Welcome to the ... new edition

It is four years since EFTRE last issued an edition of its Newsletter, and since that time two EFTRE conferences have come and gone – Bruges, Belgium in 2010 and Malmö, Sweden in 2013. In between these triennial events we hope that the EFTRE community can continue to meet each other by means of this on-line publication.

EFTRE is a Europe-wide organisation linking teachers of Religious Education in schools and colleges. Each country is represented on the EFTRE Board which meets once a year in a member country. Since the last edition the Board has met in Seville, Spain (2011), Belfast, Northern Ireland (2012), Malmö, Sweden (at the 2013 EFTRE Conference) and Vienna, Austria (March 2014). Members of the smaller EFTRE Executive normally meet on at least one other occasion each year in addition to the Board meetings. This enables Board members to meet colleagues in other countries and to learn from and share with them in addition to the wider meetings at the EFTRE conference every three years.

This Newsletter is an additional means of keeping in touch with RE colleagues around Europe – for news of events, publications, resources, examples of effective practice and for greater understanding of each other’s work in our different contexts. But for this to be successful we need a regular supply of news and articles from EFTRE members.

If you have something you would like to share, please send it to me via the email address below. We hope to have two issues every year – one in the late Autumn / early Winter and one in the Spring / early Summer. And please let us know what is useful and what different items you would like to see us include. Articles are normally in English, but we will also publish in other languages if requested and where possible.

Norman Richardson (Editor)
FROM THE CHAIR

Dear EFTRE Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome you all to this edition of our Newsletter. I very much hope that you will find it a useful way of keeping in touch and finding out about all the relevant EFTRE events which will be taking place in the next few months as well as other matters of interest for all those involved in Religious Education in Europe.

For those of you who do not know me, I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to introduce myself to you. I first became involved in EFTRE when I attended the Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2001 and I valued the experience so much that I have been part of every EFTRE Conference since that time. At the 2007 Conference, in Budapest, Hungary, I was delighted to be elected to represent England on the Board of EFTRE and was also invited to join the Executive. I had the great privilege of serving under Sonja Danner from Austria who was our Chair for nine years, until taking on the role myself at the end of her term of office at the Malmo Conference in Sweden last summer. It is a daunting task, but I hope to follow in her footsteps and those of our predecessors and do justice to my new position. I very much look forward to meeting and working with as many of you as possible in the next few years.

In England, I am an experienced Adviser and Senior Lecturer in Religious Education (RE). Most of my work is based at the University of Roehampton in South West London where I am involved in teacher training, covering both primary and secondary phases of our education system. I am also employed as a consultant for RE, supporting and training serving teachers, I am currently working in a variety of different locations, including the London Boroughs of Brent, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Richmond upon Thames. I am also a member of the Shap Working Party on Religions in Education (www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/), a member of the RE Council of England and Wales (www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/) and Chair of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on RE or NASACRE (www.nasacre.org.uk/). I am also Secretary of The Coordinating Group of RE in Europe or CoGREE (www.cogree.com/) of which EFTRE is one of the four or five member bodies. This is a very useful link for EFTRE and enables us to work closely with other colleagues involved in similar activities to ourselves.

Since last year’s EFTRE Conference in Malmo in August, the members of the Board have met in Vienna in March where fourteen countries were represented and where we were kindly hosted by Sonja Danner right in the heart of the city centre. Draft minutes of this meeting can be found on the EFTRE website thanks to the efforts of our new Secretary, Elisabeth Faber from Denmark.
As you will see, there was much discussion about our forthcoming Conference in 2016 which is to be held in Vienna and we have begun to identify some possible themes and begun to consider what to include in our programme. If you have any ideas or suggestions to include in these initial preparations, then please do let us know. The next EFTRE Board Meeting will be held in Dublin on 20th/21st March 2015, thanks to the kind offer of Sandra Cullen, our Irish representative when we will take these plans forward. In the meantime, the next meeting of the EFTRE Executive will be in Bruges, Belgium on 18th October later this year. Those of you who are involved in either or both of these meetings, should of course make a careful note of the relevant dates!

I have also had the pleasure of representing EFTRE at a CoGREE Board Meeting in Soesterberg in the Netherlands in June last year and attending the CoGREE Conference in Soesterberg in November. In January, I met with Peter Schreiner, Chair of CoGREE and EFTRE’S German representative about ways in which our two organisations might work on some shared projects and conferences and I also represented EFTRE at the Inter European Commission on Church and School or ICCS (www.iccsweb.org/) in Strasbourg and Klingenthal in France this April.

If any of you are planning to visit London and would like to find out more about RE in England and perhaps experience it for yourselves, please do get in touch. It may be possible for me to arrange for you to attend some of my lectures, seminars or training sessions or even to visit some schools to observe some RE lessons. I can also help you to organise trips to some of the more unusual places of worship and other sites of religious significance in the area. London is such a religiously diverse and vibrant city, with so many different possibilities to choose from, that there should be something to interest you from a traditional Thai Theravada Buddhist Temple in Wimbledon to a Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow and many more besides! I look forward to seeing you soon.

Lesley Prior - Chair EFTRE: 2013-2016 - chair@eftre.net
EUROPEAN FORUM FOR TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MEMBERS OF EFTRE 2013-16

THE EXECUTIVE

The executive last met in Vienna in March 2014. From left to right: Sonja Danner, Elisabeth Faber, Hugo Verkest, Lesley Prior, Outi Raunio-Hannula and Paul Hopkins.

THE BOARD

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MULTICULTURALISM IN MALMÖ

The European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education, EFTRE, held its 12th conference at the end of August 2013, in the scenery of the popular Swedish-Danish tv-series The Bridge (Bron / Broen), at the border between Denmark and Sweden. The four-day seminar exceeded expectations in its diversity.

I had been eagerly and happily looking forward to this trip all work-filled summer long. I would get to travel to not one but two foreign countries and immerse myself in Religious Education in an international setting. Expectations were high, but even so I could not imagine the many ways in which this trip would turn out to be rewarding. The official program of the conference was of great quality, but so was the unofficial yield, that the partakers of the conference made happen both during the program and outside of it. An extra pleasure were also the events taking place in the cities of Malmö and Copenhagen at the time of the EFTRE conference.

DISMANTLING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

Finally on August 21th the day came, and with a few butterflies in my stomach I traveled by plane from Helsinki to Copenhagen and from there by train to Malmö along that famous Öresund bridge that connects two countries. Once at my destination I made my way to the Malmö University Faculty of Education and Society, where most of the conference was held.

The topic of the conference was Religions and Relationships: Dealing with Diversity. Already on the first day there were two very different lectures on the program. Before them we heard a short presentation on Malmö, its religious landscape, and the university that was hosting our conference.

The city of Malmö was indeed most suitable for a conference covering diversity, as it is Sweden's third most multicultural city. Malmö is also a relatively young city – almost half of the population is under the age of 35. Numerous Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism are present
in the built cityscape, and a Hindu temple is under construction. So it was no surprise to hear that Religious Education is among the most popular subjects at the university's Teacher Education Department.

Senior Lecturer of Lund University, Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg spoke about the challenges Religious Education faces in Sweden. The title of her lecture was *Religions and Relations*. She tackled several questions in her speech, including: What happens when the perspective of gender-equality is taken for granted? What kind of challenges are there in teaching about gender and religion in a society where a growing debate about the relationship between religion and secularization is taking place?

The lecturer told us that the gender-perspective is present in the Swedish curriculum for Religious Education since primary school. The emphasis is on an intersectional analysis: the aim is to observe and evaluate how different cultural and social categories such as gender, ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation interact with each other and contribute to structural inequality.

**A FESTIVE DINNER**

Professor Emeritus of the Catholic University of Leuven, Roger Brugggraeve's lecture *If you wish to enter into – not step out of – life* reflected on a philosophical, anthropological and most of all ethical level on the gospel narrative of Jesus and the rich young man (Mt 19:17) and the second tablet of the Ten commandments. Brugggraeve's aim was to read in the text an answer to the challenge posed for Christian ethics today by the diversity of intimate relationships. According to him, the second tablet of the decalogue offers a “path to life” and to an ethics of human relationships through the boundary lines it defines. These lines create the “frames” for freedom to take place inside them. Relationships may vary but the sexual ethics has to be the same. The church should instead of “deviant behaviour” see a “heterodoxy of behaviour”.

On the first night of the conference EFTRE received unprecedented attention on behalf of the host city. The participants of the conference were invited to the old City Hall for a reception at the Mayor’s. It was a grand dinner in an equally grand setting - by far the most exclusive dinner I had ever been to.

Before dinner I spent some time in the city center enjoying the program of Malmö Festival that was fortunately taking place simultaneously with our conference. I stopped for a moment in the city's oldest building, the St Petri church, where Amnesty International was hosting a discussion on the situations in Syria and Egypt then. On the Stortorget, the square in front of the City Hall, the award-winning author from Malmö, Björn Ranelid was speaking under the topic of *I have a dream*, to honour the speech Martin Luther King gave 50 years ago.

The first lecturer of the second day of the conference was an adult educator and an integration consultant, Sonja Sherefay. The lecture had two parts, the first-of-which was about Sherefay’s work with immigrant parents in the form of the *Barnen I VÅRA hjärtan - Children in our hearts* parental education program. In a lively and humorous manner she described situations where someone moving from a collectivist culture to individualist Sweden might face challenges. The second part of her lecture was about *Relations in Islam*.

The afternoon in Copenhagen at the ActionAid Denmark house offered a compact but rich package about human rights from an educational perspective. After an introduction by the representants of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the participants of the EFTRE conference took part in a practical exercise. The exercise enabled partakers to empathize with how and to what degree
human rights actualize in the lives of people in various situations and positions over the world. An eye-opening exercise well-suited for human rights education in schools too.

The timing of our conference was great not only in Malmö but also in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen Pride was taking place that weekend, so a lot of events were taking place around the city at the time or our visit.

**A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST**

On the third day of the conference, gender researcher and professor of pedagogy Lars Jalmert from Stockholm University gave us a lecture called *Gender in the Classroom*. His lecture dealt with the power-relations between the sexes first in a global context, then in the context of Sweden.

One example from Jalmert’s lecture was very impressive. He told us about a Swedish school where very worrying gender-related behavioural models had emerged. The boys were fighting “for fun” and calling girls “whores”, the older girls were assessing younger girls according to their “sexyness” and so on. The school decided to make an effort to end this, and introduced a zero-tolerance for all behaviour such as described. The attitudes changed and soon this change manifested itself also in boys’ better success in schoolwork. Everyone benefited from the dismantling of the socially determined gender norms.

On Friday’s program was also a theme visit titled *Religion at a cross road*. It took us to the scenery of Kurt Wallander in the municipality of Ystad, and more specifically the highest spot on the Kåsehuvud plane, “Käseberg Head”, right by the sea. The Ale’s Stones are to be found there, a megalithic monument in form of a ship dating back to the Bronze Age. The monument serves as a solar calendar. According to research, the Ale’s Stones surprisingly do not resemble so much the other Scandinavian stone ships, but are rather similar to the English Stonehenge. In the beaming sunlight this amazing monument made one’s imagination race back to times preceding the Common Era. From these landscapes we continued on to Sweden’s oldest stone church in Dalby and to the great cathedral in Lund.

In the four workshops I chose during the conference days, I got to delve into global citizenship education, shame and honour in school context, the ethical foundations of the educational encounter in the light of Emmanuel Levinas’ thinking, and secular mindfulness-meditation. The leaders of these workshops were extremely competent and the atmosphere in them was fruitful and discussing.

In addition to all the lectures, workshops and visits, my experience was enriched immensely by all the thought-exchanging that took place within the international group of participants at the conference. In my mind I still go back to the discussions, where I compared curricula with Swedish colleagues, considered affective teaching methods with my Australian colleague, got to know several different models of Religious Education through the experiences of e.g. German, Estonian, Norwegian and Scottish colleagues, and of course, reflected on our own Religious Education with Finnish colleagues in the light of all that we learned at the conference. I sincerely recommend attending the next EFTRE conference in Vienna 2016 to all RE teachers!
NEWS UPDATES

Religion and Education in Hungary:

The Hungarian Educational Research Journal (April 2014) has published a thematic issue on: CURRENT RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF RELIGIOSITY AND EDUCATION. The issue contains articles from Central and Eastern Europe on religious education and also an article by Dr Peter Schreiner on ‘Religious Education in the European Context’. You can visit the homepage of the e-journal at: http://herj.lib.unideb.hu/?oldal=aktualisszam&folyoirat_szam=4/2013

News from CoGREE (Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe)

CoGREE welcomes Lesley Prior, the new chair of EFTRE as new CoGREE secretary. This connection can lead to a close relationship between EFTRE and other CoGREE organizations and will be of great benefit for CoGREE. The next meeting of the CoGREE steering group will take place from 15-16th June 2014 in Amsterdam. Items on the agenda are the evaluation of the CoGREE conference in November 2013 and plans for further activities. More information on CoGREE is available at www.cogree.com.

News from ICCS (InterEuropean Commission on Church and School)

The chair of EFTRE, Lesley Prior, participated in the ICCS board meeting and and the invited consultation of ICCS correspondents held in Strasbourg and Klingenthal from 27th to 30th of April 2014. The national correspondents represent church and school concerns either in Protestant or Orthodox churches or come from related areas of research and university education. 15 countries were represented among the 19 participants. ICCS promotes connecting activities of research, policy and practice in the field of church and school issues through publications, conferences and consultations and also through advocacy at the European political institutions and the European churches. Dr Tania ap Sion from Wales serves as secretary and Dr Peter Schreiner from Germany is president of ICCS. A main theme at the consultation has been the changing situation for religion and religious education in more and more secular societies of Europe and developments in church and school relationship in different countries.

Klingenthal Colloquy 2014

ICCS and CoGREE are organising the Sixth Klingenthal Colloquy with the theme “Intercultural Education and the religious dimension” (working title) from 6th to 10th October 2014 at the conference centre of the Goethe foundation in Klingenthal near Strasbourg. The programme will include the presentation of a new document of the Council of Europe “Signposts. Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education”, a report of the dialogue meeting of the Council of Europe with the religious communities to be held from 1-2 September in Azerbaijan and information about other important developments in the field of religion and education. The program includes also a visit to the Council of Europe with meetings of experts in education and reports about current developments in CoGREE member organisations. There is no fee for the meeting and for accommodation. If you are interested to participate contact

Dr Peter Schreiner: schreiner@comenius.de.
IRISH CENTRE FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (ICRE)

New questions concerning religious education arise in every generation at local, national, and global levels. Such questions about the identity and function of religious education are especially relevant in contemporary Ireland. In this context the Irish Centre for Religious Education (ICRE) was established in 2009 to support research, partnership, and innovation in the field of religious education in an open and creative manner.

The ICRE is a research centre located within the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin. Its coordinator is Dr. Gareth Byrne; the Research and Development Officer is Bernadette Sweetman. Staff of the Mater Dei Institute, as well as postgraduate students, contribute to the work of the Centre which also benefits from the expertise of an Advisory Board of leading national and international figures in the field of religious education.

Some core functions of the ICRE include:

- Promoting RE as a particular discipline and field of study;
- Encouraging research into RE nationally from undergraduate through to doctorate level;
- Facilitating collegiality and cooperation in RE research nationally and beyond;
- Developing interreligious education;
- Engaging in research in the area of RE and in the interface between education and religion;
- Encouraging practitioner research;
- Supporting links between RE and digital pedagogy;
- Providing conferences, seminars and publications;
- Analysing the role of RE in the school curriculum and serving as a resource for the subject area in schools;
- Providing support for developing clarity concerning the ethos/characteristic spirit of schools;
- Promoting reflection on life-long RE;
- Supporting continuing professional development initiatives for school leaders, teachers of RE, and school chaplains.

The ICRE is involved with hosting conferences, providing CPD for teachers, supporting research students, and publishing in the field of RE. A significant initiative of the ICRE has been the establishment of the RE Lecturers Forum which gathers third level lecturers involved in RE, primary and post-primary, North and South, to discuss relevant issues. The primary goal of this Forum is to help RE reach a critical mass as a research subject. Another initiative designed to support research pertaining to RE in Ireland is the development of a searchable database, this is available at [http://www.materdei.ie/reeresearchdatabase](http://www.materdei.ie/reeresearchdatabase)

To find out more about the initiatives undertaken by the ICRE see [http://www.materdei.ie/icre](http://www.materdei.ie/icre)

You can also follow the ICRE on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Irish-Centre-for-Religious-Education/257207617656277](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Irish-Centre-for-Religious-Education/257207617656277) or Twitter [https://twitter.com/ICREMDI](https://twitter.com/ICREMDI)

Dr. Sandra Cullen
Lecturer in Religious Education at Mater Dei Institute, Dublin
“RE IN EUROPE” - RUSSIAN LANGUAGE EDITION

The 2007 book on Religious Education in Europe, edited by Elza Kuyk et al and originally published in English by IKO Publishing House for the ICCS, has now been translated into Russian. For details of how to obtain a copy please contact Dr Peter Schreiner: schreiner@comenius.de.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

Professor Bob Jackson introduces a series of books from the University of Vienna

The University of Vienna is engaged in a project that will be of particular interest to EFTRE members. The RELEDU project is a series of six books covering religious education across the different regions of Europe. The Central Europe book has been published in German, and is now being translated into English. The Western Europe and Northern Europe books have been completed in English and were published by Vienna University Press in May 2014 (with the English translation of the Central European book due later this year). Further details are on the website http://www.rel-edu.eu/project/. I have co-edited the Western Europe book with Martin Rothgangel and Martin Jäggle, and Geir Skeie has co-edited the Northern European book with the same two co-editors. Volumes on southern, south-eastern and eastern Europe will follow the three published this year.

Volume 1  Central Europe - Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Principality of Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland

Volume 2  Western Europe - Belgium, France, England (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales), Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands

Volume 3  Northern Europe - Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Iceland (Faroe Islands), Norway, Sweden

Volume 4  Southern Europe - Andorra, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino, Spain

Volume 5  Southeast Europe - Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey

Volume 6  Eastern Europe - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus
SIGNPOSTS

Update on the forthcoming Council of Europe Signposts document

Robert Jackson

As colleagues will be aware, some significant European intergovernmental institutions have taken a direct interest in recent years in the study of religions and other worldviews in schools in Europe. The term ‘religious education’ tends not to be used in these European documents since this term is understood in various countries as meaning educating into religion, rather than learning about religions and reflecting on that learning. (General European developments are discussed in more detail in Jackson 2013, 2014 forthcoming a, b).

The motivation for this increase in interest in European institutions relates to some key issues.

1. Religion has become a topic for discussion in the public sphere across Europe; 9/11 was recognised as a ‘wake-up call’ in the Council of Europe; scholarly discussion about religion in the public sphere has also had an influence.
2. Education about religions and other worldviews is seen as contributing to social cohesion. Thus, education about religions and other worldviews is seen as contributing to intercultural education, citizenship education and human rights education.
3. The main institutions which have focused on this topic are the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. The United Nations has also taken an interest through its Alliance of Civilisations Programme, which is highly supportive of education about religions and beliefs (http://www.unaoc.org/actions/online-platforms/erb/)
4. The OSCE produced the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools in 2007. The OSCE has 56 participant states including most European states and the USA and Canada. The Toledo Guiding Principles have been widely distributed and referred to in the UK literature on religious education.
5. The Council of Europe made the decision to include studies of religious diversity in its educational projects in 2002. Formerly it had regarded the study of religion as belonging to the private sphere. Since 2002, projects have integrated the study of religions and nonreligious worldviews with the Council’s work on intercultural education. The Council of Europe has 47 member states, including the UK, and there is a strong national political presence in its activities. For example, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe includes members of the national Parliaments of member states (not members of the European Parliament). The Committee of Ministers includes the foreign ministers of all member states etc.
6. Council of Europe projects on the religious dimension of intercultural education have resulted in conferences and 2 books which have been widely distributed. On the basis of these projects, the Committee of Ministers issued a Recommendation to all member states in 2008 on ‘The Dimension of Religions and Nonreligious Convictions within Intercultural Education’ (Council of Europe 2008).
7. In 2010 the Council of Europe set up a joint committee with the European Wergeland Centre (a Council of Europe-related European resource centre for values education in its broadest sense, based in Oslo http://www.theewc.org/) to produce a document giving guidance to member states on adapting the Ministerial Recommendation to the education systems of particular states. The resulting document is entitled ‘Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education’. It has been written by Professor Robert Jackson on behalf of the joint committee and will be published by the Council of Europe in autumn 2014.
8. **Signposts** is not intended a blueprint, but as a tool for stakeholders in member states to use in developing their own specific approaches to teaching about religions and other worldviews as a contribution to intercultural education.

9. A questionnaire was sent out by the joint committee to members of the Council of Europe Education Committee in the 47 member states, in order to identify issues raised by the Recommendation that could be addressed in the **Signposts** document. Respondents raised issues pertinent to their own national situations which have helped to determine the contents of **Signposts**. All the issues raised by respondents are covered in the **Signposts** text.

10. Issues raised by respondents from the Council of Europe Education Committee include:
   a. the confusing proliferation and ambiguity of terminology in this field;
   b. issues of the developing competence in this field for teachers and students, and in devising suitable teaching approaches;
   c. how to make classrooms ‘safe spaces’ for young people’s discussion and dialogue in the area of religions and beliefs;
   d. how to help young people to analyse media representations of religions;
   e. how to integrate the study of non-religious worldviews with the study of religions;
   f. human rights issues, including the wearing and display of religious symbols in schools; and
   g. linking schools to religious and other relevant communities in the locality and further afield for educational purposes, as well as linking different types of schools together in order to collaborate in learning about religions and other worldviews.

All of these issues are covered in the **Signposts** document, and are discussed in relation to recent research in Europe and some examples of good practice. **Signposts** also looks forward to potential follow-up activities such as:

   • a European conference for key stakeholders  
   • collaborative European courses for teachers, and  
   • action research in schools involving teachers and academics working together with young people

**It is hoped that European professional organisations such as EFTRE and also national professional organisations will publicise and utilise **Signposts**, taking an opportunity to develop further collaborative work in our field across Europe.**

References


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Professor Robert (Bob) Jackson was Director of Warwick University Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) from 1994 to 2012. He is a leading figure in international debates about religions and education in Europe and beyond. He is Research Consultant to WRERU at the University of Warwick and is Professor of Religious Diversity and Education at the European Wergeland Centre, a Council of Europe related centre based in Oslo, specialising in intercultural, citizenship and human rights education. In 2013, in recognition of his many contributions to the development of Religious Education, Professor Jackson was awarded the prestigious William Rainey Harper Award in Boston USA.

PROFILE: NEW MEMBER

Eszter Kodácsy-Simon (Hungary)

Dr. Eszter Kodácsy-Simon is assistant professor at the Evangelical-Lutheran Theological University in Budapest and also teaches Religious Education classes at the Budapest-Fasori Lutheran High School. She is the leader of the Religious Education Workgroup and the Workgroup for Educational Strategy in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Eszter is the editor and co-writer of four RE books and some other booklets. She wrote her PhD on the relationship between science and religion focusing on its impacts on Religious Education under the title: “The Significance of Paul Tillich’s Theology in the Relationship between Science and Religion”.

She was a scholarship holder student at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and at Helsinki University.

Besides theology she also holds a degree on mathemathics and physics.

Eszter is the coordinator and one of the founding members of Jesenius Center for Science and Religion, Budapest, and also of the Creation Care Workgroup of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Contact information: eszter.simon@lutheran.hu

1141 Budapest, Rózsavölgyi köz 3., Hungary
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE DONETSK REGION OF UKRAINE

Donetsk and other areas of Eastern Ukraine have been much in the news in recent months in relation to political and territorial concerns. Here, however, Iana Poliakova, the EFTRE Board representative from Ukraine, gives an overview of more normal everyday life in relation to the teaching of religion in the region’s schools and churches.

Donetsk Region is one of the largest regions of Ukraine in its territory and population. More than 4.5 million people live here (10% of the total population), representing 133 nationalities. 90% of the population lives in towns and cities.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is the dominant confession in the territory of the country (except for 3 regions on the west of Ukraine).

The activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the field of education reflect the general improvement of the relations between the state and religious organizations. The Orthodox Church is eager to realize its missionary, propagation and educational objectives within the limits, set by the legislation of Ukraine.

Each year Donetsk Eparchy (Diocese) organizes many educational events for the schoolchildren and parents, the most well-known and popular among them are the following:

Open festival of children’s creative works (arts) “The Sparkle of God”, the Contest of Young Artists “My Orthodox Ukraine”, festival “The Victory Consonance”, devoted to the Victory in the World War II, and other educational events.

Donetsk Eparchy has been publishing a magazine for 3-10 year-old children “Shishkin Les” (The Conifer Wood). The Magazine is recommended for parents, the Sunday school teachers in the nursery schools and primary schools as the teaching aid for Christian Ethics.

Magazine for 3-10 year-old children “Shishkin Les” (The Conifer Wood). Last year the children of Donetsk and some other cities of the region
took part in activities organized by the Eparchy: “Ready to help”, “Art Therapy”, Bell flash-mob in honour of the anniversary of Russia Baptizing. The pupils of primary schools took part in the celebration of the Easter and the Contest of traditional Ukrainian Easter Eggs, “Dyvo-Pysanka”. Pupils of several secondary schools took part in contests for the best young experts on the Bible History, Christian Ethics and Orthodox Culture. In Gorlovka (the city near Donetsk) there was held the Festival of Slavonic Culture. There were organized some travelling exhibitions, shown in educational institutions: “The Bible in the European Cultural Tradition XVI-XIX Centuries”, “

*Svyatogorsk Lavra*” (Monastery in the Saint Mountains, Donetsk region).

The educational authorities together with theologians, teachers and educators hold several regional conferences including: “Ukrainian culture on the modern world”, “Orthodox Therapy”, “Moral Values of family and marriage”, conference for parents such as “Family, school and church as the united educational space”, and seminars for the teachers of Christian Ethics and Sunday School teachers. The following questions are discussed at the panel discussions:

- the influence of the moral oriented subjects on the school atmosphere,
- the importance of teaching moral-oriented subjects in the state school;
- the peculiar features of moral-oriented subjects for different age groups;
- interaction of educational authorities, religious and community organizations in teaching moral-oriented subjects.

Donetsk Eparchy has its official web-site “Donbass Orthodoxal” ([www.ortodox.donbass.com](http://www.ortodox.donbass.com)) which reflects all the main events, publishes the materials of periodicals and discusses actual questions.
The Organic Law on the improvement of the quality of education (LOMCE) was adopted 9th of December 2013. It will enter into force by stages, starting in the academic year 2014-2015, up until 2016-2017. Its aim is to improve the education quality and the bonds between the Spanish labour market and the educative system. To acquire this objective, the new education law establishes: a) the compulsory evaluation of student after finalize primary and secondary education stages; b) a new two-year vocational training module to allow to those students without a basic compulsory educational diploma to access to several vocational training module; and c) increased flexibility between the different educative possibilities.

The main aim of the Organic Law to Improve Educational Quality (Spanish acronym LOMCE: *Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*) includes to improve the quality of education and the employability of young people, to reduce the school drop-out and the high exam failure rates, and also, to modernize the Vocational Training.

**The future legislation:**

1. will strengthen instrumental knowledge
2. will make education more flexible
3. will incorporate external evaluation systems to assess student learning and therefore to adapt it
4. will provide educational centers with a greater autonomy and specialization
5. will improve the transparency of results
6. will underline cultural efforts.

**To address these problems the educational reform:**

- introduces early tests on school performance to detect special learning difficulties.
- increases the flexibility of the system which allows the realization of adaptation in different degrees taking into account the students’ preferences and their educative trajectory.
- extends the external importance of the assessment to a larger part of the education system.
- centralizes the authority to the Spanish government, somehow disempowering the regional governments.

Although primary school students will be able to choose between a religious education or “social and cultural values”. In secondary education the alternative will be "ethical values".

In particular, in the religion course, it should be pointed out that the previous regulation will not be modified; this subject will be evaluated on the same terms as the alternative subject, and also will be taken into account in the students’ final average mark.
The system contemplated by the educative laws will include Catholic Christianity, Protestant Christianity, Islam, Judaism and an alternative subject.

There is an “agreement on education and cultural matters” between the Spanish State and the Vatican. The agreement, which is an international treaty, between the Spanish State and the Holy See was signed in 1979. They were drawn up in accordance with constitutional and international precepts, and their territorial application sphere also covers the Autonomous Communities.

In 1992, co-operation agreements were established with the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities in Spain, the Federation of Israeli Communities in Spain and the Islamic Commission of Spain. In the Spanish democracy, the teaching of the Catholic religion has never been compulsory in schools or high schools.

The religious and Catholic moral course, which is integrated into the education curriculum, helps in the educational objective of forming responsible and conscious people with a critical point of view. This aim provides students some important tools which allows them to develop their own personal autonomy. It enables them to respect other religions in a pluralistic society. Then, it encourages a balance between the spiritual, psychological and cultural development of students, in an educational environment which allows them to know the real world. Also, it helps them to understand the cultural and artistic heritage of Spain. Finally, it allows them to structure and organize the Catholic faith content which is the most extensive in Spain.

In all the non-university educational levels, public and private centres have to offer the Religion subject, and also an alternative course. Students’ families (or the students themselves if they are older) can do that in a freely and voluntarily way.

**We are concerned about two different questions:**

1. The threat in the Baccalaureate about Religious Education is that it becomes in an “optional subject” for the educational centres. The Ministry of Education has taken the decision to exclude it from the list of compulsory subjects which have to be offered.

2. The decision about the timing (number of hours per week) of this subject in Spain, will be made by each regional government and not by the central government, which can propose a decrease in the number hours for this subject, reducing the working timing for Religious teachers. This change, however, does not reflect the agreements between the Spanish State and the Holy See.

The legal right to receive religious instruction, as a basic aspect of integral education, is a result of a constitutional right which all the public powers are bound to guarantee in its educative religious dimension. According to the Spanish Constitution, the principal educative aim will be the complete and adequate development of the human personality. “The public powers guarantee the parents’ right to choose for their children to receive a religious and moral education according to with their own convictions”. (Art. 27.3)

**LINKS:**

- [http://www.symbaloo.com/mix/recursosreligion](http://www.symbaloo.com/mix/recursosreligion)
Understanding the relevance of Dutch religious education makes it necessary to know something about Dutch education in general.

**A brief overview of Dutch education**

In 1806 the secretary of education JH van der Palm legislated an educational law. From that moment education was a task of the government. Education aimed to encourage the development of social and Christian values, according to the aims propagated by the philosophy of Enlightenment. Moral and social values encouraged the development of each citizen. The result was the founding of schools, in which citizenship became the aim of religious education. Orthodox protestants and Roman Catholics preferred religious education with the own belief.

During the 19th century a system of *pilarisation* was set up. The result: next to the public schools (presided by the local political authority) there were Christian schools (for which read ‘Protestant’) and Roman Catholic schools. In 1920 the three school types were financed equally by the national government.

**Dutch education in shorthand**

Each child aged 4 to 12 attends a primary school. For secondary education there is a choice between vocational and general education. Vocational education is offered in a lower level (3 of 4 years), in a secondary level (3 or 4 years) and at university level. The more general education (5 or 6 years) enables entrance to university.

**Religious education in schools**

Each primary school has the subject teaching world religion and worldviews (teaching about religion). The subject, introduced in 1985, aims to enhance tolerance in Dutch society.

Public primary schools mostly do not have obligatory religious education. There is a possibility for non-obligatory Protestant, Roman Catholic, Islamic, Hindu or humanist education. Since 2009 this education is paid by the government, with a responsibility of the diverse religious societies. In Christian primary schools religious education (obligatory) has a Protestant flavour and in Roman Catholic schools a Roman Catholic flavour. There are a number of Islamic and Hindu schools and an occasional Jewish school, but no humanist schools.

In secondary education in public schools religion is mostly not taught. The bill of 1985 for primary schools making teaching about religions obligatory was not extended to secondary schools. Sometimes philosophy is taught, even as a subject in which pupils are examined. Christian, Roman Catholic or Islamic secondary schools mostly teach their own religion and sometimes ethics and world religions. This choice is made by the board of the school. Public vocational schools mostly do not have religious education as a part of the
curriculum. Vocational education founded by a religious society sometimes has religious education in general, sometimes in the option of ethics related to the vocational aim (e.g. economic, medical or social ethics).

Universities have sometimes been founded by religious societies. These universities are a normal part of the Dutch higher educational system. In everyday life there is hardly a difference between state founded and church founded universities. Religious education is mostly not a part of the curriculum.

**With a view on the future**

Dutch society is more and more becoming a secularised society. Churches seem to restrict to the private interest of members. Religious education does not draw much attention. In Christian and Roman Catholic primary and secondary schools sometimes religious education is characterized by teaching into religion, sometimes in teaching from religion.

Public schools, Christian and Roman Catholic schools tend to merge. In these schools where Christians and non-Christians join together sometimes religious education is non-compulsory, taught only to the children of the parents of the former Christian or Roman Catholic school. Much more exciting is the experimental attempt to let all children attend all the lessons including religious education and a variety of religious and non-religious rituals. Being involved in this is a great honour. Possibly Dutch society will in future learn to understand the lasting importance of religion.

**Henk Pol**  
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**PROFILE: NEW MEMBER**

**Phil Lord (Wales)**

Greetings from Wales. My name is Phil Lord and I represent Wales on the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education. I have always been interested in Religion and studied Theology in Regents Theological College in England. I have taught RE in schools in both Wales and England. In 2010 I started working to help support and improve the teaching of RE across North Wales, a job which I have found immensely exciting and rewarding. I represent North East Wales on a board of other Religious Education professionals who meet to discuss and promote good practice in RE.

Contact information: philliplord@gwe.org.uk
Religious Education in Wales - The Pupils’ Perspectives

Phil Lord, EFTRE Board member for UK: Wales, collected these observations on RE from Welsh secondary school pupils.

Jillian. Being a student in Wales, RE means to me… broadening my knowledge of religious and social issues in the world around us. Not only is RE fascinating subject but it helps to explain the diversity in life.

Morgan. Being a student in Wales, RE means to me… learning about diverse faiths and cultures of the world and interesting social issues. It allows me to express my views while hearing others and provoking compelling debate.

Emma. Being a student in Wales, RE means to me the different views and cultures of people around the world. I love learning about religions that I may not come across in my everyday life and gives me a wider and more diverse view of the world.

Imogen. I like studying RE because it is the only subject that the teacher asks for my own personal viewpoints and opinions and respects them.

Ellen. I like studying RE because it teaches us to think beyond our dreams.

Kalen. I like studying RE because Wales is changing with lots of people from different cultures and religions here - so it’s important to make them feel welcome and understand what they believe.

Fay. I like studying RE In Wales because it’s a lesson that my voice can be heard and not many people listen to children my age.

Megan. I like studying RE because Wales is a small country which is influenced a lot by religion, even Llandudno has a religious meaning to it as do most of the place names in Wales.

Rhys H. I like studying RE In Wales because I can talk about issues which have no definitive answers, and my answers are part of this.

Rhys W. I like studying RE In Wales because the history and culture of Wales would not exist without Religion.
FOR FUTURE EDITIONS OF THE NEWSLETTER

• Tell us about new resources for RE in schools – all age groups – books, resource packs, websites, etc.

• Write a review of an RE text book or an RE book for teachers.

• Tell us about places of interest to visit in your part of Europe that might be relevant to the teaching of RE.

• What research has been taking place in your country or region in relation to RE in schools or the teaching of RE in general?

• Prepare a short profile of RE in your country, highlighting key issues for teachers.

• Write about a day in your own classroom practice – a short diary: “My RE Day!”

• Can you suggest a series of novels, plays, pieces of music or paintings that might make for an interesting cross-curricular RE project?

• Which movies (or extracts from them) could you use in the teaching of RE? Suggest your top-ten RE movies!

PLEASE INVITE RE TEACHERS FROM YOUR COUNTRY TO WRITE FOR THE EFTRE NEWSLETTER!