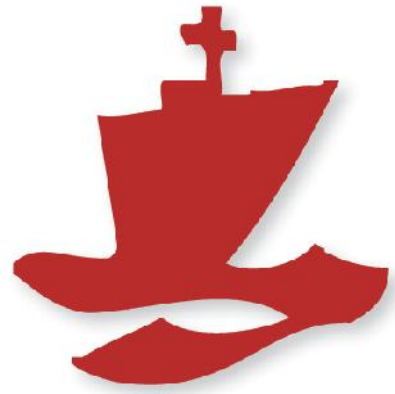


# Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe aisbl



## **Statement on the contribution of religious communities to the formation of European citizens**

### **Introduction**

This statement was originally agreed upon by the participants in the conference “Fundamentalist or Responsible Citizen?”, where young people from all over Europe coming from various Christian denominations, Jewish and also Muslim communities gathered and developed the text in joint cooperation. The conference took place from 28 November – 5 December 2010 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The version presented below was amended by the delegates in EYCE’s 38<sup>th</sup> General Meeting in Höchst, Germany, which took place from 17 - 23 October 2011.

### **Statement**

Our faith calls us, as young religious people, to take a more active role in public life within Europe. In light of the changing religious composition of European societies (also due to migration, which is a natural phenomenon that has always shaped religious communities in Europe), increased xenophobia, and a trend towards excluding religion from civil discourse or towards having one major religion/ denomination dominate the discourse, our aim is to propose ways in which young religious European citizens can take a more active role in fulfilling their duties towards society as a whole.

We are concerned over the rise of extremist attitudes, sometimes identified with fundamentalism, whether religious or secular. We believe that religions, cultures and civil systems can work together towards common objectives.

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We assert that religious identity should not be excluded from the public sphere, and that in order to achieve a fairer society, people of all backgrounds and beliefs must take an equal part in civil activities.

To achieve this, we recommend:

Formal, informal and non-formal educational initiatives:

- to raise awareness about the role of religious communities within societies;
- to raise awareness of civil duties within religious communities;
- to increase understanding of different religions and perspectives
- to help all people to see beyond stereotypes;

Dialogue and collaboration:

- on an individual level: getting to know each other; listening, and sharing life experiences
- first between religious communities and further more between religious communities and secular authorities;
- to build networks involving different religious and secular communities and policy influencing organisations;

Engagement:

- by young religious citizens in politics, media and NGO work;
- in setting an example, becoming involved in voluntary services.

These are activities that will need to be continued by all members of European society on a long-term basis. We must persevere towards a more committed, more responsible and more inclusive society, all together.

Sarajevo, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2010