

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Europe and European Recommendations as mutual Challenges

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Comparative analysis of Islamic RE in Europe =>

- Challenges for (I)RE
- Challenges for future research in (I)RE
- Challenges for European recommendations.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Europe and European Recommendations as mutual Challenges

1. Basic ideas of the European recommendations
2. Observations regarding Islamic RE in European countries
3. Consequences and challenges for (Islamic) RE in Europe and for the EU-recommendations

1. Basic ideas of the European recommendations

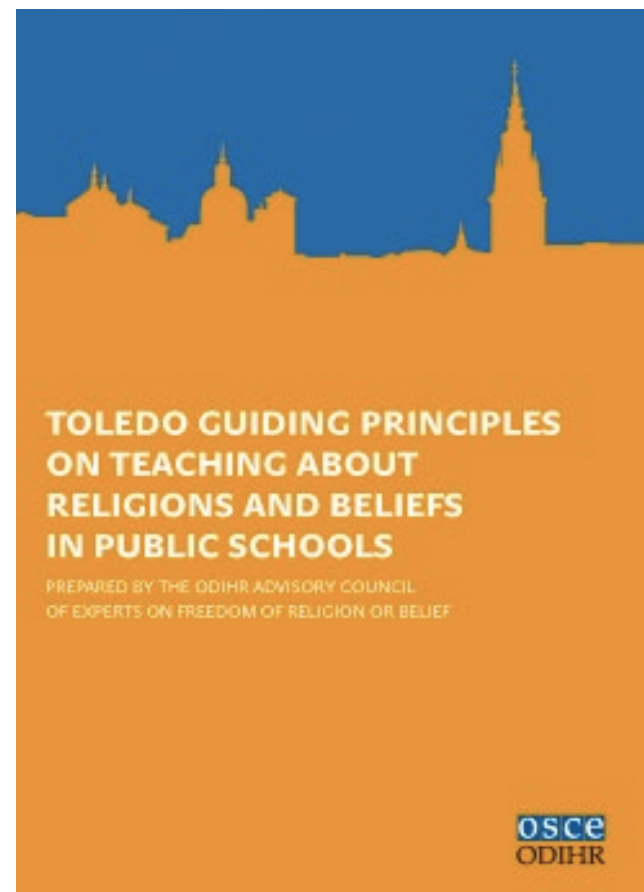
Before “9/11”: Deficit

1. Basic ideas of the European recommendations

Before “9/11”: Deficit

a) Toledo Guiding Principles (2007)

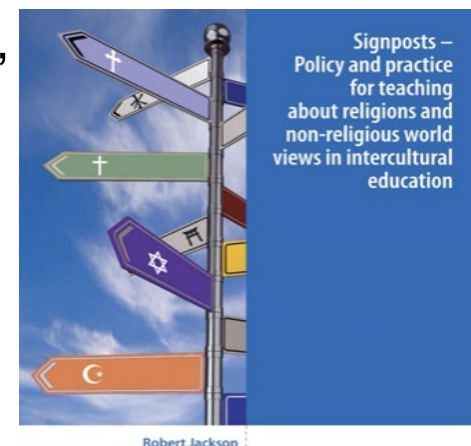
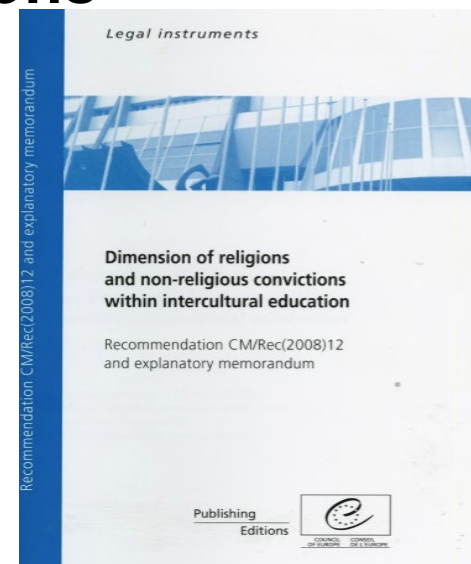
- “positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for *everyone*’s right to freedom of religion and belief”
- “teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes” (Jackson 2014, 26).



1. Basic ideas of the European recommendations

b) Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12

- religion =
cultural phenomenon
- corresponding learning processes =
aspect of intercultural learning
- basic educational preconditions =
 - “sensitivity to the equal dignity of every individual”
 - “recognition of human rights as values to be applied”
 - “capacity to put oneself in the place of others”
 - “co-operative learning in which people of all traditions can be included and participate”
 - “provision of a safe learning space”
(Jackson 2014, 23)

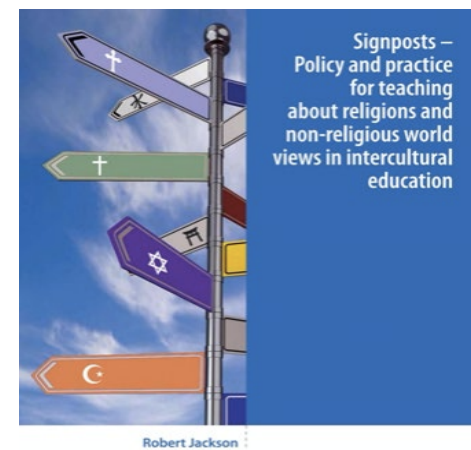
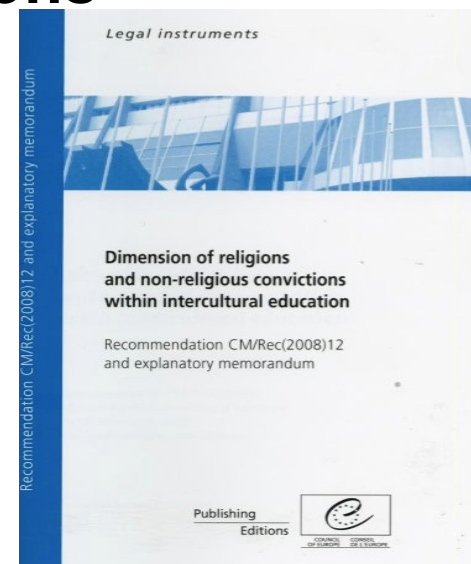


1. Basic ideas of the European recommendations

b) Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12

• basic objectives =

- tolerant attitude, respect for the right to hold a particular belief,
- sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions,
- teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions = consistent with aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals,
- communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds. (Jackson 2014, 23)



2. Observations regarding IRE in European countries

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a) Challenges especially regarding Islamic RE

- expectations of the state regarding Islamic communities
- critical public discourse on Islam
- critical headlines on Islam in the media
- threats from right-wing parties
- influence of Turkey and/or Saudi Arabia
- diversified Islamic community, resulting in Muslim pupils with different linguistic, cultural and national backgrounds

2. Observations regarding IRE in European countries

b) Deficit of references to European recommendations

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=> one possible reason: Denominational RE in many European countries (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany)

=> however: no necessary contradiction to European recommendations (see e.g. cantonal Curricula of Catholic RE in Switzerland)

2. Observations regarding IRE in European countries

c) Problems in countries with denominational (I)RE

- Textbooks opposing Islam and Darwinism as well as criticizing atheism as ‘humiliating for humans’ (Bulgaria 2002/2003)
- Greek Orthodox Church with objections against “more knowledge about other religions (especially Islam) and non-religious positions into the curricula”
- Insufficient training and problematic role of IRE teachers (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Germany)
- Cooperative RE only between Christian denominations, but not between Islam and other religions (e.g. Austria, Germany)

2. Observations regarding IRE in European countries

d) Challenges for countries with ‘teaching about religion’

- Perspective of Muslim minorities = non-denominational RE dominated by a Christian perspective, Islam not sufficiently reflected in the curricula (e.g. Sweden) or depends on the teacher (e.g. Norway)
- Desire for a ‘safe space’ = establishment of a denominational RE in the context of Islamic schools (e.g. England, the Netherlands)
- Othering effects (Denmark) and prejudices against Islam (Norway)
- RE mixed with national elements, e.g. when talking about Danish, English or Norwegian values
- Religion and RE are closely linked to personal as well as social identity issues (e.g. Norway, Sweden, Denmark)

3. Consequences and challenges for (I)RE in Europe and for EU-recommendations

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No comparative studies regarding the effects of different forms of RE, e.g.

- tolerant attitude of pupils
- pupil's knowledge about their own and other religions,
- pupil's ability to change perspectives

= empirical basis for EU-recommendations corresponding to European plurality.

3. Consequences and challenges for (I)RE in Europe and for EU-recommendations

Need for development of the different forms of (I)RE:

- Will forms of denominational (I)RE succeed in establishing co-operative phases with RE of other religions as well as with subjects such as ethics, philosophy and citizenship education?
- Will a 'neutral' RE for all succeed in considering adequately the identity questions of both religious majorities and minorities?
- Will a comprehensive subject with religious as well as non-religious worldviews succeed in avoiding a functionalization of the state and a marginalization of the religious dimension?

Thank you for your attention!