



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

LIFE TWO

Learning Interculturality from Religions towards Outreach Activities



Learning
Interculturality
From Religion 2

WP1 Preparation for the upscaling

D1.7 Religious education and multiculturalism: analysis of the status quo and of the strategic perspectives

Report in the 8 countries involved in the LIFE TWO project

Agreement n. 612220-EPP-1-2019-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of Contents

1. The conceptual definition of the religion (Council of Europe)

2. Religions, multiculturalism and interculturalism: Background and Contexts of the countries involved in LIFE TWO Project

2.1 ITALY

2.2 IRELAND

2.3 CYPRUS

2.4 SPAIN

2.5 THE NETHERLANDS

2.6 GREECE

2.7 TURKEY

2.8 BULGARIA

1. The conceptual definition of the religion (Council of Europe)

Belief is a state of the mind when we consider something true even though we are not 100% sure or able to prove it. Everybody has beliefs about life and the world they experience. Mutually supportive beliefs may form belief systems, which may be religious, philosophical or ideological. Religions are belief systems that relate humanity to spirituality. The following definition provides a good overview of the many dimensions of religion: it is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature. Many religions have organised behaviours, clergy, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, congregations of laity, regular meetings or services for the purposes of veneration of a deity or for prayer, holy places (either natural or architectural), and/or scriptures. The practice of a religion may also include sermons, commemoration of the activities of a god or gods, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trance, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. However, there are examples of religions for which some or many of these aspects of structure, belief, or practices are absent.

In the simplest sense, religion describes “the relationship of human beings to what they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine”. It is usually accompanied by a set of organised practices which foster a community of people who share that faith. As discussed above, belief is a broader term and it also includes “commitments which deny a dimension of existence beyond this world”. Religions and other belief systems in our environment have an influence on our identity, regardless of whether we consider ourselves religious or spiritual or not. At the same time, other parts of our identity, our history, our approach to other religions and groups considered “different” will influence how we interpret that religion or belief system. Religions and other belief systems in our environment have an influence on our identity, regardless of whether we consider ourselves religious or spiritual or not. At the same time, other parts of our identity, our history, our approach to other religions and groups considered “different” will influence how we interpret that religion or belief system.

2. Religions, multiculturalism and interculturalism: Background and Contexts of the countries involved in LIFE TWO Project

2.1 ITALY

General overview

Italy is, constitutionally, a nation embracing all creeds and religions, where the relationship between State and Church is regulated and sanctioned by constitutional laws. This is especially important as, geographically, the heart of the Catholic Church is within Italian soil. This very presence is rooted in the historical relevance of Rome in the history of Christianity, a relevance that has made the capital of Italy not only the geographical and beaurocratical centre of Catholicism, but also its spiritual core.

71.4% of Italians ascribe to Christianity making it the dominant religion in the country with Catholicism being the majority Christian denomination. Other Christian denominations include Orthodox, Jehovah's Witness, Protestant, and Methodists. The Catholic Church accounts for 93% of all Christians in Italy.

Islam in Italy and is not recognized by the state. Only 3.1% of the population in Italy confesses Islam faith.

Buddhists in Italy account for only 0.4% of the total population.

Only 0.6% of the Italian population ascribe to other religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, and Judaism while the rest of the population either ascribe to other faiths or are not affiliated with any religion

General institutional Background

The 1948 Constitution includes four main dispositions on religious freedom:

- article 7, on relations between the Italian Republic and the Catholic Church;
- article 8, on general equality between religions and relationships with the State for non-Catholic confessions;
- article 19, which protects freedom of conscience for citizens as well as foreigners;

- article 20, which prevents any discrimination of treatment between a religious and a non-religious society.

As the Lateran Treaties are explicitly mentioned in article 7, along with mutual independence for State and Church, the Roman Catholic Church remained the State official religion until the revision of the Concordat in 1984. Since then, while Catholic priests are no longer paid by the State, a system of indirect fiscal funding is provided by the eight per thousand on the tax return, by which citizens can choose to donate 0.8% of their individual income to either the Catholic Church, or another religion which signed an Intesa with the State, or to secular charities. The mechanism of the Intese, whose purpose is to guarantee particularities of non-Catholic religions according to article 8 of the Constitution, was used six times between 1984 and 1995, with the Waldensian and Methodist Churches (1984), Seventh Day Adventists (1986), the Assemblies of God in Italy (1988), the Union of Jewish Communities (1989), Baptist Churches (1995) and Lutheran Churches (1995). Subsequent projects of Intese were all halted, or annulled in the case of Soka Gakkai (which recently signed the Intesa in 2016) before the conclusion of six agreements voted by the Italian Parliament between June and December 2012, with the Hindu and Buddhist federations, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Latter-Day Saints Church, the Apostolic Church and the Sacred Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta and Exarchate for Southern Europe. Under the level of the Intese, the status of culti ammessi ('tolerated cults') from the law of 06/24/1929 allows, under strict conditions of registration, limited facilities for worship and recognition of the legal validity of religious marriages.

The weaknesses of this system are twofold. On the one hand, while this status gives a substantial and symbolical legitimacy to recognized religious organizations, it has followed a mimetic trend concerning the fields covered (religious education, degrees conferred by confessional colleges...), without being on an equal footing with the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, the steps to recognition, especially the status of culti ammessi, are matched by a part of discretionary choices and vulnerability to changes in political majorities in Parliament. In other words, if Italian multiculturalism exists, it is top-down, institutional, focused on religious aspects and not integrated.

For instance, although being Islam the second most popular religion in our country after Catholicism, none of the attempts by Muslim organizations towards an intesa came to term since the 1990s, and the only recognized organization according to the 1929 law is the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy, based at the Great Mosque of Rome and close to diplomatic representations of Muslim States to Italy and to the Holy See, due to a presidential decree in 1974. Islamic association in Italy reflects the plurality and diversification of Muslims in our country. The increasing number of associations is also due to the structure of Islam: unlike the Catholic Church, which is hierarchically organized

through an official clergy, an institutionalized form of priesthood is totally absent in Islam. Moreover, some associations, especially those that bring together first-generation migrants, are structured with reference to the country of origin.

One of the most well-known associations is the UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy), which gathers around 200 places of worship in Italy. The UCOII was founded in 1990 and is currently chaired by Izzeddin Elzir. In 1992 UCOII attempted to conclude an intesa with the State and took part in the 'Consulta' for Italian Islam promoted by Interior Ministers Pisanu and Amato. It subsequently joined the Permanent National Conference "Religions, Culture and Integration" established by Minister for Integration and Cooperation Andrea Riccardi.

The Islamic Alliance of Italy has been working for more than ten years but has become an association in 2010. It is formally a member of the UCOII and the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe. The association deals with ethical and religious issues and its activities are carried out at different Islamic Centers.

The COREIS (Italian Islamic Religious Community), born in the nineties, is an organization far from political ideologies that aims to represent the religious interests of Muslim citizens. In 1996 COREIS proposed a draft agreement to the Italian State for an intesa. From 2005 it has participated in various consultative bodies wanted by the interior ministers.

As it was mentioned above, the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy manages the Grand Mosque of Rome, inaugurated in 2005. Since 1974, the center is the only Italian Islamic body with legal personality and is chaired by Abdellah Redouane, Secretary-General of Moroccan origin. Since 2008, with an initiative supported by the government of Rabat, the Center has begun to connect Islamic centers across the country managed by Moroccan leaders.

The Italian Islamic Confederation (CII) was set up in Rome on March 21, 2012. The Confederation is a national organization that brings together 14 Islamic Regional Federations in order to coordinate all the places of worship associated with it, which are spread across the national territory, promoting the unity of goals, projects and actions, as well as the dialogue between them and the Italian authorities at national and local level.

In February 2017, Marco Minniti, who serves in the Government of Italy as Minister of the Interior since December 2016, has signed the "National Pact for an Italian Islam, as expression of an open and integrated community, adherent to the values and principles of the legal order of the State", drafted with the collaboration of the Council for Relations

with Italian Islam and recognized by the Ministry of the Interior. The document was signed by the leading Islamic associations and organizations in Italy, representing about 70% of Muslims currently living in the country.

While the religious components of Italy have shown significant changes, without questioning the effectiveness of the Roman Catholic Church in terms of representation and influence, even since the collapse of Christian-Democratic currents, new issues have come to visibility, such as the place of religious symbols in public offices and schools (Lautsi v. Italy, EtCHR, 03/18/2011).

As laicità (secularism) is intended in a positive, active sense of intervention to guarantee religious freedom (Constitutional Court, decision 203/1989), it is nonetheless an unequal system, while some political formations like Lega Nord (Northern League) clearly define religious pluralism as a threat to national (or, in the above mentioned case, regional) identity and while the question of Islam is still dealt with by national media in terms of security and 'reciprocity'.

On these grounds, multiculturalism in Italy has been first debated as a dangerous schema by some intellectuals and politicians, while the Italian situation might provide a fruitful field of experimentation for policies of recognition of pluralism in the future.

List of the agreements so far implemented, approved by law pursuant to article 8 of the Italian Constitution:

<i>Religious Confession</i>	<i>Signature Date</i>	<i>Law of</i>
<i>Approval</i>		
Tavola valdese	21 Feb. 1984	<u>Law 449/1984</u>
	25 Jan. 1993 (amendment)	<u>Law 409/1993</u>
	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law 68/2009</u>
Assemblee di Dio in Italia (ADI)	29 Dec. 1986	<u>Law 517/1988</u>
Unione delle Chiese Cristiane Avventiste del 7° giorno	29 Dec. 1986	<u>Law 516/1988</u>
	6 Nov. 1996 (amendment)	<u>Law 637/1996</u>
	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law 67/2009</u>
Unione Comunità Ebraiche in Italia (UCEI)	27 Feb. 1987	<u>Law 101/1989</u>

	6 Nov. 1996 (amendment)	<u>Law 638/1996</u>
Unione Cristiana Evangelica Battista d'Italia (UCEBI)	29 Mar. 1993 16 Jul. 2010 (amendment)	<u>Law 116/1995</u> <u>Law n.34/12</u>
Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia (CELI)	20 Apr. 1993	<u>Law 520/1995</u>
Sacra Arcidiocesi ortodossa d'Italia ed Esarcato per l'Europa Meridionale	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law n. 126/12</u>
Chiesa di Gesù Cristo dei Santi degli ultimi giorni	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law n. 127/12</u>
Chiesa Apostolica in Italia	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law n. 128/12</u>
Unione Buddhista italiana (UBI)	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law n. 245/12</u>
Unione Induista Italiana	4 Apr. 2007	<u>Law n. 246/12</u>
Istituto Buddhista Italiano Soka Gakkai (IBISG)	27 June 2015	<u>Law 28 giugno 2016, n. 130</u>

Italian Government, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Service for Relations with Religious Confessions and Institutional Relations

RE within the *Intese* - The agreements between the state and religions and denominations other than the Catholic Church (*Intese*), also concern teaching their religion in public schools. They identify and defend the right of pupils and parents belonging to the relevant denomination not to attend classes teaching Roman Catholicism. Contrary to the case with the IRC, these religions or denominations have to finance the teaching themselves and the time for teaching must be found outside the regular timetable. Besides, while IRC is also a 'regular' school subject in terms of the fact that grades are given to the pupils attending it, this is not so in the case of other kinds of confessional RE. This system also stipulates the right of the relevant denomination to organize the teaching of religion in State schools, under two conditions: a congruous number of students will have to request the activation of the teaching, and that teachers shall be paid by the denomination. Article 10 of the agreement with Waldensians, stipulates that in case arrangements are made for classes teaching Protestantism in State schools by Waldensian teachers, this must be paid by the ecclesiastical authorities (gli oneri finanziari sono a carico degli organi ecclesiastici competenti). The same phrasing is

reiterated in Article 12 section 3 of 2007 *intesa* with Mormons enacted in 2012.

Article 33 of the Italian Constitution - The majority of pupils in Italy are educated at public schools. Article 33 of the Constitution, in reference to “private schools”, states that entities and private persons have the right to establish schools and institutions of education at no cost to the State. The Republic guarantees the freedom of the arts and sciences, which may be freely taught, and also establishes general rules for education and institutes State schools of all branches and grades. The law, when setting out the rights and obligations for the non-State schools which request parity, ensures that these schools enjoy full liberty and offer their pupils an education and qualifications of the same standards as those afforded to pupils in State schools. Private schools are mostly Roman Catholic (an average of 75% over the last 20 years): Concordat of 1984 (Act No. 121 of 1985) strengthens the general protection granted by Article 33 of the Constitution and the general laws regulating the inclusion of private schools in public education. Article 9 of Act No. 121 of 1985 provides a specific guarantee of freedom and autonomy of Catholic schools – further, article 10 of Act No. 121 of 1985 secures the autonomy of ecclesiastical educational establishments, and a framework for civil recognition of academic degrees delivered by Catholic institutions.

For decades, a large section of the public opinion has opposed State funding for private schools. Reflecting this position, some legal experts have argued for a strict interpretation of the “*at no cost for the State*” (*senza oneri per lo Stato*) clause, emphasizing the principle that State funding of private schools is constitutionally illegitimate (Ventura 2013: 195). This has become a marginal position, but establishing a system of equal State funding of State schools and private schools meets a large opposition in the country; defence of the priority of State schools embodies a consolidated pattern, deeply rooted in the national customs.

Today the debate has shifted from whether the State should fund private schools or whether full parity in State funding of State and private schools should be established. Catholic Bishops have taken a clear stand in favor for the latter position and have put pressure on governments. The credit crunch and the debt crisis have deepened the divide between those who push for full parity, who criticize the inefficient State schools, while defenders of the impoverished State school are the victims of neo-liberal cuts in the State budget. If State funding of private schools remains below European standards, parity in the recognition of degrees has been basically achieved. Also, private schools integrated in public education enjoy extreme freedom, with little, if any, State control on the effective compliance of private schools with the agreed-upon standards (Ventura 2013: 195-196).

Today, private state authorized schools are managed partly by lay bodies and partly by

religious bodies. In terms of structures, the number is equivalent (1.924 schools are run by religious entities and 1.749 by lay people), while in terms of enrollment religious state authorized schools are prevalent with about 218.000 users (62% of the total number of state authorized schools students).

Italian Educative system

Concerning the teaching of religion, the political environment which had radically changed with the passage to a Republic and with the adoption of constitutional regulations did not change the established agreements: in Italian schools, the usual hour of religion as catechetical education, a compulsory discipline from which parents were allowed to withdraw their children, continued for several decades after 1946. On March 25th, 1947, the majority of the Constituent Assembly, with the casting vote of the Communist Party, decided to integrate the Lateran Pacts in the brand new Italian Democratic Constitution, a real foreign body in the democratic life and religious freedom of a modern country. Piero Calamandrei - Italian author, jurist, university professor and politician who was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1945 and, as a Social Democrat, to the National Assembly in 1948 - who was strongly opposed to that decision, described the scene as follows:

“When the outcome of the vote was announced (359 in favor, 149 against) no one applauded, nor the Christian Democrats, who seemed greatly annoyed by a victory achieved with that help. Not even the Communists seemed cheerful; and many noticed that while coming out late at night from that unforgettable session, they were speechless and walked keeping their heads down”.

Suddenly, that moment represents a huge weight that will influence Italy's democratic life in all its multiple dimensions, since the succeeding democratic governments will all uphold the Pacts signed in 1929 by Benito Mussolini during the Fascist dictatorship.

It was only in the '60s that it started to appear necessary to identify and implement choices which could establish a new relationship between school and religion, which would take into account heretofore unheard examples of cultural and religious pluralism, thus acknowledging the presence of children coming from families with different views or practices concerning religion. An epistemological analysis on the subject accompanied the discussion, as can be

easily inferred by the number of published papers, studies and even new text books which offered alternative paths and methods for approaching the religious issue.

Discussions which were held in the late '70s were crucial, and they would pave the way for the turning point in 1984: different points of view discussed and collided, sometimes expressing positions which could not find a common ground.

During this time, the 1984 Concordat (known as *Accordi di Villa Madama*) signed by Bettino Craxi and by the secretary cardinal of the Vatican, Agostino Casaroli, established a non- compulsory confessional hour of Catholic religion, no longer intended as catechetical education, but rather as a cultural approach to the religious phenomenon from a Catholic point of view. It was also established that Catholicism was no longer the only religion in the Italian State and, with respect towards the right to freedom of conscience and towards parents' educational responsibility, it was guaranteed that every student of every kind of schooling level or type could choose to attend the hour of catholic religion or not. Ever since, the teaching of Catholic religion in public schools, of every level and type, is imparted in compliance with the doctrine of the Church and in respect of the students' freedom of conscience, by teachers who have been considered suitable by the religious authority and have been assigned, in full agreement, by the school authority. In kindergartens and elementary schools, this subject can be taught by a class teacher who has been considered to be suitable by the religious authority and who agrees to teach it.

Altogether, the agreement has little to do with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962- 1965), which addressed relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world with an innovative approach towards enhanced openness to the world at large.

In *La religione a scuola*, Emilio Butturini noted some elements of inconsistency: on one hand, The Italian Republic recognizes the value of religious culture and the principles of Catholicism as part of the historical heritage of the Italian people, on the other hand it calls on freedom of conscience with respect to the possibility of choosing whether to attend CRE or not. The new conception of the agreement is expressed by the concept of 'cooperation' between the Catholic Church and the State with regard to the cultural maturation of the pupils. In this perspective, it is made clear that the teaching of the Catholic religion is not a form of catechesis, but rather the proposition of a «religious culture» to be elaborated in the «[public]school framework»

(Law n. 121 of 25th March 1985). It represents one of the many inconsistencies of the agreement because, if that were the case, then it would not be clear the reason why CRE teachers, although paid by the State, should be chosen by the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

An agreement between the appropriate school authority and the CEI – Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Episcopal Conference) has established: the curricula for the various types and levels of the public schools; the ways in which said subject is organised, including the way it is positioned within the frame of the other lessons; the criteria for choosing textbooks; the professional profiles for choosing the teachers. Currently, the curricula for the hour of religion are established for each level and type of school by the Ministry subject to an agreement with the CEI, in the understanding that it is the latter who has the competence to define their conformity with the doctrine of the Church. Kindergarten is assigned a yearly total of 60 hours (one and a half hours per week), elementary school is assigned two hours of CRE per week while I and II level secondary school are assigned one hour of CRE per week. Catholic schools of every level and type were assigned additional hours, in compliance with the Educational Offer Plan established by each school.

The magistrate Gian Paolo Meucci argued that the solution achieved with the agreement represented an authentic betrayal of the educational function towards the new generations, because the State and the Church have ultimately failed in one of their fundamental missions, which is “to be educative communities and not exclusively supporters of principles, ideologies and power dynamics that concern both the two institutions and the politically-oriented choices of (adult) individuals”¹

Alternatively to the CRE, the regulation provides for several options: an alternative activity established by the school itself which should, as suggested by the 1986 Ministry Circulars, Nos. 128, 129, 131, and 131, address topics concerning ethics, values, tolerance and peace. This activity should be imparted by any teacher who is, at the time, available. Another option is tutoring (revision, in-depth studying) or, for high school, a study activity without the presence of any teacher, within the school premises; lastly, a very used option is the early exit from school (or delayed entry).

As for grading, Law no. 824 of 1930, in implementation of the Lateran Pacts, is still in force: instead of marks and examinations, the teacher drafts a special report for the student’s parents, which is attached to the regular school report card concerning the interest with which the student is following the subject and the benefit which he or she is gaining from it.

The Consolidated Law on School Legislation (Article 309 of Legislative Decree 297/94) provides that, unlike before, the special report is “to be delivered together with the

¹ G.P. Meucci, Una politica per i giovani, «Bambino incompiuto: per una nuova cultura dell’infanzia e dell’adolescenza», 1, 1984, pp. 6-7, cit. in E. Butturini, La religione a scuola, cit., p. 228.

regular school report ” and no longer “to be included in the school report” as recalled in the 1930 law.

As for the teachers, the criteria necessary to be able to teach this subject are established by the Agreement between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, according to which in kindergarten and elementary schools CRE can be taught by section or class teachers which the religious authority has deemed to be suitable. It is possible for laymen and deacons, priests and religious people possessing the necessary qualification (diploma issued by an institute for religious sciences recognized by the CEI) to teach religion.

Since 2003, after having passed an open competition (written and oral test concerning general teaching and training techniques), 70% of the teachers are hired permanently; all religion teachers possess not only a duty assignment paper, like other teachers, but also a special warrant issued by the local Bishop who recognises their suitability to teach - it should be noted that in the last years this activity has more and more taken an interest with laymen and women rather than religious people.

So, with Law n. 186, 18th July 2003, concerning “Rules on the legal status of catholic religious teachers of institutes and schools of every order and degree”, an open competitive exam was launched in order to recruit RE teachers and eventually took place in 2004. Since then, no other open competitions were convened and this caused serious problems related to the staff of religious teachers within schools: since some teachers have retired and no other open competition has been held, schools face problems of staff shortages and are forced to hire new teachers through fixed-term contracts every year. The problem lies in the fact that the European Court of Justice - Judgment of the Court (Third Chamber), 26th November 2014 - has ruled that school temporary employees - those in precarious employment - , with more than 36 months of service are entitled to a permanent contract. The ruling revived the hopes of hundreds of thousands of precarious workers who have covered vacancies within schools, research bodies, universities and all public administration bodies for years.

During the government of Romano Prodi, at the end of the legislature, the outgoing Minister of Public Education Giuseppe Fioroni, with Circular 22nd April 2008 no. 45, laid down detailed rules concerning “Curriculum Indications [related to kindergartens and to the first school cycle - primary school and lower secondary school] with regard to the teaching of the Catholic Religion.” The ministerial text granted, without objecting, the request of the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) to 'harmonize' the teaching of Catholic religion with other teaching subjects - a proposal that brings with it the idea that the entire public school education activity should be permeated by the Catholic doctrine.

Further, it was still Minister Fioroni who set up a special 'school credit' for students attending the teaching of Catholic religion, which represents a strong advantage related to the calculation of the average of marks in view of the final exam. The inconsistency lies in the fact that this is only theoretically possible for those who choose alternative activities, which schools often do not provide.

In 2009, with ruling No. 7076, 17 July 2009, the T.A.R. of Lazio allowed two appeals addressing the annulment of the Ministerial Orders issued by Giuseppe Fioroni, the then Minister of Public Education, for the State Examinations of 2007 and 2008, which required the evaluation of the students' attendance to the Catholic Religion Education course in order to establish the overall school credits, and thus the full inclusion of Religious Education teachers during the assignment for marks. The Council of State (May 7th, 2010) reversed the ruling of the T.A.R. of Lazio, which had expressed itself against the Fioroni decree.

On October 29th 2008, Decree Law no. 137, better known as the Gelmini Decree (Mariastella Gelmini served as Italian Minister of Education in the Berlusconi IV Cabinet until November 16th, 2011), was converted into Law no. 169 of 30-10-2008. As for grading, an analytical judgment has been added to the decimal marks, in order to avoid reducing the whole evaluation activity to a mere accounting process. Promotion to the next class can only be denied by unanimous decision of the teachers in the primary school and by a majority decision in high-school. The promotion of the student depends on the decision expressed by the class council – so, not on the basis of the average of marks - of which the CRE teacher is also a member with deliberative vote.

In November 2014, with reference to the consultation promoted by former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi preparing a reform of public school ("La buona scuola"), some Italian professors of historical-religious subjects, belonging to SISR (Italian Association of Historians of Religions), had addressed a document to Stefania Giannini of the Ministry of Education³. They were asking for a meeting to discuss the possibility to insert an hour of "Storia delle religioni" ("History of religions") in school curricula. This meeting never occurred.

For what concerns the reform, which was eventually adopted by the government of Matteo Renzi (Law July 13th, 2015, n. 107), it is featured by the absence of any reference to CRE teachers or the teaching of Catholic religion. The law deals generally with the management of teaching staff without going into the details of individual subjects, apart from a few exceptions that still do not concern CRE.

Teaching religion and pedagogical approaches after the Second World War

After the end of the world conflict, the Ministry of education decided to publish the Primary School Programs. In these documents the religion was constituted as a specific discipline. The writing of these programs benefited of the contribution of the American pedagogue Carleton Washburne, a student of John Dewey. The religion was conceived and was designed, like other disciplines, to promote the free development of the pupil so that he would create a feeling of fraternity. In the specific warnings of the religious program, it is stated that "religious education" inspires [...] the gentle figure of Jesus, as it is from the Gospels, "so that" in the children the love for God and the neighbor is improved». Always in the same warnings, it became clear that the particular importance to be given to the figure of Jesus was to be aimed at illustrating the moral and social teachings that came about and reminded that the teacher could draw religious education from the other subjects of the curriculum.

Appropriate figurations and reproductions of masterpieces of sacred art were intended as a contribution to the efficacy of this teaching, "acknowledging and pointing to an interdisciplinary approach, albeit at the principle of such teaching".

On 1st of December 1952, with a Ministerial Decree concerning timetables and teaching obligations in the media, classical, scientific and magisterial institutes, the weekly schedules of the various disciplines were established. For the teaching of religion, a weekly lesson of one hour was held in the gymnasium and in almost all the high schools, while two hours were appointed in the pedagogical high school.

Again in 1955 the new programs, in the premise, indicated that the purpose of primary education was to "ensure to all citizens the basic training of intelligence and character, which is a condition for a real and conscious participation in the social life. This training, prior to any professional purpose, means that primary school is elementary, not only because it provides the elements of culture, but above all because it educates the basic skills of a man. It was recalled that the indications expressed were "to our humanistic and Christian educational tradition: that is to the recognition of the dignity of the human person and to the respect of the values".

The general reform of the pre-secondary school (*scuola media*), established in the 60ties for the specific program of religion, recalled that "the teaching of religion will contribute eminently to the harmonious and complete development of the pupil". Attention was shifted from its strong recognition in the education system to its active role in promoting the development of the pupil. Always in the preface to religious programs, the teacher was called upon to help, through the presentation of the revealed truths, "to discover and

live in the Church his vocation as a Christian, to imitate virtues, to observe, with the help of the Sacraments and of the prayer, the Lord's precepts", emphasizing through acknowledging the cultural value, its catechetical character.

In 1985, new educational programs for elementary school are published. The New Programs show that they have already received the spirit. Indeed, in the First Part of the General Premise, it is stated that elementary school "recognizes the value of religious reality as a historically, culturally and morally incarnated figure in the social reality of which the child has experience and, as such, the school makes it object of attention to the complexity of his educational activity, having regard to the religious experience that the child lives in his family and to mature feelings and behaviors of respect for the different positions on religion and refusal of any form of discrimination".

It appears very clear that towards the long path from the Second after-war time and the renovation of the General Agreement between the Italian State and the Catholic Church done in 1984, different are the aspects of novelty highlighted by the new formulation. Firstly, the same denomination, never used in precedents, of teaching the "Catholic" religion (although in the previous formulations the reference to the Catholic tradition was taken). This indicates that this teaching does not aim at a generic study of the religious phenomenon of human religiosity, but draws on religion itself and specifically to the Catholic religion in the forms and expressions in which the latter has historically manifested itself. This indication, however, should not be understood in a rigid and restrictive sense as if the religious teacher did not or could not deal with the developments and manifestations of the religious phenomenon present in the history of humanity. This openness can be seen if we consider the programs referring to religious education, which, in the years following the new agreement and the implementation of the Intesa of 14 December 1985, were enacted by Decrees of the President of the Republic.

However, in primary school of infancy, the "educational aspects of the educational activity of this school order" are the "universal aspects of religiousness", clearly alongside the specific aspects of Catholic values. For upper secondary education among the goals set out in the religious education program, it should be noted that the pupils "will begin to mature with the ability to compare Catholicism, other Christian denominations, other religions, and the various systems of meaning; to understand and to respect the different positions that people take in ethical and religious matters", emphasizing in this way not only a notional approach to religions, but the need for comparison, respect and dialogue with different religious confessions and experiences.

This formulation of the Catholic religion programs, elaborated in the second half of the year, took into account the new current multicultural and social context.

The enhancement of religious culture should not be confined to a historical reconstruction of it, in particular of the Christian one, cannot be restricted to historical information. It must also take into account the continuous and proactive contribution in formulating answers to the fundamental questions of the Research of the meaning of the humanity. In particular, for the Primary school, it was stated that the choices of didactic activities had to take as a starting point the needs and interests of the children and the experiences that they live in the family, in the school, in the social environment and in reference to the Christian community. And later, among the criteria to be used in choosing the activities to be organized, it was stressed that it is necessary to "always enhance, without discrimination, the different experiences of children".

More recently, in 2009, the indications related to the school of childhood and the first cycle defined the goals of the development of skills and learning objectives for teaching religion. It is stated that "activities in the teaching of the Catholic religion [...] offer opportunities for the integral development of the personality of children, opening to the religious dimension and enhancing it".

Even more significant are the statements referring to religion as a discipline for the school of the first cycle. The recognition of the value of religious experience by the legislator starts, among other things, as always evidenced in this text. "The explicit comparison with the religious dimension of human experience plays an irreplaceable role for the full education of the person. It allows, in fact, the acquisition and proper use of cultural instruments that [...] allows communication also on otherwise unrepeatable and unknowable facts". The forms of confrontation with the religious dimension is also referred to the historical process of Catholicism: the comparison, then, with the historical forms of Catholic religion plays a fundamental and constructive role for civil coexistence, as it allows to understand fundamental aspects of the cultural identity of belonging and helps relationships between people of different cultures and religions. This formulation contains also the acknowledgment of the educational and social value played by the teaching of the religion in contributing to a civic coexistence open to dialogue and differences.

Teaching religion in Italy

An agreement between the appropriate school authority and the CEI - Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Episcopal Conference) has established: the curricula for the various types and levels of the public schools; the ways in which said subject is organized, including the way it is positioned within the frame of the other lessons; the criteria for choosing textbooks; the professional profiles for choosing the teachers. Currently, the curricula for the hour of religion are established for each level and type of school by the Ministry subject to an agreement with the CEI, in the understanding that it is the latter who has the competence to define their conformity with the doctrine of the Church. Kindergarten is assigned a yearly total of 60 hours (one and a half hours per week), elementary school is assigned two hours of CRE per week while I and II level secondary school are assigned one hour of CRE per week. Catholic schools of every level and type were assigned additional hours, in compliance with the Educational Offer Plan established by each school.

The different relationships entangling Italy's political and cultural institutions and the education system traditionally regard the search for a common path that conciliates religion, religious diversity and secularism as a confrontational and divisive field of action.

From a practical point of view related to the contents of CRE, the curricula are determined on the base of a Decree of the President of the Republic (D.P.R.), in particular:

- **D.P.R. 11th February 2010**, concerning CRE programs for kindergartens and first school cycle - primary and lower secondary school;
- **D.P.R. 20th August 2012, no. 176**, related to the implementation of the Intesa between the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) and the MIUR (Italian Ministry for Education, Universities and Research), concerning recommendations for the teaching of Catholic religion in Secondary Education and Vocational Education and Training.

In the first school cycle, the pupils discover in the stories of the Gospel the person and the teaching of Jesus, from whom they learn that God is the Father of all, and that the Church is the community of men and women united in his name; they start to recognize some symbolic and figurative languages typical of Christians' traditions and life (signs, religious holidays, prayers, songs, gestures, environments, arts, etc.) and they start to learn some of the terms of Christian language, listening to simple biblical stories.

For what concerns the first school cycle - primary and lower secondary school – the description of the Learning Objectives included in D.P.R. 20th August 2012, no. 176 is

indicative and states: *“Learning objectives for each age group are divided into four theme spheres, taking into account the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ:*

- 1. God and men, with main historical and doctrinal references to Christianity;*
- 2. The Bible and other sources, in order to provide for knowledge on a documental basis;*
- 3. Religious language, in its verbal and non-verbal declinations;*
- 4. Ethical and religious values, in order to illustrate the link that connects religious elements with the growth of a moral dimension and the development of a civil, responsible and sympathetic coexistence.”*

Catholic Religious Education, while offering a first overview of the historical-positive elements of the Christian Revelation, encourages and follows the intellectual development and all other aspects of the person through an in-depth critical analysis of the core issues of life. The educational proposal of CRE allows reflection on the big questions related to human condition (identity research, relationship life, complexity of the reality, good and evil, value-based choices, origin and end of life, radical questions of meaning ...) and urges the comparison with the answer developed within the Christian tradition in respect of the process of personal growth and in different ways according to the specific age group, by studying in depth the anthropological, social and moral implications and by promoting a comparison through which the student, in the exercise of his/her own freedom, reflects and is oriented towards the choice of a responsible life project.

The set of Skills Development Goals and Learning Objectives related to the different school grades feature the presence (yet weak) of elements concerning the issue of “interreligious dialogue”, in particular: students are aware that the Bible is the sacred text for Christians and Jews and a fundamental document of our culture, knowing how to distinguish it from other categories of texts, including those of other religions; students are aware of events, people, and structures of the Catholic Church since its origins and compare them with those of other Christian confessions, highlighting the perspectives of the ecumenical path; students are aware of the origins and development of Christianity and other great religions and are able to identify the most important aspects of interreligious dialogue; student are able to compare the Bible with the sacred texts of other religions; students discover the answer that the Bible gives on human condition and are able to compare it to the ones of the major non-Christian religions.

At the end of the first school cycle, students should be able to interact with people with different religious beliefs, developing an identity that is open to confrontation and

dialogue. This, together with other competences, is to be achieved through the following Learning Objectives: to understand some fundamental categories of the Jewish-Christian faith (revelation, promise, covenant, messiah, resurrection, grace, Kingdom of God, salvation, ...) and compare them with those of other major religions; to identify the specific elements of the Christian prayer, also making a comparison with those of other religions; to know how to express the main reasons supporting the ethical choices of Catholics concerning affective relationships and the value of life from its beginning to its end, in a context of cultural and religious pluralism.

Some Learning Objectives link religion to the field of art and cultural heritage, in particular: to identify the biblical texts that inspired the main Italian and European artistic productions (literary, musical, pictorial ...); to recognize the expressive languages of faith (symbols, prayers, rituals, etc.) by learning to appreciate them from an artistic, cultural and spiritual point of view; to recognize the Christian message in Italian and European art and culture of the late-ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary times.

It is also worth mentioning the ambitious attempt, included in the set of Learning Objectives, to propose a non-conflicting vision of the relation between religion and science: “to consider the perspective of Christian faith and the results of science as distinct but non-conflicting interpretations of man and the world”.

Alternatively to the CRE, the regulation provides for several options: an alternative activity established by the school itself which should, as suggested by the 1986 Ministry Circulars, Nos. 128, 129, 131, and 131, address topics concerning ethics, values, tolerance and peace. This activity should be imparted by any teacher who is, at the time, available. Another option is tutoring (revision, in-depth studying) or, for high school, a study activity without the presence of any teacher, within the school premises; lastly, a very used option is the early exit from school (or delayed entry).

With regard to the first option (alternative activity established by the school itself), it is worth mentioning that some Italian schools provide themselves with ‘enhancement teachers’, who are nominated by the Regional School Office. In Liceo Classico A. Mariotti (Perugia, Umbria) for example, since the program of constitutional and civic education is often not carried out (in this case, it should be up to History and Philosophy teachers) and since a law course is not foreseen in the educational planning of the school, the headmaster along with the teaching board decided to introduce a course of constitutional and civic education addressed to those who have chosen not to attend the hour of CRE.

Other schools, especially technical institutes, opted for the implementation of technical courses, more suitable to their specific educational planning.

Religion as a discipline in Italy: the state of the debate

The main discussion in Italy is oriented along the vision that are more proper and relevant.

For some authors we can propose an ethno-historical-anthropological, religious culture, that could, as an alternative to the creation of a new discipline, be promoted by taking into account the dissemination of the different aspects of this culture in different disciplines. In this case, the disciplines that study and teach art should take care of the artistic aspects present in religions.

A second approach proposes the presence of religious culture as a "comparative study of religions". In this case, the school should guarantee a cultural approach to the phenomena that characterize Christian, Muslim, Hindu religion or other religions, and compares them to highlight the aspects of correspondence and difference, building a sort of synoptic reading of religions. In the school environment, this approach could result in religious education paths proposed in the different grades of school according to the comparative method.

A third approach proposes religious culture in the "scientific-critical-theoretical" sense, and as such it does not primarily aim to explain "how things are" but to critically consider the reasons why a certain religious culture is justified. In the case of Europe, and of Italy in particular, the discussion is addressed to the faith of Christian religion, but there's also a debate related to other religious traditions. Understanding in this way religious culture cannot stand out from confrontation with confessional theologies.

This is related to the contextual state of the art that allows to prospect the impossibility of the study of the religion, without the object of the study (religion without a religious context).

This one is the way the Italian government intends to propose for teaching this discipline in schools.

There is also a fourth approach: religious cultures can be understood in the sense of "psychogenic and philosophical-pedagogical" and the questions to which they are to answer refer to how, where and when the dimension of faith and religion is born and developed in the "man and the related accepted possibility of a free transcendence of the

transcendent in human life and in the world to make the first and the second understandable”.²

In short, the approach to a pedagogic research in term of religion as a discipline begins with a problem, but the effort to solve the problem or discuss it (because the problem is strictly related with a variety of attempts to understand the meaning of the human being) stir a plurality of suspicions or hopes that can be translated into acts. From these, the discipline takes shape, as a set of knowledge grouped according to specific criteria which, in the field of education, give rise to teaching and study religion as a subject.

In this perspective, interesting is the reflection of the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (OERC). In the text there are some first terminological definitions that trace the methods of meeting and working between disciplines. In particular, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity are defined.

Multidisciplinary is defined as juxtaposition of different disciplines, sometimes without any apparent relationship between them. Ex: music + math + history. This is the case with a problem that requires knowledge from two or more disciplinary sectors without, however, that the disciplines called to contribute are mutually modified or enriched. Somehow there is some disciplinary autonomy in solving the problem without the benefit of the discipline itself from the other disciplines involved.

Interdisciplinarity is understood as a juxtaposition of disciplines more or less close to within a certain field of knowledge. Ex .: Mathematics + physics or in the field of letters: French + Latin + Greek. In this case, it is emphasized the role of a specialist or not, a process of solving a problem, which uses external and diverse contributions from the disciplines without worrying about the issues inherent in the disciplinary elements that have proved to be useful to the predefined purpose. Focus is on solving the problem and not on the epistemological implications of the disciplines involved (CERI, Interdisciplinarity. Problems of teaching and research in universities, OCSE, Parigi 1973).

If we can divide the teaching of the religion in phase, we can propose this didactic approach stated that the inter and multi-disciplinarity is the pedagogic area in which the religion finds its conceptual place.

The first phase, Analysis of the Educational Needs, highlights, from an analysis of the Educational, Cultural and Professional Profile of the Students, the needs that the teacher points out in school. It is important at this stage to know the students, to identify the

² (G. Bertagna, Quale «cultura religiosa» nella scuola? Criteri per uno sguardo alla situazione italiana ed europea.)

personal characteristics of the students, their communication skills, the openness to the other, the expansiveness or the confidentiality of the character, the expectations that move them to the proposals of the School, the personal resources they own.

In the second phase, Identifying a Scope of Social Life and formulation of hypothesis, the teacher should pay attention to the diverse cultural and associative realities of the territory to select the particular contexts that can be configured as a means of promoting students' unified knowledge and allowing them to achieve the identified educative objective. It will be useful at this stage to have a mapping of cultural and welfare associative realities, as well as institutional ones, without which it is difficult to design a formative alternative pathway that links school and society in the specific cultural and social context . More generally, this mapping phase should involve the school institution in order to build a "database" available to any other teacher and thus have a broad view of the territory and the training opportunities that it can offer to the school

The third Phase, identifies the educative action and the impact of the educative action. In this phase the use of the storytelling as way to discuss the problematic and critic interaction between the man and the religion. The story of the Bible, or better the stories of the Bible are origin of different approaches and cultural perspectives.

This discussion can/should generate an interaction among the students and the teachers, being the religion the pivoting discipline that can bring the class to increase the awareness about the problems and the personal ethic approaches.

Conclusion

The main difference between teaching religion in schools and catholic Catechesis resides on the method and the language used and also in the formative proposal, that is very different from the "performative" announcement of catechesis. The teaching of religion is rooted in the school context.

Catechesis is a requirement of the ecclesial context. It aims at the formation of man, who welcomes the vocation of being a Christian, responding to an announcement that can involve himself in person until a totalizing membership. Teaching religion's goal is the formation of man-citizen, also through religious culture, particularly Catholic, in comparison with the different visions of the world in the community. Teaching religion proposes specific content as an opportunity to read the cultural, existential, and spiritual context in which the pupil and the family live. It is based on motivations of anthropological-social, historical-cultural, pedagogic-didactic, in interdisciplinary

dialogue. For this reason, teaching religion in order to develop a knowledge of skills, as indicated in the National Curriculum Guidelines, and to take into account the skills development goals at the end of primary school, declines them through four -modulated environments in each of the five years, respecting key competences, recommended by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2006 (2006/962 / EC).

In this context the teaching of the catholic religion is open to the presence of other believers that can contribute to the discussion about the ethical issues and find space for increasing the personal skills without changing their religion views and beliefs.

2.2 IRELAND

The system structure

The school system in Ireland is a State-funded public system. It is highly centralised. The Ministry of Education, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), is responsible for 'providing for' the education of children. The DES determines the staffing quota in each school, according to the number of learners, and operational funding is provided by way of annual capitation grants. Additional teachers and capitation are provided to schools located in low-socioeconomic status communities. There is a small number of notably elite 'private schools' in the larger urban areas, but these are funded by the State to the same level as other schools. Teachers' salaries are set centrally, as part of national public service wages agreements, and salaries are paid from the budget of the DES.

A key issue is the way in which Church and State co-exist in the sphere of education. The majority of schools at primary level (95%) and a significant percentage of second-level schools are under the control of the Church (mainly the Catholic Church). There have been efforts made by the Churches to control the governance of education in Ireland since the establishment of the national school system in 1831. A distinctive feature of the Irish Constitution (1937) is that this seminal document incorporated many Catholic principles. Under the model of Catholic social theory that prevailed at the time, parents were explicitly given the right and responsibility to educate their children:

The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.³

The role of the State is thus framed as being subordinate to that of the parents, and is confined 'to provide for free primary education' and 'to intervene where parents neglect their rights and obligations'.

The marginalisation of the State's role in education resulted in the State providing financial support while the Church, acting on behalf of the people, attended to all other aspects of running State schools.⁴ To a significant degree, this structure still prevails: the DES pays for teachers' salaries, most of the buildings and maintenance, while the patron (usually the local bishop) has responsibility for the running of the school. The board of management (the governors) oversees

³ Government of Ireland (1937) Article 42.1.

⁴ Walsh, J. (2009).

the school on behalf of the patron and is accountable to the patron and the Minister for Education and Skills. The board must uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, and is accountable to the patron for so doing. The principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including providing guidance and direction to the teachers and other staff of the school, and is accountable to the board. In practice, the running of the school is left in the hands of the principal. Therefore, at one level, schools have a significant level of autonomy. Increasingly, however, schools argue that this autonomy has been eroded by a number of agencies whose role is directly or indirectly to monitor, frame or redefine aspects of the education system.

The diversity dilemma

The lack of religious diversity in the school system is currently the subject of considerable controversy.⁵ The long-time link between Church and State in the area of education is coming under pressure. Although, historically, the population of Ireland was mainly White and Catholic, a significant demographic change occurred during the years of rapid economic growth that became known as the Celtic Tiger (1990–2006). During this period, the demographic profile changed dramatically in respect of ethnicity, nationality and, most notably in the case of schools, religious diversity. The percentage of the population who identified as Catholic on the 2016 census has fallen sharply, from 84.2 per cent in 2011 to 78.3 per cent in 2016. There has been a corresponding rise in the number with no religion, which grew by 73.6 per cent, from 269,800 to 468,400, an increase of 198,600. This changed demographic creates a demand for a more religiously diverse school system. The decreasing level of religiosity among teachers compounds the issue. This is all happening at a time when the Church is seeking to establish a more traditional view of a Catholic school that is very explicitly modelled on Catholic values.⁶

The primary sector

Table 5 provides an overview of the patterns of patronage at primary level. Broadly speaking, there are now six main groupings:

1. *Catholic schools.*

⁵ Heinz et al. (2018).

⁶ Grace, G. (2009).

2. *Minority faith schools*: these include Church of Ireland schools, Muslim schools and Presbyterian schools.
3. *Educate Together schools*: A significant ‘bottom-up’ movement by parents for the establishment of multidenominational schools began in the early seventies. The first such school opened in 1978 in Dalkey, Co. Dublin, followed by the Bray School project in 1981 and the North Dublin School project in 1984. This was not a straightforward or easy process, and the parent groups establishing schools encountered various forms of opposition. Over time, this momentum was coordinated by a group called Educate Together, formed in 1984. The movement gathered momentum, and there are now 58 multidenominational schools under the co-ordination of Educate Together.
4. *Community National Schools (CNS)*: This model of primary-school patronage is a recent policy initiative by the State. The first two pilot schools began operating in 2008. The model offers an alternative to the State’s traditional reliance on private-sector patron initiatives for the establishment of primary schools. The model is currently under the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills and the Education and Training Board (ETB). There are now five pilot CNS schools. A distinctive feature of the schools is their multidenominational character, whereby they aim to cater for children with a variety of belief systems, including those whose parents do not wish their children to receive faith-specific teaching.
5. *Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium schools)*: Another ‘bottom-up’ movement took place in the seventies, driven by parents who wished their children to be educated through the medium of Irish. They established *naonraí* for the young children and *gaelscoileanna* for children of national school age. An Forás Patrúnachta has established the patronage rights for all Irish-medium schools. Schools under its aegis operate as denominational, interdenominational or multidenominational, depending on the wishes of the parents.
6. *Other school types*: A very small number of schools with various patronage.

Table: Overall profile of patronage of primary schools 2016/2017⁷

Ethos/Patronage of school	No. of schools

⁷ Department of Education and Science (2017).

Roman Catholic	2,820
Church of Ireland	168
Presbyterian	17
Methodist	1
Quaker	2
Islamic	2
Jewish	1
TOTAL faith-based schools	2,993 (95.8%)
Interdenominational	19 (0.6%)
Multidenominational	111 (3.5%)
(Educate Together	67)
(Others, under Educate Together	11)
(Irish-medium schools – <i>An Foras Patrúnachta</i>	17)
(Lifeways Ireland	3)
(Friends of Killashee Ltd	1)
(John Scotus Trust	1)
TOTAL Non-faith-based schools	130 (4.2%)
TOTAL number of schools (primary)	3,123

Despite the changes in school patronage, the Catholic Church retains responsibility for the vast majority of schools.

The second-level sector

The issue of ethos/patronage takes a different form in the second-level system, as summarised in Table 6. In the past, there were two main sectors contributing to second-level education: the voluntary-school sector (religious owned and managed); and the State-run vocational sector. Over the years, through amalgamations and other forms of reorganisation, different types of school have emerged. Many remain under the patronage of trusts set up by the Churches and/or the religious orders. Some of the other, more secular types of schools have religious representation on the boards and may also have a chaplain aligned to the main faith group in the school.

There are four broad types of second-level schools:

Voluntary secondary schools: Historically, these schools were religious owned, almost like private schools, but they received State funding. In the early stages of second-level education, voluntary secondary schools were the only provider of second-level education. With the decline in the number of religious vocations, the number of religious working in these schools has dropped dramatically. In recent times, the governance of this group of schools has been handed over to a number of different trust bodies whose function it is to ensure that the ethos of the school and its core educational and religious mission prevail.

1. *Vocational schools:* A system of vocational schools set up by the State in the 1950s, vehemently opposed by the Church authorities.
2. *Community schools:* often resulting from an amalgamation between a voluntary secondary school and a vocational school, often aligned with one religious group.
3. *Comprehensive schools.*

The Table below provides a summary of the number of schools in each group.

Ethos/patronage of school	No. of schools
Voluntary secondary (mainly Roman Catholic)	374 (53%)
Vocational (State sector)	241 (34%)

Community schools (often resulting from an amalgamation between a voluntary secondary school and a vocational school (often aligned with one religious group)	82 (11%)
Comprehensive	14 (2%)
TOTAL number of schools (second-level)	711

1.1.1. Schools and changing demographics

The pattern of ownership and governance of schools no longer reflects the diversity of Irish society. In some urban centres where it has been practical, consequently possible, to provide a level of school choice to children of different religious backgrounds, a number of models of school have developed, yet these changes go nowhere near meeting the demand across the country. Table 7 below provides an overview of the changing demographics with respect to religious beliefs in Irish society, comparing census data from 2006 to 2011.

Population by religion – Demographic changes 2006–2011⁸

Religion	2006	2011	% change
	000s	000s	
Roman Catholic	3,861.3	3,729.1	-3.4
Church of Ireland	129.0	126.4	-2.0
Muslim (Islamic)	49.2	63.4	28.9
Orthodox	35.2	62.2	37.5
Christian	41.2	37.4	-9.1
Presbyterian	24.6	24.2	-1.6
Hindu	10.7	14.3	34.1
Apostolic/Pentecostal	14.0	13.4	-4.9
Other	70.2	97.7	39.1

⁸ Central Statistics Office (2017).

No religion	268.8	468.4	73.6
Not stated	72.9	125.3	71.8

Most non-urban areas have a student population that is only sufficient to warrant a single primary school. For example, almost 1,500 of the 3,100 primary schools have fewer than six teachers. In almost all of these cases the student population is served by a local Catholic primary school. A nationwide effort for five years to bring about change has had little impact. In many cases, children who do not subscribe to the dominant religion of the school have no choice but to attend the local school and ‘exempt themselves’ from religion time, which often results in sitting in the class doing another activity. Like schools in many countries, pre-existing anomalies have been overlaid by new concerns that, in the Irish context, relate mainly to Islamophobia and patterns of intersectionality between class, race and religion.

The current situation, with respect to the mismatch between the profile of schools and population trends, has been the subject of frequent criticism, both nationally and internationally, as risking the rights of citizens in a more culturally and religiously diverse society.⁹

Religious instruction

Under Article 44 of the Constitution, all parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious instruction or, in the case of a student who is 18 or more, the student may withdraw him/herself. Under legislation currently in development, schools will be required to publish an enrolment policy that will clarify the school’s arrangements for upholding the constitutional right of parents for their children not to attend religious instruction. Different schools have different ways of facilitating withdrawal. In larger schools, it may be possible to stagger religion classes so that pupils who wish to opt out can move to another class at the same grade to follow the curriculum in that class. The logistics of such an arrangement depend on the numbers wishing to move class and the number of classes available. Where the school does not have the facilities or the staff to facilitate such withdrawal, the pupil may remain in the classroom yet not participate in the lesson. The withdrawal of learners or alternative curricular provision is usually viewed

⁹ Faas, D., Darmody, M. & Sokolowska, B. (2016); Tuohy, D. (2013).

as a better option. However, in most cases there are insufficient staff to supervise children who have been withdrawn from the class and so these options are not possible. Consequently, in most cases pupils remain in the class while religious instruction is taking place, doing schoolwork or other work. Some read or have online lessons, in some cases about their own beliefs and traditions.

Forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary sector

In a government-led initiative to address the lack of faith diversity in the system, the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established in 2011. It consulted widely on the issues arising, and in 2012 a report recommended steps to ensure that the education system at primary level could provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none.

The recommendations covered four broad areas:

1. Planning towards future patronage arrangements and having a more diverse range of patronage types for new schools in areas of rising population.
2. The practicalities of achieving divesting of patronage where there is a stable population and a demand for diversity of school types.
3. Irish language provision.
4. The creation of a more inclusive culture in schools.

A follow-up paper published in 2014 gave an update on progress in implementing the recommendations, with a particular focus on the issue of inclusion and diversity in schools. The paper also provided an update on progress in implementing recommendations on new schools, divesting of patronage, enrolment legislation and developing a programme, Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. The updated report gives details of a number of practices and exemplars of good practice.

The paper does not set out to be prescriptive, recognising that each school has its own ethos and operates in a particular context. Therefore, it encourages schools to consider their own practices critically and to consult meaningfully with their own communities and stakeholders in formulating policies and developing practice. Consequently, there is little by way of direction in terms of ensuring that the outcomes for the diverse body of learners will take place. Perhaps it is the lack of legislative support or firm direction that

leads to a reluctance to place demands on the system. Instead, the primacy of the right of each school to determine its ethos is reemphasised. Considering the acute lack of diversity in the system and the role of the Forum in helping to challenge and improve practice, it is regrettable that the outcome is so laissez faire, particularly when the key areas identified are so central to the operation of schools and the experiences of learners.

The Minister for Education and Skills published three Report Stage amendments to the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, which will have a historic impact on how children access their local primary school. This development fulfils a key action in the Minister's Action Plan for Education, to remove the role of religion as the key determinant of school admissions, including ensuring that oversubscribed schools can no longer discriminate or select on the grounds of religion. This became law on 29 May 2018. The amendment will remove religion as a criterion that can be used in school admissions in over 95 per cent of primary schools. Under the new law, there will be protection to ensure that a child of a minority faith can still access a school of their faith, fundamentally changing the balance between the rights of three groups: minority religion families; Catholic families; and nondenominational families. How these changes will play out is yet to be seen.

2.3 CYPRUS

The Cypriot context

Cyprus is a young democracy that became an independent republic in 1960. It is a small island situated at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Turkey, west of Lebanon, north of Egypt, and south-east of Greece. Cyprus has always demonstrated a unique historical context because of its strategic geographical location at the crossroads of civilisations and faiths that has led to a continuous situation of conflict and conquest. Additionally, the social landscape of Cyprus has been radically transformed in the past six decades, making the Cyprus context an important and interesting site to examine interculturalism and interfaith diversity. The partition of the island in 1974 caused the physical division of the two constitutionally-recognised communities of the island: the Turkish-Cypriots moved in the North, while the Greek-Cypriots were relocated in the South. Armenians, Maronites and Latins, which are the constitutionally-recognised religious minorities of the country, were affiliated to the Greek-Cypriot community, while the Turkish-speaking Roma (Gypsies of Cyprus) were affiliated to the Turkish-Cypriot community. Last but not least, over the last two decades, the arrival of migrants to the island has resulted in the phenomenon of ‘super diversity’ (due to the unprecedented plethora of cultures, identities, religions, and statuses). The notion of ‘super diversity’ functions as an apparatus for observing complex societies and highlights the drastic changes a country is undergoing. It focuses on the changing nature of diversity and the multiplication of factors, a phenomenon which distinguishes today’s urban societies from preceding demographic conditions.

Arguably, Cyprus has historically been a site representing interfaith diversity. However, despite of the culturally- and religious-diverse character of Cyprus society, the previously described situation of conflict led to the development of a rather nationalistic education system combating against any efforts of intercultural development and interfaith exchange until very recently. Moreover, the paternalistic stereotypical stances towards who is perceived as the “Religious Other” still persist in the Cyprus context and society and thus make the development of interfaith curricula of Religious Education a rather daunting and difficult task. Last but not least, the Church’s intervention in the political life and school system further challenges such an endeavour. What we therefore argue is that in the Cyprus context there is an urgent need to develop students’ critical thinking skills on religious diversity through interfaith curricula of RE that build upon

creative and innovative teaching and learning methodologies, as those proposed to be used by the LIFE TWO project.

The educative system: general background

There are four levels of pre-higher education in Cyprus, namely pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and higher secondary schools. Pre-primary schools are usually private and attendance is not compulsory; pupils of an age level between 3-5 years of age may attend pre-primary schools. Attendance in primary schools is compulsory for all five-year-olds. Primary education lasts for six years, leading to a Leaving Certificate. Public general secondary education also lasts for six years; it is divided, however, in two three-year cycles. Pupils between 12-15 years of age have to attend Gymnasiums which offer lower secondary education; attendance is compulsory. Pupils over 15 years of age may choose to follow higher secondary education in Lyceums; higher secondary education is not compulsory. In parallel to Lyceums, there is also a vocational and technical stream.

State schools are generally considered as equivalent (or better) in quality of education to private sector institutions; thus, state schools are attended by the great majority of pupils. However, there are several private schools which are also attended by students, both for primary and secondary education purposes; the language of instruction in private schools is not Greek, but usually English. It should be noted that while a high-school leaving certificate is mandatory for admission in the University of Cyprus and Greek universities, high school grades are completely ignored; admission is decided on the basis of scores at centrally administered university entrance examinations, which are large ignore high school grades for admission purposes that all university candidates are required to take. Such entrance examinations are largely based upon the curriculum taught in public schools and are conducted in Greek; consequently, it is considered that only graduates of public schools of secondary education may be competitive for entrance at the University of Cyprus or Greek Universities. If a student attends a private school, this essentially means that he will have to study to one of the three private Cypriot Universities (University of Nicosia, European University and Frederick University) or to universities in England or other countries besides Greece.

Lyceums have been restructured following the school year 2000-2001 and the now restructured Eniaio Lykeio offers more variety and flexibility in the choice of studies, rather than before when each student had to choose a selected stream (e.g. emphasis on classical courses, or science courses). The Eniaio Lykeio focuses upon general education, more similarly to what occurs in both primary and lower secondary education.

The Orthodox Church of Cyprus showed a considerable interest in education during the Turkish and British rule of Cyprus; the Church considered that education was closely related to religion and the maintenance of the Greek Orthodox character of the island under foreign rule.¹ Education in Cyprus remained closely connected with religion in the early years following independence; education was one of the areas within the competences of the Greek and Turkish Communal Chamber respectively and thus, while Turkish education was pre - dominantly associated with Islamic religion, Greek education was connected to the Orthodox Christian religion. In addition, the three religious groups of the Republic were assisted in maintaining their own religious education.

Consequently, Orthodox religion was an integral part of the curriculum, and no person of another religion could teach at a Greek elementary school. Most schools were established by the Church, which donated great amounts of money in order to support the proper functioning of primary and secondary schools. During the British rule, Archbishop Makarios III established the Educational Council of the Ethnarchy, which coordinated the educational activities of the Greek schools.

Undoubtedly, the influence of the Orthodox Church in the curriculum has lessened after Independence; non - Orthodox, or atheists may well be appointed as teachers in Cypriot schools, while the Orthodox religion is no longer considered as an integral part of the curriculum, as it used to. In view of the fact that the Church no longer felt that Cyprus's identity was threatened because of foreign rule, the Republic followed international standards with respect to providing secular education. Consequently, education in state schools has been completely secularised, with the exception of religious education. However, the Church still maintains a limited role with respect to educational activities, since school festivities often relate to Christianity, such as the celebration of Easter, or Christmas. In addition, students collectively go to church with their school three or four times a year, in order to participate in school worship. Furthermore, the first class of the day usually begins with a collective prayer.

Religiously Motivated Behavior in Public Schools - Education and Religion

Article 20 of the Constitution provides that every person has the right to receive, and every person or institution has the right to give instruction or education subject to such formalities, conditions or restrictions as are in accordance with the relevant communal law and are necessary only in the interests of the security of the Republic or the constitutional order or the public safety or the public order or the public health or the public morals or the standard and quality of education or for the protection of the rights

and liberties of others including the right of the parents to secure for their children such education as is in conformity with their religious convictions. Similarly, Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that no person shall be denied the right to education and that in the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. The stipulation that the parents have the right to secure for their children the education which conforms to their religious convictions, aims at safeguarding the possibility of pluralism in education. The State is forbidden to pursue an aim of indoctrination which might be considered as not respecting the parents' religious convictions (*Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark*, Judgment of 7 December 1976; (1979 – 1980) 1 EHRR 711, *Valsamis v. Greece*, Judgment of 18 December 1996; (1997) 24 EHRR 294).

Despite the declared neutrality towards religion, state schools often engage in practices which promote the Orthodox Christian religion. Benedictions of school buildings are considered as a tradition, and the first class of the school day normally begins with a collective prayer. Similarly, collective prayers may be held in major school events. The walls of public schools may well contain religious symbols, such as the crucifix, or icons of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, twice or three times a year all students attend collectively religious services in the nearest Orthodox Church.

The Doctrinal Character of Religious Education

Religious lessons given in primary and secondary schools follow the doctrine of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In secondary education, the courses are given by graduates of university schools of divinity, while in primary education they are given by the class teacher. Attendance is compulsory for Orthodox pupils; atheists or members of other religions, however, may be excused. In the 1996 Curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the subject of religious education is under the title 'Christian Orthodox Education' and it is provided that the aim of the lesson is to enable the students to realise that they are members of the Christian Orthodox Church, to learn the fundamental truths of Christianity and to experience a loving relationship with God. According to the Curriculum pupils should be assisted to understand the presence of God throughout history and the apocalypse of God as an answer to the fundamental questions of human existence; they should experience the figure and teachings of Jesus Christ and experience the Christian way of love towards all people, regardless of colour, religion and race.

It is further provided that pupils ought to be introduced to the basic aspects of other religions and develop a critical attitude towards them, so as to become able to understand and respect the religious beliefs of others. Orthodox education should provide pupils, according to the Curriculum, with the skills to appreciate the meaning of the Orthodox ethics, traditions and prayer, and the beneficial influence of the Church to the development and progress of civilisation. In addition to the above, Orthodox education should develop the understanding of the collective worships of the Church and encourage the students to participate in such worships and teach them to respect the value and importance of the various ecclesiastical monuments. It should also promote each individual's responsibilities for the continuation of the Orthodox faith and way of life (Ministry of Education, *The National Curriculum of Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1996, in Greek): 128 (in Greek). See also M. Krasia, 'Religious Education in Cyprus', available in www.mmiweb.org.uk/eftre/reeurope/cyprus_re.doc, November, 2008.)

Some of the textbooks used in Cypriot schools are edited by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus, while some other textbooks are edited by the Ministry of Education of Greece. The aims of religious education in the Greek curriculum are nearly identical to the aims of religious education in the Cypriot curriculum, namely to teach the pupils the Christian Orthodox way of life, tradition and values, to develop their religious identity and to enrich their relationship with God. In addition Orthodox education in Greece aims to teach children the meaning, the symbols and tradition of the Orthodox faith, the meaning of the Gospels and the moral and spiritual values of Orthodox Christianity.

There is not a possibility of religious education for members of other religions in public schools, with the exception of Maronites and Turkish Cypriots; the religious instruction of Maronite children who attend public schools is taught by Maronite priests who receive a monthly salary by the state. Similarly, where there is an adequate number, Turkish Cypriot pupils may be religiously educated in their mother language and in their own religion, even in Greek - speaking schools. The fact that the State cannot offer religious education consistent with every single individual religion or creed is not of course surprising; the great majority of pupils in each non Turkish public school adhere to the Orthodox Christian religion and thus, it would be practically unfeasible for the State to provide religious education which would meet the demands of all parents. This is why the State has opted to assist children belonging to religious groups to attend private schools of their choice, if they so desire, and further why non Orthodox Christians pupils may request to be exempted from religious education, including collective worship.

2.4 SPAIN

The basic legal framework governing Religious Education in School

The basic legal framework governing Religious Education in School (RES) and the justification of its presence in the Spanish education system is defined in the following regulations:

- **Spanish constitution of 1978**, according to which *“the public authorities guarantee the right of parents to ensure that their children receive religious and moral instruction in accordance with their own convictions”*. Additionally, it is established that this religious and moral instruction in accordance with one’s own convictions shall be included in formal education. In this sense, parents’ right to choose on the religious and moral education their children shall receive is derived from the right to religious freedom itself and from educational rights, namely, the fundamental right to education and to freedom of education.
- **International treaties** - The International Treaty with the Catholic Church, establishes a regulation in educational institutions, which is included in the Agreement between the Spanish Government and the Holy See concerning Education and Cultural Affairs, signed in Vatican City on January 3rd, 1979. This agreement has been legally considered as an international treaty, since the Holy See has international legal personality. There are also Agreements with Islam, Evangelism, Judaism.
- **Organic law on Religious Freedom** - Religious freedom guaranteed by the constitution includes everybody’s right to choose the religious and moral education for themselves and for incapacitated minors in accordance with their own convictions.
- **Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May**, on Education, consolidated by the **Organic Law 8/2013, 9 December**, on the Improvement of the Quality of Education holds that Catholic religious education shall be adjusted to the Agreement concerning Education and Cultural Affairs between the Spanish Government and the Holy See. That is why Catholic religious education shall be included as an area or subject in the corresponding educational stage, and it shall be compulsorily offered by educational centres and taken voluntarily by the students.
- **Agreements with Religious Faiths** - Catholic Church, Evangelism, Islam, Judaism:
 - International treaties: Catholic Church; the regulation on Catholic religious education in educational institutions is included in the agreement between

the Spanish Government and the Holy See; Educational plans shall include the teaching of catholic religion in all Educational Centres but Religious Education shall not be obligatory for all students.

- Agreements with organic law status: Islam, evangelism, Judaism; students, their parents and those school organisms so requesting, shall be guaranteed the right to receive religious classes in public and private schools. Religious education shall be imparted by teachers designated by the Churches. The contest of religious education shall be determined by the respective communities.

Further, **Royal Decree 696/2007, 1 June**, establishes the employment relationships of Religious Education teachers provided by the third Additional Provision of the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.

The following requirements shall be fulfilled to teach Religious Education:

- Hold the same qualifications, or equivalent, required to government-employed school teachers in compliance with the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.
- Recommendation by the religious authority to teach Religious Education.
- Provide determination of suitability or equivalent certification, prior to the teacher's employment by the competent authority.

Religions and Multiculturalism within school programs:

Royal Decree 696/2007, 1 June, establishes the employment relationships of Religious Education teachers provided by the third Additional Provision of the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.

The following requirements shall be fulfilled to teach Religious Education:

- Hold the same qualifications, or equivalent, required to government-employed school teachers in compliance with the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.
- Recommendation by the religious authority to teach Religious Education.
- Provide determination of suitability or equivalent certification, prior to the teacher's employment by the competent authority.

Catholic Religious Education (CRE) According to the Agreement on the economic and labour related system for teachers not employed by the government in charge of Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary

Education, the State finances the teaching of CRE in Public Schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. Teachers of Catholic Religious Education shall be remunerated in accordance with the salaries of interim teachers at the educational stage.

Teachers in charge of Catholic Religious Education shall provide service under the recruitment system with a full-time or part-time fixed-term contract coinciding with the academic year. They shall be included under the general social security scheme, to which teachers of Early Childhood and Primary Education schools shall be incorporated. To this effect, the employer shall be the corresponding Education Authority.

Evangelical and Muslim Religious Education Teachers shall depend on the corresponding religious authorities. Additionally, these authorities shall be able to determine the system of these teachers, in accordance with the specific service they provide. The State shall pay the religious authorities for the services provided by individuals teaching RES in public primary and secondary schools. The Spanish law holds that the students who choose not to attend religious education shall take an alternative subject, this way ensuring the non-discrimination of the students that receive religious education.

As for Primary Education (which comprises six years), every academic year students shall take one of the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects: Religious Education or Social and Civic Values, at parents' or legal guardians' choice.

As for Compulsory Secondary Education, Every academic year students shall take one of the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects: Religious Education or Ethical Values, at parents' or legal guardians' choice or, if applicable, at the student's choice.

In High School during the 1st year students shall take one the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects:

- Physical Education.
- Depending on the regulation and the syllabus of the courses available established by each Education Authority and, where appropriate, on the courses available in each educational centre, a minimum of two and a maximum of three subjects among the following:

Subjects available during 1st year

Musical Analysis I	Applied Anatomy	Scientific Culture	Artistic Drawing I	Technical Drawing I	Musical Language & Practice
---------------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	--

Religious Education	Second Foreign Language I	Industrial Technology I	Information & Communication Technologies I	Volume	One subject from the area of core subjects not previously taken by the student
----------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------	---	---------------	---

During the 2nd year depending on the regulation and the syllabus of the courses available established by each Education Authority and, where appropriate, on the courses available in each educational centre, a minimum of two and a maximum of three subjects among the following:

Subjects available during 2nd year

Musical Analysis II	Earth & Environmental Sciences	Artistic Drawing II	Technical Drawing II	Basics of Administration and Management	History of Philosophy
History of Music & Dancing	Audiovisual Communications	Psychology	Religious Education	Second Foreign Language II	Graphic and Plastic Expression Techniques
Industrial Technology II	Information & Communication Technologies II	One subject from the area of core subjects not previously taken by the student, which shall be considered as a specific subject for all intents and purposes			

The basic regulation and organization of religious education depends on whether it is Catholic religious education or Evangelical and/or Muslim.

Catholic Religious Education (CRE) It is compulsorily offered by the school centres and voluntarily taken by the students. The ecclesiastical hierarchy shall be responsible for determining the contents of Catholic religious education, as well as suggesting textbooks and instructional materials for this purpose. The Spanish government assumes the funding of Catholic religious education in public schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. In this case, the teachers are designated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which can revoke suitability and put an end to the working relationship with the Government. Thus there is an alternative subject in Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, but there is no alternative subject in High School.

Muslim and Evangelical Religious Education The students' parents or guardians, or the students themselves if they are over eighteen, shall voluntarily express to the headmaster their wish to attend religious education at the beginning of every educational stage or when they first enroll in the center, although the decision may be modified at the beginning of every academic year. The religious authority shall be responsible for determining the contents of religious education, as well as suggesting textbooks and instructional materials for this purpose. Before the beginning of every academic year, the religious authority shall inform the corresponding Education Authority who the suitable persons to teach Religious Education at different educational stages are. The teachers in these cases depend on the corresponding religious authorities that have designated them. Likewise these authorities shall be authorized to establish the labour system of the teachers, in accordance with the specific nature of the service provided.

RES classes shall be paid by the State when the number of students attending RES classes is equal to or larger than ten. Every year, the Spanish government shall transfer the total amount resulting from the application of the previous clause for the service provided during the preceding academic year by the teachers of Religious Education who are not government-employed schoolteachers. As in the case of Catholic religious education, there is an alternative subject in Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, but there is no alternative subject in High School.

It is interesting to highlight that Jewish Religious Education is neither regulated nor taught in public schools in Spain.

As for how many hours are taught depending on school level, each autonomous community establishes, in conformity with the State's basic regulation, the timetables for each subject. Timetables regarding the autonomous community of Aragon are presented below. Timetables are the same for all RES.

Times for RES in Aragon

Educational Level	Time	Grades
Primary Education	45 minutes of class every academic year	from 1st to 6 th grade
Compulsory Secondary Education	1 hour of class every academic year	from 1st to 4 th grade
High School	1 hour of class every academic year	from 1st to 2 nd grade

2.5 THE NETHERLANDS

The secularised Netherlands

Like many western European countries, the Netherlands is a pluralistic, multi-religious and secularised country. With its origin in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, the Netherlands nowadays has religious percentages as presented and as compared to world figures below

	The Netherlands (%)	World (%)
No religion	49	12
Christian	40	33
Muslim	5	22
Hindu	0.5	14
Buddhist	0.5	7
Other religion	5	12

Sources: The Netherlands: Schmeets and van Mensvoort (2015). The World: Johnsons and Grim (2013).

Over the last decades, there has been a decline of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in the Netherlands. Hellemans calls the decline the third stage of main churches: 'far reaching secularization and increasing marginalization of the main churches without the rise of new churches or groups to fill up the void. [...] these countries are tending towards becoming "post-Christian" in the near future' (Hellemans and Jonkers 2015).

The place of youth in today's Dutch society is not very different from the rest of Western Europe. Different types of Dutch research describe today's youth in Western Europe. As an initial description, some recent publications (Boschma and Groen 2006; Smith and Lindquist Denton 2005; Savage et al. 2006; Spangenberg and Lampert 2009; Collins-Mayo et al. 2010; Dijk-Groeneboer 2010; D'Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier 2013) will be used to characterise 'today's youth', a generation that is sometimes called Generation Y, Generation Einstein, the Millennials, or the Boundless Generation. By doing so, a basic sketch is made of youth in the twenty-first century.

In *The Faith of Generation Y* (2010), Collins-Mayo et al. report a study in England of over 300 young people between the ages of 18 and 23. Two main conclusions provide insight into the religion of today's youth. First, young people have not inherited the rebellious hostility to religion and church as seen in their parents' generation. Secondly, for many

youth religion is simply irrelevant to everyday living. In Australia similar descriptions were established by Rossiter (2010): 'as if it [this cultural-religious framework, MvD] no longer existed; or it has little influence on their thinking' (130).

Findings from these studies suggest that for most young people faith is found primarily in family, friends and themselves as individuals, which is defined as 'immanent faith'. The research shows that they do not miss having knowledge of faith or going to church. They do not know anything about religion or church, and therefore have no idea what this means for their development. Rossiter (2011) states: 'Most young people [...] just appear uninterested in religion; what they are interested in is feel-good experience and lifestyle' (59). I will discuss this in the final paragraph about being a religious educator in the Netherlands.

Education in the Netherlands

We will now focus on the educational situation in the Netherlands. Education and society are interdependent to each other in a double way. Developments in education are implemented to cause changes in society, and also the other way around: due to societal changes, education changes. However, there is always a cultural lag between developments. For example, the focus of a changing political programme may be outdated by the time the educational system is finalising its part of the programme. Establishing economic growth, reducing criminality and enhancing the health and well-being of people are main purposes in Dutch politics nowadays, and therefore also in educational programmes.

In Dutch society in the twenty-first century, one can easily recognise a meritocratic (Deelrapport 2008, 24) way of reasoning. At the end of the twentieth century, primary school children's personal capacities and achievements determined which educational level they were allowed to enter next. Nowadays, however, the selection of pupils in secondary school types, and especially students in higher education, is based more and more on merits, talent and effort. Therefore, it looks as if anyone who puts effort into it, can enter the educational level of his or her choice. According to this line of reasoning, those who do not achieve this level do not have the abilities or did not put enough effort into it. One can easily predict what this will do to the motivation of pupils who do not make it to higher educational levels.

Many skills that were needed in centuries past, such as critical thinking and problem solving, are even more relevant today. Yet the way in which these skills are learned and

practiced in the twenty-first century is rapidly shifting. There are also new skills to master, such as digital media literacy, that were not even imagined fifty years ago. The twenty-first century skills that are nowadays introduced in secondary schools include learning and innovation skills (communications, creativity, innovation), digital literacy skills (information and media literacy) and career and life skills (flexibility, initiative, social and cross-cultural interaction and leadership), including values and behaviours such as curiosity, caring, confidence and courage. (Trilling and Fadel 2009) These developments should be taken into account when thinking about today's religious education.

Catholic education in the Netherlands

When we look at the religious background of schools, it seems as if the secularisation process is hardly taking place at all. In the Netherlands, nearly all secondary schools are confessional, being either Roman Catholic or Protestant (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag/Heerlen Statline, 2016).

Public	184
Protestant	133
Catholic	153
Other non-public	185

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag/Heerlen Statline 9-12-2016

But what does it still mean to be a Catholic school? Parents do not choose a school for its religious identity, but much more for its accessibility and quality of education. In 2000, over 40% of non-religious parents chose a school with a religious identity, whereas 20% of religious parents chose public or non-confessional schools.

In our research among pupils at confessional schools, which I will discuss later, we found that the main reasons to choose a school were location (40%), reputation (36%) and atmosphere (30%). The school's identity was seldom mentioned; only 8% of Christian pupils gave this as a reason. As it was possible to provide more than one answer to this question, these figures show that choosing a school based on confession did not play any part in their choice at all.

Secondary school' students and their perception of religion beliefs

Having described Dutch society, the educational system, and the identity of the schools, let us now focus on the pupils that religious educators deal with. What do we know about these young people aged 14 to 18? Do they regard themselves as religious? Are they active in church? What values do they consider important in their lives?

During these years of formation, young people develop and go through major changes. Their bodies grow from child to adolescent, and at the same time they mentally grow into adulthood. For example, they prepare to move from secondary school into college or university, or they start thinking about their future jobs. They also start thinking about the transition from living at home with their parents to moving out into the world and becoming autonomous. Their search for relationships is very important in these years, and spending time with peers is their main way of dealing with the many changes and challenges they experience. There are many choices to be made, and as a result of globalisation and the Internet, the entire world is now available to choose from.

The group that calls itself Christian has only 16% of Roman Catholics, with the other 20% being Protestant or of another Christian faith. When teaching religious education, teachers have to be aware of the fact that most pupils are not religious, especially not Roman Catholic, and therefore often know nothing about the Roman Catholic faith, tradition, rituals and so on. We can call these pupils religiously analphabetic; there is at least a need for teaching them *about* religion. I will discuss this more in-depth later on.

As we have seen, these pupils do not automatically come from the same religious background, in contrast to what the formal identity of the school suggests. I underline here what Rossiter (2010) states that 'helping young people learn how to identify, interpret and evaluate contemporary spiritual/moral issues need to become a more prominent part of religious education, especially in the senior years' (130).

Let us now focus on the identity and religion of these pupils, the things they value, and their sources of inspiration before jumping to suggestions for their religious education.

Possible strategies for religious education

Keeping this typology in mind, what can be done as a religious educator in a secularised classroom with these types of pupils? The diversity is large, for instance regarding their

knowledge *about* religions. Only the Fortissimo's are familiar with religion, but mostly just their own, without knowing much about other religions. The other groups, especially the Legatos and Tranquillos, know next to nothing about religions, so there is a task for teachers to educate *about* religion. For it has great meaning for pupils to realise that 'religions provide important values reference points for questioning the authenticity if media-conditioned imaginations of the world and of human development that have such a strong influence on young people' (Rossiter 2011, 64).

Our empirical research shows that pupils say they want to believe but do not know how. They even sometimes call themselves religious nevertheless. Would it not be wonderful to start a dialogue about these doubts and questions in the classroom? As Rossiter (2010) also advised: focus on the needs of this contemporary spirituality (141/3), and it even can be called religious in their perspective. Pupils think it important to be a good human being, to enjoy life and have happy relationships. Teachers should talk about these values in the classroom and show which traditions offer a solid base to build upon and can help them achieve the goals in life that they value. Rossiter (2011) calls this the need to include a search for the spiritual and moral dimensions in experience and events (60); review your life, clarify personal values and offering a spiritual/moral viewpoint that could be beneficial for them personally (61). Music for instance can be used to start this dialogue, for many of the pupils in our research admit that this helps them when dealing with feelings of sadness.

Furthermore, the twenty-first century skills specifically include social and cross-cultural skills. Today's society is looking for people with self-confidence, who are strong and can deal with all the choices that must be made in our globalised world. Values such as caring, confidence and courage can easily be taught during religious education classes, for religion is all about these values. Listening to each other, in the diversity of the classroom, will be the best way to practice real-life communication with all the twenty-first century skills needed.

This brings us to our main advice for religion teachers in the secularised Netherlands, based on our research and the societal changes of today. One has to enter into dialogue with pupils, as has been pointed out by several authors. I will quote Professor Gerald Grace when he spoke about this at Heythrop College on the 23rd of June 2015:

If you want your teachers to have impact on young people, you have to support their programme to be witnesses, renew their internal spiritual resources and keep them inspired!

Grace (2018) uses the word ‘spiritual capital’ in this perspective, which ‘draws upon theological literacy but adds to it the dimension of a personal witness to faith in practice, action and relationships [...], a form of personal empowerment [...]: the sustaining resource for everyday leadership in Christian living and working’ (120). When a teacher tells pupils about his own religious narratives, for example by sharing a part of his own biography that has made him the teacher he is with the values he treasures, he will challenge pupils to do exactly the same. Professor Bert Roebben writes about this in his latest book (Roebben 2018) and calls it ‘inclusive religious education’ and ‘going on a journey with your pupils’(34–38). Instead of pointing pupils to where they can find knowledge *about* religions, a teacher travels with them and, through narrative dialogues, dives *into* the religions that are present in each of the participants.

This way of teaching is part of the new two-year programme of the Tilburg University Teacher Training in Religious Education. Taking our duty as a Catholic Faculty seriously (Grace 2018; referring to Miller 2016) to assist Catholic schools, we practice the spiritual capital ourselves as an example and create new resources for schools at the same time by doing so. Lecturers, professors and students explore the programme together. Of course knowledge about theology, religions and didactics is presented and learned. But in addition, the programme includes opportunities and moments for inspiration, such as extracurricular meetings that especially focus on keeping teachers and students inspired. In this way, the programme aims to form teachers who can reproduce this method by being an inspiring dialogue partner for the pupils they will teach in the future. If a teacher can be a witness of his own values and beliefs, he can enter into dialogue with young people – in their broad variety – in an inspiring and open way. By doing so, a teacher can *form* them to become people who are strong and self-confident and who know their values and religion by being witnesses themselves in turn.

2.6 GREECE

Religious education within the Greek education system

In Greece the education system has a centralized structure and a unified planning under the ministry of Education. The administration of the Greek educational system has three different levels:

1. *National or Central Level* (Minister, Deputy Minister, General Secretary and General Managers, Councils);
2. *District/Prefectural Level* (Head of Education Departments, Heads of Education Offices, Directors and Deputy Directors of Schools, Teacher's Council);
3. *School Level* (School Unit Director, Assistant Director, Association of school teachers, School Board, etc.)

While Greek society had made significant progress and adopted social practices that transcend the religious prejudices of the past (such as the reform of family law, the issue of abortion and divorce), religious education remained defensively oriented in outdated educational standards.

According to the Spanish Constitution, education is one of the main tasks of the state (16 par. 1) and is defined as mandatory for nine years duration (16 par. 3), it serves specific principles (16 par. 2) among of which the development of religious consciousness.

The Administrative Court stated that "the purpose of this provision (Article 16 Paragraph 2) is to maintain the orthodox Christian doctrine espoused by the vast majority of Greek citizens". Also, according to the common law, the course aims at making students partakers of the truths of the Orthodox Christian faith. These principles are reflected in the way that the course of religious textbooks are formed, where as a basic prerequisite arises that the Greek citizen is both a Christian-Orthodox.

Based on this argument it was considered by the Supreme Administrative Court (CoE) the compulsory character of the course of religion, for the exemption of which there should be reliable statement of the students' parents that they are atheists, heathens or heterodox. In the same vein, the Council of State ruled that the education system must ensure the teaching of the course of the religion should take place for a sufficient number of hours per week. Moreover, the official church believed that whatever comes out from the row of bond-catechism lesson, constitutes a hostile act. They also asked to express an opinion on the content of all books of religion at all levels of education.

These views were partly embraced by the State Council and at a later judgment in consultative formation [24], made a shift in the case-law, and accepted that the legislator is free to choose the religious model considers appropriate (Spiritual or catechetical) although it highlights that Spiritual responds more to the liberal features of the Constitution (Article 5 paragraph 1, 13 paragraph 1 and 16 paragraph 2).

Educational matters in Greece began to move after the Democracy restoration (1974) and the reform of 1976, the main purpose of which was the democratization of education. However, despite the fundamental proclamation of the primacy of the school's cognitive orientation and the weakening of ethnocentric educational philosophy, the religion education – along with the lessons of history and language remained the main “weapons” of establishing national and religious identity for the students in the Greek Schools.

More specifically, the general purpose of religion teaching in the primary school was “the development of students' religious sentiment, the consolidation of the faith in the Christian Religion and enhancing their active participation in our people's religious life”. The teaching of religion wasn't enriched by the international religion and pedagogical concerns of the 60s and 70s which tended to have a more open-minded view. The result was for the lessons to remain in the suffocating, regulatory conditions of religious education of the previous decades and keep the “Preachy” character, assuming that all school pupils are faithful Christians. The textbooks compiled during 1977-1981 were distinguished by lack of child –centered orientation not only to the contents but also to the presentation form. From the early 80's series of interventions is being carried out in order to capture in the teaching content the national, cultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes the classrooms. New books, changes in the curriculum and manuals attempt to include more and more references to the pupils' particular culture and to show positive images for the respective national cultural groups.

Since the 90's, in the context of social developments and discussions on the role of the religious lesson, the Greek school made the first attempt on the methodical teaching of other religions mostly in secondary education. For what concerns the three cycles of compulsory education, in the latest program of religion studies Christianity remains the main religion for study and retains a special and “privileged” position, while six other religions are gradually being approached: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (with a greater focus on Judaism and Islam).

According to the guide book for the teachers of the primary schools (which teach the religion lessons, as in Greek pedagogical program for primary schools it is no specialized teacher of religion), the religions of the world are not presented to the students simplistically and schematically as closed belief systems, whose substance is expressed in

a series of propositions or doctrinal positions. In the recent educational program there is an attempted to highlight the potential and evolutionary character of religions, since students are invited to understand religion as:

- Timeless search for meaning and value of life and answers to fundamental questions of people
- Everyday life of people and communities
- A prominent factor in culture
- Live presence in the modern world

At the same time, it is considered as very important for students from other religious traditions, to understand the types and essence of Christianity, to become accustomed to the culture of the country in which they are located.

The new educational program proposes an approach to Christianity with a focus on the Orthodox tradition first and gradually extending to the other two great Christian traditions (the Roman Catholic and Protestant).

Teaching Religion in the Greek context

From the early 80's a series of interventions is being carried out in order to capture in the teaching content the national, cultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes the classrooms. New books, changes in the curriculum and manuals attempt to include more and more references to the pupils' particular culture and to show positive images for the respective national cultural groups (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014).

Since the 90's, in the context of social developments and discussions on the role of the religious lesson, the Greek school made the first attempt on the methodical teaching of other religions mostly in secondary education (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014). For what concerns the three cycles of compulsory education, in the latest program of religion studies Christianity remains the main religion for study and retains a special and "privileged" position, while six other religions are gradually being approached: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (with a greater focus on Judaism and Islam).

According to the guide book for the teachers of the primary schools (which teach the religion lessons, as in Greek pedagogical program for primary schools it is no specialized

teacher of religion), the religions of the world are not presented to the students simplistically and schematically as closed belief systems, whose substance is expressed in a series of propositions or doctrinal positions. In the recent educational program there is an attempted to highlight the potential and evolutionary character of religions, since students are invited to understand religion as:

- Timeless search for meaning and value of life and answers to fundamental questions of people
- Everyday life of people and communities
- A prominent factor in culture
- Live presence in the modern world

At the same time, it is considered as very important for students from other religious traditions, to understand the types and essence of Christianity, to become accustomed to the culture of the country in which they are located.

The new educational program proposes an approach to Christianity with a focus on the Orthodox tradition first and gradually extending to the other two great Christian traditions (the Roman Catholic and Protestant) (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014).

Greek Religion Educational Curriculum and Timetable

From the teacher’s guide for teaching religion in primary and secondary school, edition 2014.

Third Grade of Primary Schools: We discover faces, images and stories (56 hours)	Fourth Grade of Primary Schools : We discover faces, images and stories (56 hours)	Fifth Grade of Primary Schools: We discover texts, monuments, places and events (30 hours)	Sixth Grade of Primary Schools: Ανακαλύπτουμε κείμενα, μνημεία, τόπους και γεγονότα (30 hours)
Living together (6 hours)	When people pray (6 hours)	Teachers and Students (6 hours)	The First Christians: Difficulties and Adventures (6 hours)

The joy of Celebration (6 hours)	The Mother of Christ (6 hours)	Walk together with limits and rules (4 hours)	Persecutions and Spread of Christianity: Persons and Testimonies (2 hours)
Sunday: An important day of the Week (6 hours)	Grate "Kids" (6 hours)	Walking ahead by changing (6 hours)	The Bible: An Historical and Timeless Book (4 hours)
Christmas: God becomes a man (8 hours)	All Equal, All Different (10 hours)	Prophecies of the Bible: Calling for repent and announcement of the Messiah's coming (4 hours)	The Divine Eucharist: Source and climax of the Church's life (6 hours)
Celebrating Pasha (8 hours)	Holly Places and Sacred paths (10 hours)	Jesus Christ's Church in History (4 hours)	From the Christians of our country to the Christians of the World
Our world is a gem (8 hours)	Christian Saints and Sacred Persons of other Religions (8 hours)	Missions for the "Good News" (4 hours)	Religions in our Country (4 hours)

Methodological approaches of teaching religion according to the curriculum

Teaching strategies for the above curriculum have the orientation of:

- do not regard teaching as a process of providing and receiving information but as an active knowledge-building process involving learners actively and interactively;
- adopt the view that knowledge and thought are formed through the person's contact with the world and the social context;
- Explain and serve the fundamental principles of approaching the religious cognitive object, as embodied in the new curriculum, i.e. interpretation, dialogue and critical literacy;
- develop equally and consistently both the objectives and the contents of the curriculum, highlighting the methodical process as a functional part, which is a central choice of a Process Procedure;
- Selected and organized exclusively by the teacher according to the conditions and requirements of his class, not considering them exclusively technocratic but continuously investigating their relationship with the humanistic and moral basis of teaching. (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014);

Participatory forms of teaching promote a learning procedure in which all students are treated equally, diversity is treated with respect, opportunities are created to improve the lives of children with difficulties, and student marginalization tends to disappear. (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014).

Also **Exploratory** teaching processes are being implemented in which, the teacher acts as a facilitator and organizer of the work to be done: chooses and provides material - appropriate and accessible to students - from a variety of sources or guides them to identify themselves. In information organization and case-shaping activities, the teacher controls the involvement of all students, supports their efforts, participates in any rewriting of the question, organizes alternatives and activities, and takes care not to create deviations that prevent research. Exploratory teaching is flexible and can be applied to students of all ages, infrastructure and capabilities but needs serious planning, careful organization and continuous remodeling. Exploratory approaches work more effectively when combined with collaboration groups. (Γιαγκάζογλου, 2014)

The **Collaboration Groups**, especially in multicultural and multinational societies, it is an ideal framework, as - through this method - the school can facilitate the social integration of people of different potentials and origins while at the same time mitigating rejection and competitive attitudes and practices (Matsagouras, 2000).

Project Method - It is a form of group teaching in which teachers and students, participating equally, are in an open learning process whose boundaries and procedures are not strictly defined. The process of a Project starts with an initiative that is expressed as a suggestion and on the occasion of an experience, event or problem, which the participants after exchanging views undertake to investigate. Having agreed on what they are going to do, jointly define their areas of action and make their programming.

Some of the Teaching technics that are proposed for the curriculum are as follows:

- Brainstorming
- Think, Pair, Share. (TPS)
- Dimensional Analysis (Dimensional Analysis)
- Case study
- Mind map
- Building Online Bridges - Building e bridges
- Online webcasting
- Reflective Journal
- Teaching through art. Patterns of artistic reasoning - Artful thinking
- [I see, I think, I wonder].
- [Think, puzzle, explore]
- [Creative Questions]
- Collage creation
- Painting
- Visits
- Thematic approach
- Round table discussion
- Narrative stories

- Experiential techniques and activities

Perspectives Nikolaos Filis, Minister of Education in 2015, attempted changes to the curriculum of the religion education, with the aim of transforming the course, using extra-philosophical and literary texts, and eliminate the orthodox centric character that it has. In the above changes, the Church reacted through the Archbishop's Jeronime, claiming for religious education. The solution came from a meeting between the two government partners, the Minister and the Archbishop, where the decision was suspended, and a public debate has opened. From this conflict, between the Minister of Education and the Archbishop, the question arises once again whether the Church can interfere with state issues, what is the position of the Church in a modern state, what should be the relations between them. (Μυλωνάς - Λέκκας, 2016)

At this point the Greek Ministry of Education is creating the new Educational approach with new books for the Religion teaching in primary and secondary schools which is going to be more adjusted to the inter-cultural school environment the way it has been evolved the last years. Unfortunately the exact content will be available within the next few months, so for the moment we are not able to include it in our research.

Pedagogical approaches related to the teaching of religion in Greece

Looking through the current and past few years' bibliography various cases of mistakes or inadequacies in the field of creating a multicultural-friendly school environment can be found.

In many schools, foreign children and their families are treated as potential criminals and they are followed by a suspicious attitude from local children. This attitude often reaches racist and xenophobic levels. Consequently, many families come to the solution of giving their children 'christianised' names in an attempt to help them become more easily accepted by the school environment. This example brings to surface the pressure that arises to foreign pupils who- in the name of cultural and religious homogeneity- have to oppress their real identity.

Moreover, as most schools do not have a clear multicultural and anti-discriminatory strategy, teachers feel like they are carrying a personal weight of defending their pupils against racist attacks, often calling forth punishments and verbal attacks towards the offenders.

Additionally, there have been examples where pupils who do not speak Greek very well were rewarded only when they showed significant progress in their language skills. These

pupils were falsely given the message that only if they act as Greeks will be treated and rewarded equally.

The above are typical examples of wrong attitudes and behaviours that reveal the necessity of shaping a multicultural pedagogical model that will promote equal treatment of all pupils regardless of their language and cultural background.

2.7 TURKEY

Multiculturalism and interculturalism: the Turkish case

Multiculturalism and interculturalism are two different concepts while the prior basically defines the presence and acceptance of different cultures within a single country; the latter supports actions which support intercultural dialogue, tolerance and understanding instead of sole acceptance (Harper 2011; Penaz & Saenz 2006). Government policies and strategies which supports communication among cultures and different belief systems may be considered more useful for decreasing conflicts due to clash of cultures rather than promoting centralization on diversity and cultural uniqueness that might cause intercultural competition and lead to ethnic conflict (Caval 2001; Hurd 2011).

Turkey has always been a refuge to people from diverse cultures and belief systems. For instance, since the early 15th century Ottoman Empire has opened its gates to hundreds of thousands of Spanish, Armenian, and Portuguese Jews along with Russians, Polish and Europeans in search political asylum in the course of over 600 years (Aydin, 2012). Owing to its historical nature, Turkey has become a home for various cultures, ethnicities and religions. Furthermore, according to the International Religion Freedom Report of U.S. Department of State, in Turkey, within the population of 79.4 million, “there are 15 million to 20 million Alevi Muslims. Alevi foundation leaders report higher numbers, estimating 20 million to 25 million Alevis in the country. The Shia Ja’fari community estimates its numbers at three million” (2015). The rest of the people who are from different religions compose %1 of the population and they mostly live in Istanbul and other large cities (2015). “While exact figures are not available, these groups self-report approximately 90,000 Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians; 25,000 Roman Catholics; 15,000 Russian Orthodox Christians; 10,000 Bahais; 22,000 Yezidis; 5,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses; 7,000 members of Protestant denominations; 3,000 Chaldean Christians; and up to 2,000 Greek Orthodox Christians; “there also are small, undetermined numbers of Bulgarian Orthodox, Nestorian, Georgian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Anglican, and Maronite Christians. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) estimates its membership at approximately 300 individuals. Estimates of the number of atheists vary, but most recent published surveys suggest approximately 2 percent of the population is atheist” (2015).

Besides the religion diversity there is also a significant amount of ethnic variety who have their own languages and cultures in the country. Owing to ethnolinguistic estimates in 2014 by Ethnologue, while %70.6 of it is comprised by Anatolian Turks; %10.7 is Kurmanji

Kurds and %7.7 is Turcophones Kurds. Moreover, Zaza Kurds, Lebanese Arabs and Kabardians Circassians compose less than %2 of the population (2014). According to The World Factbook the population in Turkey is Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 19%, other minorities 7-12% (CIA, 2017). Lastly, Iraqi Arabs, Persians, Azerbaijani, Romani, Gagauzes, Pomaks, Pontic Greeks, Adyghe Circassians, Alevi Kurds, Georgians, Bosniaks, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, Lazs, Karakalpaks, Albanians, Armenians, Abkhazians, Han Chinese, Ossetians, British, Macedonians, Jews, Tatars, Assyrians are the rest of the ethnic groups which constitutes less than %1 of it (2014). In terms of policy in education, government took several actions to include other languages within the country such as Kurdish, Arabic, Zaza language and Circassian. However, it is still not adequate for an extensive intercultural education.

In consideration of these religion and ethnic demographical facts of the country, government policies, which support interculturalism, should become very significant and one of the priorities in order to achieve peace and tolerance among citizens of Turkey.

Teaching Religion in Turkey

The decision of European Court of Human Rights on compulsory education in September of 2014 has raised debates on the subject in Turkey. Since 1924, the legislation in Turkey enforces the religion education and its effects on Turkey's secularity has been debated hotly ever since. More specifically, the 14th article of Turkish constitution states that religion education must be supervised and be under control of the government. Current situation in Turkey about the new curriculum, that Turkish Education Ministry proposes, is still in process of taking feedbacks. On compulsory religion education issue, Ministry does not have any clear decision on whether to comply to the ruling of European Court of Human Rights in 2014 September or not. Therefore, in a new curriculum proposal the religion and ethics course has not presented yet.

According to MEB's (Ministry of National Education) current syllabus of Religion, Culture and Ethics Course, one of the main purpose is introducing fundamental cultural and moral values of Turkey to the students through education of Islam (MEB 2010). It states that a vast scale of the culture, such as literature, music, arts and customs, comprises of Islamic belief and the way of life (MEB 2010). In this sense, it is believed that teaching religion of Islam will preserve cultural values and raise students who have respect towards their heritage (MEB 2010). The syllabus also contains respect to other religions and cultures, reforms and democratic values of Atatürk, national solidarity and respect to human rights and environment (MEB 2010). Among twenty eight objectives of the course, two

objectives, the 2nd and the 27th, aim to teach students respect and tolerance to different cultures and beliefs through education of basic characteristics of different religions other than Islam. 27th falls under the three Universal objectives that also include emphasizing the overlap of universal humanistic values and Islamic humanistic values; secondly, making the connection between universal values and “ their own religion”, here “own religion” means Islam so it can be seen that the ministry accepts the Turkish students as Muslims who should follow the discipline of Islamic religion (MEB 2010). Through the education program starting from 4th grade until the end of 8th grade, just %9,5 of the subjects are created for education of different religions and only one subject, which demonstrates %4,5, is about love, friendship and fraternity apart from religion of Islam. Additionally, the list of concepts that will be taught during the 5 years of the course includes only 4 religions other than Islam and no major beliefs within Turkey, such as one of the most practiced religion sects Alewism, and universally.

Moreover, right of exemption from the course has been another issue for a long time. While the students from Christian and Jewish families can practice the right of being exempted from the course, it is still not possible for other students who are from different kind of religion and belief system or simply does not want to be included in the lecture due to various reasons (Kaya 2015). For instance, it is stated in various reports that Alewi students have been facing difficulties and impracticability about exemption from the course (ERG 2011; Kaya 2015; Eđitimsen 2017). As a consequence of this kind of issues, increasing possibility of discrimination and eroded freedom of thought become inevitable current facts, which take their place at the top of the heap of current problems that Republic of Turkey has been facing for a long time.

Besides the inefficacy of curriculum and matter of exemption, multicultural personality level of teachers also falls within primary criticisms. According a recent study from Journal of Research in Education and Teaching, investigations show that the majority of teachers are lacking to be multicultural models and they should be educated more during university in terms of how to teach in a multicultural society and communication between cultures (Şahin & Kılıç 2016). On the other hand, it is proved that having a sensitive behavior towards different cultures increases the success and progress of students (Banks, et al., 2001). Therefore, teachers are playing a crucial part in following the means of multicultural education and having an equal attention for all children coming from different cultures (Polat & Kılıç 2013). Since they are the most important actors who have an enormous impact in development of students, the results of various aforementioned studies become a worrying and unpromising fact for a highly multicultural country which needs a proper education of interculturalism among its citizens.

In the light of these facts, it could be concluded that subjects are extremely insufficient for covering the necessities of intercultural education and cannot embrace other beliefs and religions within Turkey adequately. As Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (Initiative Reform of Education) (2011) and Eğitim Sen Öğretmenler Sendikası (Teachers' Syndicate) (2017) reports indicate that current curriculum in public schools are not satisfying enough in fulfilling some basics such as supporting religion diversification and respect to other cultures and beliefs. Hence, students are being raised without knowing the other elements of the culture that are considered as minority; however, has been playing important role in making it very rich and diverse throughout the history.

2.8 BULGARIA

General institutional Background

The worldly character of the Bulgarian school is announced by the Provisional Statute for National Schools in 1878, approved by Prince Dondukov - Korsakov. From then until 1944, the subject of the Law of God/religion was studied at school, which did not interfere with the already established secular nature of education. The training was conducted by qualified teachers, and later by priests, and the textbooks were controlled by the Holy Synod. 281 textbooks were published.

After 1944, however, political changes took place in Bulgaria, leading to a change in educational policy. At the beginning of 1945, religion dropped out of the curricula of primary and pedagogical schools. The next school year was only facultative, one hour a week in primary and junior high schools. In January 1946, the temporary education minister, Dr. Racho Angelov, ordered the school to remain in a neutral position with respect to the church. With the 1947 Constitution and the 1949 Religious Denominations, religion definitively dropped out of the curriculum of public schools.

The idea of restoring religious education in the Bulgarian school was reborn after the political changes of 1989. Since 1997, concrete actions have been taken to develop a concept for the introduction of the subject of Religion.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education and Science set up a Religious Commission to create concepts, curricula and textbooks. Representatives of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) had objections to the name, content and manner of introduction of the subject, thus offering religion as a compulsory subject, respectively, with different educational content and confessional teaching. The Commission rejected these proposals and reaffirmed the concept of the experimental introduction of a single subject for religion. The curriculum for all grades of the general school was determined, teaching materials for students were prepared and the specialists who would teach religion - graduates of philosophy, Bulgarian philology and history were chosen. For Primary Teachers at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University they started courses in post-graduate specialization in theology.

In 2000, the Religious Affairs Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science developed normative and methodological guidelines and affirmed two forms of teaching the subject Religion: Religion-Christianity and Religion-Islam. That is how the subject is taught today.

Teaching the school subject “Religion” is based on the following acts of legislation:

- According to the **Constitution**, religious faiths in the Republic of Bulgaria are “free” (article 13, paragraph 1), the religious institutions are separated from the State (article 13, paragraph 2), and the traditional religion is the eastern orthodox faith (article 13, paragraph 3).
- The equality and respect to other religions, the free right to practice a religious faith, its protection as well as the legal status of religious communities and institutions and their relations with the State are covered in the **Religious Denominations Act** (article 4, paragraph 1).
- School education is codified in the **Law on Pre-school and School Education** (published in Official Gazette, issue 79 of October 13, 2015; in force since August 1, 2016), which defines pre-school and school education in Bulgaria as “secular” (article 11, paragraph 1) and “does not allow the imposition of ideological and religious doctrines on students’ education” (article 11, paragraph 2). In the process of school education “religions are taught in historical, philosophical and cultural prospective through the learning content of different school subjects. Under the conditions of the above act, the school subject “Religion” can be also taught in the course of school education” (article 76, paragraph 4). The school subjects under paragraphs 1,2,3,4 and 6 – to which the school subject “Religion” belongs – are taught in learning programs approved by the Minister of Education and Science. The learning programs determine the number of hours for teaching a specific school subject.
- There is also a still existing **Instruction № 2 of June 23, 2003** concerning the training on the subject "Religion" which defines the conditions and order for teaching the school subject "Religion". It states that "pupils from the first to the twelfth grade have the right to study the subject" Religion "in the classes of compulsory and/or elective preparation" (Article 2). The organization of training on the subject "Religion" takes place in compliance with:
 - the desire of the students;
 - the capacity of the municipality and the school to provide qualified teachers;
 - the Concept of Education in the Subject "Religion" in the Comprehensive Schools of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Concept of Education of Muslim Children in the Subject "Religion - Islam" in the Comprehensive Schools (Section 2, Article 3), approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

Religion as a subject of study in Bulgarian schools

As a subject of study Religion was introduced in the Bulgarian schools during the academic year 1997-1998. From 2003 to the present time, religion is studied as a subject of compulsory and/or elective preparation of students from 1st to 12th grade and is realized according to the wishes of the student (his/her parents) and the ability of the schools to provide qualified teachers. The curriculum complies with the educational requirements in the country.

Religious education in Bulgaria takes place in five spiritual schools - two spiritual seminaries and three Muslim schools. In these schools, apart from general subjects, religious disciplines are also extensively studied. According to the MES (Ministry of Education and Science) instruction, teachers who have the right to teach the subjects "Religion" and "Religion-Islam" must meet one of the following requirements:

- To have higher education in the field of "Humanities" - professional field "Religion and theology";
- Primary school teachers who have completed a course of study at faculties of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria
- or persons who graduated from the Higher Islamic Institute (Article 11).

The next stage of religious education takes place in higher schools. The Faculty of Theology at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" was founded more than 70 years ago. In June 1950, it was separated from the Sofia University as a Spiritual Academy, which is disadvantaged compared to other higher schools in the country. It was only in July 1991, with the political changes, that the status of the Faculty of Theology was restored. This change brings back the dignity of higher theological education. New theological faculties were established at the universities of Veliko Tarnovo, Shumen, Blagoevgrad and Kardzhali.

In Bulgaria there is also a Higher Islamic Institute, established in 1998, based on the Religious Denominations Act. This is the first independent high school of Muslims in Bulgaria, which is defined as a high school of the Muslim denomination in the country. However, the Higher Islamic Institute and its majors are not accredited by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

From this academic year at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" a new Master's program "Religion in Europe" has been introduced. "The

program is aimed at preparing two profiles of specialists in the three monotheistic religions - Christianity, Islam, Judaism, which in varying degrees have affected the formation of the culture and civilization of Europe over the centuries. The aim is students to acquire solid knowledge about them in comparative theological terms, which ensures insight into the religious diversity on the map of modern Europe."

Debate about religious education

While writing this report on the history of Religion at the Bulgarian School, the laws and the different perspectives in the existing analysis, our team held informal conversations with educational experts and parents to follow their attitudes and opinions on religion education and organized a focus group discussion for discovering the approaches and the needs.

Information about the pedagogical approaches has also been found in several published articles.

Svetla Ang. Shapkalova in her article "The pedagogical experience in an education of interreligious tolerance" she reveals a co temporal pedagogical experience in religious education and upbringing of students in primary schools and those from universities concerning their skills and knowledge's about interreligious tolerance. According to Shapkarova, "the curriculum of other subjects can fit into religious education. The integrative tendency is not only theoretically possible but also practically fully applicable". The article describes specific models for the application of the subjects of religion in the following disciplines: Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, manual labor, music, etc. Based on hers many years of experience, the author states that "religious knowledge should be developed with the students in a free spirit and should educate tolerance to the others."

As an innovation in teaching religion, we could present an educational program on the integration of knowledge about religions in the first, second, third and fourth grades, adopted as an innovation at a meeting of methodological unit - "Primary Teachers", realized in class. The practice is realized in "Vasil Levski" Secondary School - Krumovgrad, Kardzhali.

The aim of the program is to build behavioral models in the school in harmony with Christian and Muslim values and morals, to build dialogue and communication skills based on the Christian and Muslim understanding of man, his place in the world, the community and the relationship with his neighbors.

In the description we also find an example curriculum, a description of METHODS of work in pedagogical practice, organization of open lessons. Advantages of the presented practice are presented compared to the standard approaches.