



ERENEWS

EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



1 AGOSTO 2022

UNIVERSITÀ ROMA TRE - ISSN 2531-6214

Contributors to this issue

Federica Candido (Editor)

Francesco Carta

Isabella De Paolis

Sara Giorgetti

Filippo Mariani

Giulia Nardini

Lorenza Pamato

Michele Trabucco

Scientific committee

Alberto D'Anna

Gennaro Gervasio

Mariachiara Giorda

Alessandra Gribaldo

Maria Lupi

Raimondo Michetti

Caterina Moro

Carla Noce

CONTACT US

Mail: erenews@uniroma3.it

Facebook: [ERENews](#)

Ask for a subscription to the bulletin [here](#).

Are you a student in Roma Tre?

Our newsletter is classified among the "other activities" of the DSU's educational offer as an activity that entitles you to 6 cfu (area F).

Are you a student in another university?

EREnews can also host trainees from other universities, following the signing of an agreement between the university of origin and Roma Tre. The internship, which lasts 150 hours, allows students to obtain 6 cfu, can be carried out entirely online and requires the student to take part in editorial meetings and to collaborate in the creation of an issue of the bulletin (press review on a given topic; writing of a fact sheet on a specific European school system and a contribution to the monographic section, article or interview).

For further information write to: carla.noce@uniroma3.it

Table of contents

EDITORIAL.....	6
<i>FIRST SECTION</i>	8
<i>Reasoned press review</i>	8
AUSTRIA. Ethics - new compulsory subject for students not attending religion classes.....	8
GERMANY. Religious education for all: Hamburg's Proje RUfa 2.0.....	12
ITALY (Trentino-South Tyrol). Religion or ethics? A proposal for a choice.....	15
SPAIN. The debate around the LOMLOE (Celaá law).....	17
<i>SECOND SECTION</i>	20
<i>Religions and the globalised world</i>	20
ITALY (ROME). The 'Religions in the global world' lab (Roma Tre University) goes to Tor Pignattara.....	20
<i>THIRD SECTION</i>	24
<i>REVIEWS</i>	24
F. Binini, <i>Pluralismo religioso a scuola: una proposta</i> , pref. by F. Pajer, Villa Verucchio, Pazzini Editore, 2021.....	24
A. Cuciniello e S. Pasta, <i>Studenti musulmani a scuola</i> , Carocci, Roma 2020.....	27
<i>SECTION FOUR</i>	32
<i>REPORTS ON CONFERENCES</i>	32
Report conference "Obiettivo 4 dell'Agenda 2030 per uno sviluppo sostenibile e insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola".....	32
<i>MONOGRAPHIC SECTION</i>	34
In-depth article.....	34
<i>The Italian Education and Children from Ukraine</i>	34
Teaching religion in schools. Ukraine.....	37

Teaching Religions in Schools39Russia	39
INTERVIEW WITH THE RESPONSIBLE OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE IRC OF THE ITALIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE	43

ERENews

European Religious Education Newsletter

EDITORIAL

*The issue of EREnews, which the reader is about to consult, consists of two parts. The first, contains, as an experiment, a **reasoned press review** which, starting from the debate on the teaching of religion and religions, on the daily agendas of several European countries, tries to frame the main themes and provide links and sources for an appropriate in-depth study. The first part also includes a **report** on the activities of the workshop*



*“Religions and Globalised World” at the University of Roma Tre, as well as two detailed and through **reviews** of two books that proved to be fruitful for the editorial work: F. Binini, “Pluralismo religioso a scuola: una proposta”, pref. by F. Pajer, Villa Verucchio, Pazzini Editore, 2021 and A. Cuciniello and S. Pasta, “Studenti musulmani a scuola”, Carocci, Rome 2020. The first part of the bulletin ends with the **report** of the conference “Obiettivo 4 dell’Agenda 2030 per uno sviluppo sostenibile e insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola”, held on 7 May 2022 at the Fondazione Collegio San Carlo in Modena.*

*The **thematic section**, on the other hand, is dedicated to an in-depth study that, focusing on the teaching of religions/religion in Russia and Ukraine, also tried to develop current topics and issues related to the conflict. The topics dealt with in the monographic section of this issue of EREnews come from some questions that we in the editorial staff have asked ourselves on several occasions. We have tried*

to give an account of the role assigned to religions in the current school systems in Ukraine and Russia and we have also attempted to investigate other possible issues, such as the reception strategies in the different European school systems, and in particular in Italy, of Ukrainian children/youths who are currently refugees.

*Finally, the **interview** with the person in charge of the CEI's national IRC service, Don Daniele Saottini, turned out to be very stimulating, right from the moment we discussed the construction of the interview and the choice of questions.*

This issue is also the result of consultation, confrontation and broad debate; however, for the cultural growth of the bulletin and to understand whether the experiments underway are effective, we ask attentive readers to send us criticisms, corrections and comments.

The editorial staff of EREnews

FIRST SECTION

Reasoned press review

Keywords: ethics, public school, teaching of religions, alternative teaching, Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy

This section offers articles, in-depth analyses and reflections on the topic of the teaching of religions and/or ethics in the public schools of several European countries.

AUSTRIA.

Ethics - new compulsory subject for students not attending religion classes

By Sara Giorgetti

With a resolution of the National Council of 20 November 2020, BGBl. I Nr. 133/2020¹, the School Organization Act was amended, and ethics was introduced in Austrian public schools as a compulsory subject for all students who choose not to attend religion classes. This is a long-term school experiment, which provides an educational opportunity for students who do not participate to any religious denomination or who decide to renounce religious education.

In particular in § 39 par. 1 the following sentence is added:

"As of the ninth year of schooling, the compulsory subject of ethics shall be offered in the amount of two lessons per week for students who do not participate in religious instruction".

It is further specified in § 43 subsection 3 that:

"The compulsory subject of ethics is taught, as far as possible, at the same time as the religious education of the church (religious community) to which the largest number of students in the school belongs. If churches (religious communities) hold religious education in a cooperative form, the sum of all members of the churches (religious communities) participating in the cooperation is used to determine the number of students. If fewer than ten students in a class are required to participate in the teaching of ethics, they will first be grouped with students from other classes

¹ Link to the complete reading of the law: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbl/i/2020/133>. In the August 2021 edition of EREnews we announced the approval of the new law, before it was applied for the 2021/2022 school year (see <https://erenews.uniroma3.it/numeri-di-erenews/>).

in the same grade, then with other classes in the school, and finally with students from other schools until the number of at least ten is reached'.

Thus, the ethics hour is scheduled for two hours per week and only in high schools. A minimum number of ten participants is required for the course to be activated within the school. The decision to systematically introduce the hour of ethics in Austrian schools is motivated by the growing number of young people who drop out of religious instruction or who do not belong to any religious community and is aimed at ensuring that these boys and girls are given an in-depth study in the ethical, social and legislative spheres.



Circular 5/2021 has made known the implementation guidelines for religious and ethical teaching²: the new ethics lessons are intended to enable students to reflect in an autonomous way on how to successfully construct their own lives, providing them with tools to critically orient themselves in the world and guiding them towards deep reflection on themselves and their personal and professional choices. By addressing the human condition from philosophical, anthropological, ideological, cultural and religious perspectives, ethics lessons aim to contribute to the development of the individual personality.

The introduction of ethics as a school subject originates from a long experimentation: for more than 20 years, 233 Austrian secondary schools have organized ethics lessons as part of experimental projects.

The first school year in which the new law was applied was 2021/22 in lower and upper secondary schools, including boarding schools and evening schools for workers. On 7 June 2021, new curricula were drafted and issued (OJ No. II No. 250/2021), based on those of the pilot schools, which were derived from a wide range of very diverse school experiences. The core of the new ethics lessons is constituted by philosophy, flanked also by other disciplines (psychology, sociology, religious studies, history, law, biology, economics, political science).

Following the introduction of ethics as a compulsory subject, structured teaching at university level became necessary in order to train teachers. At the beginning of the academic year 2021/22, the qualification to teach ethics was offered at the

² Link to full reading of the guidelines: <https://rundschriften.bmbwf.gv.at/rundschriften/?id=1014>.

following universities: Vienna, Innsbruck, Graz, Salzburg, Klagenfurt, Linz Private Catholic University. A provisional university course based on a curriculum jointly developed at teacher training colleges, universities and KPH Vienna/Krems with a total of 60 credits was initially developed as part-time education and training. A first teaching Qualification requires 30 CFU in the first year of study, a further 30 CFU from year 2 to year 4 to complete the academic course.

The first school year in which the new law was adopted is now coming to an end, and the new ethics lessons seem to have met with interest from students and families. So, to what extent have the new ethics lessons been appreciated? How do they relate to the teaching of the Catholic religion and other religious confessions?

From: <https://www.katholisch.at/site/home>

Date: 25.02.2022

“Religionspädagogen: Fach Ethik ist Bereicherung, nicht Konkurrenz”

Religious education experts from different confessions in an interview define religion and ethics as two disciplines that enrich and complement but are not in competition one with another.

*In einer Stellungnahme der interreligiös besetzten "ARGE Religionspädagogik an Universitäten" heißt es zum Verhältnis der beiden, seit dem laufenden Schuljahr parallel in Oberstufenklassen verpflichtend angebotenen Schulgegenstände: "Religionsunterricht und Ethikunterricht stellen keine - wie oft angenommen - konkurrierenden Angebote dar, die gegeneinander ausgespielt werden sollen, sondern sie sind sinnvolle Ergänzungen in der Schulwirklichkeit. Beide haben das Ziel, eine reflektierte und begründete Wertorientierung von Schüler*innen zu ermöglichen."*

Read more: <https://www.katholisch.at/aktuelles/137647/religionspaedagogen-fach-ethik-ist-bereicherung-nicht-konkurrenz>

From: <https://www.vienna.at/ethikunterricht-zahlen-im-religionsunterricht-stabil/7272534>

Date: 27.01.2022

“Ethikunterricht: Zahlen im Religionsunterricht stabil”

This article gives details of the numbers of Austrian students who chose to attend the new ethics classes this year as an alternative to traditional religious instruction (specifying the different percentages of the student population who are Catholics,

of other Christian denominations, of other religious faiths or who do not belong to any confession). The university courses activated for the training of new ethics teachers are also indicated.

Ethikunterricht: Zahlen im Religionsunterricht stabil. Ethikunterricht als Ersatzfach wurde bisher an 233 AHS und BMHS (berufsbildenden mittleren und höheren Schulen) als Schulversuch angeboten, mit diesem Schuljahr wurde er ins Regelschulwesen überführt und damit im Ausmaß von zwei Wochenstunden an 922 Standorten verpflichtend. Gestartet wurde mit den neunten Schulstufen, der Endausbau soll 2024/25 (AHS) bzw. 2025/26 (BMHS) erreicht sein.

Read more: <https://www.vienna.at/ethikunterricht-zahlen-im-religionsunterricht-stabil/7272534>

From: <https://oe1.orf.at/>

Date: 29/03/2022

“Ein Schulfach namens Ethik”

Lessons of ethics lead students to reflect on the great existential questions that humanity has always asked itself and stimulate the development of critical thinking.

Was ist wichtig im Leben? Was ist gut und richtig? Der Ethikunterricht bietet Raum, um über Grundsatzfragen nachzudenken und das eigene Handeln in der Gruppe zu reflektieren. Seit dem Schuljahr 2021/22 ist Ethik ab der Oberstufe Pflichtgegenstand für jene, die ohne Konfession sind oder sich gegen den Religionsunterricht entscheiden.

Read more: <https://oe1.orf.at/programm/20220329/672777/Ein-Schulfach-namens-Ethik>

Da: <https://www.uibk.ac.at/de/>

Data: 07/03/2022

Universities, however, have also been actively engaged both in training teaching staff to teach ethics, and in increasing the interest of society and the academic community towards the new discipline. In this regard, it is worth mentioning an initiative by the University of Innsbruck, which organised an online forum about the relationship between ethics and religious education.

Rund 100 Interessierte nahmen vom 24.-25. Februar 2022 an der 4. Tagung des Forums „Zukunftsfähiger Religionsunterricht“ teil, die unter dem Titel „Ethik- und Religionsunterricht: Eine spannungsreiche Beziehung“ online veranstaltet und mit

Grußworten von Bildungsminister Martin Polaschek und Rektor Tilmann Märk eröffnet wurde.

Read more: <https://www.uibk.ac.at/newsroom/ethik--und-religionsunterricht-eine-spannungsreiche-beziehung.html.de>

GERMANY.

Religious education for all: Hamburg's Proje RUfa 2.0

On the 28th of April 2022, the Catholic Archdiocese of Hamburg joined the project 'Religious Education for All (RUfa)' (Religionsunterricht für alle).

Read more: <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Religionsunterricht-fuer-alle-Katholische-Kirche-macht-mit,religionsunterricht118.html>;
<https://www.zeit.de/2021/23/religionsunterricht-hamburg-paedagogik-islam-judentum-christentum-alevitentum> .

This is a unique initiative for allowing all students in a class to attend religious education together, in contrast to the other federal states, where religious instruction is given separately according to denomination and religion. In the public school of Hamburg, teacher from Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim, Alevilik or Jew faiths trained in Hamburg university for this specific role, can teach Lutheranism, Catholicism, Islam, Alevism or Judaism to all the students who are from these religions, from other faiths or they are not religious. The character of the religious education offered is inter-religious and other religions will join the project.

RUfa 2.0. follows RUfa 1.0., an experiment presented back in 2011 to the municipality of Hamburg but started at the school in 2012 by the religious community's desire for inclusive religious education. Hamburg, which is Germany's second most populous city and has an autonomous federal government, has a culturally diverse demographic characterised by a majority that is non-religious or different from the historically most present Christian denominations, Lutheran and Catholic. There is an important presence of Muslims and a large Jewish community.

Religious instruction, provided in Hamburg's public schools according to Article 7 paragraph 3 of the German Constitution, has always been a denominational curricular hour, "according to the principles of religious communities", and the sole responsibility of the Protestant Church. Since the 1990s, however, more attention has been paid to religious diversity: 'Religious Education for All under Evangelical Responsibility' has been opened to all students, accommodating the different needs of students according to their religious and non-religious denomination. An 'Interfaith

Religious Education Discussion Group' (GIR), 'Gesprächskreis interreligiöser Religionsunterricht' (GIR), a multi-religious team of representatives from the Lutheran Church, which also invited members of other religious communities to define the curriculum, was set up.

This model, called RUfa 1.0 since 2012, gives way to RUfa 2.0. Thanks to the agreements signed by the City of Hamburg in 2012 with the three Muslim communities (DITIB-Nord, SCHURA-Hamburg and VIKZ) and with the Alevite community, the public authorities officially recognise the religious communities and nominate them (together) as being responsible for religious education in public schools. The Jewish community joined this project in 2014. As of 2019, the archdiocese was also invited to collaborate in teaching as part of a shared responsibility. Finally, on 28 April 2022, the Catholic Church came out in favour.

Hamburg Senator Ties Rabe (SPD) in responsible for school and religion, interviewed by zeit.de expresses his satisfaction, calling the project 'an earthquake from a religious point of view' and addressing the Archbishop of Hamburg Stefan Hess who coordinated the bishops' conference in the decision: 'a brave man who said we would make it. Because questions of church law alone would probably have kept the lawyers busy for the next 15 years. I was a bit surprised, but also moved, that he was able to explain and coordinate this to some measure in the bishops' conference'.

Read more: <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/hamburg/Religionsunterricht-fuer-alle-Katholische-Kirche-macht-mit,religionsunterricht118.html>

The big decision taken, therefore, by the Lutheran and Catholic Churches is the renunciation of their own teaching hours, allocating them instead to interreligious and combined teaching with other religions. In fact, the German Constitution provides for religious curricular teaching of a confessional nature in state schools, since the school as a place of knowledge and education cannot ignore the religious dimension of human existence (Art. 7 paragraph 3). Religious education is based on the doctrine of faith and the ethical and moral philosophy that characterises every religion (Art. 7 paragraph 3). Religious education is 'res mixtae', coordinated together by the State and the Church. The Church provides the teachers, decides on the method of study, the content of the books, the syllabuses, and the educational offerings "religious instruction must be given according to the doctrine of faith and the fundamental



principles of the religious communities present in the territory" (Art. 7 paragraph 3). The state supervises the effective implementation of the programmes and the discipline of students and teachers. Some schools activate a teaching of philosophy, ethics and morals as an alternative for those who do not take religious instruction. In fact, the hour of religion or the alternative hour of philosophy ethics/morality are compulsory subjects in the curriculum. In some Länder, and with not a few difficulties, there are also teachings of Islam as an option in the religious education curriculum. To date, only three Länder offer the teaching of Islam, North-Rhine Westphalia ('NRW') since 2012, Hesse and Lower Saxony since 2013. Berlin offers Islamic teaching but not as a compulsory religion hour and is the responsibility of the school itself (Religious Education in Germany considering Religious Diversity: Constitutional Requirements for Religious Education, Fabius Wittmer* and Christian Waldhoff, German Law Journal (2019), 20, pp. 1047-1065, Cambridge University Press. 2019. p.1058).

"Religionsunterricht für alle" is also a pilot project with respect to teacher training, choice of course offerings and course materials. In fact, all candidates of Christian Lutheran religion, Christian Catholic religion, Muslims belonging to the communities involved, Alevites, Jews and non-religious teachers can fulfil the teaching. To become a teacher, the candidates follow a course at the University of Hamburg, in the new department entitled 'Religions', where courses in the history, theology and philosophy of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Alevite religion are taught for all types of schools. The preparatory service for the subject Religion has been open to Muslim, Alevi and Jewish candidates since 2017. There is an internship at the state institute, conducted by a multi-religious team.

The curriculum is managed by various institutions, first of all by the mixed commission ('Gemko') consisting of the School and Vocational Education and



Training (BSB) authorities and the (Protestant) North Church, which has so far been the sole decision-making body; separate commissions have also been set up by the school authorities with all the religious communities involved. The various working groups are coordinated by a 'working group for the further development of religious education', which

has since been renamed the 'RUfa Commission'. In addition, a 'group of specialists' from other religions besides the officially appointed and recognised ones is involved; these other religions do not yet share responsibility for religious education because the necessary legal requirements are not satisfied.

The implemented teaching programmes were tested by a multi-religious team of teachers who then developed exemplary teaching units. A detailed evaluation was

carried out and published by the IfBQ and is available online: (<https://www.hamburg.de/bsb/ifbq-evaluation-religionsunterricht-fuer-alle/>)

Based on the positive experiences of the test, the central didactic principles of RUfa 2.0. were (partially) redesigned and a new curriculum structure was developed accordingly.

ITALY (Trentino-South Tyrol).

Religion or ethics? A proposal for a choice.

By Lorenza Pamato

After almost thirty years since the revision of the Concordat, which in 1985 made religious instruction optional, the many critical aspects of this teaching are increasingly evident, as demonstrated by the continuing and progressive disaffection of Italian students, both male and female. Although the picture is not easy to define, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) does not in fact publish an annual report on the real extent of non-adherence to IRC³, the available sources show that in the three-year period 2018-2021 alone, the number of pupils who decided not to take IRC rose from 12.90% to 14.07%, with peaks of over 20% in the last school segment, with some significant differences between the various school orders and between the various courses of study⁴.

Proposals to reform the regulatory framework are various and they all start from the recognition of the value of religious culture for the full understanding of our cultural heritage and our history: some move in the direction of a drastic discontinuity - which will, however, have to come to terms with the concordat node⁵ - such as the recent one by Lucetta Scaraffia, who would like to restore the status of religion as a compulsory subject, but assigning its teaching to teachers selected by the State⁶, and others aiming to make effective the right of those who do not make use of it to be able to follow an alternative teaching. In fact, CM 22 of 21/12/2015 envisages that students who choose not to follow the IRC may, as an alternative, participate in teaching and training activities according to programmes

³ <https://www.datibenecomune.it/2022/06/09/datibenecomune-e-uaar-ecco-i-dati-ministeriali-sullinsegnamento-della-religione-cattolica/> ;

(<https://dati.istruzione.it/opendata/opendata/catalogo/#Scuola>

⁴ <https://www.vivoscuola.it/Schede-informative/Insegnamento-della-religione-cattolica-a-scuola/Statistiche-e-ricerche>; <https://www.bz-bx.net/it/formazione/insegnamento-della-religione-cattolica.html>.

⁵ https://presidenza.governo.it/USRI/confessioni/accordo_indice.html .

⁶ <https://www.orizzontescuola.it/a-scuola-la-religione-sia-materia-obbligatoria-ma-con-prof-scelti-dallo-stato-e-non-dallautorita-ecclesiastica-la-proposta-di-scaraffia>.

formulated by teachers' boards, or carry out study and/or individual research activities free of charge with the assistance of teaching staff⁷, carry out study and/or individual research activities free of charge without the assistance of teaching staff (for secondary school students), or be exempted from attending school during those hours. This is, unfortunately, a possibility that is not always effectively reflected in the planning of institutions, to the point that several reminders to schools are necessary to reiterate the obligation to organise such activities and prevent those hours from turning into moments of enjoyment⁸.



Along these lines is the proposal presented at the beginning of 2022 for schools in Trentino, which takes up a similar initiative of the Province of Bolzano, where pilot projects have already been launched in some didactic districts in Bolzano and Merano⁹, projects that should involve all schools in the province, including Italian, German and Ladin schools, from the 2023-2024 school year. The objective of the new subject, which would become the only option compared to IRC, is to transmit to South Tyrolean students an appreciation of their own identity and culture, tolerance and respect in order to develop social responsibility and foster civil coexistence.

In Trento, it was Ugo Rossi (Azione) who tabled a similar motion, which also drew on experiences in other European countries, to enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills of IRC, "declining them in a secular and plural horizon"¹⁰ and to respond to the growing abandonment of IRC¹¹. The initiative comes, again, in response to the continuing decline in enrolment in religious education and the need to provide them too with "the conceptual tools necessary to interpret ethical and cultural values in a rapidly changing society"¹². The motion sets out both the content that should be part of the new subject and the criteria for identifying teachers. The programme is divided into three points and should therefore provide for "a) critical reflection on the values, norms and institutions that regulate the private and social

⁷ http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/circolari/cm316_87.html

⁸ Lazio Regional Administrative Court Judgement no. 33433 of 15 November 2010; Council of State Judgement no. 2749 of 16 March 2010.

⁹ <https://news.provincia.bz.it/it/news/insegnamento-dell-etica-in-alternativa-a-quello-della-religione>.

¹⁰ https://www.consiglio.provincia.tn.it/doc/IDAP_1669138.pdf. Per la discussione seguita in aula i riferimenti sono https://www.consiglio.provincia.tn.it/attivita/resoconti-integrali/archivio/Documents/20220119_io_ro.pdf; https://www.consiglio.provincia.tn.it/attivita/resoconti-integrali/archivio/Documents/20220120_io_ro.pdf.

¹¹ In Trentino about 19% of male and female students do not attend the IRC class. This statistic, however, cannot be compared to the national data since such teaching is only provided for from primary school onwards and does not cover pre-school, as is the case in the rest of the country.

¹² https://www.consiglio.provincia.tn.it/doc/IDAP_1669138.pdf.

life of individuals, starting with the problems that individuals and institutions face on a daily basis; b) critical reflection on the ethical and bioethical problems linked to the continuous technical-scientific development in the various fields of knowledge; c) critical reflection on the structure and justification of national and international legislative codes"¹³.

With perhaps excessive optimism, Rossi observes that the teachers to whom this teaching should be assigned already exist - forgetting, however, that they are assigned to other disciplines and would run into staffing problems -; the profile of the ethics teacher envisages, in his proposal, the possession of a 'research doctorate or a master's degree in anthropology, history, religious sciences, pedagogy and related subjects' with a 'significant number of university credits in the disciplinary sector M-FIL/03'; it also envisages the possibility of setting up refresher courses for those who do not have the requirements. This is probably the weakest part of the proposal, which places on the same level, for the purposes of teaching, very different educational courses, such as a doctorate, a master's degree, and refresher courses, and from which it is not possible to expect comparable profiles.

The minutes of the Provincial Council meeting of 20 January 2022, at the conclusion of the discussion, record a vote in favour of the motion; however, no implementing acts have yet followed, and the official website of the Trentino school does not report any trace of the proposal presented here.

SPAIN.

The debate around the LOMLOE (Celaá law)

By Federica Candido

In Spain the new law on education, called 'LOMLOE' (Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la LOE) and known as the Celaá Law (from the name of the PSOE's Minister of Education), was approved on 29 December 2020 but will become effective from September, at the start of the 2022/2023 school year.

Vast and multifaceted has been the debate that has ensued within the Spanish cultural and political world. In previous issues we have attempted to give an account of it.

It is a wide-ranging law that touches on delicate aspects, first and foremost the linguistic one, which would require proportionate time and space to be properly addressed and discussed.

¹³ *Ibidem.*

The area concerning the teaching of religion, which interests us most closely, is the one that has provoked the most reactions.

The Celaá law aims to establish a renewed legal system in the field of education in order to increase the educational and training opportunities of the entire student population, reduce student segregation and strengthen digital competence. Ample space within the LOMLOE - as emphasised in the introduction - is given to the role of values and ethics based on the principles set out in the 2030 Agenda. Individual responsibility, education for peace and non-violence, affective-sexual education, education for sustainability and ecological transition, respect for other cultures are just some of the terms of reference from which the law was written.

The conservative world, however, defines LOMLOE as an ideological law whose objectives are to educate students with 'gender free' theories, to cancel the teaching of religion and to abolish Castilian (i.e. Spanish) as a vehicular language in schools.

The reform, in fact, has been strongly opposed by the right-wing world, which fears the undermining of parents' right to decide on the education to be given to their children and the cancellation of the freedom to propose a Catholic education. In fact, LOMLOE has cut funding to the so-called 'concertadas' schools, i.e. private schools, free for families but subsidised by regional governments, which are mostly Catholic.

The other point that has aroused vehement criticism (suffice it to recall that more than 1.3 million signatures were collected against the Celaá Law) concerns the teaching of religion, which, according to some interpreters, will gradually be abolished.

On 15 April 2022, the Spanish Bishops' Conference reported that only 48% of children and young people enrolled in public schools attend religious instruction, while 52% attend classes in other subjects.

In non-state schools, on the other hand, adherence is remarkable: the percentage of pupils enrolled in courses of religion actually increases in both private schools (75%) and paritarian schools (almost 90%).



In the face of this heterogeneous and diversified panorama, the text of the law states that the course of religion will no longer be average and that it will not have to be replaced by another course by those who decide not to follow it.

We will see, starting next autumn, its concrete application in Spanish schools. One of the first problems is already emerged: what will do the students who do not attend the course of religion?

Read more:

- https://documentos.anpe.es/ANPE_LOMLOE/168/
- https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/prohibido-ensinar-nadie-alumnos-no-elijan-religion_1_9135582.html
- <https://www.laopiniondemurcia.es/comunidad/2022/07/26/educacion-sube-1-5-numero-70856606.html>
- <https://www.magisnet.com/2022/07/madrid-impartira-el-horario-minimo-de-valores-civicos-que-establece-la-lomloe/>
- <https://www.religionenlibertad.com/polemicas/488796260/escuelas-catolicas-valencia-lomloe-religion.html>
- https://www.eldiario.es/comunitat-valenciana/opinion/nueva-ley-educacion-competencias-religion_129_9194705.html
- <https://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/comunicado-sobre-curriculos-de-religion-catolica/>
- https://www.hispanidad.com/sociedad/educacion-hablan-obispos-no-hay-calidad-educativa-sin-reconocer-clase-religion-catolica_12035640_102.html
- <https://www.eldebate.com/educacion/20220726/60-familias-piden-religion-no-hay-partido-tenga-esos-porcentajes.html>

SECOND SECTION

Religions and the globalised world

Keywords: religions, superdiversity, pluralism, globalisation, Tor Pignattara, Roma Tre, workshop activities

ITALY (ROME).

The 'Religions in the global world' lab (Roma Tre University) goes to Tor Pignattara

By Isabella De Paolis

During the second semester just ended, at the Department of Humanities Studies of Roma Tre University, the workshop entitled "Religions in the global world" was held, the result of collaboration between the Master's Degree courses "Movements and trends of contemporary Islam" (Prof. G. Gervasio); "History of religions" and "Religions and urban spaces" (Prof.ssa M.C. Giorda). In addition to the seminars of the two teachers involved, the workshop was attended by external experts - scholars, researchers, local and international civil society representatives, and personalities of Italian and international religious communities - who dealt with current issues and urged students to a critical and participatory confrontation.

In full line with the didactic specificity of the university laboratory, that is to insert itself in the within of the curricular proposal through a more direct modality, a more restricted setting and a more active participation, the laboratory "Religions in the Global World" on May 12th left the classrooms of Via Ostiense 234 and moved to one of the most super-plural districts of Rome, Tor Pignattara, to discover some symbolic places of different religious communities. Located in the southeast quadrant of the capital with an area of just over 200 hectares that hosts about 22% of foreigners out of a total of about 50 thousand residents, Tor Pignattara is a place that escapes a clear and unambiguous definition.

It is a suburb, but it is located a few kilometers from the historic center; it is a buffer zone characterized by a unique otherness compared to the Pigneto, which in recent decades has experienced an alternative and somewhat naïve gentrification, and the area around Largo Preneste, made of curtain buildings of the middle class, shops and supermarkets and, although close to the dormitory district of Casilino



23, Tor Pignattara is a lively and varied neighborhood, sometimes difficult, where there are small shops of all kinds (artisans, service supplies and bazaars) and with affordable rental apartments that have called immigrants mostly from Southeast Asia. It is the district that yesterday experienced, within the school walls and in the streets, media and political battles and that, today, promotes the Taste de World, the Karawan film festival and the activities of the Casilino Ecomuseum. In short, it is the neighborhood of oxymorons: the false truths of television services, the lucid madness of the coexistence of several religious faiths, the bitter sweetness of the looks of *Italian* migrants, the dull noise of the train that crosses it and divides it in two. These premises made it possible to choose the neighborhood of Tor Pignattara as a place of religious pluralism and multiculturalism for a lesson on the go of the laboratory "Religions in the global world".

As well known, laboratory teaching aims to decline the skills of "savoir-faire" and "savoir-être" through the contextualization of disciplinary and interdisciplinary contents, through the activation of the students' soft skills. It is a matter, at the operational level, of building real workshops that can give life to an integrated learning mode that is concretized as the place of the triangulation theory-practice-theory, where the metacognitive model of competences is valued, which, in turn, refers to a process of critical self-assessment.

In this perspective, the day spent in the streets of Tor Pignattara represented a moment of reflection and dialogue between students, teachers, and experts around key points of some places of worship visited.

The super-diversity of the streets of Tor Pignattara, among the bright colours of the clothes laid on the strings of the balconies that lead us to India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and the smells of spices and exotic fruits from small shops on the street opens, on tiptoe, to the various religions.

The first stage is Casa Scalabrini that welcomes families and young refugees and promotes activities and training courses aimed at asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, and the local community. Linked to the program of the Scalabrinian Agency for Development Cooperation (ASCS Onlus) Casa Scalabrini is supported by the Congregation of the Missionaries of San Carlo, which for 130 years has been at the service of migrants and refugees in 32 countries around the world and welcomes both Catholics and Muslims, working, from the outset and without linguistic mediators, on individual autonomy that can encourage integration in the surrounding context.

The definitely summer temperatures of an anomalous spring day do not stop the curiosity of more than 40 students attending, who listen to the explanations provided by the "hosts", visit the common areas of the house, from the canteen to the various corners of the garden that surrounds it, from the tailor's shop to the radio station.

Continuing on Via Casilina, the long line of students and teachers, which suggests an orderly line of pilgrims or students, reaches the Mausoleum of Saint Helena, erected by Constantine in the fourth century after Christ. Built close to the Basilica in honor of the martyrs Marcellinus and Peter, the mausoleum began the monumental christianization of the suburb and, today, is the symbol of the district of Tor Pignattara to which it gives its name (the amphorae that decorate the Mausoleum were called, in jargon, "pignatte"). The detailed information, both from a historical-religious and archaeological point of view, of the anthropologist Carmelo Russo, guide of the itinerary, provides a few points of reflection and possible insights to the students of the laboratory that, along the walks, comment on the places visited and look, with interested eyes, the surrounding space.

Walking next to the Alexandrian Aqueduct, near the Giordano Sangalli Park, you will reach the Madonna della Capannuccia, symbol of popular Christian belief, built on the place where, it is said, group of children on May 17th 1948, saw a dazzling light while one of them recognized the features of the Virgin. Today it is a small chapel where the faithful go to pray; inside the walls are covered with dozens of plates "by grace received", dating back largely to the 40s. Inside the chapel there are holy cards, statuettes, flowers, postcards of popes, a small table dedicated to Padre Pio, in an atmosphere that brings back to an archaic faith. The entrance to the chapel, contingent for reasons of space, gave rise to the spontaneous formation of various groups of students involved in pleasant conversations on the route, highlighting a relaxed atmosphere and empathetic emotional involvement.

A little further on the group reaches the Muslim Center in Via Carlo Della Rocca 23, once a supermarket, and today, the main place of prayer for the Muslim community of the neighborhood, mostly Bengali nationalities; the temple 'Om Hindu Mandir in Via Amedeo Cancelli 23A and, then, the Bahá'í Educational Centre, located in Via Bernardo Buontalenti 29, which started its activity a couple of years ago. What unites the three places of worship is the absolute anonymity with which they overlook the surrounding environment. In all three cases the entrance, on the road, is that of a showcase of any shop, known to the only interested and perhaps to some curious. Despite this, the activity of the three offices turns out to be very fervent and active.

The imam of the Muslim center and his collaborators welcome students and teachers with warmth and affection. Enjoying great dates and home-made cookies kindly offered by Muslims, students are, first, captivated by the explanations of the typical day in the mosque and the cultural activities proposed in collaboration with the Ecomuseum Casilino and other organizations active in the neighborhood and then engaged in a task of digital dissemination assigned by the teachers. The relaxed and, at the same time, effervescent atmosphere of students taking photographs, asking for translations of signs and manuscripts posted on the wall, trying to repeat the correct pronunciation of terms already known from previous studies but altered by the Latin phonology, confirm the success of the workshop output.

Finally, the Bahá'í Educational Centre welcomes students and teachers from Roma Tre in its spacious air-conditioned rooms, exhausted by the torrid heat, and

immerses them in a religious dimension unknown to most of the participants. From the maxim "All men have been created to advance a civilization in continuous progress" of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, who stands on a whiteboard in the center of the room, the leader of the Via Buontalenti community illustrates the focal points of the Bahá'í vision of a better world that draws on teachings such as the unity of mankind, equality between women and men, the elimination of prejudices, the harmony between science and religion. The encounter with a little known religious faith generates curiosity and questions among students and, luckily, clear and comprehensive answers from the hosts.

Undoubtedly, all the places of worship visited seem to be united by the same mission, namely the promotion of the culture of encounter, welcome and integration between the faithful and the local community through encounters, dialogue, formal and informal relations, shared holidays, and socio-political appointments.

In addition to the general impression given during the day, through careful and participatory observation, more reliable data were collected through a structured questionnaire on the day of May 12th and through interviews with some students.

The student-type who has participated in the laboratory "Religions in the globalized world" is in progress, attending, is working on his thesis and believes that the educational output has had a significant weight in their study path, for various research points identified. It is interesting to note that more than half of the students attended the workshop and participated in the educational output for their own personal interest, beyond what was provided for in their study plan. Everyone liked the idea of the didactic exit, more than half of the students defined it, with regard to the proposals offered and the organization of the day, a decidedly positive experience. Although there have been episodes, mostly spontaneous, of aggregation, especially during the educational exit, more than half of the students propose to enhance the socialization within the laboratory. An invitation to teachers, therefore, to plan group activities aimed at implementing cooperative learning and facilitating dynamics of mutual collaboration. From a more didactic point of view, about 70% of students believe that the realization of the triangulation theory-practice-theory is very positive.

As for the day of the exit to Torpignattara, it is important to mention the moment of conviviality shared during the lunch break. The proposal of the organizers of the workshop, namely a vegetarian lunch at the Bazar Taverna Curda Meticcia Casilina 607 street based on borek, hummus, falafel and biryani welcomed a very high consensus of participants. The internal and external premises of the tavern, in a few minutes, were crowded with students who in an informal, socializing and fun context (are some of the recurring adjectives in the answers to the questionnaire) and under the scorching heat of an early summer, almost forgot to be at a university laboratory in Rome.

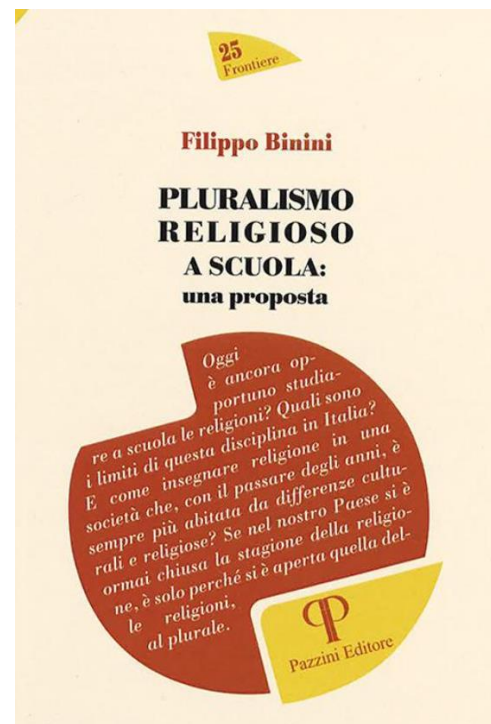
THIRD SECTION

REVIEWS

F. Binini, *Pluralismo religioso a scuola: una proposta*, pref. by F. Pajer, Villa Verucchio, Pazzini Editore, 2021

By Francesco Carta

The book by Filippo Binini, a Catholic religion teacher in primary school, is divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to a brief examination of Catholic Religious Education (IRC) in Italy. The author provides a brief reconstruction of the history of the IRC and then concentrates, with the support of the most recent scientific historiography, on the analysis of the current Italian socio-religious reality, characterised by an increasingly marked pluralism, in which this teaching is inserted. Binini then contextualises IRC within the European reality, comparing it to the different proposals for teaching the religious fact and presenting the most recent international reflections and debates on the subject. Finally, he presents, with a certain critical vein, the situation in which IRC in Italian schools finds itself today. The picture that emerges from this last part is



that of a teaching that fails to adapt fully to the plural reality in which it is offered. It suffers, in fact, according to the author, from the weight of the denominational management of teachers and programmes: despite the fact that teaching is to all intents and purposes included within the public school 'the actual management of "religious knowledge" continues, however, to depend on the regulatory and discretionary power of the Church, which trains teachers, establishes their suitability or otherwise to teach, and establishes the programmes' (p. 35). From the picture outlined, therefore, emerges a critical situation whose most emblematic fact is the constant growth in the number of non-adopters (the tables in the book make this clear) to whom the Italian school is unable, in most cases, to guarantee a real alternative, with the increasingly real risk of isolating minorities. The author also brings out the problem of the assessment of those who have taken advantage of it, which, as is well known, is not decisive for the student's final score. The consequence is a minimal commitment on the part of the pupils who see in the hour of religion a moment of defatigue, according to a perception, the author notes,

often shared by the teachers themselves who, not bound by a defined syllabus, end up assuming the role of "students' confidants" (p. 34) and deal with topics that are the fruit of improvisation.

It is within this framework that the proposal that occupies the entire second part of the book is placed. It is the description of a programme designed for teachers of Catholic religion in the upper secondary school. For each class, a general theme is identified to be carried out during the year and the contents of the various lessons are briefly presented (then taken up in useful summary diagrams in the appendix). The first classes are offered a reflection on the great questions that man has asked himself since the dawn of history (Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?) and an introduction to the concept of religion; the second classes are offered an analysis of the relationship between culture and religion and an introduction to the two majority faiths on the European continent, Christianity and Islam; the third classes are given an in-depth look at Eastern religions. For all the faiths dealt with, a first of all historical contextualisation is proposed, which then helps to present the respective faith contents, and a general approach that stimulates students to learn by reading the respective sacred texts and listening to direct witnesses, to be sought, first of all, within the classes themselves. An analysis of contemporary reality is proposed to fourth and fifth grade students, and they are called upon to confront the great phenomena that characterise it: secularisation, scientific atheism, agnosticism, religious pluralism, the phenomenon of "Personal religions", the birth and development of charismatic movements, and religious fundamentalism. Fifth grade students will also be asked to reflect on the problem of evil, anti-Semitism and the Shoah.

These and other contents are presented by Binini with a careful eye not to isolate the teaching of the Catholic religion: repeated and constant is the invitation to grasp all the potential that these themes can have if treated in relation to other disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and history, with which the invitation to collaboration is always recurrent.

Especially in this second part, the author chooses a 'didactic' tone. In fact, he does not limit himself exclusively to listing which contents are to be addressed but deals with them in brief (as in the case of oriental religions) by exemplifying some paths. Clearly, Binini believes he has to deal with these topics because he realises that the audience he prefers to address, namely his colleagues in upper secondary schools, is not trained in this regard. It is precisely the lack of training on these topics on the part of the majority of current teachers of religion that constitutes an obvious limitation of the book's proposal. This limitation is moreover emphasised in the concluding phase by the author himself: in order to be implemented, this programme implies a surplus of training on the part of the teachers, who, often, have a solid scientific basis exclusively with regard to the Christian religion.

This limitation actually evokes another, more general one. In the writer's opinion, Binini does not draw the true conclusions from his analysis to the end, namely that

the thoughtful programme he proposes can only really be adopted after reforming the current teaching of the Catholic religion and/or its teachers. I envisage two different possibilities. The first, strongly conservative, would consist of a change in the training paths of teachers who would have to acquire, even exclusively within pontifical universities, all the skills to present a Catholic religion teaching attentive to the plurality of religions and, in general, to the religious fact.

The second, more courageous and decisive, is to transform the IRC into a teaching on the religious fact, with a non-denominational matrix. The training of teachers could easily be guaranteed by the state through university courses that, moreover, already exist, such as the Master's degree in the Science of Religion. This would also make it much easier to guarantee a high level of selection through public competitions. It seems to me, moreover, that this is the only way that, by making the subject compulsory, would make it possible to solve the problem of non-adopters who, at present, risk remaining in a condition of almost religious illiteracy. Binini, not by chance, tackles the problem again at the end of the book, proposing a strategy to involve them within specific teaching units agreed upon between the teaching of Catholic religion and the holders of other teachings. The proposal can be read from two points of view: on the one hand, it could be a necessary stratagem to make the students acquire competences which they would not otherwise attain (and which are all the more important the more they are aimed at the construction of a citizen who faces adult life in a plural reality); on the other hand, it could be experienced as a sort of 'deception' for the non-accepting students who could simply claim the right to obtain the same competences from a teacher who is not a Catholic.

The book, in short, presents a fine programme and a stimulating read for all Catholic Religious Education teachers who could draw much advice on planning for the coming years. The writer is left only with the doubt as to whether, in order to move 'towards a teaching of religions' in the public school, as the title of the second part of the book states, a teacher not chosen and trained by a denominational institution is more desirable.

A. Cuciniello e S. Pasta, *Studenti musulmani a scuola*, Carocci, Roma 2020.

By Isabella De Paolis

The book *Studenti musulmani a scuola*, edited by Antonio Cuciniello and Stefano Pasta, was published in November 2020, edited by Carocci and summarizes part of



the work focused on intercultural skills and literacy in the Islamic world promoted by the PriMED-Prevention and interaction in the trans-Mediterranean area, in Lombardy. The text presents ten essays entrusted to the pen of scholars who, different for disciplinary skills and scientific interests, converge in attributing to the school and the educational agencies operating in public spaces, a key role in the formation of intercultural citizenship that can hinder, on the one hand, the manifestations of prejudices and stereotypes, and, on the other, counteract the emergence of radicalisation.

The introduction to the text, four-handed by the editors, helps the reader to identify who are the Muslims in Italy, providing numbers and data and outlining a brief, but clear, *excursus* on the ethnic specificities and the complex characteristics of the

Muslim presence in Italy, so as to clearly define the ultimate goal of the text itself, that is to overcome the multiculturalism perspective in favor of the "critical intercultural pedagogy" approach (Santerini, 2017). Today the school context is a plural, complex and multifaceted reality where the relationships among teachers, educators, students and parental figures are intermingled. The book *Studenti musulmani a scuola* is concerned about the most relevant social and educational issues dealing with the Islamic religion that the school communities are coping with, suggesting new educational paths and interdisciplinary activities to be implemented and solutions to be evaluated.

Thanks to the contributions of scholars of church law, pedagogues, sociologists, anthropologists, Islamologists and Arabists, the reader (it may be an insider or a researcher or whoever wants to be cultured about Islam) is accompanied on a journey that, in the first instance, deals with basic content on Islam and Muslims and, in the second place, referring to the school context, it also provides a comprehensive overview to whom, teachers, educators or assistants, are called to participate in the growth of students of different cultures and religious faiths from the Catholic and, therefore, to question the need to overcome the impasse of religious and cultural illiteracy.

In this regard, it is interesting, how this book faces the essential points relating to Islam *tout court*, as to untie the knots of semantic confusion around the terms "Islamic", "Muslim" and "Arabic", often misused as synonyms; to illustrate the guidelines that define the specificities of Islamic faith, worship and ethics; to define the epistemological panorama around the West versus East binomial; to mention analysis and theses, now historical, now sociological, now anthropological that have followed each other since the attack on the Twin Tower and to clarify the value of holidays and religious symbols with a look at legislation.

The ISMU Foundation estimates that, as of 1st January 2020, there are 5,923,000 foreigners in Italy out of a population of 59,641,488 residents, or just under one foreigner per 10 inhabitants and that 29% of foreigners resident in Italy are Muslim¹⁴. Accordingly, it is clear the challenge to which the whole school community is called, which will have to commit to building a space where more cultures and more religions cannot only live together but enrich each other, starting from their main diversity. The words of Anna Granata, pedagogue and writer of a contribution to the text under examination, resound as appropriate, or "The school is another place, a space of self-recognition, but also the place where you can build your own identity, distinct from that of your family and your community".

To accept this challenge means, essentially for teachers, to open themselves to a transversal educational and didactic action, to train themselves in order to acquire skills and abilities suitable to face cultural and religious otherness, to experience and collect new practices that can be reviewed and used in other contexts and in other situations under the common denominator that "intercultural education is not an exception, or an appendix that they must add to their educational and didactic action"¹⁵.

It is a question of following up on the proposals made by the above-mentioned pedagogues and on what is stated in the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, which is mentioned in this text, and which focuses on the intercultural dimension of various subjects taught at school, as to underline the awareness of not relegating religious pluralism to the hour of IRC. Certainly, the re-introduction of the teaching of civic education¹⁶ has raised awareness of a more conscious intercultural pedagogical and educational approach, involving more cooperative participation among teachers, due also to *ad hoc* training courses proposed by the Ministry of Education through the Regional School Offices, in order to "answer students' questions of meaning, combining school and life" (Granata, 2016).

¹⁴ XXVI ISMU Report on Migration 2020.

¹⁵ Marco Catarci, Massimiliano Fiorucci (edited by), *Intercultural Orientations For Citizenship*, Armando Editore. This volume is distributed free of charge as it is produced with the contribution of the EIF (European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals)"Intercultural Guidelines for Citizenship", Annual Programme 2012, Action 3 ("Youth Projects"), PROG. 103940.

¹⁶ Law 92 of 20 August 2019 introduced from the school year 2020-2021 the transversal teaching of civic education in the first and second cycle of education, with initiatives to raise awareness of responsible citizenship from kindergarten onwards.

In the lay panorama of the sphere of public schools, "the promotion of literacy to religions, then, looms at the cognitive level as a necessary tool to train students to a global citizenship" (Giorda, 2009). Proposals and suggestions are raised for possible didactic paths that move around the search for common values such as the Abrahamic origin of the three great monotheistic religions, the Mediterranean basin as the place of encounter-clashes of different cultures, the phonetic similarity of certain terms, the migratory phenomena and related socio-economic-demographic issues as well as historical, diachronic and synchronic analyses and comparisons, linked to struggles, wars and peaceful relationships that have taken place over the millennia.

Once the general scope of action of the issue has been defined, namely the above mentioned need for an intercultural approach of openness and dialogue at school aimed at enhancing diversity as a mutual enrichment, the text edited by Antonio Cuciniello and Stefano Pasta focuses attention on two critical issues closely related to the Muslim students: the presence of stereotypes and prejudices and the phenomenon of the radicalization of youth extremism; both refer in a speculative way to the so-called islamophobia.

Veiled girls and, sometimes, somatic traits; the days of public holidays (not yet recognized by the Italian State); religious symbols (the Catholic ones, exhibited in class); the fast of Ramadan; the issue around citizenship, are presented as evidence that emphasize a kind of "otherness" of those Muslim students who feel that they do not belong to the class group, despite many of them were born and raised in Italy but, at the same time, proudly of their Muslim faith. If all this can represent, for some, an introspective closure that affects self-esteem and, for others, the exhibition of a more ironic and disenchanting attitude that leads to pretending nothing, it is clear that, in both cases, we are faced with attitudes that require the use of corrective actions and that need to be declined in well-studied training courses at an interdisciplinary level, with the aim of creating moments of formal and non-formal learning where students can open themselves to an inter- and intracultural dialogue in an area of freedom and confrontation. A freedom that, however, should not be misunderstood with that freedom of expression that, too banally and too hastily, makes fall into the trap of the speed 2.0 of the augmented-reality of the web and that, in the case of insults and hate speech against Muslims, gives rise to a real form of racism, or islamophobia. In this regard, the pages of Stefano Pasta review reflections and prevention proposals to islamophobia, starting from school benches, through educational paths that see a correspondence between the online and offline dimension and that literate students to digital competence, focusing on social responsibility and critical thinking.

Referring to islamophobia, we cannot fail to remember how the events of September 11th 2001 have contributed to fueling ever more subtle and varied forms of hatred that have, in lots of cases, associated Islam with jihad and all Muslims with the armed terrorists of al-Qaeda. This distorted reading, which was followed by a media exposure supported by various testimonies, not least those of Oriana Fallaci and Cristiano Madgi Allam who have reinforced the presence of unfounded and

dangerous stereotypes, has entered, in the school, with all the pitfalls and questions that accompany the turbulent novelties. This is the background to the phenomenon of youth radicalism that, although in Italy can be traced back to a few dozen children, teachers are called to recognize. What is defined the 'Islamization of nihilism' (Roy, 2017) seems to recruit two types of young people: the marginalized, socially and emotionally, from a disadvantaged background that do not accept their diversity and that suffer from the absence of future prospects and those who, despite coming from middle social classes, suffer the fascination of power and authority that wants to assert itself in the most repressive dimension. Hence, "the need for a patient work of inclusion, integration and intercultural dialogue" (Santerini, 2020). Several European educational projects are proposed in this book which, by analyzing propaganda from the extremist narrative, propose examples of peaceful counter-narration, based on the principles of democratic citizenship, and aimed at arousing positive emotions. Beyond the school walls, planned educational outings are proposed within multidisciplinary programs and suggestions are made of meetings with the places of Islam, from mosques to prayer centers, to cultural associations that today they are opening up to institutional celebrations such as the sharing of iftār dinners (the end of fasting).

It is valuable the proposal of educational contributions; a case study on research of the didactics of the history in the countries of the Persian Gulf that takes into consideration the study of the manuals used in public schools and the contents of the ministerial circulars concerning the teaching of the various disciplines and a compendium of teaching units as final outcome of the PriMED Advanced Training Courses, held in Lombardy. If, in the first case, the point of view of the methodological approach is interesting, in the historiographical field, which moves between the concepts of "discursive practice" and "discursive strategy", it is however evident the difficult replicability or adaptability to cultural contexts like ours. As for the proposals for the teaching units, however, there are no references to the specific characteristics of the class group where the teaching actions were carried out, or information such as the number of students involved, their nationality, their religious faith, the presence of SEN or mixed-ability pupils and it would have been appreciable, as well as of considerable interest, the sharing of the results of the post-teaching interventions, through a feedback that highlighted the positive aspects and the critical issues and outlined any pros and cons in both the specific educational and social field.

The undoubted value of the text is to raise a very important current issue, that of the need to rethink the educational and guiding role of the school within a social context characterized by complex intercultural, intra-cultural and pluralistic dynamics. Islam, more than other religions, catalyses around itself strong emotions and mixed feelings that need explanation and recognition through a path of knowledge and overcoming prejudices that should start from a reshaping of school curricula that must be open to religious plurality in the name of preserving diversity. Because

cultural diversity means wealth. And because being Italian does not coincide with being Catholic.

FOURTH SECTION

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES

Report conference “Obiettivo 4 dell’Agenda 2030 per uno sviluppo sostenibile e insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola”

7th May 2022 Sala Verde - Fondazione Collegio San Carlo - Modena

By *Federica Candido*

The poster features the logos of UNIMORE (Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia) and the University of Bologna at the top. The central text reads: "OBIETTIVO 4 DELL'AGENDA 2030 PER UNO SVILUPPO SOSTENIBILE E INSEGNAMENTO DEL FATTO RELIGIOSO A SCUOLA". Below this, it states the date and location: "Sabato 7 maggio 2022 Sala Verde • Fondazione Collegio San Carlo Via San Carlo 5, Modena". The main visual is three overlapping circles with geometric patterns in yellow and red. The bottom section contains a detailed schedule of events from 9:00 to 15:00, including institutional speeches, a round table, and a streaming event. Logos for the organizing institutions are at the bottom.

UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA
Dipartimento di Educazione e Scienze Umane

Con il patrocinio di
US
Ministero dell'Istruzione
Università degli Studi di Bologna
Fondazione Collegio San Carlo

OBIETTIVO 4 DELL'AGENDA
2030 PER UNO SVILUPPO
SOSTENIBILE E INSEGNAMENTO
DEL FATTO RELIGIOSO A SCUOLA

Sabato 7 maggio 2022
Sala Verde • Fondazione Collegio San Carlo
Via San Carlo 5, Modena

Ore 9.00
Saluti istituzionali

Relazioni
L'insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola e l'obiettivo 4 dell'agenda 2030: alcuni suggerimenti dal percorso pedagogico di Mario Lodi e dalla giurisprudenza della Corte Europea dei Diritti umani
(Vincenzo Pacillo, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)

L'educazione religiosa nelle scuole d'Europa. Percorsi e temi comparativi
(Rita Benigni, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Insegnare la religione o le religioni? Appunti sulla teoria e sul metodo
(Maria Chiara Giorda, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Tra passato e futuro. L'insegnamento della religione cattolica nel diritto della Chiesa e le sfide dell'Agenda 2030 per uno Sviluppo Sostenibile
(Michele Madonna, Università degli Studi di Pavia)

L'esperienza di ERENews. Bollettino di informazione sull'insegnamento della storia delle religioni e delle religioni nella scuola e nelle Università
(Federica Candido, Editor, Redazione EREnews)

Ore 11.45
Coffee Break

Ore 12.00
Tavola rotonda e dibattito con i relatori
Modena: Giuliano Albarani
(Fondazione Collegio San Carlo)

Ore 15.00
Fine dei lavori

L'evento verrà trasmesso in diretta streaming sulla Pagina Facebook di "La Piazza Magarini"
<https://www.facebook.com/lapiazamagarini/>

Si ringrazia per il sostegno all'iniziativa
Fondazione Collegio San Carlo

During the conference held in Modena on 7 May 2022 *Obiettivo 4 dell’Agenda 2030 per uno sviluppo sostenibile e insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola* experts and researchers of different disciplines discussed and debated the topic of teaching RE in public schools in the light of the different historical experiences in European school systems and following the statement in Goal 4 of Agenda 2030.

The conference can be listened to in full at this [link](#).

The first speech by Prof. Vincenzo Pacillo (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), *L’insegnamento del fatto religioso a scuola e l’obiettivo 4 dell’agenda 2030: alcuni suggerimenti dal percorso pedagogico di Mario Lodi e dalla giurisprudenza della Corte Europea*

dei Diritti umani, retraced the revolutionary experiments of Mario Lodi's educational method with respect to the proposed teaching of religion. According to Pacillo, Gianni Rodari and Mario Lodi considered the school as a place where the purpose was the formation of the citizen. And in this place, the aspect concerning knowledge of the religious fact and religions also plays a crucial role.

Rita Benigni (Roma Tre University) with her paper *L'educazione religiosa nelle scuole d'Europa. Percorsi e temi comparativi* spoke about the differences that European school systems present in the area of religious education and the teaching of religion. She emphasised the absolute necessity on the part of the State to plan, in a community dimension, the teaching of RE.

Maria Chiara Giorda (Roma Tre University) in her report *Insegnare la religione o le religioni? Appunti sulla teoria e sul metodo* stated that she considered the term 'Sciences of religions' to be more appropriate to express the plurality and complexity of the teachings concerning religion and religions.

Michele Madonna of the University of Pavia (*Tra passato e futuro. L'insegnamento della religione cattolica nel diritto della Chiesa e le sfide dell'Agenda 2030 per uno Sviluppo Sostenibile*) retraced, from a historical-juridical point of view, the teaching of religion in Catholic law in the Church and traced an outline of the existing canonical system. The paper, moreover, reviewed the challenges that the teaching of the Catholic religion faces today in the Italian state school, highlighting above all the test that today concerns the teaching of "Educazione civica".

In the last speech (*L'esperienza di ERENews, Bollettino di informazione sull'insegnamento della storia delle religioni e delle religioni nella scuola e nelle Università*) Federica Candido had the opportunity to present the bulletin created and managed for 18 years by Professor Flavio Pajer and, as of March 2021, inherited by the Department of Humanistic Studies (DSU) of Roma Tre University.

The discussion and working hypotheses arising from the round table are numerous and it will be possible to read the papers discussed in 'Il Diritto Ecclesiastico' (issue 3-4/2022).

MONOGRAPHIC SECTION

The themes addressed in the monographic section of this issue of EREnews arise from some questions we have often questioned and debated.

We strive to critically observe the world around us, to attempt to formulate the right questions to respond to the realities that we live in and go through, to be attentive analysts, and therefore it seemed right to dedicate - through our privileged instrument of observation, that is the teaching of the religious fact - part of our attention and our work to the war in Ukraine and to the complex and intricate scenario that forms its background.

We have tried to give an account of the role assigned to religions in the current school systems in Ukraine and Russia and we have also attempted to investigate other possible issues such as the reception strategies in the various European school systems, and in particular in Italy, of Ukrainian children/youths who are currently refugees.

In-depth article

The Italian Education and Children from Ukraine

By Filippo Mariani

Many of the millions of refugees escaping from Russian-Ukrainian war are children who have had to interrupt their education. Many of them have found asylum in Italy where the State have tried to integrate them in the Italian schools. According to data collected by the Ministry of Education as of 13th June 2022 the integration of Ukrainian students in the academic year 2021-2022 concerned a total of 27.506 children spread over the National territory. The Ministry registered a higher affluence in the North-Center of the country, excepting for regions Lazio and Campania. Almost a half of the children (12713) has been signed up to the Primary School, while only 2.559 pupils have been registered in the Secondary School. This lower number can be explained by the fact that the Secondary School's students are prepared for attending online courses dispatched by Ukrainian schools. The validity of the school year is obtained after the attending of a quarter of a personal amount of hour, at least. The amount of hour considers the school curriculum attended in Ukraine. For the Secondary School a Personal Didactic Plan (PDP) and personal learning paths are prepared. The Ministry of Education has opened an online platform also, where it is possible to have warnings about how to handle the new educational emergency. In this regard it is useful a guide published by the Ministry of March 2022 about the Intercultural Orientation of students arriving from migratory backgrounds. The document does not concern the Ukrainian crisis only, but it can be applied to it. In the paper one can find some key points for the reception of

migrant pupils, such as the right to education, the



linguistic teaching, the linguistic-cultural mediation, the enhancement of linguistic-cultural diversity, etc. Another action of the Ministry it was to set a Summer Plane. The Plan was already active in Summer 2021, but it is back in 2022 having a specific section for Ukrainian students. Waiting for the school year 2022-2023, the Summer Plan proposes an improvement of the teaching Italian and plans to provide

more locals and computer that can be used by the schools for the Distant Learning from Ukraine. Furthermore, the Plan arranges educational, recreational, and sporting activities as well. The past 30th June the European Union commission for supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education had produced a document with the same goal. However, both in Italian and European effort the religious matter it is not faced. In the European Commission paper, it could fit in the definition of the world *culture*. Rather, in Italy seems to be a different situation attributable to the *vexata quaestio* concerning the religious teaching which does not take distances from the Catholic Religion. It cannot be excluded that the Ministry of Education will provide an alternative teaching to the IRC for Ukrainian refugees for the next school year. However, there are no indications in this direction. Such a decision could lend itself to an easy criticism: why it is now decided to undertake a path never considered under the pressure of past migratory waves – a criticism already moved to the efforts, including economic ones, implemented for the integration and support of young Ukrainian people, but not spent on children coming from different realities, such as Afghans. However, it is my opinion that this resolution would have a double advantage: first, it would offer thousands of children an alternative religious teaching (it does not matter that such attention has not been previously applied in other contexts. Second, it could represent a constructive moment to create an open and wide debate about the possibility or expanding the horizon of religious teaching in Italy. A nice opening was given by the FISM (Italian Federation of Nursery Schools), which federates Catholic or Christian-inspired public schools. A few days after the outbreak of the conflict, the FISM made its facilities and network available to provide hospitality and education to Ukrainian children refugees and their families. In the Diocese of Milan at the end of March 1686 places have been available for Ukrainian children by 353 Catholic-inspired schools. However, on May 17th, the Federation asked its schools to create a “sharing fund for the reception of Ukrainian children”, seeking the support of the network of schools for those institutions that suffer critical situations under the pressure of migrant reception, waiting for an intervention by the Ministry of Education. Regarding younger

children, the FISM records that “after the manifestations of availability between the end of March and the beginning of April, hundreds and hundreds of ‘new friends’, especially between the ages of three and six, from the North to the South of Italy have had to take into account delays for regulatory attention” or for necessary psychological support. These are signs of how great and increasing is the pressure of young Ukrainian refugees on Italian education system, and how the initiative dealt in this article are indeed excellent ones, but still representing a starting point. As already mentioned, the entering of so many students of different culture and religion from the Italian one could represent an opportunity to discuss the teaching of religion in Italy.

Sources:

<https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/materiali.html>

<https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/allegati/ReportAlunniUcrainiTemplate2.pdf>

<https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Orientamenti+Interculturali.pdf/be99b531-74d3-8035-21af-39aaf1c285f5?version=1.0&t=1647608565245>

<https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/index.html>

<https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/racconti.html>

<https://www.miur.gov.it/-/torna-il-piano-estate-laboratori-musica-sport-inclusione-previste-attivita-con-gli-studenti-e-per-l-accoglienza-dei-ragazzi-ucraini-bianchi-il-piano-d>

<https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/allegati/Factsheet%20-%20Schools%20-Ukraine-links.pdf>

https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/supporting-inclusion-displaced-children-ukraine-education_en

https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/MSNA-in-Italia_Aprile-2022.pdf

<https://fism.net/>

<https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2022/5/17/scuole-materne-fism-un-fondo-di-condivisione-per-laccoglienza-dei-bambini-ucraini/>

<https://www.chiesadimilano.it/news/chiesa-diocesi/le-scuole-dellinfanzia-della-diocesi-pronte-ad-accogliere-i-bambini-ucraini-500394.html>

<https://www.varesenews.it/2022/03/le-scuole-dellinfanzia-della-diocesi-milano-pronte-ad-accogliere-bambini-ucraini/1441604/>

<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2022/03/28/i-bimbi-ucraini-nelle-scuole-italiane-sono-oltre-5mila-fondi-per-mediatori-e-psicologi-per-gli-altri-alunni-stranieri-invece-restano-carenze/6537794/>

Teaching religion in schools Ukraine

School and Religions

Schooling in Ukraine is free and open to all citizens indiscriminately. Compulsory schooling ranges from 6 to 17 years of age, but a reform is underway that will gradually increase it by one year.

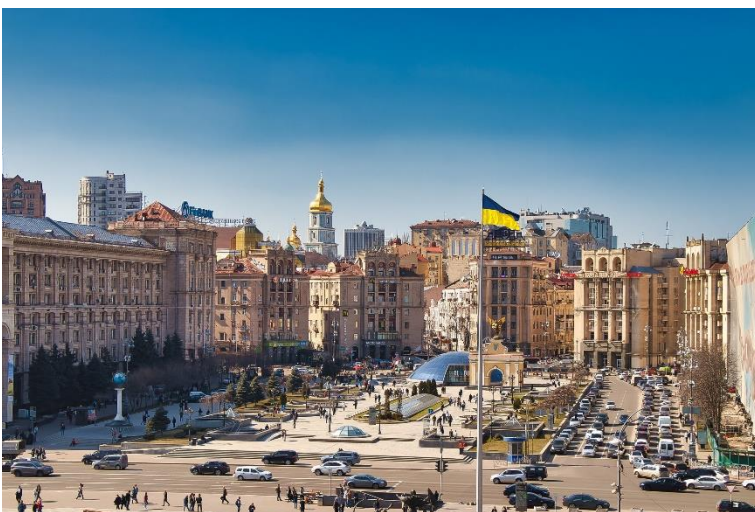
98% of compulsory education is public.

In Ukraine, the Church and religious organisations are separate from the State. By virtue of this principle, the Ukrainian Constitution, approved in 1996, explicitly states, in Article 35, that schools must be separate from the Church.

Private and religious schools are free to organise their own school *curricula*, but they are not recognised by the state and do not receive any public subsidies.

Subject name and place in the school *curriculum*

Following Order No. 437 of 26 July 2005 "On the study of optional courses in Ethics of Faith and Religious Studies", issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, it is possible to set up, within State schools, optional courses of a denominational type (e.g. Fundamentals of Christian Ethics, etc.) organised by the institutions of the various religions in the area. Such courses may be substituted for secular ethics or taken together with it.



The syllabuses and textbooks of these courses must be approved by a special commission attached to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for ethical issues.

For more information

Ukrainian Constitution:

http://biblioteka.sejm.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Ukraina_ang_010117.pdf

Ukrainian education system: <https://theewc.org/resources/school-education-in-ukraine/> ; <https://refugee-ed.sqe.gov.ua/for-governments/> ; <https://emergency.mon.gov.ua/educationalsystem/#tab-4>

On state-religion relations in Ukraine:

<https://classic.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Ukraine.1.pdf> ;

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ukraine/> ; <https://khpg.org/en/1151768398>

On current issues related to denominational teaching in schools:

https://history.sspu.edu.ua/images/2021/11/26/_9_2021_-tmns_elektronne_vidannya.pdf#page=18

Teaching Religions in Schools Russia

The Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) proclaims the secular nature of the State and explicitly states: "The Russian Federation is a secular State. No religion may constitute itself as a State or compulsory religion' (Article 14, paragraph 1)¹⁷. Paragraph 2 of the same article further states that: "Religious associations must be independent of the State and are equal before the law". Although the Communist political and cultural project in the past had strongly influenced the abandonment of traditional religiosity, in favour of atheism, to date, about 64% of Russian citizens identify themselves as Orthodox, 1% belong to other Christian denominations, 6% proclaim themselves Muslim, about 1% are followers of other religions (including Judaism and Buddhism), while 25% define themselves as non-believers¹⁸.

Since 2009, following Metropolitan Kirill's ascension to the patriarchal throne, the Orthodox Church has gained increasing importance and popularity in Russian society.



In the sphere of culture and education, while upholding the inalienable principle of the secularity of the State, progressive interventions have been made in university and school education, aimed at acquiring an education that also includes the study of the sciences of religions. The first educational project relating to training in the field of religion was approved by the Ministry of Education in 1992 and concerned university courses. Confessional and private universities activated degree courses in theology, which generated a debate concerning the content and approach to be given to the new courses¹⁹. Since 1999, the three-year degree course has been enriched and supplemented by a master's degree course. In the autumn of 2013, following the entry into force of the new law on education in the Russian Federation, a significant

¹⁷ See <https://www.art3.it/Costituzioni/cost%20RUSSA.pdf>.

¹⁸ O. FILINA, *Mapping Russia's Religious Landscape*, https://www.rbth.com/articles/2012/08/30/mapping_russias_religious_landscape_17819.html .

¹⁹ D. Shmonin, *Theology in Secular and Denominational Universities in Contemporary Russia: Problems and Prospects for the Development of Religious Education*, in «Islamic Education in Secular Societies» , Ednan Aslan, Margaret Rausch (eds.), Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, Peter Lang edition, 2013, pp. 237-246.

change also took place in university theological studies: the Russian Ministry of Education and Science approved the new list of university courses, which also entailed state-level recognition of academic degrees in the field of theology. Public and private universities to date have activated degree courses recognised by the State and the Orthodox Church: The Orthodox Theological Academies of Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Orthodox Tsaritsin, the Orthodox Theological Institute of Saint Makaryevsky, the Universities of Omsk, Altai and Nizhny Novgorod etc²⁰. In recent decades, the Islamic religion has also found considerable diffusion within the Russian Federation, and as a result, the Islamic Universities of Moscow, Kazan, Ufa and Nizhny Novgorod were established.

Since 2012, after almost seven decades of atheism, Russia has chosen to reintroduce religious education in State schools on an experimental basis.²¹ In fact, a compulsory course to be taken in the fourth year of primary school, entitled Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics (ORKSE)²², has been included. The decree, approved by Putin and endorsed not only by the Moscow Patriarchate but also by the Muslim community, has aroused widespread debate.

The division into modules was aimed to provide in-depth learning of religious cultures. In this framework, pupils (or, their parents) can choose between one of six modules:

1. Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture
2. Fundamentals of Islamic Culture
3. Fundamentals of Buddhist Culture
4. Fundamentals of Jewish Culture
5. Fundamentals of World Religious Cultures
6. Secular Ethics

In accordance with constitutional norms (Articles 13 and 14 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation), as well as the law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations", the choice of one of the 6 modules is the exclusive right of parents (legal representatives) of underage students. The ORKSE educational pathway is a single integrated educational system. All its modules must be consistent with each

²⁰ D. Shmonin, *Religion ed education in contemporary Russia: the dynamics of recent years*, in «Analysis» 2014, pp. 1-10.

²¹ See <http://orkce.apkpro.ru/209.html>.

²² See http://arz-skola7.3dn.ru/_ld/2/210_pi08-250.pdf and <http://orkce.apkpro.ru/>.

other in terms of pedagogical objectives, requirements, and educational content outcomes. The ORKSE course of education is cultural and not theological; therefore, the declared objective is to develop in schoolchildren aged 10-11 the ideal knowledge and moral values that form the basis of the religious and secular traditions of Russian culture. Some analysts maintain that this educational project, established by State law, was strongly desired by Putin to tackle - with the intention of activating a process of re-education and moralisation - a Country, and in particular its peripheries, strongly in crisis, not only economically, but above all humanly and familywise.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the experimental introduction of the course in Religious Culture and Secular Ethics (ORKSE) in Russian schools. A decade has therefore passed, and it is possible to take stock of the results of the cultural experiment undertaken in 2012, and not yet transformed into permanent teaching.

Based on statistics²³, it has emerged over the years that "Fundamentals of Secular Ethics" was chosen by 42% of students, "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" was chosen by 34% (up from 30% in 2012), "Fundamentals of Religious Cultures" is in third place with 17% (18% in 2012), "Fundamentals of Islamic Culture" was chosen by 5% of students (down from 9% initially). Modules concerning the study of the fundamentals of Buddhist and Jewish cultures remained at a statistically very low level of less than 1%.

However, public opinion does not seem to particularly like the presence of ethics and religion courses in state schools. The latest survey conducted by the Levada Centre²⁴ showed that the liking of ORKSE courses is declining: the share of those who adhere to the teaching of the basics of religion in school is steadily decreasing, while the percentage of those who believe that "there should be no place for religion in schools" has increased almost twofold in eight and a half years, from 17% in 2013 to 31% in 2021. An attitude of criticism of this teaching is detected above all among those belonging to the 18-24 age group, that is, among those who have had direct experience of this experimental teaching. It also emerges, as noted by the sociologist Lev Gudkov, that 22% of people in favour of the introduction of religious instruction in secondary schools are mainly "provincial, residents of small and medium-sized towns and the rural population. Not very educated, not very rich and, consequently, very traditionalist". The Orthodox community, in turn, is dissatisfied with the brevity of the course and the lack of integrity in the moral education of the younger generation.

²³ http://orkce.apkpro.ru/monitoring_testirovanie.html.

²⁴ <https://www.levada.ru/2017/07/18/religioznost/>.

In conclusion, the points on which almost all critics of ORKSE courses agree are twofold: on the one hand, the placement in the school curriculum (between 4th and 5th grade, for a total of 34 hours) and, on the other hand, the educational objectives. In fact, the quality of teaching, according to the teachers themselves, should be improved by other methods: in ten years, short courses have been offered to primary school teachers, but these have not produced any long-term effects.

In principle, it is true that the purpose for which the "Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" course was created is in accordance with the Toledo Principles and aims to foster an appropriate understanding of the religious diversity of the contemporary world; however, despite this statement of principle, this teaching has provoked strong criticism from academics and analysts, according to whom this teaching can be divisive and can easily incur dangerous consequences such as confessional indoctrination²⁵

Read more:

- Constitution of the Russian Federation: <http://www.constitution.ru/index.htm>
- Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation: <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/>
- ORKSE website with school *curricula*, regulations, and statistics: <http://orkce.apkpro.ru/>

²⁵ <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/a-decade-of-religious-education-in-russian-schools-adrift-between-plans-and-experiences/>.

INTERVIEW WITH THE RESPONSIBLE OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE IRC OF THE ITALIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

By Michele Trabucco



We met Don Daniele Saottini, Responsible of the National Service for the IRC of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI) in his office in Brescia, on an afternoon back from Rome, and asked him a few questions. The National Service for the IRC, as we read on the website <https://irc.chiesacattolica.it/>, in connection with the General Secretariat, is entrusted with the task of following up issues related to the teaching of the Catholic religion in schools, the promotion of the school discipline in the specific and possible interdisciplinarity, the elaboration of tools and aids for the permanent updating of teachers of religion, the sensitisation of the local Churches on educational issues related to the presence of the IRC in schools as a cultural and educational resource for the same.

To read the interview with Don Saottini **see the Italian version** of EREnews.