



**Second Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations
Istanbul, Turkey, 6-7 April 2009
Breakfast Session #5: Contemporary Society and Religion
Monday April 6, 2009, 07:45-08.45
Organized with the Network of European Foundations**

Objectives and Expectations of this Session

This session will introduce the work developed under the NEF initiative on 'Religion and Democracy in Europe' which focuses on the role of religion in contemporary societies. Speakers from different backgrounds will bring distinctive approaches to the topic so as to give the audience specific examples on the nexus between religion and the public sphere. The session will focus on the impact on daily life of the interaction between the state and religion in the specific fields of health and school systems in Europe. Participants will also discuss the issues in other geographical contexts.

Questions

1. How does the relationship between the state and religion impact the daily life of citizens? (analysis of the question in the specific fields of health and education)
2. What are the healthcare implications of religious observance in public spaces such as hospitals? Conversely, how do health policy choices affect the healthcare of groups with different religious observance?
3. To what extent should state policy regulate the involvement of religious practices in public spaces such as hospitals?
4. What are the main questions for policy-makers concerning the place of religious education in the education systems? How to take into account religious diversity when teaching religion in ever more secularized, multiethnic and multi-religious societies?

Organization of this Session:

Each speaker will give a 10 minutes presentation to introduce the topic and then the floor will be opened for half an hour for an open debate with all participants.

Moderator/Chair: Rien Van Gendt, chairman of the NEF initiative on Religion and Democracy and former Executive Director of the Van Leer Group Foundation