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The 2011 Irwin Prize for Secularist of the Year was won by Sophie in 't Veld, a Dutch MEP who chairs the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics.

Sophie received her prize to great acclaim from a capacity crowd in central London last Saturday. Her acceptance speech brought further cheers of approval as she made clear that her secularism is firm and of prime importance to her.

Also honoured on the day were two outstanding volunteers, Claudine Baxter who has loyally helped in the office with membership administration for the past five years. Come rain or shine, Claudine has made it into the office and has freed up many hours of time for our campaigners to get on with the work of creating a secular society.

Also Dominic Wirdnam from Bristol who helped so much in the hospital chaplains campaign and who is now a leading light in the new Bristol Secular Society.

Winner of the special achievement award this year was Marco Tranchino of the Central London Humanist Group who was so tenacious in negotiating a high profile route for the Protest the Pope March last September. Marco chipped away at the obduracy of the authorities — particularly at Scotland Yard — until he got the route he wanted, and the rest is history.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: “The whole afternoon was a wonderfully friendly time, when so many secularists got together to honour those who are working so hard on their behalf. Sophie was an excellent choice because her voice chimes so well with our own message of the importance of separation of religion from politics.”

Terry also thanked Neil Edwards ([The Trickman](#)) for his contribution to the entertainment as he went from table to table baffling and bamboozling some of the finest scientific minds in the country.

[Watch a video of the presentation on Youtube](#)

[Watch a part of Sophie's speech in Youtube](#)

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