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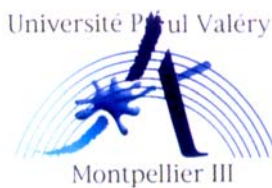
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Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Thematic Report: Religious minorities

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Content:

Introduction

Based on the work of the Prisme-société Centre (ie Bastian Messner 2007; EUREL) it can be said that national religious markers have modelled the cultural coding which still lives on in the nation-States of secularised European societies. Compared to these hegemonic and long-established religious cultures, a number of religious minorities have subsisted linked to ethnic stakes, secular diasporas or as a result of denominational confrontations: various new forms of religious expression have become grafted onto long-established religious minorities bound up with the process of secularisation induced by modernity, with the assertion of religious freedom and the freedom of conscience. At the same time, the migratory fluxes of non-European populations have accelerated the process of the multiplication (*pluralisation*) of religions and led to the appearance in Europe's landscape of religious traditions which, despite their remarkable leap forward remain legally and socially minorities alongside today's civilisations which they themselves largely shaped.

On the other hand, despite the fact that globalization has led to an intense movement of religious beliefs, these need to be inscribed in the institutions to procure their visibility, and this leads to a multiplication of religious communities previously unknown in Europe (Bastian Messner 2007). In addition to frequent complaints by religious minorities which, in Europe, consider they are victims of different forms of discrimination, the question of Islam is omnipresent in all European nations. This is evident in the majority of national reports in the EPASI programme: this religion does not benefit from the advantages conferred upon historical religions whereas, today, it constitutes – as a result of ever increasing immigration – one of the most practised religions (Benoit-Rohmer 2007). In the religious landscape of contemporary Europe and under the effect of global phenomena, the majority-minority relationship is in disarray under the influence of a proliferation of new cults and religious communities, at the same time as there is a social decline and fragmentation of the 'great traditions', themselves sometimes obliged to adopt certain characteristics of the minorities in a context of growing secularisation and disinstitutionalisation of religion (Bastian 2007).

The affirmation and development of religions such as Islam or Buddhism, the emergence of recently created religions, the progressive integration of socially controversial religions combined with the effective application of the principles of equality, freedom, and neutrality have transformed the status of minority religious denominations in Europe. Schools and teaching are at the heart of the complex interactions between civil society and institutions, interactions in which 'minority religious fact' is both at the origin of conflicting instrumentalisation and also of regulating co-existence aiming to reduce the risk of fragmentation of the common people or *citizen community*.

I – Religious minorities: definition

Although some complexity and uncertainty remain in the scientific definition of a 'religion' and above all a 'religious minority', these categories are nonetheless operational in the European landscape: the content of their definition and the resulting mechanisms – governing the State/religion relationship, their translation in the scholastic system – are of variable geometry and the privileged sphere of individual, national, political, cultural, emotional, legal, sociological or historical notions and representations.

The members of religious minorities benefit, just as the majority, from religious freedom and from the right to show their beliefs and express their religious convictions: these rights are recognised by Article 18 of the international Pact on civil and political rights and were included in the European Convention on Human Rights under Article 9 (Benoit-Rohmer 2007). In international law, religious minorities include categories characterised by their desire to preserve their traditions, their

language, their culture and their religion within a State. They are protected by universally recognised and European texts. Freedom of religion and the principle of non-discrimination guarantee in addition, and without any distinction, the convictions of minority believers and majority believers (Duffar 1994; Fenet, Soulier 1989).

Putting into practice the great guiding and protective principles often proves complex and is influenced by various contingencies. An initial error would consist in accepting and undergoing categories which, depending on circumstances, either set off or, on the contrary, stigmatise the minority : one has to keep a safe distance from the way the media handle the question, which, often swayed by public opinion, have a bigger impact on the political handling of minority issues than a scientific approach. In this 'construction of the glance' there intermingles the risk of unequal, even discriminatory approaches influencing the school ramifications of the phenomena: some minorities being liable to be construed and perceived as 'threatening' or conflicting, others being considered 'good' or generally consensual. The result is that in each society, 'certain religious traditions are more equal than others and pluralism thus proves relatively selective', according to whether the groups involved are 'active' or 'passive', support the majority norm or, on the contrary, set up an opposing minority norm (Campiche 2007). In the absence of properly determined definitions, these perceptions have various consequences on the way the principle of equality is recognised by each European democracy and transposed into its sphere of education.

1 – Limitation of the quantity criterion in defining a 'religious minority '

Defined *a minima*, the term 'minority' refers to a human group lower in numbers compared to the rest of the population of a State, whereas the term 'religious' refers to different religious characteristics compared to those of the majority of the population. This can be taken to the extent that a 'religious minority' is defined as a group, lower in numbers compared to the rest of the population of a State, which bases its claim for identity on the particularities of its religious convictions (Bastian 2007). The use of a numerical criterion only underlines to what extent it is inapplicable. First of all, in the case of all the States studied, there remains the embarrassing problem of the definition of a religion, and of that of an unequal formal or legal recognition of 'minorities' (for example the refusal of categories in France or in Sweden) making it impossible to count their members and collect so-called 'sensitive' statistics. In other case like Greece, the National Statistical Service has not included any questions to record religious minorities since 1951: "It may be assumed that this attitude of not including questions in recent censuses about even the linguistic and religious preferences of the population is consistent with a more general policy to discourage discussion on issues concerning ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences in Greek society" (Rozakis 1996:98). Therefore, in most of countries-cases, it appears that the count of individuals according to their religious convictions remains approximate - if not nonexistent - for minority groups.

Another limit for the quantitative criterion is the fact that tiny religious groups, from the numerical point of view, can be dominant in the sphere of the strategy deployed in the field of religion on the basis of what is practised and a hegemonic or 'religiously correct' approach. Finally, the transnational dimension of religious organisations leads to an inability to measure minority religions on a national level: they need rather to be examined worldwide since some evolve on the basis of a network the 'strength' of which it is difficult to reduce to its mere presence in a country (Bastian 2007).

If we consider a social construction rather than the result of a count, sociologists draw our attention to the complexity of the notion of minority which is going to influence the interaction between the State, the school system and the groups involved, both in terms of regulation and discrimination. Thus, a religious minority just as the belonging to one are a question of social definition, of the

interaction between auto-definition by the members of the group and definition of other groups: 'there is a dialectic relationship between the exogenous and endogenous belonging to a religious group which makes the religious minority category a dynamic process which has to be continually revised' (Bastian 2007). A community properly becomes a minority only when it transforms itself from a minority 'as such' - observable as such - into a minority 'for its own sake', in other words when an introspective process of identity auto-definition is in operation (Bizeul 2007): this aspect should not be underestimated in researching inequalities and religious discrimination in schools, which are also of the order of auto-perception.

2 – *Prudence in methodology: a search for a dynamic and complex approach*

Minority religions do not form a homogenous whole. They include many great religious cultures, diasporas having settled over centuries, national religions gradually becoming minorities, religions embedded in national minorities, micro-dissidents of established religions as well as socially contested religious groups. Theodor Hanf distinguishes, in connection with the previous point, types of minority behaviour. The great dominant minorities as well as small minorities which have, in the past, undergone persecutions or discrimination often encouraging integration, even assimilation, and tend to preach a universalist and republican version of life in common. The first type (the great dominant minorities) thus seeks to avoid any strong community sentiment leading to rallying of the members of the dominated community liable to endanger their privileges. The second type (small minorities which have in the past undergone persecutions and/or discrimination) hopes that their strategy will enable them to benefit from equality of opportunity bound up with their integration (this is the case for the Jewish and Protestant communities in France). Minorities permanently dominated over and discriminated against cannot hope to benefit from the advantages of social integration and therefore tend to display their differences: they may even go as far as to claim positive discriminative measures and advocate a model of multicultural integration (or rather non-integration) (Bizeul 2007).

With its complex conceptualisation, religious minority is equally complex to observe empirically. In addition to legal restrictions liable to be in existence in some countries concerning the collection of personal data, the religious variable is rarely targeted as an isolated element. As the Danish report underlines, for example, the 'minority' component in its religious acceptation is often agglomerated with other aspects (linguistic, socio-economic, even ethnic elements[1]) which are more central in the educational debate: several research teams note the lack of pertinence of the sole religious characteristics, translated by the quasi absence of mechanisms directly orientated solely towards a reduction in religious inequalities in the educational sphere. Alongside a tendency towards 'ethnic-communitarisation' due to religious fact (often treated in relation to first and second generation migrants), which blurs the specificity and autonomy of the religious variable, there are cases where religious minorities are considered national minorities (Bastian 2007). This is the case for the Muslim minority in Greece, or even the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and for Jewish, Protestant or Catholic minorities settled in numerous European countries. Religious minorities which are considered national minorities must be distinguished from religious minorities which are numerically less than the religious majority – or majorities – or which gather together a minority movement within their religion. The polymorphism of religious minorities explains the difficulty in determining a sole specific legal system meeting their needs (Benoit-Rohmer 2007), even if the represented nations have worked out different systems reflecting the specificities of their historical relationships to religion.

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[1] Other example: many of the Muslim schools in England and The Netherlands are concerned with ethnic identity as well as religious identity. In The Netherlands, in particular, most Muslim schools are practically mono-ethnic, with the majority serving children with either Moroccan or Turkish origins (Walford 2001).

II - Religious minority groups and educative strategies

The complexity of the sociological definition of religious minorities is structurally in opposition with the working constraints of the management of public affairs. Political control, often motivated by the need to maintain public order and to maintain the existing social hierarchy, requires the adoption of criteria for the recognition – or non recognition – if not of the minorities at least of the practices of religious groups. European nations, confronted with a diversity which implies careful application of the principle of equality, set up supporting and organisational mechanisms linked to national traditions concerning 'religious rights'. For each country, the drawing up of criteria for religious organisation is bound to be coupled with the existing modelling of the Nation/religion(s) relationship: these two factors are bound to structure the national educational landscape together with the hierarchical organisation of the social actors and the kind of educational systems (private/public).

1 - Nation/Religion relationships and global educative strategies

The affiliation between religion and law is articulated in the authorized and legal relationship between church and State. In the 14 investigated countries, these relationships take the outline of separation or cooperation between church and State. In some countries they have even established church systems profoundly embedded in historical events and traditions. The classification of France as 'République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale' and the position of the Church of England as an established church are examples of how the relationship between church and State can outline the constitutional identity of a country. In general terms, this classification tells us something about the 'equilibrium'. Nowadays different interpretations are evident in Europe, from the hands–off vision based on the American approach to the 'laïcité' based on the French approach to eliminate all religious connotations or symbols in the public life. Neutrality can also be seen as offering active pluralism and citizenship in the public realm (Loobuyck 2007).

The relationship between the Church and the State is determinant in allowing religious minorities to thrive, in encouraging or discouraging identity specificities of minority groups, and in drawing what is bound to be an arbitrary border between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Where they have remained denominational, nations have been incited to accept more openly the functioning of religions other than the dominant religion; where they have become secular, nations have had to manage religious diversity without discriminating against any particular religion. In this the European Court of Human Rights plays a key role in Europe in protecting religious minorities, because as it states: 'whether secular or denominational any State must above all respect religious plurality in the most dynamic meaning of the term, that is to say promote the establishment of effective religious freedom, within the limits of public order, health or the rights of third parties' (Benoit-rohmer 2007). Even if the modes of normative regulation of religious diversity in European nations are not uniform, they are based on this common obligation to protect the religious convictions of each individual as well as their outward forms.

But for all that, the formal recognition of religious freedom does not solve all the difficulties posed by its interpretation in the legal context in each country. The structuring of the relationship between the State and religion varies in accordance with the political traditions of each society and the models of integration in operation: the assimilation of religious minorities, their outlawing, their recognition under certain conditions, the rejection of the phenomenon of religion outside the public sphere, etc. In the countries represented in this report, there is evidence of the direct influence of three traditionally established systems: the affirmation of State religions, strict separation and cooperation. The first category brings together countries such as Denmark, Greece - with its constitution placed under the auspices of the 'consubstantial and indivisible Holy Trinity' - and to some extent in the UK. On the contrary, France, the Netherlands and Ireland, for example, have

opted for the principle of legal separation the principle of which is of course diversely interpreted. The French conception of strict 'secularism' or of a 'declared neutrality' with regard to all religions (whether majority or minority religions), would scarcely be acceptable to the Irish – for whom the scholastic system does not recognise any separation with religion – or the Dutch for whom separation is less strict. In countries where there is separation, State assistance is in the end quite limited, but that does not indicate total indifference regarding public manifestations of religion or regarding religion in general. Despite the acceptance of the principle of separation between the Church and the State, several countries of the EU recognise areas of common interest between Church and State, and their actions interlink in the form of a partnership (legal links, contracts between institutions, public service mission, etc.) with the historical religious institutions: this is the case for Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain, and since 2000, for Sweden. The Slovak Republic seems to be going further in terms of the recognition of Churches, their social and legal status as public institutions *sui generis*: the State collaborates with them – even with those which would be considered marginal in other countries – based on principles of partnership written into the documents of government policy. In Belgium the (Federal) Government and Parliament have responsibility for recognising faiths and paying the salaries and pensions of the preachers. As a result of constitutional reforms enacted by the Belgian Parliament in 2001, religious teaching, accounting by religious groups, and religious buildings have become the jurisdiction of the regional governments. Secular organisations remain under the jurisdiction of the federal authorities. The principle of the separation of Church and State implies, firstly, no intervention from the Church in matters of State so that religious authorities are not recognised as State authorities and cannot enact laws to be incorporated in the constitution; and secondly, no intervention from the State in matters that concern the Church, so that the State does not intervene in the internal organisation of the Church, the congregation, the appointment of representatives or ethical views.

For instance, in most European countries, the framework of religious freedom is inspired by majority religions. This implies that the latter feel comfortable in the system, and that they are the members of the majority enjoy material benefits granted by the State, which is a typical characteristic of most European systems (Torfs 1996; Torfs 2001).

Thus we are confronted with a wide variety of relationships between Church and State in Europe: no legal system resembles another, and no formula better than another appears to exist guaranteeing religious freedom for minority religions. The European Court of Human Rights indeed has no stated preference for a particular model for the relationship between the State and religions, and accepts all models of organisation, except perhaps in that it reminds us from time to time that the principle of secularism is certainly one of the fundamental principles of State best providing for the pre-eminence of law and respect for democracy (Benoit-Rohmer 2007).

Across the preceding disparities, it can be said that several European countries are characterised by the existence of national statutes for the organisation of religion on several levels, whether they are the result of formal institutionalisation or a tacit hierarchism. The statutes of the national organisation of religion are indeed characterised above all by relationships knotted historically between the State and the dominant religion or religions. Each piece of legislation in general governs the specific status of religious organisations and the clergy and gives a right to provide spiritual assistance in prisons, hospitals and the army, direct and/or indirect public finance for religious activities and the organisation of religious teaching in schools. In this respect in some countries of the European Union, the treatment awarded religious minorities is different from the treatment awarded religious majorities, the political system being favourable to the majority religious systems.

For example, the *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance*, (ECRI), in its Second Report on Greece, adopted on 10 December 1999, reports that:

"The Greek Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church as the prevailing religion. Although the Constitution also provides for freedom of religion, non-Orthodox religious - notably other Christian - groups have faced administrative obstacles and legal restrictions on religious practice and their members often experience intolerant behaviour and sometimes discrimination. The problems encountered by these groups have included difficulties in obtaining and executing building permits and opening places of worship. Obstruction by local authorities has in some cases been decisive in this respect. Some members of these religious groups have also been arrested on grounds of proselytism. The European Court of Human Rights has found Greece in violation of religious freedom in cases concerning these matters. Although the situation in these areas is reported to be improving, for example as concerns prosecutions for proselytism, ECRI considers that considerable efforts are still needed to fully guarantee freedom of religion to minority religious groups and to promote a climate of tolerance."

In France, French religious law is characterised by a plurality in the organisation of religious systems. It includes a whole assembly of support mechanisms (associations of religious organisations, fiscal deductions, army and public institution chaplaincies and the upkeep of religious buildings) applicable to the Churches and religions which apply for them. Because of the continuity between 'recognised religions' and 'separation', the Catholic dioceses and, to a lesser extent, the Jewish and Protestant religious organisations benefit globally from the advantage provided for in the texts. In Belgium, the law provides for a system of organisation of religions which chiefly benefits the majority Church. In Spain, the Catholic faith is in the majority and despite some separation, the long tradition of interdependency between the government and the religious authorities has left its mark: the Church maintains an eminent social role, in particular through its activity in teaching. The Greek Constitution of 1975 states in its initial Article that: 'The predominant religion in Greece is the Eastern Church of Christ...', whereas Article 13 underlines that other religions are recognised and that they are forbidden to proselytise, etc. On the contrary, in most of the countries studied, minority religions are only designated implicitly or are absent from the national legal texts mentioned above, which benefits the majority denominations. Sometimes the existing taxonomy can have stigmatising effects or at least negative connotations, for example, 'heterodox denominations' (Greece), 'non recognised religions' (Alsace-Moselle in France, Belgium), established and 'non established' or 'disestablished' (United Kingdom), etc.

On the other hand, other aspects are not accessible to every religion (Messner 1999: 57), and the attention paid to certain historical churches can also be interpreted as a source of religious inequality. This difference in treatment between religions within the same country is quite varied: the legal rules which govern the State/religions relationships combine neutrality of the State regarding religious orthodoxy with an equalitarian conception of the treatment of the most representative religious groups and those which are most deeply rooted in society. Just as 'conventional law' in existence in some countries, and the procedures and criteria of recognition of a religion practised in other countries, set their mark on the predominance of majority religions: the recognition of the religion, which in the greater number of instances is based on the number of believers or the antiquity of the religion (100 years for Belgium, 'acknowledged entrenchment' for Spain, etc.) is not favourable to movements whose presence is emerging. The modes of designation of minority religions are, in their quasi totality, accompanied by differential treatment: they do not have access to the same legal instruments as the majority religions when it comes to establishing their status. Differences in treatment exist for example concerning modes of organisation: institutions covered by public law for majority religions, private law entities for minority religions, public finance abundant for some, Spartan economic aid for others. Systems without status for religions - or at all events very blurred - can, as in the example of France, generate major inequalities between religions in the attribution of the mechanisms of support (Messner 2007).

The State/religions relationship in Europe thus appears structured on a pyramid shape: 'At the summit of the pyramid, including in France, a country of separation, is the majority Church, in the centre are minority religious groups originating in the historical religions, and finally at the base of the pyramid the lesser 'known' micro-minorities' (*ibid.*). The relationship between the religious minorities and majorities within the State, and the coexistence of populations of different religions have raised delicate questions which have not found solutions other than within a carefully dosed compromise more or less well accepted by the minorities, and which permeates the school system.

2 - The corollary: religion and schools

Considered essential in the education of a 'citizen' for some, indispensable for the education of 'believers' for others, school often crystallises the conflict between temporal and spiritual powers: the Churches-States relationships coming into being as well as they can on a legal plane, have often been, in or around schools, delicate - even conflicting. Although some countries have inherited strong bonds between religions and schools, (Ireland, England for example, or even Greece with a 'Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs'), it seems necessary for the majority of countries to reconcile the principle of secularism with religious freedom, which carries the right for parents to give their children the education of their choice. Religious freedom does not exist without freedom of education[2]. Historically, these principles and their implementation have occurred with more or less facility according to the country involved: as with any other liberty, the effective free exercise of the freedom of education, combined with a respect for religious freedom, assumes State support varying according to the national configurations previously mentioned (main sources for this part: Hagueneau-Loizard 2000; EUREL (sociological and legal data on religions in Europe)).

A – Denominational institutions and the place of religion in public schooling
The differentiation between denominational and non-denominational (or religious studies) refers to the fact that the content and shape of Religious Education, the training and facilitating process of teachers, the development of curricula and teaching material are mainly the responsibility of religious communities or the State. Where religious education is denominationally oriented it must be emphasised that this approach is not necessarily understood as being the consequence of a State church or of a majority religion. For Schreiner (2007) it is rather considered the expression of the State's neutrality and the individual's freedom of religion. The State does not have to influence the contents of the subject, but to be neutral in religion and in world views. Where religious education is denominationally oriented different kinds of religious education are offered. The right of an authentic self-interpretation of religious communities is given high priority. Although religious education is taught mainly in separate faith groups, the general aim of facilitating identity formation and religious competence by introducing the pupils exclusively into one specific faith tradition has reached its limits (Schreiner 2001: 263). In many cases in public schools there is an opportunity for pupils to opt out and to choose alternative subjects such as ethics, philosophy, world views, and life skills. Where different kinds of faith groups exist denominational religious education can be organised according to this: in Belgium for example, five religious groups have the right to organise RE. Most of the countries with a Religious Studies or non-denominational approach do not have a general right to opt out. In the new religion law which came into force on 1.8.2003 in Sweden, a positive "freedom of religion" and the right to one's own religion is emphasised. Religious Education in accordance with the curriculum is a compulsory subject for all who belong to a religious community. A minority including England, Wales and Scotland do provide such a choice. The general aims are to transmit religious knowledge and understanding, as well as dealing with human experiences. The neutrality of the State and the right of religious freedom are reflected in this approach differently from the way that it is expressed in denominational religious education (Schreiner 2007).

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[2] Freedom to choose an education system and the right to set up private institutions

From the national reports brought together in this study, diverse forms of implementation appear concerning the organisation of the relationship between religions and schools. Models, often contractual models, vary according to the country, just as the implementation of State control over private institutions: the legal control of the content, methods and proportion of public financing and/or private financing. The existing instances are heterogeneous: the French configuration public/private, historically marked by a process of conflict centred on 'secularism', is different from the Irish landscape where the majority Catholic school population blurs the public/private divide. In the same way the Slovakian approach, which emerges as being very adaptable, is far removed from the Swedish model which does not really have specific rules for the organisation of a form of teaching by religious communities – the very great majority of Swedes attend public schools. Despite the disparities, almost all countries recognise denominational institutions run by a religious group, generally under State control guaranteeing the coherence of the education system, and providing private institutions with the necessary financial means. Even countries which had at some stage pronounced State control over education have ended up with a system that includes both public and private schooling.

On the other hand, other aspects concerning the place of religion in public schooling are the subject of argument. The rise in identity claims, whether deplored or rejoiced in, is evidenced in schooling by an increasing demand for religious convictions to be taken into account, raising the question of the neutrality of the State, of the expression of religious convictions in schools and the permeability of such convictions in exterior manifestations of religion.

In addition, there is a language problem. In the UK, 'confessional' in the context of religious education is often understood as 'indoctrination'. In Belgium, The Netherlands and in Germany designations like 'denominational' or 'confessional' refer to the sponsorship of religious education that is shared between the State and religious communities. It does not refer to the expected outcome. Two thirds of all the schools in the Netherlands are Christian schools and one third have a neutral status regarding religion and world views. But every part of the society was structured according to the different religious or non–religious world views of its citizens. This phenomenon has been called the pillarization of the country' (Bakker 1999).

Sweden, being the most secularised, but also the most multicultural of the Nordic countries, has integrated religious education in social studies; this together with other changes in the educational system has contributed towards a more decentralised profile in the Swedish school system. Denmark is not easy to fit into the system; it could also be put together with England. In many ways it has the most decentralised school system of the Nordic countries including a relatively strong private school sector. However, this sector is not mainly composed of religious schools. The religious education curriculum in State schools is dominated by the Christian tradition, but the curriculum is less specific, and each school has more freedom to design its own.

In all Nordic countries there have been strong ties between the State and the Lutheran churches, and general education as such began as part of congregational work, but sanctioned by the State. The understanding of the State ideologically and the role of State bureaucracy has had an influence on the understanding of the school system in general and religious education in particular. In Denmark religion is a compulsory subject in elementary school, usually with the label 'Christianity'. The official learning goals are primarily focused on knowledge and understanding of the Lutheran Christianity of the Danish State church (Folkekirken), while also including an understanding of other religions and philosophies of life. Parents may apply for exemption from having their children study religion at school, provided that the parents accept responsibility for teaching their children, as well as guidance in this matter (Lov om folkeskolen, Ch. 2, § 6). Denmark is currently in a phase which may be decisive for the future co-operation between school and church. On one hand, a

growing co-operation between school and church is seen after years of focus on differences. This has resulted in the establishment of local School and Church Services in several places in Denmark. The parents and teachers of today suffer from a cultural loss, which also manifests itself in lack of knowledge about Christianity. Among these, great curiosity and openness is often traced. This curiosity, which not only benefits the Church of Denmark, but religions in general, has nourished a general interest in religion.

In some countries (like Greece and Cyprus) there is no alternative subject to Religious Education and also opting out is not easy. As Professor Sotirelis remarks about Greece in his study on *Religion and Education*, the most important consequence is in the interweaving of religion and education. He explains that *religious education has traditionally a directional character*. It is firstly *monophonic*, because it concentrates mainly on the dogmas, the teachings and the morals of the 'prevailing religion', but also it excludes from the teaching staff - fully or partly - the non-Orthodox ones. Secondly, it *indoctrinates* since it does not aim in the transmission of religious knowledge but at the dogmatic enforcement of faith in a predetermined system of dogmatic principles. Finally, it is also, *obligatory* for all students who have not been declared by their parents as heterodox, that is, all students who are presumed - because of baptism - as Christian Orthodox (Sotirelis 1999). Non Orthodox students who do not participate in the educational obligations mentioned above and which concern the development of a religious conscience can do so only after their parents declare to the Director of the school their wish that their child refrains from activities concerning religious education. But in a society that is by great majority Orthodox, requesting that one's child does not participate in *prevailing religious* practices may make that child feel disadvantaged due to its difference from the great majority. One must add here that until very recently parents wishing their child to be exempted from the course of religion were obliged to make a common declaration that proves that the student in question is an atheist or heterodox or of another religion. Recently, however, the Authority on the Protection of Personal Data judged that such a declaration is illegal, because it is contrary to the right of the parents to guarantee the education of their children without any conditions according to their religious and philosophical convictions (GHM, MRG-G 2002).

Where there is a Catholic dominated population as in Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg and Belgium, Catholicism is deeply embedded in the culture. All kinds of religious education in these countries is likely to be influenced by Catholicism. The 'strong' systems may have problems with integrating non–Christian religions in a way that is not discriminatory, but if they face the challenge, they may have the advantage in seeking common, general solutions for all. This is of course dependent on a will to acknowledge plurality as a real issue instead of trying to maintain an earlier uniformity.

Historically the strong systems have been successful in integrating the different 'old' minorities. But this success had enormous costs for many of the old minorities that were assimilated. The tendency to assimilate is still a weakness of this approach when it comes to integrating new minorities. Seen from the point of view of immigrated minorities, the combination of nation and religion look much firmer than is perceived by the majority. To the extent that a strong system sees itself as being secularised, it may be difficult for the majority to observe the extent to which religious tradition continues to live in transformed versions as part of national self–understanding.

One of the possible shortcomings of religious education in strong systems may be that the subject content of religious education is watered down in order not to offend any particular group. This may lead to a rejection of religious education. If conflicts arise, the tendency is to abandon religious education, leaving religion as a purely private and individual matter.

In France this is done in combination with a strong emphasis on citizenship in the republican tradition. The same option may be open for the strong systems, which are not yet fully secularised, but are on their way to abandoning traditional religious instruction based on the majority religion.

The described projects in France (FR255: [Religious facts teaching](), FR256: [Islams teaching in Creteil]()) are knowledge-centred projects supported by the ministry of education and history teachers. In state schools pupils learn about religious facts and their historical background. This project is involved in IUFM's where young trainee teachers will be trained to work with teacher guides. History teachers wanted that their pupils to discover that Islam has various branches and that they can adapt themselves to modernity. Teachers recognised that pupils can not understand history or art or even French without a basic knowledge of religion(s). In 2001 the Minister of Education Jack Lang asked for research on the present situation and for recommendations about how to change the situation.

The Norwegian researcher Skeie divided the European countries into two main groups. The first type represents what can be termed centralised and uniform solutions. Here the emphasis is on the State's will to find one solution for all, whether this solution is confessional or not. The second type represents more decentralised, pluriform types of relationship between religion and school. In these cases the State is less willing to impose a common solution to the entire population. Another challenge to be met by the religious schools in the long run, is the tendency that some of them eventually generate a multi-religious student council, because parents choose these schools for different reasons (quality, discipline) than the religious bases. The effect of this multi-religious composition will be difficult to ignore even if the religion of the school in principle is defined.

What some researchers have observed in Europe in recent decades is a tendency to avoid normative questions on principle, the extreme being the complete exclusion of normative discourses. Another reaction has been to make the issue less urgent and marginal. Most of the countries with a Religious Studies approach like Denmark and Sweden do not have a general right to opt out. However a minority including England, Wales and Scotland do provide such a choice. The general aims are to transmit religious knowledge and understanding, as well as dealing with human experiences. Instruction is not to be neutral in respect to values but should be neutral in respect of worldviews including religion, a demand which corresponds to the religious neutrality of the State (Schreiner 2007).

Migration movements in Ireland have been associated with the arrival in recent years of groups from a non-Catholic background, such as Muslim, Hindus or Orthodox groups. The fact that a large majority of schools are denominational (ie Roman Catholic, with the exception of a few Protestant schools, and a handful of Jewish or Muslim schools) has been identified as problematic in terms of the inclusion of non-Catholic groups. The legislative framework for equality makes exception for schools so that they can have some control on the composition of the student population in terms of religion so as to maintain their 'ethos'. This raises issues in terms of school choice, access to school and school experiences for non Roman Catholic students. Students may not have a non-denominational school in their neighbourhood, so may have to enrol in a Roman Catholic school even when they are from a different religious background or do not belong to a religious group, and thus experience a sense of alienation. While students are allowed to opt out from aspects of the life of the school reflecting particular beliefs, Lodge and Lynch (2002) observe that: 'The problem for those with minority beliefs in majority-belief schools is that the religious dimension of a school's ethos is not necessarily confined to periods of religious instruction'. The most popular schools can simply refuse students who cannot produce a baptismal certificate. This leads Lodge and Lynch (*ibid*.) to conclude that: 'Overall it would seem that the lack of choice open to parents and young people of minority or secular beliefs or no beliefs regarding the type of school they can attend is indicative of reluctance within education in Ireland to accommodate differences in the field of religious beliefs'. Religion is one of the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation. Considering the above, it is not surprising that the Equality Authority deals with many case files in this area, especially in relation to access by members of particular religions to schools of another religious ethos and of access to non-denominational schooling.

The collapse of the Communist regime in the Czech Republic (1989) marked a division in religion instruction and the church system of education; education in State and private may be offered only as on optional subject, in which the students receive no grades and the school report indicates their attendance only by the phrase 'has participated'. Religious education takes place provided that at least seven students of the school choose to attend. There is religious education in church schools, as a mandatory subject with an option for Ethics as an alternative subject. Also individual parish offices offered religious instruction.

The Slovak population is quite homogeneous as far as their religion is concerned. According to the census in 2001 The Slovak Republic has a big ratio of Roman Catholics (68 percent) compared to Lutherans (app. 8 percent). Other denominations are represented by approximately a 21 percent ratio in the population. Only about 10 percent are atheists. In the field of religious education and religious schools it is necessary to mention one key document, the Agreement of the Slovak Republic, Registered Churches and Religious Societies on Religious Education (2004) that is the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Eleven Churches. This document gives parents as well as other people and institutions the right to raise children in accordance with religious and moral principles peculiar to their own registered church or religious society. Religious education in Slovakia has always been denominational. Until recently teaching about other religions had a very minor role in the religious education syllabus. Major religions are taught to a limited extent inside other secular subjects in the curricula, such as citizenship or history, but it could not be described as 'learning from' other religions. According to the above-mentioned Accord and Agreement, the State promised to help to subsidise the production of new textbooks. One further area of potential development concerns ecumenical co-operation. Such churches, especially those which have not yet used their right to teach their religious education in schools, desire to do it as a joint activity with a more ecumenical approach.

In several European countries, agitation caused by the wearing of Islamic 'scarves' by pupils in public schools revealed other expectations from pupils and their parents, together with difficulties for European societies in the management of new forms of religious feeling. Of course, those swearing by a strict interpretation of secularism do not respond to this problem in the same way as partisans of a more elastic form of secularism; how religion is expressed by teachers or by pupils does not raise the same difficulties in the different countries we are concerned with. The wearing of religious symbols adds fuel to the debate. Whereas the wearing of a cross or the image of the virgin around the neck had not posed any particular problem, difficulties appeared when Muslim girls came into the classroom wearing the 'Islamic scarf' towards the end of the 80s: in France, in Belgium and in the United Kingdom the school authorities reacted differently to this new situation. Pupils were expelled, attempts to conciliate were made, and legal action was taken without succeeding in putting an end to the conflict. Secular equality is brandished by some refusing any kind of external manifestation of religious beliefs; religious freedom is cited by others for authorising the wearing of a veil. The debate is blurred because other considerations are accumulated beyond those concerning the place of religion in society: some feminists see in the 'scarf' a sign of debasement of women; some sociologists denounce the refusal to accept a religion recently implanted in Europe and generally professed by a population of immigrant origins; others see manipulations of extremist groups behind pupils wearing the veil.

More generally, in relation to the wearing of religious symbols, we should distinguish between:
- countries where the problem is nonexistent, because society conceives the integration of immigrants on the basis of non-discrimination and multiculturalism (for example Denmark or Netherlands);
- countries where the weight of the majority religion in the public eye forbids the presence of other religious symbols assimilated to proselytising (Greece, Cyprus);
- countries such as France which consider neutrality to be an essential quality for each citizen.

In the United Kingdom or in Ireland, society is used to Christian religious symbols in the public sphere (monks and nuns in religious clothing, etc.); counties like Slovakia tolerate non-Christian religious symbols too. In other countries, the absence of major crises does not indicate an absence of problems: no European country, with the exception of France, has passed specific legislation against the wearing of religious symbols in schools. To counteract the risks (proselytising, also conflict and discrimination) liable to be catalysed by the wearing of religious symbols, it seems that outlawing and penalising this behaviour is a step that all European countries, except France, have judged less opportune than handling instances case by case.

Another problem is the adaptation of school syllabuses and requests for exemption from attendance for religious reasons. In this context it is worth mentioning the way school canteens are progressively taking into account religious choices: even in France, more and more institutions provide a choice of food allowing pupils not to contravene the rules of the religions of their traditional background, and to eat properly and thus avoid a form of stigmatisation. In addition, in the greater part of the countries studied, the school calendar is marked by the influence of Christian religions, an influence which has sometimes been contested: Jewish pupils or pupils belonging to Protestant minority offshoots have asked to be able to observe the days of rest prescribed by their religion. Although less controversial than wearing the Islamic scarf, these requirements – which are equally sources of identity claims as well as discrimination – also pose the same kind of problem with regard to the relationship between religion and society. In Spain, the difficulties raised by the school calendar were resolved preventively: agreements reached with the principal religious groups (Protestant, Jewish and Muslim) ensure that exemption from attendance can be granted. In France, the Council of State (*Conseil d'Etat*) (14.4.1995) considered that exemption from attendance may be granted for religious reasons if it compatible with the operation of the institution. In the UK, most schools in areas where there is a Muslim population use halal meat. In areas of Jewish settlement, schools may close early on Friday afternoons in winter, and holidays will change, etc.

B – Religious instruction and the teaching of religions
Most European countries include 'religious instruction' in their school curriculum. France is an exception (save in Alsace-Moselle) because religious education may only be organised out of school hours: the principle is that religious instruction is put beyond the responsibility of schools and the school curriculum because public schooling is not an interdenominational sphere, as in some neighbouring countries, but rather a neutral sphere where religion remains a private concern (Morineau 1994). On the contrary for other countries studied, pupils in public schools just as in private schools have on principle the obligation to follow a course of religious instruction whose content and teachers are controlled jointly by the State and the religious congregations. In Spain and in Belgium the Constitution provides for religious instruction; in the United Kingdom it was brought into being by the Education Act of 1944; Diversity of beliefs were acknowledged in the UK from the beginning of publicly funded education in 1870 and were expressly addressed in locally agreed syllabuses which became a legal requirement in 1944 (Gates 2007). In the Education Reform Act there was no longer attention to the different Christian denominations but also to other religious traditions of the UK, namely Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and the Judaism. Thereafter, it became illegal for any syllabus agreed for local authority schools to ignore this plurality in the curriculum which it commended for primary and secondary pupils (Gates 2007). More recently, a non–statutory National Framework for religious education (QCA 2004) has been developed with the agreement across the full range professional religious education associations, the churches, the other faith communities and the British Humanist Association. For Gates it is more a process than content driven, and it includes a succession of indicative levels of understanding from 3-16 years. It accepts the principle that every student has an educational entitlement to become not just literate and numerate, but also 'religiate' (Gates 2008).

In France, the local exemption law of Alsace-Moselle also provides for religious teaching at primary and secondary levels. However one must not mix up 'religious instruction' and 'teaching of religions'. Teaching of religions is a matter of knowledge (from a historical and sociological point of view, etc.) being the task of teachers as part of the school curriculum over which the State must have control whereas religious instruction is different, being considered the teaching of faith - or 'catechism' - which is therefore the task of churches and denominational institutions.

The way European countries provide for 'teaching religions' varies from the absence of any specific religious teaching (the conception of a transversal and pluridisciplinary treatment in the manner of the French), to its integration in the national public educational system (for example Cyprus). In some instances there are entanglements: in Spain the compulsory subject 'Society, Culture and Religion' leads to two 'versions'; both are marked: one is denominational – according to the denomination chosen par the parents or pupils in accordance with regulations laid down by the State -; the other is non denominational. In Greece, religion is taught as such in compulsory religious classes for all orthodox pupils in primary and secondary education in both public and private schools. In some cases (Greece and England), religious education is linked to religious practises which can be compulsory (collective prayers, religious festivals, even confession in schools (in Greece until 2006)).

In most systems where there are catechism classes freedom of choice exists for parents and children who do not claim to belong to the majority denomination. As religious freedom carries with it the right not to have a religion, pupils must have the opportunity to be exempted from religious classes. This possibility is theoretically recognised practically everywhere where religious teaching exists. In Greece non-orthodox pupils, if they wish, can be exempted from religious classes, from prayers and from collective participation in mass. In France, in private schools, catechism classes are optional.

C - European educative systems, religious minorities and areas of 'discriminatory risks'
Religious discrimination connected with the education systems in the European countries studied may be direct (refusal of entry to an institution) but is more often of a 'systemic' nature, ie not resulting from a provable deliberate discriminatory intention: the 'negative' effects are no less real. This is the reason why the European legal approach has adopted the notion of 'indirect discrimination' in addition to intentional or 'direct' discrimination. EC Council Directive 2000/43/CE of 29th June 2000 gives the following definition: 'Indirect discriminations shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons....at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons' (Simon, Stavo-De Bauge, 2004). Aside from ostentatious 'discriminatory preferences', demonstrating 'indirect' dimensions is much more complex and requires the institution of a specific methodological engineering which does not exist in the domain of religion. However the religion/school relationship remains marked by areas where actual discrimination and discriminatory risks are indisputably emerging. No system is spared and the values leading to its occurrence are reversible through just as many constraints liable to reduce scholastic freedom or equality: the potential discriminants exist whatever the national model, crystallising just as much the limits of integration models based on communitarianism as those based on 'integrationist' or 'assimilationist' conceptions.

Almost no arrangement aiming to reduce scholastic inequalities dissociates the religious variable from other factors of discrimination (linguistic, ethnic, socio-economic factors): this encourages a swing from the social stigmata and from the religious domain towards other ones. In addition the nervousness of social groups confronted with a difference or with problems of integration is often bound to lead to 'ethnicisation' of the religious markers. In this sense risks of ethnic discrimination are liable to integrate broader cultural aspects including membership of a particular religion. Religious discrimination masked by the ethnic envelope can then generate the 'outsider' effect

analysed by F.Lorcerie. This term designates the systematic process by which groups are explicitly or implicitly designated different and inferior, 'intruders', by an 'established' group embodying what is considered normal or even universal. The 'outsider' effect is one of the major laws of the functioning of ethnic relations at society level; its manifestations are often the opposite of public values of equality - they depend upon social representations manufactured by the collective memory and clearly affect the school domain (Lorcerie 2003). Besides this, other zones can be detected where, at the intersection between religious and scholastic affairs, there is a risk of discrimination – they are of a different order, bound up with organisational aspects of private schooling, with its accessibility and its competition with public schooling, but also with the socio-religious hierarchical organisations which result from the national models.

3 – Inter-religious hierarchical organisation and school inequalities.

Discriminatory risk in scholastic affairs can take the form of a reduction or degeneration of denominational opportunities provided by institutions compared to the social reality there may take place a reduction in the freedom of choice for pupils or families attached to minority - or different - religious groups which are denied any social or institutional visibility. The hierarchical organisation which follows with its effects of domination – which we saw in the previous part – marks the denominational opportunities and the diversity of the educational landscape. In this sense, the architecture of national systems and the relationship of State/religion is bound to result in masking as much as in the setting up of a hierarchical organisation – thus inequality – amongst the participants and in the heart of educational relationships.

A proclaimed separation model (France), coupled with a secular refusal to recognise minorities and the rejection of 'multiculturalism', considered incompatible with a certain type of neutrality in the public area, is not exempt from the effects of the exclusion it claims to combat. For some analysts, in such a system, 'it is neither the majority nor the minorities which benefit, but the ideologists who instrumentalise the abstract principles of neutrality' (Bizeul 2007). For Bizeul, in fact, an implicit 'State religion' comes into being based on a secularism which seems less and less capable of obtaining the adhesion of minority cultural groups. This conception, which can be experienced by certain groups as a source of social inferiority or social undervaluing, proves in reality to be, if not always discriminatory, not exactly helpful for the setting up of new denominational establishments (as a good deal of the conflict over Muslim establishments in France has shown).

Even if neutrality is not an absolute guarantee against discrimination, official recognition and collaboration between government and the dominant religions are not less exempt from perverse effects. Indeed in the countries concerned by this study, historical and majority religions benefit from privileges and institutionalisation of their relationship with the authorities which reinforce the divide with minority movements. In the Protestant countries of northern Europe for example - equally in Southern countries such as Spain and Greece -, society, Churches and the political system often evolved at the same pace and tied intimate links. The favouritism which marks the relationship with the dominant religions can be interpreted as a rupture of the principle of equality, and thus as a source of inequalities appearing in the field of education: for example, teachers of the dominant religion can be paid by the State contrary to others (Spain) who have to be paid by the religious group to which they belong. Where no legal obstacle prevents the teaching of a religion other than the Catholic religion, organisational difficulties (recruiting teachers, financing and dissension within the movement) often add to the wariness of the authorities (eg Islam in Belgium): indirect selection takes place in the absence of direct support and inevitably has a discriminatory effect regarding school populations with specific requirements.

The heterogeneousness of the 'religious minority' category is not without its effect on teaching. Indeed, just as the dominant denominations, some minorities possess a quasi official status with the

public authorities and benefit indeed from various arrangements to support their practice of religion and religious teaching (Bizeul 2007). The Alsace-Moselle exception in France illustrates the particularities which can result from it. The case of Protestant and Jewish minorities also illustrates these disparities of resources in the public arena (visibility and the acceptation of lobbying) and various implications: each of these minorities became involved in the French secularism movement and was able to take advantage of its collective adhesion in a more secular perspective. As far as Protestants are concerned, two major reasons may explain their adhesion to the secular approach: it is an approach which is synonymous with the end of the supremacy of the dominant Church; Protestant doctrine takes this as an opportunity to open up the way for religious teaching (Lequin in Allieu 2007). In this sense, institutional strategies of some active minorities are supported to the detriment of other members of minorities, appearing at a later stage in the public arena and whose relationship is less institutionalised with the public authorities. At the bottom of the edifice, 'socially controversial' religious groups are held at a distance, both as regards procedures for their recognition and administrative opportunities to found denominational establishments: the situation in Europe is quite varied in this field and without entering again into the delicate 'sectarian polemics', it is inevitable to ask the question concerning discrimination inherent in this field and picked up from time to time by the European legal jurisdictions: it is the practice to underline the risk of school drop-out amongst some children connected with these movements but there is too little thought or analysis about the 'outsider' effect amongst those very children who find their beliefs sometimes publicly stigmatised in schools. In this sense, the spokesman of the sub-committee on national minorities of the Human Rights Commission of the UN underlines 'the problems which come to the surface when majorities and governments attempt not only to assimilate all religious minorities, but also to draw up lists of movements pejoratively designated as sects rather than religious minorities'.

4 – Problems resulting from teaching/religion (religious teachings, teaching on religion, tensions between religious beliefs and school activities or contents).

Providing catechism classes can lead to discriminatory effects. In an education system marked by strong religious impregnation, a prescribed possibility not to take part in religious classes may require a formal application for exemption to the head of the establishment (eg Greece): the official declaration of non-membership of the dominant religion accompanying the application remains an ambiguous action in respect of the group and can lead to perverse effects. In addition, schooling which ensures parents that their children will follow an education in accordance with their religious beliefs must not become a means of harming religious freedom: the organisation of alternative religious teaching is not always effective, any more than the opportunity to choose between different religions. Finally catechism classes are not devoid of risks regarding propaganda and content, which handled without ethical pedagogy, are liable, in turn, to result in discrimination, hierarchical organisation or to be propitious to a hegemonic temptation to the detriment of rival denominations. The interpretation of the cultural context of religious education in Flanders seems to explain some of the developments since 1996. The Flemish bishops promoted a curriculum in which information about and communication with other faith communication were important aims. In this curriculum Christianity was transformed from mainly confession and personal belief, towards being portrayed as a broad cultural tradition that still is visible. Since 1996 'catechese' is dedicated to the parishes and to believers. Religious Education is the new name of the course in schools.

Beside catechism classes, the presence and contents of teaching on religions is also not without ambiguity. To begin with, some countries such as France do not really provide in public education any specific classes on 'the existence of religion': what is provided is therefore amputated compared to what is proposed in other countries or compared to private education. Next, concerning the subjects handled, some countries have gone further in their approach while others are only able

to provide a 'mutilated teaching' in which only certain religious subjects appear: in France it turns out that Hinduism, Buddhism, the birth of Christianity, the Reformation, Protestantism, Jansenism and Gallicanism are not covered or only very marginally. In secular systems, if catechism classes are excluded there remains a lack of real reflection about 'the religious fact', a subject taught which is underrated and still raises suspicions (Morineau 1994). Catherine Kintzler mentions the 'infiltration' of religious people and sees in the history of religions a 'Trojan horse' subject matter signifying the return of religion in secular schooling together with the risk of priests teaching. Beside this stigmatising rejection of religious affairs, Arkoun of the University of Paris III states: 'the word secularism' (…) is becoming insufficient, deceptive and even dangerous, in as much as it maintains debarments and leads to eliminations, at a time when humanist thought demands a fresh vision, re-evaluation, exploration of new fields, progress, transgression of all the borders inherited from the past...' (*Ibid*). In this he denounces the risk of a secularism of 'abstention' or 'ignorance' which may have led to uncertain teaching of religious phenomena in those subjects where they appear, and may have otherwise blocked a search for a properly adapted pedagogy. In the contemporary context sometimes marked by the rise of fundamental religions and expressions of religious intolerance on a national and international level, reticence in promoting a better knowledge of religions can prove harmful to the promotion of mutual respect and dialogue towards pupils belonging to a multi-cultural, multi-denominational society (*Ibid*).

In addition, beside the principle of teaching on the existence of religion, the problem of its content is also bound up with the complex definition of what is a 'religion' which everyone agrees in considering that the notion is somewhat blurred: here again the teaching on the existence of religion, when it exists, remains marked by approaches privileging the dominant religions. Thus, treating the 'principal religions represented' implies a selection in the religious landscape which is not without risking debasing minorities and reproducing the existing hierarchical organisations, to the detriment of real general culture. In the United Kingdom the law 'forbids' limiting teaching to one specific religion and lays down that the country's Christian tradition must be respected[3]. In Alsace and Moselle, the law limits religious education to recognised denominations in which Islam is not included. The present day context of the explosion of religion characterised by the affirmation of religions recently implanted in Europe (Islam, Buddhism, etc.) grows more complicated with the appearance of 'new religious movements'. The latter may be socially contested: recognised in some countries, combated for proselytising in others, and elsewhere excluded from legislation covering different denominations (Messner 1999). These divergences are not without effects on the transmission of knowledge: the presentation of 'established' religious beliefs is openly presented by some as 'a means of combat' against 'sects' (Haguenau-Loizard, 2000); where a 'rational test' and deconstruction of images essential to democratic pluralism is expected, it is possible - depending upon the public and the way it is expressed -, to open up a regrettable arena liable to induce discrimination which would only be the echo of the 'social placing' or 'show' of the moment (Campiche 2007).

Finally a risk of discrimination may be linked to conflict between the content of the general syllabus and religious beliefs. On this score it can be said that the rigidity of religious interpretation is variable: in a great majority of cases, beliefs do not constitute a blockage to the proper progress of the transmission of knowledge or school methods. Where there is a problem informal spheres of negotiation between the protagonists are often found, encouraging the reduction of tension: it can moreover be noted that the local or decentralised modes of management seem more favourable to the search for compromise that certain highly centralised education systems. Again the stigmata can be reversed: a rupture of equality between pupils as a result of conflict between content/beliefs is operative in respect of expulsion or auto-exclusion. There is a dialectic relationship between these

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[3] *Education Reform Act*, (1988), chapter 40, art.1, section 8.3 : "Any agreed syllabus (…) shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain".

two components which feed each other, even intensify mutually. According to one's religious faith the requirement to wear a bathing costume or the exposition of Darwin's theory of evolution, can have a double effect of making outcasts: the feeling of not being respected for one's beliefs and also a risk of stress bound up with heterodox beliefs - sometimes presenting, from the rationalist scientific point of view, a risk of 'obscurantism'- liable to hinder the proper progress of the pupil's schooling and penalising the pupil compared to others. Singing a national anthem, sporting activities, medical visits, classes on sexual education or biology, the arrangement of normal school activities at the time of periods of religious fasting, etc.: all these are 'risky' subjects in terms of creating out-casts, which illustrates, once again, the difficulty in finding an equilibrium in life at school, between identity and equality.

5 – Inequalities bound up with access to the education system in its public/private components.

Freedom of choice – bound up with the freedom of opinion – seems once again to be a good criterion for detecting areas propitious to inequalities and discrimination. Above all, it is recognised that joint public/private schooling coupled with sufficient coverage in a given area, with denominational as well as public schooling, is a decisive factor for those who want to choose - or avoid - a context of private education and/or placed under the auspices of a particular religion. Sometimes these requirements lead to additional constraints (journeys, cost, etc.) liable to have a negative and discriminating impact (length of journeys harmful to school work, etc.). In France with its 'school zones', private schooling is the only means of not 'having to go to a school in a given zone'. At the same time the possibility of getting round the difficulty can lead to avoiding schools considered 'difficult' or with a 'poor reputation': this phenomenon can reduce the fresh blood and the regulation of socially mixed schooling, it can increase the polarisation of the school arena in an urban context (Lorcerie 2003), and thus reinforce discrimination. It must be noted that the reputation of private establishments is not unequivocally 'positive': in France, they can also be synonymous with 'last ditch establishments' for pupils 'with problems' - or failures in the public school system -, even stigmatised by their connotation in the name of rigorist secular tradition[4].

Considered an opportunity to avoid stigmata on the one hand, access to private establishments is not, on the other hand, always easy. First of all, when they are fee-paying, private schools take in more children from privileged socio-economic sectors of the population than public schools (Brizard 2006). Also internal policies vary according to supply and demand at a local level: the number of places available and the number of applications are bound to determine the more or less strict criteria for admission. Even when there is a wide choice, the reputation of the establishment is decisive and therefore discriminatory: the major private institutions continue to draw children from the upper classes or very proficient pupils (Brizard 2006). If in France private schools have the obligation to accept all denominations, certain European countries carry out selection on religious criteria limiting equal access to the training offered. In Ireland admission can be conditional on the presentation of a certificate of Christian baptism: in 2007, dozens of children from city suburbs of minority populations or immigrants were unable to obtain admission to a private school. Elsewhere – even if it is rare – schools reserve the right to refuse admission to pupils who do not agree with their educative philosophy (eg the Netherlands).

In countries where the supply of public/private schooling is relatively well balanced, another source of discrimination can be the difficulty to pass from one system to the other. In France nearly 40 percent of French pupils spend at least one year in private schooling during their school period and movement is made in both directions: there are those who opt for private education in their first form to avoid attending an 11+ public school or *collège public* (56,000 transfers in 2002); and those who return to public education - in the general fifth form and technological fifth form (29,000 crossovers). For all that it is not always easy to re-enter public education when coming from private

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[4] Cf. Nico Hirtt's analysis on Website of the 'Ecole Démocratique'

schools: there have been a number of cases where selection in public schools was made to the detriment of pupils coming from private schools (Brizard 2006).

6 – Success at school: an operating criterion?

Another approach for detecting inequality in school could be to the criterion of performance between private and public schooling. The PISA study can provide a few ideas for evaluation in terms of quality, equity and the technical means in operation in schools but we do not possess common indicators for the various countries sufficiently elaborated and completed concerning the education performance in correlation with religious and denominational aspects. Moreover, according to the national specificities and contexts, it is difficult to establish a sufficiently rigorous methodological model to compare public and private schooling[5]: comparison proves very uncertain because the situations are heterogeneous and a great number of educational variables, means, pedagogical, family and socio-economic aspects, etc. would have to be compared. Thus, success, failure, scholastic performance seem in the present state of the statistics not really likely to allow an objective listing likely to bring out with certainty a number of discriminatory factors. On the contrary, it is certain that disparities exist. The Greek report indicates, for example, that the majority of Turkish pupils are in special autonomous schools for minorities (meionotika scholeia), located in Thrace, where the level of children in schools and the educational level are in general lower than those for other religious minorities (Spinthourakis *et al*. 2008). In France, partial results show that 'pupils in private schools re-do a school year less often than in public schools and have a higher level for entry at 11+' (Langouët in Brizard 2006); in junior high schools they more often and more rapidly reach the fifth form level; the well-known private establishments have very good results for the *baccalauréat* (school-leaving examination). Apart from these elements, it appears above all that French results are over-influenced by the social origin of pupils: 'compared with socio-professional categories results are not fundamentally different between private and public schooling' (Brizard 2006).

Does school success constitute a sufficient criterion? Not, if we take into consideration the research of Francoise Lorcerie (2008: 21): '[...] the children of immigrants[6] have on average school results comparable with those of their friends with the same social characteristics, even a little better but they have a more degraded school experience. In particular, they have a marked feeling of injustice [...] by the idea that certain teachers do not like them or scorn them collectively'.

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[5] http://www.senat.fr/rap/l07-091-313/l07-091-3130.html
[6] In the European countries, the group 'children of immigrants' often covers the Muslim religious identity.

III – Solutions and recommendations

One of the recommendations on religion and education of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (2005) is that politics and religion should be kept apart. However, democracy and religion should not be incompatible. In fact they should be valid partners in efforts for the common good. By tackling societal problems, the public authorities can eliminate many of the situations which can lead to religious extremism. The Assembly observes moreover that the three monotheistic religions of the Book have common origins (Abraham) and share many values with other religions, and that the values upheld by the Council of Europe stem from these values. Another aim expressed in that session of the Assembly is that education should be to make pupils discover the religions practised in their own and neighbouring countries, to make them perceive that everyone has the same right to believe that their religion is the 'true faith' and that other people are not different human beings through having a different religion or not having a religion at all.

Experts in the field of religious studies were engaged by the Council of Europe to work out guidelines. The dramatic events across the world, migratory processes and persistent misconceptions about religions and cultures have underscored the importance of issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination and freedom of religion or belief for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). One of the most important outcomes of this organisation is the Toledo Guidelines (2007). These Guiding Principles are designed to assist not only educators but also legislators, teachers and officials in education ministries, as well as administrators and educators in private or religious schools to ensure that teaching about different religions and beliefs is carried out in a fair and balanced manner.

1/ For the European Commission

- The question of religious minorities and their inequalities of treatment and success constitutes first of all a challenge for Europe. The solutions envisaged and inherited from history determine shared values: recognition of religious pluralism, and individual religious choice which must be respected even by systems expressly placed under the symbol of a religion. The recommendation is to put at the disposal of countries and teachers information on the religions in Europe to avoid a situation which is less and less tenable in national solutions.

- To circulate research on religions creating a better understanding of social controversy connected with certain movements. This would make it possible to put a stop to the indeterminate use of the term 'sects' to the benefit of sociologically and scientifically based categories making it possible to distinguish more accurately, for example, between authentic new religious movements and certain rather unscrupulous groups or known to be dangerous – in particular those sentenced on the legal plane (national judgements made in court and corroborated by the European Court of Human Rights). To publish recommendations aimed at explaining how to avoid stigmatising members of these movements when they are in schooling in the EU.

- To publicise the European rights of persons and families regarding religion. To go as far as setting up an authority which could take its inspiration from the approach in Quebec in respect of 'reasonable arrangements' and allow migrant populations to benefit from the same rights and above all equal schooling throughout Europe.

- To multiply recommendations that each country should recognise new religions, whether as a logical follow-on from immigration (Islam) or because of the influence exercised by new forms of religion different from Western monotheisms (Buddhism).

- To contribute to the financing of research projects to detect to what extent membership of religions influences inequality in schools, whether in terms of the schools available or the

curriculum in far so as they are dissimulated by other more geographic or socio-economic factors.

2/ For those responsible for education policy

- To satisfy 'reasonable requirements' regarding the adaptation of the school calendar (unwittingly determined according to majority religions in Europe) for religious festivals and the discrete wearing of religious symbols. To discuss what should be considered 'excessive requirements' impinging upon the responsibilities of civil and political society which produces the syllabuses, determines the list of compulsory subjects and the combination, in most cases.

- Even in secular countries, to carefully avoid all new decisions and make a note of the routines practised, such as the school calendar, which give the dominant religion the appearance of 'normality', in particular the Christian background whose existence takes precedence without a specific reference to it.

- To place to the fore an undertaking for education going beyond neutrality or involvement for a single religion. Reference to religious choices of a private order perpetuates family or community choices which eliminate any kind of individual determination.

- To carefully distinguish the concept of 'religious freedom' recognised throughout the EU and which, in practice, is evidenced in religious pluralism - in particular in school-systems from interference in scholastic affairs which cannot be accepted in countries under the rule of Law and involves the calendar, subjects and their content, and the criteria for the admission of pupils.

- To understand and encourage the social role of certain establishments linked to religious minorities or majorities which take in pupils with major difficulties.

3/ For those in the educational system

- To agree to respect all the principles at the basis of the new subject of teaching the existence of religion and which is distinguished from religious education by the fact that there is no proselytising, simply an intercultural attempt to understand religions and their history.

- To be trained in order to better know religions. To introduce into this training practical analyses and to understand psychological, social and institutional phenomena which are fitted into scholar inequalities resulting partially or totally from membership of a religious minority.

- Beyond the possibilities and choice by families authorised by certain national laws, to ensure that access to the scholastic system is not hindered (opting out and absence from schooling, ill-treatment, etc.) because of an ostentatious refusal to integrate linked to fundamentalist reasons or membership of groups endangering the physical or psychic integrity of the individual. In these cases, when they occur, to ensure that the pupils and families concerned are not pushed even further out so that their institutional links are not definitively severed, thus adding to existing disruptions.

The contributions of the Projects

Clearly, one's position on interpretation of the projects in relation to religious minorities depends on where one stands in relation to the debate about the relationship between insiders and outsiders in the study of religions and cultures. So we must take in to consideration that the description of the project by the project managers and the summary made by the researchers can be different by using another perspective. For the manager it could be that s/he is no longer an observer but a participant

even if s/he coordinates the project. For the researcher it could be in this religious matter that s/he is an outsider and that it takes time to understand the specific language and strategy.

At one extreme, there are researchers such as McIntyre who see religion as 'organic entities', changing over time, but maintaining a solid base of core values and beliefs, and having distinct limitations (McIntyre 1978). Here the distinction between insiders and outsiders is sharp. At the other extreme, there are those who would make a case for the complete deconstruction of religions. The focus is exclusively on individuals and their personal narratives. Using this kind of method concentrates on the connections made between aspects of the subject's psychological life and theoretical material for 'modern cultural studies'.

Robert Jackson suggests following a middle way. Since the European Enlightenment religion is seen as a discrete belief system that should be relinquished in favour of a more flexible portrayal of religious traditions and minorities, variously delimited and politically contested by different practitioners and non-practitioners, and in which some individuals may locate themselves or be located by others. In that case individuals need to be seen in relation to a range of contextual group influences, some of which may be outside the religious tradition (Jackson 1997).

The aims of a educational project in Spain (ES217: "Three cultures" project) is a good examples of this view: helping pupils to discover the universal character of the religious phenomena in a didactic, yet accessible way; learning about the contribution other cultures have made to Spain's history; increasing tolerance, respecting difference and challenging stereotypes; and encouraging team work and learning from/about others. This kind of project avoids pupils to think in categories as 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. NICIE (Northern Ireland Council of Integrated Education) promotes the education in school of pupils drawn in roughly equal numbers from the two major traditions (and other faiths and none) with aim of giving them an education that gives equal recognition to and promotes equal expression of both traditions (Moreau *et al*. 2008). The schools describe themselves mainly as Christian; democratic and open in procedures and-promotes the worth and self-esteem of everyone in the school community. The schools seek to develop mutual respect and consideration of other institutions within the educational community. Its core aim is to provide the child with a caring self-fulfilling educational experience which will enable him/her to become a fulfilled and caring adult.

The traditional avoidance by government of tackling issues relating to religion in education in Northern Ireland has led to an unhealthy deference to the views of church leaders at the expense of genuinely educational decisions (Richardson 2008). For educator Norman Richardson there is publicly a reluctance to talk openly about religion 'for fear of offending someone', and this is not helped by religious separation in education and the failure of the religious education syllabuses to deal with differences and controversial issues. Despite opinion polls[7] that suggest that parents would prefer children to be schooled together, and despite an emerging integrated education sector, it is still the case that about 90 percent of Northern Irish schoolchildren attend schools where everyone belongs to the same broadly defined faith community. The value of international projects, such as the Oslo Coalition's programme[8] is source of inspiration and teacher trainers in Northern Ireland are looking for ways of extending partnerships and international exchange programmes (Richardson 2008).

In the Republic of Ireland 10,000 pupils are involved in 'Educate Together schools' (IE34). These are national schools funded by the State and differ from denominational schools. The investor (a group of parents) is a company limited by guarantee. This has created a 'modern, transparent and accountable model of patronage that is defined in clear legal terms'. The website defines it as:

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[7] See, eg http://cdd.stanford.edu/polls/nireland/2007/omagh-report.pdf
[8] www.oslocoalition.com

'multidenominational ie all children have equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being fully respected; co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities; child centred in their approach to education; democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of teachers[9]'. Though small, these multi-denominational schools are the fastest growing area in primary education and will continue to grow and increase in market share. The decline in the number of those professing religious beliefs is also having a profound effect upon the trusteeship of Catholic Voluntary Secondary schools with patterns of closures, incorporation into the Community and Comprehensive schools.

The schools also follow an ethical education curriculum called 'Learn Together'. Cooperation with the parents and the local community is important to realise educational project about/with religious minorities. When parents have less time and the voluntary sector gets smaller we see that local politicians have an interest in maintaining the 'harmony' in their communities through their schools. Non-formal education is an important part of a child's upbringing. The ideal of giving parents influence and opportunities for co–operation in the school is not always easy to realise in different school settings.

We must be aware of the difference between the character of a faith dialogue between children at school or between (young) adults. Most of the projects linked religious minorities are for young adults (students). Interfaith or interreligious education can start on a grass-root level with careful regard of developmental aspects in addition. We must investigate if project managers leave out or water down the code of interfaith dialogue when switching to interfaith education in schools. For national interests in social cohesion, religious education serving 'civil religion' will maybe do, in particular when linked to patriotism. There is no exhaustive proof, however, that this approach can effectively overcome ethnocentrism, xenophobia and racism (Nipkow 1998).

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[9] http://www.educatetogether.ie/1_educate_together/whatiseducatetogether.html

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The European Institute of Religious Science (Institut Européen en Sciences des Religions EPHE was set up in 2002. This institute too is providing electronic resources - analytic summaries of French publications, educational guides and selected resources on the Internet in the fields of religious education and religious sciences.

Appendix 1

Projects about religious minorities from EPASI database

Country	Project	Link
Belgium (Flanders)	De basisschool uitgedaagd (The elementary school challenged)	6
	De wereld op je bord (The world on your plate)	7
	'Diverse lecturers, diverse students'	8
	GOK - leerachterstand – kleuters – ouders (Equal Educational Opportunities-lag in education - preschoolers – parents)	11
	KMS (kerkwerk multicultureel samenleven)	15
	KOOS (Kleuters en Ouders Op School) (preschoolers and parents at school)	16
	Proefpas	18
	Tellen en meetellen in het hoger onderwijs (to count and to matter in higher education)	20
	Time-outproject Kortrijk (TOK)	21
	V.O.E.M vzw (Association for development and emancipation of Muslims)	249
Czech Republic	Practical Support for Media, Multicultural and Global Education at School Educational Frameworks of Prague Secondary and Vocational Training Schools	180
France	Religious facts teaching	255
	Islams teaching in Creteil	256
Greece	Εκπαίδευση Μουσουλμανοπαίδων (πρώτη φάση) - Educating Muslim Students (1st Phase)	99
	Εκπαίδευση Μουσουλμανοπαίδων (δεύτερη φάση) - Educating Muslim Students (2nd Phase)	100
	Εκπαίδευση Μουσουλμανοπαίδων (Τρίτη φάση)- Educating Muslim Students (3rd Phase)	101
	Διαπολιτισμική Εκπαιδευτική Στήριξη μαθητικών ομάδων Α΄/θμιας και Β'θμιας Εκπ/σης στην Θράκη - Multicultural Educational Support of student groups of elementary and secondary education in Western Thrace	102
	Social Care and Development programme	116
Ireland	Educate Together	34
	Protestant Block Grant	33
Malta	Diversity: Within and Without	240
	Arabic community school (and Arabic language teaching)	244
Netherlands	Kenniscentrum Sekse & Diversiteit in Medisch Onderwijs Diversiteit (SDMO) (Knowledge centre Gender & Diversity in Medical Education Diversity)	75
	Islam en Onderwijs (Islam and education)	84
Slovakia	Artistic Competition Accompanying the Campaign All Different - All equal	185
	Christmas Together	191
Spain	LOE (Education Organic Law 2/2006): measures concerning religion and citizenship education	215
	"Religions in the world" (Materials for a lay/non-confessional teaching of world religions in the framework of "The Atman Methodology for Intercultural Education and Training")	216
	"Three cultures" project	217
	City Educational Project –PEC-	224
United Kingdom	Religious Education Council for England and Wales	50
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)	51