



PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEST CLUSTER ON SECULARIZATION IN EUROPE

1. SUMMARY

The present proposal was prepared by the Faculty of Theology – Loyola University Andalusia ¹ and included changes recommended by the Kircher Council. The Council approved the proposal as a HEST common initiative to be developed by the network.

It is proposed to establish a new HEST group that will focus on developing research on secularization in Europe. An interdisciplinary approach and a comparative perspective of the secularization phenomenon in Europe will be stressed. Likewise, the analysis of the relationships and possible contributions of spirituality and religion to the pluralistic and democratic dimensions of European societies will be addressed. The group will also seek to transfer their research results to civil societies, especially to the pastoral works of the Jesuit provinces and other Catholic pastoral works.

The group will comprise researchers from different disciplines (Theology, Philosophy, Sociology and Political Science) of the Kircher Network member institutions who work on secularization.

In light of the first and third universal apostolic preferences (UAPs) and the GC 26 decree 2 on promoting collaboration inside and outside the Society of Jesus, collaboration and communication with the pastoral sector of Jesuit provinces will be promoted.

2. OBJECTIVES

Major research topics to be addressed by the HEST group during the next two or three years.

- Research on the multiple secularities present in Europe.
- Research on the best ways and lessons learned in transmitting faith in the different contexts of secularized societies present in Europe.

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- Research on the possibilities and limits of secularization as a social phenomenon.
- Research on how religion/spirituality can be in the public sphere as a contribution to a democratic and pluralistic society.

The work of this group could be closely connected with the one that the HEST cluster on Christian-Muslim relations is developing on an intellectual framework about the place of religions in pluralistic societies.

3. MAJOR ACTIVITIES TO BE DEVELOPED

- Meetings (in-person and virtual) for the organization of the group and periodical meetings for developing the research projects.
- Field research, visits and survey on the practices of transmitting faith in the Jesuit pastoral works in Europe.
- Generate quality research on the topic.
- Transference of knowledge to civil society, especially to Jesuit pastoral works.

The scholars presently interested in the topic are very much focused on high level academically recognized research. However, there is a demand from the Society of Jesus for such a group to be connected and collaborate with structures in the different province doing pastoral work in different fields.

Therefore, the work of a group in this field could answer at the same time to the first apostolic preference (showing the way to God) and the third one (journeying with youth).

4. MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS EXPECTED

- Research
- Symposium
- Publications:
 - i. Articles and conferences proceedings.
 - ii. Books (both in paper and E-book format).
 - iii. Other publications agreed by the group.

- Organizing seminars and workshops to present and discuss the research results with the JCEP, pastoral agents, and other key audiences.
- Publishing briefing reports and informative materials on the major research findings. These documents would seek to disseminate the results among pastoral agents and be written in a non-academic language and format.

2. FACULTY MEMBERS NEEDED

Number and the academic profile of faculty members that would be required from each institution that decides to join the project:

- A group of six or seven researchers would be a good number for establishing the group. The group would be interdisciplinary and would require researchers with an academic background in political philosophy, theology, sociology, political science, etc.