

The research team

REDCo consists of an experienced interdisciplinary research team with expertise in the areas of theology, Islamic studies, education, religious education, sociology, political science and ethnology. In addition to the project leaders 16 younger researchers have started to work in REDCo since March 2006.

Project Leaders

- PD Dr. Thorsten Knauth, Prof. Dr. Wolfram Weisse, Univ. of Hamburg
- Prof. Dr. Robert Jackson, University of Warwick
- Prof. Dr. Jean-Paul Willaime, EPHE, Sorbonne, Paris
- Prof. Dr. Siebren Miedema, Dr. Ina ter Avest, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Prof. Dr. Cok Bakker, University of Utrecht
- Prof. Dr. Geir Skeie, University of Stavanger
- Dr. Pille Valk, University of Tartu
- Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kalisch, Dan-Paul Jozsa, University of Muenster
- Prof. Dr. Udo Steinbach, German Institute for Middle East Studies, Hamburg
- Prof. Dr. Vladimir Fedorov, Prof. Dr. Fedor Kosyrev, Russian Christian Academy for Humanities, St. Petersburg
- Dr. A. Alvarez Veinguer, Prof. Dr. Gunther Dietz, University of Granada

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Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries

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**SIXTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME**

Funded by the European Commission within the framework of the FP6 Specific Programme "Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area", Priority 7: „Citizens and Governance in a knowledge-based society”, special area 7.2.1.: "Values and religions in Europe"

Duration: March 2006 – February 2009



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Religions, Societies and Education in Europe. New challenges

In most European countries we have long assumed that increasing secularisation would lead to a gradual retreat of religion from public space. This tendency has been reversed during the past decade as religion returned into public discourse. Regardless of the wide variety of conditions prevailing in different European countries it is increasingly important to study the influential factor of 'religion and religiosity' and its ambivalent potential for both dialogue and social conflict and tension.

Education is a vital field within which this question can be addressed: The degree to which religion serves (or could potentially be made to serve) as a criterion of exclusion or prejudice in schools and universities must be investigated as well as to what degree religious discourse and dialogue in education have the potential to promote the peaceful co-existence of people in Europe. This is especially important regarding people of different cultural and religious backgrounds for whom we need to map out educational strategies to learn from each other rather than to perpetuate divisions.

Only a limited amount of research has been carried out in this field. Work has been done in several countries to date, but as yet no comparative European analysis exists.

Aims of the REDCo-project

Our project addresses the question of how religions and values can contribute to dialogue or tension in Europe. The project aims to gain better insight into how European citizens of different religious, cultural and political backgrounds can live together and enter into dialogue of mutual respect and understanding. These possibilities are to be examined in the context of educational institutions. In the context of historical development, we will also concentrate on questions of religions and religious values.

Differences will be studied in their impact on modern Europe and the lives of its citizens. We plan to research empirically how differences within European societies can be taken into account without creating conflict or exclusion.

Complementary empirical studies from each contributing university, especially targeting students in the 14-16-year age group, will look into educational approaches to dialogue and conflict within the different national contexts. These will include studies of students' perceptions as well as analyses of pedagogy and classroom practice in relation to the study and discussion of religion in schools. These national studies will be complemented by further studies carried out in all the participating countries, and by comparative studies.

Contribution to Debates in Europe

The findings of REDCo will contribute to a better understanding of how questions of religion and religiosity for children, young people and students can be anchored in the educational process so as to promote an understanding of the values held in common and develop mutual respect.

The main focus of the project will be on ways to develop an understanding in the field of religion and value systems that can serve as an orientation for personal development, but remain open for the development of a collective "European identity", which must, however, be understood as plural and dialogic rather than monolithic.

Approaches and constellations that can contribute to making religion in education a factor promoting dialogue in the context of European development will be addressed through historical and current studies.

Looking towards the future, we cannot hope to solve this task at the national level alone. A European perspective needs to be established through comparative study.