

Press Release

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2008 Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue

Strasbourg, 31.03.2008 - The "Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue" will take place on Tuesday 8 April at the *Palais de l'Europe* (Room 1) in Strasbourg. This experimental event – which aims to promote and strengthen the Council of Europe's fundamental values and to foster mutual respect, recognition, tolerance and understanding in European society – will focus on:

"Teaching religious and convictional facts – A tool for acquiring knowledge about religions and beliefs in education; a contribution to education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue."

The event will bring together around a hundred participants from across the Council of Europe area, including representatives of religions which are traditionally present in Europe, non-religious beliefs and other sections of civil society – such as international non-governmental organisations, experts and the media – as well as representatives of the Council of Europe's member and observer states.

Fiorenzo Stolfi, the Foreign Minister of San Marino who will chair the event on behalf of the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis will open the 2008 Exchange at 9am. Discussions will subsequently focus on 2 main issues:

1. Education, democratic citizenship and the religious dimension
 - Principles, concepts and aims of the educational sphere
 - Relations between schools, the State and religions in Europe – examples of good practice
2. Teaching religious and convictional facts: challenges and prospects
 - Challenges in the organisation and functioning of educational establishments
 - Challenges in teacher training

Professor Jean-Paul Willaime, General Rapporteur, and Foreign Minister Stolfi will respectively draw the analytical and political conclusions of the Exchange during the closing session at 5.30pm.

The opening and closing sessions will be **open to the press**.

Fiorenzo Stolfi will also present a special stamp to mark the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue at 2pm on Tuesday 8 April in the ante-room of the Committee of Ministers (**open to the press**).

Further information is available at www.coe.int

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