

## **Banal, benign or pernicious? The relationship between religion and national identity from the perspective of religious minorities in Greece**

**EFFIE FOKAS**

Research Fellow, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP); Research Associate, Hellenic Observatory, LSE

**Tuesday, 25 November 2014  
18.00-19.30**

**ABSTRACT:**

The religion-national identity link in most of western Europe, but also in the United States in the form of civil religion, is often conceived of as 'merely' manifested in all kinds of symbols around us, including flags, anthems, depictions on currency, etc., much like Michael Billig's description of 'banal nationalism'.

A strong link between religion and national identity in the Greek context is conspicuous: it underpins close relations between church and the state and it is often activated as justification for an othering of the non-Orthodox in Greece. This paper examines repercussions of the religion-national identity link for religious minorities in particular, and in so doing assesses ways in which this link can form a significant barrier to religious freedom for individuals who fall outside its scope. The discussion draws on results from the Greek case study conducted as part of a broader empirical research project on pluralism and religious freedom in majority Orthodox contexts (PLUREL).

**Venue: Cañada Blanch Room, COW 1.11, 1st floor, Cowdray House  
European Institute, LSE, Portugal Street, London WC2A 2AE**

**All Hellenic Observatory Seminars are open to all with no ticket required;  
Entry is on a first come-first served basis.**



#LSE\_HOfokas