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IERS Project. *Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Religious and cultural diversity are today more than ever a critical and political challenge as the recent emergencies related to geo-political and economical global transformations clearly show. European countries are concerned by a big immigration flow that demands an extraordinary effort in order to foster the mutual understanding and integration at all levels of society.

Responses to these challenges can be represented especially by considering the fundamental role of education about religious and cultural difference, but nowadays European countries have different models of religious education (RE) in public schools, and often the teaching about religions through scientific, critical, historical and intercultural lens is still at an isolated or experimental level.

The Intercultural Education through Religious Studies (IERS) Project has its roots in the conviction that an a-confessional, objective, high-quality teaching about religion supports the development of social, civic and intercultural competences, educating towards a constructive and critical understanding of cultural and religious differences.

Such consideration echoes the various European and supra-national institutional documents. Among these can be listed the recommendations of the Council of Europe such as the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008)<sup>1</sup> e and the *Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education*<sup>2</sup>; or the OSCE/ODHIR seminal document *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*.<sup>3</sup>

Similar conclusion are can be drawn out of the findings of and the Report of the Network of European Foundations (NEF 2009) , *Teaching about Religions in European School Systems*:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper\\_final\\_revised\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d20e8](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d20e8).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true>. The third chapter of this Handbook provides a more in depth-analysis of these recommendations.

*Policy issues and trends*,<sup>4</sup> which in particular outlines a series of shortcomings in most of the present European RE systems that make up the following challenges:

- 1) Strengthening teacher training
- 2) Create a basis in intercultural and citizenship education
- 3) need of taking religious diversity effectively into account.

Therefore the IERS project wants to meet the needs of an innovative approach in teaching about religions and beliefs at school by providing teachers of humanistic disciplines with innovative tools that help teachers and pupils to plunge deeper into religions and cultures of non-European countries, as well as raising the knowledge of the religious traditions that contributed to the common European cultural Identity, promoting it in the best way suited for encouraging intra -and extra- European cultural dialogue attitudes.

Such tools are called **Digital Modules** and are the main output of the IERS Project. They are meant to support the teachers in developing social, civic and intercultural transversal key competences of their students by educating towards a positive understanding of cultural and religious differences, a readiness to engage in dialogue and to avoid or manage conflicts. By encouraging teachers and pupils to expose themselves to the differences and commonalities of religious topics, it promotes also the values of democracy, equality and human rights as it deals with social and civic dimensions of both intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The present Handbook accompanies the Digital Modules and provides several relevant information that could support their use.

The first two sections are taken from one of the first deliverables of the IERS Project, namely the Baseline Study, which mapped the RE of the countries of the IERS Consortium. After a brief sketch of the situation in which RE role is played out in the official school curricula, a second chapter on the recommendations from European and International levels will substantiate the need of new educational strategies exemplified in this case by the Digital Modules produced by the IERS Project.

The third section offers a detailed presentation of the Digital Modules: their target-users, their technical structure and their contents.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nef-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Teaching-about-religion\\_NEF-RelDem-RELIGION-EDUCATION-Final.pdf](http://www.nef-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Teaching-about-religion_NEF-RelDem-RELIGION-EDUCATION-Final.pdf).

The fourth section is a synopsis of the Digital Modules Pilot Report. In fact, during the IERS project, the Digital Modules have been tested by several teachers from each country of the Project Consortium. The highlights of the data collected during this phase will be presented. Lastly, the fifth section is made up of some examples of lesson plans produced by some of the aforementioned piloting teachers who wanted to share their good practices in using the Digital Modules. Those lesson plans are here collected as suggestions of use.

## **SECTION ONE: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE IERS PROJECT PARTNERSHIP'S COUNTRIES**

### **1. Introduction**

This section summarizes the IESR Project Baseline Study of religion education which maps and analyses teaching (about) religion in the official curricula for public upper-secondary schools of the five participating countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Be it in the shape of a time-tabled religion education (RE) (confessional or non-confessional) or as a dimension in other school subjects.

### **2. RE and religion-related topics in upper-secondary schools in European countries**

As pointed out by many scholars, diversity is great when it comes to religion education in the public school systems of Europe. Inside the national systems, a great variety can also be detected, e.g. between the various German 'Länder' and between primary and upper-secondary school. With certain reservations, though, four main models or categories may be used to map the field: 1) No state-guaranteed time-tabled RE, confessional or not, 2) state-guaranteed, optional, time-tabled confessional (or 'separative') RE, with or without an alternative subject like e.g. 'Ethics' or 'Values', 3) state-guaranteed time-tabled non-confessional (or 'integrative') RE with or without a possibility for opting out, and 4) dimensional religion education, i.e. teaching about religion only as a part of other school subjects like history, art, literature etc. (Alberts 2007, Jensen 2005, Schreiner 2002, Willaime 2007). Numbers 2-4 of these models are played out in the official curricula for upper-secondary public schools in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

#### 2.1 Denmark

The Danish Constitution, § 4, makes the Evangelical-Lutheran Church the Established Church of Denmark, to be supported by the state. However, this does not have legal consequences for RE in public schools, and the Constitution does not hold any information as regards RE. Christianity is allotted more time in the various RE subjects than any other religion, and this



but also other things give it a special and privileged status, especially in primary and lower-secondary school. RE in Denmark, nevertheless, is an example of state-guaranteed non-confessional, integrative RE.

In two types of the school-programs offered at the level of upper-secondary school, namely *Gymnasium* (STX) and *Higher Preparatory Examination* (HF), RE is a compulsory subject closely connected to the academic study of religions. All RE teachers at this level are educated to a MA level at one of the three Danish university departments for the Study of Religions. In *STX* RE is called *Religion* and it is timetabled with three lessons per week for one year, ending with an oral exam. At HF *Religion* is a part of a package of subjects called 'Cultural and Social Sciences' with one exam. Here *Religion*, together with *History* and *Social Science* is supposed to contribute with knowledge and skills built around cross-disciplinary themes. In HF and at STX it is also possible to choose a B-level elective in *Religion*. Despite differences, RE in both STX and HF aims at providing methods and theories pertaining to the academic study of religions and scientifically based knowledge about religion, religious and non-religious discourses about religion and religions, and about the diversity of and within religions as well as about issues related to religions in society. The subjects aim at contributing to the students *Allgemeinbildung* and social formation by providing them with knowledge and analytical-critical skills. The major religions of the world play a key role in the curriculum as does the theories and methods of the academic study of religions, e.g. history, phenomenology and sociology of religion theories and methods.

## 2.2 Italy

The Italian Constitution Article 7 clearly distinguishes between state and religion (in casu the Catholic Church), making each of the two independent and sovereign in its own right and domain. Italy can thus be classified as 'secular' (*laicità*) with regard to Article 7. However, with regard to RE in public schools, the relation between the secular state and the Catholic church is one of cooperation and RE in Italy can be classified as a kind of state-guaranteed confessional and separative RE. A special agreement between the Catholic Church and the Ministry of Education ensures that *Insegnamento della religione cattolica* (IRC) is provided in the normal curricula in pre-, primary-, secondary- and upper-secondary school as an optional subject. As an alternative, pupils can choose between having specific didactical activities,

individual study activities or they may choose not to attend school during the teaching of IRC. Some schools, however, have organized non-confessional courses on history of religions. State upper-secondary education is offered by the *Licei* (the general path), divided in six school-types. IRC teachers in *Licei* are authorized by the ecclesiastical authorities and needs qualifications, for example a degree in theology or a diploma issued by a study of religions institute recognized by the Church.

The profile, overall aims and core contents in the curricula for the different *Licei* centres on transmitting the teachings of the Catholic Church with a focus on its dogmatic and ethical doctrines, Church history, as well as on the impact and contribution of the Catholic Church and Christianity on individual identity formation, social relations and the culture and history of Europe and the world. IRC shall thus contribute to the student's personal religious-spiritual identity formation as well as to social-ethical-civic formation, including inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. Knowledge of 'other religions' and 'system of meanings' is thus also to be included in the teaching. Religion-related topics and themes can be found in some of the other subjects primarily aiming at providing the students with historical-cultural knowledge about different religions and religious aspects in a perspective of a European culture and history.

### 2.3 Germany

The German Constitution separates state and religion (church), yet at the same time guarantees that confessional religious education ('*Religionsunterricht*') shall be offered as a regular though optional school subject in state schools. Several alternative subjects are offered, depending on the 'Bundesland' in question, e.g. 'Ethik' and 'Werte und Normen'. Responsibility for the subject is divided between the Bundesrepublik and the Länder, and there are thus significant differences from one 'Bundeland' to the other. In some Ländern the confessional *Religionsunterricht* includes more than one religion and aims at a combination of religious instruction with learning *about* religions, and in quite a few Ländern there is a system of 'multi-confessional' RE.

This is the case in Bavaria, where Catholic, Evangelical-Lutheran, (Christian) Orthodox, Jewish, Old-Catholic and Islamic confessional RE and the alternative 'Ethik' are offered in the upper-secondary gymnasium. At the same time, in the law on education law and constitution of Bavaria, the Christian Churches and Christian tradition are mentioned as important foundations of education and 'Bildung' in general. A look at the curriculum for the different

confessional RE types in Bavaria shows several common features. RE is meant to familiarize the pupils with the dogmatics, rituals and history of the church/religion in question and show its relevance for modern life and society and for the life and identity of the pupils. RE also aims at the student's personal religious-spiritual identity formation and realization of a so-called 'religious dimension' as a fundamental dimension of all human life and foundation of true values and morals. Other religions are also to be taught in order to develop the student's ability to make the right personal choices in a world with many possible worldviews. The alternative 'Ethik' includes learning about different religions but also aims at contributing to the student's personal and societal moral formation and ethical competences. Religions and religions-related topics are included in the curriculum for some of the other subjects in the Gymnasium, particularly History, with a focus on historical-cultural knowledge including religious-related conflicts.

## 2.4 Spain

The Catholic Church has played a highly important role in Spanish history, in relation to the state, in relation to society at large, *and* in relation to education in public and private state or state funded schools. During the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, the privileged position of the Catholic Church was crowned with a 1953 Agreement (Concordat) between the Spanish state and the Holy See. Education was "developed on the basis of Catholic dogma and religious teaching was imparted in all schools, public, or private, and at all levels, even at the university". After the death of Franco in 1975 things changed but as regards RE, they did not change that much. Moral education continued to be a battleground, and so did RE, and the Catholic Church is still exercising its strong influence.

The 1978 Spanish Constitution, with the additional 1980 law on freedom of religion, and the 1979 Agreements between the Spanish State and the Vatican (Holy See), constitute the two basic pillars also in regard to RE. The state in principle is secular, and the state guarantees freedom of religion (§ 16) and the right to education, and education (§ 27) "shall aim at the full development of the human personality with due respect for democratic principles of coexistence and the fundamental rights and freedoms". At the same time though, this right to education also secures the right of all parents to "obtain for their children a religious and moral instruction which is coherent with their own convictions" (§ 27.3), and with the 1979 Agreements between the state and the Holy See this in fact gives the Catholic Church a privileged position (the privileges of the Church being written into the 1979 Agreement) in regard to education: Every school in every Spanish school in every more or less otherwise

autonomous region must offer *confessional* RE as a school subject. Due to its confessional character it must be *optional* but it *must* be there, and it is the Catholic Church (Spanish Episcopal Conference), like in Germany, that decides and provides the contents (curriculum) and the teachers and their education. But the state pays for it all.

The ideological and political struggles about education, including moral and religious education, also show in the fact that almost every government since Franco has introduced its own new educational system and law. At the moment Spain is again in between two laws, the L.O.E. and the L.O.M.C.E. The confessional RE however is to be offered in both the old and the new one, but contents and conditions as regards the alternatives are not finalized in regard to the new system, L.O.M.C.E. In the old one, L.O.E. the alternative was 'History and Culture of Religions' - the only subject in the Spanish public school reflecting some of the ingredients and approaches in non-confessional integrative RE in other countries. In the new system it seems that an alternative called Civil and Social Values or Ethical Values is to be taught.

## 2.5 France

The French Constitution declares France a secular (*laïque*), democratic and social Republic. A consequence of *laïcité* so far has been the omission of a time-tabled religion education (RE) as a subject in its own in the public school system. In the last twenty years, however, there has been a growing political, professional and public focus on the necessity to give teaching about 'religious matters' ('faits religieux') a higher profile in the school, and the teaching about religious matters have been introduced into the curriculum of various school subjects, especially History. In upper-secondary school it is mainly when dealing with Antiquity or the medieval period, that the curriculum and guidelines for the various subjects include or make room for a study of religious traditions and matters. When dealing with the centuries after the Middle Ages, religious issues are mostly connected to cultural-political discussions, conflicts or war. But how and to what extent religious matters are included in History or other disciplines also depends on the choices made by the teacher. In some of the curricula or guidelines it is possible to choose religious matters, for example in the subject 'Civil, juridical and social education' where discussions about *laïcité* and religion can be included, or in Philosophy, where religious philosophical thinkers or philosophical discussions related to the concept of religion may be taught. In general, the approach to religious traditions and matters can be characterized as analytical-critical, stressing the need of historical-cultural

contextualization and the distinction between an insider and outsider perspective on religion(s). A state supported program for in-service training of teachers in regard to teaching about religion in a professional scientifically based way has been located with the IESR - Institut européen en sciences des religions.

## **Concluding remarks**

As is evident from the base line study on the situation as regards religion education (RE) in the countries participating in the IESR, it is but Denmark that has developed a study-of-religions based timetabled RE. And, even in Denmark this is so primarily in upper-secondary school.

As for the other countries, the dominating trend is still to have confessional/religious RE based upon the teachings of the religion/church in charge of the teaching, the contents and most often also the training of the teachers. However, in all countries, this has long ago become an option, in the name of freedom of religion. Moreover, the need to teach about other religions than the one of the pupils and their parents is evident, and it does color the curricula in various ways. But, the teachers are not very well trained for teaching about religions other than their own. In all countries with confessional religion education, the state now has to also find ways to offer confessional RE linked to other religions than the majority Christian religion. RE has thus to a certain degree become multi-confessional. In addition to this, the rule is that an alternative to the confessional RE is offered (Ethics, Values, or the like) but this subject does not entail much about religion.

In France, teaching about religion(s) is as is the case in Denmark for upper-secondary school, strictly study-of-religions based (and thus 'secular' rather than religious RE) but in France teaching about religion takes place as a dimension within other school subjects, not least History.

Consequently, the IERS project is an important way for the EU to help promote the implementation of a secular, objective, study-of-religions based religion education to help foster mutual understanding and tolerance, thus positively responding to the the various sovranational recommendation analysed in the next section of this handbook

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## **SECTION TWO: EUROPEAN PROJECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS INVOLVING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

### **1. Introduction**

Supra-national processes such as globalization, pluralization and migration are challenging individual European nation-states *and* Europe as a whole: when it comes to ideas about national and/or European citizenship, about 'cultural identity and heritage', about social cohesion and co-existence, - and when it comes to confessional as well as non-confessional RE in public schools. The sharing by all European countries and kinds of RE of the challenges mentioned is what Jean-Paul Willaime (2007; see also Willaime 2014, and Jensen 2014) referred to as an 'Européanisation' of challenges facing various models of RE in Europe. Apart from the country-by-country responses to the challenges, the challenges are also met at the European supra-national political level in the shape of various educational projects and in discourses focusing on e.g. 'citizenship education', 'intercultural education', 'inter-religious dialogue', and RE. In his extensive writings about these projects, Robert Jackson has pointed out that September 11, 2001 and the events that followed marked a turning point in European policies in regard to security<sup>5</sup>, citizenship and education (Jackson 2007, 2009, 2008).<sup>6</sup> RE was as now allotted an important role in efforts to solve political and social problems and in the promotion of human rights values, active democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue. In what follows, the most important of these efforts and the resulting projects and recommendations involving RE will be outlined.<sup>7</sup>

### **2. The Council of Europe: Intercultural education, citizenship education and RE**

In 1997, the Council of Europe (CoE)<sup>8</sup> launched the project 'Education for Democratic Citizenship', a project running until 2009. Recalling the Council of Europe's mission to build a

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<sup>5</sup> Discussions and studies of this 'securitization of religion' in different countries can be found in Sakaranaho (2013), Jensen (2014) and Shani (2014)

<sup>6</sup> Jackson has since 2002 been closely involved with the Council of Europe projects relating to RE and is now special advisor for The European Wergeland Centre.

<sup>7</sup> See also Pépin (2009) for a discussion of these projects and the situation of RE in different European countries.

<sup>8</sup> The Council of Europe founded in 1949 and based in Strausbourg, France, is a human rights organization with 47 member states, of which 28 are members of the European Union. All the member states have signed up to the European Convention of Human Rights. The Council's decision-making body is the Committee of Ministers, which is made up of the ministers of foreign affairs of

freer, more tolerant and just society and “concerned by the development of violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and religious intolerance”, the Committee of Ministers in the 1999 declaration on education for democratic citizenship recommended that all member states should make education for democratic citizenship an essential component of all educational training, and all cultural and youth policies and practices. (Council of Europe 1999). In the 2002 recommendations “religious intolerance” was replaced by “intolerance of minorities” and it was affirmed that education for democratic citizenship, informal as well as formal, is a factor for “social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and solidarity” and therefore should be a priority and factor for innovation in educational policy-making, curricula and teaching methods, and that “the European dimension” should be a component in this (Council of Europe 2002).<sup>9</sup> It was encouraged to use multidisciplinary approaches, combining civic and political education with teaching in history, philosophy, religions and other relevant disciplines. It was also recommended that the member states set up specific curricula related to education for democratic citizenship in teacher training systems in order to develop key competences of the pupils, students and teachers. Some of these competences are defined as the ability to settle conflicts in a non-violent manner, to listen, understand and interpret other people’s arguments and develop a critical approach to information through patterns and philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts (Europe 2002). As a culmination of the project, the *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2010) was adapted by the member states. The charter recommends that education for democratic citizenship and human rights education be included in curricula at all levels of formal education from pre-primary to higher education

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each member state or their permanent diplomatic representatives . The Committee of Ministers decides the policy and actions of the Council of Europe which leads to recommendations or European conventions which are expected to influence policy development in the member states.

Recommendations to the Committee of Ministers are given by the Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of investigation and projects. The Parliamentary Assembly is made up by members of parliament in the member states, and also elects the Secretary General, the Human Rights Commissioner and the judges to the European Court of Human rights (<http://hub.coe.int/> last accessed April 2014).

<sup>9</sup> ‘The European dimension’ is not explicitly defined in this recommendation but refers to democratic citizenship as a factor that promotes relations of trust and stability in Europe beyond the boundaries of the member states, and it is recommended that European networks on democratic citizenship be established. The Project Management T-Kit issued by the Council of Europe explains ‘the European dimension’ as “putting forward certain values, a certain idea of society, a certain concept of human beings. It means showing respect for individuals and for human rights. It also means helping to integrate young people into a multicultural world”. Criteria for the ‘European dimension’ of projects are: European citizenship, partnership and transferability with and to other European countries, reflection of topics and concerns of European countries, project mobility, intercultural learning, involving of young Europeans and connections to other European activities and programs.

([http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Publications/T\\_kits/3/4\\_european.pdf](http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Publications/T_kits/3/4_european.pdf). last accessed May 2014).



and that teachers should be provided with training in these areas. Citizenship education is defined as:

(..) education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law (Council of Europe 2010a, 5-6).

Educational approaches and teaching methods should enable learners to acquire knowledge and skills in order to “promote social cohesion, value diversity and equality, appreciate differences – particularly between different faith and ethnic groups – and settle disagreements and conflicts in a non-violent manner (..)” (Council of Europe 2010a, 14).

In the same year a standing conference of the Ministers of Education was held with the theme ‘Education for Sustainable Democratic Societies: the Role of Teachers’. The Ministers expressed a determination to implement educational actions geared “to Europe’s diverse and multicultural societies”, and seeing the teachers as one of the “essential pillars of the process of building sustainable democratic societies” they wished for “the development of ‘a’ teaching and learning methodology, which equips future teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for managing a diverse sociocultural environment” (Council of Europe 2010b paragraphs 8, 11, 14).

When this project about citizenship education was started, ‘history teaching’ as highlighted as a key factor in the development of democratic citizenship (Council of Europe 2000), and as pointed out by Jackson, RE was not dealt with explicitly as an aspect of citizenship education (Jackson 2009, 88). However from 2002 and onwards there seems to be a development towards more attention to social problems related to religious and cultural diversity and on the importance of knowledge, skills and teaching methodologies that enables pupils, students and teachers to live and work in social, cultural and religious pluralistic schools, democratic societies and Europe as a whole.

Issues of religion and RE became a central part of a new project on ‘Intercultural Education and the Challenge of Religious Diversity and Dialogue’ which the Ministers of Education agreed upon in 2003 (Council of Europe 2003). According to the CoE ‘intercultural dialogue’ has since the ‘Third Summit of Heads of State and Government’ of the CoE in Warsaw, May

2005 been a major political priority, and is to be seen as a “cross-sectoral, ‘transversal’ approach that influences the agenda of virtually all other policy domains and institutions of the CoE”.<sup>10</sup> In the declaration from the European Conference on ‘The Religious dimension of intercultural dialogue’, April 2007, the participants underlined the importance of teaching about religions and that “the religious dimension of our cultures should be reflected in an appropriate manner in education systems (..) (Council of Europe 2007). An important policy document on this project is the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008), in which CoE argues for a new intercultural strategy based on ‘intercultural dialogue’ as a replacement for ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘assimilation’, now found inadequate as policy approaches (Council of Europe 2008a, 9). Intercultural dialogue is defined as:

(A)n open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect (Council of Europe 2008a, 10)

One of the policy areas in the promotion of intercultural dialogue is ‘Learning and teaching intercultural competences’, which according to CoE should form part of citizenship education and human-rights education, teacher training as well as all subjects, especially history, language and RE. It is stated that “education as to religious and convictional facts in an intercultural context makes available knowledge about all the world religions and beliefs and avoid prejudice” and that regardless of the different RE systems, “religious and convictional diversity” should be taken into account and education should include “knowledge of the major religions and non-religious convictions and their role in society” (Council of Europe 2008a, 30-31, 43-44). The role of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education is further elaborated in the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers December 2008. According to this document, religions and non-religious conviction is seen “at least” as ‘cultural facts’ and information and knowledge of these areas should therefore be taught in consistence with the aims of citizenship education, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals (Council of Europe 2008b, 4).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/policy\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/policy_EN.asp) (last accessed April 2014)

<sup>11</sup> Jackson points out that this formulation (‘cultural facts’) was a pragmatic strategy recognizing that the presence of religions in society was the lowest common denominator with which all European states could work in an educational context, - despite the different relationships between religion and state and the diversity of RE. This approach also legitimizes that knowledge and understanding of religion as a cultural fact is relevant and therefore of public concern also within the Council of Europe that has to be neutral with regard to expression of views on religion (Jackson 2008, 157-158; 2009, 87).

Some of the objectives of an intercultural approach to teaching about religious and non-religious conviction are stated as:

- promoting knowledge of different aspects (symbols, practices, etc.) of religious diversity;
- addressing the sensitive or controversial issues to which the diversity of religions and non-religious conviction may rise;
- developing skills of critical evaluation and reflection with regard to understanding the perspectives and ways of life of different religions and non-religious conviction;
- fostering an ability to analyze and interpret impartially the many varied items of information relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious conviction, without prejudice to the need to respect pupil's religious or non-religious conviction and without prejudice to the religious education given outside the public education sphere. (Council of Europe 2008b, paragraph 5)

The recommendations goes further and also set up appropriated "attitudes" to be promoted, *inter alia*:

- recognizing the place of religions and non-religious convictions in the public sphere and at school as topic for discussion and reflection;
- recognizing that different religions and humanistic traditions have deeply influenced Europe and continue to do so;
- promoting a balanced approach to "the role of religions and other convictions in history and cultural heritage (Council of Europe 2008b, paragraph 6).

Different didactical approaches are recommended such as 'a phenomenological approach' (aiming at the cultivation of knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious convictions), 'an interpretative approach' (encouraging a reflective understanding and preventing a "rigid pre-defined framework"), an approach enabling dialogue, and 'a contextual approach' (taking account of local and global learning conditions) (Council of Europe 2008b, paragraph 7). This document is at the same time referring to earlier recommendations, one of them from the Parliamentary Assembly in 2005, in which teaching about religions is promoted. In this 2005 recommendation, education is seen as "essential for combating ignorance, stereotypes and misunderstandings of religions" and it is stated that:

By teaching children the history and philosophy of the main religions with restraint and objectivity and with respect for the values of the European Convention on Human Rights, it will effectively combat fanaticism. Understanding the history of political conflicts in the name of religion is essential (Council of Europe 2005, 7)

The Parliamentary Assemble explicit criticizes "so-called secular countries" that are not devoting enough resources to teaching about religions or are focusing on or favoring a particular religion, something they find examples of especially in countries where one religion

predominates or functions as the state religion. They also find that there is in Europe “a shortage of teachers qualified to give qualified instruction in the different religions” and they therefore recommend that the Committee of Ministers, on the basis of the criteria given in the recommendations, “promote initial and in-service teacher training in religious studies respecting the principles set out in the previous paragraphs” and “envisage setting up a European teacher training institute for the comparative study of religions”. (Council of Europe 2005, 13.2; 13.3).

The reply of the Committee of Ministers given in 2006 noted that the recommendations were in line with the general thinking underlying most of the activities in CoE, and therefore pointed to existing projects and earlier declarations and recommendations (Council of Europe 2006). The proposed European Center on the Study of Religions (European teacher training institution mentioned above) was, according to Jackson, considered too narrow, and instead work to set up an interdisciplinary center to deal with research, information, training of educators and policy recommendations including about RE was initiated (Jackson 2008, 161-162). In 2009 The European Wergeland Centre<sup>12</sup> was established by the Norwegian government in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The center focuses on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship with a mission to build bridges between policy, research and practice. One of the activities is a joint Council of Europe/Wergeland Center expert group including Jackson and other RE scholars trying to find the best ways to support member states implementing the 2008 recommendation from the Council of Europe. A document titled *Signposts - Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews in intercultural education* is said to be issued at the end of 2014.

### **3. Projects and recommendations from OSCE, UN and EU related to RE**

#### 3.1 UN: Alliance of Civilization

The importance of education in resolving cultural and political problems is also highlighted by the United Nations (UN). In 2005 the Secretary-General of UN launched the project ‘Alliance

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<sup>12</sup> Information on the European Wergeland Centre and the activities can be found on <http://www.theewc.org/> (last accessed April 2014)

of Civilization' co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey as a counter-response to the theory of 'clash of civilization' expressed by Samuel Huntington (1996) and by some political leaders, sectors of the media and radical groups. A High-level Group of prominent people including former ministers, religious leaders and scholars was formed in order to examine the relations between societies, with particular attention to relations between Western and Muslim societies, and to give recommendations on a practical program of actions to be taken by states, international organizations and civil society. The *raison d'être* for these are "the need to build bridges between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding and to forge the collective political will to address the world's imbalances" and the suggested actions are hoped to assist in "diminishing hostility and in promoting harmony among the nations and cultures of the world" (United Nations 2006, I paragraph 1.4; 1.5). One of the areas of action is education, and it was stated that:

Education systems, including religious schools, must provide students with an understanding and respect for the diverse religious beliefs, practices and cultures in the world. Not only citizens and religious leaders but the whole society needs a basic understanding of religious traditions other than their own and the core teachings of compassion that are common to all religions (United Nations 2006, VI paragraph 6.8).

Some of the recommendations are:

- Government should ensure that their primary and secondary educational systems provide for balance and integration of national history and identity formation with knowledge of other cultures, religions, and regions.
- Religious leaders, education policymakers, and interfaith civic organizations should work together to develop consensus guidelines for teaching about religions. (..) Those involved in ongoing efforts should collaborate to develop consensus among religious leaders and educators on the need to teach about world religions in various educational settings, and to collect and disseminate best practices, consensus guidelines and instructional resources toward this end. The goal would be to provide base-materials that could be used by schools and religious training centers to teach about major faith traditions.
- Government and international organizations should work together to convene curriculum-review panels consisting of curriculum experts and representatives of the major faith traditions to review widely used educational curricula, ensuring they meet guidelines for fairness, accuracy, and balance in discussing religious beliefs and that they do not denigrate any faith or its adherents (United Nations 2006, VII paragraphs 1, 3, 4).

### 3.2 Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools

According to Jackson, these recommendations from UN had exercised influence on the decision taken by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>13</sup> to develop the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* issued in 2007 by OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which provides support and expertise to member states and civil society in promoting democracy, rule of law, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination (Jackson 2008, 154). These were developed by members of the Advisory Council of the ODIHR Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief and other experts and scholars in the fields of international law, human rights, religion, sociology, education, RE and academics and practitioners with theological expertise from religious associations and denominations. This has according to the Toledo Guiding Principles helped "to ensure that the perspective of religious and belief communities is reflected and that the final product is as balanced and inclusive as possible" (OSCE 2007, 27). The framework for the *Toledo Guiding Principles* is the human rights, especially freedom of religion or beliefs, and the 2006 Decision on Combating Intolerance and Non-Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding. In this decision, the OSCE Ministerial Council called upon the member states to "address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination" by developing domestic education policies and strategies and awareness-raising measures that "promote a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or belief" (OSCE 2007, 9).

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* is based on two core principles: "first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for everyone's right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching about religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes" (OSCE 2007, 12). It is explicit stated, that OSCE and the *Toledo Guiding Principles* do not take side with respect to the different approaches and models for teaching religions in the participation states, but is aimed to offer practical guidance in preparing and implementing curricula to educators, legislators, teachers and

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<sup>13</sup> OSCE has its origin in the early 1970s, when the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was created to serve as a forum for dialogue and negotiation between East and West during the cold war. After 1990 CSCE acquired permanent institutions and operational capabilities and the name was in 1994 changed to OSCE. OSCE comprises 57 participating States from North America, Europe and Asia and is engaged in many different areas including military security, economic and environmental co-operation and human rights. See <http://www.osce.org/> (last accessed April 2014)

officials in public and private schools in member states that “choose to promote the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, particularly as a tool to enhance religious freedom” (OSCE 2007, 12, 20).

The ‘Key Guiding Principles’ addresses the curricula, textbooks and educational material, the teachers and their education as well as the general ethos of the teaching. The teaching “should be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship (..) in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values” (OSCE 2007, 16). In summary curricula should be:

- Developed in accordance with recognized professional standards in order to ensure a balanced approach to study about religions and beliefs and also include open and fair procedures that give all interested parties appropriate opportunities to offer comments and advice.
- Give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues.
- Should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve in order to address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

Curricula, textbooks and educational material should also:

- Take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.

It is also key principles that the development of curricula make sure, that the process “is sensitive to the needs of various religious and belief communities and that all relevant stakeholders have an opportunity to have their voice heard, and a key guiding principle is that the teaching “should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations” (OSCE 2007, 15-16).

In the detailed chapter about the curricula it is also stated that they should be sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, based on reason and up to date and that sources from various religious and belief traditions that reinforce the significance of tolerance, respect and caring for others could be included in order to enforce inter-religious dialogue and respect of the rights of others (OSCE 2007, 40-41). Convictions, interests, and sensitivities of the pupils, the parents, the teachers, school administrators, representatives of religion and belief communities, NGOs, inter-religious councils etc. are to be taken into account when developing curricula. At the same time, the *Toledo Guiding Principles* also highlight that the teaching should be based on sound scholarship and not merely on wishes



from religious communities, and that if they gain too much decision-making power at the cost of abdicating state responsibility, this could be a violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief (OSCE 2007, 64-65).

The Key Guiding Principles for the teachers states that they should:

- Have a commitment to religious freedom that contributes to a school environment and practices that foster protection of the rights of others in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among members of the school community.
- Need to have knowledge, attitude and skills to teach about religions and beliefs in a fair and balanced way. Teachers need not only subject-matter competence but pedagogical skills so that they can interact with students and help students interact with each other in sensitive and respectful ways.

It is also stated that any basic teacher preparation should be:

- Framed and developed according to democratic and human rights principles and include insight into cultural and religious diversity in society (OSCE 2007, 16-17).

Different pedagogic approaches are mentioned as appropriate, with special references made to 'the Phenomenological Approach', 'the Interpretative Approach' and 'the Dialogical Approaches' also mentioned in the Council of Europe's recommendations from 2008. A so-called 'empathetic attitude' are highlighted as something to be encouraged among learners and teachers, which is defined as "attempts to genuinely understand what another person is feeling and the ability to respectfully communicate the essence of another person's experience" (OSCE 2007, 46). The learning objectives and reasons for teaching about religions and belief can be classified as social formation competences, cultural-historical knowledge and personal existential-ethical formation. The social formation competences are:

- attitudes of tolerance and respect for the right of individuals to adhere to a particular religion or belief system. This includes the right not to believe in any religious or belief system;
- an ability to connect issues relating to religions and beliefs to wider human rights issues (..) and the promotion of peace (..)
- an historical and psychological understanding of how a lack of respect for religious differences has led to extreme violence in the past and, related to this, the importance of people taking an active role in protecting the rights of others (civic responsibility); and
- the ability to counteract, in a respectful and sensitive way, a climate of intolerance and discrimination, when it occurs (OSCE 2007, 48-49).

It is argued that knowledge about religions and beliefs is an essential part of a well-rounded education, and required in order to understand much of history, literature and art. This cultural-historical knowledge and competences include:



- a core knowledge about different religions and beliefs systems and knowledge of the variation that exists within all religions and beliefs, with reference both to the local/national context as well as to larger geographical areas;
- an understanding that there are various legitimate ways to view history and historical developments (multi-perspectivity);
- knowledge of the contexts associated with major historical events relating to different religions and belief system; here, again, the specific attention to local/national circumstances should be combined with a broader geographical and cultural perspective;
- an understanding of the importance of religious or philosophical beliefs in a person's life;
- awareness of similarities and differences between different religions and beliefs;
- the ability, based on sound knowledge, to recognize and to question existing negative stereotypes about religious communities and their members (OSCE 2007, 48-49).

The contribution to the learner's personal existential-ethical formation is the:

- forming and developing self-understanding, including a deeper appreciation of one's own religion or belief. Studying about religions and beliefs opens student's minds to questions of meaning and purpose and exposes students to critical ethical issues addressed by humankind throughout history (OSCE 2007, 19).

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* clearly reflects the human rights framework, and the idea that teaching about religion and belief can play an important role in solving political and social problems and in the promotion of human rights values, active democratic citizenship and intercultural/religious dialogue.

### **3.3 The REDCo-project sponsored by the European Commission**

EU has also shown interest in RE as a potential factor in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and solving political and social problems. A major project called 'Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries?' (REDCo) was financed by the European Commission (EC)<sup>14</sup>, designed to contribute to the section 'Values and Religions in Europe' in the Framework 6 Programme 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge based society'. The REDCo project lasted from 2006-2009 and included nine universities from Estonia, Russia, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, England, France and Spain with project leaders from various academic disciplines (theology, Islamic studies, education, RE, sociology, political science and ethnography) and coordinated by Wolfram Weisse from the University of Hamburg. The

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<sup>14</sup> EC represents the interests of the EU: It proposes new legislation to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and it ensures that EU law is correctly applied by member countries. For more information, see [http://ec.europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm)

main aim of the project was “to establish and compare the potentials and limitations of religion in the educational systems of selected European countries” (Weisse 2011, 113) with a focus on religion in the lives and schooling of pupils in the age group 14-16. The project included qualitative and quantitative research such as document analyses, class-room observation, questionnaires and interviews with pupils and was theoretically based on Robert Jackson’s interpretative approach to RE and combined with approaches of ‘neighbour religions’, ‘citizenship education’, ‘non-foundational education’ and ‘identity formation’ (Weisse 2012). The results of REDCo are published in several books and reports, three films, more than 100 articles and the research group also produced policy recommendations aimed at European institutions, national educational bodies, research associations, religious organizations, universities and schools.<sup>15</sup>

These policy recommendations support the recommendations given by the Council of Europe and Toledo Guiding Principles but also stresses the need for a differentiation at the national level and “underline the importance of dialogue at classroom level which emphasizes the exchange of different perspectives of students concerning religions and worldviews.” (REDCo 2009, 3). The recommendations cover four main objectives:

1) Encouragement for peaceful coexistence, 2) Promotion of diversity management, 3) Including religious as well as non-religious worldviews and 4) Professional competences. ‘Encouragement for peaceful coexistence’ should according to REDCo focus on the transmission from abstract, passive tolerance into practical, active tolerance through the following actions:

- Counter stereotypical images of religions, present more complex images that show the impact of religion on society and the individual.
- Develop and strengthen skills for dialogue between pupils concerning different religions and worldviews.
- Provide opportunities for engagement with different worldviews and religions, (including cooperation with local communities in order to increase exchange between different religious and non-religious groups) and to offer opportunities for encounters between students of diverse positions vis-à-vis religion.

The ‘promotion of diversity management’ stresses the necessary to value religious diversity at school and university level, and recommend actions that:

- Offer opportunities for students to learn about and give space for discussions on religions.
- Develop innovative approaches to learning about religions and worldviews in different subjects including RE, history, literature and science.

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<sup>15</sup> The most recent book *Religion, Education, Dialogue and Conflict* ed. Robert Jackson (2012) gives an overview and some of the results of the REDCO project.

- RE and learning about religion must incorporate education for understanding and tolerance and take account of children's differing needs as they develop.
- Encourage universities to give fuller consideration to religious diversity in research and teaching.

It is recommended that actions should be taken in schools towards the:

- Inclusion of learning about different religious and secular worldviews in their complexity and inner diversity
- Inclusion of the religious dimension into general intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Similar to the projects from other European organizations, the education of teachers is seen as vital for implementing these recommendations, and it is therefore recommended to:

- Prepare educators in different subjects to treat religious topics relevant to their subject, ensuring the inclusion of students regardless of their religious or non-religious background.
- Train educators in methods that supports and encourage students to be comfortable with difference and to engage with the diversity of their personal experiences.
- The curriculum for teacher training should include the development of skills to organise and moderate in-class debates on controversial religious and conflicting worldviews (REDCo 2009, 3-4).

## **4. Concluding remarks**

As can be seen from the different projects and recommendations mentioned above, teaching about religions and beliefs is nowadays seen as an important instrument for meeting and maybe even solving major social, political and cultural challenges and conflicts. The projects and recommendations are in agreement that no matter what kind of RE that currently may be in place in the European states, there is a need to ensure that this RE or another kind of RE provides teaching about different religions and non-religious convictions in a balanced, impartial and pluralistic way that may counteract negative religious or cultural stereotypes, intolerance and misunderstandings of religions. This teaching and the recommendation thereof is placed in a framework of human rights, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and citizenship education with the main aim of contributing to the learners 'social formation'. Common to the ideas of what this 'social formation' includes or implies is a competence to contribute to social cohesion and to a culture of 'living together', thus also implying active citizenship and intercultural dialogue, active tolerance, respect and the ability to interact with 'the other' in multicultural and multi-religious societies. The prerequisite for developing such social skills and attitudes is a balanced, impartial historical-cultural knowledge about religion, religions and non-religious convictions.

Despite this overall agreement, differences and nuances can be detected when it comes to the framework and academic basis, to the teachers education and to whether the pupils are to learn not just from the teaching about religions in regard to social formation but also from the religions themselves with regard to their personal moral- and spiritual development.

The Council of Europe, particularly in the 2005 Parliamentary Assembly recommendations, in the *White Paper* (2007), and in the 2008 recommendations shows a move from recommending more general principles towards giving more explicit and detailed principles for RE in a framework of intercultural education and the study of religions. These recommendations stress the need of impartial, critical-analytical knowledge and skills, and they differ from others by also recommending that the teaching includes controversial issues related to religions. The idea of learning *from* religions is, however, also expressed, and much in line with Robert Jackson's idea (1997,2008) of 'edification' as the ability to reflect on one's own and others' existence and views not least as a way to develop intercultural (and interreligious) dialogue.

The UN *Alliance of Civilization* recommendations put more weight on interreligious dialogue as the framework for teaching about religions with a mainly positive perspective on religions and the harmonization of religions. They also assign a central responsibility to religious leaders of the major religions and intercivic organizations in evaluating and developing curricula and teaching material.

Not all RE scholars from the study of religions agree with the interreligious dialogue framework for RE and also point to difficulties to be considered if religious leaders are included in curricula production.<sup>16</sup> Some such concerns are also discussed in the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, that also stress the need of showing sensitivity to and including representatives from religious and inter-religious communities and councils. Just like the Council of Europe, the *Toledo Guiding Principles* stresses that teaching about religions and beliefs should be based on professional expertise, training, and sound scholarship and that it

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<sup>16</sup> See for example Alberts (2007, 377-380) for a discussions of these matters. Alberts stresses, that this inclusion should not give privileges only to the major established religions and requires a clear distribution of roles under the general responsibility of secular educational institutions. She also points out, that the inclusion of insider voices in the representation of religions can be helpful, but that they cannot have the final word in the representation and that educators must be aware of the diversity of insider-voices

should be accurate, objective, non-doctrinal, impartial and up to date. At the same time, however, teachers and learners are asked to have and show 'empathy' and 'sensitivity' in regard to religion and religious sensitivities, and (religious) existential-ethical formation is said to be one of the aims of RE.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently: As pointed out also by Luce Pépin in his report on RE in various European countries and trans-national European recommendations, despite agreement on the need to teach about different religions in schools, a fundamental question remains whether this also include learning from religions and how this should be justified (Pépin 2009, 43-44). Another unanswered question is to what extent the trans-national European organizations and the member states are ready to acknowledge that it is the research, methods and theories developed within the academic study of religions that ought serve as the academic foundation and overall framework for an impartial, balanced, and objective RE that can be made compulsory because in line with the criteria stated by e.g. the European Court of Human Rights.

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<sup>17</sup> See Jensen 2008, 2011 for a critic of the Toledo Guiding Principles, which in his opinion puts too much weight on respect, empathic attitudes and sensitivity towards the needs and interests of pupils, parents, religious communities etc. and thus making the teaching of religions and beliefs something special compared to other subjects or subject-areas in the school.

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## SECTION THREE: IERS PROJECT DIGITAL MODULES: AN OVERVIEW

### 1. What are the Digital Modules?

A Digital Module is a ICT Application, to be used in class by teachers, to hold one or more classes on a certain topic. All Digital Modules are available for free on the IERS Project site (<http://iers.unive.it/>). They can be accessed and used in on-line mode, as well as been fully downloaded. They are available in the following languages: English, Italian, German, French, Spanish and Danish, so that they can be used also in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) modality.

The target of the Digital Modules are upper-intermediate school teachers of Humanities and Social Sciences (e.g. History, Geography, Philosophy, Sociology, Arts, Literature, Religion) and educators at large interested in promoting intercultural dialogue, active democratic citizenship and human-rights values.

### 2. What are the technical features of a Digital Module?

A Digital Modules is made up of 3 to 12 sections, each with a specific sub-topic, plus an introduction and a summary of contents.

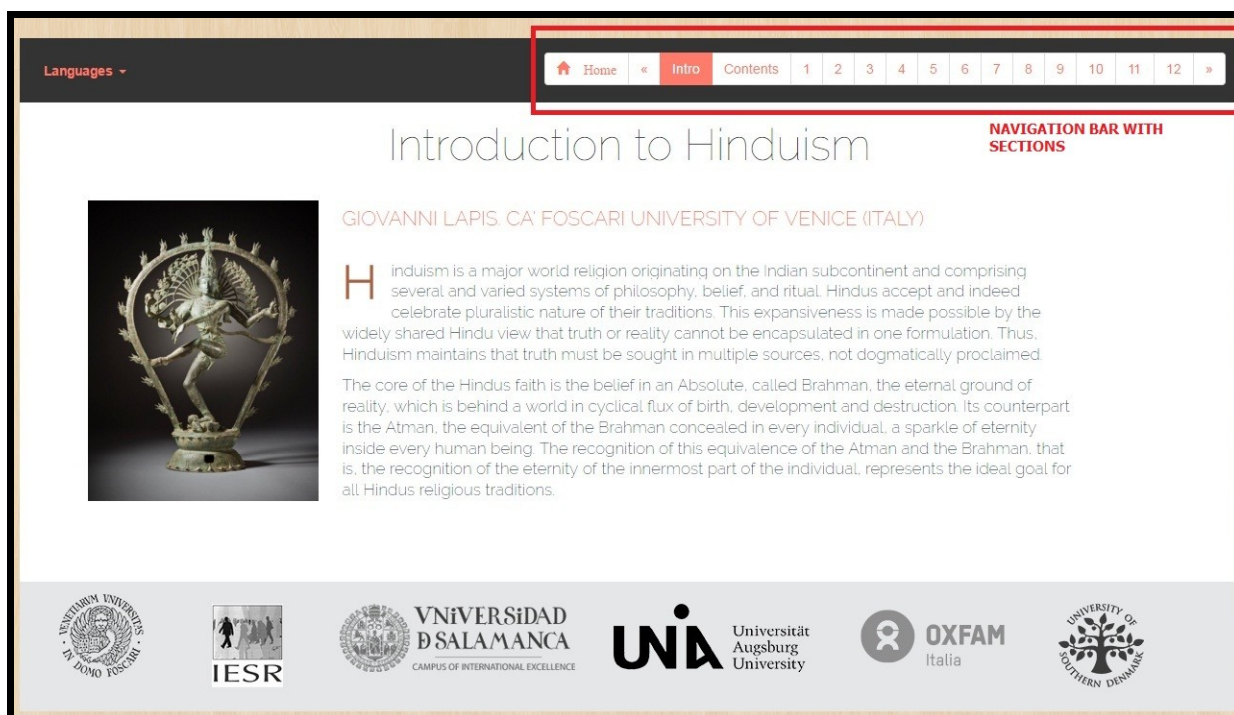


Figure 1. Module Introduction with navigation bar.



Each section has two visualization. One for student and one for teacher. Each section is built around 1 up to 7 resources (texts, pictures, maps, videos, audio...) which can be used in the class-room. Each resource is accompanied by a quick presentation (for the teachers and the pupils) which provides the background in order to have a better understanding of its meaning and purpose.

2. Scripture, the canon and apocrypha

**SELECTION OF SOURCES**

- Introduction
- Source 1**
- Source 2a
- Source 2b
- Source 2c

**EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY**

Eusebius (ca. 265 – ca. 340) lived at a pivotal time between past persecution and the recognition of Christianity as a lawful religion by Emperor Constantine. He became a priest at Caesarea in 300, before being bishop to 312. He is close to Constantine, and wrote the *Vita Constantini* (Life of Constantine). He is also considered the first historian of the Christian Church. However he is not primarily a historian but a biblical and apologetic writer. His History is written in a religious perspective, and focus on Christian faith.

In this passage, Eusebius explains why the message of Jesus, conveyed by the apostles (Peter in this text), is written down. The main reason is the desire to preserve the message in the absence of the apostle. However, the extract also shows that writing down such a message is not obvious. The intervention of the Holy Spirit persuades Mark, the companion of Peter, to accept the task. Eusebius, like his contemporaries and Christians until recently, has no doubt that Mark was the author of the gospel. But if Mark is the author, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The extract quoted here shows that clerics consider that the authors of their sacred writings are human, inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. Hence the importance of *kata*, "according to" in the title of the gospels: there is one gospel (one message of Jesus), but "interpreted" by men.

**TEXTUAL SOURCE**

Thus when the divine word had thus been established with them [the citizens of Rome], Simon's power was extinguished and immediately destroyed, along with the man himself. So greatly did the lamp of piety enlighten the minds of Peter's hearers that they were not satisfied with a single hearing of the unwritten teaching in the divine message, and with all kinds of appeals begged Mark, whose gospel is extant, as he was a follower of Peter, to provide them with a written record of the teaching they had received in oral form. Persisting in their request until they had persuaded him, they were thus responsible for the writing known as the Gospel according to Mark. 2. It is said that, when what had happened was revealed to him by the Spirit, the apostle was delighted by their enthusiasm, and authorized the work, for reading in the churches.

F. Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective*, p. 442.

**Figure 2, textual sources.**

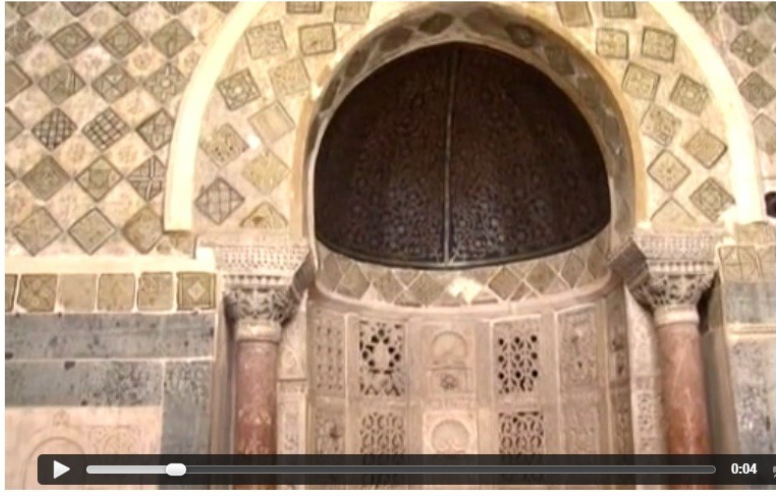
## 8. The mosque: the sacredness of the space and the multitude of functions)

**SELECTION OF SOURCES**

- Introduction
- Source 1
- Source 2**
- Source 3a
- Source 3b

**VIDEO SOURCE**

THE MIHRAB OF THE MOSQUE OF KAIROUAN

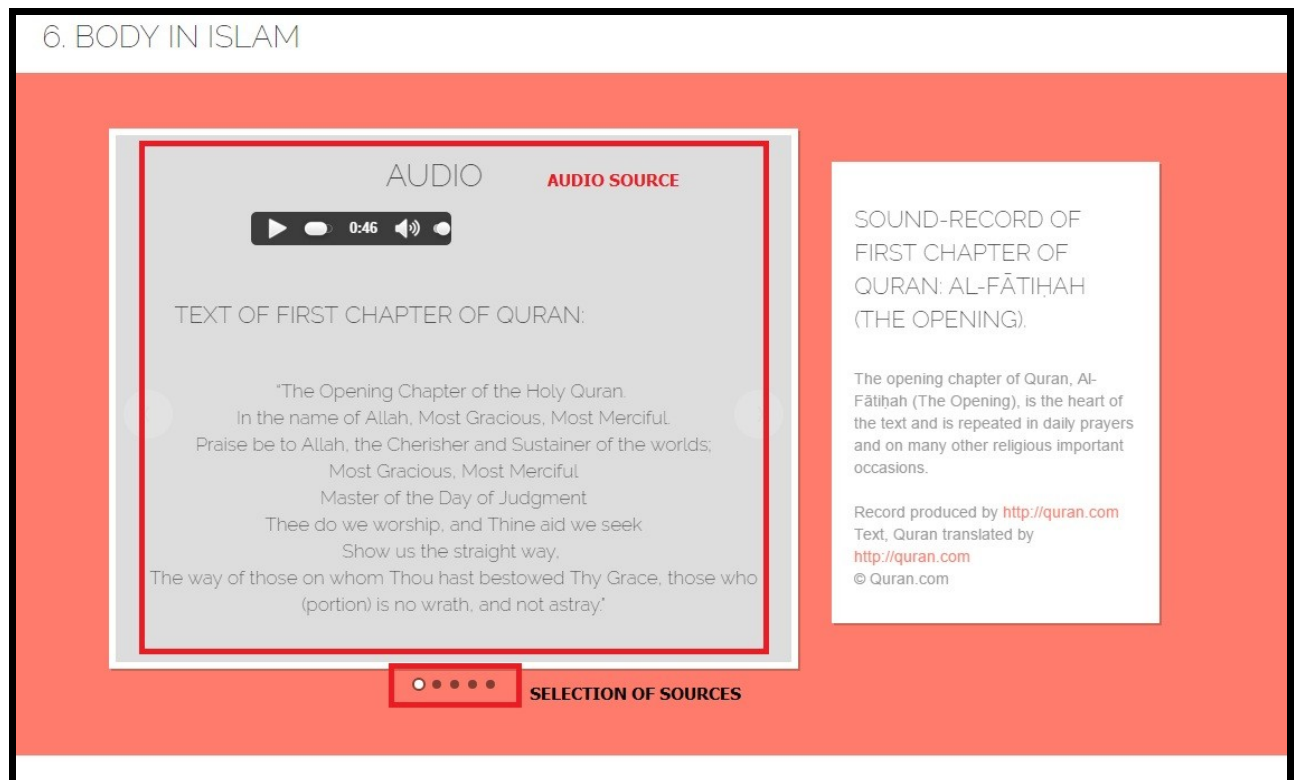


[http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show\\_video.php?vi\\_id=48](http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_video.php?vi_id=48)  
(19/12/2014)

**EXPLANATORY TEXT**

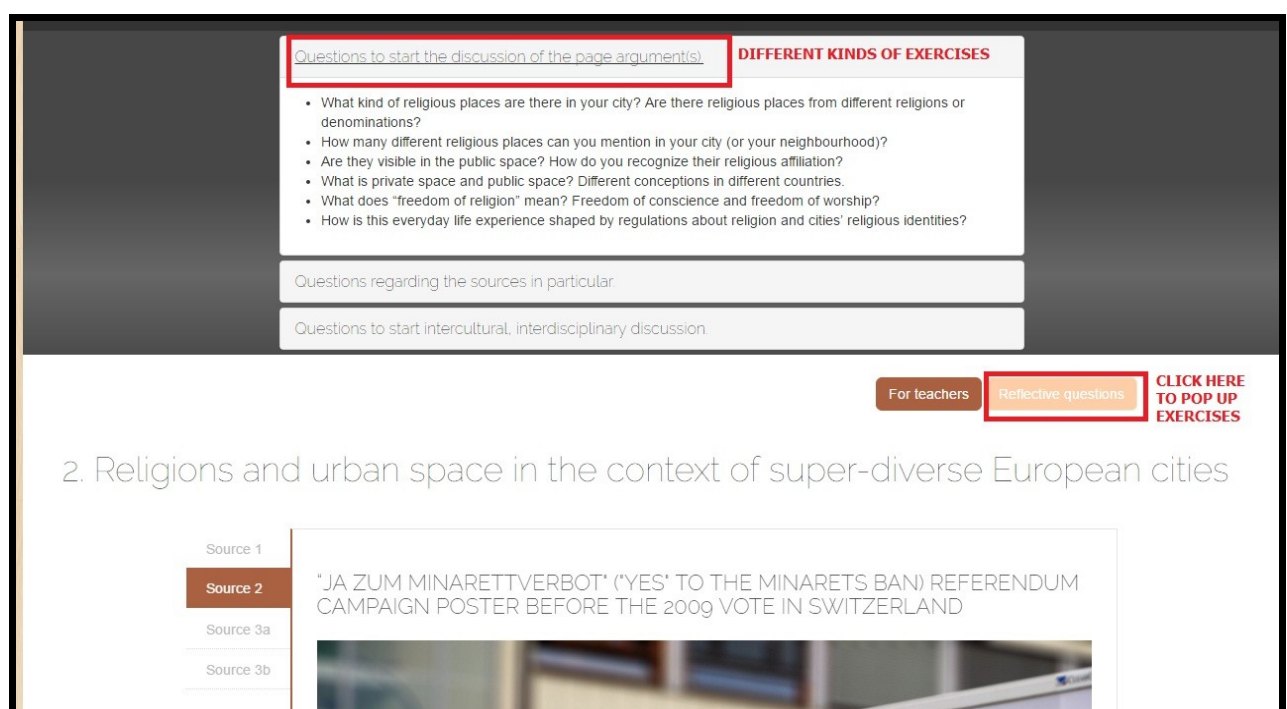
The mihrab, in all its splendour in Cordoba or in a more simple or hollow form, is the main architectural innovation in the religious art of large mosques. The mihrab in the Great mosque of Kairouan is a majestic niche because of its dimensions (more than four meters high) and splendour (decorated with sculpted and latticed marble and ceramic and metallic reflections from the ninth century). Its upper part is topped by a wooden half-dome. It also has inscriptions in Kufi style, Quranic verses and blessings. The Great Mosque of Kairouan influenced the design of the mosques found in the Maghreb. It was a centre for the dissemination of malikism (see module Islam I, page 7) and an important place for the teaching of Sunni religious sciences, just as al-Azhar in Cairo.

Figure 3, video sources.



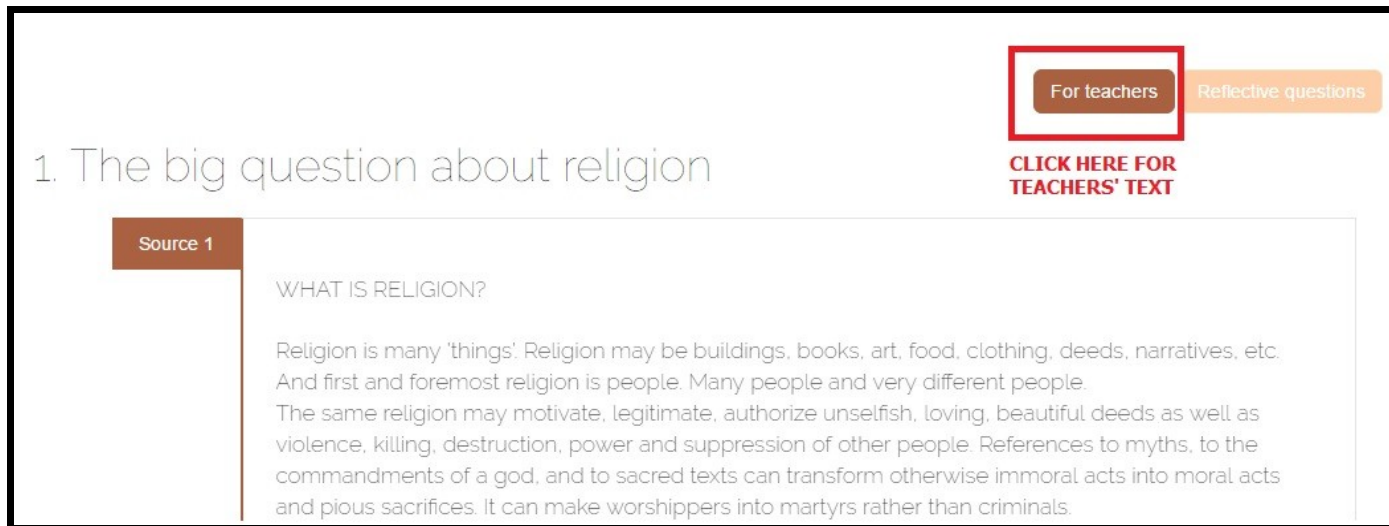
**Figure 4, audio sources.**

Each sections also comes with suggestions for various Kind of questions and exercises either concerning the broad topics of the section in question or in reference to one or more sources in particular.



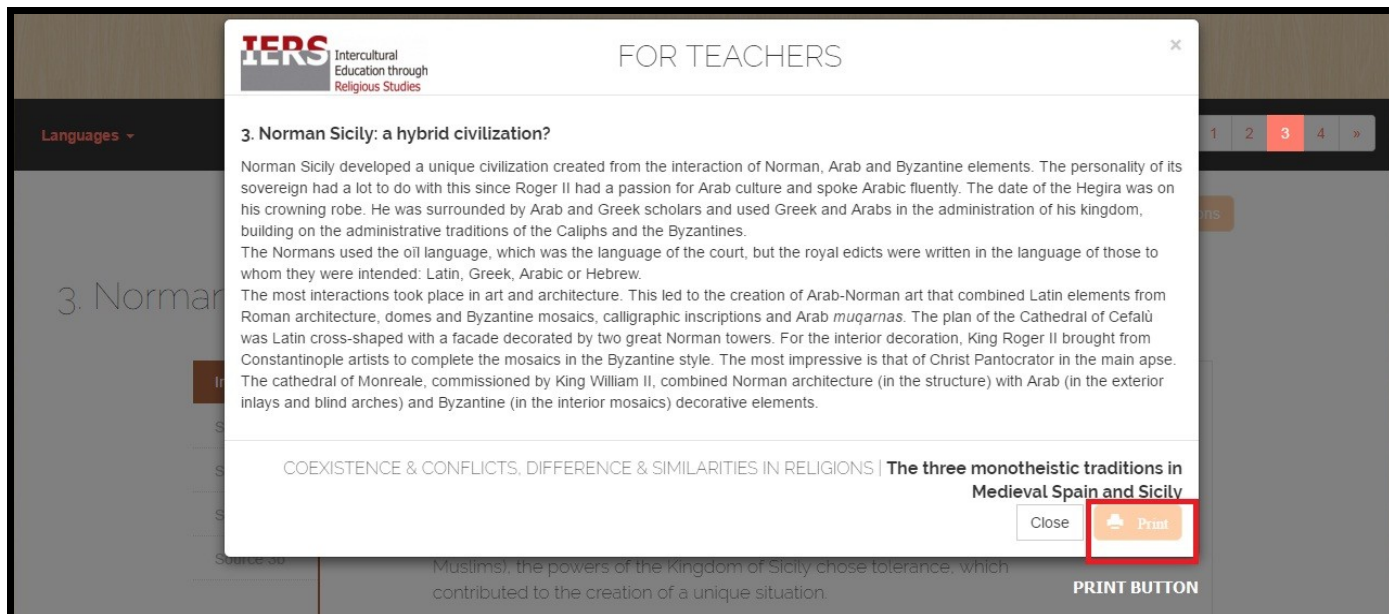
**Figure 5, suggestions of exercises.**

Every section is supplemented by a text which gives the teacher detailed information about the subject. Cross-references between pages of different digital modules will encourage teachers and pupils to take a cross-cultural approach.



**Figure 6, teachers' text button.**

The Teachers text has a built-in printing option.



**Figure 7, teachers' text and print button.**

A video tutorial explaining in detail functions and use of the Digital Modules is available in various languages in the Project Web Site (<http://iers.unive.it/about/teaching-support-actions/>).

A Digital Module is conceived as a whole. However each section, although featuring reference to other sections, has a relative autonomy.

Therefore, teachers are free to use the different sections of various Digital Modules in a flexible way.

## **2. Digital Modules' Contents**

The Digital Modules' contents are divided in three sets:

- 1) An articulated overview of different religious traditions (10 modules)
- 2) A methodological introduction to the scientific study of religions (4 modules)
- 3) A selection of topics revolving around the theme of "conflict & coexistence, differences and similarities" in religions (6 modules)

### 2.1 Introduction to Religious Traditions

The principal set of Digital Modules is made up of 10 detailed introductory modules that present the main religious traditions of the world. 6 Modules are devoted to the three monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) that contributed building up the religious and cultural heritage of Europe and the Mediterranean area.

The modules on the three monotheisms share the same approach. Two modules are devoted to each tradition: The first module deals with the historical developments of the religion from its beginnings up to the present day. It contains topics that are commonplace in school's curricula such as Ancient Judaism, Judaism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Early Christianity, the Reformation, the predication of Muhammad and the first expansion of Islam, thus making them more usable inside the standard educational programmes. But their added value is to deal also with lesser known aspects such as Jewish modernity, Christian churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the various schools of Islamic law or the modern trends in Islamic thought. This in order to offer a comprehensive picture and to emphasize the diversity inside each monotheism.

The second module highlights some shared aspects of the three religious traditions, such as the places of worship, the holy texts, the status of the image, the rites, the dogma, and more specific topics (the Jewish diaspora, the art of Islamic gardens, monasticism) also of contemporary relevance, like the importance of Jerusalem, or the developments of Muslim Minorities in nowadays Europe.

Each section is built around two to four documents. Different types of documents are used: excerpts from the holy texts (Bible, Quran), religious and literary works, maps, pictures and video... The documents are given with a short presentation to provide a context and identify the major issues. In order to help the teachers and pupils in their work with the resources, each document comes with a few questions or guidelines. A "teacher's text" gives a more detailed analysis of the section's topic in a secular, academic and non-biased way.

Also the eastern and far eastern religions, which now are being brought in Europe through immigration and globalization, has not been neglected. One Module is devoted to Hinduism and one to Daoism, whereas for Buddhism, which is characterized by a long history of diffusion and adaptations throughout Asia ( and now also in the West) two Modules have been provided.

Since the history of the countries which witnessed these religious traditions is seldom touched in schools' subjects (especially regarding premodern times), in these Modules the focus has been put on the doctrinal (beliefs and worldviews) and ritual aspects, rather than on a detailed historical evolution. Nevertheless, diversification of beliefs, developments of doctrines and ritual practices has been highlighted in order to avoid stereotypes and the false idea of eastern religions as monolithic and timeless phenomena. In fact, for each religions traditions the most interesting changes brought about by modernization and globalization have been taken in due account. Moreover, being religions a social and cultural phenomenon, the interactions with the social structures, politics and arts are covered while discussing, for example, the theological foundations of the caste system in India [Module on Hinduism, sec. 8], the diffusion of Buddhism thanks to various forms of state-sponsorships [Module on Buddhism II, sec.1], the influence of Daoism and Buddhism in Chinese ink-painting [Module on Buddhism II, sec.3]. Since eastern religions are nowadays enjoying an increasing popularity in the West, some space is also devoted to foster a critical approach towards exotic or biased understanding [Module on Daoism, sec. 1,2 and 8; Module on Buddhism II, sec. 6].



The texts for teachers discuss the sections' topics following a common scheme: information are divided by categories, such as "main doctrinal tenets", "main rituals", "main texts of the traditions", "founders" etc. so that intercultural comparison between religious traditions can be easily made. Analysis of the featured resources are also provided.

The resources used are mainly translations of the most important texts, various images of religious art pieces and pictures of people doing rituals, but also audio and video resources are provided in order give the students some concrete glimpses of how a religion is lived.

As for the suggestion of exercises, these 4 modules feature three type of questions: 1) introductory questions that serve most of the cases as a preliminary brainstorming or as a point to start the exposition by the teacher; 2) questions that mainly engage the student in analyzing the resources showed; 3) questions aimed to foster intercultural debate, either by suggesting comparison with other modules topics or engaging the student on its own cultural or religious background.

## 2.2 Introduction to the Study of Religions

But how about the category of "religion" itself? Being an ambiguous and sensitive matter, it is also important to provide students and teachers with a an introduction to the theoretical and methodological approaches used and developed within the academic study of religions and suggest different tasks in order for the teachers and pupils to apply this approach to their lectures and learning.

All these 4 modules aim at developing the students' analytical-critical knowledge and skills in order for them to analyze and reflect on the methodological way of analyzing and comparing different religions, on the notion of religion, on the relations between society, the individual and religions, and on contemporary issues about religion, multiculturalism and minority rights.

For example, the 'Introduction to the Study of Religions: Subject Matter and Approaches' Module provides some of the most fundamental theoretical and methodological principles applied in the scientific study of religion, including e.g. the insider-outsider distinction.

The 'Introduction to the Study of Religions: Comparative religion' introduces some of the important concepts and classifications developed and used as tools for systematic and comparative academic studies of religion, like "myth", "sacrifice" and "ritual process".

Theories and methodology regarding relationship between society, the individual and religion are introduced by the "Introduction to the Study of Religions: Sociology of Religion" Module, which focuses in particular to contemporary issues, presenting theories and concepts about civil religion, secularization, religion in modern and post-modern society, minority and majority religions, individualized and lived religion. Lastly the "Introduction to the Study of Religions: Philosophy of Religion" provides an insight into some of the central philosophy-of-religion approaches to religion as well as examples of specific discussions and theories, including relations and differences between theology, the study of religions and the philosophy of religion. Apart from giving an overview of the foremost philosophical topics about religion, it deals also with contemporary issues such as multiculturalism and minority rights as well as the question of the 'right place' for religion in the public space.

In these Modules students are given different tasks in order for them to analyze the resources presented (texts, images and videos) as well as the other Digital Modules, applying the concepts, the theories and the methodologies presented. Other tasks ask students to actively engage themselves in discussions concerning various topics in their own cultural, social and religious contexts.

### 2.3 "coexistence & conflict, differences & similarities"

In the end, in order to present concrete case-studies that put in actual context the intercultural and present-day issues in studying religions, the remaining 6 Digital Modules are devoted to a series of topics revolving around the theme "coexistence & conflict, differences & similarities".

These Modules feature much more focused and shorter contents (no more than 6 section) in a broad range of topics: the Module on "Religion and the Body" is aimed to show, in a comparative and intercultural way, how religions shape and informs notions and practice regarding something that we feel so natural and taken for granted like our body. Other modules on Fundamentalism and Migration & Minorities are meant to foster a more critical and informed approach to two of the most salient contemporary phenomena related to religions. What is the character of Fundamentalism in the various religions? What are its historical origins? What role do religions play in the migrations and in the communities of immigrants in a foreign country?



Another module on “Religious diversity in contemporary Europe” is aimed to clarify the difference between the traditional features of religious and denominational diversity coming from the past and the new forms of diversity due to migrations, and then to focus on some fields: urban space (coexistence of religious buildings in metropolitan cities), food (religious diets and prohibitions, religious food market), and law (international and European law and protection of freedom of conscience and of religion).

In order to deal with the topics also in premodern times, and to facilitate the connection with standard schools' curricula (especially History), the module on Medieval Spain and Sicily studies two situations of religious coexistence in an age otherwise characterized by violent conflicts — and in many cases religious conflicts. Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) and Norman Sicily are sometime seen as a golden age of tolerance and mutually beneficial cultural exchanges. This module is divided into 4 sections: the historical background (section 1), the situation in Spain (section 2), the situation in Sicily (section 3), the cultural exchanges (section 4). The teacher will be able to give a more accurate assessment of the situation: indeed, in some cases, a peaceful and fruitful coexistence happened, but distrust and rivalry are nonetheless an important feature of this era.

#### **4. Complete list of the Digital Modules:**

##### *A) Introduction to the main religious traditions*

- 1-Buddhism (brief overview)
- 2-Buddhism (diffusion in the world)
- 3-Christianity (history)
- 4-Christianity (themes)
- 5-Daoism
- 6-Judaism (history)
- 7-Judaism (themes)
- 8-Hinduism
- 9-Islam (history)
- 10-Islam (themes)

##### *B) Methodological Area*

- 1-Introduction to the Study of Religions
- 2-Comparative Religion

3-Sociology of Religion

4-Philosophy of Religion

*C) Thematic area: "Coexistence & Conflict, Similarities & Differences in religion"*

1-Religious Diversity in Contemporary Europe

2-The three monotheistic traditions in Medieval Spain and Sicily

3-Main Religious Festivals

4-Religions and the Body

5-Religions and Fundamentalism

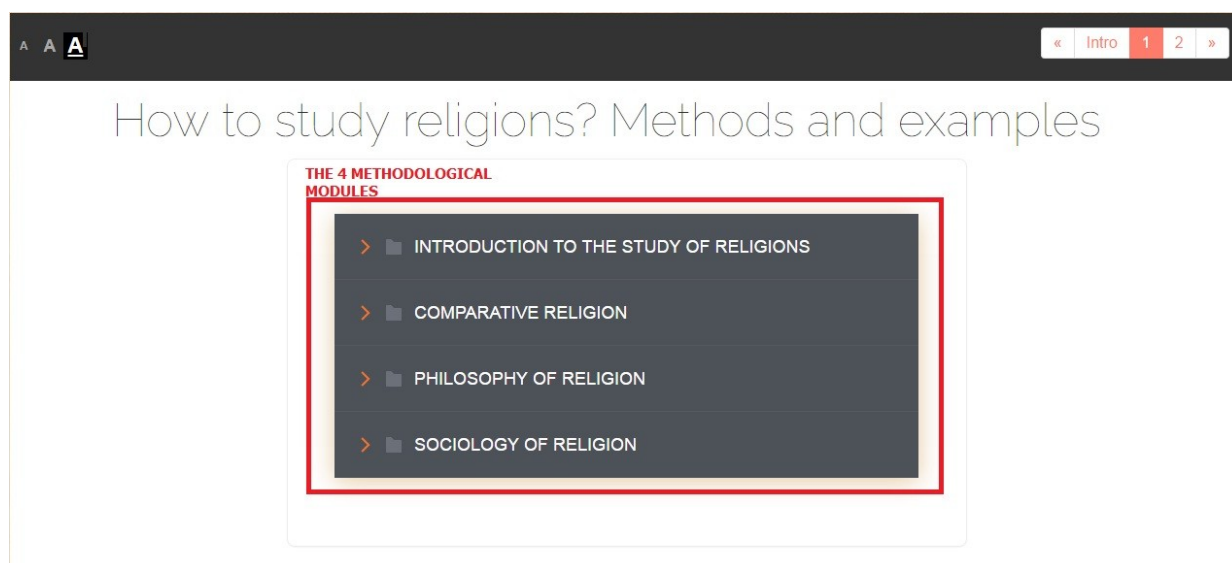
6-Religions, migration and minorities

## 5. The "Intercultural Paths through Religions" Metamodule:

This Module has been planned as an answer to the first impressions and suggestions of the piloting teachers who pointed out the usefulness of more cross-connections between Modules. It is in fact meant to offer comparative and intercultural didactic paths among the different Digital Modules.

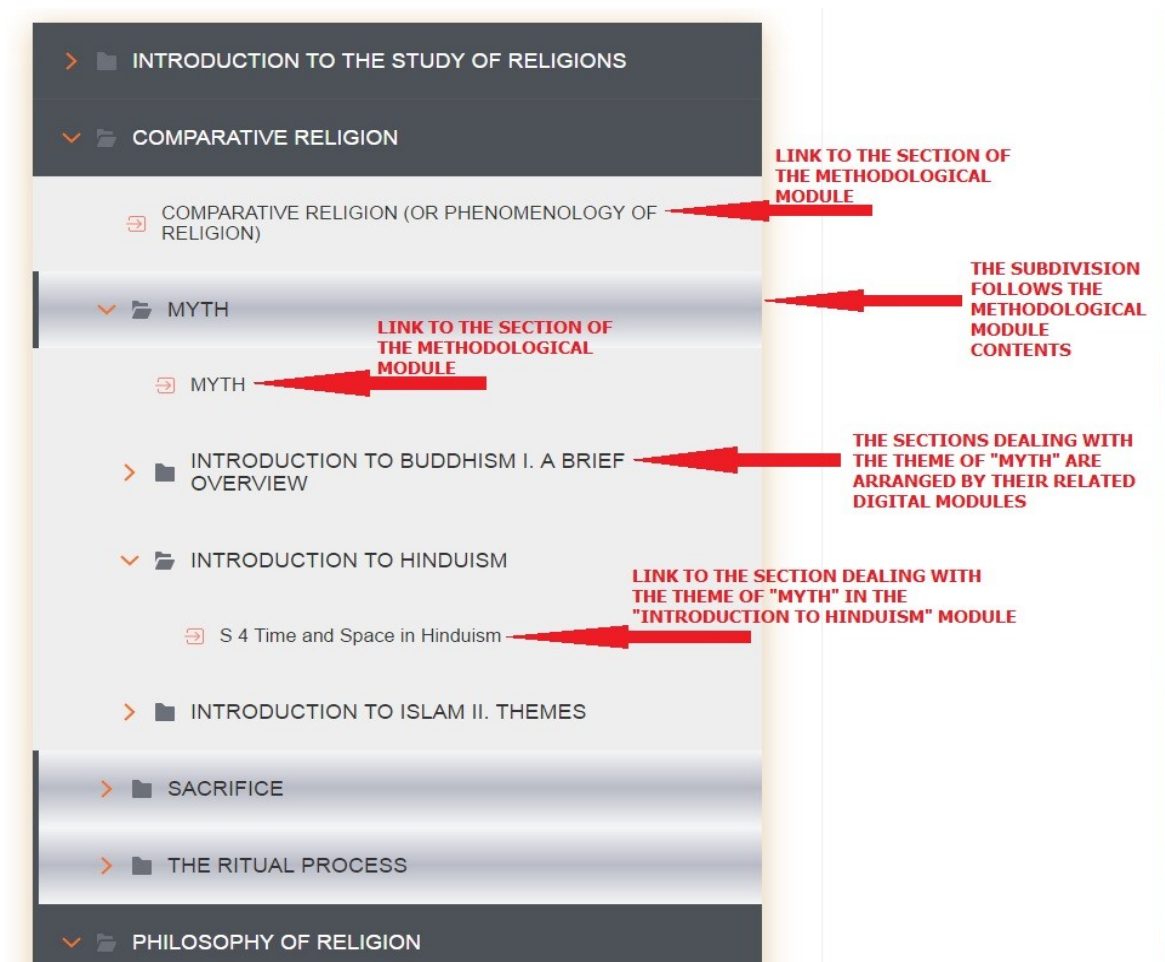
Using this Module, teachers can choose between two modalities, which correspond to section nº1 and section nº 2.

In section nº 1 of this Module the starting points are provided by the 4 methodological modules on the study of Religions: Introduction to the Study of Religions, Comparative Religion, Philosophy of Religion and Sociology of Religion



**Figure 8. The 4 Methodological Modules as starting points.**

For each of these modules, their sections explaining theoretical formulations (for example, Myth, The Ritual Process, or Religious Themes in Political Philosophy) are accompanied by actual examples from the various religious traditions, with links to the correspondents sections of the various Digital Modules.



**Figure 9. Structure of Section n° 1.**

Using this modality, teachers can start explaining what are the basic and general theories, concepts and problems found in the study of religions, and deepen their critical understanding by applying them to actual different examples from the various religious traditions, thus enabling a comparative and intercultural approach.

In section n° 2 of this Module the starting points are provided by a series of common themes that help gain a comparative and intercultural understanding of religions.

**FOUNDER & ORIGINS**

**TRANSVERSAL THEMES**

**DEITIES & HOLY BEINGS**

**SACRED TEXTS AND OTHER MAIN TEXTS**      **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSVERSAL THEME**

Are the main doctrinal tenets of a religious tradition inscribed somewhere? Which kind of texts did a religious tradition produced? What are their contents and role inside a tradition?

\*\*\* Introduction to Buddhism I. A brief overview

\*\*\* Introduction to Buddhism II. Diffusion in the world

\*\*\* **Introduction to Christianity I. History** →

-S1 The emergence of Christianity (sources 2&3)

-S3 Early evangelism and Christianization (source 2)

-S5 The birth of the Eastern Orthodox Church (source 1)

-S6 The age of Reformations (source 1& 2c)

-S7 Christian churches and the modern world (sources 1&2)

-S8 Vatican II and ecumenism

\*\*\* Introduction to Christianity II. Themes

\*\*\* Introduction to Daoism

\*\*\* Introduction to Hinduism

\*\*\* Introduction to Islam I. History

\*\*\* Introduction to Islam II. Themes

\*\*\* Introduction to Judaism I. History

\*\*\* Introduction to Judaism II. Themes

**ONCE THE CHOSEN DIGITAL MODULE IS SELECTED, A LIST OF SECTION DEALING WITH THE TRANSVERSAL THEME IN QUESTION OPENS**

Figure 10. Structure of Section n° 2.

These themes are the following: Founder & origins; Deities & holy beings; Main doctrinal tenets; Sacred texts and other main texts; Authority and Religious Organization; Main rites and Practices; Religion & society; Religion, culture & arts;, Religions & Modernity, Encounters between religions.

Under each theme links to relevant sections from each of the other Digital Modules are provided, divided by each Religious Tradition.

A final word of advise

Teachers and students are highly encourage not to take the above mentioned classification as intrinsic to the multidimensional phenomenon of religions: these classifications are just theories and concepts that should act as a tools to understand better religions, not to define and determinate them in a narrow, enclosed way.

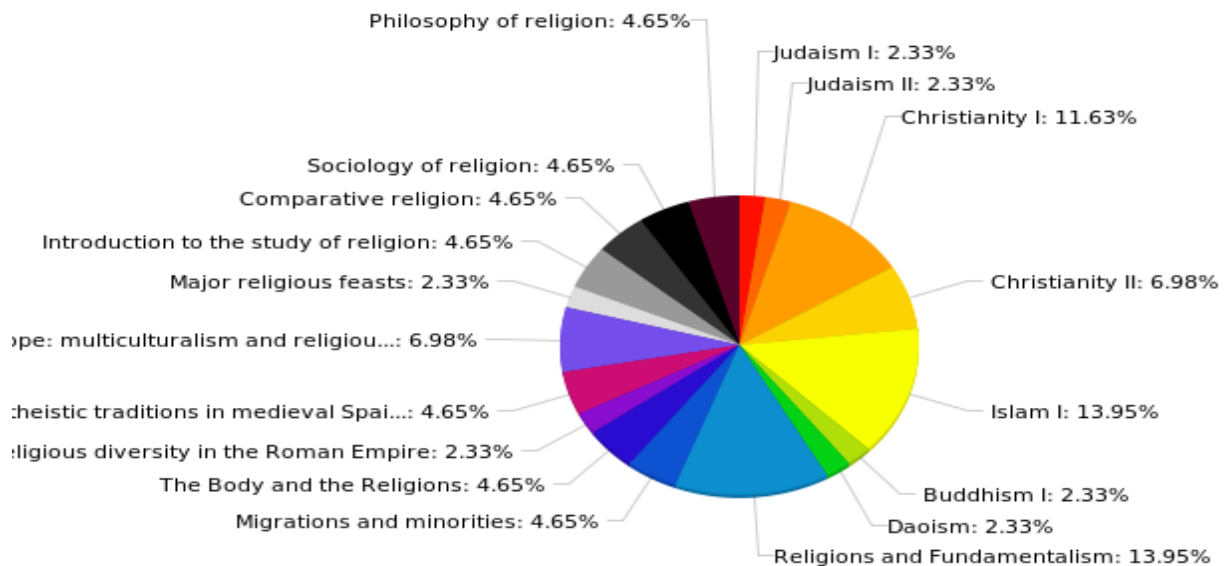
## **SECTION FOUR: PILOT REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

Beginning with January 2015 the teachers start to testing the IERS digital modules with their pupils in the associated schools and evaluating their use in classroom activities with pupils.

With regard to the Spanish, German, Italian, French and Danish partner schools, the local partner staff gave the teachers an introduction to the IERS project, its outcomes and the methodological aspects involved before testing the modules (teacher training and support actions – WP6). Following testing teachers' feedbacks were constantly collected throughout answers to online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. On the basis of 48 piloting teachers' feedbacks from 32 schools an evaluation report was designed in April 2016.

The Report's findings reveal that most of the teachers tested the modules in history lessons (50 %), confessional (23 %) or non-confessional RE (23 %). But there are far more subjects, in which the modules were tested. The wide range of subjects, beginning from social studies and ranging to foreign language or art lessons shows that the topics of the modules easily fit into the curricula of a wide range of subjects in each partner country. Moreover, it can be concluded from the teachers' statements that the modules are particularly suitable for upper stage classes (beginning with 9th/10th grade).

Concluding from the popularity of some particular modules, like *Islam I, Religion and Fundamentalism* and *Religious Diversity in Contemporary Europe*, the teachers have a great need to deal with highly relevant socio-political issues. The choice of these particular modules can be seen as an indicator that the IERS project provides the teachers with teaching materials that have been lacking so far.

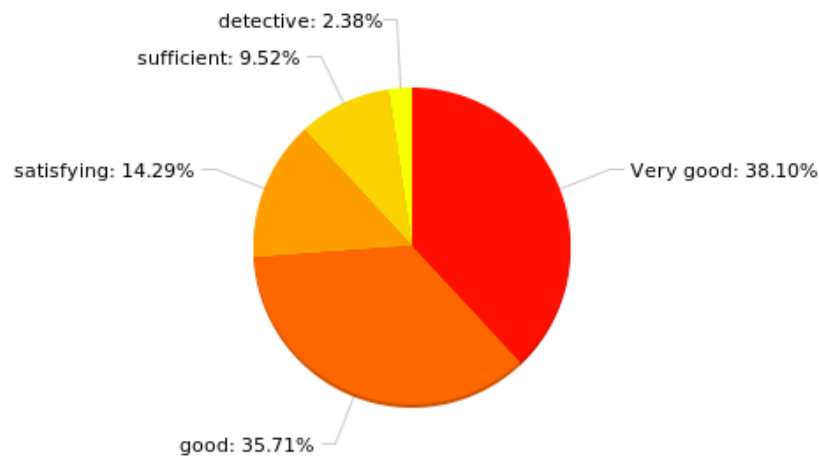


Concerning the assessment of the IERS-Project itself it can be stated that the underlying quasi -ideology of the IERS project received great approval. All of the teachers agreed on the statement that the IERS outcomes are truly an educational component, which could be one solution on how to deal with and to handle challenges emerging from an increasingly multi-cultural and religiously diverse Europe.

With regard to the assessment of the pilot content it can be concluded from the teachers' statements that the choice of the topics has its finger firmly on the pulse of the present – particularly in regards to highly relevant socio-political and socio-cultural realities. The great variety of topics can also be seen as an "encyclopedia" of issues related to or emerged from



religion(s). The modules themselves mainly received very positive appraisal



The teachers particularly highlighted the technical design of the modules, the layout of the digital environment, the scientifically outstanding quality of the teachers' texts, and last but not least the choice of the resources. However, the teachers' statements also reveal the necessity of improvement from a school's practical point of view. For the IERS-project the teachers' feedback thus turned out as a truly practical assistance for the optimisation of the teaching and learning materials. Moreover, the piloting can be seen as a fruitful cooperation between scientific staff and the persons who will finally use the IERS outcomes.

## SECTION FIVE: LESSON PLAN SUGGESTIONS

In this chapter of the Handbook lesson plans developed by some IERS Project piloting teachers are collected in order to serve as suggestions for other teachers.

### Lesson Plan n° 1

**Title:** Introduction to Buddhism.

**Module used:** Buddhism I. Brief Overview

**Subject Area:** 3rd grade Catholic Religion Education

**Type of school:** Upper-intermediate

**Country:** Italy

<b>AIMS</b>	<p>Briefly describe the lesson training goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Knowledge:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prince Siddharta's life,</li><li>• Benarese's speech</li><li>• Definition of samsara, karma, impermanence, awareness, eightfold path, meditation</li><li>• Difference between reincarnation and resurrection</li></ul></li><li>- Skills:<p>Face evil, death, joy and pain, by using religions' contributions to build a personal, critic, flexible and conscious view</p></li><li>- Abilities:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be able to compare and contrast some doctrinal elements of Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as some dogma belonging to monotheisms</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>THEMES</b>	<p>The path, organized in three meetings, started with an interaction activity whose main theme was Benarese's speech. From a didactic point of view, it contributed to raise interest and curiosity on the theme through a recreational activity.</p>

	By using iconographic resources within the platform, the meeting started with prince Siddhartha's life story and continued with Benares's speech. Afterwards, always through the available resources, it worked on karma, impermanence, resurrection, reincarnation, samsara and eightfold path, by always considering a comparison with other religions.
<b>BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</b>	The class almost ignored the theme.
<b>MODULE USED</b>	The module chosen concerned Buddhism. Iconographic and textual resources, belonging to the first six sections, were chosen.
<b>LINKS AND COHERENCE WITH CURRICULUM</b>	planning fully respected the module. Please bear in mind that teaching Catholicism is NOT religious in Italy. It is not catechism. This means that the complete conformity between the module and my planning was not only at a thematic level, but even at a methodological and organizational one.
<b>LESSON PLAN</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce the theme and motivate students: interaction activity on Benares's speech. Frontal intervention: prince Siddhartha's life – 1-hour lesson</li> <li>2. Links with Hindu tradition. Reincarnation and castes. End of Benares's speech. Material: iconographic resources within the platform. Part of the movie "Little Buddha". 1-hour lesson</li> <li>3. Evil and death: a nightmare for religious people or atheists? Brainstorming with the class. What religions say about evil and death. Excursus on monotheisms. Karma, impermanence, resurrection, reincarnation, samsara and eightfold path. 1-hour lesson</li> </ol>

<b>CLASS MANAGEMENT</b>	The class had no difficulties. The theme itself referred to deep and important issues of human condition: joy and pain, life and death. Students were very attentive and motivated. Their participation was punctual and personal.
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## Lesson Plan n° 2

**Title:** Introduction to Fundamentalism

**Module used:** Religions and Fundamentalisms

**Subject Area:** 10th grade History

**Type of school:** Upper-intermediate

**Country:** Germany

<b>LEARNERS</b>	The module was tested in the 10th grade history lesson. The students are generally interested, but still have little knowledge and skills in this field. Overall, knowledge of social relevance and political issues is not very pronounced. The pupils are very interested in cultural and socially critical topics.
<b>AIMS</b>	The students should deal with the issue of differentiated fundamentalism. Awareness of relationships (fundamentalism and religion) and different forms of fundamentalism and their similarities and differences should be encouraged.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p><b>-Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learn and understand the definition of fundamentalism and the conceptual distinction to religion and terrorism.</li> <li>• Pupils deal with different forms of the phenomenon of fundamentalism.</li> </ul> <p><b>- Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils recognize fundamentalism on the basis of central features and can differentiate the phenomenon in its various religious manifestations.</li> <li>• Pupils understand that fundamentalism in its definition is not a product of Islam.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils understand the difference between religion, fundamentalism and terrorism.</li> </ul> <p><b>-Competences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pupils are able to deal on the basis of the module contents with the topic fundamentalism.</li> <li>The Pupils can understand fundamentalist embossed events better and report their backgrounds.</li> </ul>
<b>THEMES</b>	Religion and Fundamentalism
<b>BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</b>	Pupils have a little knowledge about the religions Christianity and Islam and are familiar to some extent with their extreme forms. Moreover, they have superficial knowledge of current and past events that have fundamentalist backgrounds. Overall, however, contexts and backgrounds are little known.
<b>MODULE USED</b>	<p>For the lesson module <u>Religion and Fundamentalism was chosen</u>:</p> <p>In particular:</p> <p>Section 1-5</p> <p>Section 6 was used as a deepening in a subsequent lesson (Focus on terrorism)</p> <p>The individual sources were used at different stages of teaching, partly also comparatively opposed.</p>
<b>LINKS AND COHERENCE WITH YOUR CURRICULUM</b>	<p>Excerpt of the curriculum of the Bavarian Gymnasium (upper secondary school, history, 10th grade):</p> <p><b>G 10.3 Europe and the world after the end of the east-west-conflict (ca. 9 hours):</b></p> <p>Clash of cultures in a globalized world: Examples of conflicts (e.g. "September 11") and opportunities (e.g. cultural exchanges.)</p> <p>After dealing with the topic „dissolution of the blocks after the Cold War“, the treatment of new conflicts and trouble spots is provided in the 10th grade history. In the context of international terrorism the topic fundamentalism is very well suited as a basis for understanding of backgrounds.</p>

<p><b>ACTIVITIES</b></p>	<p><u>Introduction:(6 Min.)</u></p> <p>For introduction to the topic, the sources 1 to 4 were used. The comparative study of the concept of fundamentalism should be introduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teacher lecture with supporting questions:</i> Which topics can be seen on the billboards / posters of the demonstrators? (reflective questions)</li> <li>• What similarities and differences can be observed?</li> <li>• How do you call this expression of religion / religious understanding?</li> </ul> <p><u>Topic:</u> Introduction to the term fundamentalism</p> <p>Elaboration: (6 min.) Class discussion: first discuss the meaning of the term "fundamentalism". What are its general characteristics? (Deepening questions) Teacher presentation: In addition to the results in class discussion the definition is explained. Securing the results on the board.</p> <p>Elaboration: Characteristics and forms of fundamentalism (25 min.)</p> <p>Group work 3: In group work, divided into three large groups, characteristics and backgrounds of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Christian</li> <li>- Islamic</li> <li>- and Jewish fundamentalism</li> </ul> <p>were elaborated.</p> <p>Material: In addition to the information and materials in the module the groups got additional information on the three topics. (to answer the questions this was necessary)</p> <p>To edit the topics the corresponding key questions should be</p>
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	<p>answered.</p> <p>The results were recorded by the pupils and the class presents.</p> <p><b><u>Intensification 1:</u></b> (7 Min.)</p> <p><b>class discussion</b></p> <p><i>Can fundamentalism be associated only with (a) particular religion (s)? Discuss. (reflective question)</i></p> <p><i>As an impulse the image of Breivik was shown; The cultural expression differentiates the image of fundamentalism and its forms at the end of the lesson again.</i></p> <p><b><u>Intensification 2:</u></b> (5 Min.)</p> <p><b>Pair work:</b> <i>Which connection have the terms Religion – Fundamentalism – Terrorism?</i></p> <p>Formulate three theses.</p> <p>Used forms of communication:</p> <p>Teacher lecture, classroom discussion, group work, pair work</p> <p>The module in this way should be conducted in a double period. Times presented were corrected after testing upwards as a lesson of 45 minutes is not sufficient.</p>
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### Lesson Plan n° 3

**Title:** Body in Buddhism and Christianity

**Module used:** Religions and the Body

**Subject Area:** Year 9 Ethics/Philosophy

**Type of school:** Upper-intermediate

**Country:** Germany

<b>LEARNERS</b>	Group of 22 Year 9 students (15-years old), Ethics/Philosophy class, "Gymnasium" in Bavaria/Germany
<b>AIMS</b>	<p><b>General aim of the lesson:</b> Introduction to topic Religion and the body, revision of key Buddhist teaching covered earlier this year</p> <p><b>Phases:</b></p>



	<p>1<sup>st</sup> phase: Introduction picture analysis: brainstorming major world religions and the body</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> phase: Main part</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 2 Discourse on Noble Eightfold Path, revision of Buddhism covered earlier this year.</li> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 3 Picture analysis Pu-tai Buddha: how does it relate to source Noble eightfold path? Contradiction?</li> <li>- Discussion: relationship body – spiritual growth? How this relationship is represented in German culture</li> </ul> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> phase: Deepening: source Catholic catechism: relationship to the body in Christianity. Discussion about Christian attitudes towards sex and the body, revision of topic covered earlier this year</p> <p><b>(Teacher) Teacher/Students' roles and attitudes:</b> Teacher-oriented teaching, Phases of pair work (2<sup>nd</sup> phase: Source analysis and picture analysis)</p> <p><b>Skills to improve, techniques/strategies to try out:</b> Analysis of pictures, analysis of text sources, revision of key aspects covered in Year 9 Ethics/Philosophy under a new aspect (the body)</p>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> students revise key elements of Buddhism, Students will be better able to understand the Buddhist teachings of the noble eightfold path</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> Skills in picture and text analysis, students compare the role the body plays in Buddhism with the role it plays in German society/Christianity</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> Students realize that looking at the relationship between body and religion leads to insights about the specific religion and enables comparisons between different religions, , students will be able to reflect about the role the body plays in their own culture/in Christianity</p>
<b>TOPICS</b>	Religion and the body in Buddhism vs. Religion and the body

	in the students' culture/in Christianity, reading/text analysis skills; picture analysis skills
<b>BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>Pre-knowledge, familiarity with the topic:</b> students are familiar with the key teachings of Buddhism as well as with the orthodox Catholic views on sex and marriage
<b>MODULES USED</b>	Powerpoint and Handout with text sources and pictures from module Religion of the Body: 1 <sup>st</sup> phase: Selection of pictures from the module for the brainstorming at the beginning of the lesson. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 2 Discourse on Noble Eightfold Path</li> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 3 Picture analysis Pu-tai Buddha</li> </ul> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- source Catholic catechism</li> </ul>
<b>LINKS AND COHERENCE WITH YOUR CURRICULUM</b>	The Year 9 curriculum for ethics for <i>Gymnasium</i> in Bavaria covers the topics "Buddhism" and partnership/sexuality, so the lesson at the end of the school year was a revision & extension of the subject matter covered.
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> phase (10min): Lead-in: brainstorming major world religions and the body (Powerpoint slide with different pictures from the module), teacher-student dialogue, whole class 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase (25min): Main part <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 2 Discourse on Noble Eightfold Path, revision of Buddhism covered earlier this year (Students read the text, discuss questions first in pairs, then teacher-student-dialogue with the whole class)</li> <li>- Body in Buddhism Source 3 Picture analysis Pu-tai Buddha: how does it relate to source Noble eightfold path? Contradiction? (whole class, teacher-student dialogue)</li> <li>- Discussion: relationship body – spiritual growth? How</li> </ul>

	<p>this relationship is represented in German culture</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> phase (10min): Deepening: source Catholic catechism: relationship to the body in Christianity. Discussion about Christian attitudes towards sex and the body, revision of topic covered earlier this year (teacher-student dialogue, whole class)</p>
<b>CLASSROOM &amp; PROBLEM MANAGEMENT</b>	<p>22 students; Methods: frontal-teaching, teacher-student dialogue, discussions individual work/pair work; classroom with computer/beamer; lesson 45 minutes</p>
<b>OTHER</b>	-

### Lesson Plan n° 4

**Title:** Introduction to Judaism and links with local realities

**Module used:** Introduction to Judaism II. Themes

**Subject Area:** 2nd grade, Catholic Religion Education

**Type of school:** Lower-intermediate

**Country:** Italy

<b>AIMS</b>	<p>Briefly describe the lesson training goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Knowledge:</u> Story of Jewish people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple;</li> <li>• Structure and function of the synagogue;</li> <li>• Marking time in Judaism;</li> <li>• Story, development and features of the local Jewish community in Monte San Savino</li> </ul> </li> <li>– <u>Skills:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the expressive language of Judaism, through its story, symbols, prayers and places of worship;</li> <li>• Recognize, within the territory, the signs left by the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>Jewish community through years;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover how two different religious communities coexisted within a unique local reality, like in Monte San Savino;</li> <li>• Identify the central topic of some biblical texts, especially those that contain the main features of Judaism's story.</li> </ul> <p>– Competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to interact with people from different religions, by developing an identity that is able to receive, measure itself and have a dialogue.</li> </ul>
<b>TOPICS</b>	<p>The path, developed through 4 weeks, is organized in two main branches. The first one links to the analysis of the local Jewish community's birth in Monte San Savino, by referring to the most popular characters that connoted its story, like Salomon Fiorentino. The second branch links to analyzing the foundations of Judaism: starting with worship places that came in succession through time, it continues by analyzing the most important rites and celebrations that connote social and religious life.</p>
<b>BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</b>	<p>The group-class dealt with the issues proposed with a proper competence and a very satisfactory linguistic knowledge.</p>
<b>DIGITAL MODULE USED</b>	<p>The digital module that was chosen is "Introduction to Judaism II", with particular reference to sections 2 and 4. The class found the iconographic section and the didactic materials the most useful resources.</p>
<b>LINKS AND COHERENCE WITH CURRICULUM</b>	<p>The detailed study of the basic and historical moments of different religions is integral part of teaching religion in schools. Historical themes and economic-social analysis,</p>

	concerning, for example, the relationships existing among the different Jewish communities that occupy local realities, are linked to this study.
<b>LESSON PLAN</b>	<p>Please describe the activities expected by the lesson.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedules: 4 hours through 4 weeks</li> <li>- After introducing the general guidelines to the class, students were divided into groups of 2-3 people and were given an issue to be developed by using the platform resources that were previously re-elaborated and enhanced through IT tools, such as text documents or power point presentations</li> <li>- Each student had to introduce his homework to the class, by using the specific language concerning the developed subjects.</li> </ul>

### Lesson Plan n° 5

**Title:** Introduction to Christianity. A focus on the Orthodox tradition.

**Module used:** Introduction to Christianity I. History

**Subject Area:** 3rd and 4th Grade, History and Philosophy.

**Type of school:** Upper-intermediate

**Country:** Italy

<b>AIMS</b>	<p><b>- Knowledge:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of the main stages of Christianity's development from a different perspective than the one outlined in the national curriculum;</li> <li>2. Knowledge of the doctrinal and liturgical diversity inside Christianity</li> <li>3. Knowledge of the first internal religious divide with the birth of the Christian Orthodox Church</li> </ol> <p><b>-Competences</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be aware of the plurality of interpretations and sources that</li> </ol>
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	<p>make up the universe of Christianity;</p> <p>2. Understand how the past events have influenced the current way of approaching the Christian religion;</p> <p><b>- Skills:</b></p> <p>1. Be able to recognize the various Christian denominations identifying their distinctive features;</p> <p>2. Be able to distinguish the different doctrinal and liturgical characteristics of the various Christian denominations in relation to their historical and cultural contexts.</p>
<b>TOPICS</b>	<p>The themes have been selected in order to deepen the national curricular topics. In particular, attention has been drawn to the development of the Christian religion in areas outside Italy using the specificity of Orthodox tradition (rather neglected in Italian school manuals) as a case-study.</p>
<b>PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE</b>	<p>The class was already accustomed to deal with these issues through a critical and comparative perspective.</p>
<b>USED RESOURCES</b>	<p>The Christianity. History Module was used, in particular the sections regarding the formation process of the early Christianity, the rise of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox confession.</p>
<b>LINKS AND COHERENCE WITH CURRICULUM</b>	<p>The connections are many. In the first place with the medieval and the modern age topics in history as well as with the philosophy program of the third and fourth grade.</p>
<b>LESSON PLAN</b>	<p>The work was done with the whole class together with the cooperation of the teacher of Catholic Religion Education. As first step, students have been made aware of the plurality inside Christianity and of the process of definition of the doctrinal and liturgical foundations of the different confessions belonging to the Christian foundation. Then the work in class focused on those textual and iconographic sources that could synthetically express such different perspectives. Moreover, the</p>

	lesson had an interdisciplinary scope touching issues belonging to Christian philosophy and even to medieval literature.
<b>CLASS MANAGEMENT GROUP</b>	The class was very positively involved in the discussion and especially appreciated the diversity of the perspective used. They showed interest to the religious practices of Orthodox Christianity, very close to us geographically but very little studied at the school level. There were no misunderstandings on the mode of handling religious themes since the class was accustomed to address them in a critical and non-confessional way.