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[Home](#) > Council of Europe approves resolution against creationism

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## **[Council of Europe approves resolution against creationism](#)** [3]

On October 4, 2007, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly approved a [resolution](#) [4] urging its member governments to oppose the teaching of creationism as science. The resolution, entitled "The dangers of creationism in education," states, "Today creationist ideas are tending to find their way into Europe and their spread is affecting quite a few Council of Europe member states," observing, "The prime target of present-day creationists, most of whom are Christian or Muslim, is education. Creationists are bent on ensuring that their ideas are included in the school science syllabus. Creationism cannot, however, lay claim to being a scientific discipline." Included is "intelligent design," which is described as "the latest, more refined version of creationism" and "presented in a more subtle way."

The resolution recognizes the importance of evolutionary theory in the modern world -- "Denying it could have serious consequences for the development of our societies. Advances in medical research with the aim of effectively combating infectious diseases such as AIDS are impossible if every principle of evolution is denied. One cannot be fully aware of the risks involved in the significant decline in biodiversity and climate change if the mechanisms of evolution are not understood" -- and accordingly concludes, "The teaching of all phenomena concerning evolution as a fundamental scientific theory is therefore crucial to the future of our societies and our democracies. For that reason it must occupy a central position in the curriculum, and especially in the science syllabus, as long as, like any other theory, it is able to stand up to thorough scientific scrutiny."

Acknowledging the religious roots of creationism, the resolution begins by emphasizing, "The aim of this report is not to question or to fight a belief ... The aim is to warn against certain tendencies to pass off a belief as science," and notes that religious leaders (including Pope Benedict XVI and his predecessor Pope John Paul II) have not endorsed creationism. But, the resolution continues, "The war on the theory of evolution and on its proponents most often originates in forms of religious extremism which are closely

allied to extreme right-wing political movements ... The fact of the matter, and this has been exposed on several occasions, is that some advocates of strict creationism are out to replace democracy by theocracy."

The resolution ends by calling on the member states of the Council of Europe "to defend and promote scientific knowledge; strengthen the teaching of the foundations of science, its history, its epistemology and its methods alongside the teaching of objective scientific knowledge; to make science more comprehensible, more attractive and closer to the realities of the contemporary world; to firmly oppose the teaching of creationism as a scientific discipline on an equal footing with the theory of evolution and in general resist presentation of creationist ideas in any discipline other than religion; to promote the teaching of evolution as a fundamental scientific theory in the school curriculum" (internal numbering omitted).

The Council of Europe, as a Reuters [story](#) [5] (October 4, 2007) on the adoption of the resolution explains, "oversees human rights standards in member states and enforces decisions of the European Court of Human Rights." The story adds, "The resolution, which passed 48 votes to 25 with 3 abstentions, is not binding on the Council's 47 member states but reflects widespread opposition among politicians to teaching creationism in science class." A [press release](#) [6] about the resolution, a [report](#) [7] containing both the draft resolution and a memorandum providing a lengthy background discussion and explanation of its provisions, a [list](#) [8] of the votes on the resolution, and a [video](#) [9] (in French) of a press conference about it, are available on the Council of Europe's website.

[Anti-Evolution](#) [10]  
[2007](#) [11]  
[International](#) [12]  
[+ read](#) [3]

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[2] <https://ncse.com/users/ncse-staff>  
[3] <https://ncse.com/news/2007/10/council-europe-approves-resolution-against-creationism-001200>  
[4] <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta07/ERES1580.htm>  
[5] <http://uk.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUKL0417855220071004>  
[6] <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Press/StopPressView.asp?ID=1965>  
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[10] <https://ncse.com/news/anti-evolution>  
[11] <https://ncse.com/news/2007>  
[12] <https://ncse.com/news/international>