



# Religious Inclusion: Religious education for religious tolerance - steps toward a truly democratic society

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## INTRODUCTION

Religion has presented itself as a source of conflict and reconciliation throughout human history. Modern history was marked by the devastating acts of terrorism in New York, Washington, London and Madrid, when people supposedly in the name of their religion committed horrific acts of violence and murder on innocent victims. However, despite these tragedies, something rather extraordinary occurred in their aftermath. People in the USA, UK, Spain and all over the world began showing an interest in religions other than their own; they were becoming more aware of the role of religion in their lives, as well as the social and political ramifications of its presence. It may bring peace, or wage war.

One such country is Bosnia-Herzegovina. Throughout its complex history, Bosnia had undergone glorification and destruction with the underlying theme of religion. The recent war in Bosnia was clearly instigated by ethnic and religious animosity. Unlike anywhere else, ethnicity in Bosnia is almost automatically equal to religious belonging, and vice versa. For this reason, one must not take the issue of religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina lightly. Religious education in public schools must be observed and targeted as a priority issue in decisions regarding education in general. It must be incorporated in the education of young people in order to rebuild trust, understanding and coexistence of the four main religious groups.

Religious education in this study will be discussed comprehensively, regarding all forms of religious education: confessional and non-confessional. Confessional religious education refers to teachings of religious rites and beliefs with the sole purpose of educating one single religious group. Non-confessional religious education refers to the education *about* religion. This study is aimed at discovering what are the true issues regarding the existence and development of religious education in a democratic, multicultural and pluralist society such as it is in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Neighbouring countries that have also experienced turmoil and transition will be analysed from possible best practice examples. The conclusion will offer a pragmatic and innovative approach to resolving certain issues in respect to religious education in public schools, with the aim of creating a long-lasting collaboration and rebuilding the trust between religious institutions and government bodies, by discussing what kind of policy can influence the improvement of the current situation in religious education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and offer insight into the present, past and possible future of the Culture of Religions course.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research proposal will focus on policies regarding religious education in public schools. In this sense it presumes that religious education is *confessional* religious education in public schools. However, this study will explore the concept of religious education that includes both forms of religious education, confessional and non-confessional.

The problem description section will deal with the current issues revolving around religious education. This has been a well publicized topic in all media, with opinions flying around and no responsible party that would step in to try and solve this problem. On the one hand the religious communities are relentless in their effort to keep religious education in schools; on the other, some political parties together with a large part of the media are trying to abolish religious education completely. Basically they are playing the parts of polarized opposites, with the issue at hand not being the central part.

The analysis of the situation in the region is not comforting. The three chosen countries (Croatia, Serbia and the Former Republic of Macedonia) are all in somewhat of a difficult situation, and therefore do not represent a model that Bosnia-Herzegovina could follow.



However, since Bosnia-Herzegovina is quite unique in its legislative structure and organization in the political, social as well as religious sense, it would be very difficult to find an applicable „cut & paste“ model. Therefore, the possible solutions for the issue of religious education in public schools must be tailor made to Bosnia. The review of possible options was informative. The first option would be to remain status quo, meaning there would still not be any collaboration between the state and religious institutions. The second option would assume the abolishment of all forms of religious education in public schools. The third option would be to create a platform by which confessional and non-confessional religious education could be merged without one excluding the other. This option was chosen as an experimental, yet very plausible solution that would bring two opposing sides together and function as a single, unified course of action.

## **PROBLEM DESCRIPTION**

The issue of religion in general in contemporary society is one of great sensitivity, based mainly on personal conviction rather than professional orientation. The issue of religious education in public schools is even more so, as it influences future generations and the matter of tolerance and understanding among religious groups. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, religious determination is almost synonymous with ethnicity. However, although this is quite obvious, the presence or even possible presence of religious education in public schools in any form has caused an upheaval in the Bosnian society. Many people, public and private persons and organizations, have been perceiving religious education as a threat to this war torn and traumatized society. It is believed that religious education would further deepen the segregation in schools, that it would introduce inappropriate content in school books and classes and discriminate against minorities. On the other hand, schools and textbooks have become battlegrounds of cunning politicians searching for their own agendas, and creating an environment of non-tolerance and distrust.

The history of Bosnia is full of various phases as far as religion and religious education are concerned. Atheism was the normative and imperative in the Communist period, which lasted for fifty years. Religion was not allowed to be practiced and was even punishable. Therefore, religious education was not even an issue. It was to be ignored. However, towards the downfall of the communist regime, and the 90s, religion very quickly became a “hot” subject. Because they were forbidden to speak and practice their religious beliefs, the explosion of religious emotion and demonstration was awesome. Essentially, this rush of religiousness nourished the building of nationalistic tendencies of the peoples of the Former Yugoslavia. Today, the religious communities insist on religious education, in the sense of confessional religious education, in order to ensure that nothing similar would ever happen again. However, there are parties that oppose confessional religious education, stating that it would further separate a divided society.

The legislative structure and organization of the government additionally makes a difficult situation even more so. A relatively small population of 4 million people is organized in a chaotic government framework where positions of important decision-making are distributed not according to expertise and experience, but rather based on the national key. With three presidents (one representing each constitutive nationality), four levels of government (state, entity, cantonal and municipality), over a hundred ministers and a very large, expensive and old-fashioned public administration, this country represents a democratic mess. The Dayton Peace Accord, while it brought a very desperately needed ceasefire, left the country in an organizational rut that it cannot pry itself away from.

The present education system of Bosnia-Herzegovina is extremely complicated. As a result of the Dayton Peace Accord the country is divided into two entities, which are further divided into subdivisions. In the case of Republika Srpska, it is centralized and the municipalities are directly responsible to the government. The situation in the Federation of BH is more complex. It is divided into cantons and then further into municipalities, therefore making the whole system much more timely and costly. There is no Ministry of Education at the state level, and therefore the jurisdiction for the education system is placed on the entity level. It is further divided onto cantons (in the case of the Federation of BH). This decentralized framework of the education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina creates a disproportionate education framework.

### **Is tolerance an issue in Bosnia-Herzegovina?**

The policy problem within the framework of religion and schooling in a democratic and pluralistic society such as it is in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the **religious non-tolerance in confessional religious education**, where by *confessional* it is understood to be the study and practice of a certain religion as opposed to the *non-confessional* or the study about religions.<sup>1</sup> What this means is that the existence of confessional religious education as such should not be questioned, but should be optional. This is a society so highly motivated by religious emotion and ethnic identity, religious education should be used as a tool through which religious tolerance and freedoms can be promoted. This could possibly be achieved through the merging of confessional religious education and non-confessional education. In a sense, the culture of religions course should be interweaved in the religious education curricula.

For the purpose of demonstrating the existence of tolerance in schools in Bosnia, two random elementary schools were selected, one in Republika Srpska and the other in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina for the purpose of this research paper. The sample was conducted in two classes respectively in each school. The number of students in each class were between 25 and 32. The name of the schools will remain undisclosed because of the agreement that the researcher and the school reached; that is that this would be an anonymous sample for the purpose of this study. Each class is primarily selected on the criteria that it is multicultural, meaning that it represents at least two ethnic/religious groups per samole.

The question presented to them was: *Do you find that your classmates avoid other children of different religious or ethnic background?* This question offers an albeit small scale but also representative overview of the degree of tolerance present in schools in Bosnia at the present. This sample of course does not give the true state in all of Bosnia. However, the results of it may be used to qualitatively conclude the state of ethnicity and religious beliefs in public schools. The analysis of the results offer the following findings.

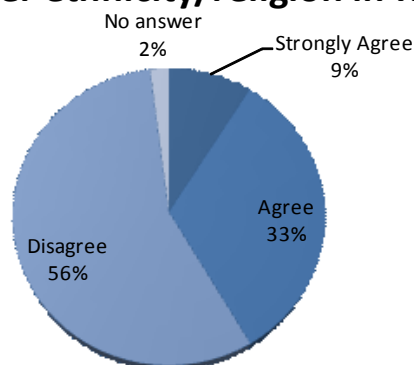
It is evident that more than half the children in each case disagree with the notion that children avoid other children of different religious/ethnic background. However, the number of children that strongly agree and agree with this notion is not negligible. In FBiH it is 30%, while in RS it is 41%. This is a large enough number to cause concern. One must take into consideration that this means that this percentage of children do not feel socially acceptable or socially included. This is an indicator as to the general feeling of people in Bosnia today. Therefore, the concept of tolerance is the only solution that is possible to be conducted in practice that could lead Bosnia-Herzegovina towards a path to a true multicultural society. As mentioned before, this is to be achieved through the combination of confessional and non-confessional religious education.

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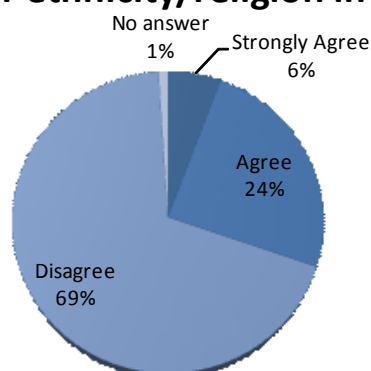
<sup>1</sup> www.iarf.net



### Children claiming their peers avoid children of other ethnicity/religion in RS



### Children claiming their peers avoid children of other ethnicity/religion in FBiH



### Confessional or non-confessional education (or both?)

The religious communities of B&H are determined to retain confessional religious education in public schools, and have been very vocal about it. It is in fact their constitutional right to demand CRE in the education system according to the State Law on Religious Freedom. Therefore, it would be extremely difficult to attempt at abolishing religious education in public schools. The aim here would be to combine the religious and the secular. More specifically to allow religious communities the right to religious education in public schools with their curricula, and for government bodies, namely the Ministry of Education in each entity respectively, to be allowed supervision for the purpose of securing a promotion of tolerance in religious education classes. The problems of confessional religious education in Bosnia are:

- The fact that not all schools have confessional religious education in their curricula,
- The religious communities alone have the freedom to include what they deem necessary in the curricula,
- The government has no say in the design of the curricula,

- There is much opposition by the media, some political parties and some members of the public even to the existence of confessional religious education in public schools.

On the other hand, non-confessional religious education is perceived by some as an opposing side to the confessional/non-confessional religious education debate. In 2000, the OSCE in collaboration with the Goethe Institute and the NGO Sarajevo Open Centre, piloted a course titled *Culture of Religions* to teach students about BiH's four main religions through an inclusive, non-denominational/non-confessional approach aimed at promoting tolerance and understanding. However, this project has had limited success because of the persistent polarization of the religious education debate.

Culture of Religions was designed for students attending the last year of primary school or the first year of secondary school. The initial phase of the pilot Culture of Religions classes was supposed to take place in 21 schools - one in each canton, ten in Republika Srpska, and one in Brčko. Although the course was originally designed for the last year of primary school or the first year of secondary school, the lack of state-level standards made it possible for Ministers of Education to introduce the course at varying levels. Thus, in Republika Srpska, Culture of Religions was introduced in the 9th grade of primary schools, while schools in the Federation and Brčko District BiH offered the course in the first grade of secondary schools. In Republika Srpska, the Minister of Education also commissioned new schools each year to pilot the course. In 2005, eight more schools were selected to pilot Culture of Religions. However, many of the schools that were selected to implement the course have failed to do so.

**Primary schools in Republika Srpska that have Culture of Religions as a subject in their curricula**

Name of primary school	Town in Republika Srpska
<b>PS Jovan Jovanović Zmaj</b>	Trebinje
<b>PS Sveti Sava</b>	Bileća
<b>PS Njegoš</b>	Berkovići
<b>PS Đura Jakšić</b>	Šargovac, Banja Luka
<b>PS Petar Kočić</b>	Han-Kola, Banja Luka
<b>PS Petar Kočić</b>	Mrkonjić Grad
<b>PS Petar Kočić</b>	Prijedor
<b>PS Vuk Karadžić</b>	Omarska, Prijedor
<b>PS Radoje Domanović</b>	Doboj
<b>PS Vuk Karadžić</b>	Ročević, Zvornik
<b>PS Jovan Dučić</b>	Bijeljina
<b>PS Sutjeska</b>	Modriča
<b>PS Branko Ćopić</b>	Donji Agići, Novi Grad

In the Federation, the implementation of the course varies. Because of interference by the Catholic Church, the predominantly Croat cantons have refused to participate in the pilot program. Conversely, a number of cantons have embraced *Culture of Religions* and made it available in every school depending, of course, on whether the course is taught in primary or secondary schools.

The following issues pose a difficulty for the future of Culture of Religions course:

- Curricula for Culture of Religions differ from one school to the next.
- No textbooks or standardized course materials exist.
- Seminars for current and future Culture of Religions teachers are limited in number.



Canton	Number of Schools introduced	Current Status
<b>Una-Sana</b>	0	Not Taught
<b>Posavina</b>	0	Ministry of Education has taken no action.
<b>Tuzla</b>	All	Available as alternative to religion classes in all grades of primary school and first year of secondary school.
<b>Zenica-Doboj</b>	1	Only taught in Srednja Tehnička Škola Zenica; Pedagogical Institute Zenica plans to introduce the course in all grammar schools in students' 4th year.
<b>Bosnian Podrinje Goražde</b>	0	Previously taught in Secondary School Enver Pozderović Goražde. With revised grammar school curriculum, the course will be taught in the 4th year of all grammar schools. Will begin in two years time.
<b>Central Bosnia</b>	0	Ministry of Education has refused to implement the course.
<b>Herzegovina-Neretva</b>	0	Ministry of education has taken no action.
<b>West Herzegovina</b>	0	Not approved by Ministry of Education.
<b>Sarajevo</b>	All	Mandatory in 4th year of all secondary schools, third year of teacher's school and 8th grade of all primary schools.

- Government provides little to no oversight and guidance to teaching of the course.
- Schools to introduce Culture of Religions face an already demanding curriculum.
- Religious communities, most specifically the Catholic Church, oppose the course.

### Cantons in Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina where schools include Culture of Religions as a subject in their curricula

The *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* by OSCE/ODIHR could provide as a guide fore the non-confessional religious education curricula.

It states the following reasons for teaching about religions and beliefs

„ ... - Religions and beliefs are important forces in the lives of individuals and communities and therefore have great significance for society as a whole. Understanding these convictions is necessary if people are to understand one another in our diverse societies, and also if they are to appreciate the significance of the rights that protect them.

Learning about religions and beliefs contributes to forming and developing self-understanding, including a deeper appreciation of one's own religion or belief. Studying about religions and beliefs opens students' minds to questions of meaning and purpose and exposes students to critical ethical issues addressed by humankind throughout history.

Much history, literature and culture is unintelligible without knowledge of religions and beliefs. Therefore study about religions and beliefs is an essential part of one's own stock of education, broadens one's horizon and deepens one's insight into the complexities of both past and present. Knowledge of religions and beliefs can help promote respectful behaviour and enhance social cohesion. In this sense, all members of society, irrespective of their own convictions, benefit from knowledge about the religions and belief systems of others. „<sup>2</sup>

The *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* was signed by many 56 OSCE participating states, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, which means that religious education is a normative for the Bosnian society. The Toledo Guiding Principles have been prepared in order to contribute to an improved understanding of the world's increasing religious diversity and the growing presence of religion in the public sphere. The rationale is based on two core principles: first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes

<sup>2</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*, Warsaw, 2007, p. 19.



respect for everyone's right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes. While the Toledo Guiding principles offer the proper approach to the issue of non-confessional religious education, it has not arisen as such in the B&H framework of religious education.

### **A comparative analysis of the countries of the region**

The Balkan region had been in turmoil for much of the 90s in the last century. The main difference between these countries and Bosnia-Herzegovina is that they have a monotheistic/ethnic majority. Other religions/ethnicities in these countries are minorities. Therefore, the issues in Croatia, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are rather different than they are in B&H. Bosnia-Herzegovina is quite unique in this regard. As mentioned before, Bosnia-Herzegovina has three constitutive ethnic groups/religious communities, where all are regarded as equal. The issue here is to allow all to have the same freedom of religious belief or non-belief. However, for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to have an overview of what the situation is in the whole region in order to choose the best possible solution in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the Republic of Croatia, Catholic religious classes are offered as part of the country's curriculum. Students choosing not to take classes on Catholicism may request that their religious instruction be offered through their faith community. Although many nongovernmental organizations have worked with students and teachers towards promoting "education towards peace", the Croatian government has discouraged teachers from attending any similar training unless it sanctioned them. Accordingly, the government has organized little training in this regard, and not much progress has been made.

In 2001, the Republic of Serbia introduced optional religious classes into their curriculum for the first years of both primary and secondary schools. Seven faiths were granted permission to offer religious classes in schools. For those students opting not to take religious classes, a course titled "Civic Education" was created. This drew criticism from religious authorities who argued that the name of the alternative course implied that civic values were not learned in religious classes.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adopted a different approach. In 2000, a culture of religions class was planned but its implementation was found questionably illegal. As a result, all religious education in public schools was ultimately abolished by a Constitutional Court decision. Since then, the Macedonian government has had additional discussions about the course with the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but to date, no compromise has been reached. Many Macedonians, as chronicled by the Kotor Network, have been advocating for a course similar in content to that of Culture of Religions, in order to better reflect the multi-religious character of Macedonia. Three very different approaches in three countries and all are under scrutiny and still a matter of debate. From this overview it is evident that these countries are all experimenting with the issue of religious education and are on unfamiliar ground. Croatia has taken the solely monotheistic approach to religious education, and has disregarded non-confessional religious education entirely. Serbia has attempted at involving all religions in confessional religious education and combining it with culture of religions as an optional course. This has caused more scrutiny from the religious communities. Macedonia, on the other hand, has completely abolished religious education and is "back to square one", trying to find a way to include religion in the education curricula of public schools. The models of these countries all prove that religious education is a very delicate and complicated issue that must be tackled with great care and much monitoring and evaluation in order to find the exact match that would prove to be successful.





## The role of the government?

The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its entities and cantons, has an indirect role in the issue of religious education. Confessional religious education has been given to the religious communities to be at their disposal, to deal with as they please. On the other hand, the culture of religions project has had many difficulties, which is mostly the blame of the government itself for not implementing it in the devised manner. Another problem with the Culture of Religions course is that it has been placed as an opposing and „disqualifying“ course against confessional religious education, which is a misconception from the start. The idea is for the Culture of Religions course to be a supplement to confessional religious teachings, according to the Goethe Institute. The Ministries of Education need to take a more active role in the issue of religious education in order for all parties involved to be satisfied.

## POLICY OPTIONS

The problem with the status quo is that with the present state of religious education, whether it is confessional or non-confessional, there is no unified system in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This could possibly have severe ramifications, because it is a very sensitive subject, not appealing to politicians and professionals alike. Religious education in Bosnia-Herzegovina must provide pupils with the knowledge of their background and the background of their peers in order to allow a development of a multicultural setting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The present state does not allow that. The Culture of Religions course is not sustainable, as it creates an additional burden to the already burdened curriculum. The confessional religious education classes do not offer insight into the religions of the region and therefore not a comprehensive education that all students should receive. Another model must be found to allow the inclusiveness of both confessional and non-confessional religious education.

The options to be taken into consideration in this study will offer insight into the complexity of the problem and the very sensitive nature of the possible solution. It is clear that as religious education is not an exact science, but rather varies both in the environmental setting and time frame of its implementation. Each option was carefully inspected, making findings according to set criteria. The criteria of the policy options are:

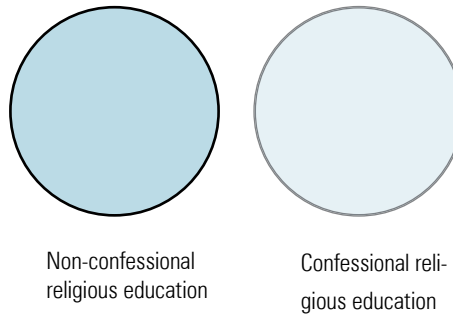
- Social acceptability
- State and religious institutions involvement and cooperation
- Adaptability of curricula
- Cost/Feasibility
- Level of acceptance by students
- Level of acceptance by school (principal, teachers, administration)
- Implementability

### Option 1

The first option would be to remain status quo, that is to choose not to change the current policy but to implement it further and try to improve on it through monitoring and evaluation. The OSCE supported pilot project of the Culture of Religions course was sufficiently presented in the previous section. The problem with this approach is, once again that religions differ from one school to the next, no textbooks or standardized course materials exist, seminars for current and future Culture of Religions teachers are limited in number, the government provides

little to no oversight and guidance to teaching of the course, schools to introduce Culture of Religions face already demanding curriculum. These issues make it difficult for the subject of Culture of Religions to be taken seriously, whether by students or the school administration. It has proven to be quite costly, with the teacher trainings, implementation strategies, the Ministries of Education in each Canton, each entity going through the motions of implementing this project. In addition to this, it will take a long time to implement this course in every single school in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for it to be properly monitored and evaluated. In fact, with the current state the government bodies are in, it is unlikely that any type of monitoring can be conducted, not to mention the evaluation of this project. It would prove to be a magnanimous task to say the least. Furthermore, in the case of Culture of Religions, there is evidence that the religious institutions are opposed to this type of religious education; on the other hand, there is limited involvement of the state in the implementation of this course.

Option 1: Status quo; non-confessional religious education and confessional religious education remain polarized

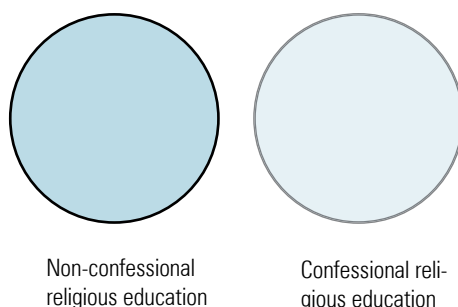


**Option 2**

The second option would be a radical course of action, that is to abolish religious education in public schools completely, much like in the case of the Former Republic of Macedonia, as mentioned previously. In this case all responsibility for the education of children in religion and belief would be left in the absolute control of the religious institutions, without any type of involvement on the part of the state institutions. In this case the state would have no insight into the curricula, nor would it have any say in any matter of religious education. This option would not allow the presence of non-confessional education, and therefore the idea of promoting religious tolerance, mutual understanding and coexistence would most probably be lost. This is not to say that the religious institutions themselves would not take part in the development of a multicultural society, but they would have limited resources because the focus of their teaching would be on the confessional teachings of religion. This would furthermore allow for the deepening of religious exclusion of majority groups within Bosnia-Herzegovina and would not create an environment of tolerance and understanding. In addition to this, the Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BH clearly states in Article 9 of the aforementioned Law whereby *religious education is an elective and regular subject in elementary and high school education*, which means that this course of action would be unconstitutional and therefore illegal.



Option 2: Religious education as such is taken out of public schools.



### Option 3

The final option would be to attempt to create a symbiosis of confessional and non-confessional religious education, whereby, confessional religious education would be refreshed with non-confessional lectures and workshops. This type of education would not include additional classes in primary and secondary schools but would rather take “Culture of Religions” into the setting of confessional religious education classes. The teachers who would teach these classes would already be trained in their own right: they would be imams or priests who teach their confessional religious classes; they would be teachers who would transfer their knowledge of their own religion to members of other religious groups. These would be so-called “travelling priests” designated to a number of schools that they would be responsible for. In this case, the religious institutions would send their own “employees” into other religious classes, with clear instructions of what to say and how to teach. This would of course, not be deductive teaching about the belief of the pupils, but rather informative of their own religious customs and convictions, in order to present this religion in the best possible light.

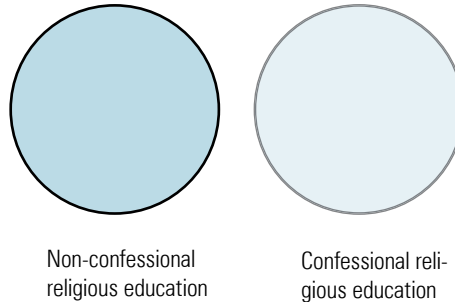
A very important aspect of this approach is that the religious institutions would not be threatened by the introduction of this type of teaching about religions through their own religious instructors, which is not the case with the Culture of Religions course, whereby the religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church find it very objectionable. This option would allow them to have a say in non-confessional religious education, in the curricula, the manner their respective religions are presented and their staff who would be engaged in this process.

The aim is to allow the pupils first hand knowledge about the religion of their peers. The state would give instructions to the religious institutions on the teaching methodology and in turn would be able to monitor what takes place in the religious education classes, which has not been the case in the past. Implementation would not require extra school effort, but the responsibility would be on the state and the religious institutions.

However, this approach also has a particular disadvantage, which cannot be neglected. These types of classes would not include those children who do not attend confessional religious education, and thereby would create a gap. This would mean that they would be left on their own to pursue religious education of their own will, which is not an adequate solution.

This may also be overcome. If we take into consideration the benefits of the Culture of Religions course, it could serve as a supplement to those who do not have any education about religions and choose not to take part in confessional religious classes.

Option 3: Create an atmosphere whereby confessional religious education and non-confessional religious education are merged



### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The previous sections offered a background of the issue of religious education. Religious education is a complex issue, providing many obstacles in each approach to it, especially within the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a specific case, where the issue is not as much the problem of minorities. The problem lies in the three constitutional peoples (the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) and their respective religions (Islam, Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism). In order to attempt to bring these three peoples together and for them to live in an environment of tolerance and understanding, it is necessary to prepare the future generations for a multicultural society in the true sense of the word. Only then can the rights of minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina be approached in a non-discriminatory manner.

Although there may be many other plausible solutions to this problem, from the options offered in the previous section the most applicable would be the approach of the symbiosis or merging of confessional and non-confessional education. This would provide comprehensive religious education for all pupils who attend and would allow a comparative aspect to religion and beliefs. This option would offer the following:

- The tutors would be instructed and tutored according to the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools.
- Classes would not include textbooks for children, but would rather include presentation slides and handouts.
- Religious institutions would provide their recommendations on the methodology of this type of religious education.
- State institutions would have an opportunity to monitor and supervise these classes in order to maintain a level of quality and tolerance.
- Evaluation would be made by non-partisan agency which would offer insight into other limitations. These limitations would be overcome with the joint effort of the state and religious institutions.



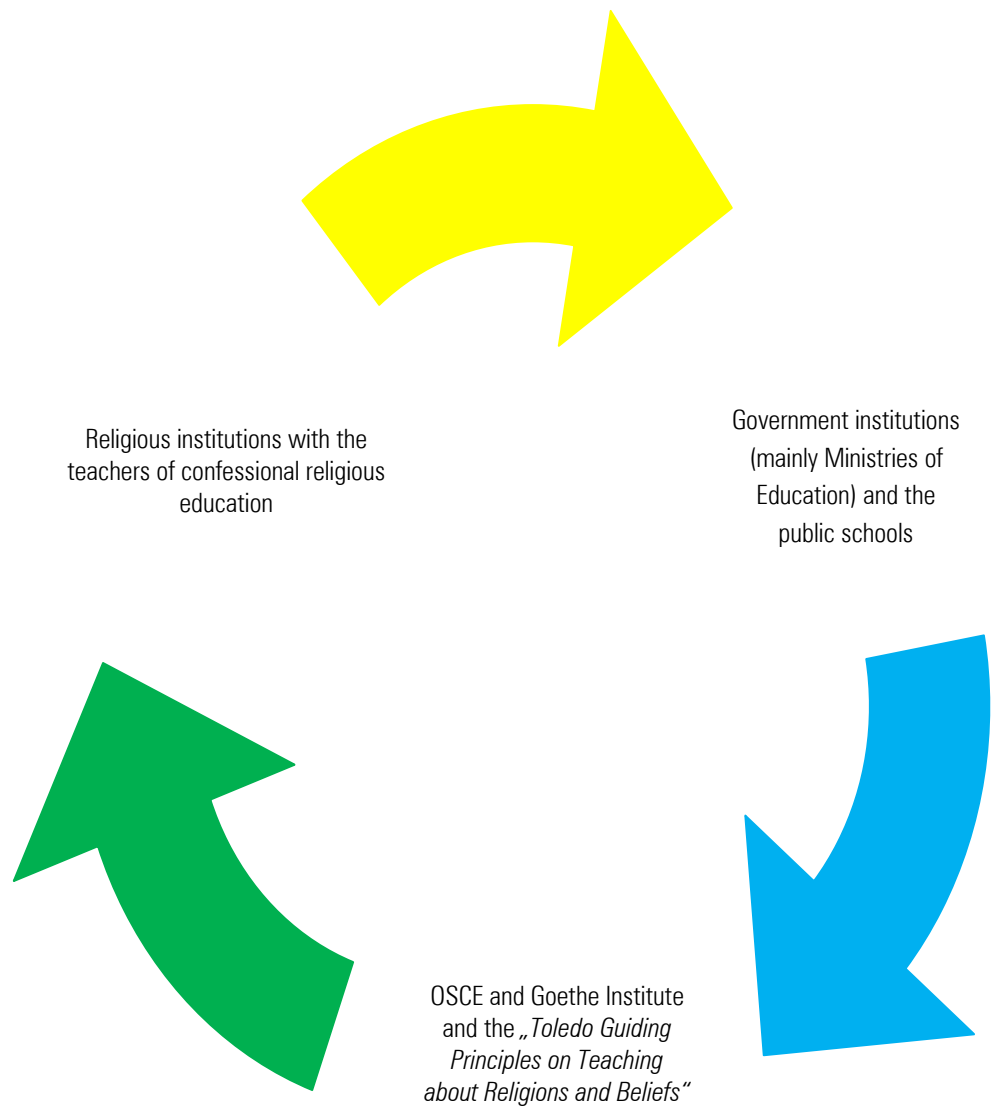
This policy option would be implemented through 10 pilot projects in high schools across Bosnia-Herzegovina, divided between the two entities. The reason high schools are chosen specifically is because at the age of 14-18 years of age pupils are capable of critical thinking and resonating issues presented to them. In each entity three pilots would be implemented in urban areas and two in rural areas. The reason for this is that the rural areas have a much larger percentage of a single ethnic/religious group than is the case in urban areas, and therefore need to be represented for a much clearer picture during the evaluation phase. Three priests from each religion respectively (Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity) would be selected to travel from one place to another and offer lectures and workshops teaching about their religions. Each class would subsequently have a structured discussion where students would be allowed to ask questions and offer a comparative view with the religion being discussed and their own religion.

The institutions that would directly take part in this policy option would be the state institutions and the religious communities respectively. The state institutions involved would be the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina (as a part of the legislative framework), the entity ministries of education (as the executive branch that would take control of the implementation of the pilot) as well as the cantonal and municipal educational organizations. The municipal level bodies would conduct the monitoring of the efficiency of the pilot and report to the entity ministries.

On the other hand, the religious communities would offer their curricula concerning what they deem necessary to present and educate the other two religious groups about their religious beliefs and would also select priests from their ranks who would be teaching these classes. This is necessary first of all logistically, because their priests are the best experts in teaching about their respective religions. On the other hand, this is an opportunity to build trust between the religious institutions and the government, and a chance for them to build a long-term relationship through this pilot. The OSCE and the Goethe Institute could provide the training to the teachers for the education about religion, through the Toledo Guiding Principles. This would also serve as another chance to mend broken ties, as the OSCE and the Goethe Institute and the religious institutions have had tension in their relationship because of the very issue of religious education. A building of trust between the religious institutions and the international community will also strengthen ties and offer other opportunities to collaborate on different issues.

This pilot would be conducted for a period of one year before the progress of this effort is evaluated. It would be most efficient to have a third party, non-partisan agency involved in the evaluation, in order to measure the exact outcome and impact of the introduction of a merge of confessional religious education and non-confessional religious education.

Finally, after the evaluation, and based on the measured impact of the results, it would be up to the religious communities and the government to further implement and broaden the scale of this pilot. This effort would involve all possible stakeholders in this process, and in addition to that create new networks for other issues. The most important impact that this pilot could have is creating more open minds among the pupils of the selected high schools, for them to be able to witness the various similarities and differences between the religions, and for them to see that they are no different from their peers of different backgrounds. It would create a platform of understanding and tolerance, which was the original aim of these pilots in the first place.



## CONCLUSION

Finally, there is a very inspirational example from everyday life and evidence that the chosen option is the most applicable for this region. News that came from Livno in the period while this study came to its final stages additionally support the thesis from the recommendation on the options for religious education. In two fifth grade classes in Elementary school „Fra Lovro Karaula“ a common class of religion was conducted presenting all three monotheist religions of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The teachers were the Livno pastor fra Marko Gelo, pastor Željko Đurica and imam Samir Đonlagić. The leader of this project was psychologist Jasminka Borković. The questions presented by the children in this class were at the same time naive and of the most profound theological meaning, such as: „Is God limited by time and space, why did God sacrifice his son and could evil have been conquered in another manner, can we pray to God only in church or mosque.“ The atmosphere in the classroom was full of respect and good willed presentations and questions. Although this example is not exactly the same as the proposal of this study, it simply confirms that there is an option and opportunity for this type of initiative to be realized. In this case the religious communities were involved with the placement of their teachers in the elementary school classrooms, as well as government institutions, more precisely the Ministry of Education



which allowed such an initiative. Therefore, collaboration is completely possible and can only contribute to the general improvement of religious education in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In addition to this is the stamp by the media, who are the most open opponents of religious education. According to the political magazine *Dani* (20. 03. 2009.): „... in circumstances in which religions and their representatives more often deepen the societal division and discord, the priests of Livno, the school board and the project manager represent an excellent exception and deserve every commendation.“

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