

Network for Ecumenical Learning in Central and Eastern Europe (NELCEE)

Religious education in school – confessional or ecumenical?
Prague, 14-17 October 2010

FINAL REPORT

Between 14th and 17th of October 2010 the first NELCEE consultation took place in Prague. Representatives of twelve member institutes from eleven European countries gathered and debated upon 8 thorough reports documenting essential – sometimes controversial – features of the religious education process in several European countries (Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Romania, Russia, and Slovenia). These reports concerned particularly the state of affairs in public primary schools, secondary schools and high schools.

Multiculturalism and the need for a “theology of otherness” on the one side, and atheism on the other side were profiled as the two extremes which border the struggle to achieve the religious education process in Europe. As far as the ecumenical dimension of this process is concerned, all the reports rather revealed the lack of such a dimension, the denominational religious education being further promoted even in schools with a higher degree of multiculturalism.

One relevant example in this sense is **Romania**, where religious education is included in the national curriculum as obligatory subject. Although there are 18 religious communities living together in Romania, the Orthodox population forms the majority, therefore religious education in school is generally ensured by Orthodox teachers in a confessional manner. However, confessional religious education in school can also be ensured by non-Orthodox Churches, otherwise pupils/students belonging to other Christian denominations or to other religions are not compelled to attend Orthodox Religion classes, but are required to provide marks obtained in their religious community.

The other pole of the attitude towards religious instruction is represented by **Slovenia**, where religious education and any other religious activities at public schools are explicitly prohibited. The Slovenian state promotes the lay character of the public schools which should not get under the monopolistic influence of any individual Church. However, the existence of private schools is authorised and parents have the opportunity to choose also denominational schools where their children acquire religious and moral education according