

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The LLP AM Comenius addresses the teaching and learning challenges and the need for successful integration through education of that portion of the population in Europe deriving from predominantly Muslim countries, as well as the need of officials who supervise schools, of directors and teachers to acquire an understanding of international norms for freedom of religious expression within the framework of respect for human rights.

WEBSITE

http://www.lawandeducation.com/click_research/onderzoek
click Islam (Instruction) in State-Funded Schools

Start date: 1st December 2010

End date: 28th February 2012

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PRINCIPLE RESULTS:

- Project booklet
- On-line interactive e-book for i-pad on 'Islam (Instruction) in State-Funded Schools' - Country Reports
- On-line interactive e-book for i-pad on 'Islam in State-Funded Schools: Religion and the Public Law Framework' - Proceedings
- Video about the comparative analyses of the legal frameworks in the LLP countries with subtitles in various languages of the EU
- Preparatory symposium on 'Religion and the public sphere' (Tilburg, 28 April 2010)
- Kick-off workshop on 'Religion, Beliefs, Philosophical Convictions and Education' (Bruges, 7-10 December 2010)
- International Conference on 'Islam (Instruction) in Education' (Antwerp, 8-12 February 2012)
- Meeting of an alliance follow-up working group appointed to enhance impact of the project (27-29 February 2012, Antwerp)

PROJECT TARGET GROUP

Education law and policy experts, members of the school inspectorate in European countries, representatives from European networks of teachers' unions, equality bodies, independent education providers, and policymakers, students and researchers.

Islam (Instruction) in State-Funded Schools Religion and the Public Law Framework

9-11 February 2012, Antwerp (Belgium)

Project

Islam (instruction) in state-funded schools:

Project Information

Title:

'Islam (Instruction) in Education'

Funding scheme:

EU Lifelong Learning Programme

Main project funding

LLP Comenius AM

Co-funding

Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

Coordinator

University of Antwerp

Co-beneficiary

European Association for Education Law and Policy (ELA)

Partner

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Research Group on Fundamental Rights & Constitutionalism (FRC)

Responsible coordinator

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CONCLUSIONS BY THE PROJECT COORDINATORS

Characterized by rationalization, functionalism, and individualism, the European public sphere also offers space for communal life although to a different degree and with variations in each member state, as reflected in the so-called "margin of appreciation" doctrine of the European courts.

One can distinguish traditionally a number of players in community life and in education.

There are the traditional Christian churches. However secular European politicians may be in their outlook, they have often regarded faith and religious institutions as pillars of public order. European policy and decisions of national and European courts have fundamentally affected the relations of the churches with the respective states and societies. Nevertheless, although at present many churches have lost influence on social life, they may continue to play a significant role in education.

Although in general public schools are kept quite separate from the churches, in many European countries they offer religious instruction as a means for inculcating moral principles and historical traditions.

Denominational schools have in many cases been brought under the influence or even the control of government through public funding and requirements that they emulate many of the organizational and curricular standards of public schools. To what extent they may continue to exercise a distinctive mission is a question for public policy; to what extent they seek to do so is an equally interesting question in sociology.

There are also communal frameworks with a religious character developed by migrants, particularly those from predominantly Muslim countries. Many Muslims seek to be at home in Europe but remain marginalized. To what extent the religious institutions which migrants create sustain community life and nurture youth but also isolate them from the host society is a question of vital importance.

Many migrants and their children born in Europe could be described as having a 'denationalised identity,' belonging comfortably neither in their country of origin nor in the country in which they live, compelled to accept European values, legislation and administrative structures. They have the right to practice their faith, but not as the basis of exemptions from the principles of the secular state. For many, the norms of Western secular culture based on individual rights and freedoms are in conflict with deeply-held communal values.

This tension is also reflected in legal doctrines. European policy and courts have accommodated national identities resulting from national histories based on the doctrine of the "margin of appreciation", but this failed to accommodate 'denationalised identities' defined by culture and religion that are not part of a country's history.

Europe has come to understand its public life as functioning in a secularized sphere in which religion does not play a significant role, having been relegated to the realm of private choice and practice. The presence of communities based upon migration that define their identity in religious terms and seek to make this the basis of their participation in public life, often invoking human rights principles of freedom of conscience and of culture, offers a fundamental challenge to European policy-makers, educators, and legal experts.

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