

## Tajani in hot water again for World Congress of Families conference

Written by Martin Banks on 20 February 2019 in News  
News

Parliament's President Antonio Tajani has found himself facing the music for the second time in less than a week.



**Antonio Tajani** | *Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual*

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This time, the Italian member is under fire for reportedly accepting an invitation to attend the World Congress of Families conference in Italy.

Campaigners and MEPs say the event is organised by the International Organisation for the Family (IOF), saying this is an “umbrella organisation known for its anti-LGBTI agenda.”

A letter sent by a group of MEPs from the assembly's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights asks Tajani not to

attend the event or to support it.

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The letter, seen by this website, says, "Until 13 February, Antonio Tajani was listed as one of the main speakers at the World Congress of Families in Verona (29-31 March)."

"This conference, whose goal is to defend the 'natural family as the only fundamental and sustainable unit of society', is known for its explicit anti-women's rights and anti-LGBTI rights positions," it adds.

Although totally unrelated, this is the second controversy to hit Tajani in recent days.

Last week, MEPs called for his resignation after comments he made on Sunday were branded "offensive."

"The Intergroup is not calling on him to resign, simply to clarify what is his involvement with the World Congress of Families and publicly announce he will not go" **Spokesman for LGBTI Intergroup**

An online petition which calls for the "immediate resignation" of the Italian centre-right deputy attracted more than 3,000 signatories.

In that case, Tajani is said to have caused "great offence" in a speech he made at a ceremony commemorating Italian victims of World War II massacres.

The new row surrounds his possible attendance at the Verona conference.

The MEPs' letter says, "It has come to our attention that until 13 February, you were supposed to be the listed as one of the main speakers at the upcoming World Congress of Families, taking place in Verona in March. It seems that your picture was deleted from the Congress' website only recently."

"We still want to express our profound surprise and disappointment to see you, President of the European Parliament, initially accepting to take part in an event which defends the natural family as the only fundamental and sustainable unit of society."

The World Congress of Families is organised by the International Organisation for the Family (IOF), a cross-continent umbrella organisation known for its anti-LGBTI agenda.

The IOF was established in 2015 with the Cape Town Declaration, which "affirms the dignity of marriage as the conjugal bond of man and woman" and the importance to resist "every push to redefine marriage: to include same-sex ones."

The letter goes on, “In recent years, the rhetoric of ‘protecting the natural family’ has been used not only to preach hate against Rainbow Families, but also to promote the criminalisation of homosexuality in several countries across the globe, as well as restrictions on rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and self-determination for LGBTI people.”

“As the President of the European Parliament, therefore representative of all EU citizens, it is your responsibility and duty to refrain from taking part in events that contribute to preaching hate against vulnerable groups such as LGBTI people.”

“In light of the above, we kindly request that you confirm publicly and officially that you will neither take part nor support in any form the World Congress of Families this March.”

The letter is signed by MEPs Terry Reintke, co-president of the LGBTI Intergroup; Daniele Viotti, co-president of the LGBTI Intergroup; Tanja Fajon, vice-president of the LGBTI Intergroup; Sophie in’t Veld, vice-president of the LGBTI Intergroup and Malin Bjork, vice-president of the LGBTI Intergroup.

On Wednesday, a spokesman for the group told this site, “Tajani’s name was removed from the list of speakers. However, he did not confirm publicly that he will not attend, hence our letter.”

“The Intergroup is not calling on him to resign, simply to clarify what is his involvement with the World Congress of Families and publicly announce he will not go,” he added.

This site asked Tajani for a comment but, to date, received no reply.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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