

# Scientists warn: creationism is on the rise in Europe

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More and more people in Europe are beginning to believe that a god -- not evolution -- shaped life on Earth and there are no signs this development will stop.

Creationism, the belief that a god -- not evolution -- shaped life on Earth, is by no means restricted to people from the Bible belt in the US or illiterates in remote corners of civilisation.

Not at all, in fact it's spreading in the very stronghold of evolution, Europe. That's the conclusion of five years of research that's been put into new book on creationism. The book details how creationism is on the march throughout most of Europe.

"Creationism is most dominant in Eastern Europe and Turkey, but even some schools in the Netherlands are teaching creationism," says one of the book's authors Hans Henrik Hjerimitslev, University College South Denmark. "Politicians in some German federal states are advocating that schools use creationist books alongside those about evolutionary theory in their lessons. This kind of struggle is going on on a small scale in many places."

Hjerimitslev is one of three authors behind the new book aptly titled 'Creationism in Europe'.

## **Creationism rarely sticks its head out in public**

The researchers conclude in their book that although creationism is making headway in Europe it's doing so behind the scenes and rarely making its way into the public space.

The book is based on research from Aarhus University, UC South Denmark, and the University of Ghent in Belgium which shows that most of the creationism activity happens in the schools and universities where students are being taught creationism or intelligent design -- the idea that somebody made plans for what the Earth and all its creatures should look like.

"The battle between science and creationism is not one that happens in the laboratories among scientists. It's happening in the schools," says Hjerimitslev.

## **Creationists are helped by the internet**

Creationism is not just gaining ground out in the countryside among people who have no education or nothing better to do than go to church and hide away from the rest of the world, says co-author Peter C. Kjærgaard, professor of evolutionary studies at Aarhus University.

"Over the last ten years we've seen the emergence of big-city creationism. London is a good example," says Kjærgaard.

Here, noticeably more young people have been signed up to various local and religious groups.

"And this doesn't just apply to young Muslims as many people might think. Christian groups are also recruiting young people who feel that nobody else takes them seriously -- be that the government, their school or city," says Kjærgaard.

Creationism has particularly been on the rise in step with the internet, which according to Peter Kjærgaard has made it much easier for people to become activists and hurl out statements in favour of creationism which look as though they carry just as much weight as scientific results.

The scientists' 296-page book 'Creationism in Europe' has just been published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

It is based five years of research, during which the team trawled through newspaper articles, internet sites, scientific studies, opinion polls, and reports by scientists in other European countries.

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 [Did humans develop from earlier stages of animal life or were we created in God's image? Every scientific fact -- including evolutionary theory -- points the former. Creationists believe the latter. \(Photo: <a href="http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-140268190/stock-photo-outdoors-portrait-of-cute-years-old-child-boy.html?src=-4C78CoRmQ9YQnEEKW3WuA-1-49" target="blank">Shutterstock</a>](http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-140268190/stock-photo-outdoors-portrait-of-cute-years-old-child-boy.html?src=-4C78CoRmQ9YQnEEKW3WuA-1-49) [9]  
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[Creationism in Europe: Facts, Gaps, and Prospects; Journal of the American Academy of Religion; doi: 10.1093/jaarel/ift034](#) [18] [Creationism in Europe](#) [19]

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