

European Council of Religious Leaders

 Religions for Peace

ECRL News Updates – December 2025

Message from our new President

Dear members of the ECRL!

It was a great honour and pleasure to be elected President of the ECRL in September at our meeting in Oslo. Thank you very much for your trust!

I am proud that ECRL has been in continuous operation since 2002. It is often challenging to find ways to promote constructive interaction between religions in a diverse and busy Europe. Therefore, there are many reasons to be pleased that ECRL is keeping operations going, even at times when polarisation is growing, hate speech is on the increase, and withdrawal is tempting. I hope and believe that 2025 will give us the opportunity to contribute constructively to a more peaceful future, where people respect diversity and celebrate differences, and interact in peaceful dialogue and cooperation.



This autumn, I have been able to talk about ECRL in several contexts. Both at home in Norway and in Europe. Hope grows in people when I talk about the Council and its composition. Many people do not know that religious leaders meet to build bridges and bring together people of different faiths to work for peace in local communities and wider societies. I think an important point for us in the future is to make more people aware of the Council's activities, so that more people understand that religion and faith can be strong forces for developing diverse and peaceful communities.

Last week, we bishops of the Church of Norway were invited to the Kings Palace. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess hosted a lunch for us, and they were eager to hear about current topics, and I was able to present ECRL. The Royal Highnesses expressed great confidence in such a council and gave their best wishes to me and to us, and encouraged us to work hard to ensure that peace and unity can characterize Europe to a greater extent than it does today.

That is my prayer for the ECRL. That we are seen as offering an important contribution to more peaceful times and places throughout all of Europe.

Wishing a merry Christmas to everyone who celebrates, and a peaceful new year to all of us when 2025 arrives!

Kari Mangrud Alvsvåg

**Bishop
President - European Council of Religious Leaders**

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Members' Activities

Youth, Faith, and Peace

We are grateful to Gandharvika Prema Dasi for representing ECRL at the event 'Young Voices of Hope in Times of Division', held in Warsaw on the 3rd October. This was a side event which was part of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2024, and saw ECRL partner with KAICIID and the Muslim Jewish Leadership Council (MJLC), with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The aim of the event was to offer an interreligious contribution to the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda by addressing worrying trends in antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred and the increase of hate speech. At the conference, Gandharvika Prema Dasi, emphasized the importance of spiritual values in addressing the challenges facing today's youth. The side event featured insights from various other religious leaders and youth representatives, on the crucial roles young people can play on addressing the key challenges we face in Europe today.



Gandharvika Prema Dasi serves as the Chief Communications Officer of the Hungarian Society for Krishna Consciousness, a role she has held since 2014. She joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in 1995 and has since been deeply involved in its activities. Her work includes establishing Food for Life food relief program as an NGO in Hungary in 1999. She has been a member of the European Council of Religious Leaders since 2022.

<https://iskconnews.org/youth-faith-and-peace-iskcons-role-at-the-osce-conference/>

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Interreligious Responses to Migration and Community Cohesion

On December 3rd Imam Yahya Pallavicini and ECRL Secretary General Professor Mark Owen represented ECRL at an event held in the European Parliament in Brussels on 'Promoting Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Migrant Inclusion: An Interreligious Perspective'. The event was held in partnership with KAICIID and sponsored by Ms. Lidia Pereira, Member of the European Parliament, Portugal. The discussion explored the pivotal role religious leaders and actors can and do play in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by migration, and efforts to manage the impact of population change on social and community cohesion. This process and engagement with the European Parliament is a direct development of the European Policy Dialogue Forums (EPDF), which ECRL have been partnering with KAICIID on over the last four years.

Imam Pallavicini offered insights and perspectives from the Italian context, and outlined some of the important work his community, and Muslim and religious networks, have been undertaking to support migrants and host communities. Professor Owen highlighted some of the lessons learned from research in this area, including the added benefits of multistakeholder partnerships, and the crucial roles religious leaders and communities play in supporting the integration of migrants into society and communities. The importance of the role multi and interreligious networks was also noted, as they can often help migrants build bridges and networks outside their immediate religious and ethnic communities.

Imam Yahya Pallavicini is Imam of al-Wahid central mosque in Milan, and Vice President of COREIS the Islamic Religious Community ITALY (www.coreis.it), one of the main Italian Islamic organization providing theological training, interreligious dialogue and intercultural education, and advocacy for Muslim religious needs with the Italian Government and the European Institutions. Imam Pallavicini is also Chairman of EULEMA the European Muslim Scholars Council (Brussels, www.eulema.org) and has served as advisor for Islam to the Italian Ministry of Interiors from 2005 to 2018. Imam Pallavicini has been a member of ECRL since 2010.



As a Council it would be great if we can share more of our members activities with each other. We plan to send out more regular newsletters showcasing the excellent work our members are doing in a range of areas. Whilst we understand that first and foremost members are often invited to engagements to represent their respective communities and organisations, please, if possible, also represent ECRL. If we want to increase the effectiveness and impact of our work, we need members to help increase the profile of the Council. Thank you! We are also working hard to increase opportunities for members to attend events on our behalf.

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ECRL Membership

After a recent review of membership, we currently have approximately 20 active members of the Council, out of a possible 42. As a result, it is a priority for 2025 to recruit new members to strengthen the Council. As you know, we amended the recruitment process last year to enable any member to suggest possible candidates, which can be put forward to the nominations committee. If you have any recommendations for members, please forward to Mark and Rebecca. The President and Vice Presidents will be reviewing suggestions in the New Year. Thank you.

Council Meetings

It is our plan to hold 3 online council meetings, and one in-person annual meeting in 2025. The first online meeting will be in February, and we will be in touch early in the New Year to confirm a date. At the last annual meeting Mufti Grabus kindly said he would explore the possibility of holding the 2025 Annual Meeting in Sarajevo, in late May. We are working on confirming dates and location and will be in touch with more information as soon as possible.

Season's Greetings!!

Thank you to Council members for all your hard work and support in 2024, and look forward to an even better 2025, and carrying on the excellent work of the Council. We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and/or holiday, and extremely prosperous and peaceful New Year.

