

EIN Seminar
“Meeting of Transatlantic Group”
18 July 2013
Washington DC

Roundtable – Transatlantic dialogue in values

Ignacio IBANEZ, Rapporteur (Strategic Studies Group of Spain - GEES)

The session was chaired by **Mr. Jan Olbrycht MEP** (PL). Mr. Olbrycht made three introductory points to the roundtable. First, he started by signaling that when talking about “values” we are referring to universal values, not only Western values, because of the importance of agreeing on a minimum set of principles to avoid instability and other societal risks worldwide. Secondly, he stressed the importance of the principle of subsidiarity when addressing family matters. And thirdly, he alluded to the discrimination that Christians suffer, even in the European Union nowadays.

The next speaker, **Mr. Jaime Mayor Oreja MEP** (ES), circulated a document to be considered by the Transatlantic Group. The document proposed an agreement over ten points on the defense of the universality of human dignity. This Decalogue included an introduction describing the main threats to human dignity that need to be confronted, especially relativism. It also detailed what the role of the Transatlantic Group should be in this battle of ideas and how it should be strategically structured moving forward. Mr. Mayor Oreja referred to the Decalogue itself, which includes, as he pointed out, ideas that aim to bring both sides of the Atlantic together against relativism—e.g. life is at the center of the law and abortion cannot be considered as a right; life needs to be defended since conception; family must be at the center of any strategy to overcome the current crisis in values in our societies; marriage can only be defined as a union between a man and a woman; parents have the right to choose their children’s education; work is a key element of human dignity; euthanasia cannot be considered a right; the principle of objection of conscience must be protected and religious freedom defended. Mr. Mayor Oreja concluded by identifying certain organizational issues—e.g. offices, board of trustees, exchange of information, partnerships at different levels, launching and financing the initiative—that could help backstop the Decalogue and the efforts of the Transatlantic Group in this regard.

Congressman Chris Smith followed in taking the floor. He started by pointing out that the attacks on values in the United States are very similar to those in Europe. As the current U.S. administration is adamantly pro-abortion and pro-gay rights, he argued, there is a strong need

to counter these efforts with a sound pro-life strategy. Congressman Smith alluded to his vast experience, both at the national and international level, in this common endeavor of the protection of values and reaffirmed his commitment to it. He concluded by mentioning that the U.S. has made some substantial progress on pro-life measures at the State level and that defunding organizations that support pro-abortion measures should be at the center of any successful strategy.

Mr. Luis Tellez, Officer of the Board of The Witherspoon Institute, focused on the need to engage the academic community and how the Witherspoon Institute is trying to achieve it through different programs in several universities and with the collaboration of a number of scholars. As a result, the Witherspoon Institute has produced academic studies that scientifically prove, for instance, the importance of preserving traditional family structures to appropriately raise children.

Next to take the floor was **Mr. Pat Fagan**, Senior Fellow and Director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI.) Mr. Fagan started by describing MARRI's two main projects. The first one produces models and analysis on the social impact of changing traditional family structures, as well as the impact of religious practices. MARRI's studies show that the future of welfare States depends on having an increase in the number of young marriages. The second project shows, through data and findings obtained under sound academic methodologies, the importance of Natural Law—and the continuum God-Marriage-Fertility—in our societies.

Mr. Austin Ruse, President of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (CFAM), explained the advocacy work CFAM does, especially at the different specialized fora of the United Nations. Opponents of traditional values, Mr. Ruse underlined, were becoming increasingly frustrated because the “Cairo Declaration” and other international agreements on “reproductive rights and health” were not being implemented thanks to the efforts of actors such as CFAM. Additionally, other victories for the defenders of traditional values had been claimed at the international level on sexual orientation and gender identity. Finally, Mr. Ruse stressed that strong partnerships had been created between CFAM and some European partners, subsequently turning into successful collaborative models for NGOs from both sides of the Atlantic.

The next panelist to take the floor was **Mr. Thomas F. Farr**, Visiting Associate Professor of the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University. Mr. Farr explained to the audience that the rationale behind the creation of the “Religious Freedom Project” of the Berkley Center of Georgetown University was to fill a gap, as no organization was paying enough attention to the

“religious freedom” in the world issue. According to Mr. Farr, this lack of attention is worrying as PEW polls show that 75% of world population lives in countries where there is no or little religious freedom. Additionally, social hostility towards religion is rapidly growing both in Europe and the U.S.—e.g. cases such as the Affordable Care Act, which includes provisions contrary to religious freedom. However, Mr. Farr argued that we need to be optimistic and counter the assumption that “it is not legitimate to bring religious beliefs to the public square.” This privatization of religion must be overcome. To conclude, Mr. Farr emphasized the importance that popular culture has in complementing political efforts—movies, music and social media need to be a part of an overall strategy to win the hearts and minds of society over the importance of traditional values.

Mr. Brian Brown, as its President, explained that the fundamental mission of the National Organization for Marriage is to protect marriage at the political level—e.g. through State ballots initiatives. In this regard, he explained the successes registered in the last year in several States, such as North Carolina, and underlined the importance of taking the experience and practices that led to those successes to the federal level. Mr. Brown made three additional recommendations: (i) an international agreement should be reached on what the strategical route map for success should be; (ii) we should take stock of international best practices—especially in the U.S. and Europe—to see what is working and what is not; and (iii) initiatives should be advanced to encourage discursive consistency amongst relevant stakeholders—i.e. political groups and churches.

The last speaker of the panel was **Mr. David Lejeune**, Member of the Board of Directors of the Jerome Lejeune Foundation in the USA. Mr. Lejeune explained the mission, objectives and activities of his Foundation, and the importance that our societies should give to defending life. Additionally, he described how French society has massively taken the streets in the past few months to protect marriage and the conclusions that could be extracted from this experience—i.e. the need to focus on the message, and how to organize to appropriately convey it to a larger audience. Based on these efforts, Mr. Lejeune underlined the importance of exchanging information and good practices between Europe and the U.S. to effectively advocate for our common values and reach our common goals.

In the Q&A session that followed the panel, the members of the Transatlantic Group exchanged ideas on a wide range of topics, including: the Decalogue and its implementation, as proposed by Mr. Mayor Oreja; lessons learnt from Latin-America; the need to develop collaborative networks; the importance of focusing on the message; how personal stories and their narrative need to support academic research to enhance the impact of campaigns; how foreign aid is being misused—e.g. by funding gay-rights and pro-abortion lobbies and groups; the need to

focus on children and a healthy demography to overcome current social problems; and the need to reflect on how we protect religious freedom so as not to end up protecting religions that are intolerant and intrinsically opposed to human dignity.