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ACCEPT PLURALISM

APPLYING TOLERANCE INDICATORS:

ASSESSING TOLERANCE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

2013/20
5. New Knowledge.
Applying Tolerance Indicators

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Table of Contents

ASSESSING TOLERANCE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS.................................. 3
How much room for religious schools?...4
State regulation, associational freedoms and public scrutiny.........................4
Ethnic and socio-economic segregation and desegregation policies.............6
PART 1. THE INDICATORS.. 6
What the indicators can and cannot show 7
Indicator 3.1 Parallel education (voluntary) 8
Indicator 3.2 desegregation 11
PART 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION 14
FURTHER READINGS AND COUNTRY REPORTS....................................... 15

About ACCEPT PLURALISM – project identity 18

ASSESSING TOLERANCE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

The European Convention on Human Rights guarantees freedom of education. Drawing from this, the establishment and operation of faith-based schools is protected. Yet as European societies have become increasingly diverse in religious terms, the role of faith based schools has come under scrutiny and is in many cases contested. Serious tensions have emerged between those who ardently support religious schools in their various forms, and those who oppose them.

With the aim to draw insights from the experiences of six EU Member States, we compared **Denmark, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain** and **Sweden** – all of which provide public funding for faith-based schools. Our analysis is based on the research conducted by six research teams participating in the ACCEPT PLURALISM Project. The project, funded by the European Commission under the seventh Framework Program, aimed at investigating the responses to ethnic and religious diversities in 15 European countries in the fields of education and politics.

Table 1 below presents the overall "market share" of religious schools in these countries (based on national statistics where available).

Table 1. Percent of religious schools over the total number of schools in six EU Member States, 2010

	Number of religious schools as % of total number of schools		**Number of pupils attending religious schools as % of total number of pupils attending school**	
	Primary	**Secondary**	**Primary**	**Secondary**
Ireland	95 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	61.5 %	56.1 %	63.1 %	62 %
Italy	24.2 %	14.5 %	16.2 %	4.7 %
Denmark	22 %	n/a	27 %	n/a
Spain	15.2 %	25 %	20.6 %	21.6 %
Sweden	8.9 %	0.6 %	0.9 %	0.4 %

Sources: ACCEPT Pluralism (Comparative policy brief: A delicate balance: religious schools and tolerance in Europe, 2012) based on national statistics

How much room for religious schools?

Accepting that faith-based schools are entitled to operate in Europe raises three challenging questions:

- How should they be financed?
- What degree of organizational and pedagogical autonomy should they be granted?

Religious schools are contested for different reasons. Generally, tensions arise when the values and practices of the schools in question conflict with the dominant majority's sensibilities. In some cases, religious schools are perceived as being in contradiction with the principle of secularism, which is widespread in many European countries. This perceived conflict tends to be even more egregious if these schools are financed and recognized by the state.

In effect, several factors contribute to presenting the very existence of religious schools often as anachronistic. An assumed decline in levels of religiosity, weak support for a public role in organized religion, and the political demand that state institutions be strictly neutral are among these.

Moreover, new forms of religious pluralism related to immigration have led to the establishment of non-Christian religious schools (mainly Muslim and Hindu) that are seen as posing a potential risk to social cohesion. These immigrant-majority religious schools figure prominently in political rhetoric and are associated with the danger of the development of 'parallel societies' and a 'balkanization' of national communities in Europe.

In the wake of these debates, the position of schools of more established religions (Christian and Jewish) is also being questioned. In all cases, the degrees of autonomy granted to religious schools are contested by liberal norms of non-discrimination and equal educational opportunities for all.

State regulation, associational freedoms and public scrutiny

Religious schools are subject to a variety of government restrictions that vary from country to country. Common forms of regulation include:

- selection of staff and students;
- internal organization;
- content of curriculum and lessons;
- selection of teaching materials;

- didactics;
- examination;
- inspection;
- recognition of diplomas.

Systems of governance range from strongly centralized and nearly full regulation in all regards (e.g. in France, and in Italy before 2000), to minimal regulation and control as in the case of Denmark.

The governance landscape is actually even more complex as there are many instances of high degrees of autonomy in one domain, and nearly no autonomy in another. In the Netherlands, for example, religious schools are relatively free to selects students and recruit their teachers, but they have very little leeway in shaping the curriculum and selecting assessment methods. In Ireland, the Department of Education lays out a broad regulatory framework and leaves considerable autonomy to schools in deciding on teaching and assessment methods. Sweden and Spain have relatively decentralized schooling systems and in Spain, regional governments can impose constraints and priorities for admission.

For the most part, those who argue against faith-based schools frame their concerns around three principles:

- the importance of de-segregation and mixing of pupils of different ethnic and class backgrounds;
- the importance of respecting and upholding non-discrimination legislation with regard to recruitment of staff and selection of pupils; and/or
- the obligation of schools to teach all students a similar ‘modern’ and ‘secular’ worldview and to contribute to government-initiated forms of teaching citizenship and national integration.

The first indicator (indicator 3.1) presented below attempts to summarize the overall situation of religious schools in the respective countries. But before we proceed to analyse this indicator, it is useful to also consider the socio-economic conditions that influence much of the debate on faith-based schools in all countries concerned.

Ethnic and socio-economic segregation and desegregation policies

The broader issue of socio-economic and ethnic segregation of immigrant minorities often constitutes a major argument in the debates on the existence of faith-based schools. This is often a cause of concern in relation to schools set up by religious newcomers such as Muslims or Hindus.

It is thus relevant to examine what structural inequalities exist between different types of religious schools (majority versus minority schools, established (Catholic, Protestant) versus new religious (Muslim, Hindu) schools?

In some countries, religious schools are considered as contributing factors to socio-economic and ethnic segregation (for example Catholic and Protestant schools in the Netherlands); in others, religious schools serve mainly middle class pupils and issues of socio-economic exclusion are not of concern (for example in Ireland); in other still, faith-based schools struggle with a high number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (for example Islamic schools in the Netherlands).

Ethnic and socio-economic segregation is a very complex matter, affected *inter alia* by both “voluntary separation” based on religion and “involuntary segregation” based on ethnic descent and/or social class.

This is exacerbated even further in the education sector. Focused research has underlined the relation between residential (geographic) segregation and segregation in education, the effect of parents’ school choice (“white flight”), and the cumulative effects of disadvantage in the educational career of children (see Karsten et al. 2003).

What is certain is that we should avoid simplistic conclusions as to whether religious schools contribute to ethnic and socio-economic segregation, or whether different forms of government programmes combatting “segregation” are (or can be) effective. The opportunities for governments to impose “mixing”, for example, are restricted because of fundamental rights, including the “freedom of education” which grants parents the right to choose a school for their children (Vermeulen 2001). They also tend to be counter-balanced by parents’ strategies, who may choose to move to another part of the city or country to avoid forced “mixing”.

Finally, educational disadvantage may already exist before schooling begins (for example in terms of mastery of the dominant language) which may have cumulative effects, suggesting that “mixing” is no longer a viable option in, for example, secondary schools.

It is therefore important to situate the debate on faith-based schools within the larger context of tolerance, inter-community relations and the issue of segregation in each society.

As we see in the sections below, therefore, the second indicator (indicator 3.2) attempts to summarize the overall situation of segregation and desegregation policies in the respective countries.

PART 1. THE INDICATORS

Two indicators have been selected. One indicator (3.1) concerns the room and support that is granted to schools to cater to the needs of specific religious groups; and the other indicator (3.2) represents the relationship between the educational system and patterns of ethnic and socio-economic segregation in each country.

Indicator 3.1 Parallel education (voluntary)

Indicator 3.2 Desegregation

What the indicators can and cannot show

Country scores on individual indicators should be interpreted as very condensed statements on the situation in a particular country (for a given time period) on this aspect.

Scores represent contextual judgments by experts based on an interpretation of qualitative research and the available knowledge about the respective society in this respect. The "scores" cannot be understood and should not be presented without the explanations provided by the researchers.

Scores cannot be aggregated, scores on individual indicators may help to analyze the situation in countries in a comparative perspective, but from the fact that countries score higher or lower across a number of indicators we cannot infer that *ipso facto* a particular country as a whole is "more or less tolerant".

Scores on individual indicators are not necessarily comparable, because different factors and reasons may have resulted in a particular score for a country (e.g. it may be that the score in one country only refers to a particular region). This means that scores cannot necessarily be compared and they can only be interpreted in a comparative way in relation to the explications and reasons provided.

In light of the above this reports presents the scores on the two selected indicators in the following section.

For more information about each national case study please refer to the individual reports listed in the Annex. For the Toolkit of the ACCEPT PLURALISM Tolerance Indicators please see here: www.accept-pluralism.eu

INDICATOR 3.1 PARALLEL EDUCATION (VOLUNTARY)

This indicator is about the option of creating non-governmental-schools on the basis of a religious denomination, whether (partially) funded or not.

LOW – non tolerance	There are **virtually no** non-governmental schools catering to specific religious or ethnic/national groups in the entire country/region, at least not for children (ages 5-16), and not recognized as constituting a way of fulfilling compulsory education.
MEDIUM – minimal tolerance	There are non-governmental schools catering to specific religious or ethnic/national groups (accredited), but these do not (or hardly) receive public funding AND/OR they have very little meaningful "associational freedoms" AND/OR it is very difficult for newcomers and minorities to create such schools.
HIGH – acceptance	There are non-governmental schools catering to specific religious or ethnic/national groups, they receive (substantial) public funding, they have (substantial) associational freedoms, there are schools for religious (immigrant) newcomers and minorities

Table 2. Applying Indicator 3.1 Parallel Education (voluntary) in six European countries

Country	**Score**	**Notes**
Denmark	High	The Danish constitution stipulates a duty of education but no school duty. This allows for home schooling as well as for private schools. Private schools receive a substantial public subsidy akin to a voucher system, covering around 75 % of the school costs. In the last decade or so, the state has increased its monitoring of the schools as well as the self-monitoring and documentation duty of the individual schools. Some Muslim schools have expressed concern that they have been under a general suspicion from the state for not meeting the requirement of teaching liberal civic education.
Ireland	High	In Ireland, 95% of primary schools and 57% of secondary schools are 'denominational'. Education is under the patronage of religious institutions/trusts (mainly Catholic, but also Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Quaker). In addition, there are separate Irish language schools, catering to those who want their children educated through the national language and a growing number of multidenominational schools. From a comparative European perspective,

		religious groups have had considerable associational freedom; they have been able to create schools which receive substantial public funding.
Italy	**Medium**	Faith schools in Italy are non-governmental schools, which can ask for recognition and be consequently treated similarly to state schools: once formally recognised, they are subject to the same education regulations and quality standards as state schools. They can also ask for funding. Nevertheless, faith schools which have been built and asked for recognition are mostly Catholic, managed by Catholic institutions and organizations.
Netherlands	**High**	Faith schools in the Netherlands are non-governmental (bijzondere) schools that are financed on an equal basis as public schools and are subject to the same education regulations and quality standards. The vast majority (approximately 60%) of Dutch schools is organized on the basis of a religious identity. There is "statutory equality" of governmental and non-governmental schools, grounded in article 23 of the Dutch constitution protecting freedom of education. Non-governmental schools are subject to the same general education regulations and quality standards, they should employ certified teachers, but they are allowed to select teachers and pupils on the basis of religious and philosophical views, to decide on curriculum in relation to the religious identity of the school, and impose rules with regard to dress and behaviour in the school context.
Spain	**Medium**	The right to create schools according to one's faith or values is guaranteed by the Spanish constitution. In practice, creating schools for minority denominations still faces many obstacles, mainly in terms of resources. There are less than ten schools that cater to the educational needs of religious minorities in the country.
Sweden	**High**	The associational freedoms of the independent schools are by and large the same as for the public ones. They have the right to select and recruit personnel, but the national curricula provide strong guidelines for the local curricula. Teaching on sexuality or evolution theory, for example, cannot be omitted. Separate rules related to dress codes and other forms of behaviour of teachers and pupils are allowed, as long as they kept within the restrictions of general laws. The scope for a distinctly Islamic or Muslim curriculum is limited. With the advent of the new school law in 2011, no confessional elements are allowed in the instructions leading this "High" score to potentially be reconsidered as a "Medium" one.

With regard to the opportunities offered to religious schools, the Nordic countries (Sweden and Denmark) as well as the Netherlands and Ireland, score "high". Spain and Italy score "medium" on this indicator. A first factor explaining this difference may be the church-state regime in the respective countries, which in some countries seems to benefit Christian religions (and schools) but which can also become inclusive of other religions (as in the case of the Netherlands and Denmark).

Another factor could be the degree of "Catholic dominance", which explains the relative low score of Italy and Spain that are heavily biased in favour of Catholic schools but that have hardly any religious schools of other denominations. The case of Ireland is different because this is obviously a Catholic dominated country; there is room however for religious education to be set up by the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Muslim, Jewish and Quaker groups.

The associational freedoms of schools also depend on the degree of centralization of each country's education system.

Of the six countries examined, faith-based schools in Denmark enjoy the highest overall degree of associational freedom. Like their secular counterparts, religious schools in the countries examined are subject to some forms of control and accountability. They are obliged to adhere to certain standards of efficiency and effectiveness and respect non-discrimination legislation in employment and student selection. While some argue for mission-based and circumscribed exemptions, they may not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity and race.

In all the countries studied, the balancing of governmental control and associational freedoms is increasingly contested. Outspoken critics of religious schools are pressuring policymakers to reduce the scope of educational freedoms of parents and of religious schools.

In all the countries examined, religious newcomers can make use of their constitutional rights in order to create and operate faith-based schools. Providing newcomers with the judicial and institutional space to create religious schools in itself is illustrative of recognition.

However, without exception, Muslim communities encounter political and societal resistance if they do so.

In Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark Islamic schools are 'tolerated' but not liked; and they are subject to administrative impediments and monitoring, both in relation to their educational performance and in relation to the possible presence of anti-liberal or radical religious messages in teaching. More established, 'native' religious minorities usually have consolidated their privileges that are based on history and tradition. However, in the contentious debates on pluralism in education, these rights and privileges may be challenged. This is notably the case with Protestant schools in Ireland and Dutch Reformed schools in the Netherlands

INDICATOR 3.2 DESEGREGATION

LOW – non tolerance	De facto or state-sponsored segregation in classrooms and/or schools against the wishes of the local minority. Minority children are denied equal access to educational institutions that meet basic standards.
MEDIUM – minimal tolerance	Various efforts made at desegregation, but with minimal impact on larger problems. Some minority children are integrated in special schools targeted for desegregation policies, but most minority students remain in segregated classrooms/schools.
HIGH – acceptance	Sustained system-wide desegregation efforts to combat segregation in the classroom and in school. These efforts have the backing of the state and local education officials. Significant inroads made toward desegregation.

Table 3. Applying Indicator 3.2 Desegregation to six European countries

Country	Score	Justification for score
Denmark	**Medium/ High**	Significant segregation is found between 'black' and 'white' schools in larger urban areas. This is mainly the result of housing patterns/segregation, the way school districts are defined, and the ability of individual parents to opt for a private school or choose a different public school than their district school (free choice of schools). Some efforts have been made to counter-balance these tendencies. Private schools have also been encouraged to take on more 'social responsibility' for students with 'weak social backgrounds' including those of minority background.
Ireland	**Medium/ High**	There is a level of 'established religious segregation' in Ireland, as 95% of primary schools and 57% of secondary schools are 'denominational'. In practice however, there is a considerable degree of variety or religion among pupils even in denominational schools. In international comparison, schools are not segregated with respect to immigrant students, who are widely dispersed. Thus, while the government's education policy emphasises integration, the risk of educational segregation along racial as well as religious lines can emerge in certain localities from denominational schools' recourse to their right to discriminate (on religious grounds) with regard to enrolment.
Italy	**Medium**	In this assessment we have looked at the rule enacted in 2010 by the Minister Gelmini. The rule is formally aimed at avoiding segregation in

		schools: it makes Italian schools rearrange classes so that foreign students would represent no more than 30% of all students. Actually, when it was enacted, it provoked much debate. At the national level an attempt to avoid segregation has been made (even though with difficulties); schools try to balance the families' freedom of choice against an equal distribution of students among schools and classrooms but these efforts are not always successful and sometimes in fact may be counter-productive.
Netherlands	**Medium**/ **High**	Segregation in schools is an important phenomenon in the Netherlands. It mainly concerns primary schools but is then further strengthened in secondary schools because of the (early) selection of pupils for junior vocational schools (VMBO) and schools preparing for higher education (HAVO/VWO). Policies may have been mildly effective with regard to improving educational performance, but they are largely ineffective with regard to enforcing desegregation.
Spain	**Medium**	Spain has an adequate legislative framework to pursue desegregation policies but no really effective policies have been implemented in the most segregated contexts so far. This can be explained by structural causes such as residential segregation but also the will to preserve free choice of schools as well as a lack of control on the admission processes.
Sweden	**Medium**/ **High**	Ethnic and socio-economic segregation in Sweden is substantial in its scope. The government has initiated different policies and measures of desegregation, both large-scale and small-scale, such as a) housing and social mix policy (first initiated in the 1970s); b) the refugee dispersal policy (initiated in the 1980s); and c) the area-based urban policy (initiated in the 1990s). Of these three, the last two have a clear ethnic focus, while mixing policies primarily aim for socio-economic and demographic mix. None of the policies have managed to affect levels of segregation more than marginally.

All countries score “medium” or “medium/high” on this indicator for the (possible) effectiveness of desegregation efforts and/or the relative presence or absence of ethnic and socio-economic segregation in education.

What comes out clearly is that policies appear to have limited effects on segregation.

Some countries benefit from the fact that there are relatively few immigrant children and/or that they are widely dispersed (e.g. Ireland). Other countries have made efforts to improve the educational performance of disadvantaged schools rather than addressing segregation as such (the Netherlands and Denmark).

In Spain and Italy, residential segregation also strongly contributes to segregation in education, and government policies have hardly been effective in addressing the issue.

The indicators confirm the image that school segregation and strategies of countering segregation are complex issues (cf. Bakker et al. 2010).

Table 4. Comparative country overview

Country	Indicator 3.1 Parallel education	Indicator 3.2 Desegregation
Denmark	High	Medium / High
Ireland	High	Medium / High
Italy	Medium	Medium
Netherlands	High	Medium / High
Spain	Medium	Medium
Sweden	High	Medium / High

PART 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The two indicators that were selected for this area provide a very condensed, but also very general, picture of the overall situation in different countries with regard to the relationships between the structure of the education system and issues of cultural diversity, religion, inequality and freedoms.

To some extent the qualitative scores confirm important conclusions drawn in more elaborate empirical studies, notably with regard to differences between “policy declarations” and the reality on the ground, between legal framework and the way rules are bended, and with regard to differences between Nordic and Southern European countries.

These indicators can be used to obtain an image of the broader picture, however the idiosyncrasies of each country situation and changes of time should make one cautious about the applicability, validity and generalizability of these “scores”. It may be useful for ministries, local authorizes and expert groups to have this type of overview, but the more substantial reports on the situation of religious schools and school segregation that are produced by many experts and agencies across Europe provide more trustworthy and complete pictures.

FURTHER READINGS AND COUNTRY REPORTS

A Delicate Balance: Religious schools and tolerance in Europe
By Marcel Maussen and Veit Bader, University of Amsterdam (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/22238

ACCEPT PLURALISM Tolerance Indicators Toolkit
By Anna Triandafyllidou, European University Institute (2013)
Download your copy from: http://www.accept-pluralism.eu/Research/ProjectReports/ToleranceIndicatorsToolkit/ToleranceIndicators.aspx

Conceptions of Tolerance and Intolerance in Denmark: From Liberality to Liberal Intolerance?
By Tore Vincents Olsen and Lasse Lindekilde, Aarhus University (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/23255

Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Ireland. Concepts and Practices
By Iseult Honohan and Nathalie Rougier, University College Dublin (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/23258

Overview Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Concepts and Practices in Italy
By Maurizio Ambrosini and Elena Caneva, University of Milan (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/23259

Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in the Netherlands
By Marcel Maussen with Thijs Bogers and Inge Versteegt, University of Amsterdam (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/23514

Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Concepts and Practices in Spain
Ricard Zapata-Barrero, Flora Burchianti, Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas, GRITIM – Universitat Pompeu Fabra (2012)
Download your copy from: http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/24378

Tolerance and cultural diversity in Sweden
By Hans-Ingvar Roth and Fredrik Hertzberg, Stockholm University (2012)
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About ACCEPT PLURALISM – project identity

Acronym	**ACCEPT PLURALISM**
Title	**Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe**
Short Description	ACCEPT PLURALISM questions how much cultural diversity can be accommodated within liberal and secular democracies in Europe. The notions of tolerance, acceptance, respect and recognition are central to the project. ACCEPT PLURALISM looks at both native and immigrant minority groups. Through comparative, theoretical and empirical analysis the project studies individuals, groups or practices for whom tolerance is sought but which we should not tolerate; of which we disapprove but which should be tolerated; and for which we ask to go beyond tolerance and achieve respect and recognition. In particular, we investigate when, what and who is being not tolerated / tolerated / respected in 15 European countries; why this is happening in each case; the reasons that different social actors put forward for not tolerating / tolerating / respecting specific minority groups/individuals and specific practices. The project analyses practices, policies and institutions, and produces key messages for policy makers with a view to making European societies more respectful towards diversity.
Website	www.accept-pluralism.eu
Duration	March 2010-May 2013 (39 months)
Funding Scheme	Small and medium-scale collaborative project
EU contribution	2,600,230 Euro
Consortium	17 partners (15 countries)
Coordinator	European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
Person Responsible	Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou
EC officer	Ms. Louisa Anastopoulou, Project Officer, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission