

## **THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN EDUCATION IN THE FLEMISH COMMUNITY OF BELGIUM**

Gracienne Lauwers

### **I. Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools**

**I.1 Question: Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools. Is – and if affirmative please refer to the provisions in the law (add the text separately) – the teaching of religion in your country organised during school time in public educational institutions: in primary education, in secondary education.**

**Answer:**

In lower education, 326.253 pupils follow catholic religious instruction (of which 240.266 in public financed private schools), 2482 pupils follow protestant religious instruction, 1320 students follow Jewish religious instruction (of which 1269 in public financed private schools), 15861 pupils follow Islam religious instruction (of which 14726 in public schools), 5 pupils follow orthodox religion, 2.345 study moral of which 1238 in public schools), 110 study culture, and 30 are exempted.

53200 students attend public schools. 246291 students public subsidised private institutions.

259 students attend schools from provinces. 87407 attend schools from localities.

In secondary education, 362386 pupils follow catholic religious instruction (of which 329550 in public financed private schools), 1299 pupils follow protestant religious instruction, 1007 students follow Jewish religious instruction (of which 826 in public financed private schools), 12537 pupils follow Islam religious instruction (of which 11891 in public schools), 396 pupils follow orthodox religion, 24 Anglican religious instruction, 58716 study moral of which 57377 in public schools), 1184 study culture, and 1789 are exempted.

**I.2 Question: What choices amongst the religious education possibilities are offered in public educational institutions, e.g. catholic religion, Islamic teaching, ....**

**Answer:**

Yes

### **II. State funded denominational schools and state supervision**

**II.2. Question: Are there non-state funded denominational schools in your country (private)? If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of private schools. If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of Islamic private schools. Please refer to statistical information on-line**

**Answer:**

One in Brussels as annex of the Islamic Cultural centre at the end of the '80. One for girls opened in 2007 with prohibition of sex education and compulsory wearing of the headscarf. Both are French speaking. Interference of the courts Islam instruction is provided in schools in Schaarbeek en Sint-Gillis.

**II.3. Question: How do the authorities control the teaching in state funded denominational schools and are there any special questions about the control of the content of teaching in state-funded denominational schools? Please refer to the provisions in the law.**

**Answer:**

Yes, but the content of religious education is not subject to control by the inspectorate.

### **III. Refusal or limitations on the number of pupils of another conviction/belief by the governing board of a confessional (catholic) school**

**III.1. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school**

**has the right to refuse pupils from other religious beliefs? Please refer to the provisions in the law.**

**Answer:**

Not anymore if they subscribe to the pedagogical project of the school and sign the project (Equal educational Opportunities Decree)

**III.2. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school the authority to limit the number of pupils from other religious beliefs (e.g. Muslim pupils) in order to support the specificity of the project?**

**Answer:**

No, see the answer to the last question.

**IV. Point of views of the authorities concerning the teaching of Islam in denominational (Catholic) education, Islam instruction or instruction on other convictions/beliefs in denominational (catholic) schools for (a number of pupils requesting it) and alternative ethical course**

**IV.1. Question. Is there a legal obligation to organise, if parents ask for, classes of Islamic religion in denominational (Catholic) education funded by public authorities? a. for any pupil for whom a request has been made? b. from a minimum number of pupils for whom a request has been made?**

**Answer:**

No.

**IV.2. Question. Does the same obligation exist for the offer of (a) other religions and/or philosophical convictions, (b) an alternative class of conception of life, philosophy, ethics**

**Answer:**

No.

**IV.4. Question. Reference to the legal basis, with Website address, and also if possible to the parliamentary preparation of texts.**

**Answer:**

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13298>

**V. Teaching of Islam in denominational (e.g. Catholic) schools at their own initiative**

**V.3. Question: There is no guideline and: (a) in fact, teaching of Islam is never proposed in Catholic schools, or (b) the teaching of Islam is organised in some schools, which have taken themselves the initiative. If possible, explain the importance of this option**

**Answer:**

The statistics mention 1.135 Muslim students receiving Islam religious instruction in public funded private educational institutions. It does not specify which institutions provide Islam religious instruction.