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The following report compiles and develops the policy recommendations based on the research of RETOPEA's WP-3 "Representations of religious coexistence: past and present". The recommendations are based on the research and are gathered in their preliminary version in deliverables D 3.3., D 3.4., D 3.5. and D 3.6. Here the policy recommendations are presented according to the subtasks of WP-3 and developed into the coherent narrative in order to prepare the work of WP-6 "Policy impact: education and religious dialogue". This document was to be discussed at the mid-term meeting in Granada (31 March-2 April 2020) but was discussed in the skype conference on 3 April instead.

T 3.1: Representations of Religious Coexistence in Educational Contexts

There are different approaches observed in the **textbooks for history and religious education.** The interreligious interactions often play a central role in religious education textbooks which mostly deal with the contemporary times, but they only rarely refer to religion and religious interactions in a historical perspective in a greater detail (especially the ones that took place before the twentieth century). In history textbooks, however, quite the opposite is the case: religion is discussed as a separate topic mostly in the earlier historical periods but largely disappears as a subject beyond the eighteenth century. Both types of textbooks have a somewhat Eurocentric or even one state centered approach. History textbooks often tend to discuss interreligious relations and religious coexistence in connection with conflicts, especially in the contemporary era. Very little attention is given to what can be viewed as 'secular spaces' and the actual role of religion(s) in contemporary society. It is therefore important to approach religion in both disciplines in a balanced and nuanced way, neither leaving out conflicts, relations between different religions and denominations nor the effects of secularisation. Religious education needs to engage with the social and political factors in religious matters also in the contemporary world. Non-religiosity and non-institutionalised religion are significant contemporary trends that require greater coverage in the textbooks than they currently receive.

Interreligious contacts could be represented in a different way – bringing out also examples of peaceful coexistence – especially in history textbooks which too often concentrate only on the aspects of interreligious relations in political conflicts. One may think about creating an awareness both at the level of curricula makers and with the schoolbook publishing houses and editors. It seems that especially the textbooks discussing modern and contemporary history might need to discuss religious questions more. One might deduce that the absence of general religious topics in history textbooks is caused by implicitly secularist views of curricula and/or authors of these textbooks. There is no reflection on secularization and the contentious character of the concept, which is problematic, as contemporary historiography has

seriously questioned if not rejected outright the secularization narrative as overly simplistic and not adequate to describe, let alone assess, the changes in the role of religion in society.

Furthermore, the authors could also include the topic of atheism and non-belief, which is touched upon very rarely in history textbooks (one good exception is in a British textbook that discusses the first English openly atheist politician Charles Bradlaugh). It seems also that although somewhat Eurocentric or even one state centered approach to interreligious relations are in some cases certainly justified, it might be better in general if religious education textbooks would offer somewhat wider perspective. Thus, both non-Western religious and belief systems, as well as non-institutionalised belief systems (such as New Age) might need more attention; especially in the textbooks that concentrate mainly on one religion or confession.

Additionally, the depictions of religious contacts seem often to be too one-dimensional: either stressing negative or the positive aspects of the encounters. A more nuanced approach implies paying more attention to factual realities, especially when discussing contemporary events: either to show the possibilities for peaceful coexistence of different religions (especially in history textbooks), or perhaps discuss more contemporary religious issues, and show the possibilities to solve them peacefully (especially in religious education textbooks).

Museums are creating excellent opportunities for education, having often quite different approaches, as research shows. Speaking of museums about Jewish heritage and Islam in Europe, often the question appears: who 'owns' the right to represent and construct 'Jewish' or 'Muslim' history: is it the religious community or the secular authorities together with academics, historians and museum specialists? Most of the museums of Jewish life and history, despite being non-Jewish institutions, aim at establishing a good cooperation with local Jewish communities or local Jewish institutions. The question appears more complex with regard to the representation of Islam.

Museums of Jewish life and history provide a lot of good examples of teaching religious diversity and opening people up to multicultural dialogue. Not only do they educate on Jewish culture and tradition, but they also teach lessons from history, fight prejudices, confront stereotypes. Their main aim as it appears according to the research is to "open the history" – that is – to talk about the past in order to shape the present life and the future. They are places of debate and dialogue (even the process of their making has been often based on constant negotiations and debates). A visit to such museum can be a very educating and transforming experience. Teachers and educators can find here a good space for setting a discussion. Jewish museums invite for asking questions. Especially recommended are some recently established museums that are in the forefront of the contemporary museology - they put a lot of effort on reaching the audience and they care a lot about the visitor's experience (e.g. Warsaw, Berlin, Frankfurt, Ferrara, Copenhagen, Wien, London, Skopje).

If to compare the research findings from Jewish museums with the ones that come from the **museums that represent Islam** in their exhibitions, one may have the impression that we have here two different worlds – but it is true only to some extent.

Most of the museums visited for RETOPEA structure their collections in a way that is still embedded in colonial perceptions of Islam as a pre-modern religious tradition (such as the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Brussels Museum of Art and History, the Den Haag City Museum, the Louvre, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum). These museums' Islamic collections were acquired in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, when Islamic art was seen as 'subordinate' to European art but at the same a pre-modern and authentic muse for modernizing Europe. One can see a repetition of this narrative in current exhibitions, where Islamic art is represented as 'glorious' but stuck in the past, unable to modernize, unable to tell us a story of continuation of the Islamic tradition into modernity. Moreover, the way in which the 'Islamic World' is homogenized as one entity, whose only reference is the Islamic religion, ignoring cultural, ethnic, racial, and even religious differences within that world is awkwardly patronizing for the Muslim (and non-Muslim) audience. Moreover, they do not speak to the so-called European Muslim populations. The very visible homogenization of Islam and Muslims as a population that is confined to one geographical area (the Middle East) is also received as problematic by the audience and by some curators. Museums seem to ignore that the Islamic world extends far beyond the Middle East. Moreover, they hardly take in account that there are European Muslims who have historical ties to this continent . There are only few museums that seemingly address such issues (such as the Tropenmuseum and to some extent the Neues Museum and the Berlin Museum for Islamic Art). The Berlin Museum for Islamic Art is also the only museum which explains the process of acquisition of their collections, the deals that were made between Germany and the countries the objects came from, or in some cases how the objects were smuggled from their original context. This at least makes reference to a historical connection between Germany and Muslim countries before labor migration. Other museums mentioned above could revise their collections to be more nuanced and inclusive. One of the ways to do so is to organize programs and events where diverse community groups are included in their space. These museums need to amplify the voices of the under-represented and revise the paternalistic gaze of their exhibitions. A good instrument to do so is to involve community heritage groups such as Imagine IC (in Amsterdam) and the Everyday Muslim Organization which really work with community archives and resources. These community groups can be taken into consideration and given more agency in the heritage scene.

Some museums are more aware of diversity, such as the Tropenmuseum, the Amsterdam City Museum, and both museums in Berlin. They try to integrate Muslim youth in their activities and try to be more inclusive in the content and form of their exhibitions. They aim to emphasize the 'Dutch' Muslim or 'German' Muslim identities of their participants instead of othering Muslims as 'migrants' and

newcomers to the country. The 'Islam it's our history' exhibition organized by Tempora in Brussels in 2016 is also a good example to how curators are more aware of the historical links and exchanges between the West and the Muslim world. Other good examples are the 'Longing for Mecca' exhibition at the Tropenmuseum and KADOC's 'Veldlijnen. Ontmoetingen met Islam Tussen Fascinatie en Afkeer' (Field lines. Encounters with Islam Between Fascination and Aversion) exhibition. These exhibitions have a more balanced representation in terms of gender, ethnic and culture differences.

Many museums complain of not being able to include minority children. In this case, Muslim youth who often live in the suburbs of the cities which are quite far from the elite spaces where national museums are located. If museums want to attract Muslim youth in their events and programs or just for visits, some cooperation is needed with community initiatives, mosques and schools to make museums attractive. In any case, the carrying the museum to the youth instead of the other way around can be a working instrument. The Everyday Muslim organization takes their exhibitions to schools and display them in school halls and corridors. This is a good example of how the museum can develop 'travelling exhibitions' for students. Funding and volunteering programs for this purpose can be considered. During the lockdown of museums in the current pandemic situation many museums developed their online outreach, organizing virtual tours etc. This valuable experience could be developed to enable education in museums to become more independent of geographical distance and hence better to serve minority communities.

Some museums have blank spaces (such as the Berlin Museum for Islamic Art). They can be used for topical reasons/initiatives, such as inviting popular musicians, artists, storytellers, so that these spaces become spaces for interaction, sharing and mutual understanding.

Museums in general provide an excellent space for on-site learning. Teachers and curricula makers could give a higher significance for them, having a regular part of the school curriculums, either state-owned or private, not to be added only as an illustration. At the same time the current exhibitions about Islam in major museums could be revised to be more nuanced and inclusive. A similar connection would be helpful also between the museums with exhibitions about Islam and Muslim communities, particularly with their community heritage groups. One should also not neglect other religions in Europe: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and other less numerous groups. This approach can be one of the instruments in creating an inclusive society for the representatives of different religions in Europe.

The Balkans are a special case, often having dominant nationalist narratives present also in museums that exclude minorities both in terms of nationalities and religions. One might consider to contextualize the European problems (e.g. religious intolerance, conflicts and day to day political actions) on a local (Macedonian/Balkan) level. In regions such as the Balkans, museums as well as governmental and educational entities could try to focus more on religious acceptance than tolerance.

There is a general problem that museums in the Balkans are used to promote national identification, interpreted in an exclusive way. In this respect there is a problematic identification between ethnicity and religion, which reinforces the oppositions and leaves hardly any room for more complex identities.

Ottoman history appears hardly presented in the museums, although there is a lot of research that highlights the complexity and changing nature of interreligious relations which would allow for an interesting dialogue (not idealizing nor demonizing the Ottomans, but showing their changing and complex dealings with diversity). In this respect there are plenty of possibilities in museums, currently not explored, to show examples of 'ecumenism of everyday life', peaceful daily interactions.

Some key aspects for presentation, such as mixed marriages or customs as examples from the past that can show us that coexistence is not a modern idea or was not achievable before could contribute to the enrichment of the existing exhibitions. On a more practical level also use of modern technology in the exhibit presentation can be improved in the Balkans.

T3.2: Representations of Religious Coexistence in Popular Media

As research shows, more and more young Europeans get information and ideas about religion and religious co-existence from mass media (films, TV series), internet and social media. Our researchers were concerned how religious peace and tolerance is represented in TV series in the Balkans and in Western Europe. In Europe as of January 2019 86% of all people use internet and 55% (462,5 million) are active social media users (statista.com). Also according to a recent Pew study, 85% of teens use YouTube, making it the most popular platform among them.

YouTube channels as a source of religious diversity providers to teenagers can be divided into several categories:

TV/Online news and coverages in the form of short documentary: Almost all members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and all bigger news channels are investing more into short visual news/documentary format and uploading it into the online platforms. Many of these have well curated YouTube Channels like DW Documentary, Guardian Culture, BBC Documentary, ARTE etc. These could be well promoted by teachers.

Feature films and TV Series: Film trailers serve as an advertisement and stand as good examples of educational tool for religious tolerance. For example, trailers of award-winning films such as In the Fade, Tangerines, Dancing in Jaffa or What Will People Say.

Educational channels: Focusing on channels that create content to school kids. Many of them are surprisingly good. Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell counts 10,3 million subscribers, Ted ED 10,2 m, Crash Course 10,1m or AsapSCIENCE 8,85m. Considering the general lack of civility elsewhere on YouTube

the academic approach of those sites is a real breath of fresh air. Of course, information in these channels is extremely compressed on a verbal narrative level, plus it is made more appealing and informative through animation, music, effects etc. It seems that fast forward style content, with compressed information and a twist of humour works best if you want to attract masses. Videos uploaded by these channels clearly have behind them a strong production team of scientists, animators and filmmakers. Videos are well scripted and worth of attention. Significantly smaller, but also relevant for the topic of religion and religious co-existence are Smarthistory (151 k subscribers), Religion for Breakfast (98 k), and The Review of Religions (55k).

Popular youtubers/influencers: There are a countless number of youtubers. As of 2019, there are over 8.000 YouTube channels having more than 1 million subscribers and this number is rapidly growing (in 2016, there were only 2,000 channels that had over one million subscribers). The main style of popular youtuber videos that include religious content are pranks and (social) experiments. A good example is the viral hit "History of the entire world, i guess" by Bill Wurz, which has gained 78 million views and is known also in classrooms.

As one can see from these examples, **media literacy** is the competence that needs to be developed among the young people in order to help them in a demanding challenge to understand the world. Substantially increased investment into media literacy is of utmost importance to promote media intelligence and critical thinking among young people as they may be extremely vulnerable to propaganda and fake news. The most efficient interventions shall be initiated both at the universities that train schoolteachers and also as a part of the curriculum starting from elementary school until gymnasium level. Good partners would be all members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) who hold highest professional standards and knowledge of the field or regional think tanks.

Greater investment into **visual literacy** - it gives educators a chance to increase the quality of their teaching and to connect with youth in a more engaging way. It could be done by supporting different film literacy programmes, for example through Creative Europe – Media (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe_en) that covers the whole of Europe. It means investing more into audiovisual studies so that next generation could "read" visual material more critically.

A high quality learning site with online educational programmes with audiovisual input at its core that uses many different languages is needed - possibly also with help of EBU-members. There are already many surprisingly good ones with fantastic content and a huge fan base like Crash Course, Ted-Ed, Kurzgesagt etc. The EU could create new similar high-quality learning sites which could use one shared animation/video script as a base which could be then translated into different languages through local partners (again maybe through EBU members?). Of course, quality subtitles would be a cheaper option, but local language presenters would be more engaging for young people.

In case of **television series** the responsible media companies (EBU again) may think about the programmes that are based on real historical stories about the religious tolerance to compete with the domination of narrative about religious conflicts.

Also comedy series can be created to ease the tensions between different ethnic and religious groups in society – using the authors from minorities who have a recognition among their minority group.

In Citizen Khan much of the comedy results from the Khan family men acting foolishly and getting in trouble, and the women then saving the day. This can also be seen as gentle mocking and criticism of the established patriarchal order of the Muslim society. It seems obvious that a successful comedy series can be one of the best ways to propagate ideas of equality between the sexes and change the perspective on issues of gender.

T3.3: Political Discourse and Religious Coexistence

There is a need to recognise that history does not merely have an 'abstract' role, but is utilised in **political discourse** – for good and ill – and that representations of history can potentially impact on contemporary issues 'on the ground'. Academic research has an important role in offering nuanced, critical perspectives on the past. No political stance is taken in our research, concerning political discourse in European Parliament and in different European countries like Germany, Hungary, Spain and United Kingdom. Some interesting aspects grow out from the research that can be seen as some possible suggestions for those who are involved in political discussions or who are following the discussions in order to design their worldviews.

The consensus in the **European Parliament** is an asset. Because of its composition and procedure, polarisation is less present than in national discourses which leaves room for a wider consensus on issues such as toleration in particular and European values in general. This is probably a lesser known aspect of the EP, which could be promoted more.

There is an interest to distinguish between occasional uses of intolerant rhetoric or even political speech focused on such language and full-fledged governmental propaganda as in the case of **Hungary.**

One can see that religion has played different roles in narratives in recent controversies such as the migrant crisis of 2015 and the **UK** EU referendum, and sometimes it has been used for alienating the members of society – "othering". This approach does not seem to be the best tool to create inclusive society in Europe. On the other hand for example in the UK, there is a strong narrative of growing 'toleration' in history – as evident, for example, in the ways in which Protestant dissenters, Catholics and Jews have secured religious freedoms.

The politics of memory in **Spain** create an "imagined community" where Islam is represented as an integrated but not fully part of the core history of Europe and Spain, paradoxically perhaps perpetuating the exclusionary antagonist paradigm that tries to get the upper hand. The decision makers and politicians can be encouraged to make sensitive use of history and to integrate the Islamic history of Spain as a legitimate part of the Spanish identity and society. Policies need to be directed to secure the freedom of observance and practice of the Muslim communities in Europe while also tackling racism and islamophobia. The policies that tackle religious pluralism and Islam may not focus on "radicalization" as central to counter-terrorism strategies.

Decision makers and politicians need to take in consideration the voices of Muslim youth by organizing encounters with Muslim youth associations, look for solutions to the increase in islamophobia and hate speech and prevent these speeches and discourses being normalized also on the political level.

The development of historical and religious literacy in education could be supported and promoted to equip students to critically assess oversimplified representations of the past, and of religious history in particular, and raise awareness of the diversity and complexity of religious traditions. Teacher students could be trained on this already during their academic studies, also capacity-building in general for educators could be improved.

T3.4: Initiatives for Religious Coexistence in New Movements in Religion

There are three different milieus investigated here that are significant actors actively promoting peaceful coexistence:

- New spirituality (formerly called New Age) through a case study of examples in Estonia that are part of international networks: Lilleoru Community, Spiritual Lecture Hall and Gaia Academy;
- Interfaith (and inter-convictional) initiatives to promote tolerance, understanding and peaceful coexistence: Estonian Council of Churches, Orbit vzw, Axcent, Ecumenical Prayer for Peace;
- Muslim initiatives (by Islamic scholars and associations) that emerged in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing Islamophobia, which emphasize traditions of openness and tolerations in Islam: the Amman Message (2004), the Conference of Mardin (2010) and the Marrakesh Declaration (2016).

This research gave an insight into narratives and practices for promoting peaceful coexistence by these initiatives. The initiatives studied are very diverse and their capacity of influence is also very different, as well as the means by which they are promoted. In some cases, such as the Islamic initiatives, they

can be described as top-down, while the others arise from grassroots associations. In spite of that, apart from the new spirituality cases observed, it is possible to conclude that many of them try to challenge the paradigm that opposes Islam – as religion but also as a culture –and the West, excluding the first from the European history. The context determines the scope and capacity of the initiatives to be influential. It is important to avoid reductive and schematic views such as an assumed binary opposition between religions and secularity, the second often understood as the overcoming of inter-religious tensions. This opposition often leads to the distorted assumption that secular, non-religious and "new" spiritualities overcome these non-modern religious tensions that are supposed to belong to the past. Therefore, it is important to avoid the erroneous conception that religious traditions live in the past and create the conditions for a dialogue that avoids these asymmetric perceptions that situate religions as outdated, and acknowledge that all of them live in the present and respond to present conditions.

When observing and regulating the relations in European societies, one needs to include also the attitudes of people belonging to **new spirituality groups**. This is a growing phenomenon that embraces also the members of traditional churches or religious groups and seemingly nonreligious people. The influence of the particular organisations is not that big in society as the spread of the ideas and mentality of the new spirituality among population. In case of looser church organisations and discipline the influence of new spirituality may be remarkable also in connecting the spiritualities. Their attitude towards religion may be something that keeps peace in society and helps for coexistence without major conflicts.

It would be advised for public institutions and public media to analyze the use of terms in promoting interreligious or inter-convictional dialogue with the youth. It can create a better understanding of religious and non-religious groups in different European societies. This has to be done fully recognizing the identity and history of different religious groups.

Interfaith and inter-convictional organizations are being funded by either religious institutions or (local) governments. They get very little recognition from international funding bodies. The organizations can be encouraged to apply for funding (special programs, information campaigns). This certainly needs to be taken into consideration, taking into account the fact that youth organizations have great importance and perspective to influence young people of different religious and non-religious background.

Inter-faith youth work definitely may benefit from more international networking to be fully recognized in Europe. Although international organizations do exist, they currently hardly have any significance to young people of different European countries. It means that history and identity are perceived from a more or less local position.

Youth organizations such as the ones under scrutiny have very diverse backgrounds and relations/ties are of different background: some are related with one or several churches, some are related with certain members of clergy, some emphasize their independence. What seems to be common to them, is the aim to achieve an understanding between different religious groups or different convictions through common activity. A policy suggestion would be to focus on achieving mutual respect through common activity with the help of networking and role models, rather than through trying to achieve something with establishing a common identity.

Currently, youth collaboration of inter-religious organizations already includes migration and environmental issues, which need to be analyzed in the context of the history of different religious traditions. This is certainly something, where schools as well as state and European institution can give their support (creating material, financial support, know-how).

Islamic initiatives for promoting peaceful coexistence stress that official statements and media outlets can be more accurate in reporting news as well as avoid prejudice and hatred. Any event, statement or discourse are better be described in its proper historical context. Focus on ethic and common values between diverse religions and cultures need to be kept. The suggestions of those islamic initiatives could be more often used in public to reflect the attitude of islamic "official" religion.

Beyond European borders, State sponsored initiatives to promote ideas of tolerance and peaceful coexistence have gathered together Muslim scholars with the aim of revising the sources of Islamic authority and fostering the idea of common values among religious traditions and cultures. These approaches challenge the paradigm of an opposition between the East and the West. The analysis of the initiatives selected by this project shows common ground between the three of them. All of them arose as an urgent response to the Islamophobia that succeeded 9/11 and share a common goal of combating anti-Islamic propaganda and violent acts committed under its banner.

In the light of the recommendations expressed by the official documents issued by the three initiatives, it is recommended that they are acknowledged as good practice and sources of authority not only in Africa and Asia but also among European Muslim minorities. All of them focus on ethical and shared values of religions and cultures in all their diversity and stress the idea that the media in particular, but also the official statements of national and international organizations should be accurate and avoid bias and hatred.

Based on the arguments provided by the three initiatives, it is desirable to promote diversity by acknowledging the Islamic legacy of Europe and the fact that Islam and Muslims are an important part of the European historical past. It would also be important to identify and raise awareness of the power relations involved in exclusionary narratives as well as the intersection of religion with other social

categories such as class, nationality, ethnicity and gender. To this end, it is equally necessary to reflect on to what extent public policies are embedded into the majority culture with little or no biased representation of the Muslim minority.

With regard to representation in public life and in order to avoid monolithic views and prevent bigotry, it would be advisable to promote the participation and self-representation of Muslims in the public sphere in their complex and dynamic diversity.

Finally, a quote from the Topkapi Declaration (which is part of the Amman Message) summarizes well the concern that motivated these three initiatives and the spirit of their recommendations: “European Muslim youth should be seen as a positive force, which can benefit the labour force and social fabric of Europe. We strongly urge European governments to promote inclusiveness and dialogue. This should be done through measures such as education, to encourage greater mutual knowledge and understanding, as well as social programs to tackle socio-economic disadvantage. We applaud those European governments who have taken active measures to stem racism and who have legislated against overt and institutionalized forms of discrimination against minorities. We also acknowledge that the media has a role in ensuring accurate and responsible coverage”.