

## AMENDMENT FORM

### Suggestion for amendment of Article : 37

By Mr: Esko Helle

Status: - Alternate

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*[Delete Article 37]*

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### **Explanation:**

1. The principle of participatory democracy included in article 34 covers religion, churches and similar organisations.

Churches and religious organisations form a part of the civil society.

2. Article 10, paragraph 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights includes sufficient provisions on the subject:

"1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance." In addition, article 21 of the Charter prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion. Article 22 states further that the Union shall respect religious diversity.

3. Basic rights and liberties are not fully guaranteed in the activities of churches.

If churches and religious organisations are guaranteed extensive privileges in the Constitutional Treaty, violations of the principle of equality as well as violations of other basic rights and liberties that occur within churches and religious organisations are deemed to be accepted. The special status given to churches and religious organizations gives them a continued right to infringe the basic rights and liberties of citizens. A large majority of religious organizations and churches do not recognize equality between men and women in

the way they work. Many religious organizations repress their members and in practice limit the exercise of their civil rights.

4. Wars have been fought and continue to be fought in the name of religion.

Religion is not the main or real reason of a war in most cases. Nevertheless, religion is used as a method of discrimination and incitement. The existence of the proposed article would create a possible new source for such misuse of religion. Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Iraq are horrible examples of acts of violence performed in the name of religion.

5. Giving the religion undue emphasis in the society and politics leads unavoidably to repression, discrimination as well as to psychological violence and even quite often to physical violence.