

European Greens support Swiss Greens' attempts to overthrow ban on minarets

The European Green Party Co-Spokespersons, **Monica Frassoni and Philippe Lamberts**, have expressed their deep concern about the result of the referendum in Switzerland banning the construction of minarets on mosques.

“The vote in favour of this proposal by 57.5 % of voters has not surprisingly been welcomed with jubilation by extremist parties all over Europe. We are convinced that one of the main reasons for this result was the failure of a part of the Swiss political, economic and social leadership to pay enough serious attention to this issue and to wage an effective campaign against the proposal of the far-right populist Swiss People’s Party. We also consider that it is highly problematic to put to a referendum an internationally binding basic principle of civil coexistence like freedom of religion. This is a harsh reminder that freedom and civil rights cannot simply be taken for granted in Europe any more: we have to accept that religious freedom and rejection of racism and discrimination are not common European principles which are accepted by everyone. We must develop a strategy to convince voters and citizens that these principles are not dispensable and that exclusion and discrimination do not offer solutions to any of the problems facing Europe. “

“We also call on Muslim leaders and citizens all over Europe to reject radicalisation and to engage in a positive dialogue so as to demonstrate that there not necessarily any incompatibility between freedom, respect for human rights, equality for women and Islam. More dialogue and understanding is needed now more than ever if we are to reverse the tendency towards greater division and intolerance. We fully support our Member Party, the Swiss Greens, in their efforts to explore the possibilities of launching an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.”