Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education

Robert Jackson

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Foreword

Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education was a landmark in the history of the Council of Europe's educational work. Before 2002 work on intercultural education did not include religion. Religion was regarded as a matter for private life. Gradually, it became apparent that religion was increasingly a topic of concern also to the public sphere. This view was made concrete by the events of 11 September 2001 in the United States and their analysis and public discussion worldwide. The view was taken that all young people should have an understanding of religions and beliefs as part of their education. Thus, the Council of Europe began its first project on the religious dimension of intercultural education in 2002 under the supervision of the Steering Committee for Education. Subsequently, in 2007, a reference book was published on this topic for use by educators across Europe. The year 2008 saw further discussions which contributed to the Council of Europe's *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – Living together as equals in dignity*. In the same year, the Council of Europe brought together representatives of European religious leaders and humanist organisations, together with representatives of institutional partners within the Council of Europe and from various international non-governmental organisations. This was the first Council of Europe "Exchange" involving representatives of religious leaders and civil society organisations in Europe to discuss educational issues in relation to the changing climate about religion in the public sphere. Such important exchanges have taken place annually since then, and their consultative and collaborative nature is reflected in the present text. Also in 2008, the Committee of Ministers issued its recommendation on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.

We now have the pleasure of publishing a document which aims to assist policy makers, schools and teacher trainers – and indeed other actors in education – in utilising the recommendation in their own particular national, regional and local contexts. The title of the document, *Signposts*, is especially appropriate, for the intention is to facilitate discussion and action by users in member states, who themselves need to address a range of issues in their own settings. We are very grateful to the members of the Joint Implementation Group, set up jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre, who have conceived the ideas in *Signposts* and discussed draft material since they first began working together in 2010. We are particularly grateful to Gabriele Mazza who, having been the initiator of this project as Council of Europe's Director of Education, served as Chair of the Joint Implementation Group, to steer it in the right direction. We are equally grateful to Professor Robert Jackson, the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of the Group of experts who has written the text on behalf of his colleagues, and who has used various drafts of the document in consultative meetings with potential users in different parts of Europe since 2011. Professor Jackson has been involved in all of the Council of Europe's projects relating to religious diversity and education since 2002, and has been active in this field in his role at the European Wergeland Centre, as well as at his home base at the University of Warwick.

The next step is for policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and their students, together with all relevant professional associations in individual states and at the European level, to use *Signposts* as a tool for their deliberations and action. The whole document can be used, or individual chapters on specific topics can be made the focus for discussion or study.

I sincerely hope that *Signposts* is used widely across Europe, together with the Council of Europe recommendation.

I commend *Signposts* to you.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković
Director General of Democracy

Preface

The purpose of *Signposts* is to help implement Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education in the member countries. How can a recommendation resulting from a major effort of co-operation among governments fail to be followed by any observable form of implementation and any discernible impact within national contexts? One of the most frequently given, and easiest, answers to this question is that the Council of Europe cannot rely on an army to defend its values and to enforce respect of its norms and standards, particularly when they are as soft as non-binding "recommendations". Ensuring and, even more, assessing the impact of certain types of Council of Europe's initiatives and pronouncements, including recommendations, are arduous processes, which are dependent upon a complex set of conditions and circumstances. These include the perceived relevance and urgency of a given measure, its diverse socio-political environments, and the willingness and capacity of the national body politic and governance system to confront itself with exogenous, collective experience and to draw lessons from it.

For many years the sometimes insufficient presence, at national level, of the political will to take notice and act upon international pronouncements has been fuelling, internationally, conversations about the need to "bridge the gap" between theory and action, policy and practice which are very much alive today. That this is so probably gives the measure of the difficulties involved, and of the level of frustration that it can produce in the many protagonists of political co-operation, active in a variety of fields, including education. Frustration which is compounded by the awareness that with political will, proper dissemination and encouragement at the national level, the common efforts deployed internationally can bear fruit.

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) on education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural awareness was created by the Council of Europe and the Norwegian authorities precisely for the purpose of bridging the gap between policy and practice, and their collaborative initiative to improve the potential for implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12, which is at the origin of *Signposts*, must be noted and saluted.

The intergovernmental activities which led to Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12, the elaboration of the recommendation itself and now the publication of *Signposts* show an ongoing commitment to the inclusion of studies of religious convictions in education, for at least five reasons. First, the converging roles of the Parliamentary Assembly, of the Human Rights Commissioner, of the Council's intergovernmental co-operation mechanisms and of the Secretariat in harmoniously and consistently bringing the "problematique" of the dimension of religion in intercultural dialogue and understanding to the fore. Second, the rapidity and effectiveness with which the intergovernmental process was conducted, leading to the timely adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 by the Committee of Ministers. Third, the subsequent willingness of the Committee of Ministers' Deputies to pursue a decade-long process of direct involvement in this multifaceted subject area, through the organisation of significant related events – the "Exchange" – in member countries. Fourth, the active role, in concert with the EWC, of the Council's Secretariat, not only in initiating this process as a whole, but also, in sustaining it to this day by generating a document, *Signposts*, aiming precisely at maximising the efforts already involved in the production of the recommendation, and at improving its chances of being selectively and thoughtfully implemented in member countries. Lastly, let us be aware that *Signposts* would not have seen the light without the already mentioned collaboration between the Council of Europe and Oslo's European Wergeland Centre. In fact, the EWC itself is the concrete outcome of a well-inspired, extraordinary collaborative initiative fuelled by the Council and the Norwegian authorities to help face the challenges of the 21st century in terms of democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural education in Europe. The resounding success of this institution is a source of legitimate satisfaction on the part of those who were instrumental to its creation, both in Oslo and in Strasbourg, not least within the Council of Europe Secretariat. *Signposts* owes its existence to one of the recognised strengths of the Council of Europe: its ability to pursue issues through coherent activities of a sufficient duration, avoiding ephemeral initiatives and applying a whole range of both well-tested and innovative working methods. Through the work of two successive projects, the production of a forward-looking recommendation and, today, of the *Signposts* document, the Council has once again positioned itself as a path-opener and a standard bearer in a crucially sensitive area for the political, social and educational future of Europe.

The next challenge, as we have suggested, is to succeed in reaching higher levels of operationalisation in the member countries. This cannot be achieved by applying a single, ready-made recipe, which does not exist, but rather by exploiting the recommendation and *Signposts* to trigger a broader process of dissemination, debate, contextualisation, experimentation and well-targeted action research. Much has been accomplished already by the Group of Experts responsible for the first phase of the follow-up to the recommendation, including a first common pedagogical framework for classroom practice, the clarification of persisting linguistic and semantic ambiguities and a first exploration of the nexus between intercultural education, on one side, and the phenomenon of faith-based and non-faith-based belief and value systems, considered concomitantly on the other. Yet much remains to be done, especially in relation to the dimension of adult and out-of-school education, the necessary articulation with a stronger lifelong learning

and socio-cultural, community development perspective, and the implications for the initial and in-service training of teachers and other resource persons.

The Group of Experts, which I have had the privilege of chairing, is conscious of the "work in progress" nature of *Signposts* and of the magnitude of the challenge admirably met by its author, Professor Jackson, as Rapporteur, in providing overall coherence to their thoughts. Yet this work has just begun, the next phase having to involve more conversations with more actors and constituencies including families, media, faith and secular institutions, associations and experts, in addition to teachers and teacher trainers. But as a group representing a wide range of backgrounds and sensitivities, including both believers and non-believers (and perhaps something in between…), its members have all shared the same faith in the value of intercultural education in producing greater empathetic understanding of each other's communalities and differences, the same belief in the need to multiply ways and means of dealing with the dimension of religious and non-religious world views, and the same trust in the capacity of Council of Europe to lead in this effort.

Signposts points to the future and powerfully contributes to the Council's priorities as a foundation block of the yet to be constructed broader conceptual and operational framework (not unlike the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in which democratic and civic competences (including intercultural skills) can be identified and made to contribute to the nurturing of democratic culture. The Council of Europe builds its action upon the strength of its values, the quality of its argumentations and the relevance of its experience in order to inspire men and women of goodwill in their never-ending quest for meaning and for more accomplished forms of human coexistence. Helping to move from merely human to truly humane progress (while avoiding regression) is one of the missions of education in general and of intercultural education in particular. The Council of Europe does not have an army, but draws its force from its capacity to be at the service of a historical, long-term effort to promote democratic culture and human rights, personal growth and common humanity. May *Signposts* prove itself as a genuine contribution to this formidable task.

Gabriele Mazza
Chair of the Joint Expert Group Council of Europe/Wergeland Centre

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Thanks from the chair, author and the other members of the Joint Implementation Group are due to Ana Perona-Fjeldstad, Director of the European Wergeland Centre, for her participation and encouragement to the group, and to all the EWC staff, especially Gunnar Mandt who made a sustained contribution, and Ornella Barros, for her support in preparing the manuscript for publication. Thanks are also due to Dr Mandy Robbins of Glyndwr University for her analysis of the survey, to Isabelle Lacour, for her invaluable technical advice and support, and to Sjur Bergan, Head of the Education Department (DGII) at the Council of Europe. Particular thanks are due to Ólöf Olafsdottir, who retired in 2013 from her post of Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation at the Council of Europe, for her enthusiasm for this project and for her encouragement, to Villano Qiriazi, Head of Education Policy Division, for his unfailing support to this and earlier related projects and to Dr Claudia Lenz, Head of Research at the European Wergeland Centre, for contributing to the group's progress with her ideas and organisational assistance.

Gratitude is also expressed to guest speakers at various meetings of the Joint Implementation Group (see Appendix 2); to the members of the Council of Europe Education Committee for its kind supervision and support of the Survey and especially those members who responded to the online questionnaire, to researchers, teacher trainers, teachers and students who provided material for illustrative examples of particular activities, to researchers from different parts of Europe who provided information about their work, and to teachers, teacher trainers, policy makers, advisers and researchers who gave feedback at conferences and meetings (held between 2011 and 2013 in Austria, Belgium, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) where Professor Jackson spoke about the development of the document.

Chapter 1

The recommendation: background, issues and challenges

The recommendation

In December 2008, the Council of Europe circulated an important recommendation from the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Council of Europe 2008a). The recommendation grew out of work done in this field within the Council of Europe since 2002, building on its earlier work in intercultural education and related fields. The recommendation offers exciting possibilities for discussion and action in member states concerning studies of religions and non-religious world views within intercultural education.

The present publication – *Signposts* – has been written to facilitate discussion, reflection and action. It is written primarily for policy makers at all levels, for schools (including teachers, school leaders and governors) and for those involved in teacher training across Europe. It is intended to be of encouragement and assistance in discussing and making full, practical use of the Council of Europe's 2008 recommendation.

Religion and schools in Europe

With regard to religion, partly because of diverse histories of religion and state, together with various cultural differences, there are some different approaches to the place of religion in the curriculum of schools in European countries, and varying attitudes towards this from stakeholders, including policy makers, schools, teacher trainers, parents and children. All states are potentially influenced by factors such as secularisation, and supranational or global influences, including the migration of people, and many have gone through processes of change in recent decades.

Traditionally, some European states, such as Spain and Italy, with a state-related dominant religious tradition, have provided instruction or education only or mainly in the beliefs and values of the majority religion. Some countries, with different traditions of state and church relations, offer teaching about a variety of religions. England and Wales, for example, offer teaching about a variety of religions to all pupils in community schools. Others have taught little about religion, or regard the appropriate place for religious teaching to be the home or the private religious school. France and Albania are examples. Some states or nations combine teaching about religions with teaching about non-religious philosophies or ethical approaches or offer different optional subjects. Norway and Scotland are examples. Some countries, such as Germany, have legislation at the national level, but devolve decision making and organisation of policy and practice in religion and education (and related topics) to regional authorities. And, of course, some countries do not fit any of these generalised models (Davis and Miroshnikova 2012; Jackson et al. 2007; Kuyk et al. 2007). The contributions to the books from the Religious Education at Schools in Europe Project (REL-EDU) at the University of Vienna show that, in the European countries so far covered, the place of religion in education is a matter of debate, but that all states, in a variety of ways, are responding to "supranational" issues of diversity, globalisation and secularisation (Jäggle, Rothgangel and Schlag 2013; Jäggle, Schlag and Rothgangel 2014; Rothgangel, Jackson and Jäggle 2014; Rothgangel, Skeie and Jäggle 2014).[1]

Before 2002, there were no specific Council of Europe projects linking different European countries in order to think through issues about religion and public education. Why has there been a change? Part of the answer concerns various aspects of globalisation, including the migration of peoples, and massively improved communication via the Internet. Individual countries are subject to many influences from across the world. In world affairs, religion has become a topic of public discussion, for both positive and negative reasons. Utterances from religious leaders such as the Pope or the Dalai Lama are reported internationally, while the consequences of negative events, such as those connected with 11 September 2001 in the United States of America, continue to be felt globally and are reported widely in the media.

Cultural and religious diversity are experienced in every country. No state is homogeneous culturally. Some countries have well-established ethnic and religious minorities, often with very long histories, sometimes preceding the formation of the state. Many states have such minorities as a result of migration from other countries within Europe and beyond, mainly during the 20th and current centuries. Diversity

1. The six volumes in the REL-EDU series are: **Volume 1 – Central Europe**, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Principality of Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland. **Volume 2 – Northern Europe**, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Iceland (Faroe Islands), Norway, Sweden. **Volume 3 – Western Europe**, Belgium, England, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales. **Volume 4 – Southern Europe**, Andorra, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, Spain. **Volume 5 – Southeast Europe Albania**, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey. **Volume 6 – Eastern Europe**, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. Volumes 1-3 will be published in English in 2014; volume 1 was published in German in 2013. Volumes 4-6 are in preparation. See also Bråten 2013, 2014a and b for a methodology for comparing "religious education" in different states.

within states is complex and connects with global as well as regional, national and local issues. All of these factors are associated with an increasing view that religion and belief are not purely private issues and should be part of discussion and dialogue within the public sphere.

Thus, there are ongoing debates about religion and education in many countries. The Council of Europe came to the conclusion that a broad education about religions was a desirable activity for all school students, regardless of religious or non-religious background, to combat prejudice or intolerance and to promote mutual understanding and democratic citizenship. The events of 9/11, however, were a catalyst for change. The Council of Europe's first major project concerning religion and education started in 2002. At this stage, the focus was entirely on the novel idea of including religion as an aspect of intercultural education. At a later stage, the term "non-religious convictions" was added to religions for reasons of inclusivity. Specific attention to the interpretation of the term "non-religious convictions", and equivalent expressions, will be given in Chapter 7 below.

A Council of Europe perspective on teaching about religions and non-religious convictions

The Council of Europe's ideas on teaching about religions and non-religious convictions are closely related to its work on intercultural education, human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. Understanding religions and non-religious convictions is seen as an essential aspect of intercultural understanding. Understanding cultural diversity is viewed as a dimension of education of democratic citizenship and human rights education, which are closely inter-related and mutually supportive.

In particular, as stated in the Council of Europe's 2008 *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – Living together as equals in dignity*, understanding religions and non-religious convictions contributes to intercultural dialogue, seen as "an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect" (Council of Europe 2008b: 10-11).

Linkage with education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is also emphasised in the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, as is the need to develop intercultural understanding, partly through increasing knowledge and encouraging dialogue, but also through appreciation of differences between faith groups (Council of Europe 2010).

The ethos of the recommendation

The Council of Europe's work on education about religions and non-religious convictions is an important dimension of intercultural education. Intercultural education and the promotion of intercultural dialogue are important elements of a closely inter-related human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. The recommendation stresses the values of tolerance and solidarity gained through understanding others, values that underpin the Council of Europe's educational work.

The ethos of the recommendation is inclusive and democratic. It is concerned to provide an education about religions and non-religious convictions which is distinct from forms of religious education that aim specifically to nurture children and young people in a particular faith tradition. However, if the recommendation is followed through, the form of intercultural education suggested can be complementary to many forms of faith-based education, and could be adapted to various "outward looking" faith-based contexts.

The recommendation acknowledges diversity and complexity at local, regional and international levels, and encourages connections to be made between "local" and "global". It also advocates the exploration of issues concerning religion and identity, and the cultivation of positive relations with parents and religious communities, as well as organisations which relate to non-religious philosophies. The intention, through whole-school policies and the curriculum, is to introduce young people to a plurality of positions and debates in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.

Coverage and relevance

The recommendation is relevant both to whole-school policies and to classroom study. It considers the ideal learning context to be through the provision of a safe forum or learning space in which young people can engage in dialogue and discussion managed by teachers with appropriate specialist knowledge and facilitation skills. Didactical methods are exemplified which are "open", "inclusive" and "impartial" and which acknowledge and respect the varied backgrounds of participants and uphold human rights values.

There is no suggestion in the recommendation that every religious or non-religious position should be covered. Knowledge content needs to be selective and to relate, at least in part, to context. Finding ways to achieve an appropriate balance between skills, attitudes and knowledge is a key issue. The emphasis is on developing competence, including well-selected knowledge together with appropriate skills and attitudes which facilitate intercultural and inter-religious understanding. The aim of the recommendation is to provide knowledge but also to cultivate sensitivity, reciprocity and empathy and to combat prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and racism. The recommendation acknowledges that such provision needs to be supported by high-quality teacher training, rich and varied resources, and ongoing research and evaluation.

Intercultural education and the challenge of religious diversity and dialogue in Europe

As indicated above, rather than being a totally new area of activity for the Council of Europe, the new work on religion was closely related to key educational themes already explored, such as intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. It was seen as contributing significantly to intercultural education, whether taught as a separate subject, or as a dimension of different curriculum subjects. Thus the project was called "Intercultural education and the

challenge of religious diversity and dialogue in Europe". The rationale for including religious diversity as a theme within intercultural education was a particular stance on the relationship between religion and culture, related to the Council of Europe's earlier work on intercultural education. More will be said about this rationale below. For the moment it is important to say that there was no intention to regard religion as only an aspect of human culture, and the broad education about religions offered can be seen as a complement to various forms of religious education.

The outcomes from the project included a conference organised by the Council of Europe and Norway and a book of conference papers (Council of Europe 2004), and a widely distributed reference book for schools (Keast 2007). The project's work led to an important recommendation from the Committee of Ministers (the foreign ministers of all the member states, representing their respective governments), which was circulated to the 47 member states in 2008. The contents of the recommendation were endorsed by all 47 foreign ministers. The ethos of the recommendation matches the Council of Europe's aim to promote awareness and development of Europe's cultural identity and its diversity. In other words, the recommendation is intended as a tool to help stakeholders in member states to review issues of religion and education in schools in ways that are sensitive to their histories and traditions. The recommendation is not intended as a set curriculum, and is meant to be used flexibly in different contexts in order to meet the needs of policy makers and educators in individual states.

Although the 2002 project was about "Religious diversity and dialogue in Europe", in 2008 the Committee of Ministers took the view that the remit of the recommendation should be extended to include "non-religious convictions" as well as religions. It was recognised that, while many people belong to religious traditions that are sources of inspiration and value, there are many others within European societies whose values are not grounded in religions. This extension reflects international debates and also changing educational policies in some European countries (see Chapter 7).

Exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue

Issues related to the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and education, and about understanding religions and non-religious convictions, have been discussed at a series of exchanges organised annually by the Council of Europe since 2008. The 2008 Exchange, for example, involved representatives of the main religions present in Europe and of Humanist organisations, together with representatives of institutional partners within the Council of Europe (such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights) together with representatives from a variety of international non-governmental organisations, including some associated with the major religions, and a range of others including groups focusing on children, women and education. This was the first Council of Europe Exchange involving representatives of religious leaders and other representatives of civil society in Europe to discuss educational issues in relation to the changing climate about religion in the public sphere. The 2009 Exchange, also held in Strasbourg, continued the discussion on teaching about religions and non-religious convictions as a contribution to

education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue. The 2010 Exchange was held in Ohrid, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and explored "The role of the media in fostering intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding: freedom of expression of the media and respect towards cultural and religious diversity". This important discussion was continued at the 2011 meeting in Luxembourg. The 2012 Exchange was held in Durrës, Albania, and concentrated on the theme of "Taking responsibility for tomorrow's Europe: the role of young people in the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue", while the 2013 Exchange, which took place in Yerevan, Armenia, focused on "Freedom of religion in today's world: challenges and guarantees".

All of these meetings, conducted in the spirit of intercultural dialogue as reflected in the Council of Europe's 2008 White Paper, brought together representatives of religions and religious denominations with other representatives of groups from civil society, including some concerned with non-religious philosophies. All had the opportunity to discuss the ongoing work of the Council of Europe in this field and issues raised by it; their contributions have been considered by those taking forward the Council of Europe's activities on the role of religions and non-religious convictions in intercultural education. The present document is also written in the spirit of intercultural dialogue which permeates the Council of Europe's 2008 White Paper.

The Council of Europe recommendation

The Council of Europe recommendation on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Council of Europe 2008a) was published in December 2008, following the publication of the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue –Living together as equals in dignity* (Council of Europe 2008b), and just a few months after the first Exchange held at the Council of Europe.

The document relates to various recommendations from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and connections are also made to the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which argues that an understanding of cultural diversity should include knowledge and understanding of the main religions and non-religious convictions of the world and of their role in society.

The recommendation is sensitive to the educational systems and practices in operation in member states, and attention is drawn to "the already existing best practices of the respective member states". It is an adaptable reference text, and not an inflexible framework. Sensitivity is also shown to the fact that different approaches would be needed with young people of different ages, taking "into account the age and maturity of pupils".

Signposts

In 2011, the Council of Europe, in partnership with the European Wergeland Centre, set up a committee of experts (the Joint Implementation Group) to offer advice on using the recommendation in member states. The result is *Signposts*, which reflects the thinking of the committee. The recommendation concentrates on formal education,

with particular reference to schools. However, we hope that the document is also useful as a stimulus to thinking for those engaged in non-formal, informal education and extra-curricular teaching.[2]

We hope that *Signposts* can be used constructively and usefully in some very different educational contexts, including those where religion, or a combination of religion, ethics and/or non-religious life views, appears as a separate subject and those where education about religions is not dealt with at all directly in the curriculum. We hope that *Signposts* will be useful to you and helpful in stimulating discussion and reviewing policy and practice in your country. The whole document, or individual chapters on particular topics, can be used in discussions leading to the development of policy, as a tool for those working in schools, as an aid for training, whether initial training of teachers or the continuing professional development of teachers and others in schools, and as a stimulus to further classroom-based research.

2. An example of extra-curricular teaching which includes the goal "To overcome the stereotypes and prejudices, related to their ethnic, religious and cultural origin" is the Nansen Model for Integrated Education (NMIE) in the primary school, being used for an integrated education project in the Petrovec municipality, near Skopje in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The project includes students, teachers and parents from the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities (http://nmie.org/index.php/en/nmie-in-the-primary-school-koco-racin-ognjanci-petrovec-municipality, accessed 23 June 2014.)

Chapter 2

Introducing *Signposts* and its key themes

Signposts is an aid to thinking through issues of teaching about religions and non-religious world views in different national contexts, raised by the recommendation. The document is called *Signposts* in order to emphasise its flexible nature. It is a tool to be used by educators and other stakeholders in member states, developing their own policies and approaches to teaching and learning about religions and beliefs in their own contexts, but taking into close account the principles, values and ideas expressed in the recommendation.

Religion, culture and intercultural education

During the discussions about the recommendation at meetings and conferences, the question has been raised as to whether it reduces religion, in all its complexity, to human culture. This was not the intention of the recommendation. In categorising religion as a cultural phenomenon, the Council of Europe was linking "understanding religions and beliefs" to its work on understanding other aspects of one's own and others' culture. Discussions by those who drafted the recommendation and within the Council of Europe show that this does not mean portraying religion as only a human cultural expression (for religious believers it is clearly more than this), but rather finding the means to enable students, whatever their background, to understand, as far as possible, the language, beliefs and claims of those holding religious positions or non-religious stances within society. In other words, with regard to religions specifically, the intention is to utilise methods which enable the learner to understand religious language from the insider's perspective. This requires imagination and empathy, but is logically distinct from initiation or nurture into a particular religious perspective.

In relation to religions, it is not sufficient to teach about the history of religions, or about the outward phenomena of religions. Religion is not restricted to practices, artefacts and buildings. It is also necessary to attempt to understand the meaning of religious language as used by religious believers, including expressions of their beliefs, values and emotions. Such understanding requires knowledge, but it also requires certain attitudes and skills that raise self-awareness and awareness and understanding of the beliefs and values of others, as well as values affirming human dignity.

The Council of Europe's work on intercultural competence is very relevant to the development of such understanding and awareness. However, there are complementary sources in the fields of religious education and inter-faith dialogue, which might also be drawn on in developing competence for understanding the beliefs and values of others. A key priority is to identify the elements which contribute to a learner's competence to understand the religious perspective of another person and to consider how such competence could be developed. First, however, it is necessary to distinguish between different modes of understanding in relation to religions.

Understanding religions and religious understanding

Some writers have made a distinction between "understanding religion(s)" and "religious understanding" (for example, Cox 1983). Some religious insiders claim that understanding can only be acquired through initiation into a religious way of life. From this perspective, "understanding" can only be achieved through religious nurture, involving direct engagement in religious practice and instruction. This form of religious education (we might call it the development of "religious understanding", a distinctively religious way of understanding) would be appropriate for young people from families who are believers within a particular religious tradition. However, it would not be appropriate as part of a public education available to all students coming from a wide diversity of backgrounds, including different religious and non-religious perspectives.

The academic field of study of religions takes the view that some degree of understanding (understanding religions) is available to all, regardless of religious commitment, arguing that there are tools from a variety of different academic disciplines that can enable students to develop an understanding of religions and the perspectives of religious people. Such fields include, for example, history, art, drama, literary and textual studies, ethnography, psychology and (inter)cultural studies. The techniques required involve not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the development of skills and the cultivation of various appropriate attitudes. Such techniques are not only used in attempting to understand the language and experience of others, but also in developing self-awareness on the part of students in relation to their own current assumptions and values.

It is important, from the point of view of method, not to drive too sharp a distinction between techniques used by religious believers/practitioners in developing "religious understanding" and religious "outsiders" in attempting to "understand religions". For example, both the fields of theology and religious studies draw on similar techniques and dispositions, such as attitudes, skills and knowledge associated with the process of "dialogue".

Also, the development of an understanding of a religious perspective requires encounter and interaction with religious believers and/or their texts, stories, practices, doctrines, etc. Moreover, pluralistic classes in publicly funded schools are likely to include young people from both religious and non-religious backgrounds. For some, developing an understanding of a different religious position may raise religious or theological questions. Thus, for some learners, the development of an understanding of religions may, to some extent, develop "religious understanding".

Non-religious convictions

The recommendation includes understanding non-religious convictions as well as understanding religions. However, non-religious convictions are not defined and their relationship to religions is not discussed in the recommendation. Chapter 7 will deal specifically with issues of integrating studies of non-religious convictions with studies of religion, and will discuss related concepts such as "life stance" and "world view".

Disseminating the recommendation

The recommendation was published in December 2008 and circulated to member states. In 2011, to encourage discussion and active use of the recommendation by stakeholders, the Joint Implementation Group (JIG) was charged with the task of producing a document enabling users to engage with the recommendation in their own particular national or regional contexts. *Signposts* results from their work.

In order to assist them in their task, the JIG decided:

- to conduct a questionnaire survey with members of the Council of Europe's Education Committee;
- to consult potential stakeholders through conferences and meetings held in different parts of Europe;
- to take account of recent European and international research relevant to teaching and learning about religions and non-religious convictions.

The survey

One of the Joint Implementation Group's early tasks was to develop an online questionnaire, distributed in late 2011 to the Council of Europe's Education Committee, which includes representatives from all member states. A key aim was to identify issues raised by applying ideas from the recommendation in particular national contexts. There was a high response rate and overwhelming support for more discussion of the recommendation.[1] There were a few responses indicating some difficulty in writing from a national point of view, since education policy was devolved to regional authorities. Nevertheless, some important general points emerged from all the responses which were taken on board by the committee of experts.

It was clear from responses that there was confusion due to different shades of meaning given to terms such as "religious education" and "non-religious convictions" across different countries, and sometimes even within the same country. This issue includes discussion of the relationship between religious education seen as a means of deepening young people's understanding of religion(s), whatever their background, and religious education understood as initiating young people into a particular religious way of life.

1. Data were analysed by Dr Mandy Robbins (Robbins 2012).

Quality of teaching was an issue referred to frequently, a point having implications for the development of pedagogy and didactics as well as teacher training. There was also a general concern about how to define and to integrate or address non-religious convictions alongside religions, or even (in a few cases) whether it was appropriate to address this area alongside religion.

Another commonly expressed concern was with media representations of religions (through television, the Internet and school textbooks, for example) and how to deal with these critically in the classroom. Moreover, some respondents referred to human rights issues such as freedom of expression and the rights of minority pupils (including wearing religious symbols).

The point was also made that the recommendation should be seen not only as having relevance to the classroom, but also to whole-school policies on diversity (contributing to intercultural education) and contact with local and wider communities, contributing to education for democratic citizenship, and with other schools. The recommendation was seen to be relevant to the ethos of schools, and not just to curriculum subjects.

Other feedback from stakeholders

Further feedback has been provided from a variety of stakeholders during presentations made at conferences and meetings in different European countries between 2011 and 2013. Many of the queries raised echo responses to the questionnaire, and some amplify points made in the recommendation. For example, the point has been made that the recommendation needs to be worked with flexibly in some rather different contexts, for example in countries having some very different histories of religion and state. Similarly, the issue of knowledge selection, and finding appropriate principles for this, as well as balancing knowledge, skills, attitudes, has been raised in some different national and religious contexts.

A key point raised in meetings in a variety of countries concerns the complementary interests of intercultural education and various forms of faith-based education. Many educators working in faith-based contexts have expressed a strong interest in approaching issues of religious (and non-religious) diversity using approaches consistent with the Council of Europe recommendation, aiming to develop mutual understanding and to promote a culture of dialogue and living together peacefully in society.

Research

Signposts is intended to be a practically useful document. As such, it is written specifically for policy makers, schools and teacher trainers. Since some recent European and other international research on topics identified is particularly relevant to the development of policy, practice and teacher training, there will be some reference to it in the text that follows. Relevant research findings will be summarised and related to the needs of the users.

Illustrative examples of practice, policy and research

Some member and observer states have already developed policies, and some practitioners and teacher trainers have developed ideas and approaches, consistent with various aspects of the recommendation, in their own education systems. Summary accounts of some of these, including some specific examples from practice and research, will be presented as short illustrative examples. These are not intended as templates for other states, but are offered as illustrations of ways in which policy makers, teachers, school students, teacher trainers and researchers are attempting, in their own national or regional contexts, to address similar issues to those facing users of the Council of Europe recommendation.

Structure and contents of *Signposts*

Arising from the survey and other consultations, a series of key issues has been identified for further exploration. These issues, together with the text of the recommendation, have suggested the topics to be covered in *Signposts* from Chapter 3 to Chapter 9. Each of the issues (listed below) is an area of debate, and different stakeholders may reach different conclusions, especially if working in different national situations. Moreover, some of the issues require further research. The aim is to assist policy makers, schools (including teachers and senior management) and teacher trainers in interpreting and utilising the recommendation within their own contexts. The key issues identified, which are discussed in individual chapters, are as follows:

- **Terminology** (Chapter 3): a discussion of different terms and their different meanings in particular contexts will be provided in order to reduce misunderstanding and to help users to establish a clear and agreed vocabulary for dealing with the general area of education about religions and non-religious convictions.
- **Competence and didactics** (Chapter 4): attention is given to the development of competence (appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes) for developing understanding of selected religions and non-religious convictions. Examples of didactical approaches for use by teachers and teacher trainers in developing competence in this field are given by way of illustration.
- **The classroom as "safe space" for student-to-student dialogue within the school** (Chapter 5): various issues are considered, including ground rules for dialogue, and the role of the teacher as a facilitator and moderator of dialogue. Findings from recent research relating to the classroom as a safe space, relevant to policy makers, schools and teacher trainers, are highlighted.
- **Analysing ways in which religions are portrayed in broadcast media, the Internet and school textbooks** (Chapter 6): attention is given to the "internal diversity" of religions and to helping teachers to develop their sensitivity towards young people from different backgrounds in their classes. With reference to recent research, particular attention is given to ways in which teachers and students might analyse media representations of religions.
- **Issues concerned with the classification, description and incorporation of "non-religious convictions"** (Chapter 7) into this field are identified, discussed and illustrated by examples from recent discussion, research and policy.

- **Issues and debates concerning human rights** (Chapter 8) in relation to teaching about religions and non-religious convictions are considered.
- **Guidance on developing policy and practice on linking schools to local communities and organisations**, and developing local, national and international contacts with other schools, are provided (Chapter 9). Examples of good practice, including findings of research studies, are presented.
- **Promoting further discussion and action** (Chapter 10): finally, some ideas for promoting discussion at national and regional levels are suggested as well as mechanisms for providing feedback to the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre.

Conclusion

It is hoped that *Signposts* will stimulate and contribute to constructive discussion of the Council of Europe recommendation, stimulating debate about policy making, classroom practice, community links and teacher training in different parts of Europe, and perhaps beyond. The whole document, or individual chapters on specific topics, can be used as a basis for discussion and training.

The recommendation builds on earlier work conducted by the Council of Europe in the intercultural field, and relates to its activities on human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. By presenting the field of study as a branch of intercultural education, the aim is to promote understanding of the language and practices of religious believers. "Non-religious convictions" are also included, and issues relating to the integration of these with religions will be discussed. A distinction was made between "understanding religions" and "religious understanding". The view is taken that education in schools on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education can, in principle, contribute to both.

The development of competence of teachers and students in this field is of primary importance, and this includes identifying appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, and effective didactical methods for developing competence. There is no intention to cover all aspects of knowledge. Users of the recommendation will need to select an appropriate balance of material for study in relation to their own particular contexts, and the age and aptitude of pupils.

The shape and content of *Signposts* have been informed by consultation – with different national representatives on the Council of Europe Education Committee via a questionnaire survey, with a range of stakeholders and experts through conferences and meetings in different European countries, and with researchers on education about religions and beliefs in schools in Europe.

Chapter 3

Terminology associated with teaching about religions and beliefs

The survey, consultations during conference presentations and a review of recent and relevant research all showed the ambiguity of technical terms to be a potential source of misunderstanding and conflict. Clarity in the use of terminology is of great importance.

Terminology in the professional and academic literature

Educational terminology has its own issues of translation. For example, "pedagogy" *(pedagogikk)*, in the Nordic countries, is used as a general term for "education", covering theories of socialisation and learning in a wider sense than teaching or schooling. "Didactics" *(didaktikk)* is that part of the pedagogical discipline that deals specifically with teaching. However "education" *(educazione)* in Italian is understood more narrowly as the practice of educating and its results, while "pedagogy" *(pedagogia)* designates educational theory. In English usage, "education" can be used for theory or practice, and pedagogy is often used to refer to teaching methods or approaches. This is confusing, since what in the UK is often called pedagogy (as in Grimmitt 2000, for example) is usually called didactics (or equivalent) in various other European languages. In the German context the term *Bildung* includes not only knowledge and understanding, but also the implications of learning for personal development.

The area of religions and beliefs is a particular terminological minefield. Key terms – such as "religion", "religions", "religious", "religious diversity", "dimension of religions", "religious dimension", "faith", "non-religious", "theist", "atheist", "agnostic", "secular", "secularity", "secularism", "belief", "conviction", "spirituality", "world view", "life stance", "multicultural education", "intercultural education", "intercultural dialogue", "religious literacy", etc., have different understandings and associations in different languages and contexts. Sometimes these contexts relate to particular national situations. Other times the contexts relate more to particular viewpoints within and across nations. For example, some may object to differentiating between "religious" and "spiritual". Others may see traditions such as Taoism, Confucianism and some forms of Buddhism as non-religious world views, while others would categorise them as religions or spiritual movements.

The expression "religious diversity" is also ambiguous, and is used in various ways. It can refer to the internal diversity of a given religion, to the variety of relationships individuals might establish with an inherited religious tradition, or to several religions being practised (very likely in a variety of ways) in the same space (Akkari 2012).

In some languages, such as English, the term "faith" can be used interchangeably with "religion". Yet the range of meanings for each term does not exactly match, and some writers prefer the use of "faith tradition" or "religious tradition" in preference to "faith" or "religion", in an attempt to suggest something less bounded and reified (Akkari 2012). The German language clearly differentiates between *Glaube* (faith), referring to the individual's perspective and *Religion* (religion), referring to a more institutionalised perspective.

"Secular" can be used as an oppositional idea to "religious", as in the expression "religious and secular diversity". In Russian discussion, for example, the term "secular" tends to be associated with atheism and non-religion. However, in many contexts the word "secular" is used non-theologically, as meaning a style of governance, rather than an atheist position. In this sense, there is an important distinction to be made between "secular" and "secularist". A secular education system may support a form of religious education which allows freedom of religion or belief. This is entirely different from a secularist agenda, which seeks to suppress the study of religion or to interpret religion entirely in a reductionist way. Moreover, descriptive uses of terms (secularity, plurality, modernity/postmodernity, etc.) need to be distinguished clearly from normative uses (secularism, pluralism, modernism/postmodernism) (Skeie 1995, 2002).

Abdeljalil Akkari (2012) points to issues in translating the French term *laïcité*. In Arabic it is translated in a number of ways, such as *madani* (civil, city-dwelling, and urban) or *aalmania*, having its roots in the term for "world", and the concept generally has negative connotations, associated with atheism or anti-religious sentiment. An attempt at neutrality and avoidance of terminological confusion led Régis Debray to propose the term *fait religieux* ("religious fact") (Debray 2002). However, when translated into English, for example, even this term is laden with ambiguity. Does it mean simply "information about religions", or does it suggest some development in understanding of religious language?

The term "belief" is used in human rights codes (as in the phrase "freedom of religion or belief") to refer to world views or philosophies that are not religious in nature (such as secular humanism), but in other contexts "belief" often refers to religious belief. These various ambiguities can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the meanings of official or academic texts. The issue of integrating studies of non-religious convictions or beliefs with studies of religion or religions, and issues of terminology in this field, are discussed in Chapter 7. For the moment, it is important to point out an ongoing debate about the terminology of "non-religion". "Non-religion" has been proposed as an overarching term, with "atheism", "secularism", etc. used more specifically within this general field (Lee 2012).

Turning specifically to the study of religion(s) in schools, the terminology of the subject, as used internationally, causes a great deal of confusion. What in the United States and the Republic of Ireland, to take two examples, is usually called "religious education" is in England often called "religious nurture" or "religious instruction".

What in England is called "religious education", generally seen as an impartial study of religions in state-funded schools, is called "religion education" in the United States of America and South Africa. In France, where in public education there is still some uncertainty about the place of studies of religion, the term *le fait religieux* has been used to indicate material "about religions" taught through various subjects rather than appearing as a separate subject of study. *Le fait religieux* has often been translated into English as "education about religious facts" but, according to a Council of Europe source, the expression could be rendered, according to context, as "religion and beliefs", "religions and beliefs" (both plural) and "religions and belief systems" (meaning non-faith-based belief systems) (Council of Europe 2009).

What are religions?

The above discussion begs the question "what are religions?" Within the study of religions field, both the categories of "religion" and "religions" are keenly debated. At one end of the spectrum, religions are regarded as clearly definable and separate phenomena with their own claims to truth (e.g. Wright 2008). At the other end, religion and religions are "deconstructed", and simply regarded as no more than elements of culture (e.g. Fitzgerald 2000). A middle position sees religions as clearly identifiable, but with each having a degree of internal diversity and disputed boundaries, and related to other religions by "family resemblance" (Flood 1999; Jackson 1997, 2008). On this view, "religions" are overt expressions of culture, but they are not reduced to human culture. They have a transcendental reference (often but not always theistic), focus on existential issues and recognise the contemporary, powerful influence of globalisation and localisation, including moves towards individualistic positions on the one hand, and towards authoritarian positions (e.g. fundamentalisms) on the other.

Spirituality and the spiritual

A further complication arises with the use of terms such as "spiritual education" or "education about spirituality". Such terms can be used in relation to conventional understandings of religion and religions, and expressions such as "Christian spirituality" or "Buddhist spirituality" might be used. Some authors consider that spirituality is necessary to religion, but religion is not necessary to spirituality (Fry et al. 2005). For others, spirituality is associated with personal experience of the transcendent, whereas "religiousness" is identified with religious institutions and prescribed theology and rituals (Zinnbauer et al. 1997). Often, "spirituality" is used in a more postmodern sense to refer sometimes to unconventional understandings of religions (for example, holding a Humanist philosophical position, combined with an ethic grounded in Christianity), to syntheses of ideas and values from a range of religious traditions, or to forms of "non-religious" spirituality having no direct reference to religions.

Life interpretation: *livsåskådning*

Some writers, especially from northern Europe, make a bridge between "religion" and secular world views by using terms with the prefix "life": life questions, life orientation,

life philosophy, life interpretation and life stance. There is a distinct Scandinavian tradition of research going back to Anders Jeffner's use of the term *livsåskådning* (Jeffner 1981), which has had a broad influence in Nordic countries since the 1970s through various theoretical and empirical studies (see Chapter 7).

Religious literacy

The term "religious literacy" is used in the literature in at least three quite different ways, related to:

- Learning about religions, including developing an understanding of religious uses of language in an open and impartial way (Moore 2007);
- Studying religions and making judgments about them using a particular view of knowledge and truth (Wright 1998);
- Learning religiously (Felderhof 2012).

In the present context, the first usage is the closest and most relevant to the kind of study of religions and beliefs envisaged in the recommendation, in relation to education in publicly funded, inclusive schools.

Terminology concerned with "understanding"

In the previous chapter, a useful distinction was made between "understanding religion(s)" and "religious understanding" (Cox 1983). "Understanding religions" is a capacity that potentially all citizens share to different degrees, while "religious understanding" is a capacity that can be developed by religious believers and practitioners. These capacities are inter-related. For example, understanding a religion different from one's own can contribute to one's own religious understanding. Similarly, a person's religious understanding within a particular tradition could be of assistance in understanding a different religious position. This view is inherent in dialogical or inter-religious approaches to understanding religions. However, being a religious believer and practitioner is not a necessary condition for developing some understanding of religions.

Multicultural and intercultural education

Both the terms "multicultural education" and "intercultural education" have been used in a variety of ways, and sometimes they have been used interchangeably. While the term "multicultural" has been used by some writers – in cultural anthropology, for example – in a very flexible and non-essentialist way (e.g. Goodenough 1976), some early views of multicultural education represented religions and cultures as bounded entities (discussed in Jackson 1997, 2004, 2011a). In multicultural education, a culture was often presented as a closed system, with a fixed and inflexible understanding of ethnicity. Such multicultural education avoided giving attention to hierarchies of power within different cultural groups and also neglected the academic debate about the nature of cultures. In rejecting such a closed view of cultures, some writers coined terms such as "critical" (May 1999: 33) or "reflexive multiculturalism" (Rattansi

1999: 77) to indicate approaches that are critical of essentialist views of culture and acknowledge internal diversity and the role of power relations in the formation of culture. This understanding is reinforced by empirical evidence showing multiculturalism to be the outcome of collective negotiations and ongoing power struggles of cultural, ethnic and racial differences (e.g. Baumann 1996, 1999).

Despite more critical and nuanced uses of "multicultural", the term is still often used – increasingly in a political context – in a negative way that continues to imply the idea of separate bounded cultures existing side by side within a society. In political discourse, "multiculturalism" is often identified with policies that perpetuate this idea (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Partly in reaction to this ongoing debate about multiculturalism, the term "intercultural" has gained currency, and is used in Council of Europe discussions and literature (Barrett 2013). The key point is that the approaches to the study of religions and non-religious convictions advocated in the Council of Europe recommendation resonate with ideas of intercultural education that give close attention to a sophisticated analysis of culture and religion, and to the complexities of culture-making in the lives of individuals, including school students. This nuanced interpretation also needs to be given to the term "diversity".

Conclusion

This discussion suggests the need for clarity in the use of terminology by policy makers, schools and teacher trainers, and clarity in the formulation of aims and objectives. As Abdeljalil Akkari puts it:

> Not only is the transition from one language to another fraught with difficulty in the case of many terms, but the historical and political connotations also differ, depending on the national context. This terminological confusion is not conducive to the introduction of teaching about religious diversity in the classroom and in school curricula. It requires a special effort to determine common terms and to analyse how the different terms are perceived by the stakeholders in a school context. (Akkari 2012)

Thus, in terms of practical advice, it is recommended that policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and other users should:

- explain the meaning of key terms used in documentation such as policy documents and syllabuses. In some documents it might be helpful to include a glossary in which key terms are defined;
- distinguish clearly between descriptive and normative meanings when using particular terms. For example, many writers use terms such as secularity, plurality, modernity and postmodernity in a purely descriptive sense, whereas their equivalents – secularism, pluralism, modernism and postmodernism – are used as normative terms;
- present a clear rationale for the study of religions and non-religious world views, stating general aims and specific objectives as appropriate;
- consult key stakeholders in the process of developing policy documents and syllabuses and seek to agree on the use of particular terms;
- encourage students to explore different meanings of technical terms.

Chapter 4

Competence and didactics for understanding religions

Introduction

The survey indicated a concern with the inter-connected issues of the developing competence of students and teachers in relation to understanding religions, and in improving teaching quality. This chapter deals with developing the intercultural competence of teachers and pupils, with reference to discussion of this topic at the time of writing by experts in the Council of Europe. This discussion is linked to didactical approaches developed to promote understanding of religions. The chapter introduces two illustrative didactical approaches to studying religions at school level, which are referred to in the recommendation, and which cohere with the view of intercultural competence presented below. Both of these approaches can be adapted to particular situations and needs, and combined with other approaches. Further didactical approaches are introduced in Grimmitt (2000) and Keast (2007); in addition, a contextual approach developed in Norway that dovetails with intercultural education is worthy of attention (Leganger-Krogstad 2011).

The integration of the study of non-religious convictions with the study of religions is discussed specifically in Chapter 7, which includes brief suggestions on how the illustrative didactical approaches introduced below could be adapted accordingly. Issues about teacher-training needs, in terms of preparing to teach a combination of religious and non-religious world views, are also referred to in Chapter 7.

The fundamental goal or aim of the religious dimension of intercultural education is to develop an understanding of religions. Such understanding is developed through gaining competence, which includes selected knowledge, developing and applying relevant skills, and cultivating appropriate attitudes, against a background of upholding certain values, including tolerance, respecting the right of others to hold a religious or non-religious stance, human dignity and civic-mindedness.

Here the view is taken that some degree of understanding of religions, including the perspectives of religious believers/practitioners, is, in principle, possible for everyone, and draws on ongoing discussion within the Council of Europe on intercultural competence. As indicated earlier, in the case of religious believers, competence in "religious understanding" can often complement or contribute to competence in "understanding religions".

Intercultural competence of pupils and understanding religions

The recommendation is clear in general terms about the aspects of competence expected to be developed among pupils who study religious and non-religious convictions. Competence should be developed through:

- developing a tolerant attitude and respect for the right to hold a particular belief, attitudes based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of each human being;
- nurturing a sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe;
- ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds;
- promoting civic-mindedness and moderation in expressing one's identity;
- providing opportunity to create spaces for intercultural dialogue in order to prevent religious or cultural divides;
- promoting knowledge of different aspects (symbols, practices, etc.) of religious diversity;
- addressing the sensitive or controversial issues to which the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions may give rise;
- developing skills of critical evaluation and reflection with regard to understanding the perspectives and ways of life of different religions and non-religious convictions;
- combating prejudice and stereotypes vis-à-vis difference which are barriers to intercultural dialogue, and educating in respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- fostering an ability to analyse and interpret impartially the many varied items of information relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions, without prejudice to the need to respect pupils' religious or non-religious convictions and without prejudice to the religious education given outside the public education sphere. (Council of Europe 2008a)

A Council of Europe publication, "Developing intercultural competence through education" (Barrett et al. 2013), presents intercultural competence as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes which enables learners to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself;
- respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people;
- establish positive and constructive relationships with such people;

- understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural "difference".

The document identifies relevant skills and attitudes and has many ideas relevant to the development of intercultural competence in different educational settings. Below, some key ideas related to the development of intercultural competence are combined with illustrative examples of didactics for "understanding religions". *Developing intercultural competence through education* focuses on understanding others in their particular, often complex, cultural contexts. Understanding is developed partially through learning how to relate to others. The document also affirms that reflection on this understanding can also help learners to understand themselves and the various influences upon them. Implicit is a values dimension, what one writer has described as "an ethical civic-mindness towards knowledge that calls for *responsible thinking and action* in addition to knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Poulter 2013). This values dimension has implications for the way in which young people conduct themselves during discussions and is part of ongoing discussion within the Council of Europe on intercultural competence (see Chapter 5 "The classroom as a safe space" and Chapter 8 on human rights issues).

Illustrative didactical approaches

Two examples of didactical approaches to the religious dimension of intercultural education, mentioned in the recommendation, will be used by way of illustration. In each case, it is explained how the particular approach can be used to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that constitute intercultural competence. The examples are given in outline and are intended to be adapted for use in different contexts. They are the interpretive approach (Jackson 1997, 2004: Chapter 6, 2011b) and the dialogical approach (e.g. Ipgrave 2001, 2003, 2013). Both approaches encourage the active participation of students in the learning process, and even in contributing to the design and review of study methods.

The interpretive approach "encourages a flexible understanding of religions and non-religious convictions and avoids placing them in a rigid pre-defined framework" (Council of Europe 2008a). It can be used with classes that are religiously and non-religiously diverse, and also in situations where class membership is less plural.

The dialogical approach, which enables pupils to "engage in dialogue with other persons possessing other values and ideas" (Council of Europe 2008a) is especially useful in religiously and culturally diverse classes, but can be adapted to different situations.

Both approaches aim to establish an atmosphere of "safe space" in the classroom (see Chapter 5). Of course, other pedagogical and didactical approaches can be linked to the idea of competence presented in the Council of Europe document, and users are encouraged to adapt or develop methodologies according to their particular contexts and needs.

The interpretive approach

The interpretive approach focuses on the dynamic relationship between religions, groups of various kinds within them and the individuals who identify with such

groups. It aims to avoid stereotyping by recognising that individuals from a particular religious background may experience, understand and present their religion in ways that are in some respects different from generalised accounts given, for example, in school textbooks. The interpretive approach is sensitive to research findings showing that some young people feel that some resources used in schools do not represent their own particular religious background fairly or accurately (e.g. Jackson et al. 2010; Moulin 2011).

The interpretive approach considers individuals in the context of various, usually religious, groups to which they belong. Understanding of such groups is related to developing a broad understanding of the particular religion to which individuals relate. The process of learning can move in different directions. The starting point might be an individual person, or it could be a religious group of some kind (perhaps a denomination or sect), or it could be a religion seen in general terms such as Christianity, Islam or Hinduism. The key point is that understanding is increased through examining the relationship between individuals, groups and the wider religions.

There is also a focus on trying to interpret religious language and symbols. This involves utilising students' current understandings as a starting point for making an imaginative leap in attempting to grasp the religious meanings of others.

Also, just as the Council of Europe publication *Developing intercultural competence through education* sees students' reflections on their learning as a means to self-understanding, the interpretive approach takes a similar view, emphasising the idea of reflexivity.

The interpretive approach concentrates on three key principles related to learning about religions:

- how religions are portrayed or represented to learners (representation);
- how religious language and symbols are interpreted by learners (interpretation);
- how learners respond to their learning about religions (reflexivity).

Teacher educators and teachers can work creatively with these three general principles, devising their own particular strategies to meet the needs of particular groups of students. Some examples of a variety of strategies used by teachers (often working closely with pupils) and teacher educators in applying the principles of the interpretive approach can be seen in Ipgrave, Jackson and O'Grady (2009) and Miller, O'Grady and McKenna (2013).

Representation

With regard to the representation of religions, the interpretive approach uses three inter-related "levels".

Individuals

Every individual is unique. It is at this level that we can appreciate best the human face of religion and hear personal stories that break stereotypes. These could be of distinguished international figures, could be based on interviews with local people, or could include personal stories from students. As noted above, various research

projects have shown that individual young people in schools sometimes feel that portrayals of their religions in many textbooks and resources do not match their own knowledge and experience as individuals living within particular groups and traditions (for example, Jackson et al. 2010; Moulin 2011). The interpretive approach aims to give young people their own voice in this respect.

Groups

The next level is that of the "group". This might be a denominational or sectarian group, or some combination of these with other kinds of group, such as ethnic groups. A project or some work based on a family with an Islamic background or on a local church, for example, would be informative about groups, and would also influence and inform our understanding of the wider religion.

Religions

The broadest level is the religion or "religious tradition". Thus "Christianity" encompasses all its different denominational and cultural manifestations. Immediately it is clear that it would be impossible for any individual to have a full grasp of this. Also, different insiders and outsiders would have different views about the scope of the tradition. This does not matter. Each of us (teacher or student) can gradually form our own idea of the religions and the relationship between them. Every time we learn something new, our previous understanding is challenged and might be modified. A discussion and analysis of key concepts fits best into this level. A provisional understanding of key concepts provides a framework for understanding that can be modified as more learning takes place.

In using these levels there is no intention to fragment religions. It is the relationship of individuals, groups and tradition, used together, that can provide insight into religion as lived and practised by people, including the religious lives of students in school. The three levels can also suggest different starting points for exploring religions: the religious perspective of a particular individual, such as Martin Luther King or the Dalai Lama; the perspective of a particular community or denomination within a religion (see Chapter 9 for examples of topics involving links with communities outside the school); or a study of a text central to a whole religious tradition.

Interpretation

The central idea here is to attempt genuinely to understand as far as possible the meaning of the religious language of another person. This is not done by suppressing one's own current understanding in trying to empathise with someone else. Rather, it attempts to use one's current understanding as a starting point in making an imaginative leap, in order to make sense of what another is explaining, even if the learner's world view is very different from that of the person, group or tradition being studied. For example, various personal understandings of the term "suffering" contributed by students can be used as a starting point to grasp the multi-layered Buddhist idea of *dukha*, often translated as suffering, anxiety, stress or unsatisfactoriness.

This approach also takes on board the fact that different religious people use religious language in different ways. Some may use it literally all of the time. Some may use it metaphorically in some contexts, so that the meaning expressed may be different in some ways from a literal understanding of the words. Another is through the use of interview – actually asking people to explain what they mean when they use religious language (see Chapter 9).

Reflexivity

The interpretive approach is concerned with trying to understand the meaning of religious language, symbols and ways of living, but it also anticipates discussion of questions of truth and the relationship of meaning and truth (e.g. when you make a certain claim to truth, what exactly do you mean?).

Reflexivity includes opportunities for students to reflect on their own current understandings and values in relation to what they have learned. This does not imply adopting the views that have been studied, but using new understanding to raise self-awareness and a critical examination of one's own assumptions. The German term *Bildung* is relevant here, and includes not only knowledge and understanding, but also a reflexive dimension.

Reflexivity also includes the provision of opportunities for distanced, constructive criticism of the material studied. The two different aspects of reflexivity – coming close to the material in order to empathise as far as possible with others, and distancing oneself from the material, so as to apply one's critical faculties, can be divided into a range of possible activities, including the following:

- **Self-awareness**: becoming more aware of one's own current views and prejudices, and learning how to examine and challenge these (through considering what influences might have shaped them).
- **Values associated with other religions**: discussing and recording values from the individuals/groups/religion studied which are rooted in the religious tradition, and comparing and contrasting them with one's own values. This includes identifying shared values, which may be rooted in different ways of life, or perhaps values which overlap with one's own, but are not identical (see Chapter 8 on human rights).
- **Learning from others' values**: considering how the personal values from the individuals/groups/tradition studied are relevant to/might contribute to social values, such as citizenship. Such consideration raises questions about tolerance of others' world views; respect for others' world views or for the ways in which individuals practise their ways of life (does this position command my respect?) and acknowledging how the values or actions of certain individuals and groups might be recognised by wider society as contributing positively to social harmony.
- **Similarities and differences to one's own beliefs and values**: considering how the beliefs of individuals, in the context of their groups and tradition, are different from/similar to/overlap with one's own beliefs.
- **Improving study methods**: reflecting on the methods of study used so far, and suggesting ways of improving them in order to get a better and deeper understanding of others.

Adaptation of reflexive activities to different national contexts

In some national contexts, all the reflexive activities such as those mentioned above would be possible, if managed and facilitated well by teachers in the safe space of the classroom, with appropriate ground rules for civility and so on. In some other national contexts, the discussion of personal views would be considered inappropriate. In these circumstances, the reflexive element can be confined to examining the implications of beliefs and values from particular settings for social (rather than personal) values within society – such as issues relating to citizenship, prejudice, intercultural and inter-religious understanding. Bruce Grelle has written about doing this in relation to the American context (Grelle 2006).

Intercultural competence and the interpretive approach

How can the interpretive approach be used to increase intercultural competence? The key principles of the interpretive approach can be expressed in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to develop intercultural competence, as discussed in the Council of Europe publication *Developing intercultural competence through education*. For example,

Representation requires:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- the key concepts associated with a particular religion/religious tradition;
- the perspectives, practices and beliefs of groups within a particular religion;
- examples of key texts and relevant history, etc;
- knowledge of examples showing diversity of belief and practice within religions.

Skills such as:

- listening to people from other religions;
- interacting with people from other religions;
- how to collect reliable information about other religions;
- mediating exchanges concerning religions.

Attitudes such as:

- respect for the right of a person to hold a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint;
- openness to people from different religions and cultures;
- openness to learning about different religions;
- willingness to suspend judgment;
- willingness to tolerate ambiguity;
- valuing religious and cultural diversity.

Interpretation requires:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- the key concepts associated with a particular religion;
- the perspectives, practices and beliefs of groups within a particular religion.

Skills such as:

- empathy;
- multiperspectivity;
- the capacity to interact with and listen to people from different religions;
- discussion skills.

Attitudes such as:

- openness to people from religions/other religions/other branches of one's own religion;
- willingness to suspend judgment and to tolerate ambiguity;
- valuing religious and cultural diversity;
- flexibility in cultural and communicative behaviour.

Reflexivity requires:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- the key concepts associated with a particular religion/religious tradition;
- the perspectives, practices and beliefs of groups within a particular religion;
- awareness of one's own views and assumptions.

Skills such as:

- listening to people from other religions/religious groups;
- interacting with people from other religions/religious groups;
- empathy;
- multiperspectivity;
- evaluating different religious/non-religious perspectives including one's own;
- awareness of one's own prejudices and judgments;
- flexibility and adaptability in cultural and communicative behaviour.

Attitudes such as:

- openness to reflect upon one's own beliefs and claims;
- willingness to learn from others;
- willingness to make a distanced and balanced critique of different religious and non-religious positions.

The example below shows how the key concepts of the interpretive approach can be used imaginatively by teachers with students. Secondary teacher Kevin O'Grady worked with (initially) poorly motivated 12- to 13-year-old students in his mainly "white", urban all-ability state school in the North of England. There were no students from Muslim families in the class.

Illustrative example – Action research and the interpretive approach

"I designed an action research project conducted with a class over 12 weeks, using classroom observation, group interviews and analysis of diaries kept by students. The pupils contributed to the research, identifying their own interests and preferences. Their contributions helped our planning of work on Islam. Pupils recorded new ideas and their evaluations of work in progress in the diaries. They also wrote down responses to my questions asked in group interviews.

I analysed the diary entries and revised our programme of study to take account of the pupils' ideas. Their ideas from the diaries prompted an approach to studying Islam that connected with topics of particular interest to them.

I moved from the students' own personal interest in dress and fashion (a common theme in the diary entries) to their questions about Islamic dress, using examples from selected stories in the media, relating these to Islam more widely. Interest in the symbolic significance of clothing and their fascination with fashion accounted for pupils' interest in Islamic dress. Interests such as these were incorporated into our lesson plans. Work on the students' attitudes to clothes, and comparison with Islamic codes, was included. The topic as a whole was informed by the aim that Islamic material would prompt a reassessment of students' own attitudes, whether to clothes, family life or any questions they had raised.

Students identified activities such as art, creative writing and discussion of videos as important, but drama was the most popular activity for exploring issues. The questions raised were both about Islam (about Muslims, Islamic beliefs and concepts) and about the individual and society (personal and religious questions and questions about society and the wider world).

Students' diary entries, and my log of observations, confirmed the importance pupils gave to learning about themselves, as well as about Islam. Questions were also raised by pupils about race and ethnic identity, and the opportunity was taken to explore these, contributing to intercultural and citizenship education as well as the study of religions.

Imaginative activities designed by the pupils included – in the example of Islamic dress – analysing the relationship between bullying and dress, researching Islamic dress codes and using drama to explore what it might feel like to experience a ban on wearing a religious form of dress at school. It was gratifying that the pupils showed a high degree of maturity in discussions following these activities.

Issues of representing both Islam as a religion and individual Muslims, in the context of school, family and media portrayals, were discussed. Issues of interpretation were considered through discussing the meaning of key concepts and symbols (including dress). Issues of reflexivity were covered through the movement back and forth between students' personal interests and concerns and their equivalents in the examples from Islam that were studied."

More about Kevin O'Grady's work can be read in O'Grady 2008, 2009, 2013.

A dialogical approach

Several didactical approaches to the study of religions focusing on dialogue have been developed for use with children and young people (Castelli 2012; Ipgrave 2013; Jackson 2004, Chapter 7; Keast 2007; Leganger-Krogststad 2011; Weisse and Knauth 1997). Also, some of the research by REDCo (Religion in Education: a Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries), discussed especially in Chapter 5 on "safe space", is very relevant to dialogue as a didactical approach (e.g. the work of Knauth, von der Lippe, Kozyrev and Schihalejev). Dialogue requires appropriate attitudes and skills to engage with ideas and ways of thinking other than our own. It involves the ability "to question, listen, reflect, reason, explain, speculate and explore ideas; to analyse problems, form hypotheses and develop solutions; to discuss argue, examine evidence, defend, probe, and assess arguments" (Alexander 2006: 5). Castelli's approach, which he calls "faith dialogue", integrates an exploration of religious and non-religious world views, aiming to develop skills and attitudes that teach students both how to respond to beliefs of others while developing the ability to articulate their own (Castelli 2012).

Ipgrave's approach to dialogue – which we will take here as an example – has worked well in schools with a multi-religious and multicultural population. It capitalises on children's readiness to engage with religious questions and their ability to utilise religious language encountered through interacting with peers in the school and in partner schools. Her work was developed in collaboration with primary school children aged 8 to 11 years, but can be adapted for use with older students (Ipgrave 2003, 2013).

With this approach, the teacher often acts in the role of facilitator, prompting and clarifying questions, and much agency is given to pupils, who are regarded as collaborators in teaching and learning. The approach was found to raise children's self-esteem, to provide opportunities for developing critical skills, to enable under-achievers to express themselves, and to create a climate of moral seriousness. Children were also helped to engage with ideas and concepts from different religious traditions, to be reflective about their contributions and to justify their own opinions. They also discussed how they arrived at their conclusions, and were encouraged to recognise the possibility of alternative viewpoints and to be open to the arguments of others.

In trialling this approach, it was found that direct experience of religious plurality (or indirect contact via e-mailing) motivated children to explore religious issues. Moreover, it was notable that children did not move towards a relativist stance, thinking that all religions were equally true (or false).The approach to dialogue has various elements:

- The first is the acceptance of diversity, difference and change – through regular encounter with different viewpoints, understandings and ideas. This capitalises on different experiences and influences in children's social backgrounds.
- The second is being open to and responding positively to difference. Exchanging different points of view is seen as of benefit to all participants. This is also reinforced by a whole-school ethos that values diversity (within the limits discussed below in Chapter 5 on "safe space" and Chapter 8 on human rights). The pupils themselves formulate basic rules for the study of

religions. Children identified ideas such as respect for each other's religion, talking and thinking seriously about differences, and being ready to learn new things, including about their own religion. Pupils are encouraged to formulate their own questions when they engage with other positions on religion, not least when formulating questions to ask visiting speakers (see Chapter 9).

- The third is discussion and debate. Different stimuli are used to raise questions and issues for discussion, including stories and other texts, case studies, quotations expressing different viewpoints, pictures or video extracts and examples of teachings from different religions. Children are also introduced to issues of ethics (such as the pros and cons of using violence or taking animal life) or of belief (such as whether there can be life after death).

Applying the model

In testing the dialogical model initially through action research in an urban primary school, the first resources were the school's own diverse intake coupled with the experience of children from other local primary schools, using e-mail for communication. Further voices were introduced into classroom discussion through:

- quotations from people holding a variety of beliefs or viewpoints or taking different positions on moral issues debated by the children;
- material for discussion from religious traditions, including extracts or quotations from texts.

Throughout, personal engagement with ideas and concepts from different religious traditions was encouraged (How does this idea relate to my views?).

Children were encouraged:

- to be reflective about their contributions and to justify their own opinions (What are your reasons for thinking that?);
- to consider how they arrived at their conclusions (How did you reach that answer?);
- to recognise the possibility of alternative viewpoints (Can you think of reasons why some people would not agree with what you have said?);
- to be open to the arguments of others (Do you think X has a point here?)

Role play was used to help children to engage with different points of view. In this, children (as individuals or in groups) had to argue a case from the point of view of a particular interest group. For example, 9-year-olds took on the roles of conservationist, tourist, government official and bereaved father in discussing whether a man-eating tiger should be hunted and killed. Such activity helps children to identify values from their own background which may not be identical to – but may nevertheless overlap significantly with – the values of other children, and with conventionally expressed human rights values (see Chapter 8 below).

This dialogical approach includes children as active participants as they negotiate varied ideas of childhood in home, community and school experience and access their previous experience, knowledge and understanding as resources for learning in class. Children are seen as collaborators in teaching and learning. Teaching

maximises pupils' input, with the teacher acting as prompter, chair, interviewer and questioner, as well as providing information.

Intercultural competence and the dialogical approach

How can the dialogical approach be used to increase intercultural competence? The key principles of Ipgrave's dialogical approach can be expressed in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to develop intercultural competence, as discussed in the Council of Europe publication *Developing intercultural competence through education*.

For example, successful dialogue is dependent upon the development of attitudes such as:

- respect for the right of a person to hold a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint;
- valuing religious and cultural diversity;
- openness to people from different religions and cultures;
- openness to learning about different religions;
- willingness to suspend judgment;
- willingness to tolerate ambiguity.

These attitudes need to be reflected in whole-school policy and in the ethos of classroom interaction, as well as in the contributions of individual students.

Necessary skills include:

- ability to evaluate different religious/non-religious perspectives, including one's own;
- awareness of one's own prejudices and judgments;
- listening to people from other religions/religious groups;
- interacting with people from other religions/religious groups;
- empathy;
- multiperspectivity;
- evaluating different religious/non-religious perspectives including one's own.

This approach capitalises on children's previous knowledge and experience. Knowledge is developed in more depth by reference to a range of sources, including:

- sharing knowledge and experience of others in the class (including their use of religious terminology, and appreciating diversity of knowledge and experience),
- further contextual information from the teacher, such as examples of key concepts, consideration of key texts, teachings and relevant history, quotations from different viewpoints, and the critical use of visual and other resources (see Chapter 6 below).

Creative combinations of didactical approaches

Some teacher trainers and teachers draw a creative mix of ideas from different didactical approaches, as in the case of a project from St Petersburg in the Russian Federation which uses ideas from interpretive, dialogical and other approaches:

> our approach is *interpretive* … For instance, we distinguish … three phases of the educational process: representation, interpretation and reflection/edification. The micro-cycle formed by these phases recurs each time with a new topic, first within a lesson and then on a bigger scale when a sequence of topically connected lessons ends with a special "summing-up" lesson … We also focus our classroom interaction ... on interpretive activity of students. Search for meanings of texts and narratives under study is a core activity on the part of the learner. As a result our approach acquires a *dialogical* quality, since the participation in discussions becomes a natural element of sharing meanings … We regard our learners as researchers interested in understanding and engaging with what they are introduced to. (Kozyrev 2012: 75)

Teacher competence

The recommendation emphasises the importance of provision of high-quality initial and in-service training in order to increase teacher competence in this field, and it refers to the development of competence in suitable didactical approaches. It states that teachers:

- should be enabled to provide rich and varied teaching resources; and
- should have opportunities to exchange resources and successful experiences, and to be able to evaluate them.

Opportunities for exchanges and dialogue between students from different cultural environments are also recommended (see Chapter 9 for examples), as is attention to the local and global nature of intercultural dialogue.

Schihalejev's analysis of classroom dialogue and teacher–pupil interaction in Estonia for the REDCo project (students aged 14-16) includes some observations about the role of the teacher:

- Positive reinforcement of student responses without discussion does not contribute to dialogue; it gives the impression that the "right" answer has already been given.
- Students are deterred from exploring a subject more deeply if the teacher takes too strong a role as a facilitator; if the teacher's contribution is too strong, students tend to rely on the teacher's arguments or simply do not participate. (Schihalejev 2010: 166-67)

Teacher education needs at least to provide trainees with experience of the same methods and learning opportunities that would be experienced by school students, in order to help them develop as competent providers of information, facilitators and sensitive moderators of students' dialogue.

With regard to didactics, active participation of class members is encouraged (as in interpretive and dialogical approaches). Thus, experience and training in the use of active learning methods is highly desirable for teachers, related to the development of the range of skills and attitudes referred to in the above examples, and covering the complex issue of "content selection".

Specialist knowledge of the religions is a strong advantage. However, experience has shown that teachers who are sensitive to the internal diversity of religions, and to

the fact that personal and group expressions of religions are likely to be different in various ways from many textbook representations, are able to build their knowledge base during teaching, if provided with support. It is particularly helpful if teachers can have access to and are able to consult people with more specialist knowledge as required. Needless to say, the provision of high-quality initial and in-service teacher training courses will raise and enhance the quality of teaching.

The Council of Europe recommendation specifically mentions the creation of "safe space" for student interaction and dialogue. Issues related to this (including points about teacher competence) are discussed in the next chapter. See also Chapter 6 in relation to the critical analysis of media representations of religions and Chapter 9 for a discussion of establishing positive relationships with parents and members of different communities, including arranging visits outside the school, and building relationships with students in other schools. Teacher training should be conducted within a framework of human rights values which promote human dignity and democratic citizenship (see Chapter 8).

Conclusion

The term "competence", in relation to the religious dimension of intercultural education, was discussed with particular reference to students. A model of competence developed and under discussion in the Council of Europe was considered in relation to two illustrative didactical approaches to learning about religions. The examples were outlined to reveal some key issues in teaching about religious diversity and to stimulate the development of methods suitable in particular national and regional settings. Although there are some differences in the examples used, they share stances on the analysis of cultural and religious material, and about the agency of pupils, in common with Council of Europe work on intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights (Council of Europe 2010).

Some remarks were made about the development of teacher competence and the desirability for high-quality initial and in-service teacher training courses (as specified in the recommendation). The next chapter considers issues related to the classroom as a "safe space" for active learning approaches, such as those discussed above, and includes attention to teaching about controversial issues. Issues concerning teaching about non-religious convictions will be addressed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5

The classroom as a safe space

Introduction

The Council of Europe recommendation, in considering educational preconditions for exploring the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in schools, suggests "provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule" (7.1). In this respect, the recommendation is consistent with the Council's work on human rights, education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe 2008b, 2010). The issue of "safe space" is relevant to policy makers as well as to school communities, teachers and teacher trainers. The encouragement of active forms of learning which include a significant degree of student interaction and exchange may involve decisions at the policy level.

Providing a "safe space" for the exploration of diversity, which shows sensitivity to the belief and values positions of individual students, requires recognition of "internal diversity" and the personal character of religions and non-religious world views (see Chapter 7). As Francesca Gobbo puts it:

> the focus on religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education invites (or requires) us to consider not only the diversity from without, but also the diversity from within ("internal diversity"), given that a homogeneous cultural, linguistic and religious national (or ethnic) identity is more often a historical "invention" than a historical reality as it overlooks (or successfully belittles or deletes) the "different memories" according to which individuals, and/or collectivities, live their lives. (Gobbo 2012)

Professor Gobbo argues that a classroom needs to recognise and respect such internal diversity and allow it to be used as a resource by all concerned. The interpretive and dialogical didactical approaches referred to above aim to promote such an atmosphere of open and respectful exchange of views within the classroom. However, a climate of safe space needs to be cultivated not only in the classroom, but in whole-school policy and in relationships between the school and the wider community (see Chapter 9).

Safe space in the classroom

In the present chapter, the discussion concentrates on the classroom. "Safe space" has become a shorthand term for a desired classroom atmosphere. In a safe classroom space, students are able to express their views and positions openly, even if these differ from those of the teacher or peers. However, there need to be ground rules which all participants must understand and agree to, in terms of civility and sensitivity, ensuring inclusion and respect for others.

Research findings in the values field, related to citizenship and religious education, and research from other areas of professional education, are highly relevant to planning and operating discussions relating to religions and non-religious convictions in which students have a strong level of personal participation, while teachers act as facilitators and as sources of relevant knowledge.

It is important to emphasise that approaches encouraging student dialogue and the teacher role as facilitator do not reduce the need for teachers to have and to maintain appropriate high-quality subject knowledge.

Research on "safe space" deals mainly with the views and interactions of students, and with issues and problems that can arise for teachers in moderating open classroom discussions. Some points from relevant research will be shared, together with some observations and suggestions for stakeholders.

Social work research

Some research has been done in the United States with social work students, mainly in their twenties (Holley and Steiner 2005). Students identified the following characteristics of classrooms providing "safe space":

- Teachers should be non-judgmental and unbiased, develop appropriate ground rules for participation, be comfortable with conflict and be supportive and respectful.
- Peers should show good discussion skills, honestly share ideas/opinions/facts, be non-judgmental and open to new ideas and share a sense of community.
- Themselves: students should be open minded, actively participating, supportive and respectful of others.
- Environment: seating arrangements should allow class members to see everyone, and the room should be of an appropriate size.

Students also identified the following characteristics of classrooms they regarded as unsafe for open dialogue and exchange:

- Teachers who were critical of student interventions, were biased and judgmental.
- Peers who did not speak up, were judgmental, closed-minded and/or apathetic.
- Themselves: students who felt fearful, worried, intimidated, insecure, unconfident.
- Environment: seating in rows was considered not conducive to open discussion and dialogue.

The vast majority of respondents felt it very important to create a safe space in classrooms and the majority perceived that they learned more in these classrooms. The majority of students reported being academically challenged in a safe space. The majority were also challenged in terms of personal growth and awareness. Students reported that in a safe space they were more likely to learn about others, to expand their own viewpoints, to increase self-awareness and to develop effective communication skills. They also reported that content was more "real", "hands-on" and "experiential" in a safe learning environment.

Results from the study did not find any major differences among gender or race/ethnicity in perceptions of the characteristics that are necessary to create a safe space. Students placed most of the responsibility for a safe classroom environment on teachers, and were not always aware of their own role in creating or hindering safe spaces.

The authors of the study conclude that it is unrealistic to expect any classroom to be entirely safe for all students. The best that can be strived for is the creation of a safer space. The authors recommend the production of student-developed guidelines for class discussion so that students learn what behaviours and attitudes are expected of them.

Research on citizenship education

With regard to research on citizenship education, Deakin Crick's review of seven international research studies showed the positive impact of moderated discussion and dialogue on student learning and achievement (Deakin Crick 2005):

- Approaches using discussion and dialogue are especially effective in enhancing learning and in increasing students' motivation and engagement.
- A co-operative learning environment that empowers students leads to increased self-confidence, greater self-reliance and more positive behaviour.
- Students' participation increases when lesson content relates to their own personal experiences.
- In gaining awareness of the situations of others, students are enabled to analyse and reflect on their own personal stories and experiences.
- Discussion and dialogue relating to shared values, human rights and issues of justice and equality were effective methods.
- The quality of discussion is a key factor in learning.
- Participative, conversational activity sustains achievement.
- Students become engaged when the experience is challenging, attainable and relevant to their own lives.

We now turn to research specifically on teaching and learning about religions and beliefs in schools focusing, in particular, on classroom interaction research.

The REDCo project

The European Commission REDCo project (e.g. Jackson 2012a; REDCo: www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html) researched the opinions of 14- to 16-year-old school students in eight different European countries (England, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain) on

teaching and learning about religious diversity. Despite the fact that the studies were conducted in nations and states having some rather different policies on religious education and teaching about religions in schools, some common general themes emerged from responses across the eight countries, including the idea of a safe classroom environment:

- Students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and believe this to be possible.
- For students peaceful coexistence depends on knowledge about each other's religions and world views and sharing common interests as well as doing things together.
- Students who learn about religious diversity in school are more willing to have conversations about religions/beliefs with students of other backgrounds than those who do not.
- Students wish to avoid conflict: some of the religiously committed students feel vulnerable.
- Students want learning to take place in a safe classroom environment where there are agreed procedures for expression and discussion.
- Most students would like the state-funded school to be a place for learning about different religions/world views, rather than for instruction into a particular religion/world view (Jackson 2012b: 7-8).

The wide-ranging REDCo studies included analysis of classroom interactions in the eight participant countries. Most of these were analyses of videotaped lessons.[1] Professor Thorsten Knauth co-ordinated the analysis of lessons showing students and teachers working together in different countries. Discussions focused on issues of conflict in relation to religions. The research shows that 14- to 16-year-old students tended to support opportunities for sustained classroom dialogue when studying religions. Discussion about religion within religiously mixed groups outside the classroom was found to be rare. The research showed that there can be "invisible barriers" between different groups during moderated classroom dialogue, especially when students from different backgrounds come together for the first time.

The REDCo research shows that teachers' views on how to approach the diverse religious education classroom are dependent on several inter-related factors such as:

- their personal teaching style;
- their interests and values (van der Want et al. 2009);
- their subject knowledge: this can play a significant role in classroom interaction on religion and values. Well-informed teachers are better able to deal with student interventions (von der Lippe 2010).

Von der Lippe's research, conducted in Norwegian schools, also shows the negative impact media representations of some religious material can have on classroom dynamics, and suggests ways of dealing with this (see Chapter 6, for an illustrative example of her research on young people interpreting media).

1. In schools in two of the countries it was not possible to videotape classroom interactions for various ethical reasons. In these cases classroom interactions were audiotaped and the transcripts were analysed.

Schihalejev's reflections on classroom interaction research and interviews with students and teachers in Estonia conclude that students are "usually interested in the views of their classmates, which can be used to improve motivation and develop a deeper and more manifold understanding of a phenomenon" (Schihalejev 2010: 177). Teachers need to help students to "unpack" their responses, rather than simply affirming them; otherwise students get the impression that a "satisfactory answer" has already been given. If the teacher contributes too much, students tend to rely on the teacher's arguments or remain silent (Schihalejev 2009: 287). With regard to the dynamics of dialogue, Schihalejev points out:

> dialogue is seen as a valuable tool for understanding oneself, others and the concepts being studied. Students are willing to be challenged by dialogue. If the student recognises that security is available and trust has been built up, he or she will risk entering into conflict or vulnerable areas rather than avoiding them or utilising uncontrolled ways to deal with them. (Schihalejev 2010: 177)

However, she also notes that "distancing" – discussing issues at a distance from the personal experience of students – can be a useful initial technique for building up an atmosphere of safety in which students are then able to draw directly on their personal experience (Schihalejev 2010: 164).

REDCo research found that the majority of young people surveyed identified the school as a potential safe space for dialogue about religions. They did not consider that the peer group or the family would be appropriate or likely spaces for this kind of interchange to take place effectively. They were eager to avoid religion becoming an issue of conflict. Students expressed their wish that learning about religions should take place in a safe classroom environment governed by agreed procedures for expression and discussion.

The studies of teachers, students and classroom interaction underlined the need for the classroom being a "safe space" in order to communicate openly about diversity. As a criterion of "safe space" students particularly mentioned not being ridiculed or marginalised because of one's religion or belief (ter Avest et al. 2009).

Von der Lippe records that that some religiously committed students, especially those of a Muslim and charismatic Christian background, were anxious that conversations about religion might lead to conflict, especially fearing that their own beliefs might be criticised or that they personally would have to respond to stereotypical representations of their faith (von der Lippe 2012). The finding reinforces the need for a high degree of sensitivity in developing approaches in which students reveal their own personal positions.

Despite some students' stated wish to avoid conflict, an overview of REDCo research argues that "conflict" can be used constructively in teaching and learning (Skeie 2008). O'Grady's classroom approach, using drama and role play gives examples of successful engagement with conflict issues in the classroom (O'Grady 2013). Fedor Kozyrev, working in the REDCo team from the Russian Federation, came to a similar conclusion. He videotaped and analysed examples of classroom interaction on topics about religion, all dealing with issues of potential conflict, in different schools in St Petersburg. He found that, in the interplay of dialogue and conflict, conflict usually

came first, with dialogue functioning as a means to resolve or avoid conflict. The role of the teacher was to facilitate dialogue. In Kozyrev's observation:

- **The personality and professionalism of the teacher is highly important**. "It depends totally on the teacher whether the interaction will be of a more closed or of a more open nature, whether it will be teacher-centred and bilateral (teacher–students) or poly-lateral inviting students of different views into the conversation, focusing on the differences that exist within the peer groups and opening them up for discussion."
- **A key factor in the quality of dialogue is the relationship between the teacher and the students as shaped in previous work**. "The level of mutual trust and respect, long-term interpersonal tensions and problems, the teacher's commitments and perception of them on the part of the students all constitute an organic component of interaction and contribute essentially into its quality and course."
- **Dialogue becomes more natural, intensive and productive when the teacher addresses students personally**. "This inter-personal element of the teacher–student interaction seems to be an unavoidable prerequisite of dialogue either in a confessional or a non-confessional framework." (Kozyrev 2009: 215)

The teacher's awareness of the dynamics of classroom interaction is important. The REDCo research conducted by Knauth and colleagues (e.g. Knauth 2009) showed that there can be intra-religious barriers, for example between very religious Muslim students and those more influenced by values and attitudes from general youth culture, but still maintaining an Islamic identity. In this context classroom dialogue provided an opportunity for pupils to test and challenge their ideas.

Thorsten Knauth offers below a summary of his work in Hamburg.

Illustrative example
Classroom dialogue in a safe space

"As part of the European research project REDCo, I co-ordinated the analysis of videotaped lessons showing students and teachers in discussion in different countries. Discussions focused on issues of conflict in relation to religions. In my own work in Hamburg, a number of key principles became clear regarding the classroom as a potential 'safe space' for dialogue.

Discussions worked best when the teacher presented a topic as an open question, rather than taking a particular stand. Having ground rules was really important, especially allowing each student to speak without interruption. A non-judgmental attitude from the teacher was also important. Allowing students from different backgrounds to participate in this way gave them the possibility to test, change or to affirm or restate particular positions, or to place themselves in 'between' positions. Such dialogue was challenging and had elements of risk; it required competent and sensitive moderation by teachers.

The Hamburg research was conducted in classrooms in different schools. Some discussions included religiously committed students. There was also a secular but multicultural setting, including pupils more distanced from

religion. In this context, students maintained an 'interested outsider' perspective producing a dialogue *about* religions, rather than 'inter-religious dialogue' which occurred in some other settings.

Students mainly participated very open-mindedly, sharing a broad interest in religious diversity, and being especially involved when religions were related to ethical and political issues. These dialogues showed a need to develop religious literacy among students as well as competence to analyse the role of religion in social life, including media representations of religions.

The research revealed some different patterns which shaped the relation between dialogue and conflict: There was a *tendency to avoid conflict* in order to preserve harmony within the group. There were sometimes 'hidden conflicts' related to power-structures in the classroom. These were associated with students' different levels of ability to communicate and their level of self-confidence. Self-confidence was related to acceptance and recognition in the class. The relation between majority and minority groups could also be related to communication skills and self-confidence. In their role as moderators, teachers need to try to ensure that dialogue is not dominated by the more confident and eloquent students, so that those less able or less willing to express themselves in a group context can have a voice.

In summary, success depends on:

- a communicative atmosphere in class in which ground rules are clearly understood;
- the competence of the teacher to moderate the discussion sensitively and effectively; and
- student confidence, which has to be developed patiently during sustained practice of dialogue."

(For more of Thorsten Knauth's research see Knauth 2006, 2008 and Jozsa, Knauth and Weisse 2009).

Data from various REDCo studies, including those from Estonia, England, Norway, France and the Netherlands, show a low level of motivation for many "secular" students to engage directly with religious vocabulary. However, tolerance emerged as an important value to the majority of students, across the project as a whole. Since most young people felt that learning about religions in schools was necessary to promote tolerance in plural societies, policy makers, schools and teacher trainers might consider developing discussions of tolerance of religious difference as a bridge – not an alternative – to engaging with others' religious language.

Other European research

Qualitative research conducted in Sweden on teaching about religions has shown that some teachers try to avoid dialogue by students concerning beliefs and values since they cannot guarantee a respectful classroom atmosphere (Osbeck 2009). Moreover,

qualitative studies in Norway and England have showed how intentions of dialogue about beliefs and values in the classroom can turn into disrespectful discussions with a degree of victimisation of religious minorities (Lied 2011; Moulin 2011).

There can also be cases of intra-religious disrespect, and even bullying, in which young people from one social group within a particular religious tradition might behave negatively towards students from a different social group within the same religion, especially if the teacher is unaware of particular issues and is reliant on oversimplified classroom texts for information (Nesbitt 2013).

With regard to teaching about religions specifically, Ipgrave and McKenna's research in England with older primary school children gave examples of how respect, tolerance, increased interactions and social cohesion may develop when students of different beliefs are given the opportunity for dialogue (e.g. Ipgrave and McKenna 2007). Ipgrave's action research shows how certain methods and strategies can enable pupil dialogue to take place in the classroom. This is one of the few pieces of international research on pupil-to-pupil dialogue conducted with older primary school children (aged 9-11) rather than adolescents (Ipgrave 2013). Castelli gives examples from his own research and practice of using a dialogical approach with secondary students to explore religious and non-religious world views together in the classroom (Castelli 2012).

The need to develop a sound educational and theoretical basis for addressing highly contentious issues, including religious extremism, in classrooms is emphasised in Joyce Miller's work. She suggests two possible bases: the promotion of pupils' moral development through human rights issues (Miller 2013a); and the use of dialogical and hermeneutical approaches to develop students' understanding of and engagement with text, symbol and ritual (Miller 2013b).

Observations

Research findings on religion in schools are consistent with research on student-to-student dialogue and on the classroom as a safe space in other fields. Deakin Crick's review of research on citizenship education in Europe shows that participative, conversational activity sustains achievement and that students become engaged when the experience is challenging, attainable and relevant to their own lives (Deakin Crick 2005). Holley and Steiner's research on social work students makes the point that seating in rows is not conducive to open discussion and dialogue, and notes the positive effect of involving students directly in producing guidelines for class discussion, helping them directly to learn what behaviours and attitudes are desirable for positive classroom interaction (Holley and Steiner 2005).

Diversity is complex

REDCo and other findings on research on religion and education exemplify the complexity of diversity in late modernity, which provides a context for dialogue. Traditional ideas of plurality interact with a wider context of modern or postmodern plurality (Jackson 2004; Skeie 2003). In terms of religion, some students hold traditional views; others, who identify with a particular religious tradition, may not

adhere to all or even many of its fundamental traditional tenets; others may draw on a variety of religious and humanistic sources in formulating their personal world views; others may articulate a variety of non-religious perspectives.

Locality

Local geography is also a factor, often governing the ethnic and religious composition of classes, and influencing some attitudes expressed in the classroom. This was reflected in REDCo research and subsequent research on young people's attitudes to religious diversity (Ipgrave 2014).

Students

Students are more likely to discuss issues relating to religious and world view diversity in school rather than anywhere else. The personalities of students are very relevant to the safe space issue, as are numbers of students constituting particular subgroups within a class, and the quality of relationship between students and the teacher. Initially discussing issues at a distance from the personal experience of students can help to establish an atmosphere of safety in which students can draw directly on their personal experience. Some teachers have found that dividing classes into smaller groups encourages more diffident pupils to express their views. Several research studies showed the self-perceived vulnerability of student minorities, and various studies reported students wishing to avoid conflict; however, some successful lessons making direct use of conflict issues were observed in the REDCo project. The age of students is also important. The REDCo research covered 14- to 16-year-olds. Ipgrave's research with 10- and 11-year-olds used didactical methods more suited to younger students. Students are likely to gain in confidence and ability to participate competently in classroom dialogue with practice. Discussion of "tolerance" can act as bridge to studying religious language.

Teachers

The role of the teacher is crucial. Teachers need to be aware of their own beliefs and values in relation to their professional role, and to be able to adopt an impartial procedural position (Jackson 1982). They need facilitation and moderation skills; and knowledge of the field of religions and beliefs; and awareness of the backgrounds of young people; and of power relations within classes. The personality and professionalism of the teacher is important, as is the personal relationship between teacher and students. If teachers take a too directive role, students may rely on the teacher's arguments or not participate in discussion. All of this puts particular demands on the initial and in-service training of teachers, and on individual teachers to inform themselves. The general ethos of the school also needs to be consistent with dialogical learning. In acting as a facilitator, the teacher's role is often that of "impartial chairperson", ensuring that all points of view are represented, and sometimes as "objective informant", explaining a range of viewpoints without stating her or his own. In their role as moderators, teachers need to try to ensure that dialogue is not dominated by the more confident and eloquent students (or indeed by the teacher her/himself), so that those less able or less willing to express themselves in a group context can have a voice.

Truth and meaning

Teachers need to be able, impartially, to facilitate and moderate discussions of meaning and truth in relation to beliefs expressed during discussions. Expressing views involves attempting to explain the meaning of language used and attempting to formulate claims to truth. Discussion may involve clarifying and restating such positions, through considering the relationship of "meaning" and "truth" and clarifying the use of language (for example, when language is used metaphorically or literally).

Freedom of religion or belief

Students need to understand that the principle of freedom of religion or belief gives individuals the right to hold a particular belief, even if others do not share it. Participants need to understand that they should respect the right of others to hold particular beliefs. In terms of evaluating others' views and practices that are different from their own (and in clarifying their own views), students might be encouraged to consider possible responses to views and beliefs they do not share.

- **Tolerance** – I do not agree with your view/accept the truth of your claim, but I respect your right to hold that view.
- **Respect** – Even though I do not accept the truth of your claim, I respect the positive effects it brings to personal and social life.
- **Recognition** – I do not agree with your view/accept the truth of your claim, yet your position/way of life has some very positive moral and social effects which should be recognised by society.

Risk

It is unrealistic to expect any classroom to be entirely "safe" for all students all of the time. Providing opportunities for student dialogue and exchange inevitably holds some element of risk, which can be minimised through suitable preparation and training.

Ground rules and democratic principles

Research studies refer to the need for agreed ground rules (and the direct involvement of students in the preparation of such ground rules has been mentioned). However, it is desirable that such rules are not simply agreed, but are understood as exemplifying liberal democratic principles which underpin the public and political life of the school and society, whether these are considered to be implicit in public political culture (Rawls 1993: 223) or justified by reference to wider principles, such as human rights.

The following ground rules have been developed by various groups of students in collaboration with their teachers.

- Appropriate language should be used.
- While respecting the principle of freedom of expression, it should be acknowledged that there are limits; for example, there should be no expression of racist or sexist language or any form of "hate speech" (see www.nohatespeechmovement.org).

- Only one person should speak at a time, without interruption.
- Respect should be shown for the right of others to express views and beliefs different from one's own.
- Ideas should be challenged, not the individuals who express them.
- Students should be encouraged to give reasons for their views.
- Exchanges should be inclusive: everyone should be given the opportunity to express his/her view.

Conclusion

The image of "safe space" for civil and well-ordered classroom interaction when discussing controversial issues such as religions has been considered. Insights from research on the study of religions in schools, especially recording young people's views and classroom interactions, have been reviewed. The general conclusion is that there are suitable methods and procedures for making classrooms safer spaces, but all classroom interaction involves some degree of risk, especially when controversial issues are discussed and different claims to truth are made. This can be minimised by increasing teachers' awareness of power relations within classes, their knowledge of the backgrounds of students and their awareness of relevant research findings. Moreover, there is evidence that young people's confidence and ability to participate competently in classroom dialogue improves with practice. Regarding freedom of expression, the view is taken that controversial issues should be covered, but that all views expressed should be sensitive to the plurality of viewpoints within the school, to minority groups represented in the school and to the principles of democracy and human rights.

Chapter 6

The representation of religions in the media

Introduction

How can teachers help students to analyse critically media portrayals of religions in newspaper reports and television programmes which are sometimes inaccurate or emotive or both? This is the type of question raised by some respondents to the survey, even though the recommendation does not refer directly to media issues. The recommendation does, however, see intercultural competence as including "combating prejudice and stereotypes vis-à-vis difference which are barriers to intercultural dialogue, and educating in respect for equal dignity of all individuals" (section 5).

Media issues were, however, discussed specifically in two Council of Europe Exchanges (see Chapter 1) which brought together representatives of religion and belief organisations in Europe, representatives from the media industry, plus representatives of Council of Europe institutions and civil society organisations. The 2010 Exchange at Ohrid, in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", identified some ways in which key challenges might be taken forward in the worlds of media and faith. Challenges for journalists and media people include:

- renewing a commitment to accuracy, fairness, the right of reply and proper journalistic scepticism, and examining one's own bias;
- provision of better educational programmes and training for journalists and religious leaders;
- supporting media literacy programmes so that people understand both how media work but also how they can contribute;
- providing a space within public broadcasting for access for those of faith and belief to share their ideas and faith perspectives and to affirm dialogue. (https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1579393&Site=CM)

At the 2011 Exchange in Luxembourg participants emphasised the crucial role of the media in avoiding stereotypes, and the need for the representatives of religious communities and non-religious groups to use the media more, including the Internet, to increase contact and dialogue with young people. The need for teaching about effective use of both traditional and new media was affirmed (https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1835599&Site=COE). A Council of Europe report also draws attention to "distorted images and harmful stereotypes of minorities in the media" (Council of Europe 2011).

"Media" was a topic referred to by respondents to the present project's questionnaire survey. Some respondents expressed concern about helping teachers to deal with inaccurate and/or emotive representations of religions in some newspaper reports and television programmes.[1] Also, at various meetings with stakeholders, some criticism was expressed about how religions are represented to young people in some school textbooks and Internet resources.

The present chapter discusses issues related to media, introducing various research findings on the discussion of media representations of religions in the classroom, and on issues relating to the representation of religions in schools. This discussion is followed by a summary of some work done on a Council of Europe project on the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media, which aims to help young people to interpret media representations of cultural material, including representations of religions. It is hoped that these examples from European research and development, taken together, will provide relevant and useful information for policy makers, schools and teacher trainers. Further work needs to be done on young people's own production of media and on young people's use of media-based social networks.

REDCo research on media discourse

As part of the REDCo project, the Norwegian researcher Marie von der Lippe studied intercultural dialogue in relation to educational policy and classroom practice in religion classes in some Norwegian schools. She found that students were affected by different kinds of discourse. These were "dominant" discourses, mainly encountered through the media, and including religion and politics, but also personal "discourse arenas" relating to family, friends, school and activities in which students had some agency. Students were especially affected by "dominant" media representations of Islam. In the classroom they drew on this media discourse, tending to be more negative about Islam and Muslims in this context than they were in their interviews with the researcher (von der Lippe 2009a). Marie von der Lippe, a teacher trainer and researcher, here gives an account of her work with students and teachers:

1. In schools in two of the countries it was not possible to videotape classroom interactions for various ethical reasons. In these cases classroom interactions were audiotaped and the transcripts were analysed.

Illustrative example
Young people, media and religion in the classroom

"*How* do young people talk about religion, *what* are they talking about and *why* do they talk the way they do? During my time as researcher in the field of young people and religion, these questions have frequently come back to me. Based on classroom observation, video recordings of classroom interaction and interviews with students from various ethnic and religious/non-religious backgrounds, I found that young people's language to a large extent is influenced by so called 'dominant' discourses on religion and politics. These discourses are mainly encountered through the media and public debates (von der Lippe 2011a). Students were especially affected by dominant media representations of Islam. In the classroom they drew on this media discourse, tending to be more negative about Islam and Muslims in this context than they were in the individual interviews with me (von der Lippe 2009a). Clearly, such attitudes can have a negative effect on the idea of the classroom as 'safe space' for dialogue [*see Chapter 5*].

In my study I found that students' everyday discourses are characterised both by dominant discourses in the multicultural debate, and their own personal experiences with religious and cultural diversity. These discourses are often in opposition to each other, and it seems that it is more difficult for them to activate discourses related to their own experiences than to representations in the media. When students interpret reality based on their personal experiences with cultural and religious diversity in their everyday life, these representations are, in general, more positive than the representations they encounter in the media. In short, the powerful effect of media discourse (including television news and the Internet) is clear, but students are also capable of formulating their own more independent positions. In relation to school these are important findings.

According to the students, school is one of the few venues where they actually talk about religion and their experiences with religious diversity; school in general and religious education in particular can therefore play an important role. My studies of classroom interaction show that giving students the opportunity to share their views and to criticise dominant discourses, can enable them better to relate their knowledge and understanding of religions to their own personal and social development – but this requires input from the teacher (von der Lippe 2010; 2011a). The connection of the personal and the social in classroom interactions suggests ways in which personal reflection can be connected with themes of social morality and citizenship. The discourse analysis revealed that there is much to learn from how young people talk (von der Lippe 2011b). If this knowledge is used to help students to be more aware of *how* they talk about others, *what* they talk about and *why* they talk like they do, it becomes easier to uncover where and how prejudices and stereotypes are constructed. Making these processes more visible and clearer both to students and teachers, might hopefully contribute to a more open, transparent and balanced discussion in the classroom."

Books and other resources used by schools

There is a limited amount of recent European research available on the quality and use of resources for schools to teach about different religions. The use of resources varies considerably across Europe. With regard to textbooks, traditions range from the use of prescribed textbooks by all students in particular year groups, as in Greece (Palaiologou et al. 2012), to a free choice of resources by teachers, except at public examination level, as in England.

One large-scale study was commissioned by the UK Government's Department for Children Schools and Families to investigate books, electronic resources and other materials used in schools to teach about world religions (Jackson et al. 2010). The religions specified were Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The research included a systematic review (by academics specialising in each of the six religions, specialist educators from each of the main faith communities, and specialist teachers of religious education) of a sample of currently available web resources and textbooks; 20 case studies of the use of materials in schools (10 in each of primary and secondary schools); and a survey of primary and secondary schools across England (with over 600 responses), focusing on the use of textbooks and other resources, including Internet resources.

Key questions included:

- What materials (books, ICT resources and other materials) are available to schools for teaching about and learning from world religions?
- What materials are schools using in practice to develop an understanding of world religions?
- What is the content/nature of these materials used by schools?
- How are these materials used by teachers in the classroom?
- What are the key factors for schools to consider when determining which materials should be used to teach world religions?

The study includes an evaluation of the published materials readily available to schools (including books published since 2000), considers the factors that influence their selection and use, and examines the materials' contribution to learning.

Many religious education books were described by reviewers as attractive and engaging, presenting a positive image of the religions. Books used for 11- to 13-year-olds were closest to having an accurate knowledge and understanding of the religions. However, academic reviewers and faith consultants pointed out a high number of errors and points for criticism in the coverage of religions.

Many of the materials actually used in class were designed and assembled by teachers, from a wide range and variety of published resources (including online resources and books). This trend means that the quality of the materials, and of the students' learning through them, is dependent on teacher knowledge, skill and commitment.

Case studies and the survey showed:

- electronic resources are becoming increasingly popular, particularly with the introduction of interactive white boards and the availability of free video clips online;

- there were many examples of the extensive use of "first-hand" resources such as visitors to the school, outside visits and artefacts (see Chapter 9 on the relationship between schools and communities);
- teachers were more likely to acquire individual books as personal resources rather than sets of books for use by whole classes.

The report included the following recommendations:

- Publishers, authors and designers of websites should work with academics and faith consultants to ensure the accuracy, balance and appropriateness of the representation of religious traditions in their materials.
- School leaders and RE teachers should develop community partnerships between the school and local faith communities, so that pupils can learn about the role of religions in society (see Chapter 9).
- Publishers, authors and designers of websites should promote a culture of "living together" by supplying examples from religions of communal living, positive social involvement and collaborative action between different faith communities.

This extensive report provides an example from one particular nation, but raises important general points relevant to schools across Europe. There are issues about the representation of religions, including their internal diversity (see Chapter 4), and this places responsibility on authors and publishers. There is evidence that teachers felt the need to select from and adapt published materials in order to meet the requirements of students, pointing to a continuing need for teachers with specialist expertise in the study of religions. There are particular issues about the discriminating use of materials freely available on the Internet.

With regard to encouraging a critical approach to Internet use, an important initiative, involving young people directly, is the Council of Europe project Young People Combating Hate Speech Online running between 2012 and 2014. The project stands for equality, dignity, human rights and diversity, and targets hate speech, racism and discrimination (including religious discrimination) as they are expressed online. "The [project's] working methods are awareness raising, advocacy, and it also seeks for creative solutions. It is a project for action and intervention. The project equips young people and youth organisations with the competences necessary to recognise and act against such human rights violations" (www.nohatespeechmovement.org).

So far, little research has been done on young people's use of the Internet as a resource for learning about different religions. A small-scale, ongoing study conducted in Sweden by Hanna Zipernovszky shows little training of upper secondary school students by teachers in the use of the Internet as a resource for religious education. Thus, students tended to use the Internet in the same way as they would use a textbook, claiming that there was no advantage with digital learning if the only difference was whether they read text on a screen or on a piece of paper (Zipernovszky 2010, 2013).

Direct contact with religious communities outside the school, through visits to schools by members of religious communities, and through visits to places of worship by students and teachers, was seen by many teachers and school leaders to be of considerable value as a complement to the use of books and other resources including Internet sites (see Chapter 9). Other research, such as von der Lippe's contribution to

the REDCo project, emphasises the importance of helping students to develop their ability to analyse and evaluate broader media representations of religions, such as those commonly encountered in news broadcasts. Here the competence of teachers (including their knowledge base) is vital in helping to empower students to analyse and criticise "dominant" media discourses in relation to the representation of religions.

Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media

In another project in the Council of Europe, aiming to help students to analyse intercultural encounters, material has been developed specifically to help students to analyse media images. The project is entitled Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media, here abbreviated to Autobiography and Visual Media. The Autobiography and Visual Media project is designed to assist learners to analyse and think critically about a specific image which they have encountered in the media, for example on television, in a book or on the Internet. Although cultural material of various kinds is intended to be included, the Autobiography and Visual Media project is very relevant to the needs of students learning about religions. The visual image to be analysed should show one or more people who practise a different religion from another country, or from another religious background in the learner's own country. The visual image can be still (e.g. a photograph) or moving (e.g. an Internet video clip). The encounter is one-directional; that is, the viewer interprets the image, but the person represented in the image has no role in the encounter. However, the role of the person (or persons) who produced the image and therefore decided how to represent the image to others, for example the photographer or film director, can be analysed. The Autobiography and Visual Media project material has two related purposes:

- **Self-evaluation**: it guides learners to evaluate their own responses to a specific image. If used repeatedly over time, learners can look back and compare how they have evaluated a range of images and thus learn about themselves.
- **Teaching and learning**: teachers can use it as a means of stimulating reflection and analysis, and can thus facilitate learning in deliberate ways.

There are three main ideas behind the Autobiography and Visual Media project:

- Images which people see in visual media can influence their thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards people from other cultures and religions, often without them being aware of the influence.
- A tool for helping people to reflect upon the images which they have seen can enable them to become more aware of and sensitive to stereotyping and to the implicit messages about people from other religions and cultures which are transmitted through visual media.
- The tool can help people to become more aware of the "hidden" media production processes which are responsible for the contents of the images that are encountered through visual media.

The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media is available in versions for younger learners (aged from 5 to 6 years up to around 10 to 12 years), and other learners (from secondary school age to adults) and can be accessed at www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/AEIVM_Tool_en.asp.

The critical use of visual media is clearly of high importance in resourcing learning about cultural diversity, including religious diversity. However, first-hand experience is also highly desirable as a resource for understanding religions (see Chapter 9).

Conclusion

Various issues have been considered relating to the representation of religions in the media and textbooks which are relevant to policy makers, schools and teacher trainers. The recommendation includes a plea for the provision of high-quality resources for the use of students in schools. Issues raised by one large-scale research study about the quality, production and use of school textbooks and Internet sites on religions were discussed, and some general principles were summarised. Research from the REDCo project shows the need for teachers who can enable students to utilise their own "personal discourses" in analysing media representations of religions. Some ongoing research on older students' use of the Internet in studying religions was also mentioned. Attention was drawn to the Council of Europe project on Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media. This is considered to be a highly valuable tool for use by students and teachers in analysing examples of media representations of religions.

Chapter 7

Non-religious convictions and world views

Introduction

The present chapter aims to raise a variety of issues concerning the integration of "non-religious convictions" with religions. Some of these issues have been mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, and in Chapter 3 on terminology.

The Council of Europe upholds the right of freedom of religion or non-religious belief, and the ministerial recommendation (Council of Europe 2008a) advocates the study of both "religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education".

Organised religions are considered as institutions set up by and involving citizens who have the right to freedom of religion, and are part of civil society. Religions thus have "potential for providing guidance on ethical and civic issues, which have a role to play in national communities". Therefore, the Council of Europe welcomes and respects religion "in all its plurality, as a form of ethical, moral, ideological and spiritual expression of certain European citizens, taking account of the differences between the religions themselves and the circumstances in the country concerned" (Council of Europe 2007, paragraph 3).

Similarly, the right to hold "non-religious convictions" is equally respected within the Council of Europe, and intercultural education is expected to include developing an understanding of both religions and non-religious convictions. The diversity and complexity of religions and non-religious convictions is recognised in the 2008 Council of Europe recommendation on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.

> Religious and non-religious convictions are diverse and complex phenomena; they are not monolithic. In addition, people hold religious and non-religious convictions to varying degrees, and for different reasons; for some such convictions are central and may be a matter of choice, for others they are subsidiary and may be a matter of historical circumstances. The dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education should therefore reflect such diversity and complexity at a local, regional and international level. (Council of Europe 2008a, appendix: paragraph 3)

From a Council of Europe perspective, teaching about both should "develop tolerance as well as mutual understanding and trust". Such teaching is regarded as "an essential precondition for the development of tolerance and a culture of 'living together', as well as for the recognition of our different identities on the basis of human rights" (Council of Europe 2008a, appendix: paragraph 4).

Non-religious convictions

The text of the recommendation mentions but does not define "non-religious convictions" (Alberts 2012). As with "religions", non-religious convictions are considered as "cultural facts" within the larger field of social diversity and are described as "complex phenomena; they are not monolithic". Principles are provided as the basis on which religions and non-religious convictions can be covered in a framework of intercultural education. These include:

- freedom of religion or belief;
- their contribution to cultural, social and individual life;
- their influence on individuals in public life;
- they are not entirely pre-defined by family or community;
- they are best approached in an interdisciplinary way;
- knowledge of them should help to develop sensitivity to human rights, peace, democratic citizenship, dialogue and solidarity;
- the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions to intercultural dialogue is a precondition for developing tolerance and culture of living together;
- the manner in which religions and non-religious convictions are introduced should be appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils as well as to current best practices in member states. (Alberts 2012).

This is clear and helpful. However, we are still left with the question, "What exactly is a non-religious conviction?" Defining non-religious convictions appears to be at least as problematic as defining religions.

Religions and beliefs

Currently there is no consensus about what exactly the broad field denoted by the expression "religions and non-religious convictions" includes, and there are some issues in finding terminology to describe the field which satisfies all parties. Not surprisingly, there is a lively academic discussion, covering issues such as the complexity of distinguishing between religion and non-religion (Lee 2012), and between religion and belief (Day 2009, 2011).

The specific term "non-religious convictions" is not in wide use in English-speaking countries and appears in Council of Europe documents as a translation from the French *convictions non religieuses*. One issue with this term is that it seems to cover only convictions or beliefs and not other aspects of a way of life or view of life.

Some organisations and projects separate but maintain a link between the two general areas of "the religious" and the "non-religious". For example, the United Nations

Alliance of Civilisations programme uses the term "Education about Religions and Beliefs" (http://erb.unaoc.org). Here, the term "beliefs" is used in a technical sense to refer specifically (and in a "shorthand" way) to non-religious beliefs. It thus mirrors the human rights codes which speak of "freedom of religion or belief" (see Chapter 8). Similarly, the OSCE Toledo Guiding Principles use the terminology of teaching about religions and beliefs, as in the full title of the document, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OSCE 2007). However, this use of language is sometimes criticised by those who feel that the term "beliefs" seems to be associated primarily with non-religious perspectives. Moreover, "religion" is not synonymous with "theism", and strands of certain religions, such as Buddhism or Hinduism, are non-theistic.

Combining religious education with moral or values education

In attempting to include study of non-religious perspectives, some states or regions combine religious education (or its equivalent) with values education. Thus, in the Canadian province of Québec, we find a syllabus on Ethics and Religious Culture taken by all pupils (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Québec 2008), and in Scotland, for some levels of schooling, there are programmes in Religious and Moral Education. As the official curriculum document, "Religious and Moral Education Principles and Practice" states:

> Religious and moral education enables children and young people to explore the world's major religions and views which are independent of religious belief and to consider the challenges posed by these beliefs and values. It supports them in developing and reflecting upon their values and their capacity for moral judgement. (Education Scotland 2014)

Some critics point out that there is more to a non-religious stance than ethics. Others suggest that titles such as "ethics and religious culture" or "religious and moral education" seem to imply that morality is a comparable or parallel phenomenon to religion. Such critics sometimes point out that, for religious people, a moral perspective is integral to a broader religious outlook, which includes other aspects or dimensions. Norway's *Curriculum for religion, philosophies of life and ethics* (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2008) broadens the field to include non-religious philosophies as well as ethics. We will return to the issue of nomenclature below.

A final point relating to ethics is to note that some teachers have used opportunities to invite visitors who work in the context of ethical issues – for example magistrates and members of the caring professions – as visiting speakers (see Chapter 9).

Spirituality

Some other terminology is inclusive of both religious and non-religious convictions. For example, there is a growing literature on education and spirituality, some of which includes both religious and non-religious interpretations of the spiritual. Among those advocating an inclusive approach is Jacqueline Watson (Watson 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Watson suggests a pedagogy for spiritual education which is modelled

on inter-faith dialogue, enabling young people to express their different views in a safe space, including an acceptance that there will be different views of the spiritual, including atheistic views. Pupils' spiritual development and transformation, on this view, depends on a continuing process of dialogue with each other's differences. No final resolution of views is expected, although some development of personal views is likely to take place through the process of dialogue with difference. One issue with using the term "spirituality" to cover both religious and non-religious fields is that the term is itself contested. On the one hand, some writers claim "spirituality" specifically for religious traditions; on the other, some adherents to non-religious ways of life do not wish to describe their philosophy or outlook as "spiritual".

Life interpretation

As indicated in Chapter 3 on terminology, some European writers make a bridge between "religion" and "secular world views" by using terms with the prefix "life": life questions, life orientation, life philosophy, life interpretation, life view, life stance. There is a distinct Nordic tradition of research going back to Anders Jeffner's use of the term *livsåskådning*, which has had a broad influence in Scandinavian countries and beyond since the 1970s. Jeffner's original definition of *livsåskådning* includes three dimensions: "view of the world", "values orientation" and "basic attitude". Since Jeffner, this research tradition has been developed in educational terms by writers such as Sven Hartman (Hartman 1986, 1994). Various terms in the Nordic languages refer to "life orientation" (e.g. Norway: *livssyn*, "view of life"; Sweden: *livsåskådningar*, "interpretations of life"). These terms are inclusive of religious and non-religious ways of life ("life interpretation" often includes religious and non-religious ways of life, while *livssyn*/"view of life" is considered a part of both religious and non-religious life interpretations). They are roughly equivalent to the English term "world view", an expression increasingly used in education literature as inclusive of religious and non-religious philosophies or ways of life (see below). Those working to integrate religious and non-religious perspectives are advised to consult this literature (e.g. Gunnarsson 2008, 2009a and 2009b) as well as literature relating to world views (see below).

World views

Fairly close to the term "life stance" is "world view". The English term "world view" is a translation of the German *Weltanschauung*, a concept fundamental to German philosophy, referring sometimes to the framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual, or wider grouping, interprets and interacts with the world. In religious, theological and educational discourse, "world view" tends to be used more loosely. An overview of a sample of literature on world views education by scholars from the Netherlands confirms a common concern with existential questions. They suggest a provisional definition of "world view" as "a view on life, the world and humanity" (van der Kooij et al. 2013). On this definition, all religions would be considered as world views, but not all world views would be considered as religions; religions would be classified as a subset of world views. In the literature, world views fall into two broad categories – which the authors call "organised" and "personal" world views.

Organised world views are more or less established systems with a group of adherents, although their boundaries are often disputed, while personal world views are individuals' views on life and humanity. Organised world views have developed over time, as relatively coherent, established systems of belief and value, with groups of followers. Organised world views do not always contain the same elements. The religions of the world are organised world views, as is secular humanism. Organised world views are clear views of life, the world and humanity. They provide answers to existential questions, prescribe moral values (this element overlaps with the existential one), aim to influence thought and action, and aim to provide meaning in life. This could be through metaphysical beliefs – to serve God, for example – but it could also be through moral and social beliefs, such as moral responsibilities towards other people and the natural world. There is nevertheless an issue about what exactly would be included in a list of organised world views. Secular humanism is an obvious candidate. It includes atheism, but is not simply a statement of an atheist position. Secular humanism (or Humanism with a capital H) takes the view that human beings are capable of being ethical without religion or a God. But it also emphasises the unique responsibility facing human beings and the moral consequences of their decisions. Secular humanism includes the view that any form of ideology, whether religious or political, should be thoroughly examined by each individual and not simply accepted or rejected on authority. It also includes an ongoing search for truth, primarily through science and philosophy.

It is not so straightforward to identify other non-religious organised world views. Could, say, "neo-liberalism" (economic, self-interested, utilitarian, rational individualism) be included? And are there organised world views that straddle both the religious and non-religious, such as "ecological holism", which might be seen perhaps as an emerging world view?

Personal world views describe personal views on identity which give meaning to life, influencing thought and action. A personal world view can be based on or related to a religious or secular organised world view (like Humanism), but this is not a necessary condition. It might involve holding religious or spiritual beliefs, but without belonging to any organised group, or may involve belonging to a specific group without holding all the beliefs associated with that group. A personal world view can be more eclectic and idiosyncratic than an organised world view. Due to factors such as individualism, secularisation and globalisation, many people have developed a personal world view not based on a single organised world view. A personal world view includes moral values and ideals, and may or may not include practices of various kinds. Personal world views are more complex and harder to demarcate than organised world views. They may, or may not, include attachments to organised religious world views that are more "cultural" or "ethnic" in nature than theological or spiritual. As Francesca Gobbo remarks:

> every individual is – to a greater or lesser degree – a multicultural subject, since her/his enculturation within the family and social environment does not preclude her/him from exploring, comparing and evaluating, learning other cultural perspectives and practices (unless the power differentials in a given society prevent such explorations through segregation or exclusion legislated within the political realm). (Gobbo 2012)

Personal world views may be deeply spiritual in nature, often drawing on ideas and practices from religions and perhaps including a commitment to humanitarian and ecological values. Some personal world views might draw on more than one religious tradition. Moreover, personal world views need not be completely individualistic and may overlap with or be shared by others. For example, the term "Jubu" has been used by some persons with a Jewish background who practise forms of Buddhist meditation (Kamenetz 1994). Some members of the Sea of Faith Network combine forms of Christian spirituality and practice with an essentially atheistic outlook (Boulton 1996).

Someone may have a personal world view, but some aspects of it may be difficult to articulate, may be latent rather than explicit, or an individual may be moving in the direction of having a personal world view. Beliefs underpinning a personal world view can lead to expression of meaning through action (e.g. actions based on a moral decision). There might be temporary losses of meaning – for example through bereavement or a broken relationship. This does not negate the idea of a background personal world view.

In summary, a personal world view is a view on life, identity, the world and humanity that relates to existential questions and includes values and ideals. Personal world views may draw on a variety of sources. They influence an individual's thought and action, usually giving meaning to life.

It is of interest that in Simeon Wallis's qualitative research with adolescents, he found that a majority of students saying they had "no religion" identified neither with atheism nor agnosticism, but had less clearly defined stances (out of 23 students, only seven identified as "atheist" with two "agnostics"). He notes that the inclusion of secular philosophies alongside the study of religions does not take account of the diversity within the "silent majority" of non-religious/a-religious pupils (Wallis 2013).

World views/life stance education: policy and practice

There are various issues for policy makers, practitioners and teacher trainers. A key question for policy makers in some contexts is whether it is practically or politically possible to include a consideration of non-religious world views or life stances alongside religions in the context of intercultural education in schools. Clearly, the age of children is a factor in making such a judgment. As indicated above, the study of organised world views or life stances, including religions, already takes place in a variety of educational systems, as in Norway, where pupils study religions and other world views such as secular humanism (see Bråten's illustrative example below).

Some consideration of personal world views, in addition to organised world views, is desirable in order to provide a nuanced and non-stereotypical view of diversity. With regard to personal world views, some educational systems encourage young people to relate their learning about religions to their own developing views on life, or personal sense of identity. This might involve both closeness and distance in considering the beliefs and values of others, for example empathising with people from other backgrounds, but also applying more distanced critical ideas and judgments.

Schools cannot be expected to help children to develop a fully coherent personal world view. This is a lifelong process. However, young people can be stimulated to think about their own life stance or world view and those of others. In this respect, existential questions and issues of meaning in life, together with the influence of world views, can help students to gain a better understanding of others, and through this gain a better understanding of themselves. This is especially important in societies where a mixture of traditional and non-traditional religious and secular world views coexist.

With regard to the role of the teacher, some educational systems would not encourage teachers to discuss their own personal world views with students, emphasising the teacher's roles as provider of authoritative information and facilitator of discussion and dialogue. In certain educational systems, because of perceived dangers of proselytisation, it would be forbidden for teachers to share their own personal world views with students in class. In some contexts, teachers might be able to draw upon their own personal views in an impartial rather than neutral way (Jackson 1997: 135-36). A helpful set of guidelines on demonstrating respect for diversity and promoting equality in relation to teaching about religions and beliefs, entitled "A Practice Code for Teachers of RE" is available at http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/media/file/Practice_Code_for_Teachers_of_RE.pdf.

Oddrun Bråten, a teacher trainer and researcher, observed Religions, Life views and Ethics (RLE) lessons in Norway. For this illustrative example, she describes lessons aiming to integrate work on religious and non-religious world views within RLE.

Illustrative example
Exploring religions and life views together

"A couple of years ago I observed lessons which exemplify 'Religions, Life views and Ethics' (RLE) at its best. 'Non-religious world views' have been an integral part of RE in Norway since the merging of the subjects 'Christianity' and 'Life views' in 1997. In two 10th grade groups (students aged 15-16) the teacher facilitated pupil discussions based on lyrics of popular songs. In the lessons I observed this was 'What if God was one of us?' by Joan Osborne.

In the first group the discussion took an existential turn leading the pupils to the edge of their thinking; for example, one student noted that 'God cannot have created from nothing; and what was before God, or before the Big Bang? This is not possible really, yet we are here …' In the other group the conversation took an ethical turn, as students did not agree about whether being kind to everybody – in case they turned out to *be* God (in the context of the song lyric) – was a good act or a selfish act. They also discussed whether doubt is a *part of* faith, and whether humans have free will.

In both groups observed, it seemed that students wanted to create a distance from any acknowledgement of being Christian/religious. For example, they would say 'not that I believe in this, but …' None of them expressed an overtly Christian world view, although the plurality reflected in these fairly homogeneous groups formally ranged from membership of the Church of Norway to possibly being associated with the Humanist Association.

In the name of the subject in Norway, the 'L' for Life views is there to signal the inclusion of non-religious life views or world views. However, teaching of organised secular world views is only a minor part of one-third of the subject. Actually, only one 'organised' secular life view is represented, and this is Humanism. Under the main area of ethics and philosophy, however, one can find materials associated with Humanism as a broad historical tradition, including discussions of human rights and human dignity.

It needs to be understood that RLE is not a religiously-based subject, but is neutral and inclusive. This opens up possibilities for discussions based on the many individual world views which today's young people have, including non-religious stances. In the case of the teacher I observed, in his efforts to facilitate dialogue, he managed to create an arena where open dialogue on ethical and existential questions took place, and where participants were able freely to express various secular life views.

This is not an example of teaching of an organised secular world view, but of a teacher stimulating his students to think about their own personal world views and those of others. Through the use of song lyrics he created an open safe space for discussion where his own life stance did not interfere. Taking place in year 10 it also facilitated use of past learning through students' expressions of their own world views, thus helping students to clarify and perhaps develop their views. This is why I regard this as an example of RLE at its best."

For more of Oddrun Bråten's work, see Bråten 2013, 2014a and 2014b.

Religious and non-religious belief in schools

In terms of didactics, it would be interesting to develop approaches that could cover both religious and non-religious world views as well as organised and personal world views. The interpretive approach could be adapted to include non-religious life stances, with its dynamic of relationship between individuals, the various kinds of groups they belong to, and the wider tradition (or organised world view) they relate to most. Moreover, any approach using dialogue should in any case be inclusive of all participants, regardless of religious or non-religious background, or of personal world view. Castelli's inclusive approach to "faith dialogue" in the classroom aims specifically to integrate the study of religious and non-religious life views (Castelli 2012), and Ipgrave's dialogical approach (see Chapter 4) could also be adapted to do the same (Ipgrave 2001, 2013). The Face to Faith project's use of video-conferencing to promote dialogue between students in schools in different countries is also worth exploring in this context (see Chapter 9). It would also be valuable to investigate examples of how teachers in Norway, Scotland and Québec have managed to integrate studies of religion and ethics or of religious and non-religious world views (as in Bråten's example above). The Council of Europe's ongoing work on intercultural competence (acquiring appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes) can be applied to the study of world views or life stances, just as it can to religions.

Various issues are raised for policy makers, teacher trainers and schools. Policy makers need to explore the issues of integrating "non-religious convictions" with studies of religions, and to identify a policy that is workable in their own particular context. An important issue is whether and how to represent both organised and personal world views or life stances. A particular issue for schools and teacher trainers is establishing ways to help teachers (whether in initial or in-service training) to balance their expertise, in terms of their knowledge and understanding of various relevant world views, with their competence to help students to explore these in an active and engaged way, appropriate to their age and aptitude. A very important wider issue for providers of degree courses in universities is to identify appropriate content for qualifications requiring wider subject knowledge than that provided in courses in the study of religions or theology.

Conclusion

In attempting to integrate the study of "non-religious convictions" and religions within intercultural education, policy makers, schools and teacher trainers face a number of issues. Among those discussed have been definitional and terminological concerns, and the skills and attitudes needed to promote dialogue (see also Chapter 4). Examples of the combination of the study of religions and secular ethics were given as a way to include non-religious convictions alongside religions as part of intercultural education. The use of "spirituality" was considered as a possible generic term to cover religions and non-religious convictions; however, some issues were raised in connection with this. The terms "life orientation" (together with cognates) and "world view" were considered, both being seen as potentially workable for covering both religious ways of life and non-religious convictions. An important distinction was made between organised world views and personal world views. Some issues for policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and providers of university courses were also introduced.

Chapter 8

Human rights issues

Introduction

One of the fundamental aims of the Council of Europe is "to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law"; human rights are at the core of its activity. The recommendation states:

> The recommendation's aim is to ensure taking into account the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education as a contribution to strengthen human rights, democratic citizenship and participation, and to the development of competences for intercultural dialogue. (Council of Europe 2008a: 9)

Thus the Council of Europe's work on education about religions and non-religious convictions as a dimension of intercultural education needs to be understood in the context of its wider activity related to human rights education and education for democratic citizenship.

Within the Council of Europe, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are considered to be closely related. As the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education states:

> Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives. (Council of Europe 2010)

Human rights education and intercultural education are also closely connected in Council of Europe thinking, as in the Committee of Ministers' Declaration Regarding Intolerance – A Threat to Democracy which encourages educational work promoting intercultural understanding as part of education for democracy (Council of Europe 1981, 2.7) and the Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, which recommends the development of intercultural competence through education as a means to counter intolerance (Council of Europe 2011). In the first part of the 2011 report, the contributors identify various risks to Council of Europe values, including a possible clash between "religious freedom" and freedom of expression. They go on to identify the main actors able to bring about changes in public attitudes, including educators, mass media, civil society and religious groups. Among the many themes tackled in the report is that of stereotyping and misrepresenting religious groups.

Specifically in relation to teacher training, the Council of Europe 2008 recommendation advocates "objective and open minded training ... that is in conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights". It also recommends that states should "develop training in methods of teaching and learning which ensure education in democracy at local, regional, national and international level" (Council of Europe 2008a).

Some material on human rights, relating to the rights of children, parents, teachers and minority groups, for example, has influenced European law. Policy makers, schools and teacher trainers need to be aware of and to take account of the key issues.

The present chapter introduces the idea of human rights and reviews some of the legal issues relating to parents and legal guardians and to children. There follows a broader discussion relating to the concept of human dignity which is central to the idea of human rights. It is recognised that not all cultures and religions express the ideas of human dignity and the human person in the same way, and some discussion of different views is considered to be a part of intercultural education. Background information on the debate about the relationship between personal autonomy, human rights and responsibilities is provided as a resource. Finally, there is a focus on handling issues where there is a potential conflict between certain values and traditions held by certain religious groups and a liberal perspective associated with the human rights codes. These include an issue raised by a number of respondents to the questionnaire, concerning the wearing of religious symbols in schools. (The issue of students' freedom of expression during discussion is discussed in Chapter 5 on "safe space"). There are high responsibilities on schools in handling human rights in relation to religion. As a major Council of Europe report affirms, education is an important tool for combating intolerance, but is also an area in which religious discrimination can exist (Council of Europe 2011).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948. The human rights principles articulated in the Universal Declaration and other human rights codes underpin the work of the Council of Europe and that of other Western intergovernmental organisations.

The Universal Declaration was written in a climate of moral response to the atrocities experienced during the Second World War and, through its 30 articles, it attempts to identify fundamental rights to which all persons are entitled by virtue of their humanity. Articles 18 to 21 deal with spiritual, public and political freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief. In this context, "belief" is used in a technical sense to refer to belief systems or world views other than the religious (see Chapter 7).

Post-9/11, there has been a climate in which various intergovernmental organisations have been concerned that young people should have some knowledge and understanding of the diversity of religions and beliefs – or religious and non-religious world views – in order to promote a climate of living together in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, or even mutual respect. Such intergovernmental organisations include the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations through its Alliance of Civilisations programme. The Council of Europe ministerial recommendation takes this inclusive view.

Human rights and the law

The Universal Declaration and other human rights codes have been incorporated into international law, into the European Convention on Human Rights, and into the legislation of some individual countries. Thus, there are laws concerning human rights relating to educational issues – about the rights of children, parents, teachers and minorities in relation to religions and beliefs – that are relevant to policy makers, schools and teacher trainers. This legislation has influenced the Council of Europe's work in this field (for example, Council of Europe 1981, 2010) as well as the educational work of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE 2007). In the context of publicly funded education, there are issues of balancing the rights of parents or legal guardians and children, as well as issues concerning the rights of teachers and of minorities represented in classrooms and in the teaching profession.

The rights of parents and legal guardians

It is clear in international law that parents and legal guardians have a right to educate their children in accordance with their religious or philosophical convictions (Vienna Concluding Document 1989, cited in OSCE 2007: 34). Similarly, Article 2 of the Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights provides that:

> No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. (quoted in OSCE 2007: 38)

Moreover, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (a multilateral treaty – which is part of the International Bill of Human Rights – adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966 and in force from 1976) provides that states party to it "undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions" (cited in OSCE 2007: 39).

However, it does not follow from this that the state has to provide a form of education in accordance with parental beliefs. This is up to the state. However, parents are able to object to the variety and content of the religious education offered to their children within a particular system where it is considered that such education "is intended to or has the effect of projecting the truth (or falsity) of a particular set of beliefs. In consequence, parents must have the right to withdraw their children from such forms of teaching" (OSCE 2007: 39).

Rights of the child

International law regards children as autonomous individual persons. As children, they have the same right to freedom of religion or belief as adults. However, children's rights have to be seen in balance with the rights of parents and legal guardians in relation to upbringing within particular religious or philosophical traditions. In law, the rights of the child in an educational context are often exercised by parents and guardians on behalf of the child. International law recognises that at some point in the child's development, he or she may wish to claim their own rights in relation to religion or belief, for example, with regard to their own religious identity. There is no clear-cut position in law for judging the transition from parents acting on behalf of children, and children acting as autonomous individuals. Legal precedent favours the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. With regard to the state, international law enshrines the same obligation to maintain neutrality as it does with adults. As Article 3.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child puts it:

> The state has the same obligation to maintain a posture of neutrality and cultivation of toleration and respect in relation to children that it has in relation to adults, and should not be implicated in efforts to coerce the conscience of anyone. In practice, one can expect that the rights enjoyed by the parents regarding the education of their children in accordance with their religious or philosophical convictions will transfer to the children themselves in a fashion commensurate with their evolving capacities. (cited in OSCE 2007: 36)

Policy makers, schools and teacher trainers are referred to the *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE 2007) for further information and for discussions of the rights of teachers and the rights of minorities.[1]

Intercultural discussion about human dignity and human rights

Some critics question the universality of human rights, especially arguing that all value systems are in some way related to particular cultural (including religious) history and experience (e.g. MacIntyre 1981: 69). Some have argued that the ideas of natural rights and human equality are rooted in Christian tradition (Waldron 2002). Whatever the roots of the idea, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was expressed in the secular (but not secularist) context of an intergovernmental organisation which is part of the public political sphere. The Universal Declaration

1. One website supporting equality and diversity in education, and drawing attention to media stereotypes and misrepresentations, is www.insted.co.uk/insted.html.

forms the moral basis of the work of intergovernmental organisations which have to maintain neutrality towards religious claims. Nevertheless, the Western political and cultural context in which the Universal Declaration was developed is plain to see.

The concept of human dignity

Many critics of the universal imposition of Western liberal democracy and a Western formulation of human rights do accept the idea of the innate value of the human person – what the Universal Declaration calls "human dignity". However, they express it differently from the Western view of the individual, autonomous person. Rather, they use moral concepts and practices from within their own cultural and religious traditions which support the idea of human dignity as being a necessary condition for a just society.

One version of this view points out the relational nature of individual identity in some cultures, in which persons are not considered as "self-contained units" which can be defined in isolation from human relationships (Parekh 1994). This does not mean that there is no concern here with human dignity or a just social order. In a traditional Hindu family, for example, certain family members are expected to take on particular responsibilities by virtue of their particular position in the family (which could be as eldest son, or first cousin, for example). Thus, autonomy, as understood by some Westerners, is restricted by virtue of a person's birth. This does not negate the idea of human dignity, however.

Towards a constructive dialogue about human rights

It has been argued that there can be constructive dialogue between individuals and groups having different emphases when discussing the concept of human dignity. This dialogical view acknowledges different moral, religious and cultural sources for ideas of human dignity, but also recognises some close overlap between the different ideas. This dialogical view is consistent with the work of the Council of Europe, which has a strong commitment to the promotion and exploration of intercultural (including inter-religious) dialogue. On this view, there is a recognition that there are related expressions of the idea of human rights within different cultural or religious ways of life. For example, consensus might be found through the discussion of "overlapping values" – of attempting to find some degree of common ground, even though particular moral justifications may be rooted in different traditions or beliefs (Jackson 1997). This is close to what the philosopher John Rawls means by an "overlapping consensus" (Rawls 1993).

A similar approach has been used in work on children's dialogue, in which children from different religious and cultural backgrounds draw on their own traditions in addressing a common moral issue (Ipgrave 2013; see Chapter 4). There have also been discussions on reflexivity, including the idea that one's understanding can be deepened through encounter with difference (Jackson 1997, 2004; see Chapter 4).

Rights and responsibilities

One topic for dialogue could be the relationship of rights to responsibilities or duties. The criticism is sometimes made that the human rights codes focus fundamentally

on rights and give insufficient attention to responsibilities or duties. Although this criticism has some force, it is not fully justified, since Articles 28-30 of the Universal Declaration deal with duties. Article 29 says specifically: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his [*sic*] personality is possible." Nevertheless, the need to focus more on fundamental duties and obligations has been expressed by various critics. One example is the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, published by the InterAction Council in 1997. This international group was chaired by Helmut Schmidt.[2] The document recognises the specifically Western social and historical context of the Universal Declaration, and some attempt is made at rapprochement between East and West:

> many societies have traditionally conceived of human relations in terms of obligations rather than rights. This is true, in general terms, for instance, for much of Eastern thought. While traditionally in the West, at least since the 17th Century age of enlightenment, the concepts of freedom and individuality have been emphasised, in the East, the notions of responsibility and community have prevailed. The fact that a Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted instead of a Universal Declaration of Human Duties undoubtedly reflects the philosophical and cultural background of the document's drafters who, as is known, represented the Western powers who emerged victorious from the Second World War. (InterAction Council 1997)

The document goes on to say:

> Because rights and duties are inextricably linked, the idea of a human right only makes sense if we acknowledge the duty of all people to respect it. Regardless of a particular society's values, human relations are universally based on the existence of both rights and duties.

Examples of responsibilities in relation to rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities are as follows:

- If we have a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, we also have the obligation to respect others' thoughts or religious principles.
- If we have a right to be educated, then we have the obligation to learn as much as our capabilities allow us and, where possible, share our knowledge and experience with others.
- If we have a right to benefit from the earth's bounty, then we have the obligation to respect, care for and restore the earth and its natural resources.

Classroom issues: potential conflict of different human rights – A threat to safe space?

The discussion above is intended to provide the basis for a critical and reflexive examination of human rights issues, which maximises dialogue between those holding different views within a broad framework that affirms the concept of human dignity as a basis for human rights. However, there are situations in which one human right

2. Further issues concerning law and human rights in relation to religion and education in Europe are discussed in Hunter-Henin (2011).

might potentially or actually conflict with another (for example, certain rights of parents in relation to rights of children, or certain rights of individuals in relation to the rights of others in the public sphere). There may also be disagreements between those holding certain conservative views, perhaps derived from a particular religious viewpoint, and those holding liberal views consistent with the human rights codes. For example, the potential clash between (some) minority groups' views and traditions and those of some aspects of human rights needs to be acknowledged.

Teachers need to promote human rights, but how can they make classrooms "safe" for those who disagree (or come from homes where parents disagree) with some liberal views? There may be inconsistencies between certain conservative religious positions and more liberal stances, often as reflected in human rights codes. Examples include views on homosexuality, issues of gender inequality and issues concerning religious dress and the wearing of religious symbols. In such cases, a distinction has to be maintained between the right to hold a view which may be inconsistent with certain human rights principles, and the responsibility/duty to act in accordance with a rule or law based on human rights principles.

Handling classroom discussions related to some of these issues requires considerable skill, and policy makers, schools (including teachers) and teacher trainers have to make careful judgments about the limits of what is appropriate to discuss in class within their own particular legal and educational systems and cultural context, and with due regard to the age and aptitude of students. The issue of the classroom as "safe space" is discussed in Chapter 5.

Religious symbols, clothing and artefacts in schools

One particular issue faced by some young people from religious backgrounds, and also frequently by their parents, is the wearing of religious symbols in public areas such as schools. This was raised as a matter of debate within their own countries by several respondents to the questionnaire sent out to members of the Council of Europe Education Committee.

In most countries which participated in the REDCo research project, a majority of adolescents supported the right of religious believers to a moderate expression of religious faith in school. For example, they did not oppose the wearing of unobtrusive religious symbols in school or object to voluntary acts of worship for students who are adherents of a particular religion.

However, there were some clear national differences, especially with regard to more visible symbols and dress. For example, in the REDCo quantitative survey, there were significant differences in responses from French and Norwegian students. Almost 60% of French students were negative towards the wearing of religious symbols, while more than 60% of the Norwegian sample thought that wearing visible religious symbols in school should be allowed (von der Lippe 2009b: 169).

Different countries within the Council of Europe have a range of policies on this topic, sometimes reflected in law. In 2008 the Council of Europe launched a *Manual on the wearing of religious symbols in public areas* which aims to clarify the concept

of a religious symbol and to provide guidance to policy makers, experts and others on the criteria used by the European Court of Human Rights in its case law (Evans 2008). Issues concerning religious symbols and dress in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights are discussed in detail from a legal perspective by the author, Professor Malcolm Evans. Here, a flavour of some key points from the manual will be given.

In its case law, the European Court of Human Rights has established that states have a broad margin of discretion in determining how to fulfil their responsibilities as "neutral and impartial" regulators of religious life. However, the Court has also stressed that states must ensure freedom of religion or belief while respecting the rights and freedoms of others. The manual analyses how the European Convention on Human Rights relates to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It identifies the European Court of Human Rights' key concepts of jurisprudence, including the principles of respect, individual and community autonomy and non-discrimination. It also examines the role and responsibilities of the state (neutrality, impartiality, fostering pluralism and tolerance, and protecting the rights of others) and those of individuals.

The manual aims to clarify concepts related to the visibility of religions and beliefs in the public sphere and the notion of wearing religious symbols. It also analyses essential questions for policy makers when addressing issues concerning the wearing of religious symbols. Finally, it applies these principles and approaches to key areas of public life, including public educational institutions such as schools.

According to the manual there is no universal definition of a religious symbol. There are different approaches to understanding religious symbols. One is to consider them as limited to "figures of religious devotion", while another defines religious symbols as including everything which forms an element in the religious life of a believer. This may include, for example, articles of clothing, utensils, written materials, pictures and buildings. The European Court of Human Rights appears to favour a flexible approach in which the individual, rather than the state or the Court, determines whether something is, for them, a religious symbol. However, it is also made clear that this does not mean that the wearing of religious symbols may not be subjected to restrictions by the state.

Other key points covered in the manual include:

- Children have freedom of religion or belief and the state should ensure that knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.
- Teachers may express their religion or belief, but they must not exploit their position to impose personal beliefs that are inconsistent with beliefs of their pupils.
- A range of restrictions may legitimately be placed upon teachers when working in the classroom in order to ensure that an appropriate educational environment is maintained and that the human rights of children and parents are respected.
- Any restrictions on the manifestation of religion or belief by pupils have to be strictly necessary and in the pursuit of legitimate aims of public safety, health, order or the protection of the rights of others.

Readers are referred to the manual in order to consider the issues in the context of their own national situation. The manual is worth studying in detail, but Professor Evans' list of key questions to be considered by policy makers considering placing restrictions on the wearing of religious clothing and artefacts is especially useful in the context of this document, and is reproduced here.

Questions to ask when considering policy on restricting religious symbols in public space

- Is this restriction reflective of a general approach which is neutral and impartial as between all forms of religion or belief, or does it seek to prioritise a particular conception of the good?
- Is this restriction discriminatory in that it bears more directly or more harshly on the followers of one religion or belief than of another?
- Is the restriction directly aimed at the protection of a "legitimate interest" as set out in the Convention, and notably the protection of the rights and freedoms of others?
- Is there a pressing reason why that interest needs to be protected?
- Are there alternatives to the restriction which would secure the realisation of those interests and which would not involve a greater diminution of the freedom to manifest one's beliefs through the wearing of such religiously inspired clothing or artefacts?
- Assuming there to be no other viable alternative approach, is the restriction limited to the minimum that is necessary to realise the specific legitimate aims identified?
- Is the imposition of the restriction compatible with the principles of respect and or the need to foster tolerance and pluralism?

Above all else, it should be emphasised that the relevant question is not whether a restriction is "reasonable" in all the circumstances of the case, but whether it is "necessary", which is a very different question and which sets a much higher threshold of legitimacy.

Should domestic policy and decision-makers address these questions when considering issues concerning restrictions upon the wearing of religious symbols, then it will be more likely that their decisions will be compliant with the [European] Convention [on Human Rights] and be properly respectful of the freedom of religion while striking a fair balance between the competing interests at stake. (Evans 2008: 87-88)

The issue of freedom of expression in schools, raised by some respondents to the questionnaire, was considered in Chapter 5 on the classroom as a safe space.

Conclusion

In summing up some of the points in this chapter, policy makers, schools and teacher trainers should take steps to ensure that:

- there is no discrimination against those with or without religious beliefs in schools and classrooms;

- teachers and students are familiar with the main human rights codes and their statements about freedom of religion and belief;
- school policies and individual teachers promote a climate of living together in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance;
- attention is given in schools to the rights of children and the rights of parents/legal guardians;
- the right to freedom of expression in schools and classrooms is balanced with duties and obligations concerning civility and sensitivity to the presence of minorities;
- careful thought has been given to making judgments about the limits of what is appropriate to discuss in class within their own particular legal and educational systems and cultural context, and with due regard to the age and aptitude of students;
- the relationship between rights and duties is considered by all;
- policy on wearing religious symbols and religious dress in schools is consistent with national law; within this limit, policy makers should consider whether any envisaged restrictions are actually necessary.

Human rights principles form the moral basis for the work of the Council of Europe as well as being highly influential on international and European legislation. This chapter has introduced Universal Declaration of Human Rights and law relating to children, parents and legal guardians derived from human rights codes. A discussion about the different ways of expressing human dignity was considered in relation to classroom dialogue, and this was linked to a consideration of the relationship between human rights and responsibilities or duties. Next, attention was given to the potential for disagreement on human rights issues that could be reflected in classroom discourse. These include issues relating to situations where certain conservative religious views might clash with particular liberal perspectives, posing a potential threat to the idea of "safe space" in the classroom (see Chapter 5). Finally, attention was given to the issue of wearing religious symbols in schools, with reference to findings from research with young people in particular countries and to advice on the basis of a Council of Europe-sponsored manual which explains European law on this topic.

Chapter 9

Linking schools to wider communities and organisations

Introduction

The Council of Europe recommendation sees schools as a vital part of the public sphere, and considers communication between schools and individuals and groups in wider society to be of high importance. It encourages the development of "training in methods of teaching and learning which ensure education in democracy at local, regional, national and international level". For example, in terms of teacher training, the recommendation (Council of Europe 2008a) encourages approaches which "facilitate opportunities for exchanges and dialogue between pupils from different cultural environments" and which "take account of the local and the global nature of the intercultural dialogue". Moreover, the recommendation states that teachers should be trained to be aware of the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and the local community, including religious communities.

There are examples from different parts of Europe of schools linking within the same locality, children and young people of the same age range making links with their counterparts in a different locality, and of schools linking internationally (see below).

There are various ways in which schools can make educational links with religion and belief organisations in their local communities. These include inviting visitors from such communities into the school to act as resource persons in fulfilling educational goals. For example, visitors can be invited into the school to work in class with children; or to provide other resources; or to speak or give a presentation to the whole school or a subset of the school; or perhaps to participate in an interview by a teacher or an interview with one or more students, with questions prepared in consultation with the teacher.

Another way to establish links is through arranging student visits to religious and other communities. For example, students might visit and study one or more religious buildings. They can be given opportunities to meet members of the local community in their own space, and could have the opportunity to interview key community members, or to collect information in other ways, for example through photography (if this is permitted) or through recording observations in note form.

Usually, such visits would be conducted when worship or other religious activity is not taking place. Nevertheless, teachers need to communicate to parents and students the ways in which visitors may be expected to behave or proceed. For example, at a Hindu temple, Sikh gurdwara or mosque, visitors will be expected to wear suitable clothing, to have legs covered, to remove their shoes and in some cases to have head covering and to wash their hands. It needs to be explained that such actions are done out of respect for the religious tradition and are not in themselves devotional acts. However, students should not feel compelled to participate in what could be construed as religious practice, for example bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh sacred book. Moreover, students need to be aware of correct behaviour within a particular place of worship, for example avoiding touching something regarded by the religious community as holy. Teachers can consult leaders and other contacts within religious communities about these matters when organising visits. None of this work is straightforward, and it needs careful preparation and consultation, and time and resources should be allocated for visits as a part of school policy.

It is important to consider the various religion and belief affiliations of students in the class in relation to visits to places of worship. This implies both liaison with parents and sensitivity to the backgrounds and commitments of individual students. The idea of "safe space" (discussed in Chapter 5) applies to outside visits, and to the role of visitors to the school, just as it does to interactions within the classroom.

With regard to visits to the school by members of religion or belief communities, it needs to be explained to visitors that their role is not to proselytise, but to give information and explanation. On behalf of the school, the teacher or organiser has a variety of roles, including making initial contact and maintaining contact with key persons in an organisation, explaining the purposes of the contact and the role of the community and its members (to inform, to explain, and so on, but not to proselytise). The organiser also has to ensure that visitors to the school have an appropriate set of skills for fulfilling the tasks they have been entrusted to do (for example, to give a presentation at an appropriate level). The organiser also should liaise with other relevant staff in the school and with the students who are going to be involved, in order to ensure that the visit runs smoothly. Organisers need to ensure that students and staff thank visitors both informally in person, and formally by letter or e-mail, and that all relevant practicalities are dealt with. There may be a need to offer travel expenses to visitors, or to provide hospitality.

When looking at this range of responsibilities, the complexity of the exercise becomes clear. Liaison with communities outside the school requires a whole-school policy, appropriate support for the staff and students involved, and a person (or persons) within the school who takes responsibility for the link, plus financial support in some cases. Visits by students outside the school, of course, need all the attention that has to be given to any kind of outside visit – parental permission and provision of relevant information for parents, organisation of transport, attention to health and safety issues, guidance to students on appropriate behaviour and dress, etc. In short, with regard to the organisation of activities involving visitors attending the school and students visiting locations in the community, staff involved need to develop the necessary competence. Reviewing the issues and gaining experience can begin in initial teacher training and be extended through continuing professional development in school both through formal courses and through learning from more experienced colleagues (see Chapter 4 and the examples below).

Summary: the role of the teacher

In summary, on the school's side, there has to be an understanding that visitors to the school are not substitutes for teachers.

The role of the teacher lies in:

- preparation for the arrival of a visitor
  - making contact with an appropriate community and its spokespersons;
  - explaining the purpose of the contact and of the visit by a member(s) of the community to the school and explaining any ground rules;
  - ensuring that a speaker is selected who has sufficient experience to carry out the agreed tasks;
  - briefing potential speakers about their role (visitors might be asked to give a short talk, to participate in an interview conducted by the teacher, or perhaps to answer questions from students);
  - assisting the speaker with presentation methods (for example, discouraging reading from a written text; if the guest is not confident enough to speak informally from notes, then another form of communication – such as interview by the teacher – can be recommended);
  - taking account of the religious and belief diversity of classes involved.
- preparation for an outside visit
  - liaison with and briefing of leaders or their representatives at their place of worship to be visited, about the purposes of the visit, what students will be expected to do, and the community's expectations about dress, etc;
  - liaising with parents about the purposes and protocols of visits, and about appropriate dress and behaviour, plus any other relevant matters;
  - briefing students about expected behaviour and dress, and about distinguishing between actions showing respect for the community and its beliefs and devotional acts;
  - briefing students about learning activities to be conducted during the visit (perhaps observation, interview, listening to a presentation, possibly photography, etc.) and about expected outcomes;
  - taking account of the religious and belief diversity of classes involved;
  - dealing with practicalities of transport, health and safety issues, etc.

Following are some examples of activities related to building community links. These concern student-to-student dialogue (using e-mail and video-conferencing), bringing visitors to the school, and taking students on outside visits. These are intended as illustrations of the range of possibilities mentioned above. Some research findings relating to these kinds of activity are summarised.

Student-to-student dialogue

Building e-bridges

One project, utilising children's potential for dialogue using e-mail, linked 10- and 11-year-old children from schools in different parts of England – a very multicultural city in the Midlands and a more monocultural and rural area in the south of

England. Children from the monocultural area were able to form relationships and to communicate with and learn from children from a variety of religious and secular backgrounds who lived in the city. This project is described and evaluated in the following texts: Ipgrave 2013 and McKenna, Ipgrave and Jackson 2008. See also Chapters 4 and 5 for further discussion of Ipgrave's dialogical approach.

The Face to Faith project

The Face to Faith project, sponsored by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, uses video-conferencing to facilitate dialogue between young people from different countries in the world, with the teacher in the principal role of facilitator. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation aims to promote respect and understanding about the world's major religions and show how faith can be a powerful force for good in the modern world. Charlotte Keenan, Chief Executive of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, writes:

> Our Face to Faith schools program works with 12-17 year-olds worldwide, connecting students where they interact in a moderated space, discussing global issues from a variety of faith and belief perspectives, in a respectful and safe way. Young people learn to respect, not fear, difference and gain understanding about one and another. If we can teach our children to recognise our common bonds, the common humanity that we share with the other cultures of the world, then we can have a better idea than those who seek to distort and divide. (Keenan 2013)

For more information, see www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/projects/supporting-next-generation.

Visitors to schools

Parents as guest speakers

One former secondary school teacher, working with 11- to 13-year-old students, reports the following example as a personal learning experience, in terms of developing teacher competence, as well as a valuable learning experience for students:

> Through pupils in the school, I made contact with some local communities. We had a significant number of Jewish pupils in the school and I contacted the local Rabbi. This led to visits to the Synagogue and to regular visits by the Rabbi to the school. I also invited parents to give talks, usually in assembly, and usually with questions. I remember asking a father, who was a Muslim and an engineer, to speak to the lower school about Islam. He turned up looking very nervous, with a big sheaf of notes, which he proposed to read out. Fortunately, over a cup of coffee, I asked him if he could remember being 11 years old. He said that he could; he was a Palestinian from Jaffa. At Ramadan, he and his brothers would really try to keep the fast. But by midday, the sun was beating down so strongly that their will power failed, and they climbed orange trees and sank their teeth into the flesh of the juicy fruit. I said "Do you think you could tell the children this story rather than read your notes?" Fortunately he did this very engagingly – there were many very interesting questions – and *I* learned a lesson about inviting guests into the school, as well as learning something about the representation of religions to young people. (Jackson 2012a, p. 59)

Older students as guest speakers

There are various projects operating currently in which older secondary school students are trained to speak about their own religion or world view to older students in primary schools.

One local education authority in London has pioneered "Ambassadors of Faith and Belief" (AFaB), in which older secondary students (mainly aged 16 and 17) are trained to give information about their own religion or world view to pupils in primary schools. The project was designed to address three local needs: to support good-quality education about religions and other life stances; to provide students at the top end of the secondary school with opportunities to extend their personal and social skills; and to help to promote social cohesion. The students aim both to give a general picture of the religion or world view plus their own personal perspective and experience. The student ambassadors benefit from training in presentation and teaching techniques, as well as gaining experience of working and communicating with children. The primary school children hear a range of different voices, from different religious and belief positions, talking about the religion or world view in general, but they also hear some personal views, in an atmosphere of civility, open discussion, in the safe space of the classroom and under the supervision of a teacher. One of the organisers comments: "The ambassadors have given primary children the opportunity of a powerful and authentic personal encounter and dialogue with very positive role models of faith from a diversity of backgrounds." Primary school children who participated said that meeting the ambassadors helped them to recognise that religion is "modern" and that different people have different ways of living their faith.

Here, older secondary school students who are acting as Ambassadors of Faith and Belief describe what they have to offer to younger learners.

Illustrative example
Young people describe their role as Ambassadors of Faith and Belief

Moenes

"I decided to be part of the AFaB scheme because the idea of fostering understanding between people of different faiths at a young level appealed to me. Being from a Muslim family of mixed ethnicity (Bosnian father and Egyptian mother) I'm fortunate to have been exposed to multiple cultural interpretations of the Islamic faith. Neither of my parents forced their views or opinions on to me and so I was given the freedom to explore various religions by myself. I think it is vital that children are given the same freedom and taught it is okay to ask questions, as this will only increase inter-faith cohesion in the community.

I am studying Biology, Chemistry, English Literature and History, with a particularly strong interest in Middle Eastern and European history and politics."

Olivia

"I am a practising Catholic and I attend St Thomas of Canterbury Church. I am involved with the Brentwood Catholic Youth Service, which I really enjoy, as it's nice to know people my age who are also quite involved in their faith.

I am currently in year 12 and am studying Biology, English Literature, Psychology and Maths. My hobbies are reading, cycling, listening to music and going shopping. I like being part of the Ambassadors programme because it helps me share my view and experience of Catholicism. Although I will be teaching about my faith, I will also be learning about it, which I am looking forward to."

Shironika

"Hi! I'm currently in year 12, now studying Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Economics. Religious Studies was always one of my favourite classes to go to, hence why I am now an AFaB. Not only is the AFaB scheme a wonderful way for children to see religions from a different perspective but it allows me to develop my own understanding of other religions too.

When it comes to my faith, I am on a spiritual journey. I grew up in a Hindu household and was raised as a practising Hindu, going to the temple once a week. However, as I got older, I had some growing doubts about God and his existence, so currently I'm an agnostic. Despite this, I give my presentations on Hinduism as I can draw from my own experiences growing up. Having said that, if any members of staff or children want to know more about my agnostic beliefs, I'll be more than happy to answer any questions."

Akshita

"I am studying Maths, Further Maths, Economics and Sociology. In my spare time I like to read alongside the extra-curricular activities I am part of in school. As I am atheist, the Faith Ambassador programme appeals to me because primary school students are not all taught about atheism. By being a part of the programme I can help them to learn about this. A visit from an atheist AFaB helps many students to question their religion which allows them to become stronger in their faith and become more open to new ideas. Thank you."

Amol

"Hi! I'm Amol and I'm in year 12. First of all I'm delighted to be part of the AFaB scheme because I think it shows young children a whole new insightful look into other faiths and cultures. My main aim in this project is to deliver entertaining and informative presentations to the children so that we both get something out of it: they learn about things that might be a bit new to them (and have fun doing it, hopefully!) and I get the rewarding experience of working with them, and understanding my own faith better.

I am a Hindu and attend the temple and Hindu festivals regularly. At home my family regularly worship at our shrine (which has objects that I'd love to bring in and show the children) and I would like to think I'm well informed about my faith and the reasonings behind certain aspects of it. I intend to talk about this in a fun and not-TOO-boring way!

In case you're interested I am currently studying Biology, Chemistry, English Literature and Music, and hope to someday become a dentist, that is, if my dream of being in a rock 'n' roll band doesn't work out!"

Daniella

"My name is Daniella and I am a student at a Jewish secondary school studying A levels [*external examinations around 18*] in Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Religious Studies. I love music and play the clarinet, saxophone and piano and attend Redbridge Music School where I play in an orchestra.

Having been brought up in a Jewish household and having received a Jewish education from the age of 4, I have gained the knowledge to pass on information about Judaism in a comprehensive way. I understand that some of the concepts in other people's religions are hard to grasp and therefore I intend to give simple yet informative presentations on Judaism.

Becoming an AFaB has been a very exciting and rewarding experience for me as I feel a great sense of pride knowing that I will be able to educate others about my religion. Not only has becoming an AFaB given me the skills I need to pass on my knowledge but it has also enabled me to learn more about my own religion. My confidence has grown and the presentations that I will deliver are informative and interactive as I will often bring Jewish artefacts to make the presentations more exciting."

More about the Ambassadors of Faith and Belief project can be read at: www.redbridgeafab.org.uk/index.php.

Visiting places and people: students using ethnographic methods

Older primary and secondary school students have practised the use of ethnographic methods for use on outside visits, for example to places of worship, and in interviewing key informants (e.g. Jackson 1990). Ethnographic methods include systematic observation, documentary analysis (e.g. literature encountered during the visit; noticeboards, etc.), and structured interviewing (with students selecting the questions and designing the interview schedule under the teacher's supervision). The method aims to develop pupils' intercultural competence in an active and engaged way, building knowledge, developing skills and fostering appropriate attitudes in learning to understand and appreciate different ways of life. Pupils can deepen their appreciation of the complexity of understanding another's way of life by taking part in activities in which methods for fieldwork are discussed. Experience has shown that students respond very positively when helping to devise ideas and methods for trying to understand someone else's beliefs and practices.

The activity of attempting to grasp someone else's way of life raises interesting questions. How do children from a secular background set about understanding religious ways of life? How do children from one religion grasp the faith of people from other traditions? Just as importantly, how do children from one denominational background gain an understanding of others from another branch of the same religious tradition? Ethnographic methods can provide tools for children to be sensitised to traditions other than their own and help them to make sense of religious practices,

beliefs, terminology and symbols. They can reduce the tendency to superimpose familiar concepts and categories on to unfamiliar rituals and practices and can help pupils to overcome the negative or even hostile feelings that can be provoked by new and initially strange beliefs and rituals.

Using data

The aim of collecting material systematically using ethnographic methods is to extend the ways in which young people can discover and interpret the meanings of religious believers and practitioners. Children who interviewed the president of a Hindu temple committee made use of some of their material in a presentation to the whole school to mark the end of their study of two places of worship – the local parish church and the Hindu temple. This was held in the presence of parents and guests, including the priest and the president of the temple. It included raising moral issues about intercultural relations, an explanatory guide to some of the pictorial work done by class members (including photography and art work) and a simulated television news broadcast about the visits. Other forms of creative work that can follow from visits include poetry and art, which give students an opportunity to express their own feelings about and responses to visits and the people they meet.

Analysing intercultural encounters

Another type of activity involves guided critical reflection on experiences of meeting someone from a different religious, or religious and cultural background. Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (Byram et al. 2009) is a resource produced by an interdisciplinary group of educators as part of a Council of Europe project, following up the Council's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008b). It is intended for cross-curricular use, including in subjects such as citizenship or religious education, and is designed to help users to analyse retrospectively encounters that have made a strong impression on them. The chosen encounter could be an experience between people from different countries, or with individuals from a different religious or cultural background in the same country; it could, of course, be an experience of an outside visit from school or of meeting a visitor to the school.

Users select and describe a particular intercultural encounter they have experienced, analyse it individually, and identify different aspects of their current intercultural competence (including knowledge, skills and attitudes). This includes a critical analysis of the way the user acted at the time, how he or she sees the encounter now and how he or she might respond in the future.

The Autobiography is designed to be used by learners individually, or with the help of a teacher (for example in analysing a visit to a religious location) or parent. There are two versions, one for younger learners, up to around age 11, the other for older users in and outside schools. The Autobiography is accompanied by a facilitator's guide and is available online at: www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/AutobiographyTool_en.asp.

An important development from the project is Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media which is discussed in Chapter 6. See www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/AEIVM_Tool_en.asp.

Research on visitors and the use of outside visits

There is a limited amount of European research on the use of visitors and outside visits and related activities in creating links between schools and wider communities in the field of religions and beliefs. Chapter 6, on media representations of religions, reports research showing the importance of building links with religious communities outside the school, which has been recognised by case study schools and a survey of teachers in England (Jackson et al. 2010).

With regard to visitors to schools, Lars Naeslund has conducted research in Sweden on the impact on 17-year-old students of meeting guests from a committed religious background from several different world religions (Naeslund 2009). The guests did not "represent" the religions but, rather, their own personal world view in relation to their particular religious tradition (see Chapter 7). As Naeslund puts it, "each one of them carries a repertoire of experiences and knowledge, which has resulted in a personal view of life within a certain tradition". Interviews and texts written by the students showed that, for many of them, the encounters were challenging engagements with difference and had a significant educational impact. Naeslund remarks:

> The conclusive picture of the texts is that the young – at least temporarily – leave their cosy homes to encounter the other. Back home much could be as it has always been, however, not everything ... The texts indicate that the students do not only learn *about* religion but maybe even more *from* religion. (Naeslund 2009: 193)

Naeslund's "guests" included representatives of non-religious organisations. However, the student reactions to these were not included in the above research report.

Research is also being conducted in Sweden by Thérèse Halvarson Britton. As part of her research, she took part in teaching a 15-hour course on Islam with 16 to 17-year-old students, including a field visit to a mosque. Students were very positive about the visit as a learning experience. In contrast to standard lessons, the field visit gave a perspective from within the religion. Students appreciated:

- meeting a believer who gave a personal perspective;
- the opportunity to ask their own questions and to get the "insider" host's answers (this included a critical perspective);
- the opportunity to experience the mosque environment and the way the religion is practised.

They felt it was important to discuss the visit afterwards to clarify various issues and questions raised during the visit. Halvarson Britton noted that the environment affected the students' behaviour in the mosque. They gave more attention to each other and to the host than they would have done in the classroom when listening to a speaker. They were also more respectful in the way they asked questions than they would have been in school. Students took on two or three roles during visits: the "tolerant and respectful student"; the "questioning and critical student"; and "the seeker who thinks about life issues" (Halvarson Britton 2012).

Jo Beavan has conducted research in England with adolescents and teachers involved during 2011-12 with both visitors and visits in 17 secondary schools (Beavan 2013). All but three schools organised visits during this period, the majority to local places

of worship, but some unconnected to religion, such as a visit to a magistrate's court. Out of 45 visits related to religion or ethics, there were only six instances where teachers felt that the trip had not been worthwhile. Over 150 students completed a questionnaire following a visit to either a gurdwara (Sikh temple) or a church. High percentages of respondents were very positive about the visits including enjoying talking to one or more followers of the religion in question, feeling that they understood more about the religion's beliefs and practices following the visit, and that they were pleased that they had been on the visit.

In relation to visitors coming to the school, over 100 students completed questionnaires following lessons in which they were addressed by guest speakers, one concerned with ethical and personal issues – a Relate counsellor (dealing specifically with human relationship issues) – and a Franciscan friar. A very high majority enjoyed listening to the guest speaker, agreed that this is an effective way to learn about religious or ethics-related organisations and that the religion/organisation made a useful contribution to society. A substantial majority agreed that listening to the speaker had changed the way they thought about the religion/organisation. Beavan also notes that some visitors to schools pointed out the value of the experience to themselves and to their communities. She also draws attention to the successful use of visitors who work in roles connected with personal and social ethics – magistrates and counsellors for example – as one way of tackling ethical issues not specifically related to religion.

The amount of European research available so far is limited, but the examples mentioned show very positive support from students for outside visits to places of worship and venues concerning religion and ethics in society, and for opportunities to listen to guest speakers. The main hesitations expressed by teachers concerned their own lack of time and resources to organise guest speakers and outside visits, reinforcing the idea that there should be whole-school policies to support and finance such activities.

Conclusions

The recommendation encourages links between schools and the wider community, including religious communities and non-religious organisations, as a means to learning, to help to develop a culture of living together despite differences, and to link local issues and concerns with global ones. Clearly this is not simply a matter for policy making and curriculum design but requires the development of competence on the part of teachers who participate and developments in whole-school policy, involving school leaders and governors as well as teachers. Both training and resources are needed. Experience of activities such as organising visits and inviting visitors to the school can also be covered in initial teacher training.

Examples of projects encouraging dialogue between children and young people from different religious, ethnic and national backgrounds were given, including a project using e-mail and an international project using video-conferencing. The use of visitors from various communities as speakers in schools was also discussed, including an example of partnerships between secondary schools and primary

schools, in which older secondary students are trained to give information about their own faith or world view. An account of the use of ethnographic methods on outside visits in order to maximise students' understanding of others' religious language, symbols and experiences was provided, and a Council of Europe resource on analysing intercultural encounters was introduced. It was also noted that visitors have commented on the benefit of visits to schools to them personally and to their communities. Research from Sweden and the UK reported very positive responses from secondary school students in relation to their experience of listening to outside visitors talking about religious or ethical matters or going on visits to places of worship or to places concerned with ethics in society.

Chapter 10

Promoting further discussion and action

Summing up

Signposts has been written as an aid to policy makers, schools and teacher trainers in Council of Europe member states so that they can interpret and act upon the 2008 recommendation from the Committee of Ministers on teaching about religions and non-religious convictions. It is not meant as a blueprint, but as a tool for use in developing policy and practice to meet the needs of educators in member states. The aim is to encourage suitable approaches to teaching about religions and other world views which contribute to the intercultural education of all students, regardless of background. *Signposts* does not promote any particular religious or non-religious viewpoint, but aims to promote dialogue, learning from one another, deepening understanding of one's own and others' background and traditions, tolerance of different beliefs held by others in society, civility and respect for human dignity.

Signposts is a stimulus to thinking and reflection intended to help colleagues to adapt the ideas of the recommendation to their own particular settings and to the needs of students and teachers, while taking account of European and global issues, as well as "the already existing best practices of the respective member states". It is an adaptable working text, and not an inflexible framework.

Signposts recognises that structures and systems for teaching about religions and other world views or for teaching religion already exist in many states. However, it also acknowledges scholarly opinion which recognises that, whatever the system nationally or regionally, issues relating to diversity, secularisation and globalisation have to be worked through in developing contemporary studies of religions and world views in schools.[1]

1. The InterAction Council was established in 1983 as an independent international organisation (it is not formally attached to the United Nations) to mobilise the experience of a group of former heads of state or government.

Religious education and education about religions and other world views takes place in an intercultural context, whatever the system in operation or the particular types of diversity to be found nationally or locally. It is hoped that specialists in both "confessional" and "non-confessional" systems of education involving religion can work collaboratively with others concerned with intercultural education, to contribute to the development of policies, teaching methods and materials relating to teaching about religions and other world views in schools within a framework that respects human dignity.

Practical ways forward

Signposts, together with the recommendation, makes a contribution to the Council of Europe's Strategy for Education 2014-2016, especially its work on democratic and intercultural competences and its Action Plan for Diversity. Its use will be promoted and exemplified through the European Wergeland Centre website and the Council of Europe website.

It is hoped that policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and other stakeholders in individual states will use *Signposts*, in combination with the Council of Europe recommendation, in a variety of ways. For example, *Signposts* can be used:

- as a basis for in-service training of teachers;
- as a tool for initial teacher training;
- as a basis for discussing policy at national, regional and local levels;
- by specialists in religious education who are looking for ways of incorporating a study of religious and cultural diversity into their programmes;
- by specialists in intercultural education, or by religious educators together with those working in citizenship education, intercultural education, human rights education or other areas of values education, working collaboratively;
- for targeted advice to raise the level of awareness of this topic for children, parents, teachers, policy makers, politicians and other members of society.

National professional organisations from the fields of religious, intercultural and citizenship education could promote and utilise *Signposts* through their publications and conferences. The whole document can be used, or individual chapters on specific topics can be utilised, for training purposes.

Signposts can also be a basis for collaborative work at the European level. Such work could include teacher training programmes co-ordinated by the European Wergeland Centre, for example. European and international professional organisations could make use of *Signposts* in conferences and other forms of collaborative activity. European and international organisations[2] could use *Signposts* productively, and encourage members in different parts of Europe to utilise the document and the recommendation.

Members of European, regional (for example, the Nordic Conference on Religious Education) and national professional organisations have given constructive feedback

2. For example, Jäggle, Rothgangel and Schlag 2013; Jäggle, Schlag and Rothgangel 2014; Rothgangel, Jackson and Jäggle 2014; Rothgangel, Skeie and Jäggle 2014.

on draft material written for *Signposts*. Also, many researchers and teacher trainers working in the field of religious diversity and education have contributed directly or indirectly to the development of the document.

Action research

There is much scope for using *Signposts*, in conjunction with the recommendation, as a starting point for research and development, including action research projects on topics such as:

- teacher competence in this field;
- teacher training;
- pupil competence in this field;
- integrating the study of religions and non-religious world views;
- analysing classroom discussions/dialogue in this field;
- students analysing representations of religions and other world views in various media;
- student use of social media in communicating about religions and other world views;
- linking students in schools from different parts of the same country or from different countries;
- using outside visits to meet members of religious and other communities, or receiving visitors into the school who can talk about their faith or philosophy to students.

There is scope for action research in both primary and secondary schools, and there are possibilities for collaborative and comparative projects, bringing together researchers, teachers and students from several countries.

Several European research projects have been completed, undertaken or begun during the period in which *Signposts* has been developed and written.[3]

It is hoped that researchers (including researchers who are also teachers) will make use of the *Signposts* document and the recommendation, as well as using *Signposts* to develop research ideas in individual countries or in groups of countries in Europe. The European Wergeland Centre is keen to collaborate with those undertaking or proposing research projects designed to bring about positive changes in practice, especially through facilitating networking.

Conclusion

In 2002, the Council of Europe took the step of incorporating the dimension of religion into its work on intercultural education. This new venture recognised that

3. For example, the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV), the International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) (http://iaie.org/index.html), the Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE), the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE); and the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), which has a Special Interest Group on religions and school education.

religion was now a topic commonly discussed in the public sphere, especially in the media; it made no sense to exclude such studies from public education for all students. In 2008, consistent with the approach of the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, the need to broaden the field of concern to incorporate non-religious world views alongside religious ones was made even more explicit by the Committee of Ministers. The 2008 recommendation provided clear guiding principles to be considered in developmental work in this field in member states.

Signposts has been written to assist policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and other stakeholders in working constructively with the recommendation. *Signposts* should therefore be seen, not as an end in itself, but as a tool and an element or step in an ongoing process. The members of the Joint Implementation Group hope sincerely that the document will be useful and will play a part in encouraging exciting initiatives in individual states and in collaborative research and development across different parts of Europe, and possibly beyond.

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Appendix 1

The full text of the recommendation

Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.

(**Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 December 2008 at the 1044th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.*b* of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members, while seeking to strengthen democratic citizenship;

Bearing in mind the European Cultural Convention (1954) (ETS No. 18) which underlines the need for education to develop mutual understanding between peoples;

Having regard to its Recommendation No. R (84) 18 on the training of teachers in education for intercultural understanding, notably in a context of migration;

Considering the provisions of its Recommendation Rec(2002)12 on education for democratic citizenship in which the Committee of Ministers states:

- that education for democratic citizenship is a factor for social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and solidarity;
- that the implementation of education for democratic citizenship requires recognising and accepting differences, and developing a critical approach to information, thought patterns and philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts, at the same time remaining committed to the fundamental values and principles of the Council of Europe;

Bearing in mind its Resolution Res(2003)7 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, which considers the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and in particular dialogue between civilisations, and promotion of peace as a priority theme for the years ahead;

Considering Recommendation 1111 (1989) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the "European dimension of education", stressing that tolerance and solidarity result from a greater understanding and knowledge of "others";

Considering Recommendation 1346 (1997) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "Human rights education" which calls for the introduction of elements to promote tolerance and respect for people from different cultures;

Considering Recommendation 1396 (1999) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "Religion and democracy" which invites member states to promote better relations with and between religions and ensure freedom and equal rights of education to all citizens regardless of religious belief, customs and rites;

Considering Recommendation 1720 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "Education and Religion" which declares that education is essential for combating ignorance, stereotypes and misunderstanding of religions;

Considering Recommendation 1804 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "State, religion, secularity and human rights" which recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage the member states to promote initial and in-service training for teachers with a view to the objective, balanced teaching of religions as they are today and of religions in history, and to require human rights training for all religious leaders, in particular those with an educational role in contact with young people;

Considering Recommendation 1805 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion" which recommends that the Committee of Ministers instruct its competent steering committee to draw up practical guidelines for national ministries of education intended to raise understanding and tolerance among students with different religions;

Having regard to the European conference "The religious dimension of intercultural education" (Oslo, 6-8 June 2004), which identified the necessary conditions for applying the religious dimension of intercultural education in member states' schools in the light of the results of the 21st session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (Athens, 10-12 November 2003);

Bearing in mind the Wroclaw Declaration on fifty years of European cultural co-operation (10 December 2004) which underlined the importance of systematically encouraging intercultural and inter-religious dialogue based on the primacy of common values, as a means of promoting awareness and understanding of each other, preventing conflicts, promoting reconciliation and ensuring the cohesion of society, through formal and non-formal education;

Having regard to the Action Plan adopted at the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) which makes explicit reference to intercultural dialogue and to the specific challenges of religious diversity;

Considering the previous initiatives of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the field of intercultural dialogue and in particular the "Volga Forum Declaration" (2006), adopted by the participants of the International Conference on "Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-Faith Co-operation" held in Nizhniy Novgorod from 7 to 9 September 2006, which called for the Council of Europe to enter into dialogue with religious organisations, underpinned by universal values and principles;

Considering the Final Declaration of the European Conference on "The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue", San Marino, 23 and 24 April 2007;

Bearing in mind the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity" launched at its 118th Session (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008), which

recalls that the vision of our cultural diversity should be based on the knowledge and understanding of the main religions and non-religious convictions of the world and of their role in society;

Recalling the Council of Europe 2008 Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue (Strasbourg, 8 April 2008) which underlined, *inter alia*, the importance in pluralist democracies, for all pupils to know and understand, during their school years, world views different from their own;

Having regard to the setting up in Oslo (Norway) of the "European Resource Centre on education for intercultural understanding, democratic citizenship and human rights" which will co-operate with the Council of Europe and the mission and mandate of which is to support and to promote further the work of the Council of Europe in the field of education for intercultural understanding, democratic citizenship and human rights, including the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions, and to contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe's educational standards;

Noting that the Steering Committee for Education's (CDED) project "The new challenge to intercultural education: religious diversity and dialogue in Europe" (2002-2005) has made it possible, amongst other things:

- to make considerable progress in the conceptual approach to, the content of and the learning methods for the religious dimension of intercultural education;
- to underline the fundamental importance of taking into account the religious dimension of intercultural education in order to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and a culture of "living together";
- to put forward proposals for innovative teaching approaches and learning strategies which take into account religious diversity within intercultural dialogue;
- to produce a reference book containing a whole series of concepts and pedagogical approaches to make teachers aware of the religious dimension of intercultural education;

1. Recommends that the governments of member states, with due regard for their constitutional structures, national or local situations and educational system:

a. draw on the principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation in their current or future educational reforms;

b. pursue initiatives in the field of intercultural education relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in order to promote tolerance and the development of a culture of "living together";

c. ensure that this recommendation is brought to the attention of the relevant public and private bodies (including religious communities and other convictional groups), in accordance with national procedures;

2. Calls on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring this recommendation to the attention of the States Party to the European Cultural Convention that are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12

Scope and definitions

1. The recommendation's aim is to ensure taking into account the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education as a contribution to strengthen human rights, democratic citizenship and participation, and to the development of competences for intercultural dialogue, at the following levels:

- education policies, in the form of clear-cut education principles and objectives;
- institutions, especially through open learning settings and inclusive policies;
- professional development of teaching staff, through adequate training.

2. For the purpose of this recommendation "religions" and "non-religious convictions" are considered as cultural facts within the larger field of social diversity.

3. Religious and non-religious convictions are diverse and complex phenomena; they are not monolithic. In addition, people hold religious and non-religious convictions to varying degrees, and for different reasons; for some such convictions are central and may be a matter of choice, for others they are subsidiary and may be a matter of historical circumstances. The dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education should therefore reflect such diversity and complexity at a local, regional and international level.

Principles for taking the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions into account in the framework of intercultural education

4. The following principles should form the basis and define the perspective from which religions and non-religious convictions have to be taken into account in a framework of intercultural education:

- the principle of the freedom of conscience and of thought includes the freedom to have a religion or not to have one, and the freedom to practise one's religion, to give it up or to change it if one so wishes;
- agreement that religions and non-religious convictions are at least "cultural facts" that contribute, along with other elements such as language and historical and cultural traditions to social and individual life;
- information on and knowledge of religions and non-religious convictions which influence the behaviour of individuals in public life should be taught in order to develop tolerance as well as mutual understanding and trust;
- religions and non-religious convictions develop on the basis of individual learning and experience, and are not entirely pre-defined by one's family or community;
- an interdisciplinary approach to education in religious, moral and civic values should be encouraged in order to develop sensitivity to human rights (including gender equality), peace, democratic citizenship, dialogue and solidarity;
- intercultural dialogue and its religious and non-religious convictions dimension are an essential precondition for the development of tolerance and a culture of "living together", as well as for the recognition of our different identities on the basis of human rights;

- the manner in which the dimension of religious and non-religious convictions within intercultural education is introduced in practice could take into account the age and maturity of pupils to whom it is addressed as well as the already existing best practices of the respective member states.

Objectives of an intercultural approach concerning the religious and non-religious convictions dimension in education

5. Education should develop intercultural competences through:

- developing a tolerant attitude and respect for the right to hold a particular belief, attitudes based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of each human being;
- nurturing a sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe;
- ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds;
- promoting civic-mindedness and moderation in expressing one's identity;
- providing opportunity to create spaces for intercultural dialogue in order to prevent religious or cultural divides;
- promoting knowledge of different aspects (symbols, practices, etc.) of religious diversity;
- addressing the sensitive or controversial issues to which the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions may give rise;
- developing skills of critical evaluation and reflection with regard to understanding the perspectives and ways of life of different religions and non-religious convictions;
- combating prejudice and stereotypes vis-à-vis difference which are barriers to intercultural dialogue, and educating in respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- fostering an ability to analyse and interpret impartially the many varied items of information relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions, without prejudice to the need to respect pupils' religious or non-religious convictions and without prejudice to the religious education given outside the public education sphere.

Requirements for dealing with the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in an educational context

6. The following attitudes should be promoted in order to remove obstacles that prevent a proper treatment of the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in an educational context:

- recognising the place of religions and non-religious convictions in the public sphere and at school as topic for discussion and reflection;

- valuing cultural and religious diversity as well as social cohesion;
- recognising that different religions and humanistic traditions have deeply influenced Europe and continue to do so;
- promoting a balanced approach of the presentation of the role of religions and other convictions in history and cultural heritage;
- accepting that religions and non-religious convictions are often an important part of individual identity;
- recognising that the expression of religious allegiance at school, without ostentation or proselytising, exercised with due respect for others, public order and human rights, is compatible with a secular society and the respective autonomy of state and religions;
- overcoming prejudices and stereotypes concerning religions and non-religious convictions, especially the practices of minority groups and immigrants, in order to contribute to the development of societies based on solidarity.

Teaching aspects of an intercultural approach to religions and non-religious convictions in education

7. In order to encourage consideration of the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in the educational context, and to promote intercultural dialogue, the following educational preconditions and learning methods can be seen as highly appropriate examples:

7.1. Educational preconditions

- sensitivity to the equal dignity of every individual;
- recognition of human rights as values to be applied, beyond religious and cultural diversity;
- communication between individuals and the capacity to put oneself in the place of others in order to establish an environment where mutual trust and understanding is fostered;
- co-operative learning in which peoples of all traditions can be included and participate;
- provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule;

7.2 Various learning methods

- use of "simulations" to create teaching situations involving dialogue, dilemmas, and reflection;
- encouraging pupils to reflect objectively on their own and others' existence and views;
- role-playing in an attempt to reproduce and understand the point of view and emotions of others;
- use of "living libraries";
- co-operation rather than competition in order to construct a positive self-image;
- the development of appropriate pedagogical approaches such as:
  - a phenomenological approach aimed at cultivating a knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious convictions as well as respect for other persons irrespectively of their religious and non-religious convictions;

– an interpretative approach which encourages a flexible understanding of religions and non-religious convictions and avoids placing them in a rigid pre-defined framework;
– an approach enabling pupils to respect and engage in dialogue with other persons possessing other values and ideas;
– a contextual approach taking account of local and global learning conditions.

Consequences for state policies on the initial and in-service training of teaching staff

8. Member states, in accordance with the principles, objectives and teaching approaches stated above, are requested to:

- emphasise that training is one of the main ways of increasing the competences of teachers who, as such, also have a duty to help build a more tolerant and cohesive society;
- provide teachers with the training and means to acquire relevant teaching resources with the aim to develop the necessary skills for taking into account the religions and non-religious convictions within an intercultural educational approach;
- provide training that is in conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights. Such training should be objective and open minded;
- develop training in methods of teaching and learning which ensure education in democracy at local, regional, national and international level;
- encourage the introduction of multiperspectivity in the training programmes of teachers, as a key element that takes into account the widespread of different points of view in teaching and learning;
- train teachers to develop approaches that enable them to:
  – constitute rich and varied teaching resources;
  – exchange resources and successful experiences regarding the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions;
  – promote critical evaluation of the reliability and validity of sources;
  – facilitate opportunities for exchanges and dialogue between pupils from different cultural environments;
  – take account of the local and the global nature of the intercultural dialogue;
  – exercise constant vigilance, with due regard for legal rules and the freedom of expression, in order to combat the dissemination of proselytising, racist or xenophobic content;
  – be aware of the importance to establish positive relationships with parents, local community and religious communities (which can be involved sometimes for visiting places of worship, etc.);
  – take account of the widespread and growing uses of new information technologies.
- make provision, when devising training policies, for the necessary resources for research and evaluation of the results, successes and difficulties as well as practices.

Appendix 2

The Joint Implementation Group: membership and meetings

Members of the Joint Implementation Group

Abdeljalil Akkari is Associate Professor and director of a research group on international education at the University of Geneva. He is also a regular consultant for UNESCO and other international organisations. He was the Dean for Research at the Higher Pedagogical Institute HEP-BEJUNE (Bienne, Switzerland). His major publications include studies on educational planning, multicultural education, teacher training and educational inequalities. His main research interests focus currently on teacher education and reforms of educational systems in a comparative and international perspective. He is closely involved in a project entitled "Education and religious diversity in the western Mediterranean", launched in 2010 by the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the UNESCO Chairs of the Universities of Bergamo, Rioja, Tunis and Marrakech. The project aims at improving educators' understanding of the issues of religious diversity and non-religious convictions in education systems in a range of countries in the western Mediterranean region, namely Spain, Italy, Morocco and Algeria.

Wanda Alberts received her PhD in the academic Study of Religions (*Religionswissenschaft*) from the University of Marburg, Germany. Currently, she is Professor in the Study of Religions at the University of Hannover. Before that, she was a Professor at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway, being responsible for the teacher training programme for the compulsory school subject "Religion, views of life and ethics". She co-founded the Working Group on Religion in Secular Education of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), with an interest in applying a non-confessional study-of-religions approach to education about religion and non-religious views of life.

Francesca Gobbo is Professor of Intercultural Education and Anthropology of Education at the University of Torino (Italy). After graduating from the University of Padova, she studied at the University of California, Berkeley. She was Fulbright grantee (1969), Visiting Scholar at UC Berkeley (1995) and Harvard University (2001). She is on the editorial boards of international journals, has published extensively in Italian and English and participated into Comenius projects. She is Associate Editor of the international journal *Intercultural Education*. She studies and teaches contemporary educational issues from a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective, combining educational theory with theory from cultural anthropology and anthropology of education so as to problematise and widen the discourse and research on intercultural education.

Robert Jackson (Vice-Chair) PhD, DLitt was Director of Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (1994-2012) and is Professor of Religions and Education at the University of Warwick, and Professor of Religious Diversity and Education at the European Wergeland Centre, Oslo. He has been involved in international research and development in the field, contributing to the European REDCo project and the OSCE *Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools*. He taken part in all Council of Europe projects concerned with religion and intercultural education since 2002, and he was co-organiser of the first Council of Europe Exchange, including representatives of European religion and belief organisations, in 2008. He was Editor of the *British Journal of Religious Education* (1996-2011). He has published 22 books and many articles and book chapters in the field of religions and education. In 2013 he received the William Rainey Harper Award from the Religious Education Association (USA), presented to "outstanding leaders whose work in other fields has had profound impact upon religious education". He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Claudia Lenz holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hamburg. Her current positions are Head of Research and Development at the European Wergeland Centre; and Associate Professor at the Norwegian University for Technology and Science (NTNU). Her fields of research and publication are: Historical Consciousness, Memory Cultures and Memory Politics with regard to the Second World War and the Holocaust, and qualitative research methods as methodological resources in educational processes. Her most recent publication is *Teaching historical memories in an intercultural perspective. Concepts and methods. Experiences and results from the TeacMem project*, ReiheNeuengammerKolloquien, Band 4. Berlin: MetropolVerlag 2013 (co-edited with Helle Bjerg, Andreas Körber and Oliver von Wrochem).

Gabriele Mazza (Chair) is a holder of degrees in political science, sociology and education from Italian, French and US universities. Now an international consultant, Dr Mazza spent most of his professional life with the Council of Europe and the United Nations. As a top executive in both of these organisations he focused his efforts on the areas of education, youth and culture. Achievements under his stewardship include pan-European reforms at the institutional, policy and targeted assistance levels in the Council of Europe's 47 member states, and beyond. He has also been directly instrumental for the creation and development of cultural networks and multilateral institutions, including the European Wergeland Centre (EWC). For the latter, he was a member of the founding governing Board, dealing with education for democratic citizenship and human rights, intercultural learning, languages and cultural policies. Dr Mazza has played a leading role in negotiating educational accords in post-war former Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia, Eastern Slavonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. More recently he has pioneered efforts in support of Euro-Arab co-operation, with particular emphasis on the contribution of education for intercultural dialogue.

Villano Qiriazi is the Head of the Education Policy Division at the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France). Mr Qiriazi graduated in Philology and French Language and Literature from Tirana University in 1988. He joined the Council of Europe in 1996, after experience in teaching and journalism and has since been responsible for the management of several multilateral projects in the field of education focusing on

intercultural education, religious education, democratic citizenship and human rights education and quality education. From 2004 to 2012 he has been the Secretary of the Steering Committee of Education, the intergovernmental body responsible for the design and implementation of new education policies throughout the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. Mr Qiriazi is the Secretary of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which has been organised regularly since 1959 in one of the Council of Europe member states.

Peter Schreiner studied educational philosophy, sociology and theology at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, with a final degree of Diplom-Pädagoge. He holds a PhD as a Cotutelle of the VU Amsterdam and Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen Nürnberg (DPhil). Currently he is Senior Researcher at the Comenius-Institut, Protestant Centre for Educational Research and Development, Münster, Germany. Since 2003 he has been President of the Inter-European Commission on Church and School (ICCS) and since 2004 moderator of the Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE). His main working areas include comparative religious education, intercultural and inter-religious learning, alternative approaches in education philosophy, ecumenical learning, religion and education, Europeanisation of education, and commitment of Protestant Churches to education. He has published widely in these areas. For the Council of Europe he has been involved as an expert in various projects on intercultural education.

Marianna Shakhnovich received her Dr habil in the History of Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion from Saint-Petersburg State University (Russia). She has been Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies of the Saint-Petersburg State University since 1998. Her creative and research works are concentrated on the history of classical tradition in philosophy of religion, on the theory and methods of religious studies and on religion and education. She is the author of more than 150 articles and books, among them textbooks for undergraduate students *World religions* (2003, editor and contributor) and *Religious studies* (2013, editor and contributor), and for school children *The fundamentals of the world religious culture* (2013). From 2009 to 2012 she was a member of the co-ordinating council on the implementation of a course "The fundamentals of religious cultures and secular ethics" in Russian schools. She participated in some projects of Council of Europe on intercultural and inter-faith dialogue through education and on religious diversity as well.

Dates and venues for meetings of the Joint Implementation Group

1st Meeting: Oslo, 9-11 May 2010

2nd Meeting: Paris, 9-10 November 2011

3rd Meeting: Oslo, 10-11 May 2011

4th Meeting: Oslo, 3-4 May 2012

5th Meeting: St Petersburg, 4-5 October 2012

6th Meeting: Strasbourg, 6-7 December 2012 (in connection with a joint meeting with the final conference of the Council of Europe project "Education and religious diversity in the Western Mediterranean" (EDIR)

7th Meeting: Paris, 27-28 May 2013

8th Meeting: Paris, 28-29 January 2014

Papers contributed by members of the Joint Implementation Group

Members of the Joint Implementation Group prepared and presented papers that contributed ideas and insights which have been incorporated into *Signposts*: Akkari 2012; Alberts 2012; Gobbo 2012; Jackson 2012 b and c; Lenz 2012; Schreiner 2012a [see also Schreiner 2012b]; Shakhnovitch 2012.

Appendix 3

Papers presented by invited experts on topics of importance to the development of the document

"Experiences of children with religious minority background in the Norwegian educational system" (Oslo, 2-4 May 2012)
Raena Aslam (Multicultural Integration and Resource Network/MIR).

"The Norwegian subject on education on religions and philosophies of life – the ECHR judgment against Norway" (Oslo, 2-4 May 2012)
Gunnar Mandt: Former Deputy Director General at the Norwegian Ministry of Education; Special Adviser at the European Wergeland Centre.

"The development of the ethics and religious culture subject in Quebec" (Paris, 9-10 November 2011)
Dr Jacques Pettigrew: Official with overall responsibility for the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) programme at the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport (MELS), Quebec, Canada.

"First results of the survey: analysis of the first responses to the questionnaire" (Paris, 9-10 November 2011)
Dr Mandy Robbins: Associate Fellow, WRERU, University of Warwick and Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Glendŵr University, Wales. Expert in religion and education, and in quantitative research.

"Educational programmes at the State Museum on the History of Religion for teachers and children of different ages" (St Petersburg, 5 October 2012)
Dr Ekaterina Teryokova: Vice-Director of the State Museum on the History of Religion, St Petersburg, Russian Federation.

"The work of the European Council of Religious Leaders" (Oslo, 2-4 May 2012)
Mr Stein Villumstad: General Secretary of "European Council of Religious Leaders" which is part of the global "Religions for peace" network. Expert in inter-religious dialogue, international development, conflict transformation and human rights.

"The interaction between intergovernmental co-operation initiatives and national realities: the French example" (Paris, 9-10 November 2011)
Professor Jean-Paul Willaime: Research Director at l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Department of Religious Studies, Sorbonne, Paris. He is member of the Research Centre (EPHE-CNRS) and past-Director of the European Institute of Religious Studies. From 2007 to 2011, he was President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion. He led the French team contributing to the European Commission REDCo project.

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How can the study of religions and non-religious world views contribute to intercultural education in schools in Europe? An important recommendation from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education) aims to explain the nature and objectives of this form of education.

Signposts goes much further by providing advice to policy makers, schools (including teachers, senior managers and governors) and teacher trainers on tackling issues arising from the recommendation. Taking careful account of feedback from education officials, teachers and teacher trainers in Council of Europe member states, *Signposts* gives advice, for example, on clarifying the terms used in this form of education; developing competences for teaching and learning, and working with different didactical approaches; creating a "safe space" for moderated student-to-student dialogue in the classroom; helping students to analyse media representations of religions; discussing non-religious world views alongside religious perspectives; handling human rights issues relating to religion and belief; and linking schools (including schools of different types) to one another and to wider communities and organisations. *Signposts* is not a curriculum or a policy statement. It aims to give policy makers, schools and teacher trainers in the Council of Europe member states, as well as others who wish to use it, the tools to work through the issues arising from the interpretation of the recommendation to meet the needs of individual countries.

Signposts results from the work of an international panel of experts convened jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre, and has been written on the group's behalf by Professor Robert Jackson.

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