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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2009  
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**Working Sessions 10-11: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**

**P R E S E N T A T I O N**

The European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism (FECRIS) federates more than fifty associations of assistance to the victims of cultic abuse and thus, receives information in the sphere of health, education, private life from almost all the countries, members of the OSCE.

A number of reports, especially from the Eastern Europe and Balkans, demonstrate a tendency of attempts from the side of so-called “new religious movements” to infiltrate into the system of education on all levels.

This tendency is dangerous and presents itself a hidden form of proselytizing at schools, colleges and universities that roughly violates the principles of secular education and the right for balanced and non-biased information.

The forms of those attempts are diverse and numerous. Certain new religious movements spread their ideas by launching programs for children and youth such as, for example, free foreign language study, sports activities, summer camps and different types of seminars. The parents are promised that the children will be provided not only with the specified recreational or educational programs, but also, with the modern pedagogical and psychological methods to build up a child’s self-confidence and the leader’s abilities. In fact, children are exposed to religious teachings beyond the control of their parents.

Another form is to suggest to the authorities a socially attractive program promising to render a free help to the state to rehabilitate the drug or alcohol abusers or homeless children.

In this case, the social goals are used as a camouflage for spreading their religious ideas and recruiting new members. The state authorities may support such “social initiatives” truly believing in their advertised purposes. For example, in Ukraine a notoriously known Narconon program received a support from the Ministry of Education to lecture at schools.

The attempts of new religious movements to spread their ideas through the system of education may be direct or indirect, i.e. with the help of the NGOs that formally are not related to the initial religious organizations.

FECRIS urges the states-members of the OSCE about the potential threat from such infiltration attempts that may result in violation of the rights of the child in particular and calls to intensify the creation of a legal mechanism that will include legal acts, definitions, expert groups to prevent the hidden forms of religious proselytizing among children and youth.

FECRIS has never been an anti-religion organization and honours the right to freedom of conscience and religion. The organisations we are talking about use this religious freedom as a mask to commit their misdeeds for their own profit.