

# HANDBOOK ON TOLERANCE & CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EUROPE

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# HANDBOOK ON TOLERANCE & CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EUROPE

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Anna Triandafyllidou

WP2: Concepts and Theories on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity

D2.2: Handbook for Secondary Education: Ideas on Cultural diversity and Tolerance in Europe

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## DIVERSITY IN EUROPE: AN INTRODUCTION

It is commonplace to imagine Europe as made up of nation-states, each with a distinctive national history, culture and identity, and each relatively homogeneous internally. But European countries are more internally diverse than this initial image might suggest.

In the post World War II era, northern and western European countries have received immigrants from Asia, Africa and South America in relatively large numbers. A percentage varying between around 5 to 10% of the resident population of countries like France, Britain, Germany or the Netherlands is foreign born, and people with an immigration background account for about 20% of the total population in these countries.

International migration has intensified since 1989 and the collapse of Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. These geopolitical changes have redrawn the map of Europe and have led to significant population movements from the former communist countries to the old EU member states in the south, north and west. Inflows from other continents have also continued, contributing to an ever increasing diversity in European societies. Countries in southern Europe like Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, previously characterised by emigration, have in the last 20 years become important destination countries. Currently immigrants constitute 5-10% of their resident population.

In addition to migration-related diversity, countries of the EU, especially in Central-eastern and Southeastern Europe have significant native minority populations that have lived in their territories for centuries. In some countries, such as Bulgaria, native minorities (Turkish Muslims and Roma) account for more than 10% of the country's population, while in other countries historical minorities are rather small (e.g. Ukrainians or Germans in Poland). Among these native minorities it is important to note the presence of Roma populations in nearly all the EU countries. Roma populations range from a few thousand (in Sweden for instance) to several hundred thousand, as, for instance, in Hungary, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria.

Minority populations, whether native or of migrant origin, may differ from national majorities in ethnic origins, cultural traditions, language, religion or a combination of these features. In addition some minorities may be grouped together, e.g. people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Morocco and Turkey may be labelled as Muslims – and thus be categorised as a religious rather than an ethnic or cultural minority.

In political terms, minority groups challenge the self-definition of nations and nation-states as homogenous, mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and mono-religious communities. They may seek political representation and participation in the state, not only through individual participation (as citizens) but also through the setting up of special minority institutions that ensure the survival of their minority cultures and traditions. They may also challenge the dominant view of national history and ask for the re-interpretation of past historical events, victories (or defeats), and national heroes. For instance interpretations of World War II and its outcome may be different by the Italian majority and the Slovenian minority in Italy, or by native Greeks and Albanian immigrants in Greece. Also the history of colonialism may be interpreted differently by the national majority (the former colonial power) and the post-colonial immigrant groups (e.g. Algerians in France, or Surinamese in the Netherlands, or West Indians in Britain).

In practical terms minorities may pose challenges about what is regarded as acceptable, 'normal' or 'deviant' behaviour. These may derive from different worldviews, religious beliefs, and conceptions of gender relations, the family, and the community.

During the last two decades, media and political debates in several European countries have picked out specific minority groups, alleging that they are *unsuited* for European democratic and secular societies. The groups most stigmatised in this way have been Muslims (regardless of their ethnic origin) and Roma (regardless of their citizenship).

Muslims have often been accused for being illiberal – a well known controversy on this issue arose in relation to the publication of some caricatures of prophet Mohammed in the Danish press.

## **Religious Diversity and Freedom of the Media in Europe**

Twelve caricatures of Prophet Mohammed published in 2005 in a Danish newspaper led to an international crisis in early 2006. The caricatures originally appeared in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005, as an illustration of an editorial criticizing self-censorship in the Danish media. The published cartoons showed Prophet Mohammed in a variety of supposedly humorous or satirical situations. The most controversial image depicted the prophet as a terrorist, donning a turban shaped as a bomb with a burning fuse. Islamic tradition considers any depiction of the prophet as blasphemy. In order to prevent idolatry, it explicitly prohibits images of God, Prophet Mohammed and the major prophets of the Christian and Jewish traditions. Following the publication of the cartoons the editors received a number of angry letters and the artists were reportedly sent death threats. The threats were widely reported in Denmark and prompted anti-Muslim comments and protests.

On October 14 2005, two weeks after the first publication, a demonstration was held in Copenhagen to protest against the cartoons. Five days later, ambassadors from 11 Muslim countries filed complaints to Danish Prime Minister Andres Fogh Rasmussen, asking him to intervene and take a stance against the newspaper. The prime minister's initial reaction was that it was inappropriate for the government to get involved in an issue pertaining to press freedom.

In order to end the dispute, Danish diplomats offered an 'explanation' to the head of the Arab League and on January 30 2006, Rasmussen made an official statement. Although he expressed his regrets at the offence caused to millions of Muslims, he continued to defend press freedom. So did the editorship of *Jyllands-Posten*. Their account was accepted by the Islamic Society in Denmark. Ironically, however, the move which aimed at ending the dispute propelled it to an entirely different level. A number of European newspapers and media professionals in various European countries considered that this entailed an offence against freedom of expression and reacted by republishing the contested caricatures. That decision enraged millions of Muslims around the world.

The controversy fuelled public protests in several Muslim countries around the world. During the week of 2-8 February, some of the most violent events of the crisis occurred, notably the burning of the Danish Embassy in Syria on 4 February. In Lebanon and Indonesia also, public rallies became violent and Danish embassies were attacked by mobs. EU offices in the Gaza Strip were surrounded by Palestinian gunmen to demand an apology over the cartoons. In the same week there were protests also in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran as well as in Britain and other EU countries.

During the so-called Mohammed cartoons crisis, the media in some countries opted not to re-publish the cartoons as a sign of their exercising freedom of expression with responsibility and concern not to offend the religious faith of other people. Some European newspapers however chose to re-publish the cartoons as a way of defending freedom of expression over and above any other consideration or principle. The matter remains contested to this day on the limits of freedom of expression, respect for religious freedom and indeed the more political question of whether the essence of the problem is that Islamic traditions are not suitable for European secular democratic societies.

It has been argued that Muslims raise claims that cannot be satisfied by European liberal democracies because they reject the separation of religion from political institutions and activity, and because they do not recognise the autonomy of the individual. Roma, on the other hand, have been portrayed as being unwilling to integrate into a settled modern lifestyle that includes having a 'normal' job, sending the kids to school, and abiding by the laws.

Both groups have sometimes been stigmatised for their dress codes – in the case of Muslims the (in)famous 'headscarf' and its variants, in the case of Roma the womens' colourful and unusual dresses. Both groups have also been criticised as practising systematically under age, arranged marriages and for putting family and ethnic solidarity before individual autonomy. Thus, in seeking to maintain their ways of life, both groups have been seen as raising illiberal claims that European democracies cannot accommodate. However, in local contexts interesting solutions have been found. A case in point is the Denbigh High School in Luton and the issue brought up there by a young Muslim girl who studied at the school.

### ***Tensions over religious dress in a British school***

Begum was a pupil at Denbigh High School in Luton who claimed that she was required by her Muslim faith to wear a jilbab (a full length gown) to school. The school viewed this as a contravention of its uniform policy and decided that Begum was not allowed to attend until she wore the official uniform. In response Begum sought a judicial review of the school's decision on the grounds that the school had interfered with her right to manifest her religion and her right to education (both rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights). The school argued that as nearly eighty per cent of its pupils were Muslim, it had already accommodated uniform changes that incorporated trousers, *shalwar kameez* (a tunic and baggy trousers) and headscarves in school uniform colours. The school, administered by a Muslim headmistress, also argued that this had been decided in consultation with local mosques and parents.

Begum lost the case in the High Court, but later won on appeal at the Court of Appeal. The school appealed against this decision, and in 2006 the case was heard by the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords which eventually ruled in favour of the school. In doing so, Lord Bingham of Cornhill stressed at the outset of his judgment that "this case concerns a particular pupil and a particular school in a particular place at a particular time. It must be resolved on facts which are now, for purposes of the appeal, agreed. The House is not, and could not be, invited to rule on whether Islamic dress, or any feature of Islamic dress, should or should not be permitted in the schools of this country". Nevertheless, he concluded that "it would, in my opinion, be irresponsible for any court, lacking the experience, background and detailed knowledge of the head teacher, staff and governors, to overrule their judgment on a matter as sensitive as this. The power of decision has been given to them for the compelling reason that they are best placed to exercise it, and I see no reason to disturb their decision."

Although the particular case of Begum has not been resolved to universal satisfaction (notably not to hers), it has reaffirmed a pragmatic form of multicultural accommodation that considers claims when and where they arise.

This Handbook seeks to shed light on the challenges that the wide variety of traditions, beliefs and lifestyles of different minority groups (not just Muslims or Roma) in Europe raise, and to propose ways to address such challenges. The Handbook starts by defining the main terms used in discussion of these issues, thus clarifying the meaning and variations of words such as nation, national identity, and national heritage; nationality and citizenship; ethnic, cultural and religious diversity; ethnicity, race and racism. These definitions are also illustrated by a range of detailed examples. The second part of the Handbook discusses different ways of addressing cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, providing definitions for terms such as integration and assimilation; multiculturalism, multiculturalism and

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interculturalism; moderate and absolute secularism; and, last but not least, intolerance, tolerance, and respect for diversity and minority groups. By highlighting examples of good practice the Handbook seeks to diffuse knowledge about how diversity is integrated into European societies.

Certain concepts and terms occupy a central place in any debate on cultural diversity in Europe. Some of these concepts, as for instance nationhood, citizenship or secularism, have relatively clear cut definitions that are by and large accepted by most scholars and policy makers. Other concepts such as integration, multiculturalism or intercultural dialogue are contested, and there is little agreement on what they stand for and how they relate to one another. This Handbook presents and explains these terms illustrating them with examples from different European countries.



## NATIONAL IDENTITY, CITIZENSHIP, ETHNICITY

Minority groups are different from the national majority of the country in which they live, in ways that may be defined in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion or race. The meaning given to diversity depends on the idea of similarity/identity which it confronts. This section discusses the special nature and features of the nation as a social group and clarifies the related concepts of national identity, national heritage, nationalism, nationality and citizenship.

### THE NATION

Nationalism, and indeed the nation itself, appears in an ever greater diversity of forms and configurations. But even if no definition appears completely satisfactory given the complexity and multidimensionality of national identity, the following working definition (drawn from the writings of the well-known nationalism theorist Anthony D. Smith<sup>1</sup>) offers a good basis for discussion and analysis:

‘a nation is a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or “homelands”, create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardised laws’

A nation entails the notion of ‘national identity’ of a ‘feeling of belonging’ to the nation. Benedict Anderson<sup>2</sup> spoke of nations as ‘imagined communities’: fellow nationals are a community of people with whom one feels to share a common past and a common destiny but whom one is never able to meet in person – s/he can only ‘imagine’ them in their existence as a community. Indeed Anderson noted that historically the nation marks the passage from local communities where people knew each other to communities that are ‘virtual’, they only exist in our imagination.

In order to analyse national identity as an idea or in particular real-life examples, it is often necessary to study **nationalism**, the movement linked to the ‘birth’ or ‘re-awakening’ of nations. According to Smith nationalism can be defined as the

‘ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation’.

This movement often relies on the idea of a shared national heritage. The notion of **national heritage** refers to cultural forms of the nation, notably shared memories, values, myths, symbols and traditions as well as the recurrent activities of the members of the nation. National heritage however refers not only to the content of culture, but also the way in which it shapes or socialises the people who make up the population. National heritage can thus be defined as

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “When is a nation”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2002); Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991); Monteserrat Guibernau, “Anthony D Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 10, No. 1-2 (2004): 125-142.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson (2006) *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, first edition 1981.

a set of cultural forms that characterise a specific nation and which provide for the framework within which the members of the nation are socialised.

There can be **competing definitions of the heritage of a nation**. There may be competing elite groups that promote different historical narratives of the nation's past. Or there may be competing ideals of the nation advanced by such elites and other groups in society. A typical case in point is seen in the two competing versions of Turkish nationalism, notably the early 20<sup>th</sup> century secular Republican version promoted by Kemal Ataturk and the more recent Islamic nationalism of Tahip Erdogan's AK party in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Greece some groups place more emphasis on the classical Hellenic heritage and others on the more recent Oriental Christian Orthodox heritage.

Such conflicts over the dominant view of the national heritage become acute at times of national crisis (that may arise out of political, military or indeed economic issues). As Smith points out, such conflicts and crises may lead to the **re-interpretation of the national heritage** so that, for instance, in the case of Britain the imperial heritage was replaced by the Commonwealth and by a multicultural vision of a nation, while in France past identity crises have led to a re-affirmation of the Republican heritage right up to today rather than to any radical shift towards a new interpretation of the national heritage.

The national heritage, in fact, is more than a set of cultural objects and practices; it is a cultural framework within which the members of the nation are socialised and which in turn forges the nation's identity.

While the terms nation, national identity and national heritage are linked mainly to identity issues and feelings of belonging, the term **nationality** is generally understood as a legal term denoting ***the legal relationship between an individual and his or her state***, rather than simple membership of a nation sharing an identity or heritage.

At times, the term nationality may be used to denote an individual's belonging to a national minority group (in which case the individual's *nationality* is different from the individual's *citizenship*). Thus a member of the Finnish minority in Sweden is said to have Finnish *nationality* but Swedish *citizenship*. However, in this Handbook we prefer to use different terms such as minority identity, minority nation, minority national identity to denote such differences and use the term nationality in its legal sense.

The legal relationship between the individual and the state is also referred to as **citizenship**. The term **citizenship**, is defined as ***the set of legal rights and duties of individuals that are attached under domestic law to full legal membership***.

Within nation-states there are significant minority groups that lead to a variety of forms of diversity based on religion, language, ethnicity or a combination of these elements. In Sweden, different types of native minorities have got together and organised with a view to identifying the common challenges that they face and exchange views on how best to solve them.

### ***Dialogue between national and linguistic minorities in Sweden***

Sweden is home to five recognised minority groups. The official minority languages in Sweden are Finnish, Saami, Yiddish, Tornedal Finnish and Romani Chib. The fact that a linguistic and national minority receives official recognition as a historical, national minority can, among other things, imply that the various group's languages and cultures are given more space and attention at schools and universities – and – that the groups receive the right to communicate with public authorities and courts of law in their own languages.

Sweden ratified in 2000 the European Council's two framework conventions (the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Charter on Protection for National Minorities) on national and linguistic minorities. Thus, since 2002 various conferences have taken place at local, regional and national levels discussing common problems and strategies – not at least in the northern part of Sweden, a region which is characterized by historical territorial minorities such as Swedish Finns, Tornedalfinns and the Saami indigenous population. Some of these conferences has been initiated by the Swedish government, for example, the conference – “Alla har rätt” (“Everyone has rights”) while in other cases they were organized by regional authorities. For instance the county administrative board in the northern part of Sweden (Norrbotten) has organized conferences concerning the support of minority languages in schools.

These conferences offered for the first time in Swedish history the opportunity to members of the various minority groups to meet in an organized manner and discuss in a systematic way their problems with one another. The lack of substantial resources with reference to the new minority policies has been a salient topic in several of the conferences. Hence, crucial questions that have been addressed are what kind of interests and circumstances are common for the national minorities, and what kind of problems are more group specific.

The Roma population has, for example, specific educational problems in comparison with the other national minorities. In some of these conferences members from the government have participated and there have also been opportunities to voice serious political demands from the various groups. This is also a process that has continued in recent years with several conferences in different municipalities around Sweden – a process that has stimulated the different minority groups to engage in broader political activities.

QUESTIONS FOR  
DISCUSSION:

- ✓ What is your nationality?
- ✓ What does it mean for you?

## DEFINING DIVERSITY

### ETHNIC, RACIAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The term diversity - as for instance in the EU slogan 'United in Diversity' - is here understood in its widest sense. There are a number of different kinds of diversity identified in these contexts:

- **ethnic diversity:** individuals or groups of different ethnic descent from the majority group in a country,
- **racial diversity:** different physical characteristics of individuals and groups;
- **cultural diversity:** people and groups with different cultural traditions, customs and language; and
- **religious diversity:** individuals and groups of a religious faith other than the majority one.

These are not hard and fast distinctions, either in theory or practice. It is often hard to tell whether a given group is discriminated against on the basis of ethnic, cultural or racial diversity as for instance in the case of the Roma, seen as an ethnic minority but also as a racial group. The following example from Hungary is eloquent on this type of overlap.

#### *The Roma Minority in Hungary*

In Hungary, the Roma are officially considered an ethnic minority, but there are many ways in which they are still subject to racism. Like Roma in many other parts of Europe, Roma in Hungary are poor and live their lives segregated from much of mainstream society. The official response to these problems has been to try to integrate Roma. These efforts are aimed at improving their economic standing in the first instance; they are not directed at recognizing their cultural diversity (as are policies toward many immigrant populations in Europe).

But popular mistrust of the Roma is an obstacle to their integration. Many people in Hungary think these integration efforts will ultimately fail because they view the Roma as inferior and therefore incapable of integration. These views are racist: they blame the Roma problem on the Roma because of who they are, not because of what others have done to them.

Ultimately, however, it is what others have done to them (in the form of racist discrimination, for instance) that has contributed to the Roma's deprivation in Hungary and elsewhere. Sadly, the situation of the Roma in Hungary is not at all unlike the situation of Roma in other parts of Europe. Their case shows how officially designated ethnic and cultural differences can be recast in racial terms through processes of discrimination and racism.

Religious diversity is usually more clearly distinguished from the other three forms as religious identity may over-ride ethnic affiliation. Indeed people of different ethnic backgrounds may share the same religion (e.g. southeast Asians in Britain, Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands or in Germany).

In everyday speech 'ethnic' and 'cultural' diversity are often understood as synonymous, referring to different language, customs and traditions, including codes of behaviour, codes of dressing, and values, without distinguishing between the two.

## ETHNICITY

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are associated with common cultural features that a group of people share including a common language, common customs and values, in addition to a belief in their common genealogical *descent* and often (but not necessarily) ties with a specific territory.

An ethnic group, or **ethnie** is in turn different from a nation, according to Smith, as it shares common cultural traits but is *not necessarily self-conscious* of its ethnic identity. Nor does it *raise claims for political autonomy as a nation does*. Ethnicity is historically the stage that precedes the claim for national status as we can see from the following illustrative examples:

### ***Ethnies that developed into nations***

Before the Greek nation developed there was an ethnic group that could be labelled the Greek ethnie, because its members spoke Greek, followed specific customs and traditions, were Christian Orthodox, had lived in the territory of modern Greece for centuries, and had a feeling of belonging together – without however aspiring to have a state of their own or to be independent. The Greek ethnie existed under the Ottoman empire for centuries while the Greek nation was 'born' in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Greeks as an ethnic group started developing a consciousness of themselves as a nation which should be independent from the Ottoman Empire.

The same is true for the German nation. Ethnic groups that shared a (belief in) common German ethnic origin, spoke the German language and had a set of common German traditions can be identified in Europe for several centuries, under Prussia and as part of the Austro-Hungarian or also the Russian Empire. However, the German nation was born in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the gradual development of the idea that Germans should unite and form a nation-state of their own.

We refer to ethnicity today to distinguish between an individual's citizenship and her/his affiliation with a specific ethnic minority groups. Thus a British Pakistani is of Pakistani ethnicity but British citizenship or a Somali Swede has Somali ethnicity but Swedish citizenship.

## RACE

The notion of **race** includes a variety of features such as parental lineage and physical attributes (skin colour and other genetic traits). While it should be noted that both the concept of race itself and definitions of race are highly contested, what is common to the various definitions of race is its being associated with *natural* difference. It implies shared characteristics – physical and sometimes physical and cultural characteristics combined – that cannot be chosen or cast off. **This does not mean that racial difference is indeed natural, but rather that it is socially understood as such.** Which races exist and who belongs to which race is something which is socially constructed.

During the past two decades there has been increasing political and academic debate about the extent to which national citizenship and its rights and duties should accommodate the different collective identities that citizens of a nation-state may hold. This arises from existence of several cultures with their distinct identity and traditions side by side in a society. This is sometimes referred to as multiculturalism; but is better described as **multiculturalism** – a descriptive term referring to the *fact* of difference. In contrast, ‘multiculturalism’ is a normative term referring to **how and under what conditions** different communities, different cultural groups should be integrated into a society (see also further below on multicultural citizenship).

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ✓ What are the main native and immigrant groups in your country?
- ✓ In what ways are they different from the national majority?

## FEAR OF DIVERSITY

### RACISM

**Racism** is the belief that genetic factors which have to do with a person's ethnic, national or racial descent predetermine not only the somatic traits of an individual but also their psychological predispositions, mental abilities and other capacities.

Physical appearance, and skin colour specifically, have been important characteristics used in history to categorise and evaluate people. These physical differences were developed into folk taxonomies and defined as 'races' in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. 'Scientific' arguments were provided to sustain a presumed relationship between such characteristics and moral or socio-cultural features of the people classified into these categories. The argument underlying such categorisations was that the white, European race was morally and intellectually superior to all others. Different versions of racist ideologies have found their political expression in western colonialism and imperialism, slavery and Nazism.

The United Nations use definition of racial discrimination laid out in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted in 1965 but which entered into force in 1969:

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (Part 1 of Article 1 of the U.N. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm> )

In 2001, the European Union explicitly banned racism along with many other forms of social discrimination in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Racism may be conceptually related to nationalism in the sense that the process of nationalisation in Europe – the construction of a national identity and a national culture within each nation-state – involved, among others, a process of *racialisation*. The bourgeois ruling classes of the European nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century racialised the underclass as inferior and backward, while simultaneously portraying themselves as having a 'racial history and character' that was typical of the nation as a whole. In such discourses of ethnic descent and membership, the notions of 'race' and 'nation' often became indistinguishable. Put bluntly, nationalism and national identity involve an element of racism; in the effort to impose cultural homogeneity, they tend to create internal racialised 'Others'. Ethnic minorities or immigrant communities often play the part of the subordinated, racialised Other in a national state, although nationalism does not necessarily involve a racist view of other nations or ethnic groups.



There are **two principal types of racism**:

- **Biological racism** which creates a direct link between ethnic/racial descent, physical appearance and the abilities of an individual. This kind of racism has been condemned and actually forbidden in the European Union. Nonetheless, immigrant and native minorities often become the subject of racist comments and of racial discrimination.
- **Cultural racism** argues that immigrant or native minority populations cannot integrate in society because of their culture. It is their cultural traditions and their customs that condition their behaviour, abilities and capacities. This kind of racism argues that there are irreducible differences between certain cultures that prevent the integration of specific immigrant or native minority populations in society. This second type of racism has also been called 'subtle' or 'symbolic' racism.

However the consequences of either approach to race (biological or cultural) are discriminatory and serve to maintain the privilege of one group (the majority) over another (the minority). The discourse of cultural difference is similar to biological racism to the extent that cultural difference is seen as irreducible, because it is dependent upon ethnic descent, a presumed psychological predisposition, environmental factors or a specific genetic makeup.

Cultural racist discourses and attitudes differ little from biological racism as regards **their consequences**: their effects are racist, even if their arguments are not explicitly racial. 'Scientific' arguments about the existence of biological 'races' that could be identified by specific socio-cultural features have now been discredited. Racism nevertheless persists as ideology and practice in western societies, though perhaps in more subtle and covert forms than in the past. As a matter of fact, immigrants and ethnic minorities are usually categorised on the basis of their physical appearance and associated cultural or ethnic features. As van Dijk (1991: 26) argues:

'Throughout western history [such categorisations] have been used to distinguish in- and out-groups according to a variable mixture of perceived differences of language, religion, dress or customs, until today often associated with different origin or bodily appearance.'

Race thus becomes intertwined with ethnicity and culture to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish among them: cultural differences are used to justify and legitimise attitudes and practices of racial discrimination and the exclusion of minority groups. When analysing racism and discrimination in real life situations it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between racism and ethnic prejudice (is for instance prejudice against the Roma related to their construction as a 'racial' or as an 'ethnic' group? Does it have more to do with their presumed biological predispositions or with their cultural traditions?).

The Children's web site of the BBC offers a short but useful guide on how to deal with racist behaviour:

***The Children's web site of the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/>) offers a simple but eloquent definition of racism and its effects***

Racism is when someone thinks different skin colour or religious beliefs make some people better than others.

Racists bully people who are different to them. They do this by name-calling or violence.

Racism is not just a black and white thing. Many children are picked on because they look different, speak a different language or have different religious beliefs.

Some people have to wear certain styles of clothing because of their religion and very often get bullied because of this. Racism includes picking on people who are from a different country too.

If you think you or someone you know is being bullied because of their skin colour or religion:

- Do not join in the racism
- Tell a friend and a teacher what is happening
- If a friend is being racist, ask them why!

## XENOPHOBIA AND ETHNIC PREJUDICE

The terms xenophobia, racism and ethnic prejudice are often used as synonyms in everyday language. However, they actually refer to quite distinct phenomena.

**Xenophobia** involves a hostile reaction to foreigners in general by members of a nation or ethnic group, and is linked to specific preconditions that foster its development. It is generally related to economic factors and its main objective is the expulsion of the new groups. In Europe, for instance, the target of xenophobia are not foreigners from western, economically affluent countries like the USA or Australia but rather people from developing countries, who usually come to Europe in search of employment and better living conditions.

By contrast, **racism** is linked to established 'social, political and economic practices that preclude certain groups from material and symbolic resources' [Stuart Hall, 1989]. In other words, racism is not simply a negative attitude towards outsiders but rather aims at subordinating the minority group within (and outside) the nation-state.

A further distinction between structural racism and broader 'ethnic prejudice' may be made. The American sociologist Gordon Allport defined ethnic prejudice as:

'an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group. The net effect of prejudice, thus defined, is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage not merited by his own misconduct.'

In his seminal book on *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley, 1954) Allport makes it clear that prejudice is not simply a prejudgement or a misconception due to some overblown generalisation or wrong information. Rather prejudice is characterised by the fact that it is resistant to change, even when exposed to new, more accurate information that would threaten to unseat a prior erroneous belief. Moreover, Allport argues, people tend to grow emotional when a prejudiced view they hold is threatened by contradiction. So, while someone might discuss and change a simple prejudgement without emotional resistance, the same is not true of a prejudice. It is worth noting that this account of prejudice is descriptive; and the value judgement whether prejudice should be condemned and seen as morally unacceptable or condoned is a separate issue.

Even though prejudice is directed at groups (or individuals as members of these groups), and leads to the disadvantage of the victim without him or her being responsible for it, it must not be confused with racism. This is because prejudice is not necessarily linked to structural inequality. Prejudice does not necessarily imply that the person or group which is the object of prejudice is subordinated to the perpetrator, although racism and prejudice often do coincide. The example of the Horvath street school in Budapest shows how socio economic disadvantage and ethnic difference coincide to form ethnic prejudice but also offers innovative ideas on how to address ethnic prejudice in a school environment.

## ***Addressing ethnic prejudice in schools & promoting Roma children integration***

The Horvath street school school is adjacent to an 'urban ghetto' in Budapest where the majority of the Roma children live. The school also has a high proportion of children from less disadvantaged backgrounds, thus giving the school a very mixed social and ethnic composition overall. School administrators have made serious efforts to address this situation and ensure that all children complete the school successfully. The school's two main priorities are to nurture the talents of its students and providing them with equal opportunities. In many other parts of Hungary, and, indeed, the world, these two priorities are often regarded as mutually exclusive. This institution, however, insists the two belong together.

The school organizes both specialized and non-specialized classes. The selection of children for these classes is done based on learning ability that usually (but not always) correlates with social background. The specialized classes are about 30-40% Roma (with many from mixed marriages), and in the non-specialized classes they are 80%. The school makes efforts to compensate for the inequalities between these two classes. Classes with more disadvantaged children devote special attention to cultivating other types of talents beyond good learning skills (e.g., sports). Both classes employ modern pedagogical methods, including cooperative learning and small group activities. Equally, great emphasis is put on communication with parents: parents are strongly encouraged to get involved with the activities and life of the school. The school actively continues its outreach to these parents in an attempt to widen its support base.

In contrast to most other Hungarian schools, this school openly confronts issues having to do with Roma culture and otherness. This has two dimensions. First, the school has introduced a curriculum that is explicitly designed to construct positive Roma self-image by developing and nurturing their cultural identity through the organization of after-school music clubs and integrating Roma history into the overall curriculum. Second, about the school has an open and inclusive dialogue on negative, discriminatory events and cases affecting the Roma.

The 'success' of the school can be measured by the uncommon ways in which both teachers and pupils talk about ethnicity. Teachers invoke a 'social argument' which accounts for Roma disadvantage in terms of unemployment, socio-economic disadvantage, and discrimination. This is in sharp contrast to the views of teachers in most other schools which are typically prejudiced and often blame minority cultures for their shortcomings. Roma children in this school are in mixed groups with non-Roma children and they have developed a more positive self-image as Roma in comparison with Roma children in other schools.

QUESTIONS FOR  
DISCUSSION:

- ✓ Do you think there is racism towards minorities or immigrants in your country?
- ✓ What kind of racism? Biological or culturalist?
- ✓ Are you aware of any initiatives to fight racism in your city/neighbourhood?

## ACCEPTING [?] DIVERSITY

European societies are ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse. This diversity is the outcome of their specific histories and of the ways the respective nations and nation-states were formed in the last few centuries but it is also the result of post-war and more recent immigrations from other countries and continents. The European Union's slogan 'United in Diversity' refers to the need to accept not only the diversity that exists among Member States but also the diversity reflected in the minority and immigrant groups in each Member State.

There are different ways to address ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Here we will discuss the most important terms and approaches, namely integration and assimilation, multiculturalism and interculturalism, tolerance and respect.

## INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

In the *Asylum and Migration Glossary* issued by the European Migration Network,<sup>3</sup> integration is defined as a 'dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of member states'. The Glossary also adds that 'the promotion of fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all, are key integration issues at the EU level.'

In sociology and political science the term integration is considered a fuzzy term and for this reason quite problematic. A minimal working definition of **integration** is:

a social, economic and political process that regards the insertion of immigrants into their country of destination. Integration requires both the effort of migrants to adapt to the new reality and the effort of the host population to adapt to the presence of migrants and the changing character of the host society.

In everyday talk, integration is often confused with assimilation. But **assimilation** is

a social process by which the immigrants completely adapt to the traditions, culture and mores of the host country, and eventually become part of the host nation gradually abandoning their own ethnicity, culture, and traditions. Assimilation is indeed a one-way process that involves the effort of immigrants to 'assimilate' in the destination country and its dominant culture and is in this sense a distinct concept and term from integration.

An interesting example of how an institution that was formed to promote national identity and the national heritage can contribute to the integration of immigrant populations in a society that has recently become multi-ethnic and multicultural is provided by the Gaelic Athletic Association in Ireland:

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<sup>3</sup> The European Migration Network consists of National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) in each Member State and is coordinated by the European Commission, Directorate General for Home Affairs. The objective of the European Migration Network is to provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policymaking in the European Union in these areas.

## ***Integrating Diversity in Sports. The Gaelic Athletic Association***

One of the largest and most influential organisations in Ireland, the Gaelic Athletic Association coordinates a range of Irish sports, including hurling, Gaelic football and camogie at national, county, local and school levels, and also promotes Irish culture and language. Founded in 1884, the GAA played a major role in the cultural and national revival that led to independence from Britain. Closely connected with the Irish language, and Catholicism, it was at that time one of the key embodiments of national identity.

In the twenty-first century the GAA's network of 1 million members extends to all areas of Ireland, with its aim to strengthen 'the national identity in a thirty-two county Ireland through the preservation and promotion of Gaelic games and pastimes' (GAA Constitution 1.2). Increased immigration and the greater cultural and ethnic diversity right of Ireland's population present important challenges for the work of the GAA.

A response to this challenge came from the GAA itself, in conjunction with the Equality Authority, an independent official body responsible (along with the Equality Tribunal) for promoting equality. Starting in 2009, the Equality Authority held meetings with GAA officials to arrange appropriate equality awareness workshops for the GAA. The GAA set up an Inclusion and Integration Working Group. In December 2009, Equality Authority staff began a programme of equality workshops for GAA officials, first for members of the Working Group and selected headquarters staff members, followed in 2010 by workshops for full time staff of the four Provincial Councils of the Association around the country.

Other elements of the GAA's Inclusion and Integration strategy are:

- the appointment of a dedicated inclusion officer,
- the development of a welcome pack in a variety of languages for every club and school;
- inclusion training for all coaches;
- provision of local 'have a go days'; and
- the development of a respect initiative for all involved in sports.

In articulating this programme, the principal concepts invoked have been equality, integration, inclusion, respect, anti-sectarianism, and anti-racism. The GAA is now regarded as a distinctive and pioneering Irish sporting organisation in this respect.

QUESTIONS FOR  
DISCUSSION:

- ✓ Propose specific measures for integrating immigrant children in your school?
- ✓ Discuss how integration of these children would be different from assimilation? What would assimilation entail?



## MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES

While integration and assimilation are general terms to refer to the process through which migrants are included in the host society, the terms multiculturalism and intercultural approach refer to the specific models that a country can adopt to foster migrant and ethnic minority integration.

Multiculturalism and interculturalism are normative terms. They refer to **how and under what conditions** different communities, different cultural groups should be integrated into a society.

It has been emphasised that the state has to make sure that all citizens, regardless of their religious faith, ethnic descent or cultural traditions, should be able to access and enjoy their rights without being constrained to assimilate to the majority culture or religion. This debate and the quest for a citizenship more sensitive to the cultural identities of the citizens has been generally framed in terms of 'multiculturalism'.

**Multiculturalism** – like integration – is a term with many definitions and has often been seen as confusing as a result. A minimal definition of multiculturalism is

A diverse set of normative ideals and policy programmes that promote (in different ways and by different means) the incorporation and participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities into state and society, taking into account their ethnic and religious difference

The term **multicultural citizenship** is used to refer to

a set of rights and duties that takes into account the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the groups that make part of a state and appropriately integrates their needs into an existing set of rights and duties that follow their citizenship.

**Interculturalism**, or the intercultural approach,, is based on dialogue and actual engagement between individuals from different cultures. The intercultural perspective acknowledges that a multitude of cultures may co-exist within a society. Individuals are seen as the carriers of different cultures, and thus intercultural dialogue involves dialogue between individuals of different ethnic or religious groups. This is not a private dialogue, one that takes place for instance within a family, but a public one that can take place in institutional contexts such as the school or the workplace. An example of intercultural accommodation is the recent decision in Ireland that male circumcision is provided by public hospitals to newborns upon their parents' request:

## **Male Circumcision in Ireland: An example of intercultural accommodation**

In August 2003, the death of a 4-week old son of Nigerian citizens who was admitted after a home circumcision to Waterford General Hospital and died the next day, prompted discussions around the subject of male cultural circumcision in Ireland and highlighted the lack of appropriate services.

Religious male circumcision in the Irish Jewish community has been performed for many years on infants aged one week, without anaesthetic and reportedly without serious complication. The procedure is performed by a 'Mohel', a religious leader trained in the practice as circumcision performed by a non religious practitioner would not be acceptable to the community. However, following the increase of ethnic minority populations in Ireland, and especially of Muslims (who recommend circumcision as a rite of cleanliness preferably at one week and in any case before puberty), provision for male circumcision on religious and cultural grounds has become an issue.

A Waterford Regional Hospital doctor, called for the issue of male circumcision to be dealt with in a 'positive and caring manner' and appealed for 'arrangements' to be made for the needs of the immigrant community. He was supported at the Health Board meeting by another doctor who highlighted the fact that Ireland was now a multi-cultural country, and that hospitals must be able to provide circumcisions to male babies within 30 days of their birth, as people from Islamic cultures were under a certain amount of pressure to have this procedure carried out within this period.

In 2004 the Minister for Health and Children appointed an expert group to advise on the needs, ethical recommendations and practical guidance on circumcision performed for cultural reasons. The committee received submissions from a number of sources and reviewed the international experience in this area.

In January 2006 the report of the expert group (the Gill Report) was presented to the Minister for Health. It recommended that the Health Service Executive (HSE) provide a regional service capable of performing the requested number of cultural male circumcision (estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 annually), that the procedure should ideally take place within the second six months of the child's first year, be performed as a day case procedure by trained surgeons and anaesthetists with pre and post-operative assessment in adequately equipped units, and that medical staff who have ethical objections to the procedure should be allowed to opt out of the service. Further, it warned that a person performing a circumcision in the absence of these conditions and which resulted in injury to the child, could be subject to the criminal law dealing with child protection. The Committee was satisfied that the practice as carried out by Mohels should be permitted to continue but regularly reviewed.

The South Eastern Health Board, within whose area the child died, did not wait for the Gill report. Their management team recommended that the procedure be made available immediately at Waterford Regional hospital, on cultural and religious grounds.

Aside from the medical/health-related concerns, the issue was seen by those supporting the provision for circumcision in Ireland as meeting the need for *reasonable accommodation* of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the Irish health services and granting *respect* for the cultural and religious beliefs of others. It was argued that not providing such a service could result in sending a *negative message about diversity* and could be seen as a form of *discrimination* against families already suffering other forms of discrimination. The opponents to the provision of circumcisions as part of the health service described the act as a 'mutilation' and argued that 'the State, while being sympathetic to strongly held cultural and religious beliefs, should nevertheless use all means at its disposal to prevent those pernicious cultural or religious practices that manifestly result in harm to others' (Dr.Matt Hugh, Dublin surgeon).

The difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism essentially lies in the emphasis that the former puts on group identities and the incorporation of not only individual but also collective difference into society, while the latter focuses on individual difference only. The commemoration of the 200 years from the abolition of slavery in Britain is a good example of how a country seeks to incorporate ethnic minorities not only at the individual but also at the collective level, recognizing their position in the national history and their own view of the country's history.

### ***Commemorating the Abolition of Slavery in Britain. An example of multicultural accommodation of diversity***

Britain's imperial and colonial past has thrown up a number of considerable challenges, among them the concern with how the British 'national story', its explicit and tacit self-representations, may be changed to acknowledge past injustices and the place of non-white people. Examples of past injustice are abundant. The plantocracies of the Caribbean relied on forced labour, such as in the production of sugar. English port cities, Bristol among them, were the hubs of transatlantic enslavement and of trade in commodities produced by slave labour. With the immigration of Black Caribbeans after the Second World War, this fraught history has become a matter of considerable importance. The challenge is how black history may be acknowledged and woven into national and local self-representations. More than just a matter of empty symbolism or of setting the historical record straight, the shape of the 'national story' has repercussions for how Britain can aspire to be a place that is hospitable to the presence of post-immigration groups.

Various initiatives have emerged since the 1980s and 1990s to contribute to a history 'from below' that acknowledges the contributions of black people and considers not only historical injustice but their relevance for continued experiences of discrimination. Such considerations have for example come to the fore in the 2007 celebrations of the 'abolition of slavery' in Bristol. The idea that 1807 had seen the 'end of slavery' (and that this 'end' could be attributed to the actions of white abolitionists) caused offence not least as slavery, in various forms, continued on territories under British control well into the 20th century.

Both nation-wide and locally, such debates occurred in the run-up to the 2007 commemoration of the bicentenary of abolition. For Bristol, £2 million were provided for Bristol by the Heritage Lottery Fund and £150,000 by Bristol City Council to fund 24 local initiatives in the context of 'Abolition 200'. Where local commemorations up to the mid 1990s had largely ignored Bristol's fraught history, this represented a significant move towards acknowledging the city's role in the transatlantic slave trade.

Simultaneously, however, a significant number of local actors and black grassroots groups expressed considerable uneasiness with some elements or even the entirety of the official discourse and in particular with how it continued to reflect a white, majoritarian perspective. Albeit those reservations could not be dispelled and various protests occurred during the 2007 commemoration (notably by the Bristol-based group 'Operation Truth'), some effort was made locally to address the perceived shortcomings. A 'steering committee' made up of local groups was set up. Bristol's Lord Mayor together with various other local dignitaries publicised a declaration that 1807 was not the end but "beginning of the end of slavery".

The question how to narrate the 'national story' continues to be a contested issue not only between social majority and minorities but also among and within the various post-immigration groups. The concern to reconsider national narratives is bound to be contested. In the case of 'Abolition 200', it was not merely the official commemoration but the active contestation and the participation of various individuals and groups in these debates that point to elements of a 'best practice' example for how multicultural accommodation may be furthered.

Multiculturalism or interculturalism are holistic approaches that include views on what culture is or should be and how individual and collective needs arising from the different cultural background of a specific person or group should be met. As such they are closely related to the principles of tolerance and respect for cultural, religious and ethnic diversity.

QUESTIONS FOR  
DISCUSSION:

- ✓ How is citizenship defined in your country?
- ✓ Does this definition include minorities and recognize their difference?

## TOLERANCE AND RESPECT

The concept of **tolerance** is not new. In its basic form, tolerance means

to refrain from objecting to something with which one does not agree. It involves that one rejects a belief or a behaviour, that one believes her/his objection to this behaviour or idea is legitimate, and that one disposes of the means to combat or suppress it and yet one decides to tolerate this negative behaviour and even its possible consequences. (ref. or rephrase as :

to refrain from objecting to something with which one does not agree. It involves objecting to a belief or behaviour, believing that this objection is legitimate, and being in a position to combat or suppress it, and yet deciding to allow this negative behaviour and even its possible consequences)

As the American political philosopher Preston King argues, tolerance is meaningful when the 'tolerator' has the power to interfere with an other's act but does not exert this power.

There are some differences in use between the terms 'tolerance' and 'toleration'; the two terms are, however, often used interchangeably to describe contexts and practices where one allows practices or attitudes of which he or she disapproves to continue. Tolerance also involves prohibiting discrimination against those who engage in the 'tolerated' practices. In other words, tolerance may also be seen as a prohibition of discrimination.

Historically, the development of the idea of tolerance began in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in response to the Protestant Reformation and the Wars of Religion. It started as a response to conflict among Christian denominations and to the persecution of witchcraft and heresy. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, writers such as the French intellectual Michel de Montaigne questioned the morality of religious persecution and offered arguments supporting toleration. In the seventeenth century the concept of toleration was taken up by British thinkers such as John Milton and was further developed in the late seventeenth century by John Locke in his *Letters concerning Toleration* and in his *Two Treatises on Government*. Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire in France and Lessing in Germany further developed the notion of religious tolerance although these ideas did not prevent intolerance and violence in early modern Europe. Tolerance was then understood with reference to religious diversity (dominant religions' toleration of minority religious groups) while today the concept is applied to all forms of difference including race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender.

It is important however to acknowledge that tolerance has also non European roots:

## ***The non-European roots of tolerance***

Toleration is often thought of as an achievement of European Enlightenment thinking. Although contributions to this tradition, such as by Michel de Montaigne, John Locke or Friedrich Lessing, are significant, this may be too narrow a picture. In particular the idea that the Enlightenment set in motion a process that led – directly and by necessity – to the tolerance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has its problems. It tends to disregard the many reversals towards intolerance that occurred in the process – sometimes even in defence of Enlightenment values, such as in the oppressive phases of the French revolution. It also ignores the contributions made from different perspectives and backgrounds, such as the possibility to justify toleration on grounds of religion.

Medieval Christianity, although on the whole certainly not a particularly 'tolerant' system of beliefs, provided some precedents. Toleration – the non-interference in the life of others – could be justified on strictly religious grounds, such as by the idea that God's omnipotence and the incomprehensibility of his actions should lead humans towards humility in their judgments – towards toleration.

Also outside of the European context, ideas and practices of tolerance had been developed. Buddhism has historically been inclined towards toleration, such as when Ashoka introduced moral principles of both public and individual conduct intended to respond to the immense socio-cultural diversity of his Indian Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Ideas and values of toleration underpinned Islamic practices that were often far more accommodating towards religious difference than their Christian counterparts. Though misunderstood as an 'inter-faith utopia', Muslim Andalusia offered types of accommodation and co-existence that were unknown in the rest of Europe. Later, the *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire allowed for religious communities to organise their affairs in relative autonomy, thus accommodating cultural and religious diversity within the empire.

While the Enlightenment is thus rightly understood as an important starting point for contemporary ideas of toleration, we should be open to alternative origins. The value of cultural pluralism and ideas of inter-cultural coexistence have been proposed in different ways, as part of secular Enlightenment ideas as well as from within non-secular, religious traditions.

From the time of the Enlightenment, a distinction was made between

- mere toleration (i.e. forbearance and the permission given by adherents of a dominant religion to religious minorities to exist although they are seen as mistaken and harmful)
- and
- the higher level concept of religious liberty which involves equality between all religions and the prohibition of discrimination among them.

Indeed this distinction is probably either the main weakness or the main strength of the concept of tolerance. Some thinkers criticise it because they consider that toleration of something or someone implies a negative view of it and hence a form of discrimination. They thus privilege the notions of acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity (further discussed below).

It is worth noting that tolerance implies a relationship of power: **only majorities have the power to tolerate minorities**. The object of tolerance may be the minority group as such, an individual that is member of a minority group and/or the 'divergent' customs or practices of the minority individual or group. A minority [that is not dominant] cannot tolerate a majority simply because it does not have the power to do so. However a minority may (or may not) adopt tolerance as regards diversity among its own members.

Susan Mendus and Preston King, two political philosophers that have written extensively on the subject, see toleration/tolerance first as a practical matter, since each society or state has to set the limits of what and who it tolerates and what or who it does not tolerate, and second consider it an appropriate way to approach issues of cultural diversity and discrimination against minorities.

An interesting example of the claims that religious minorities raise and how they may be difficult to tolerate, let alone accept comes from Turkey and its native Sufi Muslim minority:

### ***Diversity that is not tolerated and alternative solutions.***

#### ***The case of the Whirling Female Dervishes in Turkey.***

Islam, like all other religions is not homogenous. In Islam, there are two major branches: Sunnism and Shiism. Sunni Islam is also extremely heterogeneous per se, consisting of several different schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), tarikats (paths), mystics and oppositional groups. Sufis do not constitute a sect, but they have a spiritual orientation in both Sunnism and Shiism.

Sufi adherents are introspective, gentle, highly spiritual people who seek to attain inner ecstasy, self-enlightenment, and emulate the Prophet's own example of frugality and self-discipline. Sufism often arose in opposition to social trends in the early expanding Muslim empire such as opulence, overindulgence in worldly pleasures, excessive emphasis on legalism, and pageantry. Faith in God is experienced through meditation, chanting, selfless love for others, self-denial, and pilgrimage to shrines of past Sufi masters. They have not been **respected** by many traditional *ulema* (Islamic scholars), and reformers. Wahhabis and Salafis still consider them to be outside the Muslim faith. One of the reasons why Sufism is not **tolerated** by the mainstream Sunni Islam is the place of women equal to men in Sufism.

The Mevleviyah Order in Turkey follows the teachings of Rumi, who lived in Anatolia in the 13th Century. Known to the west as Whirling Dervishes, the Mevlevi Order was founded by Mevlana Rumi in the 13th century. The Order wrote of tolerance, forgiveness, and enlightenment. The ritual of the Mevlevi sect, known as the sema, is a serious religious ritual performed by Muslim priests in a prayer trance to Allah. Rumi is renown all around the world with his popular lines, which invite everyone to join his ethics of toleration.

The order has recently become very popular again as it has peacefully resolved an ongoing debate in the Order: should females practice the dhikr (remembrance of God, invocation) together with males by performing a whirling meditation? Mevleviyah Order interprets Islam as an egalitarian faith towards both men and women unlike the Middle Eastern law. This is why women have equal status to men in the Order, allowing women to participate in dhikr as dervishes themselves. Sufi whirling, a worship of dhikr, became a genderless and classless practice in the Order throughout the world.

As the Eurovision 2003 winner Sertap Erener performed in the opening of the 2004 Contest in Istanbul, she decided to have her performance with female whirling dervishes. Her decision was not appreciated at all by the director of the TRT, public TV channel, broadcasting the Contest live. Senol Demiröz, director, who was appointed by the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Part government, claimed that Mevleviyah Order does not accept female *semazen*, whirling dervishes (Daily Milliyet, 15 May 2004).

This debate goes back to January 2000, when the head of the Galata Mevleviyah Order did not want to accept the willingness of the female semazens to do Sema with the males. The debate became public (Hurriyet, 10 January 2000). The conflict was resolved in 2004 by the Mevleviyah Order, giving permission to the female semazens dancing together with the male semazens. The request of the female semazen was found in line with the teachings of Rumi, who asserted that everyone is equal before God.

The resolution of the Order brought about further conflict among the mainstream Sunnis, who did not appreciate the decision, as it basically contradicted with the patriarchal culture of the Turkish society. Female semazens attracted a great attention of the public, so that it was even covered by the National Geographic Turkey in March 2004 (<http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/263290.asp>). What was peculiar in the settlement of the conflict was the reference to equality of man and women before God, revisiting the **universalist humanism** and **tolerance** of Rumi.

The question arises as to who and what should be tolerated, what and who should not be tolerated, and indeed who or what should be not only tolerated but rather accepted and respected.

Tolerance in fact can be proposed as a middle solution for addressing diversity that stands between intolerance (the non acceptance of individuals, groups or practices) and acceptance, respect and public recognition of minority individuals, groups or practices. We can distinguish thus between:

- Individuals, Groups and Practices to whom/which toleration is not granted;
- Individuals, Groups and Practices to whom/which toleration is granted; and
- Individuals, Groups and Practices for whom/which toleration is not enough and other concepts and approaches are or should be more relevant, such as equality, respect, recognition,.

It is important to clarify that the relationship between tolerance and respect or recognition of difference is not necessarily a hierarchical one. Respect is not necessarily nor always a better institutional or practical solution for accommodating difference. While tolerance may be appropriate for some diversity claims and may satisfy some requests of minority groups or individuals, respect and public recognition may be a better 'fit' for other types of diversity claims.

The case of the Cologne's new mosque building in Germany illustrates how such local conflicts can be resolved in a vein of respecting and accommodating rather than excluding the claims of a minority group.



## ***Respect for Diversity. The Controversy over Cologne's new mosque***

In 2006 the Turkish Muslim organisation DITIB presented a plan for a big new mosque in Cologne to the public. Members of the conservative party CDU criticised the architecture, which was closely linked to the Ottoman traditional style and thus, in their opinion, excluded non-Turkish Muslims. In the same year the rightwing populist organisation *Pro-Köln* started a petition for a referendum against the building of the mosque.

In 2007 the author and Holocaust survivor Ralph Giordano in a TV debate with Bekir Alboga, commissioner of the mosque for intercultural dialogue, demanded that the building of the mosque be stopped, because in his opinion it was 'not an expression of the Muslim will to integrate, but a centre of an anti-integrative maintenance of identity' and the symbol for 'an attack on our democratic way of life'. In this dialogue as well as in other parts of the media debate around the building of the mosque in Cologne, issues of integration and prejudices towards Islam entered the debate.

Giordano expressed similar ideas to the rightwing movement *Pro Köln* that a Muslim minority with an alien religion was creating a parallel society, that was not able to integrate into German society or did not respect the German constitution, with veiled women who offended the aesthetic sense of ordinary people, and demonstrated general difficulties of Muslims in adapting to modernity.

The mayor of Cologne Fritz Schramma, against many of his party members of the conservative CDU, defended the 'constitutional and moral right' of the 120,000 Muslims of the city to have their own place of worship. He expressed the hope that the mosque would also be '*eingekölscht*' soon, meaning that it would be embraced in the local environment.

An International congress against the 'Islamisation of Europe', that was to be held in Cologne in 2008, using the mosque conflict in their own interest, and a demonstration against the building of the mosque, organised by *Pro Köln* were finally prevented by the broad resistance of the people of Cologne. The counter demonstration against the rightwing movement was so strong that the Cologne police finally forbade the demonstration against the mosque, which had in any case been blocked by thousands of Cologne citizens and officials. Additionally most of the international leaders of rightwing populist movements, who had come for the anti-Islam congress could not leave Cologne airport, because

the taxi drivers refused them transport, they could not find accommodation, because hotel owners refused to accommodate them, and the owners of bars refused them drinks.

The mayor of Cologne declared after the manifestations: "With strong commitment, humour and intelligence we fought against this racist nonsense."

Respect for diversity in school life for instance is also exemplified by the initiative of the City of Copenhagen which has provided for special training to teachers with the aim of improving the teachers' communication with minority parents.

## ***Intercultural Dialogue in Denmark. Respecting the Difference of Minority Parents***

In 2007 the city of Copenhagen created an 'Integration Taskforce' to act as a contact unit between the city's central administration and its street-level professionals such as social workers, teachers, childcare workers and employees of housing associations and sports clubs (hereafter 'practitioners'). In its initial meetings with practitioners, the Task Force found that they face a common problem concerning the creation of contact and communication with the parents of minority children with whom they are working.

The solution was to develop training courses for these professionals and supply them with special tools that enable them to improve their dialogue with parents. A handbook was developed—with theory chapters, concrete exercises and management tools for implementing and improving? on good parent dialogue—to support the training courses and the professionals' own efforts to create parent dialogue in their own organizations. A strong focus is thus placed on converting theory into practical and relatively simply formulated knowledge that is practicable in everyday situations.

The training courses and toolkit focus on neutralizing as far as possible the otherwise ***asymmetrical relation*** in dialogues between practitioner and parent by opening up to the perspectives of the parent. Emphasis is placed on creating common solutions to concrete problems or goals at hand (e.g. participation in school excursions or gym classes by minority pupils). This mode of dialogue should be seen in contrast to conversations in which the practitioner speaks from a position of power (as a professional and often as a majority representative) and through which the practitioner informs or 'tells' the parent what is expected of him or her and/or about which solution is the right one. The pragmatic, goal-oriented dialogue also tends to 'bracket' discussions about fundamental principles or values in order to be able to deal with the concrete issue at hand.

Through this type of dialogue the minority parent is recognized as an individual of equal standing and as a generally competent parent whose ideas, points of view and feelings matter (and not as a person with a particular minority identity). A parallel idea is that minority parents should not only be 'invited' to, for example, school events that may be culturally unknown to them (e.g. the Danish Carnival celebrations), but should be 'involved' in their creation (the motto being: do not invite, involve).

Part of the idea is also that the practitioners should become more aware of their sometimes unconscious prejudices or pre-judgments in order for them to see how these may influence their interactions with minorities. The main focus, however, is not on changing convictions or on the eradication of prejudices, but on establishing rules for professional behavior in connection with creating and maintaining dialogue.

The idea of professionalized dialogue with minority parents has been vindicated through the feedback of participants in the training courses. The general experience, supported by interviews with minority parents, is that the practical and professional effort to make sure that dialogue in fact entails equal recognition of the parent facilitates pragmatic and concrete solutions that enable continued contact with and involvement of parents and the participation of minority children in key school and after-school activities. The best practice recommended here for dealing with religious diversity is thus a matter of procedures. Concrete solutions and accommodations emerge through dialogue. This implies a certain degree of local or organizational autonomy and the rejection of the notion that 'one-size' solutions can and should fit all.

QUESTIONS FOR  
DISCUSSION:

- ✓ What kind of claims of minority or immigrant groups should not be tolerated in Europe? (Please give examples)
- ✓ What kind of claims or needs of minority or immigrant groups should be accepted and respected? Please give examples



**ACCEPT**  
**PLURALISM**

