



EDUC8 TO BUILD RESILIENCE PROJECT

Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation Workshop Proceedings

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1. Onur Sultan started meeting at 10:00 with welcoming remarks and introducing the two speakers. Then started his briefing by talking about inspiration behind the project and further continued by elaborating on the project by going over the abstract and the methodology. The slides from Onur Sultan’s talk and the other speakers can be found in Annex at the end of this document. Following items can be extracted from his presentation:

1.1. According to a recent Pew research poll, **Western Europeans who say they personally know a Muslim are more likely to disagree with a negative statement about Muslims.** In other words, having some knowledge about Islam brings about a modest attitudinal and behavioral change. However the real change becomes real upon contact and relationship. In its essence this research shows knowing the other breaks some walls but real impact comes with contact and building relationships. The research results can be seen in the figure on the side.

1.2. To verify this premise, another Pew Research conducted in Europe shows especially in countries in periphery like Hungary, Italy, Poland, Greece and Spain rate of citizens holding negative views towards Muslims is above 65 percent. We attribute the reason for this to the common denominator of those countries, mono-religious education. The minimal diversity in the country and school allows for formation of stereotypes. The research results can be seen in the figure below:

Western Europeans who say they personally know a Muslim are more likely than those who do not to disagree with a negative statement about Muslims

% who completely/mostly disagree with the statement “In their hearts, Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else in the country” among those who ...

	Know a great deal or some about Islam	Know less about Islam	Diff.	Personally know a Muslim	Do not know a Muslim	Difference
Switzerland	75%	71%	+4	85%	48%	+37
UK	69	77	-8	85	48	+37
Austria	69	65	+4	79	44	+35
Germany	70	69	+1	81	47	+34
Ireland	70	66	+4	79	50	+29
Italy	63	59	+4	73	46	+27
Denmark	65	52	+13	66	40	+26
France	74	71	+3	77	53	+24
Sweden	71	67	+4	74	54	+20
Belgium	59	50	+9	58	42	+16
Netherlands	65	59	+6	65	49	+16
Norway	62	53	+9	63	47	+16
Spain	57	46	+11	53	42	+11
Finland	59	62	-3	67	58	+9
Portugal	68	64	+4	69	63	+6
MEDIAN	68	64		73	48	

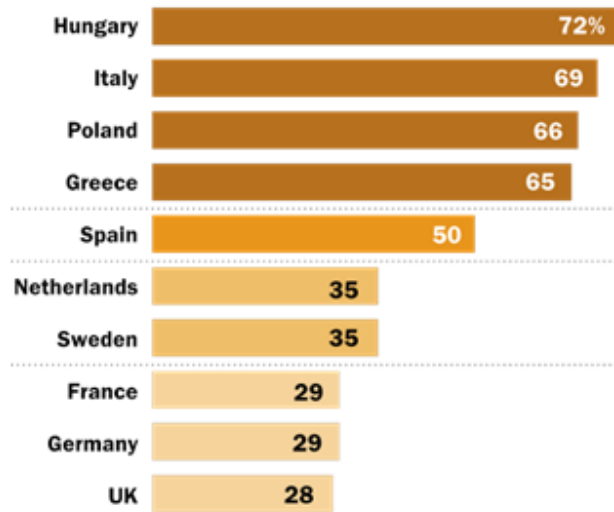
Note: Differences in bold are statistically significant. Muslim respondents are not included in this analysis.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries in Western Europe. “Being Christian in Western Europe”

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Views of Muslims more negative in eastern and southern Europe

Unfavorable view of Muslims in our country



Note: In Poland, question was asked of a subsample of 686 respondents.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36c.

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1.3. So, building some level of knowledge about the other and creating friendly relationships is a must for European societies to preclude polarization and radicalization, as we deem as two sides of the same coin that feed each other. But there is another dimension we need to highlight. That is knowledge of the person of his own faith. The research shows persons lacking knowledge of their own faith become more prone to manipulation. Two research examples are indicative:

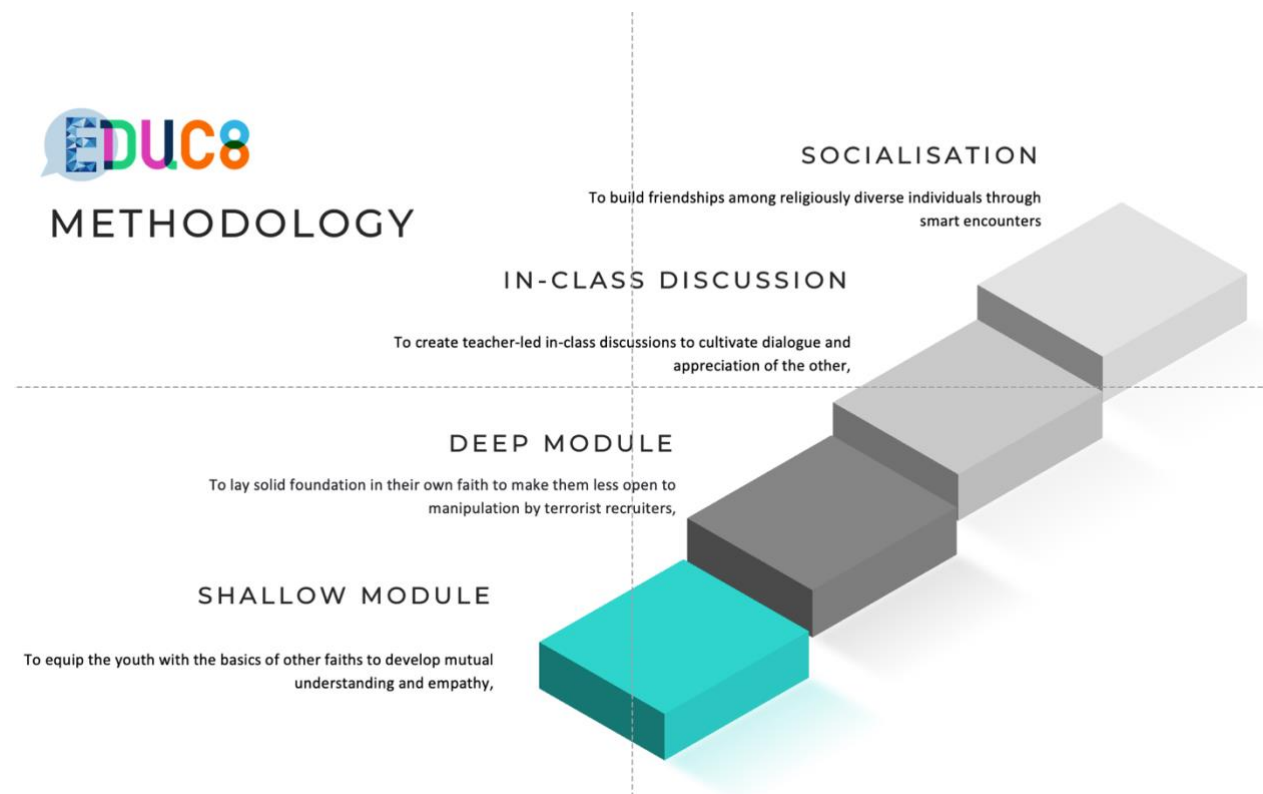
- 17% of the total 910 individuals who traveled to the Levant are converts. What is more, converts comprise at least one third of female departees. (Heinke, 2017)
- Prof. Scott Atran, on lack of traditional religious education among those joining ISIL, says: *“More than 1 in 4 French youth – of all creeds – between the ages of 18 and 24 have a favorable attitude towards ISIS; and in Barcelona just this month 5 of 11 captured ISIS sympathizers who planned to blow up parts of the city were recent atheist or Christian converts.”* (Atran, 2015)

1.4. As an answer to the concerns raised above, EDUC8 was conceptualized to build resilience in children and young people against radicalisation and **polarisation** through **religious education** in **secondary schools** and out-of-school settings. The project aims:

- to equip the youth with the basics of other faiths to develop mutual understanding and empathy,
- to lay solid foundation in their own faith to make them less open to manipulation,
- to create teacher-led in-class discussions to cultivate dialogue and appreciation of the other, and
- to build friendships among religiously diverse individuals through smart encounters.

1.5. The main outputs of the EDUC8 Project will be:

- a. A **religious education program** for secondary schools that will be embedded onto **web- and tablet platforms**. The whole program will be structured around **storytelling** (scenario-based), **interactive** and will harness popularity of tablets and their **ability to address all three senses (sight, hearing, touch)**. The program will first raise awareness about essence and daily practices of all religions and then provide modern religious interpretations in the faith of the young to help him / her reject religion-colored violence and adapt to modern daily life in Europe.
 - b. A socialization program that will entail exchanges between students from different faith groups. This will be in form of well-planned repetitive social activities.
- 1.6. Here is an illustration of the methodology to be followed.



1.7. Finally he pointed out the project will be implemented in different MSs in different settings:

- In Belgium: school, prison and juvenile penitentiary
- In Greece: school,
- In Finland: youth work.

2.The WP2 Leader Professor Pollefeyt took floor to delve deeper into Deep Modules. Here are the main points from his talk:

2.1. The secularization paradigm which posits the religions will finally disappear from the face of earth has proven to be wrong. The religions do not disappear but persist, change and adapt to keep their important place among their followers.

2.2. The link between radicalisation and religion is still discussed. But in many cases after a violent attack religious background is quickly questioned. The murder of one homosexual in

Belgium last week and public condemning of marriage of a homosexual couple in catholic church by Vatican in the same week prompted media to scrutinize connection. The Belgian Parliament also invited all religious representatives to the Parliament. As it becomes clear from this example, this link will always be questioned and should be looked into.

2.3. The project was born in this context, to help contribute to the solution of the problem by using religious education.

2.4. The deepest line of division does no longer run through the different religions but between open and closed variants of the different religions. It makes no sense and has no impact to speak 'about' the different religions, but 'with' and 'from within' the different religious perspectives.

2.5. As we pay attention to this "from within" aspect, it has three advantages, namely authenticity, authority, and orthodoxy. Authenticity in that we present those religions/worldviews as it is experienced by its own members, in line with what is referred as "lived religion". The religion is not presented as a museum catalogue but as an experience of living reality. Authority refers to the fact that those children in the learning process will feel safer because the way religion is presented is doing justice to that religion because classes are done by members of that religion. Orthodoxy in that it is in sync with how communities see and live their religion. It is extremely important as the creators of the content are competent authorities in respective religions/worldviews and that religious authorities will be able to inspect and authorize what is in there.

2.6. We go beyond formal tolerance and respect to reach recognition and appreciation: from multireligious learning to **interreligious learning**, meaning we are all at the same level in this wonderful interreligious adventure. We maintain the recognition of the violent potential of religious system, meaning **we do not hold apologetic approach from a superior perspective but recognizing that all religions and other secular worldviews have a seductive, dangerous potential.**

2.7. **Religions and worldviews are open to different interpretations (hermeneutics), but the violent interpretation is not unavoidable, and even more: does not constitute the essence of worldview systems and are even a perversion of it.**

2.8. **In any authentic religion and worldview, there is a potential to change, to criticize, to overrule, to transform violence into tolerance and peace! And the institutions participating to this project recognize this potential in the other and feel invited and challenged to discover this potential in themselves.**

2.9. **What are the didactical consequences and methods? For shallow modules**, we offer a learning from within (a presentation of the religion by a member of that religion, with a positive attitude towards it). In **deep modules, we do not avoid difficult issues** and potential and real dangers in religions. So, we do not avoid a presentation of the dangerous potential of a religion around a certain topic and often this challenge is brought in the form of a 'Fremd prophecy': someone from an external perspective challenges pre-supposition. There is a two steps method:

- A first naivety violent interpretation
- A second naivety peaceful re-interpretation

2.10. Narrative approach on the student level is followed at all modules.

2.11. There has been selected four topics four deep modules. Those are:

DM1: « Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity »

DM2: « Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence »

DM3: « Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues »

DM4: « When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace »

For Islam, a fifth and sixth module exists on following topics:

DM5: « Divine and human laws: Compatible or not? »

DM6: « Free Speech: Profane or sacred »

3.The WP3 Leader Professor Ekaterini Tsalamponi took floor to delve deeper into Shallow Modules. Here are the main points from her talk:

- 3.1. As it is written in the grant agreement, we aimed to prepare educative content to equip the youth with the basics of other faiths to develop mutual understanding and empathy, show those from other faiths how a person in the respective religion believes and how this belief is reflected in daily life to include rituals, traditions and worshipping styles.
- 3.2. In this regard, we wanted to provide a concise and comprehensive introduction to each religious tradition and non-religious/philosophical worldview. The main axis has been to assist students in a process of familiarization and evaluation of these traditions and create linkages between these material and deep modules. Also, another aim was to create necessary material for an open process of learning.
- 3.3. In terms of form and style, each model started with an approximately 7-min video featuring first-person narrative by a girl/boy talking about these traditions “from within” and “from below”. The focus has been as mentioned above on the basics of each tradition, including constructive self-critical remarks. In other words, we tried to create engagement with each tradition in a positively critical way.

To be more precise, in each video, we have General facts about each tradition, main feasts, holy books and symbols, religious buildings, worship and rituals, role of women and environment and finally moral values. In the student’s book, transcript of video script for those not having the chance to watch or listen to video, multiple-choice questions, filling the gaps in a text, role-play games, questions for discussion and reflection on texts have been provided. In the teacher’s book on the hand, more information about each tradition, teaching tips, explanation of the content of the exercises, extra exercises.

4. After the talk by Professor Tsalamponi, the attendees joined two break-out rooms to further discuss the deep modules and shallow modules. After a half-hour discussion, both groups merged in the general room. The moderators of both groups articulated the discussion results.
5. First Prof.Pollefeyt started reflecting the points raised during discussion. Here is a summary of the suggestions he reiterated:

- 5.1. The age issue was raised and if the EDUC8 educational materials could be used in the primary schools. The primary thought was to test it in the last year of the primary school with 12 years-olds.
 - 5.2. The issue of the videos being used/viewed isolated from the wider context of religious educational setting was raised, and the concern was in such case it could create new challenges. The answer was that the material was to be used by experienced teachers with some history with the class and used in line with the educational program.
 - 5.3. The project was suggested to be introduced and connected to the European network on ethics education and receive their feedback. The coordinator will take up that.
 - 5.4. Another question was how families and students learn to take critical position against their own religion from time to time. The answer was the students in secondary student by being confronted with problematic questions and issues within their tradition and confront it, will become more autonomous, more mature, more deeply rooted, more self-conscious Catholics, Atheists, Muslims etc. With this exercise, as is mentioned in the name of the project, resilience is aimed to be built or created.
 - 5.5. There was a suggestion to connect the project results with citizenship classes in schools. This will be discussed.
 - 5.6. There was a question regarding languages. The project results will be in French and Dutch alongside English.
6. First Prof.Tsalampouni took floor to reflect the points raised during discussion. Here is a summary of the suggestions/questions she reiterated:
- 6.1. There was a question regarding languages in especially those used in the Eastern Europe. The project results will be in French and Dutch alongside English. Going beyond those languages will depend on availability of resources. One probable answer to this could be subtitling.
 - 6.2. In shallow modules we are not interested in highlighting differences but more in finding commonalities or shared points. Equally, the students will be better positioned to spot or realize the religious diversity around themselves.
 - 6.3. A didactic point raised was that the exercises would preclude an adventurous dive into different religions. The answer to that is that of course some of the exercises can be left out by the experienced teachers or more can be added by the teachers themselves.
 - 6.4. Another suggestion was to add art as an element to the teaching material. An answer to that was maybe not on print but on digital materials links to interesting art products could be added from time to time.
7. In the final phase of the workshop, the attendants were allowed to make their final comments, suggestions. Following are the comments, suggestions, questions received and answers given:
- 7.1. The content is extremely quality and useful. How can they be used in classroom settings. The relevant classroom under direction of the teacher can make bulk registration and follow the program as a whole.
 - 7.2. One attendant posited the sacred texts are believed to be sent by God but the interpretation is human. He suggested a didactic approach could be to show a diversity of different interpretations by different theologians. This could teach students to be critical in a constructive way. The answer was that this was the exact reason for following the “from-within” methodology. This methodology this way resists adopt a de-

constructive approach. More precisely, with the merit of coming from inside the sphere of a tradition, it does not become external objectivist. Hermeneutic communicative model is part of the methodology proposed.

8. At the end of two hours at 12.00, the Coordinator thanked participants for their contributions and closed the session.