



THE IMAGE OF ISLAM AND OF MUSLIMS IN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL POLICIES IN ITALY, FRANCE, GERMANY, UK, AND SPAIN

**Yahya Sergio Yahe
Pallavicini**

Translated into English by
Lulie El-Ashry

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Preface

ISESCO is committed to expand the scope of its action geared to the issues of Muslims living outside the Islamic world. In this spirit, I paid an official visit to the Russian Federation, which has recently made significant overtures to the Islamic world, culminating with its becoming an observer member of both ISESCO and the OIC. Also in Russia and in coordination with the Moscow Institute of Islamic Civilization, ISESCO held the ninth meeting of its Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture for Muslims outside the Islamic World, from 24 to 25 June 2008, as part of the implementation of the Strategy for Islamic Cultural Action outside the Islamic World. I was honored to chair this meeting, in the presence of Ms Leila Aliyev, daughter of the President of Azerbaijan; Mr Elshad Iskandarov, Secretary General of Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYFDC); His Eminence Umar Iddrisov, Mufti of Russia; and Mr Abdul-Wahed Niyazov, President of the Islamic Cultural Center of Russia. During the meeting, the Supreme Council adopted a landmark document on the “Image of Islam and Muslims in European Educational and Cultural Policies”, which was prepared on behalf of ISESCO by a group of experts based in European countries. By examining the EU education and culture policies and comparing the ways how each country deals with its native-born or migrant Muslim citizens, the document gives insights into the actual situation of Muslims and the problems they face.

The document also propounds the issue of religious education in the EU countries and reviews the image of Islam and Muslims in the culture and education policies of five European countries (Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain). Moreover, the document examines the legal status of Islamic organizations in these countries, and the training of *imams*, which has become a priority issue in the

agenda of European leaders. It is worth mentioning that ISESCO has devised a special programme on the training of Imams, which it started to implement outside the Muslim world since 2008. ISESCO is determined to broaden the scope of this programme, in view of the pressing need of Muslims outside the Islamic world for well-trained religious staff who can help them maintain their Islamic identity and interact with their environment in a responsible manner.

By publishing this document, ISESCO aims not only to shed light on the image of Islam and Muslims in the European educational and cultural policies, but also to effectively partner with the European countries in addressing the Islamic educational and cultural issues falling within its competence. In principle, the EU countries and institutions are in favor of promoting further cooperation with ISESCO. Thus a number of Culture Ministers of ISESCO Member States were invited to take part in the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture, which was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in December 2008. During this conference, the Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" was presented. This book was translated and published in Arabic by ISESCO, whose consultation was requested on its broadlines. Likewise, ISESCO invited some European Culture Ministers to attend the proceedings of the sixth Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers, which was held in Baku, on 13-15 October 2009. This is indeed the sort of initiatives that would build up trust and promote cooperation among peoples and cultures.

ISESCO is pleased to publish this document for everyone's benefit.

May Almighty Allah grant us success in achieving what is best for our Ummah and humanity at large.

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri

ISESCO Director General

1. Image of Islam and Education

The image of Islam, and of Muslims in Europe, is greatly influenced by the Islamophobia phenomenon. The extremes of the fundamentalists of the Islamist matrix, who generate diffidence and fear towards the Islam they claim to be representing, along with the scarcer, partial and distorted actual awareness of the principles of the Islamic religious tradition, have had the effect of contributing to the consolidation of a false image of Islam and Muslims.

To have an idea of what the characteristics that generally distinguish the stereotypes on Islam that generate Islamophobia are, we cite the study of the Policy Department - Structural and cohesion Policies of European Parliament *Islam in the European Union: what stakes in the future?* that, in turn, cites the “the 1997 publication by the UK-based NGO the Runnymede Trust 'Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All'.” In the report, Islamophobia is characterised as:

- Islam is seen as a monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to change.
- Islam is seen as separate and “other”. It does not have common values with other cultures, is not affected by them and does not influence them.
- Islam is seen as inferior to the West. It is seen as barbaric, irrational, primitive, and sexist.
- Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, and engaged in a clash of civilizations.
- Islam is seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.
- Criticisms made of 'the West' by Islam are immediately rejected.
- Hostility towards Islam is used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.
- Anti-Muslim hostility is seen as natural and normal.

Since the Runnymede Trust's publication, discussions about Islamophobia have intensified particularly after September 11, 2001, and in the light of subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe and debates about Islam and freedom of speech. In 2005 another Council of Europe publication 'Islamophobia and its consequences on Young People' referred to Islamophobia as *“the fear of or prejudiced viewpoint towards Islam, Muslims and matters pertaining to them. Whether it takes the shape of daily forms of racism and discrimination or more violent forms, Islamophobia is a violation of human rights and a threat to social cohesion.”*⁽¹⁾

As can easily be seen, the problem that underlies these misunderstandings and stereotypes is the lack of a correct knowledge of Islam, of its religious principles and its history. This lack of knowledge leads to Islam being confused with fundamentalism, terrorism, cultural intolerance, oppression and hatred towards the West and Europe.

A big contributor towards the spreading and consolidation of these misunderstandings can probably been seen in the bias of media information and in its lack of objectivity, it is because of this that that which is perceived of Islam are the terrorist and fanatical acts or the immigration problems of people of the Muslim religion who come to Europe. These are, certainly, important matters, however they are almost never accompanied by real and objective information about Islam, whose true nature is mainly ignored. If the perception of Islam remains associated only with events in the media, it is unlikely that this religion will be known for what it truly is, a religion that carries a spiritual and sacred message.

“The information on terrorism” which is necessary, but should always be accompanied by adequate information regarding the religious realities which have nothing to do with fundamentalism, tends to slip into becoming “informative terrorism” where the easy emotional waves produced by abominable events of criminal deviations, that are in no

(1) *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*, EUMC 2006, p. 61; d'ora in poi M.in E.U.

way related to the authentic Islam except for the false pretence of the name, are manipulated to move, for no real reason other than that of ideological and political interests, the legitimate and widespread fear of terrorism towards a fear of that which is different and, furthermore, towards a fear of religion and -artfully uniting the two things- a fear of a religion that is different to one's own.”⁽¹⁾

To the distorted information on terrorism the tendency of isolation, manifested by some Muslim communities that live in Europe, must be added. Such communities tend to isolate themselves and form an “Islamic ghetto,” that results in encouraging prejudices from the rest of the population who stigmatises these communities as cults. In both cases, little effort is made towards mutual respect and understanding which should be the basis for a pluralistic, open and multireligious society that European nations should establish.

Mutual understanding and knowledge of each religious and cultural tradition, is the fundamental premise for the establishment of a society where citizens of all backgrounds and religious beliefs can be respected and aided in practicing their religion without facing hate or generating it.

The issue of the image of Islam and of Muslims is, therefore, intertwined with that of education, because it is at an educational level that the old and new generations that should be trained in the responsible practice of their religion and in the respectful knowledge of the other religious and secular components of the society. Education on cultural diversity is indispensable and must be accompanied by religious education, seeing as it will be the combining of these two aspects that will allow the image of the religions and of religious people, not only Muslims, to be real and respectful and not led by ignorance and fear.

In such a way Islam could be recognised as an Abrahamic monotheistic religion, like Judaism and Christianity, both of which have been present

(1) Mulayka Enriello, *Essere musulmani nella scuola di oggi*, in *Musulmani d'Occidente*, a cura della CO.RE.IS. Italiana, p.262.

in Europe for over a millennium, which can contribute with its wisdom and sacredness towards the knowledge of the richness and the variety of the Creation of the one God.

2. Islam in Schools

As we have shown that the principal level at which it is necessary to act in order to rectify the image of Islam and of Muslims in Europe, is at the educational level. This consists of two complementary aspects, that of non Muslims, believers of other faiths or non believers, knowing and learning about Islam, and that of religious education, Islamic religious education, for Muslims.

With regards to scholastic education, «the presence of Muslim communities in Europe concerns, in particular, two profiles of the European school system:

- religious education in public schools, and
- creation of religious private schools».⁽¹⁾

There may be the temptation to view these two possibilities as mutually exclusive: either religious education occurs in public schools or religious people should have the opportunity to attend religious schools or institutes. Both these alternatives pose some dangers, that we will seek to show, and they do not seem to be able to resolve all the various problems of exclusivity, intolerance, ignorance and lack of respect of religious people and religions in Europe.

2.1 Islamic Religious Education in European Union

«In the European Union, three different models of religious education are enforced in public schools, which may be summarized as follows:

(1) *Islam in European Union: What's at stake in the future?*, Study of the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies of the European Parliament, PE 369.031 del 14/05/07, p. 45; d'ora in poi I.in E.U.

- Some countries do not provide any specific religious education during school hours: some notions concerning the different religions are taught within other kinds of subjects, such as history, literature and philosophy. This is, for example, the case of France (except for the departments of Alsace and Lorraine).
- In other countries, there exists a form of non-denominational religious education: this kind of education takes different names (science of religions, history of religions, etc.), is focused on learning the basic characteristics of the major religions, and is provided by teachers appointed by the State authorities, who hold the qualifications required by the law of the State. In different ways, Sweden, Denmark, England and Wales, Estonia and other countries inspire to this model.
- Finally, some other countries provide a denominational religious education focused on a specific religion that is provided by teacher who, in addition to the qualifications required by the State, must be in possession of a special authorization granted by the religious community they belong to. In the public schools of some countries only a single religion is taught, and the students who do not intend to follow religion classes may be exonerated (this is the case, for example, of Greece). In other States several religions are taught (this is the case of Belgium, Germany, Austria, Finland, as well as other countries) and students may choose the teaching they intend to follow.

In the cases described in a) and b), Muslim religion does not put any problem: it is taught like any other religion. Different and more complex is instead the situation of the countries providing for a confessional religious education».⁽¹⁾

«European Union member countries have followed **different ways with regards to Muslim religion teaching.**

(1) *Ibidem.*

In Spain, the Islamic Commission signed an agreement with the State in 1992, which was followed in 1996 by another agreement concerning the appointment and economic treatment of persons entrusted with teaching the Muslim religion. According to these provisions, at the beginning of each school year, parents may apply to the school and request that Muslim religious education is given to their children. This request is then handed over to the competent territorial Islamic communities, which in turn have the task to propose their teachers, who must hold the qualifications required by the Ministry of Education and are subject to the Islamic Commission's approval. The costs concerning this teaching, if it is given to at least ten students, are borne by the State. This system is shaped according to the pattern provided for Evangelic religion teaching in the Spanish schools. However, while the latter has worked reasonably well from the very beginning, the mechanism concerning Muslim religious education has been hampered for a long time by the contrasts arisen within the Islamic Commission and its disagreement with the Ministry of Education in relation to the qualifications Muslim religion teachers must hold. Therefore, the teaching of this religion has in fact been almost exclusively limited to the schools of Ceuta and Melilla (where Muslims represent the majority of the population). Only since 2005 has the Spanish government engaged to extend it to other regions of the country.

In Belgium, the teaching of the Muslim religion in schools dates back to the mid-1970s. At the beginning, teachers were selected by the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium affiliated to the Great Mosque of Brussels but, as soon as the representation capacity of this body began to be called into question (in the early 1990s), State authorities ceased using its services. *Vis-à-vis* an ever-growing demand for Muslim religious education (there are more than 54,000 students who choose this kind of education), this decision gave rise to several problems as regards teachers' selection (almost 700 teachers in 2001) and the definition of the educational contents». ⁽¹⁾ (For further data regarding Italy, France, Germany, UK and Spain see file 3)

(1) *Ibidem*, pp. 45-46.

«After this short review, it is possible to conclude that, for different reasons, **Muslim religious education does not find, for the time being, much space in the public schools of EU member countries where a denominational religious education exists.** One might object that this situation is shared also by other religious confessions, which are emarginated or even excluded from the State educational system. However, these confessions are usually formed by small communities of believers that, in many countries, are not numerically comparable to the Muslim community. The lack of Islamic religious education in public schools depends also on other causes, and above all, on the fact that in many European countries stable Muslim communities have settled only in recent times: consequently the **actual requirements** to ensure an effective functioning of the complex mechanism that regulates Muslim religious education in schools are still lacking.

The first of these requirements consists in the **availability of a properly trained teaching staff in the position to teach the Muslim religion, and holding the essential qualifications for carrying out this educational function within public schools.**

The second major requirement consists in the **presence of one or more institutions in the position to properly represent the whole Muslim community.** The need for such an institutional structure is particularly urgent in countries where the selection of teachers and the choice of religion programmes and texts must be made and approved by the representatives of the religious communities. Typical is the case of Spain: the possibility to teach Muslim religion has been seriously hampered by the contrasts arisen among the different Muslim member organizations of the Spanish Islamic Commission. Similar difficulties have been encountered in Belgium, while in Germany the attempts to start an educational programme devised for teaching the Muslim religion in public schools have failed when the representatives of the Muslim communities were not sufficiently involved. These experiences let emerge all the difficulties encountered in dealing with the issue of

Muslim religious education without recognizing at the same time a stable legal status to the Islamic communities settled in each member country».⁽¹⁾

The availability of qualified teachers for the teaching of the Muslim religion, and the presence of one or more institutions that represent the Islamic community in the State are two necessary conditions for the Islamic religion to be taught in public schools.

The risk of “auto-ghettoization” (isolation)

“The risk of an auto-ghettoization by immigrant communities is always present and the danger of a parallel society with its own rules is, rightly, dreaded by many. However, we must note that, with regards to this situation, the politics of managing financial resources for the integration of foreigners has not, in many cases, been very prudent, unknowingly encouraging the very evil that it should have been curing: various provincial academic administrations have, for example, have chosen to favour the trend to enrol immigrant students in a few “selected” schools, rather than in one. This was done under the pretence of better management of funds for integration that would otherwise have been “dispersed.” This theory has often been an alibi to disguise the lack of staff properly trained and prepared to welcome foreign students.

Some directors of schools that risked becoming “ghetto schools” have complained about the fact that they cannot spend the money for integration because teachers are not willing to work on such projects.⁽²⁾

An analogous mistake was recently seen- and as the CO.RE.IS we denounced it, both at ministerial and public levels- with the famous cases of the “experimental projects for separated classes”: that which

(1) *Ibidem*, pp. 47-48

(2) This problem is understandable when only one school must take on the responsibility of helping immigrant families face their problems, often in conditions of social and economic emergencies, in an average city. This is added to the normal bureaucratic and didactic matters that compose the regular work routine of a teacher.

was defined by many as a marked step backwards in the path towards establishing a truly intercultural, open and democratic society. Last but not least, the resources for intercultural education have always been almost exclusively for primary and secondary schools whereas now the facts show that an increasing number of immigrant students continue their studies, concentrating mainly on, due to the mysterious mechanisms of the so called “academic orientation,” professional institutes⁽¹⁾. The common characteristics of these examples is that there is a prevalence of a pragmatic approach to contingent situations, rather than a true intellectual effort towards open mindedness, one's own and that of others.

In any case the number of students grows, they start becoming citizens with responsibilities, and in many cases, in their religious specificity, they are, as some intercultural experts may say, “invisible” to their interlocutors within the academic sphere. A sphere where religious rhythms, important festivities, the sacred months, at best are ignored and at worst become reasons to irritate teachers whereas the sharing of other recurrences and festivities is taken for granted. In this way, on both sides, miscommunication and degenerate behaviour occurs resulting in the students manipulating their religious needs in order to create disturbances or escape their academic responsibilities, this in turn can easily lead to a sort of “cold war” between these students and their teachers. All of this could be easily avoided if there was more charity, truth and patience on behalf of both sides.”⁽²⁾

The teachers and the school

We can see, for example, the case in Italy where currently the only religion that is taught in schools is the Christian Catholic one, whereas

(1) This can be seen in the recent report on the academic success of foreign students, published on-line on the ministerial website www.istruzione.it in January 2005.

(2) The behaviour «*bi-l-Haqqi wa bi-s-Sabr*», «with Truth and with Patience», is explicitly prescribed to the Muslim believer in the Sacred Koran. (*sura al-'Asr*). Mulayka Enriello, *Essere musulmani nella scuola di oggi*, cit., p. 264-5.

there is neither the teaching of the Islamic religion nor the presence of State-recognised Islamic schools.

“While waiting for a juridical agreement that meets the general needs of the Islamic community in Italy, some needs of Muslim students in schools have already been met due to the sensitivity and good sense of many academic directors, teachers and headmasters. The possibility to carry out some of the five obligatory ritual prayers when they coincide with school times, to fast during the month of Ramadan, to not be served illicit food (pork and alcoholic beverages) by the school cafeteria, constitute some fundamental premises that allow a Muslim to carry out the obligations of his/her faith.

However, it must be emphasised, that to render easier the practice of religion, for those who ask, is not sufficient for Islam to be known and respected in school by non-Muslim students and teachers. It is necessary to start a much wider process that must involve the training of teachers and a review of books used in school. Orientalist and Eurocentric perspectives are still too recurrent and they condition the reading of the history between populations and religious communities, with embarrassing gaps due to their lack of objectivity and academic rigor. All of this is openly contradictory to what the West has received in its exchanges with Muslims in the fields of chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and art, to mention a few.

As an Italian Muslim I hope that there will soon be not only “equality in education”⁽¹⁾ in the sense of mutual respect and understanding, but also the rediscovery of a “quality in education,” so as to be able to establish together a process of social transformation that is the expression of a true freedom so that everyone can be recognised for the heritage they represent. The path, towards educational policies for this millennium's Europe, inevitably passes through a global teaching, where the qualifi-

(1) Title of a conference organised in Verona by the Ministry of Public Education from the 17/5/1999 to 19/5/1999.

cation and competence of the teachers are enhanced for a teaching that can transmit the values of cooperation in empathy and of rectitude in social justice, giving importance to the spiritual dimension of man.

The creation of institutes for dialogue, the exchange and development of scientific research on the traditions of the civilisations present in Europe, together with the establishment of mixed commissions, can be a few useful tools for the immediate future. The establishment of a work group on religions could allow for the elaboration of a more attentive consideration of the relationship between religious pluralism and the secularism of the Italian State, this would include the need to revise the criteria of teaching religion or, rather, religions and favouring a better knowledge of the various faiths present in Italian schools.

In my opinion, we need to find a greater balance between the two dangerous extremes of confessionalism and relativism. The first, that confuses the teaching of religion in schools with catechism, may not know how to distinguish between the objective transmission of information on the essential elements of the doctrine and each religion's sacred history and theological transmission of a propagandistic and apologetic nature, in other words, the Italian school should not be mistaken for a seminary for future priests or missionaries. The second extreme is that of relativism, or spiritual globalisation, based on the New Age philosophy that attempts to render equal the religious "phenomenon", offering a "distilled" quintessential form of religions in which no true religion can seriously identify itself with nor be truly represented by.

In order to ensure that these extremisms don't also negatively affect the presence of Muslims in Italy, inciting fundamentalist behaviour on the one hand and the radical assimilation of all that is different on the other, it would be necessary to operate on an educational level with an intercultural perspective that can allow all teachers and students to gain a better understanding of the Islamic tradition as well as the traditions of other religions. The guidelines of this new approach have been identified

in the document of the Ministry of Public Education's National Committee for Intercultural Education:

The option to create institutes for dialogue, the exchange and development of scientific research on the traditions of the civilisations present in Europe, constitutes a valid opportunity not only for Italy, but also for the other European countries, to avoid the two extremes of confessionalism, that aims to use the classroom as a classroom for catechism and/or proselytism, and of relativism, that aims to equalise religions in a sterile uniformity that would deny them of their own qualities and genuine possibilities.

2.2 Muslim schools

As previously mentioned the creation of Islamic schools would not resolve the problem of ghettoization, risking that the Muslim religion would only be recognised at an institutional level without other levels of the society being truly implemented as this would require inter-religious and multicultural education for all citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim, believers and non-believers.

This is the situation regarding Islamic schools in Europe, as reported by *Islam in European Union*: «The basic principle inspiring the laws of the different European Union member countries concerning religiously oriented schools is included in Art. 2 of the First Additional Protocol of the European Convention of Human Rights, according to which “in the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions”. From this principle follows the right to establish private religious (or non-religious) schools, on condition they comply with the minimum educational requirements laid down by the laws of each Member State. The European Court of Human Rights declared on several occasions that Art. 2 of the First Additional Protocol do not imply any Member States' obligation to grant a financial support

to private schools. However, in most EU member countries, these schools benefit from a considerable amount of public funds and in some of them (such as, for example, Ireland and Belgium) State funded private schools are more numerous than public ones.

In principle, Muslim religious schools should not give rise to any particular problem. They may be opened; on condition they observe the regulations laid down by each national law for private schools and particularly denominational ones. In practice, there exist quite a few difficulties, and the evidence of those difficulties consists in the fact that in some countries where a large Muslim community is settled, the Muslim schools recognized and/or supported by the State are very few or do not even exist at all (such as in Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Belgium). In Great Britain, some sixty Muslim schools have been established, but only four of them receive public financial support. In other member countries, the presence of Muslim schools is more deeply rooted: almost 40 primary schools and two upper-secondary schools operate in The Netherlands, while about twenty Muslim schools are currently operating in Sweden and Denmark.

The problems that more frequently arise concern, in particular, educational contents, and in general, the fear that this kind of schools may slow down Muslim students' integration process.

Freedom to open private schools (including denominational ones) ensures plurality in educational projects and is a tool aimed at promoting and enhancing the diverse expressions of social coexistence. In this framework Muslim schools, too, can play a very useful role.

Most Member States provide for different private school categories: in general, the higher is the support granted by the State, the greatest is the control it can exert on teachers, programmes and textbooks. This pattern allows scaling State recognition of Muslim schools based on the level of adhesion to the country's core values that may be legitimately requested to any social group.

Therefore, freedom to open Muslim schools should be largely ensured, with the only limit of their full compliance with the laws concerning any private school. The financial support granted by the State for their functioning and the recognition of the titles issued by those schools may be subject to their commitment to develop their own Muslim identity according to the fundamental values of European society (such as, for example, man's and woman's equality)»⁽¹⁾.

Islamic schools in the Religious Tradition

“The teaching of the Prophet Muhammad and the history of the Muslim civilisation in the world, remind us of how important it is for every Muslim, man and woman, to study, be educated, prepared and trained in the religious, social, professional, cultural and family responsibilities the we are faced with in every moment of our lives. The basis of the Islamic school is life formation and the spiritual, civic and cultural growth of every person. The Islamic school therefore, represents the place where the young student can learn to know him/herself in order to know his/her Lord in every instant, action and sign of existence.

A school can be called Islamic if it is responsible for managing and diffusing knowledge characterised by the teaching of all the subjects of academic studies with a religious orientation and perspective, based on the Sacred Koran and the Sunna. A school, in the widest possible sense of the word, can therefore be called Islamic not because it teaches Koranic recitation or the shari'a, but because every subject is taught islamically, including history, geography, mathematics, languages, physics, chemistry etc. An Islamic school is, therefore, not a school where Islam is taught but rather a school where the world and humanity can be known islamically.

Islam is not only one of the academic subjects, but a system and a method of knowledge from which scholars have drawn precise pedago-

(1) *I.in E.U.*, pp. 48-49.

gical and didactic sciences, essential for the intellectual and cultural development of every Muslim, since the 14th Century and in every part of the world.

It consists of not confusing the understanding of Islam with Islamic orientation with knowledge. In the first case one learns what Islam is, whereas in the second Muslims are taught an Islamic vision of reality. This last possibility is not possible in European state schools, where teaching has to be aconfessional or secular.

Cultural diversity

In our times education and schools have undergone notable changes in every part of the world, varying and in the meantime levelling certain didactic solutions on the basis of the new scenario of humanity and the connection with technological progress, scientific discoveries, and development of the political, social and cultural debate.

The modernity, the democracy and easier and faster methods of communication and of exchange between people have favoured the development of a better understanding not only of one's own history and culture, but also that of others. Therefore, studies regarding various civilisations, religions, nations and cultures have been updated and re-elaborated within a frame of greater multicultural pluralism.

However, the educational system continues to be different between nations and especially between continents. In Europe the prevalent educational system foresees the responsibility of the State, that is to say of a precise institution generally defined by the Ministry of National Education, in the managing of schools, academic subjects and paths of formation.

Such a system economically favours obligatory education for all students between the ages of 5 and 18, guaranteeing a primary and secondary academic formation in public schools that are financed by the state for their management and salaries of qualified teachers. The juridical,

defining itself as secular, context of this educational system prescind from any religious orientation to guarantee a free education to all, without religious, sex or cultural distinction, with the aim of promoting a pluralist, multireligious, multiethnic, multicultural society.

In this context, the creation of “Islamic schools” remains possible, as can be seen by the Jewish and Christian schools and universities that are present in some European countries. It is important to note, however, that such schools risk isolating the young Muslim student from the rest of the society, limiting his/her social and professional future and engendering a psychological conflict between the Islamic world and the Western world as well as between integration and ghettoization. The scenario of the first generation of Muslim immigrants coming from a low-level of cultural and professional experiences doesn't help favour a balanced and harmonious integration.”⁽¹⁾

3. Files regarding five Nations of the European Union

3.1 Italy

In Italy the situation regarding Islamic education and education about Islam is limited by the fact that there is no agreement between the State and the Muslim religion, even though shortly there will be the establishment of an Italian Islamic Federation that will stipulate and agreement with the State.

Muslim Religious Education in Public Schools

In Italy, «as a principle, all religious communities without an agreement under Article 8, paragraph 3 of the Constitution, including Islamic ones, may use the classrooms of State schools for religious education, when the number of members of the concerned religious denomination is considerable, and when there are no available places of worship. The

(1) Yahya Pallavicini, *L'insegnamento della religione islamica nella scuola laica e la formazione degli imam*, in *Musulmani d'Occidente*, cit., pp. 253-256.

religious community pays the costs of such a teaching, and a previous agreement with the Director of the Regional School Office is necessary. As a matter of fact, Muslims have never used this possibility»⁽¹⁾.

Currently, the Islamic religion cannot be taught in public schools:

“For a decade or so the teaching of religion in both public and private schools is not exclusively the priests' prerogative but is open to all those who wish to carry out this profession, even if in Italy the training and certification of this type of teaching is assured only to Theological Christian Catholic Institutes. As for other religions ... in Christian theological institutes, that are qualified to train future teachers of religion, there are secondary school teachers who are mainly priests that often have been missionaries on the past ... However, it is pointless to note that the teachings of such teachers, as qualified and as objective as they may be, is still conditioned by an orientalist perspective that often goes back to the colonial times”⁽²⁾

To resolve this problem currently, three ideas are being discussed. The first is that which is promoted by radical secularists, amongst which are many strict radicals, who promote the introduction of courses in public universities to earn the qualification to teach religion, run by professors of history or sociology of religions. In this case the risk is that it may go from a unilateral (Christian catholic) perspective to a indifferent and relativistic perspective that may definitively deprive the teaching of religions of any reference to the sacred and metaphysical dimension that constitutes their essence, in order to carry out comparative studies that are exclusively socio-anthropological and that inevitably put at the centre of attention inessential elements tied to characteristics of a psychological, ethnic, local tradition kind, rather than the intellectual heritage which is the only foundation of each authentic civilisation.

(1) *I.in E.U.*, p. 130.

(2) Yahya Pallavicini, *Gli insegnanti e le scuole, in L'Islam in Europa*, cit., pp. 85-87.

The second idea, promoted by religious radicals, amongst whom some political extremists are hidden, is that of taking advantage of the law of educational autonomy, and asking to either teach one's own religion to students of that same religion or open specific confessional schools. The dangers of this second idea are numerous. Firstly, one may risk confusing the teaching of a religion in school with catechism. The latter should not be part of the school's responsibilities but rather should be taught by the family and by religious community institutions. Moreover, in the particular times in which we live, the creation of an alternative way of teaching religions, such as one that may promote specific confessional schools, may lead to the creation of ghettos where the members of each religious community would live and study separately from others, with no reciprocal exchange of knowledge occurring, erroneously attributing barriers to religions.

From these two ideas there evidently emerges the limits of a favourable politics to an indiscriminate integration of all religious elements as well as sectarian politics that promote a discriminating fundamentalism. What other solution is possible? How can we assure the teaching of religions in school by putting teachers in the position of receiving adequate training that is not exclusivist, made uniform, fundamentalist or based on New Age philosophy? While waiting for the Italian State to grant to other religious confessions-particularly Islam, as it has become the second religion in our country in terms of numbers- what they have granted Christianity and Judaism, to sign a juridical agreement to ensure religious freedom and the rules of religious worship, it is necessary to study educational solutions that can be implemented quickly, solutions that can truly fulfil the needs of a society that is increasingly more represented in a multi-confessional way.

Maybe, the third idea can be favoured either by the establishment of documentation centres or theological institutes run by religious organisations that are officially recognised and that represent the educational interest of the religious confession which they belong to. In this way an

effective pluralism can occur that will allow all the religions, organised on the national territory, to manage from within the transmission of the heritage of knowledge that the religious tradition has and to teach the history of civilisations and the relations with other religious communities with the spirit of real respect. In accordance with ministerial direction, these centres would be responsible for, each with regards to their religion, organising courses not only for future teachers of religion but also for cultural mediators, facilitator teachers, social health workers etc, these institutes would be places that provide didactic training and real information about religion, run by competent religious people, open to all and with the possibility of meeting the needs for knowledge of people of various professions such as journalists and doctors.

Needless to say the possibility of allowing teachers of religion, as well as those who may simply be merely interested, to know a reality directly from the source without running the risk of a factionist propaganda, is the most efficient way to re-transmit with vitality the experience and teachings received. In this way, the teacher would be delegated to acquire the necessary knowledge on the various religions, allowing the students in school to learn about them without having to attend separate factitious classes and also allowing them to recognise and appreciate the value of the unity that is part of various religions.

It would therefore be appropriate to give all students, not only Muslim students, in Italian public schools the opportunity to learn about religious traditions that are not based on ethnocentric and orientalist ideas and perspectives, as long as the school can maintain its precious role as a place for young boys and girls to meet, exchange ideas and contribute to the growth of an intercultural Italian society, re-transmitting the value of this experience in various fields. In fact, the knowledge of the value of religions should not only be considered in its role during the hour of religion but should also be present in all the school subjects allowing for the natural integration of the spiritual dimension and the implementation of the knowledge that has always contributed to the

progress of every civilisation in both the humanities and sciences. It seems that this is the central role of the school that should become the core not only of an ex cathedra teaching, but also of an exchange of knowledge between young students who can learn, with their help of their teachers, to be prepared, focussed, sensitive, patient and smiling...just like their teachers!

Muslim schools

«Article 33 of the Constitution grants organisations and private citizens the right to found schools and educational institutes. Up to now, no Islamic private school has been established under Article 33. Nevertheless, several foreign schools have been founded by the governments of Mediterranean States, like Libya (in Rome and Milan), and Egypt (in Milan)». (I. in E.U., p.).

Religiously denominated schools can certainly be of support and help for the understanding of the religions and religious education, that every community has the right to lead their life according to the principles and methods of their tradition. However, such schools are not an adequate answer to the problem of intercultural education, mutual understanding and respect of religions in a secular society, for which religious education in state schools could be effectively eliminated. Religious education and secular education are not an *aut aut*, both are necessary on two different levels: on the one hand public schools should obviously take care of the secular education of the citizens, also trying to diffuse an understanding of the various religions, without any orientalist deformation, through qualified teachers in an interreligious atmosphere, while on the other hand, religious education should still be taught by families and religious communities. In this way, it would be possible to avoid religious extremism, extremism that would transform school classrooms into catechism classrooms, and ignorant relativism, that takes away the possibility to teach religions in schools that would not contribute to the formation, religious or non, of people who are qualified and open to cultural diversity.

Muslim group private initiatives

Over the past ten years the COREIS Italiana, even before having been recognised and inserted as Islamic representative in 1997 in the National Committee for Intercultural Education of the public education ministry, has promoted, organised and followed hundreds of lessons including public seminars and workshops for teachers. It has started collaborations with universities, regional institutes for research on education, education agencies, schools, didactic circles, regional, provincial, communal and local authorities. It has also offered the opportunity to know Islam from within the tradition, to compare various didactic experiences, to study the most efficient ways of communication and, above all, to offer the possibility of greater spiritual, professional and cultural enrichment to all.

The peculiarity of the teachers, who collaborate with the COREIS Italiana's activities, is that they are predominantly European Muslims. Therefore, they combine, in a balanced and serene manner, the natural knowledge of culture and language of origin with a competency in their religion, in all aspects of life. These characteristics allow these teachers to provide a possible example of harmonious interaction between the dimension of one's religious faith and the participation in civil society, an accessible example for the immigrant Muslims and the fellow countryman who is searching for some clarifications.

In this way, the European Muslims of the COREIS have been able to create a new didactic method, restoring the universal character of Islam, recalling the principles that bind Muslims to the interior and exterior aspects of their community, remembering with greater objectivity and faith the history of the relations between the people and their religious communities and re-transmitting the intellectual sense of the nobility of man's role in the world, this being the only perspective that can fight ignorance and fundamentalism. The most interesting results of our courses have been seen in moments when Islam was given back its essential characteristics as a monotheistic doctrine, a traditional civili-

sation, of a sacred history and as a science of knowledge, all of this has allowed for the rediscovery of those essential values that should regulate the life of Muslims in all places and at all times. The necessity to operate with clarity to create the basis that will help integrate, in a balanced way, the religion one belongs to with their culture, and the integration of Muslims in all the civil components of the European society, must inevitably undergo a process of deep knowledge that the realm of education must develop with great sensitivity and determination. The ambiguous alternative, and a premature one at that, is to create private Islamic schools that may not always be recognised, with the motivation of having to guarantee to Muslim students an education that conforms to the doctrine of religion. This may appear to be, in some cases, used as an excuse and could contribute to the creation of a kind of parallel world.”⁽¹⁾

University courses

To date Italian universities do not offer the possibility for a higher education in the Islamic religion. The courses in Islam that are currently offered by Italian universities are of two kinds:

- courses on the history of Islamic civilisation and the history of Muslim law;
- courses of a socio-historical kind on the Islamic religion.

Both these alternatives do not offer the possibility for an authentic understanding of Islam, seeing as it is considered either as a “historical phenomenon” or as a “religious phenomenon” without their being direct knowledge of the Islamic doctrine. The courses are always taught by orientalist experts, of European origin and never by Muslim scholars. This does not contribute to a true understanding and real image of Islam as an Abrahamic-monotheistic religion.

(1) Yahya Pallavicini, *Gli insegnanti e le scuole*, in *L'Islam in Europa*, cit., pp. 85-87

This situation could be resolved by creating institutes of dialogue, exchange and development of scientific research on the traditions of the civilisations present in Europe, together with the establishment of mixed commissions, that can be a place for intercultural and inter-religious training of teachers who can teach religions in universities and schools, having gained knowledge directly from qualified religious representatives and supported by institutes or religious communities recognised by the State, in such a way as to avoid the risk of exclusivism and the manipulation of the teaching of religion for exclusivist, ethnic or political means.

Imam training

“In 1995 the members of the Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana (COREIS) believed the time had come to cease attending the community prayers organized in the Islamic centres in a number of Italian cities. The main reason for this dissociation was not in any way linked to the fact that they were Italian citizens most of whom were new converts to Islam, unlike the majority of Muslims in this country, who are immigrants and often speak Arabic. This was not a distinction between Westerners and those originating from outside Europe, between natives and immigrants or between converts and those born into the religion. In fact, it was already a distinction between true believers and political militants, between those sensitive to the nature of the spirit of Islam and others who, in their sermons and conversations used the language of proselytizing and ideological propaganda. All too often one could hear sermons promoting Islamic fundamentalism, the theorization of the Christian imperialist plot and the struggle against Zionist power. Many Muslims, both those born into the religion and converts, felt very uncomfortable on finding themselves in a setting that was supposed to be a prayer hall for the community assembly on Fridays, but that, in reality, had evidently been taken over by a number of fundamentalists intent on building a network of international power. As a result of this, the majority of Muslim immigrants were expelled from these Islamic social centres,

with the progressive restriction of religious practice to the private sphere in order to avoid complicity with the irregular formation of a parallel society that was neither Islamic nor Arab, but simply alternative to the democratic cultural and political system. The other consequence was the assumption of responsibility for training on the part of a group of Italian Muslims, who could not tolerate the unjustifiable exploitation of the values of the religion and Islamic culture by an extremist faction.

The Mosque of Milan, via Meda

When we presented the various details of the project for our Al-Wahid mosque in Milan and discussed it with the officials and politicians of the municipality and the *Lombardia* region, we decided to concentrate on the essential, avoiding minarets and promoting the normal request of a place of worship in a building that we already owned.

In December 2000, our project was approved, in favour of this project were all the political entities present in the *Commissione per l'Integrazione del Comune di Milano* (Commission for the integration of the Milan municipality) represented a successful inter-institutional dialogue of great value and a model to be followed in the future. Since then we have begun working, and continue to do so, in raising the funds necessary to buy buildings and begin the mosque's reconstruction. The building of a mosque in the heart of Milan, as part of an urban context which is in full contact with the city's reality is of fundamental importance not only as a confirmation to the obvious call to a divine reality but also as a symbol of the possible interaction with the contemporary world.

Whilst waiting for an institutional clarification that will allow for a more transparent organisation of Islamic worship at a national level, the CO.RE.IS requested, in 1998, juridical recognition, from the Ministry of Interior, as the first moral entity of Italian Muslims. In these past years there has in fact been the establishment of a network of people ready to satisfy the concrete religious needs of ritual practice and are

able to take on the intellectual and theological representational needs. Thus, there was the choice to invest in men before investing in building or in the resolution of power struggles between associations or the conflicts on interpretation between reformists and conservatives, in the hope to see the aspects, that are authentically in line with the true interests of Muslims in the West, privileged. This will lead favouring the growth of a serene and constructive presence in the Islamic community and in the Italian society.

Theological training for religious experts (men and women) and ministers of Muslim worship (imam)

For the past few years, the Italian Co.Re.Is has been organising training courses for religious experts (men and women) and ministers of Muslim worship (*imams*). The courses for future imams focus on a basic knowledge of the Islamic religious sciences and the Italian legal system. The course for theologians combines programmes of comparative religious studies, the history of Islamic civilization, the history of Western philosophical thought and intercultural education. There are also optional courses of Arabic and Italian for foreigners.

The course for the training of *imams* is intended to provide the students - all adult males of the Muslim faith - with the ability to lead the prayers and prepare the sermon due to a thorough knowledge of the Koran, classical Arabic, Italian and the contemporary social context. Muslims in Italy will recognize the *imams*, who have successfully completed our courses, as being reliable and sensitive in combining the wealth and depth of the Islamic doctrine with the harmonious testimony of the religion, while also seeking to respect in every way the Italian social. Their sermons are written and spoken *in Italian*, apart from the Koranic and traditional formulae prescribed for the Friday prayers, and the ritual prayers are carried out in Arabic. The duties of an *imam* regard mainly the pillars of the religion and the juridical rules that allow it to be practised in a situation like that of the modern-day Western world.

A world in which the Islamic community lives in a secularized society as a religious minority with a legacy of identity to safeguard and the need to fight widespread prejudices and stereotypes which it is often a victim of. The *imam* must be able to guide the faithful to spiritual devotion and a sense of responsibility towards the society in which they live, protecting the community from the interference of foreign political forces and fundamentalist influences and ensuring that the place of worship has the greatest possible transparency and reflects the dignity that should characterize an Islamic religious space. It is for this very reason that the *imams* must also be able to carry out their function of linguistic mediation, on the one hand helping the first generation of Muslim immigrants and, at the same time, being able to address these future European citizens in Italian.

It is important that young people should look up to the *imam*, not only as a religious leader but also as a precious guide who can help them live their faith in a worthy and natural manner amidst fellow students or workers and to also learn to express this dignity and ease in the context of their original or adoptive families. This does not necessarily mean that the *imam* must extemporize as a social mediator, but his spiritual and moral assistance can be decisive in order to bring harmony to the relationship between faith, reason, culture and human rights. Our courses are intended to eliminate the risks of a religious dimension conceived as extraneous to the contemporary Italian context.

Foreign *imams* and those sent by international Islamic organizations or by religious institutes of foreign governments that represent a serious obstacle to the active participation of the believers and the ministers of worship to the activities of the country because they are increasingly limited by something other than that of Italian Islam because the new generations of Muslims born in Italy do not recognise them as credible reference points that might be useful to their existence.

Course Contents

In order to guarantee the effectiveness of this relationship, our courses do not follow a classic programme of study of the language or doctrine as occurs in the majority of Muslim countries, but the study programmes start from the cycle of existence of each individual in order to allow the *imam* to expand his knowledge and to assist the faithful in their spiritual orientation in the principal stages of their lives contextualising the doctrinal competences in its practical application. In light of this are the fundamental doctrinal aspects such as birth, the sacred value of human existence, the creation of the world and the responsibility of the representatives of God in this world, the equal dignity of men and women, the pillars of the religion, education and the search for knowledge, the transmission of knowledge, the principles of the Islamic faith, the story of the prophets in the Koran, inter-religious dialogue, the earning of one's means of livelihood, family unity, civil and religious marriage, parents' duties towards their children, the Islamic identity and active participation in the prosperity of this society, political responsibility and the universal value of ethics, death and our heritage. In addition to these themes, the *imam* must attend courses on health regulations in hospitals regarding childbirth, the treatment of patients and dealing with the deceased, and have a basic knowledge of the procedures for the registration of births, marriages, divorces and deaths, and the current legislation regarding training or work contracts concerning the rights of Muslims in Italy, as well as in matters relating to education in both state and private schools, and the rules concerning the specific needs of Muslim children with regard to teaching and the preparation of food.”⁽¹⁾

«In fact, the *imam* must do his best to be prepared to answer the questions of the faithful not only regarding the principles of the religion in the mosque, but also (and most importantly) of how their religious needs can be met while fully respecting the Italian legal system and cultural heritage. Only in this way will the ministers of the Muslim

(1) Yahya Pallavicini, *Dentro la Moschea*, BUR - Rizzoli, Milano 2007, pp. 45-50.

faith be able to contribute in a significant manner to the constructive and active participation of Muslims in society, facilitating their civil, intercultural and professional roles and maintaining and reviving the spiritual heritage of their religious identity. These imams will be able to cooperate with both the institutions and Muslims in the process of the integration of the Islamic community in contemporary Italian society, with its religious pluralism and multicultural diversity. Thanks to the work of these *imams*, we are confident that new generations of Muslims in Italy will be able experience their religion in a serene manner and discover what it really means to be a citizen of a democratic country»⁽¹⁾.

“The course lasts two years and requires that students attend at least twenty hours a month, mainly on Fridays in order to allow the future *imams* to continue, at the same time, with their other study or work activities. The problem of students reconciling their religious training with their everyday commitments, may in itself be a formative difficulty because it allows the future imam to learn and verify directly the effects of his experience on the responsibilities and efforts that he himself has to deal with in his family, town or city, studies or work. The lack of an official organization with the task of managing or coordinating the Islamic places of worship in Italy means that there is no guarantee that he will be appointed as *imam* by any of the local Muslim communities and, above all, very few communities are in a position to employ an imam full time to provide for the needs of the faithful. The first group of Italian Muslims have successfully completed the course in the last few years. Subsequently they have made themselves available to carry out their functions on various occasions in different parts of Italy on a voluntary basis. Our bet is that the uncertainty that looms on their future will not negatively affect the reliable and competent interpreters and witnesses of Italian Islam.”⁽²⁾

(1) Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, *The Training Programme of Imams in Italy*, in *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe*, Leiden University Press, 2008, pp. 469-85.

(2) Yahya Pallavicini, *Dentro la Moschea*, cit., pp. 45-50.

The CO.RE.IS. is fully aware of this situation and has decided start a course of specialization. The course is not restricted to Muslims wishing to deepen their knowledge of the doctrine in order to carry out their functions of religious leadership in a capable and dignified manner, but is also open to men and women interested, for various reasons, in a theological grounding and questions of social responsibility with regard to the diverse aspects of contemporary Italian Islam. In addition to the *imams*, there is a need for people who are not only familiar with Islam for purposes that are internal to the community or the lives of individual Muslims, but are also able to use their expertise outside the community in their dealings with governmental institutions, professional associations, social solidarity organizations, school governorship and cultural mediation, hospitals and social work, ethnic communities and other religions.

These are areas of civil society and the state that, in Italy, seem to have a particular need for competent people who are able to provide information, mediate, give advice, make available their organizational skills, and resolve situations that the presence of one million Muslims in Italy has partially caused in the past twenty years. This situation is one of rapid transformation in a multicultural society, offering many interesting innovations but also one that urgently needs a number of delicate social adjustments.

In view of this, another two-year course of inter-religious theology and intercultural education has been introduced: besides maintaining the programme reserved for imams, lessons and seminars have been added focussing on social sciences, politics, teaching methods and liberal studies. The following themes have been dealt with in the last few years:

- The history of Islamic civilization. East and West. Tradition and modernity. Orthodoxy and fundamentalism.
- The Koran and the Prophetic Traditions: the sources of Islamic doctrine and the interpretations of the law schools.
- North-South exchanges and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The prevention of conflicts and the peace process in the Middle East. Islam and Jihad. The Islamic caliphate and Arab nationalism.

- Sacred science and Western culture. State and private schools in Italy. Religious education and the history of religions. Globalization and ghettoization.
- Avicenna and Averroës, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi: metaphysics, theology, intellectuality, philosophy, and reason. Comparison with the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Comparison with the Christian thought of Saints Bernard, Francis, Thomas and Augustine. Comparison with the works of Plato, Meister Eckhart, and Dante Alighieri.
- The dialogue between believers and non-believers. The oneness of God and the Abrahamic brotherhood. The encounter with Judaism and Christianity.
- Freedom of expression and the language of religious symbols. Ostentation and religious freedom in European society. Human rights and Islamophobia.
- The Italian constitution. Immigration law and EU policy on integration. Democracy, laicism, and pluralism. The Italian state and the various religions. The concordat with the Catholic Church and the system of agreements. The Council for Italian Islam»⁽¹⁾.

3.2 France

France is an exception occupies its own space in Europe. This is not only because of its numerous Muslim population who has been in the country for a long time, but also because of its political socio-cultural model of “laïcité.” French law forbids distinguishing citizens or residents according to their faith. Official census do not contain any data concerning religious affiliation, therefore there are no official data concerning the number of Muslims in France. As to 1 January 2007, the estimated population of France was 63,392,100. As to the percentage

(1) Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, *The Training Programme of Imams in Italy*, cit., pp. 469-85.

of Muslim persons on total population, estimates are very different, ranging from 4.5 % to 7 %. If Islamic communities are diverse, including North Africans, Turks, Sub-Saharan Africans, and French convert to Islam, French Muslims from the Indian Ocean, we may say that at least 2 million Muslims have French citizenship.

France secularism is articulated in the form of *laïcité*. *Laïcité* was established under the Constitution in 1946 and reasserted in the 1958 Constitution. As is the case with most other secular systems, French *laïcité* posits a separation between church and state. *Laïcité* as it has come to be known was sculpted by a December 9, 1905 law. The first article of the 1905 law “guarantees the free exercise of religious worship” while Article 2 describes a French republic that “does not recognize, pay, or subsidize any [form of] worship.” The tension between these two measures makes the French model distinct. Thus, in France, under the separation regime established by the 1905 law, no religion is officially recognised nor funded as such, and all religious communities have to be treated equally.

When interpreted rigidly, *laïcité* also poses a barrier to a full embrace of multiculturalism as cultural, religious, and ethnic particularities are subordinate to the concept of equality for all individuals. Religious communities, including Islamic ones, can only have the legal status of associations, public utility associations, or religious associations. More so than secularism, *laïcité* emphasizes the division between private life, which is where religion is supposed to belong, and the public sphere. According to the principle of *laïcité*, individuals in the public sphere should present themselves as unencumbered by particularities of religion or ethnicity, which is thought to secure individuals' equality as citizens under the state. So we imagine that Islam and Muslims, in their behaviour and their unitary conceptions of life, could not be compatible with this separation of the private and public spheres.

Exemptions to the strongly worded differentiation between religion and the state have been institutionalized over the past century. Most notably,

the French state now subsidizes private religious schools, provides salaries for religious personnel in secular institutions such as prisons and the army, finances chaplains in public schools, recognizes religious holidays, and provides tax exemptions to faith organizations.

Islam has always been an exceptional case under French *laïcité*, which complicates the project of integration. Negotiations between the state and Islam have encouraged the formation of a representative body for Islam. The push for the creation of representative bodies for Islam is part of a general trend across Europe. Religious institutions must adapt to be effective counterparts to the state. In particular, this requires that religious communities create ecclesiastical structures to nominate leadership who have popular legitimacy and the savvy political skill necessary for effective advocacy. Islam has been at a unique disadvantage because the Muslim community lacks cohesion and institutional mechanisms for developing consensus and organizing advocacy against the state. Since the 1980s, this has brought considerable critique to the French model of integration and has led to a widespread impression of a “Muslim problem”. In 2003, the Conseil français du culte musulman (CFCM), a symbolic recognition of Islam in France, was formed under the encouragement of the state with the hopes that a centralized representational body for the Muslim community would help remedy its long-term under representation. In June of 2005, the “Foundation for Islam” was established to supervise the financing of Islam in France. The foundation was government-backed and its funds will be held in a state-owned bank to ensure maximum transparency. The financing will support the building of mosques and the training of *imams*.

With worries about the possible incompatibility of Islam with Republican values on the rise, the pressure on politicians to address Islam, immigration, and integration has increased. This has led to a series of policies attempting to make Islam more “French”. This trend can be seen in the development of the Muslim Council, the establishment of *imam* training and the banning of the hijab in public schools. As we will see below,

this approach reflects a distorted image of Islam and Muslims that appears in the educative and cultural fields of French politics. Although several politicians have clearly made Islamophobic comments or statements, the official line of the conventional political parties disseminates a binary and simplistic representation of Muslims by systematically opposing a good “islam modéré” to an evil “islam intégriste”. This “selective stigmatization” of Islam has come to permeate all levels of French public institutions.

A “veiled” image of Islam

Equal access to free public education is guaranteed for all, and all children (including foreigners) of school age are under an obligation to attend school. Law on Orientation in Education affirms the individual right to freedom of conscience. In practice, these two principles have come into conflict, particularly with regard to students belonging to religious minorities, including Muslims. It is a central objective and responsibility of French public schools to train students in Republican values including laïcité, and to ensure both equal treatment of individual pupils and respect for pluralism. As such, local officials have the competence to regulate the public expression of religious belonging in schools. The conflict over the banning of the hijab illustrates the tension between public space and private choices; the difficulties inherent in balancing the requirements of laïcité against the needs of Muslim students.

The 2004 law that forbids the wearing of “ostensible” religious symbols in schools, although it does not mention the contents of education, can be considered an integral part of the educational and cultural policies regarding Muslims and Islam. In fact, this law clearly refers to the question of Muslim religious symbols, especially the wearing of the Islamic veil by young Muslim women. At the same time, this act of laïcité reinforces the “deveiling” of an image of Islam and Muslims, in particular Muslim women, that corresponds to the prejudices and wrong ideas that are currently part of the public opinion and held by political decision makers.

Under a 1955 decree, it is forbidden to wear a headgear in the pictures for identity documents. Further, law no. 228 of 15 March 2004 has forbidden the wearing of any religious symbols, including headscarves, in public primary and secondary schools. The law states: “ In schools, colleges, public secondary/high schools, the wearing of symbols or clothing that ostensibly manifest the belonging to a religion is forbidden to all students. The internal rules state that before disciplinary measures are taken dialogue with the student is mandatory.” (article 1)

The term “ostensibly”, that divided the writers of this law, attributes an intrinsic value to the wearing of religious symbols, considering that the intention of the individual would necessarily be to proselytise or wish to impose on others his/her own religious beliefs. Muslims, in this case, are looked at suspiciously or as a potential danger. Since “ostensibility” (*riya'*) and proselytism are against the very principles of Islam that teaches discretion and sincere piety. In the past, religious symbols were not considered to be against the principle of laïcité in school, but in cases of proselytism, of pressure or affecting the order in schools, the school directors could have taken measures of interdiction.

In the 18th May 2004 ministerial bill, that is to say, the directives of the Minister of Education, regarding the realisation of this law “supervising, in applying the principle of laïcité, the wearing of symbols or clothing that manifest a belonging to a religion, in schools, colleges and public lycées,” we can say that the law “*embodies a will that is shared by many, to reaffirm the importance of this principle that cannot be separated by the values of equality and respect for others. It is a law that testifies to the will of the representatives of the Nation to consolidate the Republic's school.*”

In terms of the law's application, “*the symbols and clothing that are prohibited are those that cause the immediate identification of a person's religious beliefs such as the Islamic veil, as it is called. [...] The law does not prohibit students from wearing discrete religious symbols.*” / “*The 15th March 2004 law is taken with the application of the consti-*

tutional principle of laïcité that is one of the foundations of public schools. This principle, born of a long history, lies on the respect of the liberty of conscience and on the affirmation of common values that form the national unity outside of individual beliefs.”/ “The school has the mission of transmitting the values of the Republic amongst them are the equal dignity of all human beings, the equality between men and women and the freedom of each individual's choice of lifestyle. [...] In protecting schools from the demands of the community the law consolidates its role in favour of a will-to-live-together. It must, therefore, do this in more rigorous manner when dealing with children.”

The appearance of the young Muslim girl wearing a veil, therefore, represents, not the religiosity of the individual but is a simple “community” demand. If we here find the refusal to recognise religious communities as such, in order to give preference to individuals, this position however contradict the freedom of an individual wanting to freely express his or her religious belief. On the other hand, it implies that the veil attacks human dignity and is opposed to equality between men and women. In the meantime, we see the contradictions of this approach that, in the name of fighting discriminations, impedes the expression of a fundamental right.

“By preserving schools, colleges and public secondary schools, that have the vocation to take on all children, whether believers or not and no matter what their religious or philosophical beliefs may be, the pressures that can result in ostensible manifestations of religious beliefs, the law guarantees that freedom of conscience to all. Because it is based on the respect of people and their beliefs, the laïcité is not conceded without a determined fight against all forms of discrimination. The agents of the public service of national education must show proof of great vigilance and firmness regarding all forms of racism or sexism, of all the forms of violence on an individual because of his/her true or supposed belonging to an ethnic or religious group. In any case, any behaviour that reduces the other to an ethnic or religious belonging, to a nationality (current or of origin), to a physical appearance, calls for a response.”

The veil-wearing Muslim woman is seen as the victim of an aggression, her choice and her free decisions are not taken into account. The hijab is seen solely as an expression of discrimination between men and women, but no longer as a true expression of religious belonging. Public discourse throughout the *hijab* controversy reflected and perpetuated bias against Muslim gender relations and the nature of Islam. Opponents of the *hijab* also insisted that the law would save girls from the domination and the authority of males in their families. Muslim women's voices were marginalized in this discourse. Another dominant concern was situations where non-veiled Muslim girls feel intimidated by their peers to wear the veil. Contrary to the arguments of the hijab opponents, many women were not coerced or “manipulated” into wearing the *hijab*: some of them chose to wear it as a sign of faith, while others were able to free themselves of the domination of their fathers and brothers since by wearing the *hijab* they can lead more independent and public lives without being “considered an object of male seduction.

The obligations that result, for students, from respect of the principle of laïcité are not connected with the issue of symbols of religious beliefs: *“Authorised absences must be granted to students for the main religious celebrations that do not coincide with a day off and when the dates are recalled every year by instructions published on the official Bulletin of national education. On the other hand, continuous or lengthy requests, for authorised absences, must be refused, as they are incompatible with school organisation. In the meantime schools and universities must ensure that no exam or important test is scheduled at the same time as the days of main religious celebrations.”* If the right to celebrate the important events of the Islamic calendar is recognised- obviously outside of schools-, it is only because in this way or in this dimension, be it religious, it appears to be a cultural aspect that becomes more “tolerable.” Yet again, this image of Islam as a culture tends to reduce the real knowledge and understanding of its values and its principles in the French society.

On a more positive note, the very same bill of the Minister of Education recalls the very particular role of the “school of the Republic,” according to the very principle of laïcité, for the teaching of religions, among which Islam: “Because intolerance and prejudices feed ignorance, laïcité equally assumes there to be better mutual understanding, including in religious subjects. In this respect, teaching can contribute to the consolidation of such understanding. Moreover, the activities of “living together” in primary schools, civil education at college, or civil, juridical and social education in secondary schools, constitute privileged moments that can help develop tolerance and respect for the other. More specifically, religion, when it is an explicit element of the curriculum, as is the case with French and history, must be used in the best way possible in teaching students the indispensable elements of culture that are needed to understand the contemporary world.

Islam in Schools

One has to make distinction between teaching Islam in public schools, and religious education in public schools as well as in religious private ones. Some countries do not provide any specific religious education during school hours: some notions concerning the different religions are taught within other kinds of subjects, such as history, literature and philosophy. This is, for example, the case of France (except for the departments of Alsace and Lorraine). In primary schools, no religion course can be organised, whereas in secondary schools, religion can be taught by chaplains (but not during school hours). However, as of 2004, no Islamic chaplaincy operated in any public secondary schools.

As regards the educative and cultural policies in this field, religions are dealt with as phenomena or “religious facts” that are viewed through social, cultural and historical dimensions, that is to say never as spiritual and divine messages. Nevertheless, this kind of teachings around religions and their civilisation are part of the so-called “Common base of Knowledge and Skills”, a 2006 official decree that is inscribed in the guidance and planning law for the future of schools dated 23 April

2005. According to article 9 of this law “compulsory education should at least provide each pupil with the necessary means to gain a common base made up of knowledge and skills that must be mastered to successfully complete one's schooling, pursue one's studies, build one's personal and professional future and lead a successful life in society”. The Decree dated 11 July 2006 lists the skills that should be acquired by each pupil at the end of their compulsory education.

The publication of the “common base of Knowledge and Skills” wanted to give a simple answer to this fundamental question: “What is it that children should definitely learn during compulsory education?” And what is it that Nation undertakes to teach them? Even though compulsory education cannot be narrowed down to the “Common Base”, the text provides the main lines, develops certain points, but allows for any possible developments. It is about “living knowledge” which can be drawn upon in any situation during schooling and all throughout life. Indeed the meaning of education can be seen within the Base itself, which is built on seven main skills, each of which is broken down into knowledge, abilities and attitudes. The ministry of Education explains that the Common Base therefore connects knowledge and abilities with education's most noble aim: to train an individual who will not only be able to grasp quickly and react well, but also possess certain qualities such as open-mindedness and respect for others and rules of collective life. Such are the values and ideals inherited from the Enlightenment that found the National Education system.

One of these seven pillars is: “Developing a humanist culture”. The Common Base text says: *“We live in a world which is structured, not only by technology, but also by history, major art works, values and ideas. Giving children access to this cultural universe is enhancing their perception. It would also provide them with reference points. It is currently admitted that our children lack references. Humanist culture precisely makes it possible to provide this for them, notably through knowledge of chronological and geographical references. Thanks to*

them, pupils will learn where they come from and where they stand. We do not underestimate the structuring value of such references.”

This culture could not possibly be strictly national, especially in the context of Europe. *This is why the Base includes major accomplishments of European culture: the major texts (the Bible, the Iliad, the Odyssey, etc.) and major works of world heritage, in order to help pupils understand what is universal and thus essential in all human cultures.* In this approach, Islamic civilisation does not seem to be part of European first heritage and long history. Today's presence of European Muslims, as well as the historical and cultural contribution of Islam to the West is not integrated in this vision, whereas “mastering the Common Base means being [...] equipped with a vital instrument for lifelong training to participate in evolutions of society. It means being able to understand the major challenges facing mankind, cultural diversity and the universality of human rights.”

It is about providing common references for understanding, and helping build a sense of belonging to the community of citizens, develop rational opinions, prepare each individual to develop his/her own culture and determine his/her openness to the world.

In particular, pupils must:

- have historical references, by knowing the different periods in the history of mankind (characteristic founding events that help situate them in relation to each other by connecting facts, whether political, economic, social, cultural, religious, scientific and technical or literary and artistic), as well as breaking points.
- be prepared to share a European culture, through knowledge of the main texts of Antiquity (the Iliad and the Odyssey, stories of the founding of Rome, the Bible)
- understand unity and complexity of the world by a primary approach to human rights; diversity of civilisations, societies, religions (history and contemporary spheres of dissemination); religion in France, Europe and throughout the world through

the study of founding texts (notably, extracts from the Bible and the Koran) using a secular approach respecting consciences and convictions.

That means also to study Islam as a mere human fact and social phenomena, without using the religious and traditional keys to understand the Koran or to present the real meanings of Muslims practises and believes. But how could pupils use their knowledge “*to develop a sensible approach to reality and understand current events*” where Islam seems to be at stake, if they do not distinguish between genuine religious values and their ideological parody or cultural customs? Would the confusion between Muslims and terrorists really be avoided with the attitudes that the humanist culture provides, such as: “*the desire to have a personal cultural life, or cultivating curiosity about art, heritage and contemporary productions, whether French or foreign; about other countries of the world (history, civilisation, current affairs)*”?

Besides developing awareness of the fact that human experiences have a universal aspect, to successfully complete their schooling, pursue further studies, build their personal and professional future, lead a successful life in society and freely exercise their citizenship, pupils require social and civic skills, which are another pillar of the “common base”: “*This means providing a true civic course for pupils, made up of values, knowledge, practices and behaviours. The purpose is to encourage the effective and constructive participation in social and professional life, preparing them to exercise their freedom while being fully informed of the rights of others and to reject violence. For this, pupils will have to learn to distinguish between universal principles (human rights), rules of the State of law (the Law) and cultural customs (civility). It should also help them develop a sense of belonging to their country and the European Union, respecting diversity of choice of each person and their personal options.*”

Living in society means to prepare pupils to live together well by gradual adoption of rules of collective life, with respect for religious or

cultural differences. Pupils should also be able to know the distinction between professional, public and private circles, to communicate and work in groups, “*which means being able to listen, assert one's point of view, negotiate, seek a consensus, carry out the task following the rules set out by the group; assess the consequences of one's actions: ability to recognize and identify one's emotions, impressions, affirm oneself constructively*”.

Finally, life in society is based on: self respect; respect for others (civility, tolerance, refusal of prejudice and stereotypes); respect for the opposite sex; respect for privacy; desire to resolve conflicts peacefully; awareness that no man can exist without others; awareness of the necessary contribution of each person in a group; sense of responsibility towards others. Even with a lack of true knowledge, all these civic values should help people have a better image of Muslims and Islam.

Some examples of higher Islamic Education and Culture for the future

For information and education on what are Islamic principles, teachings and cultural reality, one has to consider the necessity of religious education in the framework of Muslim private initiatives, sometimes with a financial support and co-operation of the French government. Educative and cultural policies recognise the possibility and right for Muslim associations to organise religious education and teachings, especially towards Muslim populations, as well as for promoting a better understanding of Islamic civilisation and universal values in order to show their consistency with French contemporary society.

As a unique example of governmental measure in the cultural field that contributes to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in France, it is relevant to mention here the project of expansion of department of Islamic arts at famous Louvre museum, thanks to an exceptional donation from Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. With this decision, confirmed by the decree of the 1st of August 2003 President Jacques Chirac had wished to “establish the universal vocation of this

religious institution” and to “ remind the French people and the rest of the world, the essential contribution of the Islamic civilisations to our cultures.”

The religious education of young Muslims has generally been provided either by the family at home or by associations and mosques in the framework of Koranic courses, independently and outside of regular school hours. However, the debate over the *hijab* has provided impetus for the establishment of state-approved general Islamic schools. One has been established in Lille, joining the other school established in La Reunion several decades ago. There exists one Islamic private school under a contract of association (which means that the school can receive State subsidies) in the Réunion department. Two more opened in 2001 in Aubervilliers and in 2003 in Lille (lycée Averroes): neither is under contract with the State. Another one (without contract, based in Lyon) opened in March 2007 (lycée college Al Kindi). On March 10th, 2008, the Muslim private school Éducation et Savoir opened its doors in the Parisian suburb of Vitry-sur-Seine (Val-de-Marne). The school will teaching one primary education class for the remainder of the 2007-2008 school year, and has plans to accommodate 40 high school students for the 2008-2009. In addition to state-mandated curriculum, the school will offer classes on Arabic and Islam.

The lack of qualified teaching staff and the need to provide training to imams have become increasingly important issues since the beginning of the 1990's. Several attempts have been made by Muslim associations to develop appropriate training institutions for *imams*. The question of the training of imams has been the first task delegated to the French Council of the Muslim Religion. Such an issue has concerned both French governments and Muslim communities for several years.

The poor training and low salaries of imams are seen as contributing to a possibly extremist subculture among Muslims in France. According to a 2003 survey of approximately 1000 *imams*, just over half are permanent residents and less than half receive regular salaries, while a third

speaking little or no French. Conversations between the Muslim Council and the government have promised to remedy this situation with new guidelines and further programs at universities for the training of *imams*.

Many attempts have been made, so far without success. Various institutes and places were established in France. Including the Al-Ghazali Theology Institute of the Great Mosque of Paris, the European Institute of Human Sciences (IESH, Bouteloin Château-Chinon, St Denis), International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT France), the Centre for research and Studies on Islam (CERSI, St Denis). The latest is the Avicenna Institute of Human Sciences in Lille, that was able to have its diplomas recognised by collaborating with the State. Some public university faculties specialised in history, sociology of religions and Islamology can also be found: the institute of Sociology of the Muslim and the Veme section of the *Ecole pratique des hautes études à la Sorbonne*. In September 2006, a commission charged by the Prime Minister, with the examination of some legal issues concerning the relations between the State and religious denominations, suggested the creation of a State-funded institute of Islamic theology in Strasbourg (where *laïcité* law is not implemented).

These various institutes deal with religious education and theological research, mainly for Muslims in France, in order to fulfil the needs and the current lack of training of religious heads (*imams*, chaplains, social mediators) with the teaching of advanced theology and fundamental research.

The institutes that have already been established or the projects that are taking place, in various forms, include an academic recognition and juridical officiality, in an effort towards adaptation and promoting an Islamic thought that is in keeping with contemporary society.

Another interesting example of initiatives in favour of the teaching of Islamic principles and the promotion of its culture, the activities proposed by the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Islamiques* (IHEI), that is directed by French Muslim intellectuals. For over twenty years, they have organised university conferences, intercultural and interreligious meetings, and

produced various studies. The aim of the institute is to establish activities that help increase understanding, in both Muslims and the rest of the French society, regarding the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Muslim religion and civilisation, but that equally contribute to a constructive presence of Muslims in France and Europe.

Thus, it is in this general context of the organisation of Islam in Islam, that the project of the “*l’Institut Français de Civilisation Musulmane*” (IFCM), carried out with the I’HEI and the Grand Mosque of Lyon, will have its mission registered and will carry out the various cultural, educational and social activities. The political authorities, at a regional and national level, have already expressed their involvement to financially support part of the project, which should also benefit from the aid of the European Union and Muslim countries.

A better knowledge, by the French society, of the values and the intellectual, cultural and spiritual heritage of the Muslim civilisation will help mutual understanding and respect as well as pacific cohabitation at the heart of the population. The IFCM's objective is to give value to and promote the Islamic culture and that of other civilisations, through various cultural and artistic activities, conferences, publications and exhibitions. In this way, the promotion of mutual understanding and dialogue between cultures constitutes an essential element of influence and the involvement of the IFCM to consolidate the foundations of a pacific and constructive living-together. As a genuine research, information and teaching tool on the Muslims civilisation, mainly aimed at non-Muslims, the IFCM intends to participate in the development of the reflections of the Muslim civilisation in France, acting as a bridge in the heart of the French society, with the spirit of openness and partnership with the university world, the professional fields, the media and public institutions. The aim is to render accessible to the majority of the public, not necessarily familiar with, the richness of the Muslim, classic and contemporary, intellectuality, with the constant need to enrich the debate of ideas, and to work towards an intellectual contribution of

quality, in view of a better comprehension of what is at stake and the current problems. We can predict that this collaboration with the political decision makers can lead to an improvement of the image of Islam and Muslims in the educational and cultural policies in France.

With the intention to contribute to the visibility and the serene and constructive presence of Islam in France, the IFCM aims and fields of action allow it to play a role, at times distinct and complementary to the institutes of religious and theological teaching. It answers to a certain number of needs and interests, that are at the same time shared with French Muslims, and with the French society in its entirety, and that remains until now without sufficient answer in various realms.

3.3 Germany

The juridical Statute of German Islamic organisations

With circa 3,500,000 Muslims, Germany has one of the most numerous Islamic communities in Western Europe, 70% of which are of one ethnic community, the Turkish community. The relations between the Islamic community with state Institutions are inserted in a general frame based on the principle of separation between the State and the religions, but this separatist model, established in its essential elements with the German Constitution in 1949, allows for the possibility to establish special collaborations between the State and the religious communities that have the status of “corporation under public law”.

“Any religious organization may request that it be granted "public law corporation" status, which, among other things, entitles it to name prison, hospital, and military chaplains and to levy a tithe (averaging 9 percent of income tax) on its members that the state collects (...). The decision to grant public law corporation status is made at the state level based on certain requirements, including an assurance of permanence, the size of the organization, and an indication that the organization is not hostile to the constitutional order or fundamental rights. An estimated 180 religious groups have been granted public law corporation status (...).

The Muslim communities remained an exception. In principle, the **Federal Government** is in favour of the states' granting public law corporation status to Muslim communities but **has indicated a desire that Muslims agree upon a single organization with which the states and the federal Government can negotiate**. On April 9, 2007, in consequence, the four largest Muslim religious organizations announced the formation of the "**Muslim Coordination Council**." Whether and when this group would meet legal requirements for registration as a public law corporation was unclear and was to be decided on the state level; however, some observers, including the Federal Interior Minister were on record that the Muslim Coordination Council only represented approximately 10 to 15 percent of the total Muslim population, those who were traditionally observant (...).

On May 2, 2007, the second plenary meeting of the Interior Ministry's Islamic Conference (Islam Konferenz, DIK) **took place, after it's launching on September 27, 2006**, alongside the Government's parallel Integration Summit. The conference is a multiyear effort that addresses key areas of debate such as the legal status of Islam and policies such as those related to headscarves and girls' participation in athletic activities. **It is an attempt to bring together representatives from the wide spectrum of the Muslim community, from the very traditional to the nearly secular**. The conference can claim the increased public attention to Muslim integration as a major success. It is also debating the form of representation of the diverse Muslim community in negotiations with the Government about the role of Islam in society. On the core government demand that Muslims accept the social values of the country, there was no consensus among Muslims. Participants, however, remained committed to the process and expected progress in the long run⁽¹⁾.

(1) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour.

Representatives of the federal ministries, of individual Länders and of the municipalities participate for the State to the DIK (*Islam Konferenz*). However, for the Muslims, aside from a series of independent personalities that represent the various SFUMATURE of the civil and intellectual Muslim-German society, the various influential Islamic organisations, that have recently come together in a Council of Muslim Coordination: Turko-Islamic Institutes for Religion, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, the Islamic Council and the Union of the Islamic Cultural Centres.

The relations with the Turkish Islamic Community

While the institutions seem to mainly concentrate on the attempt to identify, or create, a single Islamic interlocutor, the problems that emerged in the educational field seem to urgently solicit the need for practical interventions that avoid the strong risk that in Germany a “parallel society” could be established, founded on the one hand on the opposition between German identity and Islamic identity, and on the other hand on the confusion between the Islamic identity and Turkish national identity.

“The relationship between Germany's largely Turkish Muslim population and the German National community was until recently conditioned by the political class' refusal to acknowledge that the “guest workers” were there to stay. German rather than Turkish attitudes were the primary factor precluding effective integration. Turks' own uncertainty over whether they would eventually return “home” and a tendency toward linguistic and social segregation were reinforced for two generations by German administrative practices”⁽¹⁾.

Until a few years ago (2000), the administrative policy was, actually, that of placing permanent obstacles against the naturalisation of immigrants, “For four decades, permanently resident Turkish citizens

(1) *Islam and Identity in Germany*, Crisis Group Europe Report n. 181, 14 March 2007.

were considered “guest workers” or simply foreigners. Because the old citizenship law did not provide for automatic acquisition of German nationality upon birth in the territory, most from the second and third generation were not citizens (...) as a result a high percentage of resident Muslims are politically disenfranchised, resident aliens. This policy encouraged migrants to identify with homeland culture, language and religion (...). The advent of a disenfranchised, poorly integrated second generation face Germans of all persuasions with the consequence of neglect: several millions foreign residents, some of whose views, opinions and religious practices inevitably diverged from those of the majority population. The political backlash led to a slogan in the 1990s that “integration is not a one-way street”, a reminder to foreigners in Germany of their responsibility to learn the language and adapt to their environment”⁽¹⁾.

The fact that the majority of the components of the German Islamic community- despite being born and having lived in Germany for two or three generations- continued to keep their Turkish citizenship created notable complications in the relations with the State:

“Lacking communication channels with its Muslims population, the State has tried to open dialogue through religious bodies that represent the interests of only a minority. It has long outsourced management of Islam relying on what is essentially an extension of Turkish State, the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Dyanet, I_leri Türk-Islam Birli_i, D_T_B), to tend to religious needs. This was consistent with treating those of Turkish origin as resident aliens and providing services such as prayer spaces, imams and religious education in public schools, while avoiding direct engagement (...).

A second complication arises out of Germany's federal structure. The national government is constrained on integration issues by the extent to which policy on education, naturalisation and religion is made at the

(1) *Islam and Identity in Germany*, Crisis Group Europe Report n. 181, 14 March 2007.

provincial (*Länder*) level. *Länder* officials have often avoided difficult decisions and allowed provincial courts to rule on such questions as who can teach Islam in public schools (...). The national government's scope of action is further checked by the upper house (Bundesrat), where a majority of *Länder* representatives can block laws that infringe on regional competencies, as happened with the 2002 immigration reform. The constitutional court has rarely taken up state-Islam issues, and then only to uphold *Länder* jurisdiction in religious affairs⁽¹⁾. Muslim religious associations have mostly encountered a curious mixture of indulgence (usually towards the indirect representatives of the Turkish state, DITIB) and repression (of DITIB's rivals) in the *Länder*"⁽²⁾.

In Germany, the process of integration and official recognition of Islam is closely related to the issues connected to the concession of citizenship to the members of the numerous Islamic community, especially of Turkish origin. The first fundamental step was made with the reform of the 2000 law on nationality, with which the government started to give the German citizenship to the majority of those born in Germany, thus contributing towards the removal of one of the main obstacles to integration.

However, there remains a particular diffidence towards overcoming with regards to Islam, until now, the guarantee of "full rights and equal administrative recognition to Muslim organisations instate-religion relations - e.g. for teaching Islam in public schools - is conditioned upon religious leaders' public repudiation of putative socio-cultural characteristics, such as inequitable gender relations. Formulating such demands as the price for entry into the German polity appears to presuppose an inherent incompatibility between Islam and the German republic"⁽³⁾.

(1) The best known instance was the headscarf case involving a schoolteacher (September 2003); the court ruled the woman did not violate any law but that new local legislation banning the headscarf was within *Länder* rights

(2) *Islam and Identity in Germany*, Crisis Group Europe Report n. 181, 14 March 2007.

(3) *Ibidem*.

Muslim Religious Education in Public Schools

In Germany, policies regarding religious education vary considerably in the various *Länder*, in certain federal States, Islamic religious education has been present since 1977 but exclusively in Turkish.

“Islam classes in public schools were a controversial topic but were increasingly common throughout the country, except in areas where the Muslim population was too small to support them. Although no Islamic group had "Public Law Corporation" status that would entitle them to offer Islam courses, state governments recognized the need and demand for such courses and worked with local Muslim organizations to establish such courses. The details of the curriculum are worked out by the state government on a local basis”⁽¹⁾.

Since there are no official State-recognised Islamic organisations, that can uniformly establish on the national territory the contents of the teachings or the training of the instructors, the form and the contents of Islamic education vary between States.

«Children, parents, and religious communities have a constitutional right to religious education. When a minimum number of students, of the same religious denomination, is reached (normally from 6 to 8), a public school is obliged to teach the concerned religion. Islam is being taught in public schools in a number of *Länder*, such as Berlin, Hamburg, Lower-Saxony, North Rhine-Westfalen, and Baden-Württemberg. **The curriculum is decided by the respective religious authorities (that is, Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs, or, in some case, the leaders of a local Muslim community)**, but it is supervised by the State. The teachers are paid by the State. However, it is to be noted that, in many cases, instruction in Islam is provided for in classes of Turkish language organised for the immigrant children, which results in the exclusion of all Muslim students of a mother tongue other than Turkish

(1) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour.

from this kind of Islamic religion instruction. It is also important to note that the teaching of Islam in language and culture classes **is not religious instruction in the sense of Art. 7, sec. 3 of the Federal Constitution**, but it is the result of a compromise among different needs»⁽¹⁾.

In fact, the possibility of teaching religion in state schools may not contribute to interreligious and multicultural education and may easily contribute to the separation and reciprocal ignorance between the various components of the society. Not only between Muslims and non-Muslims but also within the Muslim community, where Islam is taught in Turkish. From our point of view, it is not an appropriate solution, as it could easily be that religious education becomes an opportunity for closure of the various components with regards to others present in Germany, when the objective is that of training citizens, both religious and non, who are open to intercultural and interreligious dialogue, able to live with their belief without any conflict or exclusivism. The image of various religions and the growth of various religious people would gain a lot from this.

Muslim schools

«Any person or legal entity, including religious communities, can establish a school, providing they comply with the law's requirements. There are reportedly three Islamic private schools in Germany: the Saudi Arabian King Fahd Academy (offering both primary and secondary school classes), the Islamic Centre in Munich (operating as a secondary school), and the Islamic Primary School in Berlin. Like any other private school, they receive State funds»⁽²⁾.

With regards to Islamic schools, what we said about Italy is also valid: they do not contribute to the establishment of a society that is truly open and multi religious but, unfortunately, favour exclusivism and negatively encourage the new generations of European Muslims to

(1) *Lin E.U.*, p. 116.

(2) *I. in E.U.*, p. 116.

isolate themselves from the political and social context in which they live, auto-segregating themselves.

University courses

«The University at Leiden has just offered a one-year Master's level programme in Islamic theology (where the emphasis is on the study of contemporary Islam in the European context)»⁽¹⁾.

« In 2005 the university (of Münster) started a teacher training program in order to help with shortages of competent instructors and lead towards more equal treatment of Muslims at German schools. Professor Muhammad Sven Kalisch was been appointed professor for Islamic sciences for the subject "Religion des Islam" at the University of Munster. Munster is the first German university that will qualify teachers for Islamic religious education, but in 2007 the University of Osnabruck has started to educate Islamic religious teachers through its Master program "Islamic Religious Education" (Islamische Religionspädagogik), too. However, only four students have enrolled 2007 in Osnabruck»⁽²⁾.

Training of Imams

Currently, a great number of Imams in Germany come from abroad and their training happens mainly in Turkey. In many cases “imported” *Imams* don't have sufficient knowledge of the German language and the socio-cultural structure of the country. This leads to a type of diffidence on behalf of the German public opinion and risks to create obstacles to the *Imams* and their responsibilities in guiding the community of German Muslims in an appropriate manner. In order to face these problems the DIK (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, established in 2006) has opened a dialogue regarding the creation in Germany of apposite courses for the training of German *Imams*.

(1) *Ibidem*.

(2) <http://www.euro-islam.info>, *Country profile of Germany*.

At an academic level, «The University of Münster has had a chair in Muslim theology since 2004, with a view to training imams, while the University of Goethe (Frankfurt) has opened a theology faculty with a course of Islamic studies for imams and teachers. These are the only schools at this time that can confer an accredited academic degree. Initiatives, which have been discussed for years, such as the project to create a programme in Islamic theology at the University of Strasbourg, have not yet born fruit»⁽¹⁾.

3.4 United Kingdom

The juridical statute of the Islamic religion in the United Kingdom

The British Islamic community makes up about 3% of the total population (circa 1,850,000 Muslims) of which the majority Asian.⁽²⁾

This community is part of a juridical frame of relation between State and religion that does not include a formal separation between the official Church (the Anglican Church) and the State: the Queen is both the political head of State and the supreme apex of the Anglican Church, and the laws of the Church are an integral part of the state system. All other religious communities are organised according to common law, and Islam, like all other religions that are not the Anglican Church, is juridically considered in the same was as an association of private law⁽³⁾. Every individual local Islamic community has organisational autonomy and are generally represented by an advisor. The British authorities regularly consult the Muslim Council of Britain, founded in 1997, when they are dealing with subjects regarding the British Islamic community.

“Religious groups are not required to register with the Government. No church or religious organization established or otherwise receives direct

(1) *I.in E.U.*, p. 21.

(2) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour.

(3) L Di Gregorio, *Il trattamento giuridico della minoranza islamica in Europa*, 2005, : www.olir.it.

funding from the state. The Government provides financial support up to 90 percent of the total capital costs of the buildings and 100 percent of running costs, including teachers' salaries to sectarian educational institutions that are commonly referred to as "faith schools"⁽¹⁾.

Muslim Religious Education in Public Schools

“The law requires religious education for all children, aged 3 to 19, in publicly maintained schools. In England and Wales it forms part of the core curriculum in accordance with the Education Reform Act of 1988. In Scotland, religious, education of some sort is mandated by the Education Act of 1980. However, the shape and content of religious instruction throughout the country is decided on a local basis. Locally agreed syllabi are required to reflect the predominant place of Christianity while taking into account the teachings and practices of other principal religions in the country. Syllabi must be nondenominational and refrain from attempting to convert pupils.”⁽²⁾.

This non-denominational religious education “takes different names (science of religions, history of religions, etc.), is focused on learning the basic characteristics of the major religions, and is provided by teachers appointed by the State authorities, who hold the qualifications required by the law of the State»⁽³⁾. “This means that, while focusing on Christianity, it also takes into account other religious traditions, including Islam. In schools attended mainly by Christian students, Islam usually forms a relatively small component of religious education”⁽⁴⁾.

Muslim schools

«Religious communities have the right to establish their own independent schools, although such schools must be registered with the

(1) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, op. cit.

(2) *Ibidem*

(3) *Lin E.U.*, p. 45; this model is followed in Sweden, Denmark and Estonia in different ways.

(4) *Lin E.U.*, p. 173.

Registrar of Independent Schools and must meet certain minimum standards. Since 1997, the Labour Government has extended State funding traditionally given to Anglican, Catholic, and Jewish schools to other minority faith schools, including four Muslim schools. There exist approximately 60 independent (that is, private) Islamic schools in the country», but «only four of them receive public financial support»⁽¹⁾, «among them: Al Furqan School in Birmingham; Islamia School in London; Feversham College in Bradford.

Currently only about 5% of Muslim students attend these schools, but surveys have shown much broader interest.

Proposals to increase the role of faith schools in the State education sector have generated much debate. The Commission for Racial Equality has expressed concern that **single faith schools could damage multi-culturalism**, and the Cattle Report cautioned that funding of faith schools would increase social segregation between different minority communities. One response to this is a proposal by faith communities for “multi-faith” schools that would appreciate faith but would not be targeted at a particular faith.

The Government remains committed to increasing the role of faith schools in the State sector but has said that new faith schools will have to “demonstrate how they will be inclusive and work in partnership with other schools.” The Government rejected a proposal in the Cattle Report that at least 25 percent of the intake in a faith school reflect the other cultures and ethnicities within the local area, but they want to “encourage all schools to ensure that their intake reflects the local community in all their diversity”»⁽²⁾.

The risk that schools of one religion could damage multi-culturalism has proven, in recent experiences, to be a real one. The initial success of a British multicultural model was connected to the attempt to integrate,

(1) *Ibidem.*

(2) <http://www.euro-islam.info>, *Country Profile of UK.*

and not to separate and increase the segregation between the various religious communities. The current exclusive concentration on separatism, does not contribute to the development of a multicultural and welcoming society towards religious minorities and risks becoming the complete opposite. Intercultural education of all citizens, Muslims and non, religious and non, is the best way to ensure that the knowledge and image of Islam and of Muslims can be separated from stereotypes.

Regarding this, the proposal “by faith communities for “multi-faith” schools that would appreciate faith but would not be targeted at a particular faith” is an interesting one.

However, it is fundamental that these multi-faith schools do not propose an understanding of religions exclusively based on orientalist studies and the so-called historic-religious sciences of an western matrix, seeing as this would not be a step forward but a step backward, with the re-proposal of a single cultural model.

To avoid such risks, the qualifications of teachers will as well as the “instruction to instructors” who play a determining role will have to acquire an in-depth knowledge of religions. In this way, teachers can accompany the family and the community's religious education of the individual, supporting it in an intellectual way and teaching the individual to be open to other religions, also demonstrating how other religious doctrines have positively contributed to history of humanity and the creation of civilisation.

In order to not render this “open” approach to religions an exclusively sociological one, future religious education teachers should acquire the necessary qualifications by attending interreligious institutes that integrate academic preparation with the contributions of various religious communities. In such institutes official representatives of the various religions can be involved in the teaching process in order to achieve a preparation that has a scientific and not “scientist” approach to religions, studying them not only via the academic commentaries of scholars, but also by allowing the future teachers to have a more direct-and not ideologically oriented in an unambiguous way- of the various faiths.

Imam Training

«There are currently two institutions dedicated to the training of *imams*, the Muslim College in London (established in 1981), and the Markfield Institute of Higher Education in Leicestershire (established in 2000)»⁽¹⁾.

However, currently the majority of accredited Imams in Great Britain are trained abroad and have little knowledge of the British socio-cultural context that they are a part of. To overcome this problem government funds for the training of British Imams within the country should be increased.

Muslim group private initiatives

«Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS) which is recognized by Middlesex University in London, or also the Muslim College, created in 1987, associated with Birkbeck College of the University of London»⁽²⁾.

University courses

«In England, relying on funds from the ministry of Education, we note that Cardiff University has created a centre for Islamic studies in the United Kingdom, and that Birmingham University has operated since 1976 its Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations, which offers a post-graduate degree in Islamic studies»⁽³⁾.

3.5 Spain

The juridical statute of Islam in Spain

The Spanish Islamic community is composed of around one million Muslims, the majority of Moroccan origin, but many also come from Algeria, Pakistan and various Arab countries. There are also a number of people of Spanish origin who embraced the Islamic faith.

(1) *Lin E.U.*, p. 174.

(2) *Ibidem*, p. 20.

(3) *Ibidem*, p. 21.

The 1978 Spanish Constitution establishes the laity of the State and recognises religious freedom. According to the Organic Law of Religious Freedom of 1980, churches, religions and religious communities can acquire juridical personality by subscribing to an appropriate National Register of Religious Entities (RER), in which there are currently 443 Islamic entities registered⁽¹⁾. Even if the number of communities present in the country may be far superior seeing as many religious communities prefer to register themselves, with the regional governments, as cultural organisations, rather than with the RER seeing as national registration requires going through a lot of bureaucracy and over 6 months of time.⁽²⁾

The religious entities registered in the RER, as long as they are officially declared as “*notorio arraigo*”, can conclude the agreement of cooperation with the State. The historical presence of Islam in Spain has facilitated the declaration of its “*notorio arraigo*” in 1989. Subsequently, following the strong stimulus of the Spanish government, the two main Spanish Islamic entities FEERI (Spanish *Federation of Islamic Religious Organizations*) e UCIDE (*Union of Muslim Communities of Spain*), united to form the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE), an entity that possesses juridical weight that has been especially created to reach a concluding agreement for official cooperation with the State (“*Acuerdo*”) that was signed in 1992.⁽³⁾

According to the Statute, the CIE is in charge of favouring the practice of Islam in Spain according to the principles of the Koran and the Sunna, even though the “forced” unification of the two entities (UCIDE e FEERI) by the government ended up paralysing the possibly constructive actions of the CIE.⁽⁴⁾

(1) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, op. cit.

(2) Jimenez - Aybar, *El Islam en Espana*, Pamplona, 2004.

(3) *L Di Gregorio*, op. cit.

(4) *Motilla, Los musulmanes en Espana*, Madrid, 2004.

Muslim Religious Education in Public Schools

«The teaching of Islam in public schools was regulated by the 1992 Agreement, but it has been actually allowed only since 2000 in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, where Muslims of Moroccan origin make up the majority of the population. In January 2005, the Spanish Office for Religious Affairs decided that schools in a number of major cities having high Muslim population, such Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Santander and Andalusian cities, would start the teaching of Islam. If there are at least ten students, from the same class or from among all classes of the same grade, who request to attend a course of Islamic, the Government will pay a salary to the teachers appointed by the Islamic Commission of Spain. The school authorities through a one-year contract employ such teachers. The Government has also financed, through a public foundation, the edition of a book of Islamic Religion written in Spanish, to be used in primary schools»⁽¹⁾.

“The selection of religion teachers is made by the entity registered with the MOJ (Ministry of Justice) to represent each religious community. Either the national Ministry of Education or the autonomous region entity responsible for education certifies the teachers' credentials. Teachers must hold degrees from a Spanish university, have training in Spanish law, and be fluent in Spanish. For the Muslim community, the Islamic Commission selects religion teachers. UCIDE has the prominent role.

For the 2006-07 academic year, the Government employed 33 teachers to teach courses on Islam to public school students. At the end of the school year in June 2007, the teachers were providing Islamic instruction in schools in Ceuta (11) Melilla (10), Andalucia (10), and Aragon (2). By comparison, the Government funded approximately 15,000 teachers of Catholicism in public schools. The Islamic Commission estimated that there were 74,000 Muslim students who would take classes in Islamic education if possible. Observatorio Andalusi estimated 120,000

(1) *I.in E.U.*, p. 166.

Muslim school-age children and called for the hiring of 285 teachers to provide religious instruction for these students.

In Catalonia, although the regional government has declared that it is willing to teach other religions such as Islam in schools, no classes had begun. The Government wanted Muslim leaders to locate professors to give the classes. Approximately 1,250 families requested Muslim religious classes in Catalonia during the 2005-06 school year⁽¹⁾.

Like in Germany, where the classes in which Islam is taught are formed mainly by students of the same ethnicity, religious education risks not being suitable for the multicultural openness that the socio-cultural European context requires and that Spanish schools should favour. There is a great possibility that religious education takes on a particular nature that may not allow for a true mutual understanding of the various religions.

Muslim schools

Although the 1992 Agreement included the possibility to establish Islamic schools and Universities, these were not established.

«Spanish law allows Islamic communities, like any other physical and legal persons, to create schools, insofar as they respect constitutional values. None of the Islamic communities have exercised this right yet. Nevertheless, there are several schools created and run by Islamic countries, such Iraq and Saudi Arabia»⁽²⁾.

«The Averroes (Ibn Rushd) Islamic University was founded in 1995, in order to train people in Arabic Philology, Islamic Sciences and Andalusian Studies. However, this University has not yet been recognised by the State, thus, its diplomas have no legal value»⁽³⁾.

(1) *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, op. cit.

(2) *Ibidem*, p. 165.

(3) *Ibidem*, p. 166.

Imam Training

In the 1992 Agreement, one of the principal points concerns the functions of the *Imams*, who are assigned a fundamental role in guiding the community towards integration. The importance of their function is, however, contrasted by the lack of preparation regarding Spanish society.

Over 80% of *Imams* active in Spain have been trained abroad. In 2004 the principal Muslim organisations asked the Government to create the Faculty of Islamic Theology based on a model of those that already exist for the Catholic religion. This would be a way for the future *Imams* in Spanish mosques to be trained within the country rather than be “imported” from abroad. Until now, the training of *Imams* has never found support in official courses that have been recognised by the State and has been followed by the individual religious communities, with the approval of the CIE.

Therefore, the panorama of Spanish *Imams* (although the same can be said about all the countries mentioned in this report) has shown that there usually are *Imams* that are either from small, local, communities and lacking in preparation regarding the Islamic doctrine, or “professional” *Imams* from abroad who are well prepared with regards to the Arab culture but not qualified to guide a community in a European context.

At the end of February 2008, the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) signed an agreement of collaboration with the Asociación Socio Cultural Ibn Batuta (Ibn-Batuta socio-cultural association) and the Islamic Cultural Council of Catalonia, to promote a national course for the training of *Imams* and directors of Muslim associations.⁽¹⁾ “According to the UAB, this will be the first specific training experience that will be implemented in all of Spain. The aim of this school is to provide social, institutional and juridical understanding to *Imams* and members

(1) Cfr.: <http://www.publico.es/espana/049297/inmigracion/uab/universidad/islam/catalunya>; http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/02/19/actualidad/1203445323_622863.html

of Islamic associations, so that “their work in the community is efficient and transparent within the framework of the legislation.” The curriculum will be designed for the subject of Ecclesiastical Law in the Faculty of Law in the UAB with the suggestions of other universities.”⁽¹⁾

“As for the recognition of the course, education course, since, as explained by Sabater, for it to be a postgraduate or masters degree it is necessary that all the instructors have a university degree and “the majority of Imams do not have university degrees that are recognised in Spain.”⁽²⁾

Whether or not the project will be publically financed still needs to be determined.

(1) <http://www.lavanguardia.es/lv24h/20080215/53436671213.html>

(2) <http://www.lavanguardia.es/lv24h/20080215/53436671213.html>

Conclusions

The image of Islam and Muslims in Europe and in the world greatly depends on how Muslims can transform the principles of the Muslim tradition into the current, multicultural, multireligious and secular reality. The safekeeping and the re-transmission of the real essence of Islam, to new generations, leads to a constructive and open dialogue with both believers, of other faiths, and non-believers. Muslims are responsible for not letting the positive contribution that Islam can give a society be diminished or even obscured by personal confessional or secular stances. It is important that the new generations maintain the ties with their religious roots, it is also essential, to avoid the drying-up of these roots, that Muslims do not isolate themselves under the false illusion of preserving their identity.

The educational level should be able to transmit to new generations a culture that is based on the principle of respect for diversity, of coherence in the practicing of one's own religion, and the avoidance of the excesses of fundamentalism and proselytism. The solution to this is to not attempt to create a parallel "Islamic" universe, but to participate Islamically in one's own responsibility to be a integral and integrating part of a composite society, contributing and knowing how to accept the contribution of others.

Following this perspective, it doesn't seem suitable to neither create in state schools "separate classes," where teaching the "catechism" of Islam (that should happen within the family and communities) leads to ghettoization on the grounds of ethnicity, language or nationality (as happens in Germany and partly in Spain) nor the elimination of religious education in state schools (as is the case in France- except for the departments of Alsace and Lorraine- where the understanding of religions is limited to subjects like history or philosophy), nor the limiting of religious education to a purely sociological level. If, in the first case,

the risk is that of increasing tensions and the mutual ignorance of both religious and non, a solely sociological approach (whether secular or multicultural) risks desecrating the understanding of religions reducing it to an ordinary understanding of history or anthropology.

The real priority to guarantee an active and widespread contribution to Islamic education in schools does not, therefore, seem to consist in the establishment of thousands of Islamic schools in the various European countries, but rather in creating a European network of Islamic Studies academies, that can collaborate to ensure a suitable training for the instructors, that is to say to state school teachers, allowing these teachers to learn about an authentic Islam, directly from European Muslims who are experts in pedagogical and didactic sciences. In this way, the mistaken image of Islam and of Muslims that can be found in academic texts and in Western society in general.

It is interesting to note the establishment in Milan, Italy of the Inter-religious Study Academy (I.S.A). The Academy trains teachers and intercultural instructors in the aforementioned ways, ensuring the proper teaching of religions and in-depth reflections via courses and seminars.⁽¹⁾

If examples and good practice could be shared based on models of this type, the results would be numerous and significant:

- Teachers would have the chance to directly understand the authentic Islam, correcting any postcolonial prejudices or prejudices that may derive from oriental literature or from wrong information disseminated by the media.
- Muslim students would see the values of their religion and culture recognised in state schools. This would favour a natural process of integration between Islamic identity and cultural diversity.

(1) www.accademiaisa.it

- Their non-Muslim classmates would learn to respect the values of the Islamic culture and see them in their Muslim classmates, in future colleagues and possibly future relatives.
- The parents of Muslim children would feel reassured by the idea that Islam is being correctly presented to their children who are to become future European citizens, with the hope of them obtaining better professional and social opportunities.
- Schools would go back to being places for the development of the European society, open to an honest dialogue between different religions and cultures, following a pluralist system.
- Islam and Muslims would no longer be subjected to discrimination, but rather, with intercultural growth throughout the society, they could marginalise formalist and exclusivist deviations and degenerations.”

The path, towards educational policies for this millennium's Europe, inevitably passes through a global teaching, where the qualification and competence of the teachers are emphasised for a teaching that can transmit the values of cooperation in empathy and of rectitude in social justice, giving importance to the spiritual dimension of man.

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