



EPC – KBF DIALOGUE

The Status of Imams in Europe

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The training of the imams : the search for information useful for reflexion

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1. General overview

- Churches and State relations
- Public funding of religious groups
- Presence of Islam
 - Size
 - Representation



Table 1. Relations between religious groups and the state (recognition)

	Belgium	France	The Netherlands	United Kingdom	Germany	Sweden
Recognized religious groups	Catholicism Protestantism Judaism Anglicanism Islam Orthodox Church. Recognition of non-confessional philosophical communities (organized secularism).	Separation of church and state. Before the law of 1905: Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism. Special status.	Separation from the Calvinist church took place in 1983.	Church of England is the official church.	Systems of special agreements. 'Recognized' religious group=religious tax (not Islam).	Separation from the Church of Sweden (Lutherian) took place in 2000.



Table 2. Public funding of religious groups

	Belgium	France	The Netherlands	United Kingdom	Germany	Sweden
Budgetary funding	Salaries, central bodies (some), places of worship, chaplains	Places of worship, chaplains	Places of worship, chaplains	Places of worship (heritage only), chaplains	Places of worship, chaplains +	Funding of denominations via general subsidy (by SST) redistributed to local communities, chaplains
Funding through taxation	No. Reduced inheritance/ donation tax.	Gifts tax deductible	Gifts tax deductible	Gifts tax deductible	Yes – church tax paid by church members only.	Formerly, ecclesiastical tax for the official church; reduced rate for non-members.
Other main sources	Revenues from estates of religious establishments (mainly Catholicism)	Gifts	Funding for social work	Revenues from real estate and personal estate comprising church assets	Funding for social work	Funding for social work

Table 3. Presence of Islam – size of the religion

	Belgium	France	The Netherlands	United Kingdom	Germany	Sweden
Muslims	400,000 (4%)	4,155,000 (8%)	920,000 (5.7%)	1,600,000-1,800,000 (2.7%)	3,200,000 (3.7%)	350,000-400,000
Origin	Morocco Turkey	Algeria Morocco Tunisia Turkey	Turkey Morocco	Iran Pakistan Bangladesh etc.	Turkey	Iran Bosnia Iraq Turkey etc.
Mosques	328	1685	453	584-900/1000	2500 places of worship	112
Imams	Around 300	+/- 1300	500	+/- 1000	?	

Table 4. Relations between religious groups and the state (Official representative(s))

Official representative(s) of the Muslim community	Executive of Belgian Muslims (EMB), derived from the Assemblée générale des Musulmans de Belgique (AGMB) [General Assembly of Muslims of Belgium] (AGMB), elected by registered voters.	Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) [French Council for the Islamic Faith]	-Contact- orgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO) - Contact group Islam (CGI)	The most representative is the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)	NO Special contacts with the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Ankara (Diyamet) Several groups claim representative status: -Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik -Zentralrat der Muslime im Deutschland	-Förenade Islamiska Församlingari Sverige (FIFS) -Sveriges Förenade Muslimska Församlingar (SMuF) -Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen (IKUS) -Sveriges Muslimska Råd (SMR)
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2. Training of clerics

- 2.1. Situation by country
 - France, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium.
- 2.2. Cross analysis
 - Which imams ? Which training ?
 - Which organisation ?
 - A few key success factors

2.1.1. France

• Other denominations

- Faculties of catholic/protestant theology (recognised and financed); institutes from the various denominations (seminaries and institutes; catholic, protestant, jewish, orthodox); some cooperation between institutions with various denominational background.

• Islam

- A few institutes (European Institute of Human Sciences, French Institute for Islamic Studies and Sciences, ...), some of them set up by muslim groups (Mosquée de Paris, etc.), neither recognised nor funded.
- Languages and citizenship training (State organisation and funding).
- « Non religious » education (law, ...) in universities ; due to complement denominational/islamic training



2.1.2. United Kingdom

• Other denominations :

- mainly colleges, affiliated with existing universities (-> recognised and financed)

• Islam:

- Muslim College; Markfield Institute of Higher Education;... (limited recognition).
- opening of a centre for the study of Islam in the United Kingdom at the University of Cardiff announced for September 2005;
- no language (and/or 'citizenship') training.



2.1.3. Germany

- **Other denominations :**
 - mostly faculties or institutes of higher education (EKD, catholics, judaism,...).
- **Islam :**
 - A few institutions : Muslimische Akademie für Religiöse und Soziale Bildung; DITIB; Institut für Islamische Bildung;...
 - Training of imams being recognized : projects in progress with recognized universities: Frankfurt; Münster ;
 - Language (and ‘citizenship’) training.



2.1.4. Sweden

- **Other denominations :**
 - Training within universities (Church of Sweden) or in collaboration with them (Catholics) -> financed
- **Islam :**
 - Svenska Islamiska Akademin (project);
 - Mosques.



2.1.5. The Netherlands

- **Other denominations :**
 - each denomination has its own rules and institutions dealing with training ; training also organized within universities (simplex ordo) or in articulation with them (duplex ordo);
- **Islam :**
 - Islamitische Universiteit Rotterdam; Islamitische Universiteit van Europa (neither recognized nor funded).
 - Training of imams to be recognized (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - after a call for projects).
 - a compulsory citizenship initiation course for all imams working in the Netherlands.



2.1.6. Situation in Belgium (globally)

- Recognised religious groups + non conf. philosophical communities
- State pays salaries and pensions for clerics and « délégués laïques »
- Local authorities cover deficit of church councils and consistories; repair and maintenance works to places of worship; accomodation allowance to clerics.
- Recognised religious groups are free to appoint their clerics.
- Training partly funded (catholic seminars and theology gaculties, Protestant Faculty Theology, Lic. Spéc. Assist. Morale, etc.).



2.1.6. Situation in Belgium (islam)

- Islam recognised since 1974.
- « Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique » derived from the General Assembly (elections).
- No financial intervention up to now (except funding of the « Exécutif »).
- The Regions must establish criteria for recognition of individual mosques.
- No recognised / organised training for imams. A few non coordinated initiatives.
- « Inburgeringstraject » for non native imams in Flanders (language, « Flemish way of life », ...).

2.2.1. Which imam ? Which training ?

- In most countries : difficulty to define a « standard » role and training requirements for imams.
- Catholic church : apostolic constitution *Sapientia christiana*.
- Anglican church : canons of the Church of England.
- Diyanet : common basis for its imams.
- Mainstream Protestant churches : at least nationally established rules (eg in Belgium, « licencié en théologie protestante »).
- Others : most religious groups define the training of their clerics (eg Evangelists in Belgium).

2.2.2. Which organisation ?

- Adding elements to existing training programmes (in one -NL- or in separate -F- institutions).
- As part of the framework of a university (cf. state universities in NL).
- Creation of an institute of higher education.
- « Model of growth » : allowing a training programme to grow gradually.
- Ad hoc, specific, courses (languages,...) :
 - not specific to muslim clerics (foreign clerics);
 - language / training (eg. Diyanet).



2.2.3. A few key success factors (1)

- **Context**
 - Agreement among the muslim communities over training requirements for imams.
 - Social status for imams.
 - Training has to be attractive (eg. « state as an employer »).



2.2.3. A few key success factors (2)

- **Academic aspects**

- Balance to be found between academic standards and islamic standards and values.
- Funding and recognition of qualifications ; possible integration in the Bachelor-Master-Doctor scheme.

2.2.3. A few key success factors (3)

- **Pragmatic approach**

- Answers to be found for short term needs (languages, local customs, etc.).
- Connection between training courses and religious organisations
 - cf. a few existing schemes (NL, Fac. Théo. Protest. B, ...).
 - Options could be internal or in partnership.

3. To conclude

- Authorities have a role to play (recognition, financing training structures, fiscal incentives, ...).
- An important responsibility also lay on each national muslim community (most notably agreement on role and training).
- Both sides have to play an active role if a solution has to be found.



- www.laforel.be/site/oracle
- www.cifop.be