



**Final Conference**  
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**multi-religious and multicultural**  
**education**

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# Multicultural Multireligious Europe

- ▶ All European societies exhibit some degree of diversity or plurality in the spheres of religions, values and culture.
- ▶ The cultural and religious diversity in Europe cannot be ignored and cannot be limited to the private sphere. Religious beliefs shape personal and collective conceptions and lifestyles.
- ▶ Therefore, it is important to prepare pupils to be active partners in creating multicultural or intercultural European reality.
- ▶ This can be achieved by helping them to appreciate the place and influence of the different religions and cultures which are now practiced in Europe and in the wider world.

# Diversity in Schools

- ▶ Schools are one of the first places where children have daily contact with the range of values and worldviews that shape individual identities.
- ▶ Whether schools are secular, denominational or faith-based, they all share certain features:
  - ▶ There is no homogeneous group of pupils, even within the same religious tradition since religious practices and beliefs differ from one family to another,
  - ▶ In modern society there are different ways of conceiving what constitutes a 'good life' and these conceptions arise from different religious and non-religious beliefs,
  - ▶ Children do not leave their values and beliefs outside when they enter the classroom.
- ▶ Therefore, neither children nor adults can be asked to abandon a large part of their identity in order to form a relationship with others.

# Diversity in Schools

- ▶ Manifestation of religious and cultural diversity in schools include visible symbols and requirements and invisible convictions and values.
- ▶ Intercultural education should ensure an understanding of the different world views found in plüralist societies.
- ▶ Intercultural education needs to develop openness to diversity and feeling of belonging to the community; it should also promote; tolerance, awareness of various life options and respect for others

# Respecting Diversity in Education

- ▶ Accommodating prescribed modes of dress
- ▶ Allowing for time-off of work for religious purposes (such as for visiting mosques to participate in Friday prayer) or for appropriate prayer facilities;
- ▶ Provision of halal food for Muslims or kosher food for Jews or vegetarian food for Hindus in schools;
- ▶ Altering work and school uniform codes to allow women to wear particular forms of dress (including headscarves) in the interest of modesty.
- ▶ Teaching about other religions not just state religion or dominant religion of the country
- ▶ Avoiding display of religious symbols ( e.g. Crucifix, star and crescent, David star, etc) in public spaces

# Resources

- ▶ Council of Europe (2006). Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools. Provisional Edition
- ▶ Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf (2004) Migration and Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Diversity in Europe: An overview of issues and trends. Centre on Migration, Policy and Society [COMPAS] University of Oxford.