

# RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN OPEN SOCIETIES

## CRITERIA OF DISCERNMENT

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Generalitat de Catalunya  
Government of Catalonia  
**Religious Diversity  
Advisory Board**



RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY  
IN OPEN SOCIETIES

CRITERIA OF DISCERNMENT

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY  
ADVISORY BOARD

Document 1

Documents of the Religious Diversity Advisory Board, 1  
Religious diversity in open societies. Criteria of discernment  
Barcelona, January 2014

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## INTRODUCTION

This document is a product of the work of the Religious Diversity Advisory Board (*Consell Assessor per a la Diversitat Religiosa*), and I would like to thank its members for their efforts to improve the management of diversity in Catalonia. *Religious Diversity in Open Societies: Criteria of Discernment* reminds us that in an open, plural society, such as that of Catalonia, the aforementioned management must involve a broad outlook on religion and take its presence in all areas of day-to-day life into account.

In Catalonia, which will always be receptive, inclusive and cohesive, we regard religious diversity as an opportunity for cultural enrichment in an increasingly cosmopolitan society. Consequently, we feel that the framework for interreligious dialogue ought to be as extensive as possible. Our initial premise must be that religion is consubstantial with people and, thus, of great importance in society. With that in mind, the public authorities must look to meet the major challenges of guaranteeing freedom of religion and maintaining social cohesion in their management of religion.

We also aspire to rise to those challenges because we feel it is necessary to highlight our society's principles, as they are the cornerstone of a better future for everyone. "If virtue precede us, every step will be safe", as the Roman philosopher and statesman Lucius Annaeus Seneca observed.

At present, Catalonia is facing what are probably the greatest challenges it has been posed in recent centuries, and we must therefore tackle them with confidence, conviction and cohesion. To that end, we will draw inspiration from the notion of being "united in diversity", the motto of the European Union, the 20th century's greatest success story where peace and harmony are concerned.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my gratitude to the members of the Religious Diversity Advisory Board, not only for this document but also for their constant work to make our society a better place and to strengthen its social and cultural cohesion.

*Joana Ortega i Alemany*

Vice president of the Government of Catalonia  
and governance and institutional relations minister



## **1. NEW FRAMEWORK**

### **1.1. Catalan society's growing diversity**

One of the phenomena that most clearly characterise Catalonia is its increasing diversity, an aspect of which is religious affiliation. While Catalonia's diversity is by no means a new development, the process that has brought it about has sped up in recent times. Migratory movements have contributed to that diversity, as has a global social paradigm shift entailing the progressive introduction of dialogue into all areas of life in response to a general feeling of uncertainty.

Rigorous analysis of the situation in question shows that Catalonia's society has never been homogeneous. At present, however, the interdependence between that society as a whole and its different component groups is multiplying the diversity that has characterised it in the past, creating both new opportunities and certain problems.

Catalonia's plural, heterogeneous society, which is home to individuals and groups with different ideologies and beliefs, is generating public debate. Everything seems to point to it being necessary to manage diversity in the public sphere intelligently and harmoniously, in a way that is sensitive to and respectful of Catalonia's own traditions and its emerging religious and cultural pluralism.

### **1.2. Equality and the management of diversity**

Given the need to balance the recognition of diversity with the duty to guarantee equality, some policy guidelines are required. Firstly, a smooth relationship between Catalonia's official structure (its government, institutions and political authorities) and religious faiths must be ensured. Secondly, there must be a common framework of rights and duties for all organisations, social actors and individuals.

Defining a framework that guarantees individual and collective freedom wherever interaction takes place (work, school, health services,

neighbourhoods, etc.), limited only as necessary to protect everybody's fundamental rights, is a vital part of the diversity management process.

The most common differences between groups are essentially intangible, consisting of principles, beliefs, concepts of life and death, views on gender roles and ideas on what constitutes happiness. Those different perceptions result in lifestyles and relationships varying greatly between one group and the next. A management model that accommodates such diversity and respects Catalonia's roots is to everyone's benefit, as it will generate wealth and contribute to social cohesion. Furthermore, its legitimacy will grow in proportion to the diversity it encompasses.

## **2. DIVERSITY AS AN OPPORTUNITY**

There are many ways in which religious and spiritual diversity constitutes an opportunity. Nonetheless, the relationship between religious communities and society as a whole can generate conflicts linked to values and interests, which we need to be able to anticipate and, as far as possible, prevent.

### **2.1. Different social responses to religious diversity**

States respond to religious and ethnic diversity in different ways in their attempts to coordinate relations with the various groups involved. Broadly speaking, one possibility is a tendency towards acculturation to the majority public culture, which entails restricting religious identity to the private sphere. Another is a tendency towards hermetic communities, resulting in the absence of a common public culture. Lastly, there is the possibility of seeking a legitimate public culture for all groups, one that accommodates a society's diversity and the corresponding territory's identity.

The third of the aforementioned approaches embraces the principle of the equality of differences, whereby all communities are guaranteed the same right to freedom of religion.

### **2.2. Ethics and communication as a basis for managing religious diversity**

Two considerations must be taken into account with a view to making good relations and smooth communication between religious communities possible. Firstly, it is important to identify ethics and shared values that connect the different religious traditions, and to overcome stereotypes, caricatures and toxic ideas of the Other. Secondly, a willingness to achieve mutual understanding is key to the diversity management process and, based on the universal ability to communicate, must prevail in interaction and dialogue between groups.

The aforementioned shared values include being committed to helping society's most vulnerable groups, respecting all living beings and the richness

of biodiversity, attending to the spiritual needs of all humans, and wishing for a fairer, more peaceful world and an economic system capable of sustaining the entire population.

Such solidarity is currently necessary to reduce the risk of conflict and reinforce social cohesion in a world whose different parts are increasingly dependent upon one another. Despite predictions to the contrary, recognising diversity does not create a divide in society (the effect is actually the opposite) as long as there is equal recognition among all the parties involved. Diversity is a source of growth, wealth and excellence for societies.

### **2.3. Towards a common culture**

For an organisation to evolve in a positive way, it needs a wealth of talent and roles. To achieve its goals, however, it also requires complementarity, agreement, great understanding, at least some degree of a common culture upon which there is unanimous consensus. Creating such a culture is essential to Catalan society's development. Equality among a structure's components makes it highly efficient and enhances its quality.

### 3. CRITERIA OF DISCERNMENT

Rather than political criteria concerning action on religious diversity, our aim is to identify the ethical criteria that ought to be applied to the political management of such diversity in the public sphere. Our proposed criteria of discernment are inspired by the spirit and letter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as we regard it as the most widely accepted text of an ethical nature, one that is recognised by all democratic constitutions, including that of Spain.

The criteria in question are:

- a. Mutual respect.
- b. Mutual comprehension and goodwill.
- c. The deconstruction of negative, offensive prejudices.
- d. Equity in terms of personal dignity, regardless of an individual's spiritual and/or religious choices.
- e. Freedom to hold and express beliefs and convictions.
- f. Respect for every individual's physical and moral integrity.
- g. Work to enable minority groups to express their views in society.
- h. Condemnation of any form of extremism or violence.

## **4. TOWARDS A SPECIFIC MODEL FOR MANAGING DIVERSITY**

### **4.1. Secularity and secularism as models for managing religious diversity**

The word secularity refers to a political concept involving the separation of politics and religion. It is a modern notion concerning society's political organisation, according to which the state, as the embodiment of popular sovereignty within a territory and the legal institution that governs coexistence in the corresponding community, takes precedence over any kind of social authority and, in particular, all institutions that manage religious traditions, symbolic traditions and philosophies of life.

It is important to distinguish secularity from secularism, which involves religion's expulsion from the public sphere. With that in mind, a model for managing religious diversity should be built on a foundation of secularity and, chiefly through institutions, accommodate all forms of religious expression on the basis of mutual recognition. The backdrop to such a model should be a society that is open to dialogue, respects diversity and fosters communication between different groups with a view to democratising and reinforcing the public sphere.

### **4.2. The principles of secularity**

Secularity is a form of government based on two broad principles. The first consists of equal treatment and freedom of conscience. The second comprises the separation of church and state on one hand, and state neutrality in relation to religions and secular movements on the other. Article 16.3 of the Spanish Constitution (SC) stipulates that "the state shall have no official religion. The public authorities shall take the religious beliefs of society into account and shall consequently maintain cooperative relations with the Catholic Church and other faiths".

Thus, the principle of secularity entails:

1. Recognising society's religious pluralism and nurturing its

integration.

2. Separating and not confusing the goals of the state and those of religious traditions.
3. The public authorities adopting a neutral stance rather than a policy of exclusive confessionalism or secularism.

### **4.3. The application of secularity in Catalonia**

The application of a porous form of secularity in Catalonia requires the public authorities to cooperate with religious faiths to jointly identify impartial ideas acceptable to all parties. The faiths, meanwhile, must respect the political arena's legitimate autonomy, without that preventing those who subscribe to a religion from actively participating in Catalonia's social, cultural, political and economic life.

The legal principle of having no official religion requires the state to respect and ensure respect for all the different beliefs present in civil society. The principle of equality prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religious belief, guarantees individuals the right to practise their religion in public and in private, and recognises that every religion or social organisation is entitled to organise itself in accordance with its values. The limitation applicable to secularity is basically that the exercise of the aforementioned rights must violate neither the principle of public order nor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which are currently enshrined in open societies' legal systems.

Secularism, in contrast, would entail excluding or seeking to exclude religion from any of society's political, cultural, economic, educational, social or health-related activities, thus restricting it to the private sphere.

We advocate inclusive secularity and oppose any attempt to suppress religion and, by extension, spirituality and to limit them to strictly private settings. We feel that such a limitation involves a significant loss for society and democracy from many perspectives, as well as a risk of causing a social divide. Religious authority, as an institution, may be represented in European

and international agreements for the common good and in the best interests of the human conscience, in the context of recognition of human rights. That entails a new form of unselfish existence, where people live for and to serve others.

#### **4.4. Towards a common public culture**

The paradigm shift taking place at present is generating both new opportunities and new risks. Behavioural guidance from traditional institutions of socialisation (school, work, family, etc.) is not as clear as it used to be. Social bonds are in danger of weakening and, given the threat of violence looming over society, we must do more to reinforce them. A common public culture must be established (as indicated in Catalonia's 2008 Agreement on Immigration) to counteract all forms of belligerence and prevent communities from closing in on themselves. Reflection on Catalonia's traditions (philosophical, humanist, religious, etc.) is thus required with a view to formulating rules for coexistence.

#### **4.5. Understanding the concept of state secularity properly**

State secularity is not simply a matter of a neutral relationship taking the place of religious or spiritual aspects, and even less of the imposition of the principles, beliefs and rituals of a form of civil religion. It is a combination of four elements, specifically the state having no religious affiliation; freedom of religion, which transcends freedom of worship; non-interference in religious affairs by civil authorities; and a framework that guarantees the conditions required for egalitarian dialogue.

Religion's presence in democratic societies is one of citizens' rights, as it is they who, in the exercise of sovereignty, decide exactly how their coexistence is to be organised. The rights in question safeguard the principles central to a common political culture. Such a culture, recognised by all its different members, lies atop a dense system of loyalties and collective and personal conceptions of good which are compatible with a common moral code. The



greater the consensus of the culture's different members in relation to the specific rules governing interaction, the more legitimate those rules will be.

#### **4.6. The importance of a precise understanding of the concepts of public and private sphere**

The problem we have at present is identifying what the concepts in question are held to mean. If the public sphere is deemed to correspond to state activity, religion must be kept separate therefrom, in keeping with the principle of secularity. If, on the other hand, it is deemed to correspond to civil society and wherever people interact (schools, work, etc.), it must accommodate all religious traditions on an equal footing.

## **5. THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Article 16.1 of the Spanish Constitution (SC) of 1978 guarantees freedom of religion. The said article was subsequently developed by the Constitutional Law of 5 July 1980 on freedom of religion. Additionally, regulations related to the fundamental rights and freedoms recognised in the SC are, as established in article 10.2 thereof, to be interpreted in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international treaties and agreements thereon ratified by Spain.

### **5.1. Freedom of religion**

Freedom of religion is the first principle that defines the state's stance on religious matters. Like other states to which this applies, the Spanish state prohibits coercing individuals and substituting their faith, and may not stipulate how they are to act or think in relation to any religion or faith.

Freedom of belief, be it religious or secular, represents recognition of an area of activity which is constitutionally immune to state coercion, as article 16 of the SC guarantees. The said freedom thus protects each person's right to profess any belief and to conduct themselves in accordance therewith, as well as to defend that belief before third parties (Constitutional Court Record 55/1985 of 24 July, and Constitutional Court Ruling 46/2001 of 15 February).

The fact that the SC guarantees freedom of religion in article 16.1 before going on to proclaim Spain's secularity in article 16.3 should not be interpreted as the state washing its hands of the matter of religion. The reality is quite the opposite. Article 9.2 of the SC requires the public authorities to ensure that people are actually able to exercise their right to freedom of religion. The authorities must therefore take society's religious beliefs into account and, consequently, maintain cooperative relations with religious faiths (Constitutional Court Ruling 166/1996 of 28 October, point of law 2).

The mandatory relationship between the right to freedom of religion and the principle of secularity is thus evident. The said principle is a key premise in terms of the harmonious coexistence of the different religious convictions present in Spanish society, which is plural and democratic (article 1.1 of the SC).

Additionally, article 2.1 of the 1980 Constitutional Law on freedom of religion establishes that the said freedom and that of worship give every individual the following rights (among others):

1. To profess their chosen religious beliefs or none at all.
2. To engage in acts of worship and receive religious support corresponding to their own faith.
3. To observe their faith's feast days.
4. To receive all kinds of religious information and instruction.
5. To meet with others and express themselves publicly for religious purposes.
6. To establish places of worship or for meeting for religious purposes.
7. To disseminate their beliefs and have ties with their own religious faith and others.

## **5.2. The limits to freedom of religion**

Like all fundamental rights, freedom of religion has certain limits. According to article 3.1 of the Constitutional Law on freedom of religion, "The exercise of the rights arising from freedom of religion and of worship is only limited as necessary to protect the right of others to exercise their civil liberties and fundamental rights, and to safeguard public morals, health and safety, which are elements of the public order protected by law in a democratic society". The article in question echoes article 9.2 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Rome, 4 November 1950), which literally states that "Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the

interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others”.

### **5.3. Freedom of religion as the norm in open societies**

Freedom of religion has a collective as well as a personal dimension. With that in mind, an open society, such as that of Catalonia, must be able to integrate and accommodate all the different beliefs and convictions of individuals and of religious faiths and communities alike.

Nonetheless, certain issues may cause conflicts between different individuals and groups in the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedom of religion. In such cases, we will need to be capable of managing religious diversity and to engage in a plural process for the purpose of establishing regulations to identify the most appropriate solution.

## 6. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to make some recommendations geared to fostering the perception of diversity, and religious diversity in particular, as an opportunity for growth, for broadening our horizons and for significantly boosting Catalonia's spiritual and social capital, rather than as an obstacle to coexistence.

Our recommendations are based on the following criteria:

1. Recognition of people's inherent dignity.
2. Respect for the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and worship.
3. Respect for the right to practise religion in public (social) life.
4. Respect for the right to not subscribe to a religious faith.
5. Respect for religious diversity.
6. Prioritisation of the common good over any individual practice detrimental thereto.
7. Secularity or the separation of political power and religious beliefs, and a distinction between the public sphere (that which everyone shares) and the private sphere (that which concerns an individual or free associations of individuals).

These recommendations are for different areas of society:

### 6.1. Educational institutions

Educational institutions are a medium through which different groups interact. They have a critical role in moulding tomorrow's society and we regard them as an essential factor in harmonious coexistence between the various religious and spiritual traditions. We thus recommend that they:

1. Report comprehensively on levels of understanding where current religious diversity is concerned.
2. Actively work to do away with negative prejudices and stereotypes.
3. Adapt to diversity, recognising equal rights; identify religious traditions'

shared values; and highlight religions' contribution to the development of democratic societies.

4. Combat the symbolic and religious illiteracy that hinders people's understanding of cultural works.
5. Promote a cooperation and dialogue-based approach to organising centres so as to prevent or resolve interreligious and intercultural conflicts.
6. Foster diversity among students so that they come to regard it as the norm.

## **6.2. The media**

The media has a key role to play where the sound management of Catalonia's religious and spiritual diversity is concerned. In addition to its duty to report truthfully, it must deal respectfully with society's religious diversity. It is our understanding that many people's perception of religious traditions is shaped by media coverage thereof. We therefore recommend that the media:

1. Portray religions with the utmost respect and dignity, avoiding caricature at all times.
2. Be particularly respectful towards Catalonia's religious minorities, giving prominence to their diversity and their integration into society.
3. Present diversity as an opportunity, highlighting examples of coexistence and mutual cooperation.

## **6.3. Public administration bodies**

Public administration bodies exist to serve the population and the principle of equity is a cornerstone of their work. Their goals include making life easier for members of the public and reinforcing harmonious coexistence in society. We therefore recommend that such bodies:

1. Have a register of religious organisations (presently exclusive to Spain's Ministry of Justice).

2. Update the 1980 Constitutional Law on freedom of religion to reflect the changes and needs that modern-day society is experiencing.
3. Establish municipal, autonomous community and national religious diversity boards, as independent bodies whose decisions are not legally binding, which reflect the diversity in society and offer guidance on conflict prevention and resolution.
4. Establish a House of Religions, a medium for interaction on an equal footing between the different religious and spiritual options.
5. Reinforce new religious communities' integration into Catalonia's culture and adaptation to the Catalan language.<sup>1</sup>
6. Familiarise specialists, mediators and members of different faiths with the various religious traditions present in Catalonia through training.
7. Strengthen campaigns that portray diversity as an opportunity to enrich Catalonia's culture and intangible heritage, and develop initiatives that champion human life and dignity.
8. Circulate the guides to respecting religious diversity which the Government of Catalonia's Directorate-General for Religious Affairs has produced since it began its activity. The guides in question deal with funerals (*Guia per al respecte a la diversitat de creences en l'àmbit funerari*), hospitals (*Guia per al respecte a la pluralitat religiosa en l'àmbit hospitalari*), cemeteries (*Guia per a la gestió de la diversitat religiosa en l'àmbit dels cementiris*), jails (*Guia per al respecte a la diversitat de creences en l'àmbit penitenciari*) and schools (*Guia per a la gestió de la diversitat religiosa als centres educatius*).
9. Oppose all types of fanaticism that might be severely detrimental to democracy and to respect for people's civil liberties.
10. Produce a guide to best practices in managing religious diversity in the public sphere, drawing on activities deemed successful on the basis of empirical findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Catalonia's law on integration.

## 6.4. Work organisations

Work organisations are a medium for interaction between different groups, as well as for integration and the creation of value. In our view, it is essential that religious diversity be managed properly within such organisations if Catalonia is to perform well in terms of its production and economic activity. We therefore recommend:

1. Creating advisory boards comprising members of cultural minorities to nurture diversity policies. There should be some form of incentive for companies to have such boards.
2. Encouraging the various groups to organise themselves so as to identify workers' requirements and demands.
3. Promoting training to raise awareness of the management and benefits of cultural diversity in the workplace, emphasising that such training is key to reducing conflicts and, moreover, boosts competitiveness.
4. That public administration bodies promote a directory of multicultural businesses, bearing in mind that having a multicultural workforce gives companies a modern image.
5. Developing an integration plan for newly-arrived workers.
6. That public administration bodies establish support measures to counteract historical discrimination, given that certain groups are underrepresented in the labour market, particularly in positions of responsibility.

## 6.5. Healthcare institutions<sup>2</sup>

Healthcare institutions apply the principle of non-exclusion and are thus open to people of all religious or spiritual backgrounds. To achieve sound management of diversity in such institutions, we recommend:

1. Respecting people's fundamental rights, with particular emphasis on

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<sup>2</sup> The recommendations in this section are taken from the guide to respecting religious diversity in hospitals (*Guia per al respecte a la pluralitat religiosa en l'àmbit hospitalari*) produced by the Government of Catalonia's Directorate-General for Religious Affairs. The guide is available (in Catalan) from [www.gencat.cat/afersreligiosos](http://www.gencat.cat/afersreligiosos).



those who are ill.

2. Paying special attention to every individual's religious affiliation with a view to comforting them at extremely sensitive times, bearing in mind that poor health makes people feel particularly vulnerable.
3. Applying the Government of Catalonia's Charter of Citizens' Health and Healthcare-related Rights and Duties.

## 7. Conclusion

For Catalonia to reach full maturity, the different cultural, ideological and religious identities (be they personal or collective) present in its society must share their human and spiritual wealth rather than compete with one another. In this document, we have sought to show that this involves, on one hand, the assimilation of a positive form of secularity by civil government bodies, which have to ensure that all religious communities enjoy equal rights and opportunities; and, on the other, interaction and cooperation between religious communities in society.

The diversity in which we live, the product of globalisation, is one of the greatest challenges facing us at present. Government institutions, all individuals and the religious communities to which they belong have a role to play in ensuring that the diversity in question gives rise not to conflicts, suspicion and tension, but to an opportunity to create a society that is richer and more inclusive in human and spiritual terms, one capable of integrating the values of every religious faith and identity into the common cause of the human community. Doing so will pave the way for the development of identities that are porous rather than impermeable, which are able to coexist and even evolve together.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to make it possible, within a secular legal framework that guarantees full equality, for religious communities to live together and share the wisdom they have acquired over the millennia, with each individual championing the rights and duties of others as if they were their own.

Barcelona, December 2011

## 8. Appendix: essential vocabulary

**Acculturation:** in sociology, this term refers to an exchange of cultural traits between two or more culturally distinct groups after they have come into contact with one another, resulting in new behavioural patterns in each group without the differences between them ceasing to exist.

**Civil religion:** a term coined by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and subsequently developed by the American sociologist Robert Bellah. It refers to a nation's pre-eminent, universal religion, which is evident in a people's shared beliefs and expressed through symbols and rituals that transcend any single religious group.

**Freedom of religion:** a principle set out in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which everyone may manifest their religious beliefs in teaching, practice, worship and observance, either alone or with others, and in public or private; change their religious beliefs; and choose to have no religious beliefs at all.

**Globalisation:** first used in relation to the economy, this term refers to the worldwide circulation of ideas, groups of people, fashions and beliefs. The phenomenon entails the acculturation of social and cultural groups, causing the transformation of individual societies.

**Hermetic community:** the result of a specific religious group adopting an exclusivist, self-referential attitude, setting it apart from the common interests of the society to which it belongs.

**Interreligious dialogue:** the process of two or more religious groups strengthening the ties between them, learning more about each other and working together. Interreligious dialogue also entails intra-religious dialogue within each participating group.

**Open society:** a society-related ideal developed by the philosophers Henri Bergson and Karl Popper. An open society's government is responsive and tolerant, and its political mechanisms are based on flexibility and transparency.

**Public sphere:** physical and/or conceptual social space in which a society's members exercise their duties as citizens and negotiations concerning different social groups' political, economic and identity-related interests take place.

**Religious community:** in sociology, this term refers to a group of people in a given area who can be identified on the basis of the religious beliefs they share, forming a distinguishable group whose world view, customs and ethics are firmly established.

**Religious diversity / pluralism:** in the context of sociology, this term refers to the diversity of the religions present within a given society. In the context of politics, it refers to an aspect of states' social organisation which guarantees that different religious subjects / elements can coexist without losing their specific identity.

**Religious faith:** in the context of the world's different religions, this term refers to a specific religious group that has developed over time, emphasising beliefs, practices and aspects of doctrine that distinguish it from other groups.

**Secularism:** a political concept related to secularity. It advocates a society's religious affairs being restricted to the private sphere and, thus, kept out of the public sphere.

**Secularity:** a modern political concept that advocates society being politically organised in such a way that politics and religion are clearly separate. Secularity can take different forms and may be characterised by separatism, authoritarianism, anticlericalism or recognition, among other things.

**Social actor:** an individual (e.g. a parent, an educator, a religious leader) who or institution (e.g. a school, a religious community) that actively contributes to people's integration into their society.

## RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD

### **The Board's functions**

The Religious Diversity Advisory Board's functions are established in article 62 of Decree 184/2013 of 25 June on the restructuring of the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Governance and Institutional Relations:

*The composition, functions and legal system of the Religious Diversity Advisory Board, which was established under Decree 326/2011 of 26 April as a collegial body to advise the ministry with jurisdiction over religious affairs on the implementation of policies on such affairs and related to the different churches, faiths and religious communities active in Catalonia, are as envisaged herein.*

*The functions of the Religious Diversity Advisory Board are to:*

- a) Advise or report to the minister in charge of the Government of Catalonia's ministry with jurisdiction over religious affairs on any questions it is posed.*
- b) Propose such measures or approaches as it deems appropriate as far as relations with the different churches, faiths and religious communities active in Catalonia are concerned.*
- c) Provide, at the request of the minister in charge of the Government of Catalonia's ministry with jurisdiction over religious affairs, advice on and support in collaborative or cooperative relations involving the participation of the Government or Parliament of Catalonia in Spanish state institutions or international organisations.*

### **The Board's composition**

In its first 2 years of activity, the Religious Diversity Advisory Board has comprised 11 people and been chaired by Dr. Francesc Torralba i Roselló.

### **Francesc Torralba i Roselló**

(Barcelona, 1967) Holder of a PhD in philosophy from the University of Barcelona and another in theology from the Faculty of Theology of Catalonia. He lectures in history of contemporary philosophy and philosophical anthropology at Ramon Llull University in Barcelona, where he is director of the Ethos Chair in applied ethics. He alternates his teaching activity with his work as a writer, and is also a member of a number of ethics committees. In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI made him an adviser to the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Culture.

He publishes in a range of specialised journals and regularly appears in the media. Over the course of his career he has received various awards for essays written in Catalan and has published more than 70 philosophy books on highly diverse topics. He is essentially interested in making profound yet clear philosophy accessible to the general public.

### **Maria Teresa Areces Piñol**

(Lleida, 1956) Holder of a PhD in law from the University of Barcelona. She is currently professor of state ecclesiastical law and secretary general of the Faculty of Law and Economics at the University of Lleida, having previously been the Faculty's dean for 12 years. She is a former member of the Board of Governors of the Government of Catalonia's Institute for Autonomous Community Studies. She has focused her research on freedom of religion, family law, canon law, relations between religious faiths and the public authorities, and conscientious objection. Her numerous publications notably include a book entitled *El principio de laicidad en las jurisprudencias española y francesa* [The Principle of Secularity in Spanish and French Case Law], and she is currently working on a book on the prohibition of the burka in Europe and Spain. She has been Lleida's municipal comptroller.

### **Lena de Botton Fernández**

(Barcelona, 1976) Holder of a PhD in sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Sociological Theory, Philosophy of Law and Social Science

Methodology at the University of Barcelona, as well as coordinator of the Interreligious Dialogue Group in the same university's Centre for Research into Theories and Practices for Overcoming Inequalities (CREA). Her lines of research revolve around immigration, cultural identity, female immigrants, interreligious dialogue and inclusive schools. Her work on Muslim women's contributions to international feminist discourse is of particular note.

### **Miquel Calsina Buscà**

(Torroella de Montgrí, 1970) Holder of a degree in political and administrative studies from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and of a diploma in religious studies from the Faculty of Theology of Catalonia. He lectures in political science and sociology in Ramon Llull University's Faculty of Communication and International Relations, and also teaches at the Barcelona Institute of Religious Studies. He is director of the Jordi Pujol Study Centre and *VIA. Values, Ideas, Attitudes*, its journal on contemporary social thought. A member of the Joan Maragall Foundation's Board of Trustees, he has coordinated the publication of various collective works, including *Religions i espiritualitat en un món en crisi* [Religions and Spirituality in a World in Crisis], *Valors útils per a la Catalunya del futur* [Useful Values for the Catalonia of the Future] and *Catalunya, reptes ètics* [Catalonia: Ethical Challenges].

### **Lluís Duch i Álvarez**

(Barcelona, 1936) Holder of a PhD in anthropology and theology from the University of Tübingen. He is an emeritus professor in the Faculty of Communication Studies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, in the Sant Fructuós de Tarragona Institute of Religious Studies, and in the Abbey of Montserrat, where he has been a monk since 1961. He has studied the different languages of the symbolic and mythical universes, and their manifestation in modern everyday life. He has translated texts penned by Luther, Müntzer, Silesius, Schleiermacher and Bonhoeffer to Catalan and Spanish. He is the author of more than 50 books and opuscles, and of over 300 articles and contributions to collective works.

**Francesc Xavier Marín i Torné**

(Gironella, 1963) Holder of a PhD in philosophy and a diploma in religious studies. An expert in Islam and the Islamic culture and civilisation, he lectures at Ramon Llull University, where he is the Identity and Intercultural Dialogue research group's principal investigator. He also lectures at the Institutes of Religious Studies of Barcelona and Vic, as well as on a number of postgraduate and master's degree courses on immigration, intercultural education and development in Africa. He has been a guest lecturer on Islam at the University of Barcelona and the Autonomous University of Barcelona. He is secretary of the Interfaith Association for the Study of Religion (FAR), and an honorary member of the ETHNOS and ORIGENS associations.

**Xavier Melloni i Ribas**

(Barcelona, 1962) A Jesuit with a PhD in theology and a degree in cultural anthropology. He is a member of the Christianity and Justice Study Centre, as well as a lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of Catalonia and the Sant Cugat Institute of Fundamental Theology. He was a member of the Advisory Board to the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona. He lives in and participates in the work of the Cova de Sant Ignasi Spiritual Centre in Manresa. He is the author of a number of publications on subjects such as theology, mysticism, interreligious dialogue and Ignatian spirituality.

**Yaratullah Monturiol i Virgili**

(Barcelona, 1961) A scholar of Islam and the Koran. She embraced Islam in 1985 and has lectured on topics related to the religion in question, women, spirituality, interreligious dialogue and interculturalism since 1994. She cofounded and, between 1994 and 2001, chaired Catalonia's first community of Muslim women. She has also been deputy chair of the UNESCO Association for Interreligious Dialogue (2001-2009) and Spain's representative in the European Muslim Network (2000-2010), an organisation led by Tariq Ramadan. In 2008, she and Asma Lamrabet cofounded the International Group for Studies and Reflection on Women and Islam (GIERFI). She has published various books, articles and contributions to collective works.



### **Nathalie Reverdin Effront**

(Watermael Boitsfort, Brabant, Belgium, 1958) Holder of a degree in protestant theology from the University of Geneva. As a resident of Catalonia between 1985 and 2011, she worked for the Evangelical Church of Catalonia in the Rubí and Clot communities. She chaired the UNESCO Association for Interreligious Dialogue from 2000 to 2010. She has contributed to various journals (including *Qüestions de Vida Cristiana*, *Foc Nou* and *Dialogal*) and appeared on Radio Rubí. She currently lives in the Swiss canton of Valais.

### **Joan-Andreu Rocha Scarpetta**

(Bogota, 1965) A historian with a PhD in the history of religions. Vice dean of journalism at Abat Oliba University. Director of and lecturer on the church, ecumenism and religions master's degree programme at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome. Guest lecturer at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and the University of Tehran. His areas of specialisation revolve around communication processes in interreligious relations, the media and religions, and religious journalism.

### **Xavier Rubert de Ventós**

(Barcelona, 1939) A philosopher, politician, essayist and lecturer with a degree in law and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Barcelona. He is the author of a great many essays and philosophical writings on aesthetics, culture theory, practical philosophy (ethics and political philosophy) and general philosophy. He has been professor of aesthetics and composition at the Barcelona School of Architecture, and a member of both the Spanish and European Parliaments.

He has received numerous awards, including the Government of Catalonia's *Creu de Sant Jordi* (one of Catalonia's highest civil distinctions), the *Lletra d'Or* Award for Catalan literature and the City of Barcelona Award for literature. He has been a member of the Dignity Commission (which seeks the return to their rightful owners of documents confiscated by the Franco regime), and is currently a senior fellow of the Philosophy and Social Sciences Section of the Institute for Catalan Studies, as well as president of the Barcelona Institute of Humanities.







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