

Annex B:

Comparative Information on Approaches to Religious Education ⁱ

The following pages provide a chart of the approaches to religious education in selected countriesⁱ. The definitions of key terms used are as follows:

Approaches to Religious Education

Information about whether the approach to RE is predominantly confessional or non-confessional and about which religious communities offer RE. The variety of approaches ranges from catechetical instructions (e.g. in many East European countries), through confessional cooperative concepts (e.g. in Finland, Germany or Austria) and non-confessional cooperative concepts (e.g. in Great Britain) to concepts focused clearly on a religious studies model (e.g. in Denmark) (Schreiner, 2002, 91).

Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)

This column gives information about the status of RE. In EU countries it is usually a compulsory (C) subject where RE is taught non-confessionally. If it is confessionally oriented, there is often a range of different subjects, out of which pupils and/or parents can choose one. Sometimes RE is a voluntary subject (O). This is not the case in Italy, where there is no alternative subject to be chosen, if the student decides not to take confessional classes. An example of an Optional – Compulsory situation (OC) can be found in Slovenia, where the schools are obligated to carry out the nonconfessional subject of religious education as an optional subject, but the pupils are free to decide, whether they will enroll. If they decide not to enroll in RE, they must choose another optional subject.

Substitutive (S) or Alternative (A)

The column describes whether there is a substitute subject or alternative subject available to pupils who do not enroll in the RE described in the first two columns of the chart. Where available, the name of the alternative or substitutive subject is provided.

Responsibility for Syllabi

Describes which authorities are responsible for syllabi of the RE and /or alternative subjects.

Remarks

All models and approaches to the RE have their own history and “biography” and result from complex developments, influenced by the religious landscape of the countries, the role and value of religion and society, the structure of the education system and the relationship between the state and religion. This has to be taken into account in order to understand the nature of RE in each country. The last column gives “remarks” referring to the specific situation of the country (Schreiner, 2002, 91).

ⁱ The data were compiled in July 2004.

EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

Country	Approaches to Religious Education	Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)	Substitutive (S) or Alternative Subject (A)	Responsibility for Syllabi	Remarks
Austria	Confessional: Religious communities, registered by the state (15)	C	No	Cooperation: State/Religious Communities	Mainly Confessional RE
Belgium	Confessional: Religious Communities, registered by the state; regulations on local level	OC Religion/Ethics	Yes	Religious Communities	52% Catholic schools
Denmark	Non-Confessional: Prim. School mainly Lutheran. Other religions must be included in sec. school	C In sixth form colleges opting out is not possible	No	Dept. of Education and local Education Authorities aided by RE teachers associations	No RE in form 7 or 8 due to preparation for confirmation. Comp. subject defined as academic study of religion
Finland	Confessional: Lutheran and Orthodox	C	S Humanistic Ethics	Cooperation State/Church	Mainly Lutheran RE (Participation 97%)
France	No Confessional or Nonconfessional RE as a particular school subject (exception: the region Alsace and Lorraine: Lutheran/Reformed Catholic/Jewish)				Exception: Alsace and Lorraine (where is confessional RE) In the rest of France religions (as cultural and historical facts) are thought as an integral part of regular school subjects (history, philosophy)
Germany	Confessional: Evangelical/ Catholic partly Jewish, Islamic Religious Instructions, Greek-Orthodox	C (Exceptions)	S/A Ethics/Norms and Values, Philosophy	Cooperation State/Churches	Exceptions: Berlin, Bremen, Brandenburg
Greece	Confessional: Orthodox Church/ Islamic Community	C	Partly	Orthodox Church/Islam. Community	In principle: Greek-Orthodox RE

Country	Approaches to Religious Education	Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)	Substitutive (S) or Alternative Subject (A)	Responsibility for Syllabi	Remarks
Ireland	Confessional: Roman-Catholic	C	No	Cooperation State/Churches	93% Protestants
Italy	Confessional: Roman-Catholic	O	No	Church	Mainly Roman-Catholic RE, enrollment for RE necessary
Luxemburg	Confessional	OC	Yes		Only Catholic. RE
Netherlands	Nonconfessional public schools and schools from associations of parents that are (for a large) part confessional.	C	No	The Schools themselves	2/3 of all schools are governed by parents themselves; most of them are confessional
Portugal	Confessional	OC	Yes		RE since 1996
Spain	Confessional: Roman - Catholic	O	Partly	Churches	Only Catholic RE, very few Protestant schools
Sweden	Nonconfessional	C	No	Cooperation State/Church	99% take part in non- confessional »objective RE«
United Kingdom					Multi-religious approach
England and Wales	Nonconfessional: Christian Tradition and World Religions at all stages	C Parental right of withdrawal	No	Local Education Authority (LEA) - committees with representatives of religious communities, teachers and politicians	
Scotland	Mostly Nonconfessional, Confessional only in Roman- Catholic schools	C	No	State in nondenomination schools; Cooperation State/Church in denom. schools	Confessional RE only in denominational schools (30% of the schools)

NEW EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES IN 2004

Country	Approaches to Religious Education	Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)	Substitutive (S) or Alternative Subject (A)	Responsibility for Syllabi	Remarks
Cyprus	Confessional: Greek Orthodox	C		Syllabi from Greece	77% Greek-Orthodox, 18% Muslims
Czech Republic	Confessional: all registered religious communities	O	No	Religious Communities	
Estonia	Nonconfessional	O			RE on demand of parents. Mainly Lutheran tradition. A few non-state Christian schools with RE are reopened.
Hungary	Confessional	O	Planned	Churches	Compulsory subject in church schools
Latvia	Confessional: Roman-Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox	O OC (from 01. 09. 2004)	Ethics	Cooperation State/Religious Communities	Partly Lutheran, partly Roman-Catholic, partly Orthodox
Lithuania	Confessional	OC	Ethics	Religious Communities	75% Catholic
Malta	Confessional Roman-Catholic	O			Only Catholic RE, all schools are Catholic schools
Poland	Confessional	O	Ethics	Church	
Slovakia	Confessional: Catholic, Protestant	OC	No	Churches	
Slovenia	Nonconfessional: "Religions and Ethics"	OC	Other optional subjects	State	Confessional religious instruction is possible in private schools

NON-EU COUNTRIES IN EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA AND SELECTED OTHER COUNTRIES

Country	Approaches to Religious Education	Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)	Substitutive (S) or Alternative Subject (A)	Responsibility for Syllabi	Remarks
Albania	No Confessional or Nonconfessional RE as a particular school subject				Confessional RE in a few denominational private schools
Belarus					History of religion in some schools
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Confessional: Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, Adventist	OC		Religious Communities	Different regulations in the cantons of the Federation and the Republic Serbia A new subject »Culture of religion« is planned
Bulgaria	Confessional: Orthodox	O			Introduced in 1998 in primary school, 1999 in secondary school
Croatia	Confessional: Catholic, Islamic	OC		Religious Communities	76% Catholic
Georgia	Nonconfessional: Religion and Culture	O		Ministry of Education	In reality the subject Religion and Culture is not taught and it is replaced with the confessional Orthodox RE.
Iceland	Nonconfessional: Christianity, Religious Science and Ethics	C	No	Cooperation State/Churches	93% Protestants
Kosovaⁱⁱ	No Confessional or nonconfessional RE as a particular school subject				

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Macedonia	No Confessional or Nonconfessional RE as a particular school subject				Mainly Orthodox and Islamic population
Montenegro	No Confessional or Nonconfessional RE as a particular school subject				
Norway	Nonconfessional: Christianity with Religion and Moral Philosophy	C	No	State	New syllabus since 1997
Pakistan	Confessional: Islamic Instruction	C	No	Religious Community	Maktabs and Madrassas – institutions imparting exclusively religious instruction run by Muslim or by any other religious denomination – operate by governmental guidelines for private institution.
Romania	Confessional: Romanian Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic	O		Churches	RE since 1998
Russian Federation	Partly Confessional	Possible O		No regulations	RE since 1990, only on initiative of parents
Switzerland	In principal Confessional RE and Nonconfessional Bible science	O/C		Churches/Regional State	School regulations on canton level (26 cantons)
Serbia	Confessional RE	O	Civic education	Religious Communities	Mostly Orthodox RE

Country	Approaches to Religious Education	Optional Subject (O)/ Compulsory Subject (C)/ Opt.-Comp.s. (OC)	Substitutive (S) or Alternative Subject (A)	Responsibility for Syllabi	Remarks
South Africa	Nonconfessional: Teaching about Religions	C		Cooperation State/Churches	Confessional RE permitted outside of the formal school curricula, as long as it is voluntary and equitable
Turkey	Confessional: Religious Culture and Morality education with Sunni Islamic perspective. Confessional education in other religions for minority schools.	C		Board of Education in consultation with Council for Religious Affairs.	Opting out for Non-Muslims possible. Nonconfessional religious education included in high school.
Ukraine	Confessional: Orthodox, Protestant	O			Constitution of 1996 provides the right of independent schools with the right of free RE

ⁱ Sources: Structure and Selected Data Adapted from: Schreiner, P., Spinder, H., Taylor, J., Westerman, W. (eds) (2002): Committed to Europe's Future. Contributions from Education and Religious Education, on behalf of the Coordinating Group for Religious Education in Europe (CoGREE), Comenius-Institut, Protestant Centre for Studies in Education, Munster, p. 92–93.

Position papers by member States, Conference on “The religious dimensions of intercultural education, Oslo, Norway, 6-8 June 2004, Organized in the framework of the Norwegian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Project “Intercultural Education and the Challenge of Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe”;

Expert data provided by Z. Kodelja, Head of the Center for Philosophy of Education, Education Research Institute, Slovenia;

Data obtained through direct contact and queries to individual experts at country level (2004).

ⁱⁱ Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo are presented separately, as their education systems are differentiated and their future status as sovereign is yet to be determined.