



Training imams in Europe

The current status



King Baudouin
Foundation

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June 2007



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Table of contents

Foreword	page 4
Introduction	page 7
Part 1. General overview	page 8
1.1. <i>Overview of Islam in different countries – relative size of the religion</i>	
1.2. <i>General overview of Church-State relations (recognition)</i>	
1.3. <i>Public funding of religions</i>	
1.4. <i>Primary/secondary schooling organised by religions</i>	
1.5. <i>Examples of training for ministers of religion</i>	
<i>Appendix to Part 1 – summary tables</i>	
Part 2. The training of imams in seven European countries	page 14
1. Belgium	page 14
1.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
1.2. <i>Public initiatives or those supported by public authorities</i>	
1.3. <i>Initiatives by the Muslim community</i>	
2. France	page 16
2.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
2.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
2.3. <i>The Muslim community's own initiatives</i>	
3. Germany	page 18
3.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
3.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
3.3. <i>Initiatives by the Muslim community</i>	
4. Netherlands	page 20
4.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
4.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
4.3. <i>Private initiatives</i>	
5. England	page 22
5.1. <i>Situation of religions</i>	
5.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
5.3. <i>Private initiatives</i>	
6. Sweden	page 25
6.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
6.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
6.3. <i>Initiatives by the Muslim community</i>	
7. Austria	page 27
7.1. <i>Situation of other religions</i>	
7.2. <i>Public initiatives</i>	
7.3. <i>Initiatives by the Muslim community</i>	
Conclusions	page 29
Executive summary	page 30

Foreword

According to various sources, there are currently between 9 and 15 million people of Muslim origin in Europe and yet the presence of Islam and Muslims in Europe provokes questions and tensions. These frequently bear witness to a lack of knowledge about the subject, as well as a shortage of long-term dialogue.

It was for this reason, in September 2003, that the King Baudouin Foundation launched a number of initiatives on this theme. These initiatives sought:

- on the one hand, to stimulate better knowledge and a more comprehensive perception of the challenges and opportunities related to the presence of Islam and Muslims in Europe;
- and, on the other hand, to contribute to the spread of knowledge and possible solutions among decision-makers and actors in the various sectors (authorities, civil society, companies, education...).

Imams wield considerable influence within the Muslim communities. They often come from abroad, notably from Morocco and Turkey. Requests are regularly made for imams practising in Europe to be trained in Europe too. What is the current state of opinion on this subject in European countries with a large Muslim presence? It is this question that the present report seeks to answer.

In order to understand developments on this topic in each country, it is important to examine the types of relationships that exist between the state and the church. Such relationships, which have been built over time, vary considerably from one country to another.

The Foundation has recently published a report entitled ‘The case for training imams in Belgium. Reference points in Belgium and Europe.’ The report, which was presented at a round table organised by the European Parliament, in February 2006 (“Prospective challenges facing faith communities in the EU”), raised a good deal of interest among the participants. It is for this reason that the Foundation asked Jean-François Husson, Director of the Interuniversity Centre for Ongoing Training (CIFOP), to prepare an up-dated summary on the situation with regard to training imams in the various countries of Europe.

The King Baudouin Foundation

Introduction

Various research works and discussions conducted at the initiative of the King Baudouin Foundation have underlined the important role played by imams and teachers of Islamic religion; a strong consensus has emerged about the need, sooner or later, to have imams who have been trained in Belgium. This has led to two questions:

- How are ministers of other religions and lay delegates trained in Belgium?
- How are our European neighbours organised in this regard?

In an attempt to answer these two questions, Jean-François Husson, secretary-general of CIFO¹ and coordinator of ORACLE², was commissioned to conduct a study. The present document summarises and updates the data contained in that report³, which formed the subject of several presentations from June 2005 to June 2006.

Belgium recognises six religions (Catholic, Protestant-Evangelical, Anglican, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim) as well as the non-religious philosophical communities (laïcité organisée or “organised laity”). Among the financing channels for religions, the public authorities pay the salaries and pensions of the ministers of the religions and of lay delegates. While there are currently no legal provisions imposing minimum standards of training for these people, the other religions and the organised laity have established internal standards in this area.

While imam training is an issue for all Belgium's neighbouring countries, the types of solutions available obviously depend on the system of Church-State relations.

The present document sets out the paths followed and touches on the problems encountered, including the variety of training needs (theological on the one hand, linguistic and cultural integration on the other), the difficulty of identifying a spokesperson representing “the” Muslim community, the recognition of training courses, and so forth.

¹ Centre Interuniversitaire de Formation Permanente – CIFO (Interuniversity Centre of Ongoing Education): www.cifop.be

² Observatoire des Relations Administratives entre les Cultes, la Laïcité organisée et l'Etat – ORACLE (Observatory of Administrative Relations between Religions, Organised Laity and the State): www.laforel.be/site/oracle

³ http://www.kbs-frb.be/code/page.cfm?id_page=153&id=388 (in French and Dutch)

1. General overview

1.1. Overview of Islam in different countries – relative size of the religion

It is unusual for states to have precise numerical data on the number of believers and of ministers for each religion. Adherence to a religious community is personal information and as such is protected by - and from - the state. Although in Great Britain the census allows relatively precise data on the subject to be obtained, in most countries indirect methods have to be used in order to obtain estimates, e.g. looking at the number of religious marriages, the number of children undergoing religious instruction or the number of people originating from Muslim countries (ignoring natives who have converted). Similarly, figures derived from religious tax receipts are not always relevant given the phenomena of “religious disaffiliation” witnessed in Germany.

Table 1. Overview of Islam in different countries – relative size of the religion

	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Great Britain	Germany	Sweden	Austria
Muslims	400,000 (4%)	4,155,000 (8%)	944,000 (5.8%)	1,600,000- 1,800,000 (2.7%)	3,200,000 (3.7%)	350,000- 400,000 (4.5%)	344,400 (4.2%)
Principal countries of origin	Morocco, Turkey	Maghreb countries Turkey, Black Africa	Turkey, Morocco	Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc	Turkey	Iran, Bosnia, Iraq, Turkey, etc.	Ex-Yugoslavia, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina...
Mosques	328	1,555 mosques (2,147 places of prayer)	453	+/- 1,000	2,500 to 2,900 places of prayer	112	
Imams	Ca. 300	+/- 1,300	500	+/- 1,000			
Other religious affiliations	Catholic (4,800,000), Protestant (132,000), Orthodox (70,000), Jewish (50,000), Anglican (10,800), organised laity (110,000)	Catholic (40,444,000), Protestant (4,900,000), Jewish (600,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (250,000), Orthodox (90,000)	Catholic (31%), Reformed (14%), Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist (3%)	Christian (72%, 42,000,000), Hindu (1%), Sikh (0.6%), Jewish (0.5%)	Catholic (26,200,000), Evangelical (25,800,000), Protestant (765,000-845,000), Orthodox (1,400,000), Buddhist (240,000), Jewish (189,000)	Church of Sweden (77%), Catholic (145,000), Orthodox (100,000), Protestant (Pentecostal et missionary 400,000), Jewish (18,500-20,000)	Catholic (74%), Protestant (4.7%), Jewish (0.1%), Orthodox (2.2%), other Christian (0.9%)

1.2. General overview of Church-State relations (recognition)

The relations between churches, religious or philosophical communities and states present relatively major variations from one country to another, going from France, which does not recognise any religion, to the United Kingdom where England and Scotland still have the system of established churches. The existence of state churches or established churches is becoming rarer with the legislative amendments made in various countries over recent years: in Sweden the Lutheran church stopped being the state church in 2000 and there are recurrent discussions on the fate of the Anglican church in England. Besides this, Austria supplemented its legislation in 1999 to allow the inclusion of small religious communities that have appeared more recently in the country, while Belgium has moved towards partial regionalisation in this area, with amendments made or in progress in some regions.

Whatever the system on which Church-State relations are based, the near-systematic state responsibility for chaplains should be noted, in particular within the armed forces and penal establishments, reflecting traditions going back centuries and the recognition of the need for spiritual support in sometimes difficult situations.

1.3. Public funding of religions

Like the institutional relationships, public participation in the financial and material life of religious communities is very varied. This said, a preferential tax regime exists in all countries observed, with, in general, deductibility or reduced tax rates for gifts and bequests. Public contributions for religious buildings are also widespread, but very often on the grounds of protecting historical and cultural heritage, not as support for the religion concerned.

1.4. Primary/secondary schooling organised by religions

In general, although there are some exceptions, the state amply recognises primary and secondary schooling organised by churches and religious communities, subject to teaching criteria being met, and sometimes funds it either in whole or in part. In state-organised education, religious teaching is or may be dispensed, except in France, although even here there exist some special cases, such as Alsace-Moselle. In most of these state-run schools, it is possible to exempt pupils (often of a religion other than that or those taught) from religious instruction. Note the quite unusual initiative of Sweden, which recently opted to introduce “pluralist” religious classes during which all the great religions of the world are taught.

1.5. Examples of training for ministers of religion

The training requirements for ministers of religion vary, as with the other points examined, not only from country to country, but also from religion to religion. The only constant is the training requirements for Catholic priests, set out in the apostolic constitution *Sapientia Christiana*. In a way, the imams trained by the *Turkish Diyanet* also meet minimum training requirements. Apart from Austria, which requires a secondary education certificate as a minimum condition, the states recognise as ministers of religion those who are recognised as such by the representative body of the religious community in question, generally without any other condition.

Appendix to Part 1 – summary tables

Table 2. General overview of Church-State relations (recognition)

	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Great Britain	Germany	Sweden	Austria
Religions recognised	Religions recognised: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Anglican, Islamic, Orthodox Recognition of non-religious philosophical communities (organised laity)	Separation of Church and State No religion recognised, but chaplains supported. Special status: Alsace-Moselle, some DOM-TOM. Islam recognised on Mayotte.	Separation with established Calvinist church in 1983. Religions have the status of private associations.	Church of England = established church; other religions have chaplains (Catholicism, Islam, etc.)	System of private agreements. “Recognised” religions can levy the church tax. Religions are public-law bodies. Islam not recognised in this framework.	In 2000, separation with the Church of Sweden (Lutheran). Religions have the status of religious federations. (Currently 19 religious federations, including Church of Sweden and 2 coordinating bodies)	Religions are divided into three statuses: 1. officially recognised religious society (public status). 2. community of religious belief (private status), 3. association.
Basis of recognition		Law of 9 December 1905 on separation of Church and State; special situation for certain overseas territories and in Alsace-Moselle (Concordat of 1801, among others)	Article 2, Book II of the Civil Code and following, law of 1983 ending financial relations between State and churches	Bill of Rights, Customs... “Established” churches: Church of England (Anglican) in England since 1534 (Church of England Assembly Powers Act of 1919), and Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) in Scotland.	Article 140 of the Basic Law, Articles 136 to 139 and 141 of the Weimar Constitution; Constitutions of Länder and agreements made between the Federation or the Länder and the religious communities.	Law of 1999 on religious communities, and Law of 1999 on Church of Sweden	Law of 1939 on church funding (Catholic, Protestant and Old-Catholic churches), law of 1874 on recognition of churches and law of 1998 on communities of belief
Official representative(s) of Muslim community	Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (EMB, Executive of Muslims of Belgium), from Assemblée générale des Musulmans de Belgique (AGMB General Assembly of Muslims of Belgium), elected by enrolled voters.	Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM, French Council of Muslim Religion)	Contact-orgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO) and Contact group Islam (CGI)	The most representative: Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)	Special contacts with the Ankara Religious Affairs Department (Diyabet) Several groups claim to be representative: -Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik (Islamic Council for the Federal Republic) -Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (Central Council of Muslims in Germany) In April 2007, the four main muslim organisations were regrouped in the “Coordination Council for the Muslims in Germany » (KRM)	Förenade Islamiska Församlingari Sverige (FIFS) -Sveriges Förenade Muslimska Församlingar (SMuF)- Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen (IKUS) -Sveriges Muslimska Råd (SMR)	Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (Islamic Community of Belief in Austria)

Table 3. Public funding of religions

	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Great Britain	Germany	Sweden	Austria
Budget funding							Funding of religious societies only
Salaries	Yes	No (except Alsace-Moselle)	No	No	No	No	Yes
Central body	Salaries: Yes Operating budget: Islamic religion and organised laity only	No	No	No	No	Funding of denominations via general subsidy (by SST) redistributed to local communities	Funding of religious societies through an annual subsidy (for cultural purposes) (fixed sum plus variable sum)
Places of worship	Yes	Yes (1908) Also as heritage	No	No except taxation and heritage	+/ Contributions from Länder, tax regime, heritage, support to Jewish community, repair and restoration of monasteries and churches expropriated in 1803...	Yes (by way of protection of cultural heritage for the Church of Sweden and specifically for the other recognised religious communities)	Yes
Chaplains	Yes: Cath., Prot., Jew., Islam. + lay counsellors	Yes (1905): Cath., Prot., Jewish, Muslim.	Yes + lay counsellors	Yes (including Muslim and Buddhist)	Yes	Yes	Yes: Catholic and Protestant
Fiscal funding	Reduced succession/gift duties	Gifts deductible	Gifts deductible	Gifts deductible	Yes – church tax paid by members of churches; no additional tax for non-members.	Yes, for certain recognised religions – church “tax” paid by members of churches; no additional tax for non-members.	Gifts partly deductible and preferential treatment accorded to religious societies
Other main sources	Income from heritage of religious establishments (mainly for Catholic religion)	Gifts Funding of social works Real-estate and other income from churches' assets Funding of social works	Subsidies granted to some recognised religions. Funding of social works				Funding of 5 theological faculties Preferential treatment for social works (but also with ecclesiastical intentions)

Table 4. Primary/secondary schooling organised by religions

	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Great Britain	Germany	Sweden	Austria
Schooling organised by religions	Catholic, Protestant and Jewish schooling recognised and subsidised by the Communities; also possible for Islam and other recognised religions	State schools and private schools under contract financed by the state (a single Muslim school exists)	Yes, with partial public funding Courses in Islamic religion, most often in independent Islamic schools	Yes, with public financing for private religious schools (Angl. 4,646, Cath. 2,041, Musl. 8, Sikh 2, Jewish 37).	Yes, with public funding	Private schooling, subsidised if under contract.	“Private” schooling by religious societies (a single Muslim school – “Islamic Gymnasium”)
Religious classes in state education	Yes, for all recognised religions + non-religious moral education: obligatory in French Community, exemption possible in Flanders.	No, except special cases (e.g. classes in Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religions in Alsace-Moselle)	Yes, not obligatory Including Islamic religion classes	Yes, exemption possible.	Yes, class obligatory but participation not obligatory. Including classes in Islamic religion only in some Länder	Pluralist religion classes.	Yes if religious society or religious community and subject to conditions (3 children minimum)

Table 5. Examples of training for ministers of religion

	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Great Britain	Germany	Sweden	Austria
Institutions involved	<p>Seminaries and faculties of theology in Catholic universities</p> <p>University Faculty of Protestant Theology (Brussels)</p> <p>Faculty of Evangelical Theology (Heverlee)</p>	<p>Faculties of Protestant and Catholic theology in University of Strasbourg which train Catholic and Protestant ministers of religion</p>	<p>Universities (state and other) train ministers of religion in various denominations</p> <p>A university linked to a religious or philosophical community can be recognised and subsidised.</p>	<p>Some training colleges for Protestant and Jewish religions and Catholic seminaries have their diplomas validated by recognised universities.</p>	<p>Training provided by the churches and given in collaboration with universities and higher educational institutions</p>	<p>Training provided by the churches and given in collaboration with universities and higher educational institutions</p>	<p>Minimum requirement of secondary school diploma for state recognition</p> <p>Faculties of Theology, Catholic (4) and Protestant (1) (financed by the state)</p> <p>Islamisches Religionspädagogisches Institut (IPRI) is the establishment that trains primary- and secondary-school teachers of Islamic religion.</p>
Religions involved	Catholic, Protestant-Evangelical	Catholic, Protestant	Catholic, Protestant (KPN and other denominations), Old-Catholic, etc..	Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Jewish	Catholic, Protestant, Jewish	Catholic, Protestant	All recognised religions.
Particular situation of Islamic religion	Currently, no training course is organised	Great mosque of Paris (training institute for imams), Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines (IESH—European Institute of Human Sciences), Institut Français des sciences islamiques (IFESI—French Institute of Islamic Studies)	VU programme	Muslim College, Islamic Foundation, Hawza Ilmiyya of London and Islamic College for Advanced Studies	DITIB, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University	Currently, no training course is organised	Currently, no training course is organised

Part 2.

The training of imams in seven European countries

1. Belgium

1.1. Situation of other religions

Belgium officially recognises and subsidises six religions (Catholic, Protestant-Evangelical, Anglican, Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim) as well as the non-religious philosophical communities (*laïcité organisée* or “organised laity”). Most public funding takes the form of the salaries and pensions of ministers of religion, payments to cover the deficit of the local communities and various contributions to the administration of places of worship. Following the regionalisation of the law on the worldly affairs of religions, the rules governing religions’ organisation and functioning vary according to the Region (Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia) in which they are situated.

From the point of view of the training of the ministers of religion, apart from the teaching provided by its own seminaries, the Catholic church recognises and occasionally participates in the teaching provided by the faculties of theology of the Catholic universities (UCL and KUL). Protestant ministers are generally trained by the Faculty of Protestant Theology of Brussels and, for the Evangelical churches, by the Faculty of Evangelical Theology of Heverlee, the Belgian Biblical Institute and the Biblical Seminary of Brussels. The other recognised religions do not have specific institutions and generally invite those aspiring to the ministry to be trained in other countries.

1.2. Public initiatives or those supported by public authorities

Although the **Flemish government** has in the past expressed its intention to put in place a training scheme for imams, so far nothing concrete has happened. Meanwhile, the decree of 28 February 2003 on civic integration (“inburgering”) was amended by the Flemish Parliament on 12 July 2006; this process of civic integration consists of a programme of training and individual support: Dutch language classes, introduction to citizenship and integration at work. This amending decree, which also aims to expand the target group of the integration procedure, will make the latter obligatory for ministers of religion, outside the European Union, covered by the decree of 7 May 2004 relating to the organisation and functioning of recognised religions, who wish to settle in Belgium. The religion’s supreme body will be required to inform its ministers of this obligation and to refer them to the reception office. Foreign ministers of religion failing to comply with the obligation to undertake this training could be fined from €50 to 5,000.

Between February and June 2007, the UCL’s **Centre interdisciplinaire d’études de l’Islam dans le monde contemporain (CISMOC)** (Interdisciplinary Centre for Studies of Islam in the Contemporary World), in collaboration with the Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis and the Haute Ecole Galilée, is set to launch a pilot project in basic university training in Islamic studies. The scope of this project, as even its authors admit, is modest, covering only the equivalent of 13

ECTS credits, and is directly in line with the **French Community** decree of July 2006 relating to continuing education, from the point of view of training for interculturality, cultural diversity and for one of the recognised religions and for the laity. It will lead to a “university certificate” and may be validated in this framework. This training is intended primarily **for senior personnel formally involved with recognised religious structures (teachers, imams, chaplains)** and will be open to holders of a university or other higher-education diploma. Acceptance on the basis of an application dossier will also be possible⁴.

In April 2006, **CIFoP** (Centre Interuniversitaire de Formation Permanente= Inter-University Centre for Ongoing Education), in collaboration with **ORACLE** (Observatoire des Relations Administratives entre les Cultes, la Laïcité organisée et l’Etat=Observatory of Administrative Relations between Religions, Organised Laity and the State) organised a training course for the administrators of the mosques of Namur and Charleroi. This course, open to any person involved in the life of the local mosque, dealt with the organisation and funding of religions in Belgium and the administration of a recognised religious establishment. A new session, for foreign ministers of religion and comprising modules relating to language, sociology and Church-State relations, will be organised in 2007. These two projects were accepted in the framework of the Fonds d’Impulsion pour la Politique des Immigrés (=Kick-Start Fund for Immigrant Policy) and benefit from the support of the Ministry of the Walloon Region.

1.3. Initiatives by the Muslim community

The non-profit association “Takâfoul – Culture et Société” opened its **Institut des Etudes Islamiques de Bruxelles (IEIB)** (Brussels Institute of Islamic Studies) in 2006, setting itself the goal of “propagating the Islamic culture and sciences among young Muslim university students and graduates of Belgian universities” by dispensing university training in Islamic studies and Arabic language. Its organisation is based around three departments: a French-speaking department, an Arabic-speaking department and the department of the Holy Koran. However, the Arabic-speaking section will not organise classes this year. The training dispensed by the French-speaking section, which lasts five years (bachelor: 3 years, master: 2 years) with a preparatory year of Arabic language, is centred on Islamic sciences, the study of the Arabic language and of the humanities. The new department of Holy Koran studies, inaugurated this year, under the direction of Sheikh Fathi Saddem and Sheikh Zakaria Fadlaoui, **aims to train imams and Koranic specialists**. The training will be given in Arabic and will stretch over four years, at the end of which students will also obtain the IEIB’s memorizer degree. The number of places offered is limited and only students recommended by an imam or a sheikh can be admitted. All the same, these courses do not lead to any recognised qualification.

Of its own initiative, the Executive of the Muslims of Belgium presented a draft bill in November 2006 relating to the recognition of ministers of the Muslim religion and of their training. The ambition is, among other things, to introduce a 4-5-year imamhood training course comprising a theological component and a civic component. The precise content of the teaching would be determined in collaboration with a Council of Theologians (to be created) and the universities that would be associated with the project. For already-serving imams, the Executive recommends a top-up course at the end of which these latter could be accorded official recognition.

2. France

2.1. Situation of other religions

Relations between the religions and the state are organised based on a traditional system of separation, with some exceptions. The law of 9 December 1905 on the separation of churches and state specifies that “the Republic shall not recognise or subsidise any religion”. The state does not intervene in the internal organisation of churches and the latter do not receive any funding. The protection of religious buildings, the funding of chaplains and the special situations of the territories of French Guiana and Alsace-Moselle may be cited among the exceptions.

Apart from the candidates trained in its seminaries, the Catholic church admits to the priesthood candidates trained by the Catholic Institutes of Paris and Lille and the Faculty of Theology of Strasbourg. The training of Protestant pastors is provided by the Faculty of Theology of Strasbourg and by the Protestant Institutes of Theology of Montpellier and Paris. The Institut Saint Serge, which answers to the Russian Exarchate, trains Orthodox priests, both French and foreign. Rabbinical training is organised by the Séminaire Israélite de France in Paris.

2.2. Public initiatives

Haut Commissariat à l’Intégration (High Commission on Integration) – Report entitled “L’Islam dans la République” (Islam in the Republic) (2000)

In this report, consistently with a position it has been supporting since 1992, the HCI recommends setting up a training course designed for Muslim religious leaders, considering that the existing structures are not of a sufficiently high quality. As in an earlier report by Fr Trocmé from 1996, it is recommended that such training form part of a university course allowing a rigorously scientific disciplinary framework to be offered. Unfortunately, although various projects have been launched with the support of the public authorities, none has reached the implementation stage.

Commission de réflexion juridique sur les relations des cultes avec les pouvoirs publics (Commission for legal consideration of the relations between religions and public authorities) – Machelon report (2006)

Ordered by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, the Report of the Machelon Commission (named after its president Jean-Pierre Machelon) offers a complete overview of the current situation and makes recommendations for the future of relations between religions and the state. Contained in its chapter on territory-specific systems, the Commission makes a number of interesting observations on the training of Muslim religious personnel. For example, *introducing Muslim religious education classes within secondary schools and technical institutions* (in Alsace-Moselle only). In this light, the Commission raises the importance the state should give to the training of those called upon to dispense this teaching, and of religious personnel in general, which should be validated by a diploma in Muslim theology. “The commission therefore strongly recommends, for the Muslim religion, the creation in the first instance of a system of training of religious personnel, in the framework of a joint action with the public authorities, followed by the extension of religious teaching of Islam within secondary schools and technical institutions⁴.”

⁴ Commission de réflexion juridique sur les relations des cultes avec les pouvoirs publics, (Commission for legal consideration of relations of religions with public authorities), “Rapport Machelon” (Machelon report), 20 September 2006, <http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/064000727/0000.pdf>

⁵ “L’introuvable imam made in France” (“The elusive imam - French-style”), *Nouvel Observateur*, No. 2159, week of Thursday 23 March 2006 <http://www.occidentalis.com/article.php?id=3143>

In December 2005, France signed *an agreement with Turkey at the embassy in Ankara providing for the teaching of French to future religious officials* ⁵.

A **proposal for an Institute of Muslim Cultures** was recently inaugurated in Paris by Bertrand Delanoë, the city's mayor. Expected to open in 2011, this institute would house a university centre for training, research and documentation on Islam, as well as cultural and social activities. No information is currently available about the course or courses which would be given there⁶.

2.3. The Muslim community's own initiatives

Currently, no attempt to organise a training course for imams can be classed as a success.

In 1994, the **Great Mosque of Paris** inaugurated a training institute. The Institute apparently ceased operating in 2000 due to a lack of subsidies and the costs of its courses, although the Mosque's website still mentions the Institute's activities. This is the same fate which befell the **Institut d'Études Islamiques de Paris** (Paris Institute of Islamic Studies).

Although it does not offer special training for the imamhood, the **Centre de Recherche sur l'Islam (CERSI)** (Centre of Research into Islam) does offer an Islamic studies programme, which can also be undertaken by correspondence, and an Arabic language programme. The ambitions of the **Institut Français des Études et Sciences Islamiques (IFESI)** (French Institute of Islamic Studies and Sciences) are greater, since it regards itself as a university-level institution, combining three departments and offering 5-year study programmes (Doctrine and Thought, Koran and Hadīth, Law and Theory of Law, History of Islam – Orthodoxy and Arabic).

The **Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines (IESH)** (European Institute of Human Sciences), opened under the aegis of the Union of Islamic Organisations of France, launched a training institute for imams in September 2005. This training course, access to which is based on an application dossier, lasts three years and is open to Muslims intending to become imams or chaplains. Students are *trained in Islamic studies and preaching and sermon methods, in a way that is wholly in line with French legal, cultural and social conditions* ⁷.

In September 2006, the former president of the Federation of Muslims of France (which is close to Morocco) inaugurated the **Institut Avicenne** (Avicenna Institute) with the support of Lille city council, which supplied the building under a long-term lease, and with funds from Qatar and Libya. The objective of its institute of Islamic theology is to provide initial and continuing training for Muslim religious leaders, primarily imams and chaplains. The **Shâtibî centre** in Lyon also opened its doors in September 2006. Offering a course in Islam over three years, it will train specialists in Islam, including possibly imams.

Finally, a private university of Islamic studies at Strasbourg, originally intended as a new department of the University of Strasbourg, is still at the development stage, even though its creation has been planned for many years.

⁶ X. TERNISIEN, "Un Institut musulman devrait voir le jour en 2011 à Paris" ("Paris to get Muslim Institute in 2011", *Le Monde*, 20 October 2006

⁷ <http://www.ieshdeparis.com/index.php>

3. Germany

3.1. Situation of other religions

Religions recognised by the state are organised in the form of public-law civil persons and benefit from funding via a church tax collected and redistributed by state authorities. However, essentially the relations between churches and state are governed by the legislation of the Länder and by agreements reached between these civil persons and the regional authorities. The Muslim community does not have a legal personality and therefore does not benefit from the church tax, but other forms of funding are nevertheless accessible to it.

The training of Catholic priests and Protestant pastors is provided by their respective churches and given in collaboration with several universities. More importantly, in September 2006, Germany saw the first ordinations of rabbis on its territory since 1942. These three rabbis were trained at the Abraham Geiger College (Potsdam), created in 1999, but which has only really been able to function from 2001. It is the first rabbinical college in Germany since the Holocaust.

3.2. Public initiatives

At the initiative of Federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, a big conference on Islam and the integration of Muslims, most of whom are of Turkish origin, was opened in September 2006 in Berlin. This conference aimed to set in train a constructive and continuing dialogue between the Islamic community and German society; it is intended as the starting point of a shared process of reflection to last two or three years before being able to provide conclusions.

The German choice has therefore been to promote a “channel” of continuing dialogue without trying to impose a rigid meeting “structure” like the French Muslim Religion Council or the Belgian Executive of Muslims. The conference brings together representatives of the federal government, of the Länder and of the local councils, representatives of the Islamic communities and ten independent personalities from the Muslim world. Nevertheless, tensions remain between the representatives of the Islamic communities, some of whom consider themselves under-represented.

The subjects broached at this conference include religious extremism, the question of sermons in German and the economic situation of Muslims in Germany. Freedom of expression will also be on the agenda. Mr Schäuble also invited the representatives to attend a controversial performance of “Idomeneo”⁸. Two subjects will receive special attention: religious classes in state schools and the training of imams⁹.

A second conference took place on 2nd May 2007. Between the subjects discussed by the standing working groups: the role of women in Islam, the relationships between State and the religious communities, the teaching of Islam at school.

⁸ This opera, which features the decapitated heads of Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed and Poseidon, had initially been cancelled because of Islamist threats, before being reprogrammed.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign affairs, Press release, “A conference on Islam to launch the dialogue”, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/fr/WillkommeninD/D-Informationen/Nachrichten/060927-1.html>; P. BOCEV, “Premier sommet sur l’islam en Allemagne” (“First summit on Islam in Germany”), *Le Figaro*, 27 September 2006

3.3. Initiatives by the Muslim community

One of the proposals mentioned at the opening of the conference by a representative of the German Turkish community was the creation of a central body to advise the federal and state governments on all religious questions. This “Council of Islamic Affairs” would be attached to a single faculty of Muslim theology common to all German Islamic communities, one of whose responsibilities would be to train German imams. The possibility of this structure replacing the existing Islamic organisations or the latter being integrated into the new structure has not yet been raised, although the idea of a new joint representative structure is not new.

In April 2007, the four main muslim organisations announced that they would join their efforts in the “Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany” (KRM). Thereby, they met the expectation of the German government to have just one official muslim partner. These four organisations represent 2000 mosques of the 2900 mosques existing in Germany. Already some doubts were raised concerning the authority of the Coordination Council.

2006 was also marked by the arrival of thirteen female imams at the mosques affiliated to the **DITIB (Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion)**, which reports directly to the Turkish department of religious affairs. This initiative seems to be successful and even if the role of these women is limited to preaching and religious teaching for other women, the possibility of their working alongside men in future cannot be ruled out. Similarly, future training for these women in Germany cannot be ruled out either¹⁰. For the moment, DITIB imams are trained in Turkey: as part of this they learn German and are taught about the integration of the Turkish community in Germany.

Other major training institutes include the **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University** in Frankfurt, which organises a programme in Islamic studies within the theology faculty, as does the **University of Münster**. The **University of Osnabrück** offers a master’s degree in Islamic religious education, a course of religious and teacher training aimed at remedying the poor training of some teachers of Islamic religion.

The **Moslemische Akademie für Religiöse und Soziale Bildung** (Muslim Academy for Religious and Social Education) and the **Institut für Islamische Bildung** (Institute for Islamic Education) offer more general courses, some relating to inter-religious dialogue and the place of Islam in Germany.

¹⁰ N. HALICI, Female Imams in German Mosques Get a Mixed Reception, *Deutsche Welle*, 7 October 2006, <http://www.dw-world.de>

4. Netherlands

4.1. Situation of other religions

The Netherlands does not recognise religions in a direct, legislative way, but through the case-law of courts and tribunals, which means that a very large number of religious communities can be recognised. The latter are most often organised in the form of private-law civil persons, but as of 1983 the state no longer has any financial obligation towards them. In the absence of public funding, religious communities resort mainly to collection and gifts, and twelve communities have access to a fund set up by a single state endowment in 1983.

The training of ministers of the various religions mostly falls within the legal framework of education recognised by the state: either by the recognition of the diploma obtained at an official institution and possible further training, or by the organisation of a higher-education institution which may or may not be legally recognised (and hence able to be subsidised).

4.2. Public initiatives

Various initiatives aimed at training imams in the Netherlands have been launched by the government in the last few years. Among the initiatives raised, three of them have led to concrete applications.

The call for proposals addressed to universities in January 2005 resulted in financial support being given to two universities. The Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam has offered a bachelor's degree in Religion and Philosophical Convictions, Islamic orientation, and a master's in Islamic spiritual care, since the start of the 2005 academic year. This first year saw around thirty students following the bachelor's and around forty students were directly admitted to the master's, over half of whom were already involved as spiritual assistants or in the service of a mosque. The direct objective is not to train imams but to enlarge the group of Muslims with an academic level of knowledge of Islam, although holders of the master's degree could be called upon to act as chaplains or spiritual assistants within hospitals, the army or other public institutions¹¹.

With the same objective and with financial support from the state, the University of Leiden has offered a one-year master's in Islamic Studies since the start of the 2006-7 academic year. This programme is organised within the Faculty of Arts by the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Middle East and offers an introduction to the various theoretical and methodological approaches to Islam, both historical and contemporary¹².

More geared towards practical than academic outcomes, the InHolland higher-education college offers a bachelor's degree divided into two sections: an Islamic specialisation for social assistants (continuing education) and a religious education training for imams and lay workers. The latter, a four-year course, was developed in close association with five Islamic organisations representing around 500,000 Muslims in the Netherlands. The objective is to train Dutch imams directly. Fifteen students are enrolled in this first session¹³.

¹¹ Vrije Universiteit, Faculty of Theology, Islamic Theology Centre: <http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/>

¹² University of Leiden, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Middle East: <http://www.studiegidsen.leidenuniv.nl/>

¹³ InHolland: <http://www.inholland.nl/>

4.3. Private initiatives

In addition to its Islamic Studies programme, the University of Leiden is considering introducing a course of “practical” religious teaching in mosques to complement its academic curriculum. However, nothing concrete is planned for the near future, as the university is still studying various forms of association with Dutch Muslim organisations.

Discussions are also under way on the initiative of InHolland with the Vrije Universiteit and the University of Leiden for the holders of its bachelor’s degree to have direct access to the master’s degrees of the two universities¹⁴.

¹⁴ M. BOWLBY and B VAN IMPELEN,
*The Imam Training Debate: The Future of
Religion for Dutch Muslims*,
<http://www.humanityinaction.org>

5. England

5.1. Situation of religions

The Church of England is one of the last established churches left in Europe. Although it still has special ties with the British Crown, it no longer has such a dominant position as it once did. The religious communities, including the Church of England, are financially independent, organised most often with the status of charitable organisations, and do not receive any state funding (although there are exceptions) for their strictly religious activities. A non-official representation of the Muslim community is provided by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which brings together more than 400 Muslim organisations.

5.2. Public initiatives

Since the attacks of 7 July 2005 in London, the British government has focused special attention on tackling terrorism. In November 2005, the working groups set up to look into this issue submitted an initial report, “*Preventing Extremism Together*”, which represents the first step of a new partnership between the government and Muslim communities. The report’s recommendations include setting up a National Consultative Council of Imams and Mosques and developing a professional training programme for imams and official representatives of mosques. The main aim of this Council would be to prevent mosques serving as a “springboard” to extremism, from resorting to the services of foreign imams (who do not know British society and sometimes do not speak English), to establish various criteria, and increase the integration and leadership skills of imams. The government has therefore strongly supported the initiative of the Muslim associations who have set up such a centre in the wake of the report¹⁵.

As part of this ongoing work, a report on the integration and cohesion of communities within local council districts is expected in July 2007.

5.3. Private initiatives

In May 2006, the MCB published a study on British mosques and imams. Its recommendations focus heavily on imam training: improve the existing programmes to allow imams to meet specific demands (such as chaplaincy), offer them basic legal training as well as training on legislative and governmental procedures. The study notes that 29% of imams have a basic university degree, 36% a British master’s degree and 14% a doctorate, but 86% of imams were born outside the UK and 59% have been in the country less than 10 years¹⁶.

On 27 June 2006, the Muslim community inaugurated the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB), an independent authority responsible for supervising mosques and training imams in the United Kingdom. The Muslim community has been shy of such an authority, which was only created thanks to the will of four of the most important Muslim organisations. One of the objectives of this new authority is also to change the British public’s distorted image of Islam.

Although no implementation date or schedule has been announced for the training of imams, one of the directions which this should take has already been announced. The gap between young Muslims and the imams (and mosque officials in general) has become particularly marked in the last few years. The proposed training would offer imams the necessary skills to enable

¹⁵ Working Groups Report, *Preventing Extremism Together*, November 2005, http://www.communities.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1502016

¹⁶ The Muslim Council of Britain, *Voices from the Minarets – MCB Study of UK Imams and Mosques*, May 2006, <http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/vfm.pdf>

a more open dialogue with these younger generations. In this initial phase, therefore, there are no plans to organise training for the imamhood in the strict sense of the term, but rather to provide imams with the tools they need to operate in British society¹⁷.

¹⁷ D. CASCIANI, *Watchdog for Mosques launches*, BBC News, 27 June 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5120338.stm>

6. Sweden

6.1. Situation of other religions

Until January 2000, Sweden recognised the privileged position of the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden as an established church. Following the recent reform, the state now treats all religious denominations on an equal footing and they benefit from funding proportional to their relative size among the population, subject to complying with certain conditions such as the creation of a federation, of an established structure and a minimum list of 3,000 members. Three Muslim communities have access to this funding, which mainly covers the costs of places of worship. Special subsidies also exist.

6.2. Public initiatives

The affair of the Mohammed caricatures published in Denmark and later reproduced in the Swedish press had a negative impact on the Swedish Muslim community. The Islamic Centre of Malmö, housing the main mosque of the city, has been the target of several attacks over several years, and in 2006 these led the government to grant it exceptional funding of three million crowns (SEK) to allow it to be rebuilt. This rebuilding is part of a wider project to improve the image of Islam in Sweden¹⁸. However, unlike other countries, Sweden has apparently not opted for an overall, non-interventionist action, but rather for sporadic assistance to religious communities. For example, it is still the Church of Sweden that is responsible for the majority of funerals and cremations, including the management of cemeteries.

It should also be noted that relations between the previous Swedish government and the Muslim communities were strained (incidents included the resignation of a minister who had downloaded the caricatures of Mohammed from a far-right website). The new government (since October 2006) has nominated a Muslim woman to the post of minister for integration and equality, but she does not always seem to be appreciated by the Muslim community (one reason being her proposed ban on the veil for girls under 15)¹⁹.

6.3. Initiatives by the Muslim community

Three Islamic communities representing 75% of Sweden's Muslims receive state funding. Alongside these there exist other organisations that do not receive public funding. Relations between these communities are also strained²⁰.

In 2000, a Swedish academy was set up with a view to establishing a university-level Islamic training programme in Sweden and creating a centre for the study of Islam. To our knowledge, although this academy still exists and publishes a review ("Minaret"), the training has not materialised and the study centre has certainly not lived up to the expectations surrounding its opening.

In other words, there is no Islamic theological training in Sweden at the present time, and the level of training of imams does not seem very high, with the exception of the imams from the Turkish religious affairs department (Diyamet).

¹⁸ Swedish government funds Malmö mosque repair, *The Local*, 27 March 2006, <http://www.thelocal.se/3392/>

¹⁹ H. FRITH POWELL, Sweden's Muslim minister turns on veil, *The Sunday Times*, 22 October 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2415525,00.html>

²⁰ Muslim Council: no support for 'special laws', *The Local*, 29 April 2006, <http://www.thelocal.se/3688/20060429/>

7.

Austria

7.1. Situation of other religions

Austria officially recognises thirteen religions and religious associations, including Islam, which has been recognised since 1912. Official recognition gives them the status of public-law civil persons and enables, amongst other things, religious education to be offered in state schools (compulsory up to age 14). Since 1998, alongside recognised religious communities, there have been “communities of belief registered by the state” which, after 10 years under this system and subject to compliance with other conditions, can claim recognition and the status of public-law civil persons.

7.2. Public initiatives

The Austrian state tries to remain neutral on religious issues and generally refuses to act with respect to religious communities. It confines itself to fostering tolerance and dialogue between religions without intervening directly. However, in 1998 the federal law on the civil personality of communities of belief was adopted.

The state also offers special protection to religions through its legislation: denigration of religious doctrines and interference with worship constitute offences, and as regards theft and damage to property religious sites and artefacts enjoy extra protection²¹.

7.3. Initiatives by the Muslim community

Although it is legally entitled to, the Islamic religious association has renounced the right to receive a church tax, despite receiving no other state subsidy. One of the most important tasks conferred on it is the organisation of Islamic religion classes in Austrian public education. The association appoints teachers (around 170) who are paid by the state.

To provide training for these teachers, the association, in collaboration with a state teaching college, opened an Islamic religion training academy which awards the recognised diploma of “teacher in Islamic religion” following six semesters of studies spread over three years. The training course has been criticised in the past by the president of a federation of Turkish associations.

There is no specific education for the training of imams in Austria at the present time.

The Islamic religious association of Austria was also behind the conference of the world Muslim league in 1986 and 1988, the biggest Islamic conference on the problems faced by Muslims in Europe. The past two years, also at the initiative of the association, the meetings of the European conference of imams have been held in Vienna. The conference did not raise the question of imam training, but centred around the work of integrating Muslims in Europe, the increased participation of women, and the bad overall image of Islam in Europe²².

²¹ Federal Chancellery of Austria, *Religions in Austria*, Federal Press Service, Vienna, 2004.

²² AP, Europe : une identité musulmane à définir (“Europe, a Muslim identity to be defined”), *Le Devoir*, 10 April 2006, <http://www.ledevoir.com>; and the final conclusions of the 2005 Conference, <http://www.derislam.at/islam.php?name=Themen&pa=showpage&pid=165>

Conclusions

In the countries dealt with, two needs stand out in particular: the need for adequate theological training and the need for language and civic training.

Since the systems of Church-State relations vary greatly from one country to another, the possibilities for promoting such training vary likewise. In some countries, the situation is also aggravated by the absence of a real representative body or the differences between bodies claiming to represent the Muslim community or communities. This absence makes it difficult to establish a “job description” for imams and the training required.

Thus Belgium²³ represents a special case: the fact that the state pays the salaries of ministers of recognised religions (and of the delegates of non-religious philosophical communities) creates job opportunities whilst also enabling certain “requirements” to be established.

In other countries, agreements have been reached to integrate theological training courses within existing universities; this type of procedure is very common for the other religions and exists in a range of cases for Islam (in Great Britain in particular). In particular, we can point to the case of the Netherlands, where, following a call for proposals, the Vrije Universiteit secured funding to organise a three-year training course.

This type of partnership seems a particularly interesting option since it avoids the difficulties which would result from the (attempted) creation of faculties of Muslim theology, such as organising a scientifically recognised university course issuing recognised diplomas, recruiting sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, internal coordination within the religion and the various sections of the community, etc.

Further, such a process does not rule out the prospect, in the medium term, of creating faculties of Islamic theology, complete with all the required academic guarantees.

Finally, any solution must incorporate the following aspects:

- funding of the studies and recognition of the qualifications issued at the end of the training course;
- meeting short-term needs relating to languages and knowledge of society, and taking into account later developments, in particular at the theological level;
- coordination between the “secular” component of the training (language, history, sociology, etc.) and the theological component;
- taking into account students’ motivations for doing the courses, so that the latter can be adapted accordingly;
- coordination between the course developed and religious authorities to ensure, amongst other things, job opportunities for locally trained students.

²³ The situation could be similar, for example, in Alsace-Moselle.

Training imams in Europe

The current status

Executive summary

Relations between the authorities and Muslims in Europe face several difficulties. One of these is the difficulty of identifying a representative of “the” Muslim community, which makes it difficult to establish a “job profile” for imams and the training they require. The types of relationships between churches and states differ enormously from one country to another as do the possibilities of providing appropriate training. Recognition of training (academic and non-academic) may also pose a problem. A further difficulty is the poor image from which Islam suffers among the people of Europe.

In the countries studied in this research, two particular needs became apparent: the need for adequate theological training on the one hand, and linguistic and civic training on the other. In response to these requirements, different types of training imams can be envisaged. One route could be the creation of Faculties of Islamic theology, although this would be demanding in the short term because of the need for academic personnel. A variant of this, more likely to be realised short term, would be the creation of partnerships between Islamic Institutes and universities. Another variant would be to add new elements to courses that already exist in a number of universities. Each of these solutions presents disadvantages in terms of complexity, feasibility or stability.

We can cite the case of the Netherlands where, following a call for projects, the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam obtained financing to organise a three-year-long course. This type of partnership seems to be of special interest because it avoids the difficulties of creating faculties of Islamic theology, whilst at the same time maintaining the medium term perspective of creating faculties of Islamic theology and ensuring all of the necessary academic guarantees.

We observe that numerous routes have already been proposed regarding the training of imams, even though all of them are far from being realised. Similarly, in those instances where training does exist, their quality is sometimes put under question.

Finally, whatever form of training is envisaged, the solutions must integrate the following aspects:

- financing of studies and recognition of qualifications delivered at the end of the training;
- short term needs including language skills and knowledge about the society, as well as taking into account ulterior developments, notably at theological level;
- coordination between the “secular” part of the course (language, history, sociology...) and the theological part;
- awareness of students’ motivations in following these studies, so that courses may be adapted in function of them;
- coordination between the training developed and religious bodies, so as to ensure job opportunities for students who have been trained locally.

Opleiding van imams in Europa

Een stand van zaken

Samenvatting

Er doen zich een aantal problemen voor wat de relaties tussen de overheden en de moslims in Europa betreft. Een daarvan heeft alles te maken met de moeilijkheid om een woordvoerder te vinden die 'de' islamitische gemeenschap vertegenwoordigt. Daardoor is het opstellen van een 'functieprofiel' voor imams en van de eisen waar hun opleiding aan moet beantwoorden, problematisch. In de tweede plaats is de manier waarop de betrekkingen tussen kerken en staten zijn geregeld, sterk verschillend van land tot land. Daardoor doen zich aanzienlijke discrepanties voor in de mogelijkheden om impulsen te geven voor dergelijke opleidingen. Ook de erkenning van de (al dan niet academische) opleidingen kan voor moeilijkheden zorgen. Een ander probleem is tot slot het slechte imago waar de islam bij de Europese bevolking onder gebukt gaat.

In de landen die in deze studie aan bod komen, treden vooral twee noden op de voorgrond: enerzijds de nood aan een gedegen theologische opleiding van toekomstige imams, en anderzijds de behoefte aan een taalopleiding en een opleiding tot burgerschap. Om een opleiding van imams aan deze noden te laten beantwoorden zijn er diverse pistes denkbaar. Een van de mogelijkheden is dat er een islamitische theologische faculteit wordt opgericht. Dat is op korte termijn lastig te realiseren omdat het veel eisen stelt op het vlak van het academisch personeel. Een eerste variant hiervan, die wél makkelijker op korte termijn kan worden geconcretiseerd, is het opzetten van partnerschappen tussen de mosliminstellingen en de universiteiten. Een tweede variant kan erin bestaan dat er aspecten worden toegevoegd aan de huidige opleidingen aan de diverse universiteiten. Beide oplossingen hebben nadelen op het vlak van complexiteit, haalbaarheid en stabiliteit.

In Nederland heeft de Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam na een projectoproep van de overheid de financiering binnengehaald voor het inrichten van een driejarige opleiding. Een dergelijk partnership lijkt buitengewoon interessant omdat men hierdoor de moeilijkheden omzeilt die kunnen voortvloeien uit de oprichting van islamitische theologische faculteiten, en ook omdat zoiets het mogelijk maakt op middellange termijn het uitzicht te behouden op de oprichting van islamitische theologische faculteiten, mét alle vereiste academische waarborgen.

Wij stellen vast dat er inzake de opleiding van imams heel wat denksporen naar voren worden geschoven, al is voor alle initiatieven de eindmeet nog lang niet in zicht. En waar er al een opleiding bestaat, wordt haar kwaliteit soms ter discussie gesteld. Voor welke vorm er ook wordt gekozen, elke oplossing zal een antwoord moeten inhouden op de volgende aspecten:

- de financiering van de studies en de erkenning van de titels die aan het eind van de opleiding worden toegekend;
- het invullen van de noden op korte termijn inzake talenkennis en kennis van de samenleving; er zal ook rekening moeten worden gehouden met evoluties, met name op theologisch vlak;
- het op elkaar afstemmen van het 'profane' luik van de opleiding (taal, geschiedenis, sociologie...) en het theologische luik;
- men zal rekening moeten houden met de beweegredenen van de studenten om een dergelijke opleiding te volgen, om zo nodig de opleiding aan te passen;
- er moet een coördinatie zijn van de opleiding en de instanties die instaan voor de eredienst, om studenten die plaatselijk zijn opgeleid ook toekomstmogelijkheden te bieden.

La formation des imams en Europe

Etat des lieux

Synthèse

Les relations entre les pouvoirs publics et les musulmans en Europe sont marquées par plusieurs difficultés. L'une d'entre elles est liée à la difficulté d'identifier un interlocuteur représentant « la » communauté islamique, ce qui rend difficile l'établissement d'un « profil de fonction » des imams et de la formation requise. Le régime des relations Eglises-Etats variant très fortement d'un pays à l'autre, les possibilités de promouvoir de telles formations varient tout autant. La reconnaissance des formations (académiques ou non) peut également poser problème. Une autre difficulté est la mauvaise image dont souffre l'islam au sein des populations européennes.

Dans les pays abordés dans cette étude, deux besoins se font particulièrement sentir : le besoin d'une formation théologique adéquate d'une part, le besoin d'une formation linguistique et civique d'autre part. Pour répondre à ces besoins, la mise en place de formations destinées aux imams peut être envisagée de différentes manières. Une piste pourrait être la création d'une faculté de théologie musulmane, piste difficile à court terme car exigeante en termes de personnel académique. Une première variante, davantage susceptible d'être concrétisée à court terme, est l'établissement de partenariats entre les Instituts musulmans et les universités. Une autre variante serait d'ajouter des éléments à des formations existantes organisées au sein de plusieurs universités. Chacune de ces solutions présente des inconvénients, en termes de complexité, de faisabilité ou de stabilité.

Citons en particulier le cas des Pays-Bas où, suite à un appel à projets, la Vrije Universiteit a obtenu un financement pour organiser une formation d'une durée de trois ans. Ce type de partenariat semble une voie particulièrement intéressante car il permet d'éviter les difficultés qui résulteraient de la création de facultés de théologie musulmane et permet également de conserver, pour le moyen terme, la perspective de création de facultés de théologie islamique, présentant toutes les garanties académiques requises.

Nous constatons que de nombreuses pistes sont avancées en matière de formation des imams, même si toutes les initiatives sont loin d'aboutir. De même, dans les cas où une formation existe, la qualité de celle-ci est parfois mise en question.

Enfin, quelle que soit la forme envisagée, toute solution devra intégrer les aspects suivants :

- le financement des études et la reconnaissance des titres délivrés à la fin de la formation ;
- la rencontre des besoins à court terme, portant sur les langues et la connaissance de la société, et la prise en compte de développements ultérieurs, notamment au niveau théologique ;
- la coordination entre le volet « profane » de la formation (langue, histoire, sociologie...) et le volet théologique ;
- la prise en compte des motivations qui poussent les étudiants à suivre ces formations, afin d'adapter celles-ci en conséquences ;
- la coordination entre la formation développée et les instances culturelles afin d'assurer, notamment, un débouché aux étudiants formés localement.

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Our activities are focused on the following issues:

Migration & a multicultural society - promoting integration and a multicultural society in Belgium and Europe

Poverty & social justice - identifying new forms of social injustice and poverty; supporting projects that build greater solidarity between the generations

Civil society & social commitment - encouraging social commitment; promoting democratic values among young people; supporting neighbourhood and local projects

Health - promoting a healthy way of life; helping to build an accessible and socially acceptable healthcare system

Philanthropy - helping to make philanthropy more efficient in Belgium and Europe

The Balkans - protecting the rights of minorities and the victims of human trafficking; setting up a visa system for students

Central Africa - supporting projects in the field of AIDS prevention and offering guidance to AIDS patients

The Board of Governors of the King Baudouin Foundation outlines the main areas of policy. A staff of sixty - men and women, Belgian natives and ethnic minorities – is in charge of the implementation.

We have total annual expenditures of some 40 million euro. In addition to our own capital and the significant grant from the National Lottery there are also Funds set up by individuals, associations and companies. The King Baudouin Foundation is happy to accept donations and legacies.

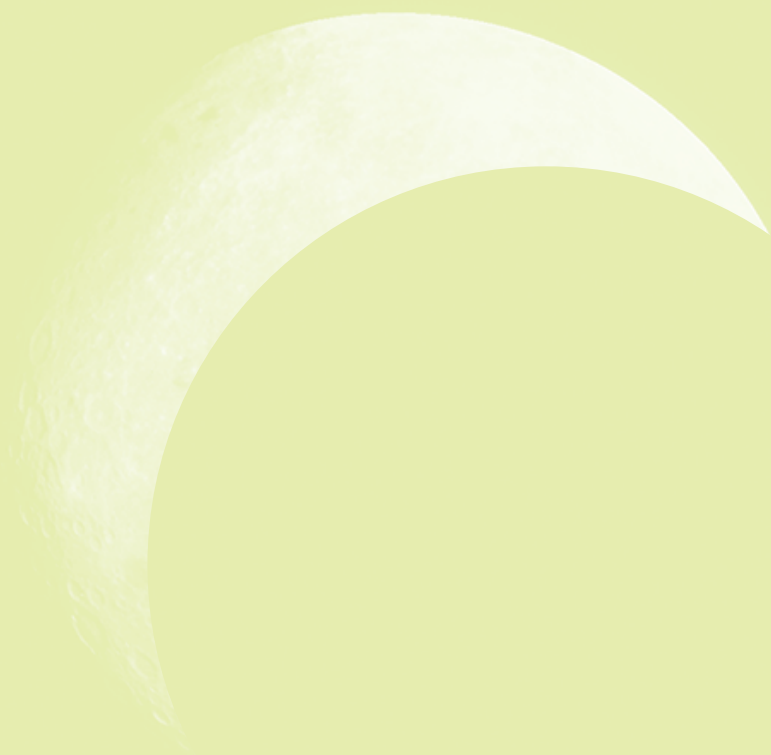
You can find more information on our projects and publications at www.kbs-frb.be

An e-newsletter will keep you informed. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@kbs-frb.be or on 070-233 728.

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Donations made to our account number 000-0000004-04 are tax deductible from 30 euro.



With the support of the Belgian National Lottery