



European Forum of Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual and Transgender  
Christian Groups

**ECP** Euroregional Center  
for Public Initiatives

**Traditional values,**

**Religion &**

**LGBT rights**

**in Eastern Europe**



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Florin Buhuceanu



# Introduction

Over the past decade we have seen many changes across both Western and Eastern Europe regarding attitudes towards the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities. Unfortunately, these changes haven't always been in the direction of greater tolerance and recognition of human rights. The reality is that there is now an increased polarity between Western and Eastern Europe when it comes to legislation which affects the lives of LGBT people.

One of the most disturbing factors is that more and more increasingly negative attitudes and laws are being heavily influenced by religion under the guise of traditional family values. Homophobic and transphobic beliefs and attitudes which lead to discriminatory and oppressive actions can only be seen as an evil which impairs the whole of society, and across various parts of Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, this intolerance is taking increasingly aggressive forms.

The European Forum for LGBT Christian Groups (EF) are acutely aware of the increasing influence of the Religious Right and the strategies they employ to demonise and criminalise people, in the name of God, purely because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This is why the EF commissioned this report.

This report is the first investigation document of this kind which highlights the rhetoric and propaganda tactics that are being used in several countries across Eastern Europe. It documents the need to take seriously the capacity of the Religious Right to export homophobia and transphobia and the damage this can cause to wider society.

The EF is an emergent advocacy voice of progressive, inclusive Christians that has a strong mandate in defending and promoting LGBT rights in Europe. We believe that LGBT rights are Human Rights and they are not incompatible with religious belief. We also believe it is our spiritual duty to uphold social justice by supporting our allies and partners to prevent and combat religious based homophobia and transphobia.

Co-presidents of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups  
Dr. Michael Brinkschroeder,  
Rev. Sharon Ferguson



# Why is this report needed?

Is Eastern Europe really on the “Right” democratic path? What is this religiously based opposition to LGBT rights? How damaging is it to the LGBT community’s ability to live openly and free from fear? Why is religion the most fertile ground for inspiring homophobia? What are the most effective arguments used to create a climate of discrimination for Eastern Europeans?

This report intends to illustrate how religious bias interferes with the legally guaranteed rights of LGBT people to human dignity, to freedom of expression and assembly and to non-discrimination. So far there has been little documentation of the extent of religiously based hostility in the countries of Eastern Europe. This report attempts to address that gap by gathering and analyzing information from various sources. Knowledge of “who is doing what” is critically important for analyzing the Religious Right’s strategies so that future advocacy actions can limit their impact and have better prospects for success. It is hoped that the information gathered here will serve as a catalyst for further research and will be used by human-rights organizations and faith-based LGBT organizations to counter right-wing populism. These right-wing movements politically and socially use God and moral values in order to advance an agenda of negative stereotyping, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

How can we define them, knowing that it is not exactly easy to pin down a definition for the Religious Right? Is this term applied to any militantly conservative branch of Christianity? Is it related to those opposing the cultural changes endorsed by both liberal theology and modernity, independent of denominational control? Is it an outgrowth of a political realignment that started to get consistency and a public profile in Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism? However we frame, form and present this definition in a useful and operational way, it is related to a vision of reality characteristic of fundamentalism.

What is fundamentalism then? One of the most important Jewish scholars and contemporary thinkers, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, simply and concisely defines fundamentalism “as the attempt to impose a single truth on a plural world”.<sup>1</sup> It is highly conservative and focused on a sacred past, reinvented and politicized in the 20th century, while using the communication and mobilization possibilities of the 21st century. This definition leads to the conclusion that we speak of a coherent, monolithic force waging holy wars under a central coordination. The religious scholar Karen Armstrong proves that this is not the case:

*“Each ‘fundamentalism’ is a law unto itself and has its own dynamic.” However, all fundamentalisms “follow a certain pattern. They are engaged in a conflict with enemies*

*whose secularist policies and beliefs seem inimical to religion itself. Fundamentalists do not regard this battle as a conventional political struggle (...). They fear annihilation, and try to fortify their beleaguered identity by means of a selective retrieval of certain doctrines and practices of the past. To avoid contamination, they often withdraw from mainstream society to create a counterculture; yet fundamentalists are not impractical dreamers. They have absorbed the pragmatic rationalism of modernity, and, under the guidance of their charismatic leaders, they redefine these 'fundamentals' so as to create an ideology that provides the faithful with a plan of action."*<sup>2</sup>

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was a "fractured time" coincident with the rise of new national identities, and religious rebirth at a personal and societal level. God publicly returned to Eastern Europe in a time of intense hope, cultural insularity, social unrest and regional emergence of identity politics. The fundamental reorganization of both public and private spheres led not just to more personal autonomy, but also to a new societal geography of identities and rights that were previously suppressed or deeply buried. The lesbian and gay movement, feminist groups and human rights organizations were part of the larger community building process, and became part of the public arena. They produced not just public knowledge, but also shock waves that questioned and doubted norms that were considered foundational in various Eastern European societies. It was a time of cultural and sexual deconstruction that provoked an immediate reaction of fear and rejection, defined generically by the historian

Eric Hobsbawm as a "defense of traditional stability against uncontrollable and unsettling change". This was the inaugural moment for returning to 'fundamentals' for various groups, churches, and public intellectuals afraid of the impact of globalization.

*"Globalization dismantled all lesser boundaries and the secular theology created a void, a worldwide aggregate of purely individual agents maximizing their benefits in a free market (...). What was our place (...)? Where did we belong, on a human scale and in real time and real space? Who or what did we belong to? Who were we? (...) To be more exact, the demand was for a primary identity among the plethora of ways in which we can all describe ourselves, ideally one that included and subsumed all of them under a single heading."*<sup>3</sup>

Homosexuality couldn't be part of such a "single heading" type of identity formula: it was rebellious and "new" to the public eye, provoking precarious national unity, social cohesion and growing religious feelings. The crusade against homosexuality has become rooted on the Eastern European national ground in the name of the religious freedom<sup>4</sup>.

Currently, it seems that no law will force religious communities to tolerate and accommodate what they believe is in conflict with fundamental religious principles. Religious freedom is portrayed as absolute, superseding other social or legal limits<sup>5</sup>. It is a powerful symbolic statement in the spiritual battle against "decadence" and social crises, but also a sign of the accelerated de-privatization of religion used as an instrument for influencing political and legal systems. The Religious

Right capitalizes on this strategy and uses so-called “moral values” as a marker of political and religion-based transnational identity to win hearts and minds. Interchangeable with “traditional values” or “family values”, they are deployed to inspire and generate political references, public commitment, personal and group-shared emotions. Failing to study, understand, question and challenge these proclaimed values – fundamentally important for our opposition – means conceding “values” language altogether, putting it in the wrong hands, and thus perpetuating injustice and discrimination.

The religious based opposition is not ultimately about religion. This report analyzes the Religious-Right rhetoric and opposition and correctly labels it as an element of that part of civil society called “politics”. It is in our immediate, medium and long-term interest to be aware of and better understand the instruments these activists use to enforce the way of life that they promote. Their vision of public good is competitive and seductive, making successful manipulative appeals to emotions and values. This force that we are confronted with is fed by globalization and feeds it: it is not a parochial enterprise, but is affecting all of Europe.

For centuries, the Catholic Church was global and, more recently, the evangelical churches have formed transnational agendas and values. More and more, Orthodox churches and affiliated groups are joining this campaign for a society and a public space in which religion and politics are inter-related players. This is not an abstract, academic vision that confronts us. Rather it is a concrete reality that attempts

to shape the relationships between politics, law and morality and our lives as citizens and members of a minority group.

# Eastern European context

Eastern Europe is a space that employs religion to legitimize identity politics, while the secular concept of the separation between religion and state<sup>6</sup>, and of religion and politics, is not taken for granted. Religion is generally recognized and valued as an important source of power and public authority that is used selectively in politics. Politicians are called to be the agents of God's will and respect the moral assumptions and commandments of the Church by putting them into practice<sup>7</sup>.

Churches in Eastern and Southeast European countries are benefiting from a significant resurgence after the fall of Communism in 1989. They have become relevant public actors with a global ambition. They have assumed a mandate to dismiss the separation between various sectors of society – such as culture, media, education, legislation – and reunite these fragmented realities under the tutelage of their moral authority and holistic vision. A formerly persecuted institution, forced to withdraw exclusively into a cultic ghetto and obliged to accommodate with a totalitarian state, the Church has fully returned into society hoping to exercise a divinely delegated legitimacy.

Unprepared for facing the complexities and difficulties of a modern and democratic society, the Orthodox Churches especially appeal to the old Byzantine tradition of the “symphony” between state and Church understood as a relationship of mutual responsibility and

support<sup>8</sup>. Such an orientation kept alive the traditional passivity in relation to state authorities, an orientation specific of its golden past that was justly criticized by theologians such as Pantelis Kalaitzidis: “instead of engaging in a struggle for internal spiritual renewal and reformation, (*the Orthodox Church*) wastes its resources and its energy on imposing its presence and activities in the public sphere, not in the context of an open society, but of yearning for a traditional, closed society. As long as this paradox stands, the theological voice of the church will continue to operate in a daydream and will probably remain an illusion, while its ‘political’ engagement will likely be limited to medieval/pre-modern models of intervention, rather than witness, solidarity, and justice.”<sup>9</sup>

Accused of confusing deliberately or tactically God's business with state business, the Church reinvented itself by reclaiming the ethos and morality of the ancient Christian community in strident opposition to decadent Western Europe that has almost lost its Christian roots and represents a threat for Eastern Europe. The narrative of moral/family/traditional values was blessed and activated as a key element in the attempt to return to Christianity understood as a self-contained moral, spiritual and value system, applicable in all places and all times.

One of the most important signs was given by Pope John Paul II in his message “Towards

an European Constitution” in June 2002. Elements of that discourse were adapted, transformed, “nationalized”, and absorbed into the tactics of the Church and of various religious and political groups as a counter-balance to a secular Europe.<sup>10</sup> The Pope’s remarks have had a long-term endurance, for example: “How can we not mention the decisive contribution of the values which Christianity espouses and that have contributed to strengthening culture and humanism of which Europe feels legitimately proud and without which it’s most profound identity could not be understood”. The Orthodox Churches, various politicians and public figures adopted and embraced this vision, ecumenically, applying it to the Eastern European mission field. Ironically and in a strikingly efficient way, they managed to present that as a sign of Europeanization<sup>11</sup> - despite the fact that the European Union and the Council of Europe are promoting anti-discrimination standards based on the liberal democratic values of citizenship, especially in the area of freedom, security and justice.

The Church’s public identity was constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by underlining its role in defending and promoting traditional values as universally accepted values and/or “truly European values”. This role was seen as fully compatible and in line with its exceptional heritage that made a durable impact in the history of Europe and humanity. This is the main reason why the involvement in the battle on sexual morality is considered to be a matter of life and death for Christianity itself and an unfailing source of public leadership for the Church: without the preservation of the traditions and values understood as static and equal to Christian law,

total collapse of civilization is announced as imminent. The rising rate of divorce, corruption, immorality, crime now has a clear cause and should be seriously confronted. The brand new “creed of action” came into force as *theologia practica* fighting against decadence, and soon became the epicenter of the public identity of the Church in the new democratic era.

This moral battleground offers a large zone of intersection and cooperation between the state, Church and various entities and protest groups advocating in favor of a community unified by a common history and Christian-based values, a union of “blood and spirit” in sharp contrast to the globalization process that submerges local identities into a foggy, Babylonian type of homogeneity challenging the nation’s very essence. The old stereotypes that “Romanians, Greeks, Serbians, Moldovans and Russians are Orthodox” in the same way that “Poles and Croats are Catholic”<sup>12</sup> came back to life to define the organic union between Church, Nation and State<sup>13</sup>. They were often used by the Church<sup>14</sup> as a solid and popular base for its identity politics and as a form of protest against “global order” institutions, such as the United Nations and the European Union. President Putin is now by far the new icon of the Religious Right expanding the Russian messianic ideology under the convenient camouflage offered by the new international brand of traditional values – with the direct support of the national Church<sup>15</sup>.

*“By making common cause with the church and its goals, Putin has not only cast his regime’s opponents as enemies of Russian tradition, but shored up his popularity: Today, about 90 percent of*

*Russians identify as Orthodox. The church is a marker of national identity, a source of political endorsements, and an official participant in the legislative process: in a 2009 agreement with Putin's ruling United Russia party, the country's top Orthodox official, Patriarch Kirill, won the right to review (and suggest changes to) any legislation being considered by the Duma. Since then, both Putin and Patriarch Kirill have stated explicitly and repeatedly that they believe in collaboration between church and state – a partnership that is helping to drive the government's campaign against homosexuality".<sup>16</sup>*

Surprisingly enough, deep theological divisions between the national Churches and various fundamentalist<sup>17</sup> groups – those that are not related to its ecclesiastical structures and can be named generically as the Religious Right – were put aside in favor of active and effective pragmatism. The borders between the Church and these groups and within these groups themselves are diluted under the larger flow of similar tactics and arguments, and sometimes common actions aimed at restoring the net of social morality. Such an opening of the door of transition from current reality to a vision of society based on traditional values would probably have captured the mystical imagination of Hildegard of Bingen. Known as the Sibyl of the Rhine, she anticipated a time when “rivers of living water are to be poured out over the whole world, to ensure that people, like fishes caught in a net, can be restored to wholeness”.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the fact that these Religious-Right groups are diverse and have different

denominational ties or none at all, they all share the same conviction that the liberalization of Eastern European societies has flowered into a secular assault on the Church. This process of unfortunate development of modernity goes hand in hand with moral decadence, for which both the political class and LGBT minority groups are held responsible. As a reaction, they started to get engaged in polemics and a creative type of Bible activism on issues related to politics, morality, family and culture and, by doing that, have attempted to take over as much as possible all of Christianity in diverse geographical areas and weld it into a common traditional-moral territory governed by God's law. Such crisis management in response to the globalization process, to feminism and the sexual revolution is fully inspired by the strategies tested and applied by the U.S. Religious Right – the iconic model of thinking and acting. With heavy support offered by their American counterparts, the Religious Right's ambition in Eastern Europe is to encourage, prepare and initiate a de-secularization process, dismantling piece by piece the most important elements of liberal citizenship. They are “remaking the world” by reshaping, in the name of religious freedom, the existing national and European systems for protecting human rights. This freedom is defended as “the right to religion being present in public life”, in a joint declaration from August 2013 of the leader of the Polish Catholic Church, Archbishop Jozef Michalik and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>19</sup> In the same perspective, a new draft resolution was submitted by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in March 2014 to the 25<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council on “moral values, common to all religions”:

*“We call for taking into account cultural and historic particularities of different people and note the importance of the UNHRC resolution saying deeper understanding and respect of traditional values will help, encourage and protect human rights and freedoms.”*

*“Lately supporters of ultra-liberal approaches have stepped up activities. They propagate policy of all-permissiveness and hedonism, saying moral values, which are common for all religions, should be revised. Such actions are destructive for society and for the generations.”*

*“I would like to say the provisions of the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights envision legislative instruments to restrict rights and freedoms in favor of the population, public security, law and order”, the Russian minister concluded.<sup>20</sup>*

These proclaimed certainties are “fundamental truths” because they are attributed to the Bible, i.e. part of God’s revelation to us all: there is no room for debate or doubt in this conceptual framework. They discriminate with pride because they claim God told them to do so: this is probably the most illiberal and dangerous operational assumption in their way of treating “truth as something obvious, simple, and self-evident, in their sentimental veneration of common sense, in their indifference to exploring the humbling intricacies of history, in their absence of curiosity for other cultures and the workings of nature, in their propensity to see disagreement as a sign of sinister motives rather than a product of the multifaceted character of human experience (...)”, as it was expressed by

the analyst Damon Linker, a contributing editor for the *New Republic*.

# Traditional values: what does that mean?

It is necessary to clarify the meaning of “traditional values”. These values are rooted in a prestigious past and presented as a revival of an ancient tradition. They are “moral, family values”<sup>21</sup> and therefore considered Christian.<sup>22</sup> In countries like Romania, Russia, Moldova and Ukraine, the rhetoric supporting these values initially targeted women’s sexual and reproductive rights, such as access to abortion services due to the decline of the birth rate. Currently focused on LGBT issues, this moral campaign copies and adapt tactics that originated in the United States of America:

*“When we listen to the rhetoric used by some of the Churches in Ukraine or Russia, we hear exactly the same kind of rhetoric that we have heard for many years in the United States. And it’s very clear that these voices of intolerance have been exported and campaigns even have been developed in Eastern European countries with the help of some churches and movements in the United States. We can see that by the style of communication, the words that are used, and the concept of family values that is espoused. And, yet, there are never attempts to understand that family values are espoused by LGBT people”.*<sup>23</sup>

However, these “moral” voices and the conceptual arguments that they use sound powerful. Conflation of the concepts of “traditional” and “moral”, and their

“Christianization” offers the force of authority to these values. However, despite all the attempts to make them “biblical” and “Christian”, these values do not derive from a single, universally-agreed-upon source. The concept behind these values is rather vague and fluid, undefined, subject to arbitrary interpretations. As a strategic tool, it is indissolubly associated with an internal and external global war against moral relativism represented by the West, somehow reproducing and translating for a different audience the concept of the global war used by George W. Bush in his second presidential term. What is known for sure is that these values are (1) anti-gay, (2) anti-abortion, (3) pro-abstinence, (4) pro-discrimination, among others: <sup>24</sup>

*Homosexuality, Bi-sexuality, Transgenderism, and other “deviant sexual behaviors” are explicitly condemned in the Bible “as an abomination and a violation of God’s (reproductive) standards of sexuality”. “Normalization of sodomy” and cross-dressing are out of the question.*

*Every human being, born and “unborn”, deserves the right to life from conception to death. However, the death penalty is acceptable and needs to be supported.*

*Sexually transmitted infections represent a failure of the idea of sex*

*education: there is a clear need to remain abstinent till marriage.*

*Discrimination is necessary as a way of discerning “between good and bad, right and wrong, the better and the best.” “A person with ‘discriminating taste’ is one who uses wisdom in making choices”. It is actually “a loving response to oppose behaviors that destroy individuals and families”.*

In the description of the Russian LGBT faith activist Valery Sozayev, the “traditional values” concept coined in the context of modern North-American culture does not just oppose other types of families that are not based on “traditional” marriage, such as single-parent families, multiple parent families, LGBT families, etc. It is largely about “gender binarism, monogamy, unambiguous assignment of male and female social roles, the denial of reproductive rights (including the right to have an abortion), the denial of the right to sexual orientation and gender identity, the promotion of homophobia and transphobia, discrimination against all forms and types of relations which do not fit into a heteronormative frame.”<sup>25</sup>

It is worthwhile to turn now to the relationship and reciprocal influence between religion and this type of moral activism concerning sexual orientation and gender identity issues. It is a matter of fact that the mainstream Christian theologies and the pastoral discourse in Eastern Europe were never concerned with LGBT inclusion. On the contrary, Churches publicly and proudly affirmed themselves through exclusionary language and practices<sup>26</sup>. Considered a western disease, homosexuality

is too heavily connected with the Western (temporal) history<sup>27</sup>, and not a part of the a-historical (eternal) religious reality to be analyzed properly. Despite the disproportionate importance in the teaching of the dominant Churches given to issues such as homosexuality – but also abstinence of non-married individuals, abortion, contraception, medically assisted reproduction, etc. –, there is a serious lack of attention, hermeneutical efforts and research on sexualities, sexual orientation and gender identity. In general in the dominant Orthodox theological paradigm, historical and biblical studies are underdeveloped and rather marginalized as disciplines. Kalaitzidis identifies several problematic theological foundations here: an overemphasis on mysticism and apophaticism at the expense of historical and biblical studies.<sup>28</sup> The Romanian Orthodox theologian Ana Manolache pointed out, as a characteristic of Orthodox society, a significant gap between the progress in modern anthropology and related sciences and the ancient, and presumably immutable, canon law and biblical exegesis. This situation is partially due to a deficit of proper, updated hermeneutic, biblical and historical instruments in the current Orthodox theological context. It is also related to the Orthodox ‘exceptionalism’ (or self-sufficiency) that keeps alive the ethos of the ancient Church and triumphant resistance to western modernity and its “deconstructive” theologies<sup>29</sup>.

In this context, LGBT rights are treated as a declaration of war against moral, traditional, and national values – all together. These “traditional” values make Eastern Europe the real Europe, according to the Orthodox Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania

of Transylvania. This is the Europe of values that Western Europe has rejected with false superiority, offering only economic advantages – *“that is, bread. Through bread we are offered liberty in whose name we must accept aberrant demands for this Europe to accept us: homosexuality, abortion, fornication, pornography, all damaging to our society, all sins which we, the people, our Church, and fortunately our Christian Orthodox youth have firmly rejected because we don’t want to lose our national identity (...).”*<sup>30</sup>

# Homosexuality: which homosexuality?

The focus of hostility to homosexuality is on male homosexuality, due to the secondary and inferior status of women in general. It is assumed that the vision of homosexuality is unconditioned by social ideology and historical context. The identity paradigm is clear: heterosexuality is a “traditional value”, “the way it is meant to be”, similar to atmospheric pressure, a fundamental of divine creation that is self-evident. Dissidence to that “given” represents not just a deviance from what human nature is supposed to be, it calls into question the Word of God. God’s desire for men to be men and penetrators and women to be women and receptive is revealed in His Word. Any disruption of this sexual economy confuses gender identities and sexual roles ordained by the Creator<sup>31</sup> and subverts the Word of God. As a direct result of this conceptual framework, the historical context of homosexuality and any attempt at taking account of scientific discoveries in this field are rejected as ideological attempts<sup>32</sup> that lead to relativism and disregard of the Word of God. The understanding of homosexuality as a neutral sexual orientation is perceived as a threat to the doctrinal, moral and canonical tradition, and as a threat to society at large. In countries such as Russia, Moldova or Ukraine, LGBT people are considered a minority group representing “social risk” based on the following definition:

*“A group that is exposed to dangerous*

*negative influences and poses a threat to the life of society. Traditionally, risk groups are alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, homosexuals, the homeless, whose lifestyle can be defined as a display of the diseases of society”.*<sup>33</sup>

This toxic definition is exercised through the interplay between politics, education, media and religious systems and denies, diminishes or greatly relativizes LGBT membership of social normality. Does such a definition comply with the principles of equality, dignity and brotherhood that derive from “traditional”, “moral” values? What room is there for LGBT people in these societies that identify these values as a source of national and religious pride?<sup>34</sup> Where is there place for LGBT rights in this generous and reassuring message? Or, using the words of the Orthodox priest and theologian John Meyendorff, are we defending human rights on a selective basis?

If religion is a way in which LGBT people learn to be as fully human as any other human beings, the pastoral model currently targeting them in Eastern Europe leads to disempowerment, low self esteem, acceptance of discrimination and injustice as though they were divinely imposed. The reality on the ground is worrying: religion is frequently used to stigmatize and condemn LGBT people just as “heretics” were denounced and condemned for centuries. In such a general climate, any attitude of openness or dialogue on LGBT issues is considered as a betrayal of true

Christianity. Having their identity condemned, denounced, delegitimized, and even seen as dangerous<sup>35</sup>, LGBT people often experience religion as an ideology of hatred and exclusion that makes them less than human. Not being of equal value, they cannot be entitled to equal rights. They are non-persons and non-identities. When recognized, their identity is blamed as a counter-identity, as anti-religious – part of the secularist, anti-Christian agenda. Therefore, they can and must be crushed. Human rights are not common to all human beings, certainly not to LGBT people:

*“When those who call themselves Orthodox Christian believers go out and start beating up other people, there’s no question of religion – it’s more about dogmas, theories, convictions. It is a human-rights issue, the issue of law supremacy and criminal law. When believers allow themselves to violate human rights, break human-rights laws, by applying violence against those with whom they do not agree, it contradicts not only God’s will but also the national law. In countries where national law is applied, such people are held to account. In Russia, instead of detaining the attackers, the police detained us.”<sup>36</sup>*

Such voices are barely tolerated and rarely heard on a national level. LGBT people have a limited narrative freedom to export stories to the general public and to describe themselves, their values, and their own lives. Even worse, they are considered foreign agents, especially in Russia:

*“(…) LGBT are really convenient: we’re sort of the ultimate foreign agent. There’s no doubt in anyone’s mind that the values*

*that affirm non-traditional relationships, that affirm feminism, come from abroad. If you’ve established – and this isn’t up for discussion – that foreign agents are bad, and foreign influence is bad, and the West is our enemy, then there’s no better expression of the West’s influence than gays and lesbians.”<sup>37</sup>*

There is indeed a remarkably wide spectrum of public figures, state and ecclesiastical authorities credited with bearing much of the burden of reality by explaining and preaching about who the LGBT are and what they are. These authorities and their selected allies are active “people of conscience” eager and able to defend Eastern Christianity, the European preserver of the true faith, from the advance and infiltration of Western Europe. Since “the time of Crusades, Western Europe has practically always fought with... Eastern Christianity”, argues the Ukrainian politician and lawmaker Vadim Kolesnichenko who is behind the anti-gay propaganda bill in his country. “I do not believe that in the past 15 to 20 years, Europe has drastically transformed itself and for some reason begun to love Slavic people from Ukraine.”<sup>38</sup> The activists who defend LGBT rights and their allies are treated as secular-minded crusaders involved in a war against religion. They are portrayed as ideologues leading people towards a new era free of religion and moral values. The distance between “us” (people with moral/family/traditional values) and “them” (LGBT people with a different, destructive set of values) is becoming insurmountable and reflects the fight between good and evil, moral and immoral. “The distinction between ‘us’ and the ‘others’ becomes emotionally charged with the

cosmic struggle between the ‘powers of good’ that have to overcome the ‘powers of evil’ if the world is to be saved”<sup>39</sup>.

The incitement to discriminate on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity is common, being part of this cosmic battle against social evil. Those who are supporting LGBT rights “insult” the “traditional” faith and national identity, and fully deserve to be punished in various ways. In 2013, Moldovan Orthodox leaders affiliated to Moscow Patriarchy threatened to ban access to Holy Communion if the members of Parliament would support legislation which would protect the LGBT community from discrimination<sup>40</sup>. In the same year, the members of the Greek Parliament were threatened by Orthodox bishops, such as bishop Serafim of Piraeus, with ex-communication if they would allow same sex couples to benefit from civil partnership legislation<sup>41</sup>. In February 2013, a coalition formed by various Christian NGOs members of the Family Alliance and far-right groups blocked an LGBT event in Bucharest using icons and Nazi salute as instruments of bullying. Claiming the freedom of religion as motivation for their action, they called the participants to the event “beasts” and “scum”, and chanted “You are not Romanians” and “Death to Homosexuals”<sup>42</sup>. Similar vocal threats easily got transformed into actions of violence in May 2013 after a statement made by the Georgian Orthodox Church that called for a counterdemonstration against a public street event marking International Day against Homophobia. On May 17, counterdemonstrators reacted to the Patriarchal appeal and attacked peaceful LGBT demonstrators and their allies. They carried banners “No to mental genocide” and “No

to the gays”, visibly encouraged by the hate speech previously delivered by Patriarch Ilia II in which he compared LGBT to drug addicts, and protested against “violations of the rights of the majority”:

*“It was a gathering of clergymen worthy of a religious festival: a line of dozens of bearded priests in black robes, with heavy silver crosses hanging on their chests. And yet, you couldn’t imagine a less holy march. The clergy men led a huge mob along the main street of Tbilisi, (...) through a police cordon, and toward a small group of visibly nervous men and women who had set out to mark the International Day against Homophobia.*

*‘Fuck your mothers’, a priest shouted. Another priest came armed with a stool. Their followers carried rocks, sticks, and crucifixes. ‘Kill them! Don’t let them alive’, they screamed. They smashed heads, windows of shops, and a minibus in which activists tried to escape”.*<sup>43</sup>

# Anti-discrimination legislation that discriminates

The anti-gay discourse used in the region mixes together foreign policy towards the EU, national history, human rights, justice and moral resistance, i.e. it is transforming politics into moral theology. It is not unusual to see, for example, how a legal proposal for introducing anti-discrimination provisions is twisted into justification for a state theology of power and privilege<sup>44</sup> associated with the “chosen people” represented by the heterosexual majority: LGBT people do not deserve this sort of legal protection (in the same way they do not deserve freedom of speech and expression or freedom of assembly) - otherwise they will threaten the majority and the Christian identity of the nation. They will homosexualize the country.<sup>45</sup> By adopting these “homosexual laws” imposed by the European Union, the Ukraine will collapse in the vision of the MP Oksana Kaletnyk from the Communist Party<sup>46</sup>. For the MP Vladyslav Lukianov from the Party of Regions, the anti-discrimination bill goes against “our Orthodox faith” and will “discriminate against other members of our society”.<sup>47</sup> A similar and authoritative position was adopted by the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in its session of March 2013:

*“The Church does not accept the introduction of certain laws that would establish as a basic human right that which is against human nature and defined by God as a grave sin, in particular, laws promoting same-sex relationships by*

*recognizing rights for marriage, fostering in the society positive attitudes towards them and imposing restrictions and penalties for criticizing immoral lifestyles”.* By introducing sexual orientation as a ground for combating discrimination, freedom of religion will be jeopardized: a silent war on religion is imminent, and it is already under way in the European Union.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in Georgia, the potential adoption of anti-discrimination legislation in 2014 is considered by the Orthodox Church as “propaganda and legalization” of the “deadly sin” of homosexuality<sup>49</sup>. It will lead to the inevitable discrimination of the Christian believers.

Such legislation that defends minority rights is considered intoxicating and soul destroying: it is homosexual legislation that will undermine Eastern European civilization. If LGBT activists are treated as foreign agents, the anti-discrimination legislation is an EU franchise operation importing “Westoxification”. Opposing this imported product is an act of faith and a state duty. It is a polemical law related to homosexuality and gay marriages and Ukrainian society is not ready for it, concluded the former Prime Minister Mykola Azarov who directly felt strong pressure from the Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in “defense of family and children”. Despite the public promise made to

the EU to abandon the anti-gay bill restricting the freedom of expression and assembly of LGBT people, the Ukrainian Parliament dropped the anti-discrimination bill in the spring of 2013.<sup>50</sup> In the same way, the explicit inclusion of sexual orientation among grounds covered in the Moldovan anti-discrimination bill was abandoned by the authorities<sup>51</sup> (with the exception of work-related issues) under intense pressure from the Religious Right: in 2012, sexual orientation became a synonym of “any other similar grounds”. By doing that, the Moldovan authorities have instituted a hierarchy of rights, offering grounds and legitimacy to religious groups for discriminating freely and legally under the umbrella of anti-discrimination legislation – adopted under strong pressure from the European Union. It is no surprise that the Moldovan Orthodox Church (affiliated to Moscow) felt free to agitate constantly for the adoption of legislation banning “aggressive propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientation” and “homosexual demonstrations” in various counties and cities.<sup>52</sup>

Ironically, the People’s Assembly of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (an autonomous region in the south of the Republic of Moldova) adopted in April 2013 an anti-discrimination legislation that directly discriminates LGBT: the Law on Ensuring Principles of Equality, Equity and Objectivity prohibits the propaganda of sodomy, lesbianism, bisexualism, transgenderism, same-sex marriage and child adoption by same-sex couples. On the national level, the Moldovan Socialist Party submitted an anti-discrimination draft law, considering any anti-discrimination law as “a direct defiance

of the moral values accumulated by the nation throughout the centuries and cultivated by each citizen in the family [...]”. The anti-discrimination legislation is not necessary and should be abolished, due to the lack of a significant LGBT population in Moldova:

*“Until now there is no precedent of discrimination on sexual orientation grounds (except some provocations, which should not to be taken into account). In fact, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is an attempt to combat phenomena that do not exist. The futility of these norms is confirmed by the very small number of persons that belong to the category of sexual minorities”<sup>53</sup>.*

In the region, all the attacks against LGBT people have been instigated and sometimes directly sponsored by Religious-Right groups and neo-fascist forces. These attacks were conveniently motivated by the fear that children might be exposed to “homosexual propaganda”<sup>54</sup> and so become victims of discrimination, or even be exposed to a form of “cruel and degrading treatment”.

In such an age where sacred terror is directed against the general population and children by a minority group, the introduction of legislation against “homosexual propaganda” in countries like Russia, Kirgizstan and the Ukraine responds to the national imperative of protecting “genuine human rights, the natural family and public morals”. Representatives of the Religious Right working on regional and national levels on behalf of the World Congress of Families (WCF) have been using religious and human-rights discourse and imagery to demonstrate the compliance of

these discriminatory bills with the national legislation and international standards, as expressed in the Memorandum sent to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in May 2013<sup>55</sup>.

This particular memorandum contains a useful overview of the Russian legal measures and arguments deployed in prohibiting so-called “gay propaganda” – taken as an irresistible regional model, as described in the second chapter of its Introduction section:

“Laws prohibiting propaganda of homosexuality to minors were first passed in the Russian Federation by the Ryazan (2006) and Archangel (2011) regional legislatures, followed by the Kostroma, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Magadan, Samara, Republic of Bashkortostan, Krasnodar Territory, and Kaliningrad regional legislatures (2013). Similar laws are currently under consideration in other Russian regions. A draft federal bill was introduced by the Novosibirsk regional legislature in the Russian State Duma and was adopted on its first reading on 25 January 2013. [...]

This legislation is aimed at protecting the children from information posing a threat to their health and development. It is being introduced in accordance with the federal law aimed at protecting the rights and interests of children, specifically Article 14(1) (“Protecting the child from information threatening his health, moral and spiritual growth, its promotion and propaganda”) of the 1998 Federal Law *On Fundamental Safeguards of the Rights of the Child (...)*. It should be noted that among types of information threatening health and/or

development of children, Article 5(4) of the law lists information undermining family values.[...]

Therefore, regional laws prohibiting propaganda of homosexuality to minors were introduced in compliance with the federal law and in explanation of Article 38 (1) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which states that in Russia ‘maternity and childhood, and the family shall be protected by the State’.

[...] As a result, restrictions introduced under these laws are consistent with the law of the Russian Federation.”

Protecting the “traditional meaning of the family” is equivalent to protecting the Ukrainian State and its citizens. It is not Russia that it is undermining the national interests and territory of the Ukraine: it is clearly the “spread of homosexuality... (that) threatens national security by... undermining the institution of the family” as it is mentioned in the explanatory notes. Beyond that, the authors of the Memorandum consider it certain that “the homosexual lifestyle” represents an “increased risk to one’s physical and mental health, even if contemporary specialists do not regard the behavior itself as a pathological condition.” The conclusion is perfectly clear: there are enough reasons to conclude that discrimination based on sexual orientation is not and cannot be discriminatory, as it is based on “objective and reasonable justifications.”

To underline the general support for their views, the authors of the Memorandum invoke the public position taken by ecclesiastical and interreligious bodies, such the Russian Interfaith Council, in the wake of the judgment of European Court of Human Rights on the

case Alekseyev v. Russia regarding the Gay Pride events:

*“Human rights have always been taken as an expression of the recognition of the high value of the human person whose freedom and dignity our religious traditions have for centuries affirmed. Accordingly, we support the Council of Europe in its action against human rights violations (...). Allowing such practices to spread throughout Europe and the world is, in our view, repugnant to genuine dignity of the human person. Equally repugnant, however, are actions that have always been regarded as immoral: prostitution and drug abuse, and homosexuality among them. Unfortunately, there are groups, albeit small, of people who think these sinful phenomena are normal, admissible, merit public manifestation and aggressive advertising, which provoke protests in many countries in Europe and beyond. We, however, advocate the rights of the overwhelming majority of the people who regard homosexuality as a sin or a vice and do not wish to be dictated otherwise through public events, media, education, or orders of either ‘legal’ or political nature. We petition the authorities of the Russian Federation to protect not only the interests of various minorities, but also the rights of the majority of its citizens, and not to allow public events known to prove insulting to moral sensibilities of Russian citizens who realize that only the union between a man and a woman can constitute a real family.”*

Significantly, one of the cosignatories of the Memorandum is Alexey Komov, a Russian representative of the World Congress of

Families, and a person responsible for the international relations of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Commission on the Family and Motherhood. Another cosignatory, the NGO called The Parents Committee of Ukraine led by Aleksander Skvortsov, one of the Religious Right NGOs affiliated to the WCF, also contributed enthusiastically to the proliferation of anti-EU propaganda in the Ukraine. In their view, the rejection of the EU agreement in 2013 was highly necessary because such a deal “will lead to the inevitable homosexualizing of Ukraine”. To show its commitment to family values his group burned a rainbow flag to denounce the proposed agreement with the EU and helped organize in November 2013 a celebratory flash-mob dance when the agreement was considered improper by President Yanukovich. LGBT rights were heavily and politically used as a tactic in favor of the former Ukrainian president Yanukovich and against “Euro Sodom”<sup>56</sup>.

# Portraits of the Religious-Right groups operating in Eastern Europe

## **Family Research Council**

[www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)

**2012 Revenue: \$14,122,495**

FRC is a well-established American evangelical non-profit institution and according to its own identity documents, it has the mission to advance “faith, family and freedom in public policy and culture from a Christian Worldview.” Established by James Dobson in 1982 and incorporated in 1983, FRC covers in priority themes such as Life, Marriage and Family, Religious Liberty and acts as a link between various “religious liberty” Catholic groups and conservative evangelicals. It was classified in 2010 by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an anti-gay hate group due to their politics, policies and positions on sexual orientation. Running a network of 23 000 pastors, FRC publicly warned that a religious leader who preaches against homosexuality can be arrested for hate crimes, and associates frequently homosexuality with pedophilia. It has financially supported lobbyists working in favor of the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill and works actively with the World Congress of Families that is advocating anti-gay policies in Russia, Serbia and other Eastern European countries.

## **World Congress of Families**

[www.worldcongress.org](http://www.worldcongress.org)

**2012 Revenue: \$ 650,084**

Founded in 1997 as a project of the Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society ([www.](http://www.profam.org)

[profam.org](http://www.profam.org)), the World Congress of Families (WCF) is an international network present in more than 80 countries “that seeks to restore the natural family as the fundamental social unit and the ‘seedbed’ of civil society”. It is an American hub for its 40 WCF partners that include Jewish, Muslim and Christian anti-gay groups. It enjoys ECOSOC status at the UN due to its relation with the Howard Center. Its Managing Director Larry Jacobs describes the organization in terms of a social movement: “(...) World Congress of Families is no more Evangelical than it is Catholic. The Congress is an alliance of believers and non-believers that spans the religious spectrum from Catholic to Evangelical to Orthodox to Jewish. Our 40 WCF Partners include leaders of all these faiths and more that affirm that the natural family is the fundamental unit of society and the key to authentic human rights and a health civilization.”<sup>57</sup>

One of the WCF conferences held in Geneva in 1999 inspired the known anti-gay activist Sharon Slater to co-found Family Watch International, active in various countries and on the level of the United Nations (its Economic and Social Consultative status is obtained at the UN under the name of Global Helping to Advance Women and Children). It is investing in the education of a future generation of young pro-family and anti-gay activists in Russia and other countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Moldova, the Ukraine, Romania and the Baltic states. It has partners, members and

supporters in different countries in the region: the Father Peter Skarga Institute, Poland; the Forum of Polish Women; the Center for Healthy Pregnancy and Newborn, the Ukraine; the Family and Marital Life Institute, Ukrainian Catholic University; the Institute for Family Studies, Poland; the Family Center, Latvia; the National Parents Association, Lithuania; the Family Alliance, Romania; the Family Center, Latvia; the New Generation Church, Latvia; the Moscow Pro-life Center, Russia, etc.

WCF manages to use Russia as a well established base for spreading anti-gay policies and activities throughout Eastern Europe. It has claimed a role in blocking the planned 2013 Pride march in Belgrade, Serbia.<sup>58</sup> In partnership with various Moldovan partners, it has successfully supported the removal of sexual-orientation criteria from the anti-discrimination legislation and managed to promote an intense debate on the definition of the family based exclusively on heterosexual marriage in the draft Romanian Constitution prepared in 2013.

WCF called anti-gay organizations and activists around the world to rally in support of the proposal initiated by the Romanian Alliance of Families for a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union freely consented to between a man and a woman. By gathering more than 650 000 signatures, they were instrumental in convincing the Romanian Parliament in 2008 that protection of “traditional marriage” and the “natural family” were top national priorities (even in the absence of any legal proposal and public debate concerning same-sex marriage), but failed to meet the required

geographical regional distribution of those support signatures necessary for a national referendum. However, they were successful in supporting and introducing discriminatory changes in the Family Code and defining marriage in restrictive terms. Previously, the US-based Alliance Defense Fund, a sponsor and partner of WCF, offered legal counsel to several key Romanian parliamentarians that were instrumental in proposing amendments to the Family Code. They falsely accused the European Union of putting pressure on national governments to adopt same-sex marriage, and used the decline of birthrate as a background argument.

WCH has forged partnerships with influential politicians in Russia, such as Yelena Mizulina, the chair of the Duma’s Committee on Family, Women and Children who authored the gay-propaganda and the ban-on-gay-adoption bills, but also the limits imposed on access to abortion. Mizulina has agreed to participate actively in the 2014 WCF Parliamentary Forum in the Duma and support the WCF VIII gathering scheduled to be held in September 2014 in the Congress Hall of the Kremlin Palace in Moscow. However, after the occupation of Crimea by Russia, the Kremlin was abandoned by WCF as host for the 2014 WCF Congress. WCF works well in Russia with a number of organizations such as the Interregional Public Movement “The People’s Council”<sup>59</sup>; the World Russian People’s Council presided by the Russian Orthodox Patriarch and its lobby agent in the Western world founded in 2008, the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation<sup>60</sup> led by the former parliamentarian and influential media commentator Nataliya Narochitskaya and the British historian and philosopher John

Laughland, both anti-EU and anti-US players; the Interregional NGO “For Family Rights,”<sup>61</sup> etc.

### **Alliance Defending Freedom**

**<http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/>**

**2012 Revenue: \$ 38,269,840**

Created in 1994 by several leaders of important Christian right-wing organizations (such as Focus on the Family, the American Family Association, the Campus Crusade for Christ, International Christian Media) ADF is an advocacy and litigation organization with a staff of more than 44 lawyers. Its aim is to transform the legal system in the spirit of the Gospel and advocate for “Religious liberty, the sanctity of life, and marriage and family around the world.” Led by a former Justice Department official, Alan Sears, this strategic legal organization based in Scottsdale, Arizona, runs a National Litigation Academy and offers legal fellowships for Christian law students (Blackstone Legal Fellowship). According to their website, ADF and its allies have won 8 out of 10 litigation cases, including 38 precedent-setting legal achievements on the level of the U.S. Supreme Court. It has accreditation at the United Nations, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and OSCE.

They are increasingly using the legal system to advance their anti-gay agenda and invest in coalition-building activities in Europe, in partnership with WCF to confront “a risk of winning a domestic battle while potentially – in time – losing the world”. It is also involved in planning the 2014 World Congress of Families and a WCF Parliamentary Forum. It filed a brief with the European Court of Human

Rights in February 2014, and was allowed to be a third party in defending Italian legislation that defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman. It testified in front of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the “marginalization of Christian belief” in Europe. In this context of the “rise of intolerance against Christians”, ADF has filed an *amicus curiae* before the European Court of Human Rights, accusing Pussy Riot of violating the freedom of religion by choosing an Orthodox Cathedral as a place of protest.

In his revelatory book *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom today*, ADF leader Alan Sears complains that “once one state protecting marriage and regulating sex is found to be unconstitutional, all others are fair game, such as laws against pedophilia, sex between close relatives, polygamy, bestiality and all other distortions and violations of God’s plan.”<sup>62</sup> In an address in 2013 from Rome, Sears explained why he had launched ADF: “We are losing religious freedom. We are losing in the battle for life on many different fronts. We are losing on many issues related to family, and we do not have a broad enough, organized, wide enough reaction to this. We need to do some significant new things to enter the battle at a new level in a new way.”<sup>63</sup>

And they managed to do that fairly effectively, in the USA but also in Europe. Part of their “European” staff, two key people of ADF are Paul Coleman and Roger Kiska, based in Vienna with the purpose of setting up a right-wing Christian legal network in Europe. Kiska is also working in the advisory working panel of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), an

EU institution previously denounced by him as an instrument of the “homosexual agenda” and denounced as the “Fundamental Wrong Agency.”<sup>64</sup> In his opinion, democracy and the rule of law are currently at stake in Eastern Europe:

“Not at the hands of communism or dictatorship, but from a threat coming from a much more cunning and friendly figure within the European Institutions These institutions believe that they can use Romania as a new member state still unsure of its place in Europe as means of quickly implementing radical legislation that they would like to in the future set up in the west. In a way, it has become a cold war of social policy.

“While Romania has by and large been spared this fate, other countries like Serbia and Croatia have been pressured by empty promises of easier access to European Union candidacy by radically changing their non-discrimination laws to protect ‘sexual orientation’ at the grave risk of injuring religious liberties. Moldova is at this very moment under this same pressure. No doubt you will learn a lot about this push by the European Union against susceptible states<sup>65</sup> in essence making empty threats and even emptier promises to get what they want”.<sup>66</sup>

### **European Center for Law and Justice**

<http://www.eclj.org>

It is the European offspring of the American Center for Law and Justice<sup>67</sup> founded by the televangelist Pat Robertson<sup>68</sup>. Started in 1997, it is now based in Brussels and Strasbourg and describes itself as a Christian-inspired international organization for the promotion

and protection of human rights in Europe and worldwide. They consider that Christianity has a special legitimacy in Europe that can justify a special, privileged treatment. Its Russian partner is the Slavic Center for Law and Justice.<sup>69</sup>

ECJL is operational on the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe, focused mainly on the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) through direct advocacy meetings and various memorandums and positions concerning issues such as freedom of conscience, sexual orientation issues<sup>70</sup>, sexual and reproductive rights, including assisted human reproduction. It has submitted applications on sex education in Croatia before the Social Charter Committee of the Council of Europe, an Amicus Brief in relation to law on abortion in Slovakia, and a Memorandum on the Assisted Human Reproduction Draft Law debated in the Romanian Parliament<sup>71</sup>. It has a consultative status at the UN/ECOSOC, uses frequently the UPR mechanism, advocates with the European Court of Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Two of the ECLJ staff are worth mentioning: Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel for both ECLJ and the American Center for Law and Justice from Washington, and Dr. Gregor Puppink, Director General – a strong supporter of the traditional-values position of the Russian Orthodox Church. In a recent meeting in early April 2014, Puppink and a French religious delegation<sup>72</sup> met the Interreligious Council of Russia chaired by archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin<sup>73</sup>, head of the Department of Church and Society Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. On this occasion,

the church members of this body “confirmed their intention to do everything in their power to protect society from the ‘contagion’ of same-sex marriages and gender confusion”.<sup>74</sup>

Puppinck has global preoccupations related to education, family and the future of society, reflecting the global agenda of the Religious Right in Europe:

“Through the debate on school, marriage and the family, the nature and structure of society is being called into question: marriage, school and family are interdependent and largely define society. It must be recognized that this debate pits ordinary people, the populace, against so-called ‘enlightened elite’ whose social projects – like the theory of *gender* – is difficult for the uninitiated to understand.”

“The promotion of the theory of gender is not limited to school and education. In reality, the question is much larger (...). The problem which has arisen in relation to education has similarly arisen in relation to the rest of society. In this regard, numerous people have already been sanctioned due to their moral refusal of homosexuality.”<sup>75</sup>

He was involved in the leadership of two major European campaigns that definitely need to be taken into consideration. The first one is the *One of Us* campaign that gathered 1.8 million signatures for a European Citizens Initiative<sup>76</sup>. A briefing note<sup>77</sup> of the UK government warned EU legislators that the requested legislative amendment to the EU’s budget “risks hampering international efforts to save lives” in developing countries (including non-EU Eastern countries) by outlawing the direct or indirect encouragement, support

or promotion of abortion.<sup>78</sup> The proposed law, the UK paper continues, “restricts all funding to organizations that fund abortion. So organizations that provide a broad range of health services to the world’s poor would be not eligible for EU funding if they also offer safe abortion services.” Groups supporting family planning and women’s rights related to child marriage and female genital mutilation could be also affected, as well as stem-cell research into treatments for Parkinson’s disease, diabetes and heart diseases. The legal reason invoked is the “juridical protection of the dignity, the right to life and of the integrity of every human being from conception in the areas of EU competence”.<sup>79</sup> Marches organized in favor of this petition also vocally protested against the Lunacek Report in favor of an EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>80</sup>

Displaying a message of support from Pope Benedict XVI<sup>81</sup> and coordinated by several Religious-Right Catholic organizations from Spain and Italy<sup>82</sup> under the leadership of Puppinck, this public initiative has support stretching from Marine Le Pen’s National Front to the French Catholic Church<sup>83</sup> and the Romanian Orthodox Church, having the potential to be replicated and multiplied over issues such as gay marriage and the struggle against homophobia in the public education system. The danger of such a legal proposal is obvious and shows the capacity of mobilization and intervention of the Religious Right in Europe:

“*One of Us* has been able to tap into and leverage the existing infrastructure of religious

movements into becoming active in the relatively simple act of signing a petition so I wouldn't be surprised if they go on the other campaign", warns Neil Datta from the European Parliamentary Forum.

The second campaign initiative in which Puppinck was strategically involved is the French La Manif Pour Tous (Protest for All), the 2013 protest movement against gay marriage that went beyond Paris and spread in February 2014 to other European cities such as Lyon, Brussels, Madrid, Bucharest, Rome and Warsaw "in defense of marriage and the traditional family".<sup>84</sup>

*Note: Revenue numbers were provided by GuideStar, <http://www.guidestar.org>, a public charity that gathers and disseminate information about every single IRS-registered nonprofit organization in the USA. They provide information about each nonprofit's mission, legitimacy, impact, reputation, finances, programs, transparency, governance, etc.*

**Constant monitoring of the opposition that foment homophobia in Eastern Europe.**

This is an important human rights instrument highly useful for documenting who are the main actors, what are the rhetoric and tactics they are using and for studying and reacting to the legal and public initiatives undermining LGBT rights. Exposing the level of funding provided by various American and European sources will be critical for revealing the way the opposition is functioning and expanding.

**Create a new narrative related to Equality and LGBT rights as human rights focused on dignity of every human being that cannot be taken away.**

It is necessary to engage with various international bodies and special rapporteurs (such as the UN Rapporteur on Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief) that defend and illustrate the coexistence and interdependency of human rights: the rights to assembly and expression are protected by international norms, and represent an essential component of the freedom of religion. Stress that LGBT rights are not undermining or in opposition to the right to freedom of religion.

**Create cultural competences on various sexual and reproductive rights in Eastern Europe.**

This is directly linked with the sexuality studies as a human rights topic: investing in sexuality studies is strategic for offering unbiased information about homosexuality and HIV/AIDS, religion and sexuality. At the moment, the vast majority of sexuality studies are a Western import.

**Prepare and adapt resources on homosexuality and religion for the use of various LGBT groups, LGBT faith groups and their beneficiaries.**

This remains an essential need. Summer Schools can offer an educational and networking space for bringing together theologians, scholars, LGBT activists that can work together and develop alliances with progressive religious entities and human rights organisations.

## Proposed actions

**Establish a Religious Platform for Sexual Rights in Europe.** This can identify, bring together and activate various faith voices supporting LGBT rights that can be heard in the public space, as a counter voice to the Religious Right presence. Such a network will represent also an educational platform for future religious leaders that need to get reliable information, resources, mentorship and connections.

**Support the capacity of the Human Sexuality Working Group recently re-established within the World Council of Churches.** This will provide them with the opportunity to offer to member churches comprehensive trainings that will include sexual orientation and gender identity. This educational opportunity might represent a unique chance of exposure to these topics for the Orthodox and various conservative evangelical churches.

**Institutional support for organizations that invest in exposing and confronting religion based homophobia and transphobia.** Capacity building for the European Forum of LGBT Christians Groups, ENORB-European Network on Religion and Belief, ECPI-Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives, Global Justice Institute (Metropolitan Community Churches), CEJI-A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe, Global Interfaith Network, etc. is strategic for developing effective and strategic responses to the current threats affecting the human rights of LGBT people.

**Confront and denounce the main actors of the U.S. based Religious Right.** This requires the involvement of various American entities that have a long term experience in fighting for equality and non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Pragmatic partnerships with their European counterparts focused on tracking and combating the American export of homophobia will increase the advocacy engagements on the ground.

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on Fundamentalism, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC\\_HZdg2qNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC_HZdg2qNM)

<sup>2</sup> Karen Armstrong, "The Battle for God. A History of Fundamentalism", Ballantine Books, New York, 2001, XII-XIII.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "Fractured Times. Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century", Abacus, London, 2014, 221

<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon is described by the Romanian antidiscrimination expert Romanita Iordache as a new phenomena "pushed" repeatedly by Western Religious Right groups: a foreign import grafted on pre-existing religious tenants.

<sup>5</sup> A direct violation of Article 17 ECHR which stipulates that freedom of religion is not a right that can be used to limit or impair the enjoyment of the rights of the others: "Nothing in this Convention may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights set forth herein or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the Convention."

<sup>6</sup> This modern concept has its roots in the Western protest movement within Protestantism and it is still a foreign concept without direct relevance in many countries with a dominant Orthodox or Catholic Church.

<sup>7</sup> Starting triumphantly with "God bless the Hungarians", Hungary's new Constitution, which came into force on 1 January 2012, has similarities with a National Creed that recognize Christianity's role in preserving nationhood and its status as national religion of state ("part of Christian Europe"). While the older Constitution of Greece acknowledges "our Lord Jesus Christ as its head", the Hungarian fundamental text stipulates in its preamble that "we, the members of the National Assembly, believe the holy God to be the maker of history". God appears instrumentally in the wording of Article 82 of the Romanian Constitution, in the presidential oath that validates the newly elected head of state: "So help us God".

<sup>8</sup> 2012 UN. Mission to Moldova, V. Issue of concern, B. Privileged status of the Moldovan Orthodox Church, 31: "(...) there seems to be a tendency in certain parts of society to simply equate national identity with the Orthodox tradition. Again, while the Special Rapporteur does not see a problem in appreciating the significance of the Orthodox Christianity as a major factor of the history and culture of the country, the invocation of Orthodoxy in the interest of collective identity politics may have serious consequences for the non-discriminatory implementation of freedom of religion and belief for everyone. It can furthermore hinder the development of a public culture of respecting diversity. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f3927cf2.html>

<sup>9</sup> Orthodoxy & Political Theology, 85, 2012 WCC Publications, Geneva

<sup>10</sup> Here can be found the base for the notorious Giscard d'Estaing' comment that Turkey's accession to the European Union mean "the end of Europe".

<sup>11</sup> In the comments of the Romanian-Hungarian Constitutional Judge Valentin Zoltan Puskas: "For us, Romanians, but also for contemporary Europe, assuming the millennial Christian tradition is, in my opinion, a natural necessity for preserving the Romanian and European identity. In this

context, the mirroring, enshrining and safeguarding of the Christian values in the Constitution, either national or European, is an objective not only necessary, but also compulsory”.

<sup>12</sup> The connection between religious identity and the national identity not only makes the national Churches stronger, but quite often positions them as the strongest public moral authority in countries where no other actors have managed to compete with them.

<sup>13</sup> President Putin repeatedly promoted the Russian Orthodox Church as a defining mark of Russianness, and acknowledged the support received by the Orthodox Church internationally in promoting the Russian led UN Resolutions on “Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a deeper understanding of the Traditional Values of Humankind.”

<sup>14</sup> Romanita Iordache, anti-discrimination expert: “Not only the church used this but also the political entrepreneurs who saw the appeal of a tribal/kinship solidarity argument. The irony here is the disconnection with what the mainstream majoritarian aim seems to be, at least theoretically: Europeanization.”

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/vladimir-ilyich-putin-the-conservative-lenin/25206293.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/02/world-congress-families-russia-gay-rights>

<sup>17</sup> These are groups that are part of a larger fundamentalist movement that was born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the American Protestant environment as a reaction and protest against the decadent and burgeoning ‘secular world’, fighting for the ‘fundamentals’, return of the world under the umbrella and protection of the Holy Scriptures.

<sup>18</sup> Cited by Diana Butler Bass in her book, “A people’s history of Christianity - The other side of the story”, HarperOne, 2009, 291

<sup>19</sup> In this common declaration, homosexuality is directly linked with the promotion of abortion, euthanasia, and consumerism: <http://www.astra.org.pl/repronews/73-heads-of-russian-orthodox-and-polish-roman-catholic-churches-sign-a-joint-message-to-the-peoples-of-russia-and-poland.html>

<sup>20</sup> [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014\\_03\\_03/Russia-to-submit-draft-resolution-on-developing-legal-base-in-human-rights-to-UNHRC-8381/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_03_03/Russia-to-submit-draft-resolution-on-developing-legal-base-in-human-rights-to-UNHRC-8381/)

<sup>21</sup> Family values are described by the LGBT faith activist Valery Sozayev as belief promoting nuclear family as an essential ethical and moral social unit. Therefore, moral, traditional and family values are synonymous.

<sup>22</sup> In the definition of the Constitutional judge Puskas: “(...) I can state, without claiming preciseness that the Christian value is an idea, an ideal that comes from Christ through the teachings of the Bible”.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Rev. James Mulcahy, Metropolitan Community Churches, Eastern Europe, in ‘Hear me out’, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU0w2N9eu3E>

<sup>24</sup> <http://traditionalvalues.org/content/defined>

<sup>25</sup> The Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in the Russian Federation (Last three months 2011-First half 2012), chapter “Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A culture war caused by traditionalism revanchism”, 2012, 7

<sup>26</sup> Patriarch Teoctist of the Romanian Orthodox Church: Romanians always respected traditional, Christian values (“the freedom to live in virtue”) and traditional families. They were always able to distinguish “sin from virtue, natural from unnatural, normal from abnormal, right from wrong” (Turcescu & Stan, 2005)

<sup>27</sup> Mother Makarija Obradovic, cited in the paper “Church and homosexuality in Serbia” by Miloš Jovanović: “The Serbian Orthodox Church has methods to deal with this phenomenon if such cases appear (...), but such examples do not exist among us”.

<sup>28</sup> Orthodoxy & Political Theology, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2012, 91

<sup>29</sup> Women, Religion and Sexuality. Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women, chapter “Ortodoxy and Women: a Romanian Perspective by Ana-Lucia Manolache, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1990

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/146/art02-stan\\_turcescu.html#\\_ftn13](http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/146/art02-stan_turcescu.html#_ftn13)

<sup>31</sup> Speaking about the 2010 Gay Pride in Belgrade, Serbia and homosexuality in general, the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Amfilohije is apocalyptic: “That is something that destroys not only the body itself but also the spiritual organism, the spirit of the folk, denies human life, and desecrates the holiness of the human body, human spirit, community, and leads to nothingness and self-destruction”, Amfilohije, Mitropolit crnogorsko-primorski: Kolo smrti na ulicama Beograda. Pravoslavlje – Novine srpske patrijarsije, cited by Milos Jovanovic in his paper “Silence or condemnation: The Orthodox Church on Homosexuality in Serbia, University of Nis, 2012

<sup>32</sup> In his 2013 Christmas Message, Metropolitan Amfilohije positions “homosexuality” with the “new totalitarianism of mindless drives”.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/glossary/tar-ipcc-terms-ru.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Interview with the Moldovan human rights activist Mihaela Ajder: “The most difficult experience is to feel that there is no room for you in society. It’s like you do not belong to this place or there is no space for you”.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with the Estonian LGBT faith activist Heino Nurk: “They see me as dangerous. As a gay man and a Christian, I am sad to say that the persecutions I have experienced from the Communist regime are very similar to those which my beloved Church is causing me right now”. in ‘Hear me out’, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU0w2N9eu3E>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with the Russian LGBT faith activist Valery Sozayev, 2013

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/gay-propaganda-and-russias-shrinking-public-space/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/russia-exports-homosexual-propaganda-law-in-effort-to-fight>

<sup>39</sup> Ulrich Beck, *A God of One’s Own: Religion’s Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2010, 54

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51d6caff9.html>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.neurope.eu/article/greece-mps-threatened-excommunication-over-gay-marriage>

<sup>42</sup> <http://accept-romania.ro/en/blog/2013/02/21/angajati-ai-statului-in-cardasie-cu-extremistii/>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/05/what-was-behind-georgias-anti-gay-rally.html>

<sup>44</sup> In a larger historical context, this exclusionary theology is not an innocent hermeneutical endeavor. In our recent history, it took the form of the “German theology of war” at the beginning of the XX century, “theology of the State” defending apartheid in South Africa as well as “theology of silence” in the Eastern European countries having an Orthodox majority under the communist regime. Now it has become a noisy and apocalyptic “theology of condemnation” upon LGBT issues.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.gay.org.ua/>

<sup>46</sup> idem

<sup>47</sup> idem

<sup>48</sup> [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/state/legislation/51601/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/state/legislation/51601/)

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/georgias-orthodox-church-opposes-antidiscrimination-bill/25366250.html>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/05/14/ukraine-parliaments-drops-gay-anti-discrimination-bill-as-hundreds-protest-against-it/>

<sup>51</sup> Except in relation to discrimination in the workplace.

<sup>52</sup> <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/moldova/106281/reports/2013HRR-Moldova-ENG.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Genderdoc-M, 2013 Hate Crimes Report, <http://www.lgbt.md/rom/>

<sup>54</sup> ‘Homosexual propaganda’ is fully synonymous with the ‘homosexual agenda’ described a decade ago by the well-known American psychologist and Religious Right representative James Dobson in his pamphlet *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom today*: “The homosexual agenda has as its primary aim to ‘trump’ the rights of all other groups, especially those of people of faith. (..) Homosexuals are attempting to force their lifestyles and its consequences upon society... They want special rights... social acceptance and privilege... They desire to teach homosexuality as an ‘alternative lifestyle’ in public schools, and want their immoral relationship both recognized and subsidized with government funding by means of ‘domestic partnership’ laws that redefine the nature of the family.” Current information on this topic: <http://drjamesdobson.org/Solid-Answers/Answers?a=99e0b966-9b01-4615-99d6-b9d0374525ce>

<sup>55</sup> <http://en.familypolicy.ru/read/256>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2013/12/06/government-supporters-ukraine-use-gay-rights-tactic/Qix2vwNXwgO5XWZ3gx1P7K/story.html>

<sup>57</sup> <http://worldcongress.org/news/press-releases/nation-magazine-recognizes-world-congress-families-pivotal-role-forging-eastwest-pro-family-alliance>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/9419072896.html>

<sup>59</sup> Described in the organization’s website [www.narodsobor.ru](http://www.narodsobor.ru) as opposing “unbridled immigration, totalitarian sects, lawlessness and corruption, the so-called ‘gay parades’, sex education of children and any other actions aimed to undermine Russia, her spiritual and moral values and culture” – cited in the publication “The Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people in the Russian Federation”, 8.

<sup>60</sup> The Institute believes that “the political order should be underpinned by a moral perspective, and specifically by the Judeo-Christian ethic which unites both the Eastern and Western parts of the European continent”, <http://www.idc-europe.org/en/The-Institute-of-Democracy-and-Cooperation>

<sup>61</sup> <http://profamilia.ru/>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2013/fall/Dangerous-Liasons>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/global-symposium-aims-to-educate-media-on-religious-liberty/>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.turtlebayandbeyond.org/2011/eu-treaties/fundamental-wrong-agency/>

<sup>65</sup> On contrary, “the susceptible state” of Croatia organized a so-called “pro-family referendum” immediately after its entrance into European Union. Two thirds of voters opted on 1 December 2013 to define marriage exclusively as “matrimony between a man and a woman”. This referendum was held following a citizens’ initiative crafted and led by the anti-LGBT organization “In the name of the Family”, heavily supported by Croatian Catholic Church.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/161/art01-Kiska.php>

<sup>67</sup> 2012 revenue of ACLJ was 17, 275,299 USD:

<sup>68</sup> Chancellor of Regent University from US and chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network, he became famous through one of its statement on feminism that was used in 1992 in a fundraising letter: “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians”: <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-1021641.html>.

<sup>69</sup> <http://sclj.org/about/mission.htm>

<sup>70</sup> [http://eclj.org/pdf/ECLJ\\_MEMOPACECOEGROSSRESOLUTIONLGBT2010\\_EN\\_20091216.pdf](http://eclj.org/pdf/ECLJ_MEMOPACECOEGROSSRESOLUTIONLGBT2010_EN_20091216.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> <http://eclj.org/pdf/memorandum-privind-propunerea-legislativa-ruam-2013.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> The delegation included Marc Aillet the Catholic Bishop of Bayonne, Lescar and Oloron, the executive director of the Jerome Lejeune Foundation, the director of the Catholic weekly *Famille Chretienne* and the general secretary of the *Vita Alliance*.

<sup>73</sup> In an interview for media agency Interfax in January 2014, this high ranking Orthodox representative declared that he is supporting the idea of a referendum aiming to restore Russia's Soviet-era anti-gay legislation: " I'm certain that such sexual conduct must be entirely excluded from the life of our society", <http://www.interfax.ru/350762>

<sup>74</sup> <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/04/03/news100415/>

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.splendorofthechurch.com.ph/2014/02/05/the-rise-of-pro-life-and-traditional-family-movement-in-europe/>

<sup>76</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/development-policy/uk-warns-meps-against-evangelical-attack-eu-development-aid-301614>

<sup>78</sup> An initiative reminding Europe of the George W. Bush era and its funding restrictions imposed by USAID in 2001, while around 47,000 women from the whole world die every year from unsafe abortions, and more than 8 million suffer related illnesses and injuries requiring hospital care.

<sup>79</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/initiatives/finalised/details/2012/000005>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2014-0009&language=EN>

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.oneofus.eu/pope-benedict-xvi-supports-the-one-of-us-campaign-in-favour-of-human-life/>

<sup>82</sup> Fondazione Vita Nova, Fundacion Provida de Cataluna, Fundacion Valores y Sociedad – with a declared budget of 152,219 € allocated to this European campaign.

<sup>83</sup> The office coordinating the campaign activities for *One of Us* is located right behind the European Parliament in Brussels, hosted by the Eglise des Pères du Saint-Sacrement.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.splendorofthechurch.com.ph/2014/02/05/the-rise-of-pro-life-and-traditional-family-movement-in-europe/>



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