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## **UKRAINE : 82 Ukrainian academics denounce FECRIS for its links with Moscow**

### **82 Ukrainian academics denounce FECRIS for its links with Moscow**

*On 18 November, Bitter Winter published an article titled "82 Ukrainian Academics Ask France to Stop Supporting the Anti-Cult Federation FECRIS" revealing that virtually all Ukrainian scholars of religion wrote to President Macron denouncing the complicity between Western anti-cultists and their Russian homologues who keep slandering Ukraine*

Emmanuel Macron  
Président de la République Française  
Palais de l'Élysée  
75008 Paris

Kiyv, November 11, 2022

Copy to:

Volodymyr Oleksandrovykh Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine  
Vadym Omeltchenko, Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to France  
Etienne de PONCINS, Ambassador of France in Ukraine

Re: Funding of FECRIS association by France

Dear Mr President,

We are a group of Ukrainian scholars and human rights defenders, most of us currently based in Ukraine. We want to start this letter by saying that we deeply appreciate the help that France is providing to our country, in the most difficult situation that we are facing during these terrible times for our people.

Nevertheless, we would like to draw your attention on the following facts. At the Human Dimension Conference organized by the OSCE in Warsaw, on September 28 and 29, France has been publicly asked by NGOs to stop funding FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sects and Cults), a French umbrella organization that gathers "anti-cult" organizations throughout Europe and is mainly funded by France.

What was reproached as regards FECRIS, besides its discriminatory activities against any religious minorities that they falsely label as "cults", was the fact that for years it has supported its Russian branch, whilst that branch is a key and constant actor in the Kremlin's propaganda against Ukraine, its government and its people.

The French Permanent Representation at OSCE issued a right of reply, and instead of answering on the merits of the criticism, only stated that "FECRIS is an association providing assistance to victims of sectarian aberrations. It is as such that it is supported by the French government, which intends to continue supporting its activities". We deeply regret that the French representation did not take seriously the facts that were denounced during this conference.

Unfortunately, the support of FECRIS to Russian propaganda against Ukraine is very well documented. It started long time ago. Alexander Dvorkin, Vice President of FECRIS from 2009 to 2021 and currently a board member, has been barred from entering Ukraine since 2014, because he was a very rabid anti-Ukrainian propagandist, spreading on Russian State TV that Ukrainian authorities were a bunch of "cult-followers" controlled by cults and the West. He was one of the first calling the Maidan authorities "Neo-Pagans" and "Nazis". Since, he made visits to the self-proclaimed "Luhansk People's Republic" and continued its propaganda against Ukraine there, in addition to Russia.

Alexander Novopashin, an official representative of FECRIS in Russia, is almost every day in Russian medias accusing Ukrainians to be "satanists" to be fought by the Russian troops, and even depicts us as "cannibals", praising the Russian government for the holy fight they are conducting in our territories. He even justified publicly the Russian invasion in Ukraine with these words: "Any disease must be cured, and, alas, if a person has gangrene, you have to take away its hand, and resort to surgical methods."

FECRIS association "the Saratov branch of the Center for Religious Studies", located in Saratov, just after the beginning of the war, published a call to denunciate to them any "provocateur" that would pretend that Russia triggered war, or were advocating for peace, so that they could liaise

with Russian law enforcement agencies to take care of them.

These are only few examples amongst dozens which have been documented.

Now, FECRIS took off their website the names of their Russian associations and are pretending that in fact they would support Ukraine. They don't and those are false pretenses. In fact, per the last documents that they filed to the French authorities, Alexander Dvorkin is still a member of their board of administration. They never distanced themselves from the actions of their Russian members. They never publicly sanctioned Alexander Dvorkin or other Russian members for the evil acts they committed recently and during these last years. To the opposite they supported them whatever they were doing. Now they say on their website that they also have Ukrainian branches as evidence that they would not support the Kremlin propaganda. What they forgot to say, is that they have two associations members of FECRIS in Ukraine, one of them being pro-Russian, and the other one being inactive for a decade while it is well-known for its discriminatory statements against minority religions, and it never publicly distanced itself from the Russian FECRIS.

Additionally, according to reports published by Chinese official sources, as late as July 15, 2022, FECRIS' treasurer Didier Pachoud and his FECRIS affiliate organization GEMPPPI hosted in a conference in Paris Roman Silantyev, one of the Russian anti-cultists who claim that Ukrainian leaders are inspired by "occult and pagan" ideologies, and infiltrate "Satanists" into Russia for purposes of sabotage and terrorism.

That is why we respectfully ask you to make sure that France stops funding such an association which is an enemy of the West and democracy and has worked hand in hand with the Russian authorities against Ukraine. We hope that you will take this letter seriously and will consider its merits. It

might look unimportant, but it's important to realize that Vladimir Putin has now adopted FECRIS theories accusing the West of "Satanism", and that they are part of his state propaganda apparatus.

Thank you very much for your help on this important matter.

Respectfully,

**Anatoly Kolodny**

President of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Chief Scientific Officer, Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy, NASU (National Academy of Science of Ukraine)

**Lyudmila Filipovych**

Vice-president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Philosophy, professor, head of the Department of Philosophy and History of Religion, Institute of Philosophy, NASU

**Alexander Sagan**

Vice-President of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Head of the Department of Religious Studies of the Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Petro Yarotskyi**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, leading scientist. Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy, NASU

**Alla Aristova**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy, NASU

**Vita Tytarenko**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy, NASU

**Pavlo Pavlenko**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Department of Religious

Studies, Institute of Philosophy, NASU

**Oleg Buchma**

Ph.D., Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Dmytro Bazik**

Ph.D., Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Anna Kulagina**

Ph.D., Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Gorkusha Oksana**

Ph.D., Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Serhii Zdioruk**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, head of department Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine

**Viktor Yelenskyi**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, head of the scientific department of the Institute of Ethnopolitics of NASU

**Oleksandr Utkin**

Doctor of History, Prof.

**Petro Mazur**

Ph.D. Doctor of Medicine, director of the Kremenets Medical School

**Leonid Vyhovskyi**

Doctor of Philosophy, head of department of philosophy, Khmelnytskyi University of Management and Law, head of the UAR of Khmelnytskyi (Ukrainian Academy of Religious Studies)

**Vitaly Dokash**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, head of UAR Chernivtsi.

**Eduard Martyniuk**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Assoc. professor, ONU (Odesa National University)

**Tetiana Gavrylyuk**

Doctor of Philosophy, Academy of Statistics

**Vitaliy Matveev**

Doctor of Philosophy, head of department, University of Bioresources

**Ella Bystrytska**

Doctor of Science, professor, head of the department, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University

**Olena Nikitchenko**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor, Odesa Academy

**Volodymyr Lubsky**

Doctor of Philosophy, prof.

**Tatyana Gorbachenko**

Doctor of Philosophy, prof.

**Ihor Kozlovsky**

Ph.D. Doctor of sciences, associate professor of science, Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Lesya Skubko**

Member of UARR

**Iryna Fenno**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Assoc. prof. of religious studies of KNU (Kiev National University)

**Iryna Klimuk**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophical Sciences

**Nadia Stokolos**

Dr. Doctor of History, Prof.

**Olga Gold**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Assoc., Odesa

**Mykhailo Murashkin**

Dr. Ph.D., prof. Dnipro, Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, head of the UAR of the Dnipro Oblast

**Evgeny Kononenko**

Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

**Oksana Vynnychenko**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, USA

**Serhiy Prysukhin**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, prof. KPBA (Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy)

**Hanna Tregub**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, journalist

**Ageev Vyacheslav**

Co-founder of the Workshop for the Academic Study of Religion (WASR)

**Alla Kiridon**

Doctor of science, professor, director of VUE (the Great Ukrainian Encyclopedia, State institution)

**Taras Bednarchyk**

Ph.D., associate professor, Vinnytsia Medical University

**Ruslana Martych**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, associate professor, KU Grinchenko (Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University)

**Oleksandr Horban**

Ph.D., prof. KU Grinchenko (Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University)



**Maria Bardyn**

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Department of Religion, Kyiv Region.

**Volodymyr Verbytskyi**

Doctor of Philosophy, KNU (Kiev National University)

**Alyona Leshchenko**

Doctor of Philosophy, prof. Kherson University

**George Pankov**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Kharkiv National University

**Victoria Lyubashchenko**

Prof. UKU (Ukrainian Catholic University)

**Dmytro Gorevoy**

Director of the Center for Religious Security NGO. Head of projects and programs of the Institute of Religion and Society of the Ukrainian Catholic University.

**Yaroslav Yuvsechko**

Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor, Khmelnytskyi University

**Serhiy Geraskov**

Ph.D. philos., Kyiv

**Ivan Mozgovyi**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Sumy

**Yury Vilkhovy**

Ph.D. History, Associated professor, Poltava Pedagogical University

**Olga Dobrodum**

Doctor of Philosophy, professor at the University of Bioresources

**Said Ismagilov**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, former mufti of the "UMMA" Council

**Yury Kovalenko**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Rector of the Open Orthodox University

**Roman Nazarenko**

Ph.D., UKU (Ukrainian Catholic University)

**Oleg Sokolovsky**

Doctor of Philosophy, prof., Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University

**Oleg Yarosh**

Ph.D., NASU, Kyiv

**Maxim Doychik**

Doctor of Philosophy, head department of philosophy of the Carpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk)

**Yuriy Boreyko**

Doctor of Philosophy, head department Eastern Europe University named after L. Ukrainki (Lutsk)

**Olga Borisova**

Doctor of History, Professor, Kharkiv Institute of Culture

**Alexander Lakhno**

Ph.D. history of sciences, vice-rector of the Poltava Pedagogical University

**Larisa Vladychenko**

Dr. Ph.D., prof., head Department Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers

**Serhiy Shumylo**

Doctor of History, director of the Athos Heritage Institute

**Vadim Sliusar**

Doctor in Politics. Prof. Zhytomyr

**Vasyl Popovych**

Dr. Doctor of Philosophy, professor, Zaporizhzhia

**Mykola Kozlovets**

Dr. Doctor of Philosophy, prof., Zhytomyr

**Nadiya Volik**

Doctor of History, associate professor, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University

**Yulia Shabanova**

Doctor of Philosophy, Prof. Head of the Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy of the National Mining University "Dniprov Polytechnic"

**Pavlo Yamchuk**

Doctor of Philosophy, Prof., Uman National University, University of Horticulture

**Maxim Vasin**

Bachelor of Laws, executive Director of the IRS (Institute of Religious Freedom)

**Nadia Rusko**

Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Sciences, Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas

**Andriy Tyshchenko**

Doctor of Philosophy, Kharkiv

**Volodymyr Popov**

Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Donetsk University, Vinnytsia

**Lyudmila Babenko**

Doctor of History, Prof. Poltava Pedagogical University

**Oleksandra Kovalenko**

Kyiv, Open Orthodox University

**Natalya Pavlyk**

Institute of Pedagogical Education of NASU

**Ruslan Khalikov**

Ph.D. in religious studies, member of UARR (Ukrainian Association of Religious Studies), WASR (Workshop for the Academic Study of Religions), publisher.

**Vitalii Shchepanskyi**

Ph.D. in religious studies, member of WASR.

**Anton Leshchynskyi**

MA in religious studies, member of WASR.

**Ihor Kolesnyk**

PhD, assistant professor, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

**Uliana Sevastianiv**

Ph. D. in religious studies, member of WASR, lecturer of the Stepan Gzhytskyi National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology of Lviv

**Oleg Kyselov**

Ph.D. in religious studies, member of WASRr and UARR, Senior Researcher, Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy, NASU.

**Olena Mishalova**

Ph.D. in social philosophy and philosophy of history, member of WASR, associate professor, Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University.

**Olha Mukha**

Ph.D. in philosophy, member of WASR, Head of Educational and Informational Department of Memorial Museum "Territory of Terror"

*Photo : Yehor Milohrodskyi – Unsplash*

[Further reading about FORB in Ukraine on HRWF website](#)

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