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Baseline Study
Religious Education (RE) in Italy



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IERS Project. *Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*

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Document: Baseline Study. Religious Education (RE) in Italy

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1. State, religion and RE – short introduction

The Italian Constitution Article 7 clearly distinguishes between state and religion (in casu the Catholic Church), making each of the two independent and sovereign in its own right and domain. Italy can thus be classified as 'secular' (*laicità*) with regard to Article 7.¹ As it is evident, however, with regard to e.g. RE in public schools, the relation between the secular state and the Catholic church is one of cooperation, and even if the same holds good for the state's relation to other religions and other Christian denominations, the State, not least in regard to RE in public school, favors the Catholic church. Though national census in Italy does not include questions about religious affiliation, and, though relevant statistics, according to Ferrari and Ferrari (2010, 431-433) are not totally reliable, a majority of the population, one way or the other, still identify as Catholics and are affiliated to the Catholic Church, while about seven percent of all residents in Italy are members of other religions or other Christian denominations (only 2,5% of the Italian citizens). Here as in many other countries in Europe, an increasing number of the population are Muslims (about one million), primarily due to immigration, in particular from Morocco.² Catholicism, furthermore, is often said to be central to Italy's collective identity, culture, and national heritage, even if critics also observe that Italian culture and life, not least that of younger generations, pupils attending school too, is no longer as Catholic as claimed.³

The normative rules for (confessional Catholic) RE in public schools in Italy are intimately linked to Article 9 of the 1985 law no. 121 and to Article 5 of the Protocol that enforces the 1984 Lateran Concordat (also called *Accordo di Villa Madama*) between the State and the Holy Sea. Furthermore, several Presidential executive

¹ According to Ferrari and Ferrari (2010), the principle of *laicità* is not defined in the Constitution nor in the sub-constituional law, but it is based on articles in the Constituion related to religious freedom. The Constitutional Court interprets the principle as the state's guarantee of safeguarding religious freedom.

² According to statistical figures from OECD annual report 2013, Morocco is one of top three immigrant countries in Italy (OECD 2013, 324). See CESNUR Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino Italy for statistical numbers on religious adherence, <http://www.cesnur.org/2013/swe-plz.htm> and Salvarani (2014).

³ For a discussion of this, see Ferrari and Ferrari (2010), and with special regard to the state supported and guaranteed Catholic RE, Mazzola (2014, 114 ff)

orders are important in regard to the agreements between the *Conférence épiscopale italienne* (CEI) and the Ministry of Education, University and Research on *Insegnamento della religione cattolica* (IRC) ('Teaching of the Catholic religion').

The mentioned 1985 law reads, inter alia:

The Italian Republic, recognizing the value of religious culture and taking into account that principles of Catholicism are part of the historical heritage of Italian people, will continue to ensure, within the framework of the finality of school, teaching of Catholic Religion in public school of every order and grade, excluding the university level (law 121/85, art 9, 2 as translated in Anthony 2009)

The aforementioned Article 5 specifies that IRC must be given in accordance with the doctrine of the Catholic Church *and* with respect for the freedom of conscience of the pupils. The IRC teachers are to be accepted and nominated by the ecclesiastical authorities but it is up to the school authorities to hire them in accordance with relevant school regulations and educational requirements. IRC is thus provided, financed and guaranteed by the state and space is provided for it in the normal curriculum of the public school. One and a half hour per week in pre-school, two hours in primary school and one hour per week on the secondary level. IRC, though, is optional, and parents have to choose it or opt out at the beginning of the school year. Pupils who choose not to attend IRC can choose between four alternative options: a) didactical activities, b) individual study and/or research activities with the assistance of teaching staff, c) individual study and/or research activities without assistance of teachers (only secondary schools) and d) not to attend the school during the teaching of IRC.⁴

The Italian Constitution also provides for special agreements between the state and religions and denominations other than the Catholic Church, also in regard to teaching their religion in public schools. Contrary to what is the case with the IRC, these religions or denominations have to finance the teaching themselves and the time for teaching must be found outside the regular time-table. Besides: while IRC is

⁴ In 2012/2013, 82,1% of the students in secondary school attended IRC (Bossi, 2014)

also a 'regular' school subject in terms of the fact that grades are given to the pupils attending to it, this is not so in the case of other kinds of confessional RE.

Though there are schools that, in accordance with relevant law, have organized various kinds of non-confessional courses on history of religions, as an alternative to IRC or as an extra opportunity for pupils, some observers remain rather pessimistic as regards the prospects for a change of the current situation. The confessional RE, the IRC, has become closely linked to the politically powerful idea about Italian culture and national identity as deeply influenced by Catholicism, and it seems, also with regard to the Constitution, difficult to imagine that secularization and the increase in religious and cultural diversity can lead to rapid and immediate changes.⁵

2. The educational system and overall framework for IRC⁶

The majority of pupils in Italy are educated at public state schools. Except for vocational training, over which the regions have exclusive legislative power, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca, MIUR*) has the authority to set up the framework for all levels of school and to establish national curricula, *inter alia* general objectives for the various levels as well as specific learning objectives for each school subject. Compulsory school is organized in a 'first cycle' of education covering primary school (5 years, age 6 – 11), lower secondary school (3 years, age 11-14), as well as the two first years of a 'second cycle' of education, whether in the upper-secondary state school (5 years, age 14-19) or in the vocational schools organized by the Regions (3-4 years).

The compulsory schooling is seen as the key period for personal identity formation, acquisition of basic knowledge and competences needed for further education as well

⁵ See Mazzola (2014).

⁶ A comprehensive description of the Italian education system (reference year 2012-13) is presented by EU through *Europedia (European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems)* https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main_Page (last accessed April 2014) and in UNESCO (2012).

as for the development of social and civic competences, including active citizenship as well as social and cultural literacy. State upper-secondary education is offered by the *licei* (the general path) preparing students for further education as well as for the labor market, by the technical institutes (with an economic and technological profile), and by vocational institutes aiming at professions in the sectors of service, industry and handicraft.

The curricula for IRC at the different school levels are based on agreements between the MIUR and the CEI, and the CEI also has the authority, through local Church authorities, to certify and authorize textbooks and teachers. IRC teachers are not trained as other school teachers. The teachers in pre- and primary schools can be ordinary teachers, but they must be approved by the Church or they can be laymen, deacons or priests who have a diploma issued by an institute for religious sciences recognized by the Church. Teachers in secondary schools need one of the following qualifications: a) a degree (baccalaureate, licence, or doctorate) in theology or other ecclesiastical disciplines, b) attestation of completion of the regular course of theological studies in a major seminary, c) academic diploma of religious science teacher, issued by a religious science institute recognized by the Church or d) bachelor's degree valued in the Italian ordinance, together with a diploma issued by a religious science institute recognized by the Church (Giorda, 2013, 181).

As of 2010-2011 secondary school has been re-organized in a two-year compulsory period (*scuola secondaria di primo grado*) and a three-year optional period (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) in either general or vocational school. General upper-secondary school (*liceo*) comes in six types: *Liceo artistico* (arts), *liceo classico* (classical studies), *liceo scientifico* (science), *liceo linguistico* (languages), *liceo musicale e coreutico* (music and dance) and *liceo delle scienze umane* (human science). MIUR defines knowledge and competences to be acquired after lower and upper secondary school. The overall competences to be obtained in *licei* can be classified as 1) 'learning competences': learning to learn, planning, acquiring and interpreting information, communicating and 2) 'society formation competences': collaborating and participating, acting autonomously, problem solving and creating

connections and relations. This is supplemented with competences of citizenship (MIUR 2010a, 8, our translation) A minimum compulsory annual timetable is given for the different *licei*-types, as well as for technical and vocational schools. A minimum of 33 hours each year is allotted to IRC or alternative activities.

3. National curricula for IRC in upper-secondary education

General profile and overall aims

The general profile, *raison d'être*, and overall aims of IRC in *Licei* as well as in technical and vocational institutions are stated in the national normative curricula of 2012 (partly in effect 2012-13 in the first classes and fully adopted in 2013-14):

L'insegnamento della religione cattolica (IRC) reflects the educational and scholarly recognition of the value of the religious culture and the contribution of the core teachings of Catholicism to the overall formation (*formazione globale*) of the person, as well as to the historical, cultural and civic heritage of the Italian people (MIUR 2012a, our translation).

IRC contributes, it is stated, to the general formative aim of the upper-secondary school with specific reference to:

[T]he ethical and spiritual aspects of the existence (*spirituali ed etici dell'esistenza*) with a view (*in vista*) to a responsible integration in social and civic life [...]

The subject:

(..) promotes the knowledge of Christian-catholic understanding of the world and of history as a resource of meaning (*risorsa di senso*) as regards the understanding of the self, others and life (MIUR 2012a, our translation).

The aims and legitimation of IRC are thus three-fold. IRC is meant to:

- contribute to the pupil's personal (religious-spiritual and social-ethical-civic) formation,
- transmit and preserve Catholicism as a national-cultural heritage
- transmit and preserve Catholicism as a seminal part of history and the continuous development of Europe and the world.

The social-ethical-civic formation includes inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue in a multi-cultural context, and IRC is said to provide knowledge and competences related

- to " the complexity of the human existence" ,
- to debates between Christianity and other religions and systems of meaning (*sistemi di significato*),
- and to "(..) the participation in an authentic and constructive dialogue, educating towards the exercise of freedom in a perspective of justice and peace" (MIUR 2012a, our translation).

The overall competences expected to be obtained by the students after the first two years (part of compulsory education) and after completing upper-secondary school are also almost identical in the different school-types, with only minor differences related to their different educational profile. After the first two years, the students should be able to:

- Construct a free and responsible identity and being able to formulate existential questions (*ponendosi domande di senso*) via meeting with the evangelic message of the tradition of the Church;
- value and appreciate (*valutare*) the eternally relevant contribution of the Christian tradition to the development of the human civilization, - also in dialogue with other cultural and religious traditions;
- value and appreciate (*valutare*) the religious dimension of the human life with a point of departure in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ, acknowledging the meaning and significance (*significato*) of the Christian religious language (MIUR 2012a, our translation).

After five years, the students should be able to:

- develop a mature critical sense and personal vision of life, reflect on his or her identity via the meeting with the Christian message, and show openness towards justice and solidarity in a multi-cultural world;

- grasp the presence and influence of Christianity (*licei*: in history and culture in order to critically understand the contemporary world) (*technical schools*: in the historic transformations brought by the humanistic, scientific and technological culture) (*vocational schools*: in the historic transformations brought by the working and professional culture);
- consciously use the authentic sources of the Christian faith, correctly interpreting their contents in line with the tradition of the Church, (*licei*: in an open dialogue towards the contribution of other disciplines and historical-cultural traditions) (*technical schools*: in an open dialogue towards the contribution to the scientific-technological culture) (*vocational schools*: in a framework of an open dialogue with the labor market and business professions). (MIUR 2012a, c, b, our translation)

The aims and various aspects or dimensions of IRC may be classified as, respectively, religious-dogmatic, religious-existential, and historical-cultural, with the religious-dogmatic (i.e. the confessional) dimension as a permanent point of departure but also with some other kind of overlap: The religious-dogmatic dimension puts a stress on a correct and personal understanding of 'authentic sources', of the eternal truth and meaning of the Bible and Jesus-Christ in line with the authoritative tradition of the Catholic Church. It is thus explicit confessional instruction in Catholicism. Other aims or dimensions are more religious-existential, stressing the importance of learning *from* Catholic religion for the formation of a 'rounded' personal identity and social-civic-moral responsibility as well as for the personal apprehension of what is called the 'the religious dimension' as vital in human life in general. A third category of aims or dimensions, then, are historical-cultural and centered on the (real as well as postulated) contribution and impact of Christianity on the history and culture of the world, and in this regard attention is paid also to IRC as a forum (of discussion) for dialogue with 'other cultural and religious traditions'.

Contents, proficiency and skills

The aforementioned (analytical) categories correspond fairly well to what can be found in the curriculum for *Licei* as regards the stipulated proficiency and skills objectives said to be, respectively, anthropological-existential, historical-phenomenological, and biblical-theological. The specific proficiency and skills objectives are stipulated for the first two years, the second two years, and for the fifth year, and they are almost identical in the three different types of school. In what follows, the point of departure are the objectives listed in the curriculum for *Licei* in, respectively, the first two years' period, the second two years' period, and the fifth year. These will be structured following our classifications (and the classifications mentioned in the curriculum) in a synoptic table in order to enhance the transparency (MIUR 2012a, our translation):

Religious-dogmatic (biblical-theological) proficiency areas		
<i>First two years. The student:</i>	<i>Second two years. The student:</i>	<i>Fifth year. The student:</i>
<p>Locates the Hebrew roots of Christianity and grasps the specific features of the Christian-catholic evangelical message in the uniqueness of the revelation of the Trinity, distinguishing it from the messages of other religions and systems of meaning</p> <p>Approaches the most relevant texts and categories of the Old and New Testament: creation, sin, promise, exodus, covenant, people of God, messiah, reign of God, love, the Easter Mystery; discover their characteristics from a historical, literary and religious viewpoint</p>	<p>Studies the issues about God and the faith-reason relationship in connection with the history of philosophy and scientific-technological progress</p> <p>Becomes aware of the centrality of the Easter Mystery within Christianity and of the correspondence between the figure of Jesus Christ inside the Gospels and the testimony of the first Christian communities codified in the first editing of the New Testament.</p>	<p>Knows the identity of the Catholic religion with reference to its fundamental sources, to the central event of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as to its proposed life norms.</p> <p>Knows the main innovations of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II, of the Christian-catholic understanding of marriage and family and of the fundamental social doctrines of the Church</p>

<p>Deepens his or her knowledge of the person and the message of salvation of Jesus Christ, his lifestyle, relationship with God and people, his proclivity towards the poor and humble as documented in the Gospels and other historical sources</p>	<p>Enriches the knowledge of religious terms, knows the origins, meanings and present-day relevance of some great biblical themes: salvation, conversion, redemption, Eucharist, grace, eternal life, understand the proper meaning such categories receive from the message and deeds of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Knows the relationship between the human history and the history of salvation, gaining from the latter the Christian point of view on the human existence in time</p>	
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The religious-existential-ethical (anthropological-existential) proficiency areas		
<i>First two years. The student:</i>	<i>Second two years. The student:</i>	<i>Fifth year. The student</i>
<p>Acknowledges the universal questions of Man: origin and future of the world and Man, good and evil, the meaning of life and death, hopes and fears of humanity, and the answers provided by Christianity also in comparison with other religions</p> <p>Elaborates on, in the light of the Christian revelation, the value of interpersonal relations and the following affections: authenticity, honesty, friendship, fraternity, hospitality, love, forgiveness and help in the context of the demands of the contemporary society.</p> <p>Acknowledges the ethical values of human life: the dignity of the individual, freedom of conscience, responsibility towards oneself, others and the world, and show openness</p>	<p>Analyzes in depth through a systematic reflection the most relevant questions of meaning: finitude, transcendence, egoism, love, suffering, solace, death, life</p>	<p>Acknowledges the role of religion in society and understands its nature in a perspective of constructive dialogue based on the principle of freedom of religion</p>

towards the quest for truth, justice and commitment for the common good and promotion of peace		
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The historical-cultural (historical-phenomenological) proficiency area		
<i>First two years. The student:</i>	<i>Second two years. The student:</i>	<i>Fifth year. The student:</i>
Reviews the main events of the history of the Church in the first millennium and grasp the importance of Christianity for the birth and development of the European culture.	<p>Knows the historical development of the Church in medieval and modern times; understanding its contribution to the development of culture, of civic values and fraternity as well as to the historical causes behind divisions and the commitment to recompose the unity of the Church.</p> <p>Knows within a context of complex cultural pluralism, the orientation of the Church in matters such as the relationship between conscience, freedom and truth particular seen in relation to bioethics, employment, social justice, ecological issues and sustainable development.</p>	Inquires about the relationship between the Church and the contemporary world with reference to the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century and to their fall, to the new religious scenarios, to globalization, immigration and new communications forms.

The skills the students are expected to obtain during the first two years, second two years and fifth year can thus also be summarized and categorized with respect to the three analytical categories mention above:

1) Religious-dogmatic skills:

- to "acknowledge the value" of Christian-catholic religious language in life and use it in the explanation of the contents of Christianity,
- to "correctly approach" and interpret the Bible,
- to "link" and "grasp the meaning of God's action in the history of Man",
- to "confront" him or herself with "the great truths of the Christian-catholic faith" incl. innovation promoted by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II.

- to understand the origin and nature of the Church and its action in the world (preaching, the sacraments, charity)
- to understand Christian-catholic concepts of marriage, family, relationship etc..

2) Religious-existential-ethical skills;

- existential reflections, ethical life choices and social-civic formation including inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, everything with a starting point in the Christian tradition and message

3) Historical-cultural skills:

- to be able to identify and differentiate, from other religious identities, Christian and Biblical references/symbols in artistic, literary and popular expressions..
- to describe and identify the encounter between the "universal Christian message" and different cultures
- to describe and identify the effects of such encounters in various social contexts, and (in the fifth year)
- to identify, "on the ethical-religious level", the "potentiality and risk" of economic, social and environmental developments, globalization, multi-culturalism and new technologies

(MIUR 2012a, our translation).

The curricula for the different types of school do not specify the contents of the teaching related to each area, but some can be derived from the proficiency and skills objectives as well as from the overall aims of the curricula.

At *the religious-dogmatic-theological* level, teaching during the five years must include the Roman Catholic Church dogmatics and teachings on:

- Central narratives in the Old and New Testament
- Church dogmatics on God, trinity, salvation history vs. human history and time
- Jesus Christ: life, message and meaning
- Origin, meaning and present-day relevance of central themes, language and dogmatics in the Bible

- The evangelical message and the Mystery of Easter
- Proper interpretation of the Bible, incl. distinguishing between the historical, literary and theological elements and with references to classical language sources
- Sacraments and Christian-Catholic ethical norms and social doctrines

The *historical-cultural* level includes:

- Hebrew roots of Christianity
- Origin and main events of the Church in the first millennium
- Church actions in the world: preaching, charity etc.
- The importance of Christianity for the birth and development of European culture
- Christian symbols in popular and artistic expressions
- Dialogues with different cultural and religious positions

In the second two years this is supplemented with:

- Historical developments of the Church in medieval and modern times
- Faith /Reason issues in relation to the history of philosophy and the scientific-technological progress
- The contribution of the Church to the development of culture, civic values, social work and fraternity
- Divisions within the Church (Christianity) and commitment to recompose the unity of the Christian Church and religion
- The perspective of the Church on conscience, freedom, bioethics, employment, social justice, ecological issues and sustainable development
- Encounters between the universal Christian message and different cultures and its social effects

In the fifth year

- Innovations of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II
- Role and nature of religion in society

- Relationship between the Church and the contemporary world incl. totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, new religious scenarios, globalization, immigration, new communication

During the five years, one may detect a tendency towards teaching more and more about historical-cultural issues, especially those connected to relations between the Catholic Church/religion and other religions and system of meanings, ethical and political issues and developments in contemporary society.

This tendency must be seen in connection with an opposite development on the *religious-existential-ethical* level that - in line with the overall aim of the compulsory education - is given more weight in the first two years. During the five years' period, the religious-existential-ethical level (in summary) is to include:

- Universal questions of man and answers provided by Christianity in comparison with the answers provided by other religions
- Christian ethical-religious and social-civic values in relation to human-rights values, peace and inter-religious/inter-cultural dialogue
- Christian ethical-religious values in relation to personal life and identity

The core contents area for IRC in the upper-secondary school, according to the curricula for the different school-types, is thus beyond a doubt the tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church with a focus on its dogmatic and ethical doctrines, Church history, as well as on the impact and contribution of the Catholic Church and its doctrines and values on personal identity formation, social relations and the culture and history of Europe and the world.

However non-specified 'other religions' and 'systems of meaning' incl. the history of philosophy, as well as ideologies in the 20th century are to be included with focus on comparison and dialogue related to existential-ethical questions and religious dogmatics.

4. Religion-related topics and themes in other upper-secondary school subjects

All pupils in upper-secondary school, no matter if they attend IRC or not, gain some kind of knowledge of religion, be it Christianity, including the Catholic Church, or some other religions, as a part of other subjects, not least History, Geography, Art History, and Literature.⁷

In the different types of *Licei*, *Storia* ('History') in the first two years includes the rising of Christianity and the diffusion of Islam. In the second two years universal powers (the Papacy and the Empire), the Church and religious movements and "the definitive crises of the religious unity in Europe" are to be taught (MIUR 2010a, 19, our translation).

In *Geografia* ('Geography'), a compulsory subject in the first two years, "cultural diversity (linguistic and religious)" is mentioned as a theme, and "diffusions of religions" are mentioned as part of a theme about the constitutions of modern states (MIUR 2010a, 20, our translation).

These historical-cultural perspectives are supplemented with proficiency areas about relations between religions, literature and art in the subjects *Letteratura* ('Literature') and *Storia dell'Arte* ('History of Arts'). In the first two years of 'Literature', the students shall engage with the fundamental works of classical antiquity, *inter alia* the Bible, and as part of the first expressions of Italian literature, religious poetry is to be included. 'History of Arts' is to be taught all five years in *Liceo Artistico*, *Liceo musicale e coreutico* and *Liceo scientifico* and in the last three years of *Liceo Classico*, *Liceo linguistico* and *Liceo delle scienze umane*. The first mentioned general competence of 'History of Arts' (in all *Licei*) is:

(...) a clear understanding of the relationship between the works of art and the historical situation in which they have been created, that is, the

⁷ See Giorda (2014) for a study of the representation of religions in history textbooks for licei

various links with literature, philosophical and scientific thoughts, politics, religion. (MIUR 2010a, 30, our translation)

Among specific learning objectives mention is made of “the first Christian art and the symbolic dimensions of the images” (MIUR 2010a, 31, our translation).

In *Liceo Classico*, *Liceo scientifico* and *Liceo delle scienze umane* the subject *Lingua e Cultura Latina* (‘Latin language and Culture’) is part of the first two years (all years in *Liceo Classico*). This subject includes understanding of the value of Roman antiquity for the European tradition and its various religious, political, ethical and aesthetic aspects, and the students shall obtain categories enabling them to “understand the mythological, artistic, literal, philosophical, political and scientific heritage common to the European civilization” (MIUR 2010a, 198, 229, our translation). In addition, the subject *Lingua e Cultura Greca* (‘Greek literature and culture’), is timetabled in all of the five years in *Liceo Classico*, and it too must include the mentioned aspects with regard to Greek antiquity. In *Liceo linguistico* a subject called *Lingua Latino* (‘Latin language’⁸) is part of the first two years, which together with the studies of Roman history focus on relations between “language of the law, politics and the sphere of religious worship” (MIUR 2010a, 259, our translation).

Historical and philosophical aspects of religions are part of the subject *Filosofia* (‘Philosophy’) which is part of the last three years in the different *Licei*. A general competence of this subject is to be able to address fundamental issues such as ontology, ethics and “the relationship of philosophy with the religious traditions.” In the two second years: “The examination of the development of thought in Hellenistic-roman era and of Neoplatonism will introduce the theme of the encounter between Greek philosophy and biblical religions” (MIUR 2010a, 20-21, our translation). It is also mentioned that the main representative philosophers of the late antiquity and Middle Age are Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas in the

⁸ This is not included in the economic-social option that can be offered at *Liceo scientifico* or applied sciences option in the *liceo delle scienze umane* (Eurypedia: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main_Page (last accessed April 2014))

framework of the patristic and scholastic traditions of philosophy. As part of nineteenth-century philosophy, the study of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche is emphasized, and among ten themes of the twentieth century (four themes must be chosen) "new theology and philosophy of Christian inspiration" is mentioned (MIUR 2010a, 21, our translation). In *Liceo delle scienze umane* a subject called *Scienze Umane* ('Human Sciences') includes anthropology and pedagogy and it is taught all five years. Anthropology includes (MIUR 2010a, 394, our translation):

- a) the various anthropological theories and their different concepts of culture.
- b) the various cultures in their multifaceted and peculiar aspects regarding their adaptation towards their surrounding environments, ways of knowledge, self-understanding and other-understanding, kinship and family structures, religious and ritual dimensions, economic and political organization.
- c) the great cultures-religions (*culture-religion*) in the world and their peculiar rationalization of the world.
- d) Research methods in the field of anthropology

Pedagogy includes:

- a) the rise of the culture of writing and education in the societies of the ancient world (Egypt, Greece, Israel),
- d) the Christian education of the first centuries
- e) education and monastic life.

Regarding the vocational and technical institutes, themes of religions are included in 'History'. One theme in the first two years is:

Cultures of the Antiquity and High Middle Age with reference to contemporary cultures different from those in Western Europe. Further insight might be provided with examples relating to cultures of the Ancient Near East, Jewish culture, Greek culture, Roman culture, the rising of Christianity, Roman barbarian Europe, economy and society in Europe Middle Ages, the rising and diffusion of Islam (..) (MIUR 2010b, 43, our translation)

The students are expected to obtain skills "to discuss and compare different interpretations of facts or historical, social and economic phenomena with reference

to contemporary reality” and “to recognize the historical origins of the main political, economic and religious institutions of the contemporary world and their inter-relationships” (MIUR 2010b, 43, our translation).

In summary, the teaching of religion or religion-related themes in other subjects in upper-secondary school can be classified as primarily *historical-cultural*. In the *Licei*, the students shall acquire knowledge about the rising of Christianity, the Church (not specified), the Papacy as universal power, the Bible, Christian poetry and Christian art as artistic and literary works fundamental to Western Civilization, Christian inspired philosophy and new theology as well as the encounter between Greek philosophy and Christianity. The students shall also learn about the religious schisms in Europe. The Roman antiquity (and the Greek) with its religious-mythological aspects is also to be included and stressed as a fundamental value for ‘the common heritage’ of Europe. The teaching shall also include diffusion of Islam and diffusion of religions as a factor in the Constitution of and early colonization the USA.

As in the case of IRC, unspecified ‘religious movements’, ‘religious traditions’, ‘religion’ and ‘cultural-religious diversity’, and, in *liceo delle scienze umane*, also ‘world culture-religions and their rationalization of the world’ are to be included, and ‘biblical religions’ are mentioned explicit in relation to their ‘encounter’ with Greek philosophy.. The teaching of ‘History’ in the technical and vocational institutes includes the rising of Christianity and Islam, the diffusion of Islam and cultures in the antiquity and High Middle Ages different from those in Western Europe. A theoretical-methodological approach to ‘culture’ is given in ‘Social sciences’ in *liceo delle scienze umane*, but otherwise theoretical and methodological perspectives on the concept of religion are not mentioned as part of the teaching in the curricula for the upper-secondary school

5. Alternative RE subjects in upper-secondary school

As narrated by Mazzola (2014) and Giorda (2013), the RE situation in Italy has, as in other European countries, been debated and criticized. According to Mazzola and

Giorda, scholars, educators and teachers are arguing for another kind of non-confessional RE, and several projects and initiatives have introduced alternative subjects about religion(s) or a new compulsory non-confessional RE so far, though, with no success as regards the national normative and legislative framework. (Giorda 2013, 184-185, 194). One of the projects at the regional level, mentioned by Mazzola (2014: 114-118) is the implementation of a 'History of Religion' course initiated in Turin 2008-09 and in 2011-12 expanded to six *licei* in Turin. The project was implemented by Giorda now coordinating the teaching with the support of the *Centro di Scienze Religiose* of Turin University, the Foundation Benvenuti in Italia and the *UVAUniversolatro* group – an association of Italian students of science of religions.⁹ The course builds on different EU RE policy recommendations, including the *Toledo Guiding Principles* from OSCE/ODIHR (2007) and the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* issued by the Council of Europe (2008) and it is intended to also function as contribution to citizenship education as well as to inter-religious and inter-ethical dialogue. It is, however, also based on some of the principles for RE based on the Study of Religions as presented by e.g. Wanda Alberts (2007).

So far the course is scheduled to one hour per week each of the five years of upper-secondary school, and it is based on principles of "religious pluralism including non-religious choices" and comparison of religions as well as "the relationship between religion, democracy and international rights". The content includes introduction to historical and scientific approaches and terminology to religion and religions, representation of "the world's major religions" (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism) and other religious or non-religious traditions as well as contemporary challenges and views including reflections of "pluralism of faiths" and categories as "syncretism, multicultural rights, laity and interfaith dialogue" (Giorda and Guerrisi 2013).

⁹ The background and curriculum for this course is presented by Giorda and Guerrisi (2013). See also Giorda and Saggiaro (2011)

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