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The following report gives the overview of the research focus and material, preliminary research findings and policy recommendations (where applicable) according to the subtasks. The report is designed in line with D 2.3, which presents the outcomes of WP 2. The actual research results will be published in academic (peer reviewed) formats. This document will be discussed at the mid-term meeting in Granada (31 March-2 April 2020) and constitutes the basis for D 3.7 "Final report policy recommendations WP3".

T 3.1.1: Comparative analysis of the representations of religious pluralism in recent European textbooks

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1. Research Focus and Material

The research focus of the analysis is on the representation of religious diversity and coexistence in recent European school textbooks. The relevance of textbook study derives firstly from the fact that every pupil has contact with them, which makes them potentially very influential towards young people. Secondly, textbooks are often used in an uncritical manner, although they are inevitably biased culturally, politically and societally. For the current analysis, textbooks from the fields of history and religious education (RE) were consulted. Somewhat more emphasis was put on history textbooks, as they have more usage in schools (i.e. on average more hours per week in teaching schedules). In some European countries, there is no compulsory RE at all.

The research was conducted during two years (2018–2019). The research has benefitted largely from research conducted at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, which is the leading centre for studying educational media in Europe and which has a library that contains the most extensive collection of European school textbooks.

Altogether, about 110 textbooks from 9 countries (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, and United Kingdom) were consulted. Additionally, three textbooks which are used in two countries simultaneously (German-French; German-Polish; German-Luxembourg) were studied. Textbooks for students aged 13 to 18 years were under observation, as they are the main target group for the RETOPEA project.

The main topics observed were interreligious relations and the question of religious toleration; especially if they appeared to be problematic. Temporally, the study covered the questions from Antiquity (Greece and Rome) up to contemporary times. To follow the guidelines of the RETOPEA Project, and to form a basis for comparison, attention was turned to the topics that firstly were central to the aims of the Project (presentation of interreligious contacts, especially religious toleration) and secondly were present in

multiple textbooks. Such topics included the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire; Jews and Judaism in Antiquity and Medieval Europe; the rise of Islam and the Crusades (not only in the Near East, but also elsewhere); the Reformation, inter-confessional relations (incl. religious persecutions and toleration); secularization and religious indifference; contemporary interreligious relations.

2. Research Findings

Through the analysis of textbooks studied, it became clear that interreligious interactions are quite differently presented in history and RE textbooks. These interactions often play a central role in RE 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.

As recent history textbooks are mostly dealing only with European history, the religious topics are usually confined to European ones. RE textbooks cover a wider scope geographically – especially the ones that give an overview of world religions. On the other hand, many RE textbooks concentrate on specific problems of one country (such as religious interactions in contemporary Switzerland). The result both for history and RE textbooks is a somewhat Eurocentric or even one state centered approach to religious interactions. Religions themselves are usually described on an equal level. At the same time, it is clear, however, that both history and RE textbooks focus mostly on the three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. RE textbooks, nevertheless, devote some attention also to other world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Naturalistic or folk religions, and other local and non-monotheistic religious practices (including New Age spiritualities) are usually also mentioned in RE textbooks. Only rarely are they discussed in details (e.g., naturalistic and folk religions and practices in Estonian and Finnish textbooks). Generally, one cannot say that textbooks depict any of the individual religions clearly negatively. The one example concerns Satanism in an Estonian RE textbook (which content was translated from Finnish) where it was unequivocally equalized with evil.

In history textbooks, religious interactions are often presented in a political context (e.g., describing the causes of religious tolerance in Roman Empire, or depicting the causes for confessional conflicts in Early Modern Europe). However, there are also many cases when religious matters are described in cultural or purely religious context (e.g., the beginning of the Reformation, which is often claimed to be caused by doctrinal differences inside the Catholic Church). In RE textbooks, the political context of interreligious relations often functions as background, and cultural/societal factors are more emphasized. On the other hand, if the efforts for ecumenical peace are described, then the political actors and factors are also stressed (such as actions of the Popes and political clergymen like Martin Luther King).

In case of the attitude towards interreligious relations and religious coexistence, there seem to be different trends in history and RE textbooks. History textbooks often tend to discuss them in connection with conflicts, especially in the contemporary era. Very little attention is given to the process of secularization and the actual role of religion(s) in contemporary society – the silence with regard to religion illustrates secularization rather than identifying it.

However, for the Ancient and Medieval periods, good examples of interreligious relations, and also peaceful coexistence and toleration are present in the history textbooks studied. Additionally, in some Austrian and German textbooks, religious tolerance in Early Modern Europe is discussed quite lengthily. However, there were many problematic cases where the description of an event was overly simplified and superficial. One of the most widespread examples is the depiction of the rise of Christianity in Roman Empire. It was claimed correctly almost in every textbook that the Christians were persecuted – and some of them mentioned also that the non-Christian Romans and Christians managed actually to tolerate each other in most of the time –, but only few textbooks turned attention towards the fact that after the establishment of Christianity as the state religion, the non-Christians were harassed and persecuted in turn. After the eighteenth century, there are only a handful of examples where religious topics are discussed as a separate topic or in a positive sense. History textbooks dealing with the twentieth and twenty first century mention religion usually in connection with conflicts (e.g., Arab-Israeli conflict, Balkan Wars, and Religious/Islamic Terrorism). The peaceful coexistence of religions, as well as successful or attempted religious pacifications, are missing almost completely. Thus, these history textbooks tend to add many negative connotations to religion and depict it as rather violence-inciting.

In RE textbooks studied, the depiction of religions is much more nuanced and sensitive. Frequently, ecumenism and inter-faith relations have a central place. RE textbooks also often discuss problematics of secularized society and religious communities, and postulate possibilities for peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, it seems that quite often the relations between the three Abrahamic religions get almost all of the attention and it leaves an impression that contacts with and between other religions and worldviews are not always represented sufficiently. Naturally, this occurs especially in the textbooks which are meant to teach about a certain confession (such as many German Catholic or Protestant textbooks). Additionally, one can notice that contrary to the history textbooks, religious conflicts of the contemporary world seem to be rather avoided or somewhat downplayed in many RE textbooks, thus creating perhaps an overly idealized depiction of interfaith relations.

When describing past events, history textbooks rarely make direct connections with present time, although sometimes an opposition between an intolerant past and more tolerant present is created (e.g., when discussing the treatment of the Jews). RE textbooks tend to be almost exclusively oriented towards the present, and thus also the examples from the past are clearly connected with the contemporary or recent problematics.

As expected, there are some clear cultural and national specificities in the textbooks. For example, German textbooks devoted more attention to the Ottoman Empire and Islam, while British ones dealt with India and Hinduism to a greater extent. Jews and Judaism, and their relations with Christians constitute a central topic in German textbooks, but not that much is written about that subject in the textbooks of other countries. Similar trends appeared also for example with the Crusades: British textbooks discussed only briefly the wars in the Near East, while German ones discussed also the crusading phenomena in other regions (Eastern Europe, Iberia), and Estonian and Finnish ones turned attention also to the Crusades in the Eastern Baltic.

3. Recommendations

Based on the described research, one can give some recommendations about both history and RE textbooks. Generally, interreligious contacts should be represented more thoughtfully, balanced and nuanced way especially in history textbooks which too often concentrate only on the aspects of interreligious relations in political conflicts. 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 are caused by an implicitly secularist viewpoint of curricula and/or authors of these textbooks. At the very least they seem unaware of recent historiographic reappraisals of the so-called 'secularization thesis' and the current state of the art in religious studies and historiography. . Furthermore, one should 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 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 RE textbooks would offer a 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 overly one-dimensional: either stressing on negative or positive aspects of the encounters. Thus, one should pay 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 RE textbooks). Additionally, many textbooks should express more clearly that there are multiple possibilities for the interpretation of interreligious encounters.

T 3.1.2 Examining religious diversity from a Jewish perspective

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1. Research Focus and Material

This research is focused on Jewish museums in Europe. It aims at examining how these museums construct their narratives that is – how they present the history and culture of the Jewish minority and what are their missions and goals for reaching their audiences. In other words it aims at analyzing the purposes of Jewish museums and – in a wider perspective – at reflecting if and how they can contribute to teaching religious diversity and tolerance.

The research was conducted within the span of approximately two years (2018-2020). The researcher is an art historian and exhibition curator. She visited several Jewish museums in Europe: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Jewish Museum Berlin, Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia in Skopje, Sephardic Memorial Center in Granada, Sephardic Museum in Toledo, Jewish Museum London, Jewish Museum Frankfurt, The National Museum of Italian Judaism and Shoah (MEIS) and The Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives in Budapest. She studied their core or temporary exhibitions, their locations and buildings and their educational programs; in some cases she interviewed the museum's curators or management. The selection of visited museums covers the variety of historical and geographical regions of Europe. This allows to touch upon various aspects of the history of European Jews and different social and political contexts in which the Jewish history is perceived today. The research material was also complemented by on-line study on other European Jewish museum's websites or exhibition catalogues. The most comprehensive list and presentation of the European Jewish museums is to be found on the website of the Association of European Jewish Museums https://www.aejm.org

2. Research Findings

- **The Jewish museums' boom in Europe**: In the last four decades a lot of Jewish museums have been created in Europe and many older ones have been renovated and redone. Most of these museums are national or municipal institutions, although often the first initiative came from a Jewish community or some social or cultural non-profit organization (Jewish or non-Jewish) interested in promoting Jewish heritage and history. They are targeted/aimed at a wide audience: citizens (of a city and of a country), tourists – in a large part – non-Jews (members of local Jewish community or Jewish tourists are only one part of the audience). This fact should be perceived as an expression of the need of European societies to come to terms with their difficult Jewish histories, to break the silence that for several postwar decades surrounded the Shoah

(Museum Judengasse in Frankfurt makes it explicit, beginning its core exhibition with the history of social protests in the late 1970s demanding preservation of the excavated ruins of the old Jewish ghetto).

- **Jewish museums and Jewish communities**: The oldest Jewish museums were established before the Second World War and they were Jewish communal institutions (Budapest, Prague, Vienna, Amsterdam). Most of those communities and most of those museums ceased to exist after the war. Contemporary Jewish museums in Europe are mostly established and run by non-Jews. Only in some rare cases a Jewish museum is run by or somehow connected to the Jewish community (for example in Rome, Venice, Budapest, Athens, Thessalonica, Trondheim, Bratislava).

  In such situation the question who 'owns' the right to represent and construct 'Jewish' history may arise: is it the religious community or the secular authorities together with academics, historians and museum specialists? In case of Jewish museums this issue in fact leads to some debates or local conflicts. However eventually some kind of agreement is worked out. Most of the Jewish communities usually support the establishment of Jewish museums in their cities or states – they perceive them as a chance to recover the lost history not only to themselves but also to the national audience (as mentioned above sometimes the very initiative of creating of a Jewish museum comes from a Jewish community or a Jewish organization). Small and often still recovering Jewish communities are well aware that they would never manage to gain financial resources and professional skills allowing creation of a contemporary museum capable of reaching a wider audience. At the same time, most of the Jewish museums, despite being non-Jewish institutions, aim at establishing a good cooperation with local Jewish communities or local Jewish institutions. They often want to be platforms connecting Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. In their core exhibitions or public events they ask questions about Jewishness in contemporary world and attempt at presenting the rebirth of Jewish life in the present, in this way including the contemporary Jewish communities in the story they tell. Eventually some kind of symbiosis and cooperation emerges between Jewish museums and Jewish communities (a good case is the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and the way it establishes relations with a range of Jewish organizations in the country). However, such symbiosis and cooperation is possible only in the situation when the Jewish museums are autonomous institutions, not dependent on politicians and state intervention.

- **Main mission**: The main mission of Jewish museums in Europe is to recover the history of Jewish life in a particular country, region or city. They aim at keeping the memory alive of the ages of a Jewish presence and the multiethnic past of a place where a museum is located (many Jewish Museums in their mission statements refer to the "ages of Jewish history" in the

particular region - POLIN – 1000 years; Berlin – 2000 years, Copenhagen – 400 years, etc.). By adding the "Jewish history" to the national stories they also aim at transforming local identities and opening people up to the idea of cultural coexistence and cultural diversity. They are sign of democratic changes, of openness and inclusiveness that have shaped European discourse in the recent decades.

- **Types and locations**: There are many types of Jewish museums – some of them are collection based (Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Amsterdam, Rome) but some do not have representative collections and base their exhibitions on reconstructions and multimedia (a result of the substantial destruction of Jewish material heritage during the WW2), such as Warsaw, Moscow, Ferrara. Nevertheless, most of the contemporary Jewish museums put special emphasis on telling the history and creating a coherent narration.

  Jewish museums communicate their missions and narrations not only through exhibitions, but also through their locations and their architecture. Some of them are located in the places formerly inhabited by the local Jewish population (old synagogues or other community buildings or their excavated ruins of fundaments). In this way they link history and the present, communicate the continuity and express hope for reparation and renewal. There are also many museums located in newly designed buildings distinguished by symbolic and expressive architecture (often by world-renowned architects) that in a powerful way communicates their missions.

- **The meta-historical approach**: Although they differ in many details, the historical exhibitions of Jewish museums share a general meta-historical approach. They emphasize the connections between the Jewish history and the history of the country, region or city. They present the local history as shared by different groups that lived on that territory. Presenting the relations between the Jews and the local population they emphasize the coexistence that embraced both cooperation and mutual influences as well as moments of crisis. The emphasis is put on cultural pluralism, historical change and different points of view: they present the variety of Judaism and different forms of being Jewish (especially in the nineteenth and twentieth century), as well as different forms of relations between Jews and non-Jews. Such ideas as "change", "influence" or "cultural frontier" are exposed as positive factors that led to historical progress and development. This narrative is most evident in the new narrative museums (e.g. Warsaw, Berlin, Frankfurt, Ferrara, London), however even the older collection based museums tend to introduce such direction too.

- **Relation to the Shoah**: Most of the Jewish Museums in Europe are not Holocaust museums and they should not be put in one row with martyrological commemorative museums located in the places of genocide. To some extent they do commemorate the Shoah but in another way –

by showing the life before the Shoah. At the same time Jewish museums should be perceived as created in the contraposition to the trauma caused by the Shoah. They do not want to show events as leading to the Shoah and they want to present the past in its all complexity and richness. They present the Shoah as part of history, as its most tragic chapter, and even if they have a commemorative space, they are part of a larger museum complex (e.g. Amsterdam, Vilnius, Skopje). They also show that despite of the Shoah Jewish life has not completely ended. They emphasize the idea of "continuity" and attempt to link the past and the present, showing new forms of Jewish life in the contemporary world. In this way they open up to the future and communicate hope for renewal and reparation (the best example can be the Jewish Museum Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind or POLIN Museum in Warsaw).

- **Opening up to broader issues:** Apart of expressive architectures and core exhibitions, Jewish museums devote a lot of efforts and resources to broader cultural activities. Especially important are their temporary exhibitions and educational programs that are often linked to contemporary problems. These activities become crucial for fulfilling museums' missions of being a center of social dialogue and debate. It has become especially important in the recent years when the new social and political conflicts that appeared after relatively calmer 1990s have set a new framework for Jewish museums. Some of them start to get beyond particularly Jewish topics and reach at more universal issues. Through their activities they try to give voice to the excluded minorities and take actions against any forms of discrimination or exclusion – be it related to race, religion, gender, nationality etc. They promote the idea of civic society and openness to dialogue and cultural pluralism.

3. Recommendations

Jewish museums 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 a lesson from history, fight prejudices, and confront stereotypes. Their main aim 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 foundation and development 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, Vienna, London, Skopje).

T 3.1.3 Understanding the active invocation of European Islamic heritage centred around peaceful coexistence

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1. Research Focus and Material

The focus of this research concerns how Islam is represented in museums and exhibitions in Europe and how Muslim community networks are also taking part in heritage activities.

This research took place in the span of approximately two years (2018-2020). The researcher is an anthropologist and she conducted a year of fieldwork with several major museums and exhibitions in different capital cities of European countries. These countries are the Netherlands, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. The researcher conducted ethnographic research with the following museums:

1) The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

2) The 'Longing for Mecca' exhibition at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam

3) The "Islam Splendor and Bliss" Temporary Exhibition in Den Haag Stedelijk Museum

4) Imagine IC Amsterdam

4) The Islam colletions in the Brussels Museum of Art and History

5) Islam It's Our History Temporary Exhibition in Brussels

6) KADOC Exhibition "Veldlijnen. Ontmoetingen met Islam Tussen Fascinatie en Afkeer" in Leuven

7) The Islam collections in the Louvre Museum

8) The Institute du Monde Arabe

9) The Albukhary Foundation gallery in the British Museum

10) The Islam collections in Victoria and Albert Museum

11) Everyday Muslim Heritage Organization in London

12) Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin

13) Neues Museum Temporary Exhibition "Cinderella, Sinbad and Sinuhe Arab-German Storytelling Traditions".

The researcher carried out interviews with the curators or educational outreach staff of these museums and exhibitions. She went to these museums in person and collected photographs and texts which have

been used as fieldwork data in her analysis. The fieldwork took place between January and September 2019.

2. Research Findings

- Most of the museums that the researcher visited (the Rijksmuseum, the Brussels Museum of Art and History, the Den Haag City Museum, the Louvre, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum) structure their collections in a way that is still embedded in colonial perceptions of Islam as a pre-modern religious tradition. These museums' Islam collections were acquired in a certain period of history, where Islamic art was seen as 'subordinate' to European art but at the same a pre-modern and authentic muse for modernizing Europe. We 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.
- Most of these museums are unable to update their collections to answer to these issues that are rooted in colonial and racial understandings of the Muslim world. 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 are still ignoring the fact that there are European/American/African Muslims who have historical ties to these continents and have contributed to their civilizations. The only museums seemingly to address this issue is 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.
- 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' exhibition. These exhibitions have a more balanced representation in terms of gender, ethnic and culture differences. They also portrayed a more detailed account of colonial connections and pre-colonial connections between Muslims and Europe. However, these attempts for diversity miss a crucial point - that there is still a selective representation of Islam and Muslims. There is the endeavor to represent a 'decaffeinated' Muslim - the Muslim who is integrated into the cultural and artistic scene, the artistic-hip-cool Muslim. This is often done without considering the experiences of othering, racism, poverty, low educational levels and exclusion these populations experience. It seems to be a too easy solution, especially when we take into consideration that Muslims in these countries have been the primary target of anti-radicalization programs.

- The second issue with museums that try to be more diverse is that they still work within an institutional hierarchy. There is a general acknowledgement that only certain types of programs are funded by the national and European funding bodies (such as those that focus on inter-cultural dialogue). In most cases, museums design their programs and exhibitions to cater to the expectations of these funding bodies. This was the case, for example, for the 'Islam it's our history' exhibition. Their first proposal was rejected by the House of European History because it lacked inter-faith dialogue. Their revised proposal was then accepted. This fashioning of exhibitions according to higher agendas does not allow for museums to be effectively diverse. We cannot really talk of diversity if the agenda is so closely monitored and the narrative is still written *for* the minorities, without allowing them to choose which story they want to tell about themselves.

3. Recommendations

- If museums are to practice diversity and inclusion more effectively they should give more autonomy to their participants who should have the power to choose the story they want to tell about themselves. The activities and working policies of Imagine IC in Amsterdam is a good example to this. Museums should engage with community archives more, instead of sticking to official canonical history which is biased racially and in terms of gender.
- Community heritage groups such as Imagine IC and the Everyday Muslim Organization which really work with community archives and resources gain very little recognition from funding bodies and still remain under the radar. We advise that these community groups are taken into

consideration and given more agency in the heritage scene. Especially, if they have to work with museums that they have as much authority and voice in the kind of exhibitions and events they want to organize.

- We suggest that current (permanent) Islam exhibitions in major museums (Louvre, Rijksmuseum, Brussels Museum of Art and History, Berlin Museum for Islamic Art) revise their collections to be more nuanced and inclusive. If this is beyond their power, then, they should find ways 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.
- We found that 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. There is an obvious class factor in play here. If museums want to attract Muslim youth in their events and programs or just for visits, they should devise effective programs together with community initiatives, mosques and schools to make museums attractive. In any case, they should think about carrying the museum to the youth instead of the other way around. 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 should be considered.
- Some museums have blank spaces (such as the Berlin Museum for Islamic Art). They often struggle with how to use these spaces. We suggest that they are used for topical initiatives, such as inviting popular musicians, artists, storytellers, so that these spaces become spaces for interaction, sharing and mutual understanding.

T 3.1.4 Exploring the possibilities of peaceful coexistence in the Balkans

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1. Research focus and materials

The main focus of this research were the museums in the major cities of the Balkan countries. Given the long, rich and complicated past (and present) of the Balkan countries (North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Kosovo – former Yugoslavia countries, as well as Greece, Albania and Bulgaria) the research was focused on exploring the representation of the minorities (ethnical and religious) in correlation with the majority both in ethnicity and religion. The fieldwork took place in the period of September 2018 until August 2019.

The museums that were chosen and visited for this research were as follows:

- Republic of North Macedonia: National museum of North Macedonia (focus on the ethnographic collection); Museum of the City of Skopje; Museum of the City of Bitola; Museum of the Albanian alphabet – Bitola; Museum of the Macedonian struggle – Skopje; Holocaust memorial center – Skopje; National Archeological museum – Skopje; National gallery – Daut Pasha hamam – Skopje; Monastery of Raicica near Debar (workshop of the monastery).
- Republic of Serbia: National museum of Serbia; Serbian war museum – Belgrade; Museum of national history – Belgrade; Museum of the City of Belgrade; Jewish museum – Belgrade; Museum of Yugoslavia; Special exhibition in honor of the NATO bombardment of Belgrade.
- Museums in Croatia: National museum of Croatia – Zagreb; Museum of the city of Zagreb; Croatian war museum – Zagreb, Museum of the City of Zadar; Archaeological museum of Zadar; Church museum of Zadar; St. Donatus – church museum;
- Museums in Slovenia: National museum of Slovenia – Ljubljana; National Ethnographic museum – Ljubljana; Museum of the City of Ljubljana; Metelkova War Gallery;
- Museums in Bulgaria: National museum of Bulgaria – Sofija; Museum of the City of Sofia; National Ethnographical museum – Sofia; Church museum – Aleksandar Nevsky – Sofia.

The research included interviews with curators or museum staff responsible for the educational outreach. The materials collected from the research included interviews, photographs of the collections, museums pamphlets and monographies.

2. Research findings

From the analysis of the museums, four major conclusion were drawn.

- The Balkan countries, especially those that were once part of the Yugoslavia, now have a mindset of "us vs. them". This is also recognizable in their exhibitions and the way they set their narrative. Even though exploring and celebrating one's country history is a valuable and acceptable position, still we can notice the trend of emphasizing the antiquity of the country. This is more accented form the 1990's up until the 2015 when some countries get their first privately funded museums. The current political trends are almost always translated in the exhibition narratives. This stance and trend is more noticeable in the countries that are still not part of the EU. As the political climate changes so do the museum's' narratives. For example, during the government of the political party of VMRO (with emphasis on the period from 2010 – 2017) in Macedonia their political and cultural agenda was focused on celebrating the ancient past. A new museum was established – the National Archaeological museum. Here, the focus was put on one particular point in history – the Kingdom of the Argeads. Very little is shown (or even presented by the curators and guides) in the context of religion and other time periods or ethnicities. As a positive example, we should mention the exhibition of the Museum of the City of Bitola and its compact narrative. Even though religion is not separately represented, it is clearly and visibly displayed in the context of the ethnical community. It is very common to associate one's ethnicity with a certain religion (e.g. if I am Macedonian *I must* be Orthodox Christian. But if he is Albanian *he must be* Muslim. If she is from Croatia she must be Catholic, etc.) Also, we should mention the commemoration room of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Bitola. The narrative is celebratory and yet neutral. It does not have "its own opinion" but lets the visitor decide what to do with the information. It simply gives honor to (and takes pride in) one of its famous citizens, no matter the ethnicity or religion.
- There are no special religion museums (with the exception of the church museums in Zadar, Croatia). Religion and religious traditions are just part of the (usually) permanent exhibition. If they are treated as a separate exhibition, that is usually as part of the ethnographical museums. To address the striving towards religious tolerance some museums organize travelling temporary exhibitions. It seems that the treatment of religion in the context of museums is as part of the national identity. After the Second World War and up until the first decade of the 2000's exhibiting, the place of religion in museums was relatively modest. The display of ancient pagan rituals and beliefs was more common. This was a policy and legacy from the communist rule on the Balkans. Religion became "popular" again after some of the Balkan countries entered the EU. Whether in positive or in negative context (depending on the idea of the exhibition) religion became more present in museums as well as got a permanent spot in museums halls. Unfortunately, as was mentioned before, religion as well is used in the "us vs. them" mindset, where religion is used as a national identity in secular countries. The religion of minorities is never celebrated as part of national religious mosaic.

- It seems that the main goal of the museums on the Balkan is for them to be "Laudatores temporis acti." Now, the common knowledge seems to be "They are exactly that", but it seems that there is a trend to be celebrating one specific time period of the history of one country over others. Many of them focus on time periods when the country is ruled by a royal dynasty. This is very obvious in the national museums, and the period addressed is usually the nineteenth century. There is a serious time gap that needs to be addressed, and it mostly is the period of the Ottoman rule that is missing as a whole. The Ottoman Empire is the occupier (along with the Muslim religion) and the culture, traditions and art from that period are presented as local interpretations of the Ottoman (and Muslim) influences.
- On the subject of toleration and peace we can see that the Balkan countries (ex-Yugoslavian or not) recognize themselves as "not really a part of Europe". This may be coming from the attitude "East vs. West" and be a remnant of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall. Some examples for this can be seen in the exhibition in honor of the NATO bombardment of Belgrade. The tone of the whole exhibition is nationalistic and very anti-NATO. However there is an opposite example that could be characterized as a political move translated into the museums narratives. Namely, the countries from the Balkans that are now part of the European Union (Slovenia, Bulgaria and Croatia) focus more on the cultural and historical connections with Western Europe. In the galleries of the National museums in Ljubljana and in Sofia we can see the mandatory representations of these connections. From the short interviews with the curators in both museums it was clear that these changes were more political ones than simply a natural change of the exhibition.

3. Recommendations

- There are 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. These could contribute to the enrichment of the existing exhibitions.
- One should contextualize the European problems (e.g. religious intolerance, conflicts and day to day political actions) on a local (Macedonian/Balkan) level, since the Balkan is not always seen as part of Europe (aside from not being in the EU as a region).
- Besides material goods, museums should also exhibit non-material goods (describing the mentality). There is also lack of modern technology included in the exhibit presentation.
- In terms of education, the starting point should be the religious leaders. Namely, they must be the ones that must be more careful with their announcements and actions.
- An example from NI Museum Bitola – the religious artefacts in the Bitola museum are placed in context with the other artefacts. There are artefacts that belong to the Christian, Muslim and

Jewish religion. So far, there has been no donations, or offer for any kind of religious artefacts, especially from the Muslim community.

- Example from the Memorial center – concerning the Museum of the Holocaust, the direction that the curators and the experts took was to present the life of the Jewish community before the Holocaust. They answered questions such as "Where is the oldest synagogue, beside the one in Israel?" "How do the Jewish look today?" "What is the dynamics in the synagogue between the men and the women?"
- The education on religion is not very well put together and presented by the Department of educational development in North Macedonia.
- Museums as well as governmental and educational entities should try to focus more on religious acceptance than tolerance, especially in regions such as the Balkans.

Conclusion

Recommendations for textbooks and museums can be concluded as follows.

- There are different approaches observed in the textbooks for history and religious education – one should try 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 secularization. Religious education should not forget about the social and political factors in religious matters and history should not forget about the inner reality of religion – also in the contemporary world. Non-religiosity and non-institutionalized religion are certainly the contemporary trends that are not having found the way to the textbooks yet in a way they deserve to.

- Jewish museums provide many good examples of teaching religious diversity and opening people up to multicultural dialogue. At the same time the current exhibitions about Islam in major museums should be revised to be more nuanced and inclusive. Even if contemporary Jewish museums in Europe are mostly established and run by non-Jews, there is established some kind of symbiosis and cooperation between Jewish museums and Jewish communities. A similar connection would be helpful also between the museums with exhibitions about Islam and Muslim communities, particularly with their community heritage 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 that often exclude minorities both in terms of nationalities and religions. It seems that the public attitude changes only during the process of joining the European Union and this process should also influence

the improvement of the exhibitions in museums – together with the changes in education and public discourse.