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Baseline Study
Religious Education (RE) in Germany



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IERS Project. *Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*

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

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1. State, religion and RE

1.1. State and religion

The primary legal sources for the regulation of the relation(s) between the state and religion(s) in Germany are the relevant federal laws (Bundesrecht) of the German Federal Republic ('Bundesrepublik Deutschland') and the laws ('Landesrecht') of the 16 German Federal States ('Bundesländer' or 'Länder'). The German constitution, the so-called Basic Law (Grundgesetz, GG) deals with religion and religious education ('Religionsunterricht') in several articles. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in GG Article 4, 1 and 2. Article 140, incorporating Articles 136, 137, 138, 139 and 141 of the German Constitution of August 11, 1919 [Weimar Constitution], further elaborates on freedom of religion and on the civil and political rights of the citizens, and, in Article 137, 1, it prohibits the establishment of a state religion: " There shall be no state church".

This separation of state and religion, nevertheless, is far from absolute. The preamble to the German constitution reads:

Im **Bewusstsein seiner Verantwortung vor Gott und den Menschen** [...] hat sich das Deutsche Volk kraft seiner verfassungsgebenden Gewalt dieses Grundgesetz gegeben. (emphasis added).

While the constitutional separation of state and religion, with its accompanying basic principles of 'secularity, neutrality, and parity', does prevent the state from interfering in the internal matters of the religions (and vice versa), it does not prevent the German state from (close) cooperation with religion(s), especially those religious institutions that have acquired status and rights as a legal person.

1.2 State, religion and RE

The perhaps most manifest constitutional evidence of (close) cooperation concerns religious education (RE) in public schools.

GG Article 7, 1-5, dedicated to school education of the GG, states:

(1) The entire school system shall be under the supervision of the state.

(2) **Parents and guardians shall have the right to decide whether children shall receive religious instruction** (German:'Religionsunterricht') (emphasis added)

(3) **Religious instruction shall form part of the regular curriculum in state schools**, with the exception of non-denominational schools. **Without prejudice to the state's right of supervision, religious instruction shall be given in accordance with the tenets of the religious community concerned.** Teachers may not be obliged against their will to give religious instruction.(emphasis added)

(4) The right to establish private schools shall be guaranteed. Private schools that serve as alternatives to state schools shall require the approval of the State and shall be subject to the laws of the Länder. Such approval shall be given when private schools are not inferior to the state schools in terms of their educational aims, their facilities, or the professional training of their teaching staff, and when segregation of pupils according to the means of their parents will not be encouraged thereby. Approval shall be withheld if the economic and legal position of the teaching staff is not adequately assured.

(5) A private elementary school shall be approved only if the educational authority finds that it serves a special pedagogical interest or if, on the application of parents or guardians, it is to be established as a denominational or interdenominational school or as a school based on a particular philosophy

and no state elementary school of that type exists in the municipality. (Official translation; italics and bold ours)

Apart from the few Länder that may claim special rights in accordance with the so-called "Bremen Clause" in Article 141 ("The first sentence of paragraph (3) of Article 7 shall not apply in any Land in which Land law otherwise provided on January 1, 1949.") Article 7, then, pertains to *all* public schools in *all* Länder, and all the Länder within their own 'Landesrecht' must comply with these statutes that establish the close cooperation between state and religion(s) in regard to the establishment of, teaching and contents of, confessional RE ('Religionsunterricht') in public state schools.

The cooperation between the state, the state (public) school and the educational school authorities on the one side, and the religious societies on the other, is, with reference to Article 12 of the 1924 Staatsvertrag, GG Articles 140 and. 7 , 3 an example of what is called 'res mixta', i.e. an affair run by both the state and the religious institution in question: the last mentioned is and must¹ be responsible for contents and didactics, i.e. the curriculum, the state for the inclusion thereof in the school and for covering the costs. That it must be a part of the regular curriculum, an 'ordentliches Lehrfach', also implies that it must not only be in accordance with the tenets of the religion in question but also with what is called the 'Freiheitlich-demokratische Grundordnung' and other basic needs. Students are passing exams and are graded. The confessional character, thus, shows in regard to the curriculum, to the teachers' own confession and their training, and to the pupils attending.² In principle, the confessional RE therefore is neither *Religionskunde* (non-confessional study of religions RE), nor inter-religious or inter-cultural RE.

¹ The 'must' is important and the importance shows also by way of the fact that Bavarian Islamic RE is formally not a confessional RE according to Art. 7,3 of the German Grundgesetz. The main reason is that the curriculum has been developed by state institutions because of the lack of a recognized Islamic body. Therefore, Bavarian law experts call it "religionskundlich" although it is meant to be in line with Art. 7,3 on confessional RE. It thus has the official status of a 'Modellversuch'.

² Pupils or students who are not members of an institutionalised religion or confession may be allowed to join the classes on confessional RE. The German Länder have different regulations in that regard.

Religionsunterricht is thus to be offered - with a state guarantee - as a school subject in the public schools (state schools as well as private schools) at the same time as freedom of religion is also guaranteed. Consequently, it is, after all, not a *totally* normal school subject: there has to be a possibility for the parents/pupils to opt out if for some reason they do not want confessional RE.³

Therefore, the Länder offer an alternative to Religionsunterricht. This 'Ersatzfach' has various names and its contents also varies to some degree from Land to Land. The most widespread names are 'Ethik', but some places it is named, respectively, 'Ethikunterricht', 'Allgemeine Ethik' or 'Werte und Normen'. Also 'Philosophy' may serve as an alternative to Religionsunterricht, and sometimes the subject and its name depends on whether it is offered in primary or secondary school and/or Gymnasium. Whatever the name, this subject often includes some teaching about religion(s).⁴

While the teachers teaching confessional Religionsunterricht are trained primarily at relevant theological university departments and also have to be formally approved by the religious society in question,⁵ teachers teaching the alternative are often educated with a mixture of Philosophy, Study of Religions and Social Science as their three basic academic disciplines.⁶

While the confessional Religionsunterricht primarily is linked to, respectively, the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Protestant ('Evangelisch') Church, post WW2 developments towards a more multi-confessional and multi-religious situation have

³ In Bavaria students can opt out independently of their parents only from the age of 18 according to BV Art. 137, 1. See also Art. 46 Abs. 4 BayEUG. However, if the students exit the church, and they may do so already at age 14, there is no obligation to participate in Religionsunterricht. In that case, though, the student must participate in the alternative subject offered.

⁴ See NN for Ethik in Germany and NN NN for Ethik in Bavaria.

⁵ The terms for this approval or authorization are *vocatio* for the RE teachers teaching the Lutheran-Protestant RE, and *missio canonica* for those teaching Catholic RE. In regard to Muslim RE (which has recently been introduced as a 'Schulversuch' or regular school subject in several regional states) the authorization is called *ijāza*.

⁶ In the regional state of Bavaria, "Ethik" is not recognized as a normal subject for teacher training – such as Mathematics, English or "Katholische" or "Evangelische Religionslehre", but only as an "Ergänzungsfach" (additional subject), see: Lehrerprüfungsordnung XXX. At the same time, a training in Religionswissenschaft is not provided for "Ethik"-students, except in Munich and Würzburg.

paved the way for more religions and confessions taking advantage of the state guarantee for confessional RE in public schools.

The various Länder may have various regulations for what it takes to establish such confessional RE. In Lower Saxony, for example, a number of 12 pupils from the same religion/confession is needed for the school to be obliged to establish RE in accordance with that religion or confession. In Bavaria, in cases where there are not enough students in the class (e.g. for confessional Jewish RE, confessional Serbian Orthodox RE and some more kinds of confessional RE) the state pays the respective rabbi, or minister, for teaching the pupils privately in the synagogue, or in the church. A problem that arises in line with this development, of course, is that some of the religious institutions entitled to have their own confessional RE may not have appropriate venues for a proper academic education of qualified teachers. Another problem may be that e.g. the Muslims in question do not pertain to an *institutionalized* Muslim religious organisation that can be regarded as a 'legal person' for the state to make legally binding agreements with.

Likewise, secularization and globalization, religious and cultural pluralization and individualization have also paved the way for *discussions* about the confessional system and for subjects dealing with religion and ethics in ways that might be non-confessional and more study-of-religions like, including teaching about religions, ethics and philosophy in a more comprehensive way.

Other new ways of doing things, like in Hamburg, are in line with the confessional way of approaching religion. E.g. the demand that RE teachers be members of the protestant church. However, the teaching includes more than one religion and aims at including pupils from various religions in the same class thus aiming at a combination of *instruction* in the various faiths of the pupils with a teaching *about* religion that may lead to inter-faith or inter-religious understanding and learning *from* religion.

While central to the Hamburg 'Religionsunterricht für alle', this inter-religious aim also is partly included in many of the more regular confessional kinds of RE where

pupils, from the perspective of their own religion, learn about other religions with the aim of paving the way for understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

1.3. Religions and religiosity in Germany and in Bayern

Before taking a look at RE in one Land, namely Bayern, followed by a very brief mentioning of the special situations in Bremen, Brandenburg and Hamburg, mention can be made of the (almost up-to-date) current situation as regards religion and religious affiliation in Germany. Mention is made of the largest groups only, and the figures are all based on the information found at the website of REMID and thus on their statistics, mostly as of 2011 and 2012, some, though, as of 2014. Besides, use has been made of recent numbers given by Bochsinger and Rüpke (forthcoming, p. 6-7 with notes).

Catholics belonging to the Roman-Catholic Church, Lutherans belonging to the so-called 'Evangelische Landeskirchen', and people who do not belong ('Nones'), or who are declared atheist constitute the three largest 'groups', each with some 24 million 'adherers'. The total population of Germany being some 80 million.

The number of Muslims in Germany is close to 4 mill, while the number of Jews is some 110.000, of Hindus some 120.000 and of Buddhists some 270.000. The number of people one way or the other engaged in alternative forms of religion and so-called spirituality may be about 1 mill. But there really is no way to count these people who may also be members of some church. Mention may be made also of a growing number of Orthodox and Oriental Christians. They may amount to something close to 1.4 million people if all groups mentioned by REMID are added to each other.

Other ways of estimating the religion and religiosity of Germans can add some nuance to this picture. A 2002 ALLBUS questionnaire dealing with the self-identification of Germans asked to the degree to which the respondents considered themselves more or less religious (rendered in a 2011 publication by religion scholar V. Krecht): Some 53 % saw themselves as more non-religious than religious, while

some 48 % saw themselves as more religious than non-religious. It should be noticed, however, that this almost 50/50 situation is complicated by the fact that 22.6 % are very clear when answering 'non-religious' while the same clear answer as to the opposite is but 9.7 %. When asked about their ideas about god/God, 23 % say they believe in a personal God, 31% in some supernatural power or divine being, 15% say they are agnostics, while 31% answers that they are atheists.

Bochinger and Rüpke (2015 forthcoming, p. xx) notices the situation in the regions formerly belonging to the former German Democratic Republic: here church membership is the lowest in Europe – and maybe in the world (Müller and Pollack 2009, 413), and explicit mention is made of the federal state of Thuringia with its capital Erfurt. Here the number of non-confessionals amounts to 68% (Catholics: 8%, Protestants: 24%), and in big cities in the North and West of Germany, especially Berlin and Hamburg, the situation is similar. Even in regional states, Bochinger and Rüpke write, with high rates of church membership (in particular: the southern states Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg), "a majority of church members is fairly distanced from the respective confessions.

Since we are focusing on RE in Bavaria, a few more words on the religions and religious affiliation in Bavaria may be appropriate: The post-World War II population in Bavaria has, as is the case in many other places in Europe, become much more variegated. In the course of the flight and expulsion of some 12 million ethnic Germans Eastern and South-Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1950, some two million 'Deutschmährer', 'Deutschböhmen', and Deutschschlesier ('Sudetenduetchen') found a new home in Bavaria. The recruitment of guestworkers from southern and South-Eastern Europe and from Turkey in the 60s and 70s, the reception of refugees from conflict regions (mainly from the former Yugoslavia) in the 90s, the influx of ethnic or partly ethnic Germans (so called Russlanddeutsche, Kasachstandeutsche, Kirgistanddeutsche etc.) from the USSR or after 1990 from its successor states, the admission of Jewish quota refugees and the settling of EU foreigners as well as intra-German migration have changed the religious as well as intra

confessional/denominational composition of the Bavarian population. This also shows in the statistics as regards religious affiliation.

As of 2011 (see https://www.statistik.bayern.de/medien/statistik/zensus/pk_zensus13_faltblatt_www.pdf as well as http://www.bayern-evangelisch.de/www/ueber_uns/die-bayerische-landeskirche-in-zahlen.php) some 6.82 million people (55% of the total population of 12.4 million people) in Bavaria adheres to the Roman-Catholic Church, and some 2.51 million (20.1%) to the Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche. 3 million adheres to another religion or confession or to none.

Out of the (2012) some 355.552 pupils in the gymnasium in Bavaria, some 58% are Catholics, some 27% Lutheran-Protestants, some 3% Muslim, 1% Christian Orthodox, and some 11% belong to another or to no confession or religion.

1.4 The Educational System⁷

Responsibility for the education system is in the main delegated to the Länder. There are thus differences between the educational systems of the various Länder, also in regard to RE, but the general picture is this: Pupils have to attend compulsory school for nine (or ten) years, beginning at the age of six. The system is divided into primary school ('Grundschule'), secondary (Sekundarstufe I and upper-secondary (Sekundarstufe II) school, with primary school covering mostly 4 years (some places six). The tertiary sector then is comprised by higher education.

Already in secondary school (grades 5-9/10), the system in general operates with different (often three) 'paths' for the pupils to choose between. One of the possible paths can be the gymnasium ('gymnasialer Bildungsgang'). Of primary interest to this project, however, is the upper-secondary gymnasium, grades 10-12 or 11-13. The upper-secondary gymnasium closes with an so-called 'Abitur' or 'Abiturprüfung', i.e. the certificate that proves that you have passed the relevant exams and that serves also as the certificate that allows you to enter higher education (and some

⁷ See the information provided by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Federal Republic of Germany, abbreviated KMK ('*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*') at <http://www.kmk.org/bildung-schule.html>

professions). Normally the first year is an introductory basic year, while the next two allows for some kind of specialisation. The subjects are divided into compulsory subjects and electives. RE ('Religionsunterricht') or the alternative ('Ethik' or the like) figure at the bottom of the list of normal, compulsory school subjects, together with German; Foreign Languages; Math, Natural Science, and Technics; Social Science.⁸

2. RE in Bavaria - In General and with Special Focus on the Gymnasium, especially 'Sekundarstufe II'⁹

2.1. Constitutional and other legal regulations and contexts

As in the German Constitution (GG, see above), the 1946 constitution of Bavaria (*Bayerische Verfassung, BV*) in its preamble has a mentioning of 'God'. In BV it says:

Angesichts des Trümmerfeldes, zu dem eine Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung ohne Gott, ohne Gewissen und ohne Achtung vor der Würde des Menschen die Überlebenden des Zweiten Weltkrieges geführt hat, [...] gibt sich das Bayerische Volk [...] nachstehende [...] Verfassung

In accordance with this, the BV (Art. 131, 1-3) also states that the school is supposed to not just provide knowledge and competences. It shall also help form the heart and character of the pupils, and the ultimate aim of education is „Ehrfurcht vor Gott“ and „Achtung vor religiöser Überzeugung und vor der Würde des Menschen“. The pupils are to be educated and edified "im Geiste der Demokratie, in der Liebe zur bayerischen Heimat und zum deutschen Volk und im Sinne der Völkerversöhnung."

In regard to the gymnasium in Bavaria, and to RE, mention may be made also of the following description of the profile and claims:

The teaching in the gymnasium [...] also provides the pupils with moral guidance ('Wertorientierung') related to their search for meaning and

⁸ <http://www.kmk.org/bildung-schule/allgemeine-bildung/faecher-und-unterrichtsinhalte.html>

⁹ For the Bavarian school system in general, see <https://www.km.bayern.de/education-in-bavaria.html>

orientation. This includes making them aware of the religious dimension ('der religiösen Dimension') of human life. By way of encountering the European culture, rooted in Greek-Roman Antiquity and in the Judaic-Christian tradition, and positively influenced also by contacts with Arabic culture ('arabischen Kulturraum'), the pupils - in combination with contemporary challenges - develop the faculties needed to master their own life with a sound judgment and self-assurance.¹⁰ (our translation)

After the war, the dominant Christian churches were seen also as key players in regard to the ethic-religious aspects of the post-war reconstruction, and in BV 133, 2 the churches are mentioned as important foundations of 'Bildung'.

Mention may be made also of the fact that Article 7, 3 of the Bayern law on education and upbringing ('Bayerischen Gesetzes über das Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesen' (BayEUG)) says:

In view of the historical and cultural characteristics of Bayern, each lecture room holds a crucifix. Thus, the will to realize the highest goal of education as expressed in the constitution, built on the foundation of Christian and Western values and respect for freedom of thought and conscience, is made manifest.

Nevertheless, all available information points to an increase in post-World War II pluralisation of religion, and the confessional RE pertaining to respectively the Catholic Church and the Lutheran-Protestant (Evangelische Kirche) has therefore been supplemented with (Christian) Orthodox confessional RE ('Orthodoxe Religionslehre'), Jewish confessional RE ('Israelitische Religionslehre'), Old-Catholic RE ('Alt-Katolische Religionslehre'), and Islamic RE ('Islamischen Unterricht'). The confessional RE in Bavaria thus turned into a plurality of mono-confessional RE or, with this wording in mind, a 'multi-confessional' RE-model. In all of the various kinds

¹⁰ See <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26350> (Profil und Anspruch des Bayerischen Gymnasiums 4, on 'Wertorientierung').

of confessional RE there is, furthermore, an element pertaining to some kind of information about and tolerance of other religions and worldviews.¹¹

The legal ground for *all* kinds of confessional RE in Bavaria, apart from the GG and the passages already quoted, is the BV Article 136, 2, that matches the GG Article 7, 3. It says:

Religious instruction shall form part of the regular curriculum in public schools, vocational schools, lower and higher educational institutions. It shall be given in accordance with the tenets of the religious community concerned. (official translation).

Furthermore, Art. 46 BayEUG states that the school supports parents in regard to the religious upbringing of their children, that school prayer and school worship, with the participation of pupils, may be part of such endeavors, and that the participants in the school community are obliged to respect the religious feelings of everybody.

The minimum number of pupils needed for the establishment of RE is five. But alternative arrangements outside the school can be found, e.g. state paid RE taking place in a synagogue or in the buildings of other small congregations. Opting out of RE (Religionsunterricht) must be made in writing and normally no later than at end of the previous school year.

Pupils who do not belong to any of institutionalized religious community may be admitted to attend the confessional RE if the religious community in question approves of it and there are no other administrative obstacles. The same holds good for pupils belonging to a religious community not having its own state supported confessional RE established. In this case an application from this religious community is also needed.

¹¹ According to Bochsinger (2013a, p. 283, note 10) this is the case especially in Islamic RE in Bavaria where the confessional curriculum has additional elements like 'Religion und Menschenrechte', "Sinnstiftung gegen den Missbrauch", and "Friedenspflicht gegen die Gewalt".

If pupils leave the classes in confessional RE in the midst of a school year, they have to pass an exam in that part of the contents of the alternative subject Ethics ('Ethik') that has been taught at the time when they left confessional RE.

2.2. Catholic Confessional RE: 'Katholische Religionslehre'

The Education of Catholic RE-teachers

The so-called 'Kultusministerkonferenz'¹² drafts and issues a national curriculum for the subjects and the subject-related didactics pertaining to the education of teachers for the confessional Catholic RE, thus aiming at ensuring a common set of subject-related competences. It also lists the contents of the education in regard to Biblical Studies (Old and New Testament), Church History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology and Subject-Related Didactics.

Thus Catholic RE-teachers in the gymnasium in Bavaria go through an (nine semester) education in Catholic Theology as a 'Studien-' and 'Unterrichtsfach', including the above mentioned, an education offered at many Bavarian universities, for example in Munich, Augsburg and Erlangen.

In addition, future teachers are educated in a second school subject (e.g. German or History) and will teach both subjects in the schools. A first exam in both subjects is followed by a two-year preparatory position and a second state exam in both subjects, and following that and the above mentioned *Missio canonica*, i.e. the endorsement by the Catholic Church, the teacher can get a position and serve as a public servant. *Missio canonica* is given in line with a specific set of rules related to „Katholische Religionslehre“.

However, the right to teach Catholic confessional RE can also be given to employees in the Catholic church, e.g. ministers, chaplains, or 'Pastoralreferenten'. Such teachers are trained even more intensively than 'regular' RE-teachers in Roman

¹² A so-called standing 'Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland' (Abbreviation: KMK (Kultusministerkonferenz), is a political institution responsible for the coordination of the educational and cultural politics of the 'Bundesländer' in the German 'Bundesrepublik'.

Catholic theology but they have not been educated in didactic nor do they have a second school subject. So-called 'Gestellungsverträge' (special agreements between the Land and the church/diocese/bishopry) make it legal for the church to allow such personnel to teach RE in the school, and these agreements, furthermore, regulate the reimbursement by the state of the salaries first paid by the church to such personnel.¹³

General Aims and Profile of Catholic RE:

The Secretariate to the German 'Bischofskonferenz' produced in 2003 a detailed description of the fundamentals of Catholic RE in the upper-secondary school (Gymnasium Sekundarstufe II), which is valid for all regional states in Germany¹⁴:

In the 'Grundlagenplan', it is said (our translation), inter alia, that

"Religion and religiosity is part and parcel of human life", and a central aim of the RE is provide 'religious competence', inter alia "a responsible way of handling one's own religiosity in its various dimensions". (*ibid.* pp. 11-12).

The 'identity' or 'self-understanding' of Catholic RE is described as follows:

In RE the life lived [by the pupils] must be brought together with the claims of faith. This must assist the pupil's personal development and give him or her 'guidance with regard to faith decisions and orientation in life' [...]. Knowledge of the situation of the [pupils] is needed for the pedagogics of RE to function, and this knowledge includes knowledge

¹³ See e.g. <http://www.gesetze-bayern.de/jportal/portal/page/bsbayprod.psml?showdoccase=1&doc.id=jlr-EUGBY2000V27Art61>

¹⁴ *Grundlagenplan für den katholischen Religionsunterricht" in der gymnasialen Oberstufe/ Sekundarstufe II*, Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, see http://www.bistum-muenster.de/downloads/Schule_und_Erziehung/2009/KuS145_3_Grundlagenplan.pdf See also the 2002 report on Catholic RE. The same basics are also found here.

about processes of 'individualisation', 'pluralisation', and 'de-traditionalisation'.

Having stated that today's life reduces human beings, viewing them and treating them as 'human resources', the Catholic RE must 'crack open' an alternative to the dominant 'Nutzenkalkül' and show the pupils the critical-emancipatory potential of the Christian faith vis á vis all kinds of totalitarian regimes.

This can be done in RE, it is said, by way of helping the pupils to critically (re-)view this view of man and world in the light of the Creator. [...] In spite of, it is further stated,

a growing distance between the youth and the institutions of tradition, a longing for commitment and faithfulness ('Verbindlichkeit und Treue'), a (latent) quest for understanding the meaning of life and suffering, and a search for happiness and truth is [nevertheless] evident. (our translation)

The basis (Grundlage) for the specter of tasks for Catholic RE is formulated as follows (ibid, p. 14) (our translation):

- RE (Religionsunterricht) awakens and reflects the search for God, for the understanding of the world, for the meaning and value of life and the norms for human action, and makes possible an answer based on revelation and the faith tradition of the church
- RE makes the pupils familiar with the reality of faith and Evangelium, i.e. with what is at the basis of life, and helps the pupils to meet the demands of the faith
- RE makes the pupil capable of individual decision-making in the face of the meeting with confessions and religions, worldviews and ideologies, and encourages understanding and tolerance in regard to the decisions of others.
- RE inspires to a religious life and to responsible action in church and society.

The learning aims are stated as follows (Ibid. p. 16): The pupils shall be capable of

- recognising religious issues in their own life and in social contexts
- dealing in a competent and methodic way with religious phenomena
- reflecting on and interpreting existential human experiences in their relation to God
- analysing and understanding the cultural importance of the Jewish-Christian tradition
- apprehending a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and familiarize themselves with the manifold contemporary religious and ideological traditions
- entering into dialogue with other Christian confessions and other religions and worldviews on the basis of the Catholic faith, to see differences and to learn to deal with them in a reflective manner
- recognizing and realizing the possibilities offered for identification with (aspects of) the Christian tradition
- reaching personal decisions, e.g. in regard to faith and way of living, on the basis of a critical examination of (different) religious and Christian values and norms
- taking upon themselves social responsibility in regard to church and society on the basis of the biblical tradition and the Christian social ethics.

Aims and Profile of Catholic RE in Gymnasium (grades 5-12) in Bayern

What is written (see above) by the Deutsche Bischofskonferenz in regard to all German regional states, corresponds almost totally to what is stated on the website of the responsible Bavarian state institute regarding the profile of the subject in the

Bayern gymnasium today (curriculum as of 2008).¹⁵ The 'self-understanding' or the profile is explained as follows:

In Catholic RE, the young human beings with their various backgrounds enter into a dialogue with the faith of the church. Based on the Christian tradition, the pupils discover a religious approach to life, a unique approach not to be substituted by any other dimension of life [...]. They [the pupils] become intimate with the Christian roots of our Western culture and understand the basis of modern Europe. [...]

[Catholic RE] helps the believers among the pupils to reflect on and deepen their being Christian, and it spurs those young people who are searching for or disnaceddistanced? from the faith to relate to Christian positions and reflect on their own. As for those who turn out to be indifferent, it awakens a notion about the existential importance of religious questions. [...] (our translation) ¹⁶

In regard to the potentials for cooperation with other school subjects, the text states that Catholic RE is characterized by an ecumenical spirit, that opens the pupil for the totality of the Christian tradition, and for cross-confessional dialogue. It is not just able to cooperate with Protestant (Evangelische) 'Religionslehre'; it also entails encounters with people, living in our society today, who adhere to non-Christian religions, and together with other subjects it supports and develops the moral foundation of the pupils.

Catholic RE in the gymnasium builds on what has been taught in elementary school, and it is planned with regard to the continuous teaching throughout all grades. For this reason, it is difficult to just mention here the curriculum for upper-secondary

¹⁵ The reason, of course, being that it is the the Catholic Church and not the secular authorities that determines and is responsible for the curriculum. The secular Bavarian authorities only monitors that the curricula are in conformity with the constitution.

¹⁶ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26352>

school, and in what follows we thus have an overview of the gymnasium from grade 5 to 12.

The themes and knowledge areas that constitutes Catholic RE throughout and across the different grades are:

- The Message of the Bible: introducing a 'presentist' approach to the Bible, though the word of which God's relation to humankind becomes present. (Der Lernbereich *Biblische Botschaft* eröffnet einen situationsbezogenen Zugang zur Bibel, in deren Wort die Geschichte Gottes mit den Menschen gegenwärtig)
- Christian Belief and Worldview: relates the dogma of the Church in a way close to the experience and life-context of the adolescents. (Der Lernbereich *Christlicher Glaube und Weltdeutung* erschließt kirchliche Glaubenslehre erfahrungsnah und in Lebenskontexten der Heranwachsenden.)
- Christian Spirituality: inspires an open mind for expressions which in the form of prayer, meditation, worship and sacraments lead to the secrets of God (Der Lernbereich *Christliche Spiritualität* weckt Offenheit für Ausdrucksformen, die in Gebet, Meditation, Gottesdienst und Sakramenten zum Geheimnis Gottes hinführen.)
- Christian Ethics and Life Management: builds capacities for moral judgment and motivates to the orientation towards Christian values. (Der Lernbereich *Christliche Ethik und Lebensbewältigung* bildet ethische Urteilsfähigkeit aus und motiviert zur Ausrichtung an christlichen Wertvorstellungen.)
- Church History: being a Christian is framed in social and cultural aspects and connects the memory of the past with directions for contemporary life. (Der Lernbereich *Kirchengeschichte* betrachtet Christsein unter sozialen und kulturellen Aspekten und überprüft in erinnerndem Lernen heutige Orientierungen.)

- Interreligious and intercultural Learning: promotes a critical as well as tolerant consciousness and knowledge of other belief systems and worldviews (Der Lernbereich *Interreligiöses und interkulturelles Lernen* leitet zur Wahrnehmung fremder Glaubens- und Lebenswelten in kritischer Toleranz an.) (our translation)¹⁷

The teaching about and instruction in the Christian history, beliefs and life from the point of view of the Catholic Church is thus not rarely linked to the experiences and life of the pupils and it aims at their personal, moral, religious and spiritual development. At various points the meeting of the Church and Christians past and present with other religions or alternative religiosity are also to be taught. In view of the purpose of this analysis, we do not render the full text for the curriculum for each grade, from grade 5 to 12, but in what follows only lift out what may be seen as related to other religions as well as to a general attitude of the pupils towards religion and ethics in the world today (our translations):

- Grade 7: Cultures in transformation: the Christian Europe in the Middle Ages, Islam - the meeting with Muslims in our society. The pupils are supposed to learn about the key elements of Islam and about the necessary tolerance for living together. They learn about the similar as well as dissimilar elements in Islam and Christianity, also in regard to religious festivals.¹⁸
- Grade 8: Christian criteria for evaluation of new religious movements and so-called 'Psychokulte', also termed orientation (or guidance) in regard to what is called the 'Psychomarkt', or 'Sprituellen Supermarkt'.¹⁹
- Grade 10: Here there is, inter alia, teaching that deals with Christianity amidst the pluralism of religions and cultures, and the pupils shall compare e.g. Christian notions of the afterlife with other notions about afterlife. Far eastern religions are to be taught and compared with Christianity. Hinduism and Buddhism are mentioned

¹⁷ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26352>

¹⁸ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26288>

¹⁹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26269>

particularly, and so is teaching about the positive reception in the West of some of these religions and their tenets, practices and persons (e.g. reincarnation, meditation, Zen, Dalai Lama)²⁰

- Grade 11: Choice and options: religion and ethics in an open and pluralist society. The aim is to - based on his/her own apprehension of religious phenomena - get closer to an understanding of the role and function of religion for individuals and in society and to see and judge - from the outside as well as from their own religiousness - religion as an important factor and to develop their own position. This includes learning about religion in modern media, in art, literature, and to be able to discover what may be equivalent to religion. The new presence of religion, secularisation, freedom of religion, religious symbols in the public sphere, religious education, as well as ecumenical trends and interreligious dialogue, tolerance are matters to be taught and discussed. So are truth claims, and the plurality of truth claims, Kant and the definition of 'religion', the human being as 'homo religious', religious language and symbols, as well as criteria for the personal religious stance and for the search for truth.²¹

- Grade 12: Ethical competence from a Christian perspective: [life-] orientation in view of a pluralism of values: The perspective towards the religious and ethical pluralism of the world of the pupils is widened, at the same time as the teaching aims at stressing the Christian way of handling this pluralism as a challenge. It is thus an orientation also in various kinds of non-religious ethics and current ethical challenges as well as in the Christian ethics and the Christian answers to the challenges. In grade 12 the future and expectations about the future, of the pupils, the society and the world are dealt with, including eschatology and how to use Christian ethics to meet the challenges of the future. The final grade in Catholic RE in the gymnasium at 'Sekundarstufe II' is devoted to a six lectures summary of the Christian 'Credo'.²²

²⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26208>

²¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26175>

²² <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26175>

3. Other kinds of confessional RE in Bavaria

As indicated above, the system of confessional RE in Bavaria has become a plurality of mono-confessional RE or some kind of 'multi-confessional' RE, especially since there is now no longer 'just' a Protestant confessional RE next to the Catholic but also (Christian) Orthodox confessional RE ('Ortodoxe Religionslehre'), Jewish confessional RE ('Israelitische Religionslehre'), Old-Catholic RE ('Alt-Katholische Religionslehre'), and, as said, Islamic RE ('Islamischer Unterricht'), - even if the last mentioned may not (see note 1) officially be recognized as 'confessional RE'.

Apart from being based on and framed by the same general, German and Bavarian, constitutional and sub-constitutional and educational laws and regulations, including those aimed at confessional RE, the other kinds of confessional RE look a lot like Catholic confessional RE also as regards their profile and aims as these are staked out by the ecclesiastical authorities. The differences are due to the differences in confessions/doctrines, but they primarily regard those parts of the profile and aims that are most closely linked to dogmatics and the tradition of the church/confession. What they have in common is this: RE is meant to familiarize the pupils with the confession/faith/dogmas, rituals and history of the church/religion in question, and it is going to show the pupils that it is still relevant to modern life and society and to the life of the pupils themselves. The Christian identity and the personal development of the pupils as individuals and citizens are to be linked, and at the same time the pupils are supposed to realize that what is called 'the religious dimension' is fundamental dimension of all human life and that constitutes the foundation of true values and morals. Another common aim concerns the claim that Christian identity building can and must go hand in hand with learning about other religions, especially those that are currently part of the multi-cultural and multi-religious world and context of the school and the pupils. The learning about the other religions, however, is closely linked to the religion/confession of the pupils and seen from the

perspective of that religion, and it is intimately linked also to the building of a capability of the pupils to make the right personal choices in a world with a lot of possible worldviews and what is called - also in e.g. the texts of the Evangelical RE - 'a'Psykomarkt'. RE is, to put it briefly, meant to function as a religious, spiritual and moral 'supervisor' in order for the pupils to live their life in a more religious, spiritual and morally responsible manner.

Since the Protestant RE, with the Catholic, constitutes one of the two dominant kinds of confessional RE, not just in Bavaria but in Germany in general, we shall, nevertheless, take a closer look at that.²³ As for the other kinds of confessional RE, we shall say but a few words.

3.1. Protestant ('Evangelische') Confessional RE ('Religionslehre')

The Education of Evangelical RE-teachers

The education of the Protestant RE -teachers is very similar to that of Catholic RE-teachers. It takes place at the university departments for Protestant Theology. It takes some nine semesters (including Bible Studies, Church History, Systematic Theology, and Pedagogics of Religion), and it ends with the first so-called 'Staatsexamen'. The structure of the subject is, as the Catholic, in line with the 2008 state regulatives (LPO I) for the education of school teachers. Similarly to the Catholic case, the regulatives for "Evangelische Religionslehre" have been formulated by representatives of the "Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern" (ELKB) and integrated into the general framework of the LPO. A two-year preparatory position as teacher then again ends with the second 'Staatsexamen', and the teacher becomes a civil servant. Like their Catholic colleagues, the Protestant teachers also study a second school subject. The endorsement by the Protestant church is called 'Vocatio', and the 'Vocatio' is given in accordance with a specific set of rules by the

²³ Schieder (2013: 89ff), following an overview of Islamic RE in the Länder, including the problems related to the education of Islamic RE teachers at the German universities, discusses claims that German state guaranteed RE is saturated with a protestant 'spirit' (individualized, intellectual religion primarily understood as ethics) and that it serves, whether e.g. Catholic or Islamic, as a 'protestantization' of the pupils as well as of e.g. Muslim coming teachers trained at public universities.

church. Here too, the church has entered an agreement with the Land in order to be allowed to delegate the right to teach to e.g. school chaplains, ministers or the like who are not certified teachers and in the service of the church. Some of these persons have to add to their qualifications by way an in-service training program offered by the 'Religionspädagogisches Zentrum' of the Protestant Church of Bavaria. As in the Catholic case, the state will reimburse the salaries for those persons to the Protestant church.

The aforementioned 'Kultusministerkonferenz' (KMK) has provided a profile of competences for the teachers teaching Evangelical RE, and it also lists the contents: Bible Studies, Systematic Theology (Dogmatic, Ethics), Ecumenical Issues, World Religions and Worldviews as well as fundamentals of the pedagogics of religion and didactics of RE ('Religionsunterricht').²⁴

General Aims and Profile of Evangelical RE

Evangelical RE within the school must serve to communicate to the pupil the relevance of the Christian tradition in the contemporary world. Through RE, the church takes upon itself the responsibility for the education and edification ('Bildungsverantwortung') in the pluralistic society at the school level. RE functions within the framework and on the conditions of the school, and the responsibility for it is shared by the state and the church.²⁵(our translation)

²⁴ Cf. Sekretariat der Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed.) (2013), *Ländergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der Lehrerbildung* (Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 16.10.2008 i. d. F. vom 16.05.2013), 42-43.

²⁵ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26354>

From this follows certain aims for Evangelical RE. One of the general aims mentioned is (our translation):

informing about the Christian tradition and its Jewish roots, about the church past and present, about ecumenical and inter-religious issues, and about non-Christian and philosophical interpretations of man and life. It tries to direct the pupils towards a life-orientated relationship to the Biblical tradition.²⁶

As regards aims and contents, more specific mention is made of (our translation):

- Acquaintance with the Evangelical understanding of God and Man
- Qualified relationship ('sachgemässer Umgang') with the Bible and key formations of the Christian tradition
- Confrontation with existential questions of meaning and faith ('Glaubens- und Sinnfragen')
- Meeting the reality of the Church and its manifold possibilities
- Meeting non-Christian religions and worldviews
- Approaches to religious art and spirituality
- Understanding the role and meaning of religious, especially Christian traditions in society, e.g. in the arts and in modern literature.²⁷

As for the aims and contents of the various levels/grades in the gymnasium, the following may be highlighted (our translation)

Grade 5 and 6: Christianity and Christian dogmas and narratives mostly, but in grade 6 also something about 'religious festivals' of other religions in order to compare them with the Christian festivals of the year

²⁶ See the full text at <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26354>

²⁷ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26354>

Grade 7: Church and Church History up to the Reformation, plus Islam: Belief, rituals, festivals, history, - and development of the pupils own position in relation to issues linked to understanding(s) of the sacred texts, Jesus, the role of women, attitudes to war, fate et al.

Grade 8: Life in the light of the creation of God, Reformation, and new religious movements and so-called 'Psychomarkt', including Scientology, and an aim to give the pupils the means to make the right choices, i.r. disregard the many offers from new and esoteric religions that are attractive, e.g. because they offer simple answers to complicated questions in a complicated world

Grade 9: Judaism; various Christian themes; work and effectivity; state and church, past and present

Grade 10: Approaches to the Bible; Religion and religions (including the challenges of a plurality of religions and questions about the truth claims of the religions; tolerance; Buddhism; death and afterlife, also in non-Christian traditions; moral and ethical issues and approaches.

Grade 11/12: Mostly epistemological and existential and moral questions pertaining to the Christian truth (claim) and to philosophical thinking too. Closely linked to the identity-building of the pupil as well as the personal image and relationship to God. Other images of god, from other religions also included.²⁸

²⁸ See for grades 10/11 <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentsev/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26176> and move from there by way of the links to the left to the precious grades.

3.2. Orthodox confessional RE ('Ortodoxe Religionslehre'), Jewish confessional RE ('Israelitische Religionslehre'), Old Catholic²⁹ RE ('Alt-Katholische Religionslehre), and, as said, Islamic RE ('Islamischer Unterricht').³⁰

Due to the small numbers of pupils,³¹ it is often difficult to establish the confessional RE of the above mentioned religious/confessional communities (apart from the Islamic) within the school. Quite often, therefore, the sparse RE given becomes unattractive to the pupils and an evil circle may lead to the RE in case being interrupted, and the pupils instead attending the kind of confessional RE offered or the alternative to confessional RE, Ethik.³² While this may be a problem for the Christian communities as well as the Jewish, the number of Muslim pupils and of Muslim parents wanting to have a confessional RE established is higher, especially in the densely populated urban areas. So far, however, the Islamic RE still has the status of a pilot project, and problems are many: what kind of Islam is to be taught (sunni, shia, alevi), which organisation(s) represents what Muslims, and what about the teachers' education?

²⁹ The stronghold of the Old Catholic (Alt-Katholische) Church in Bavaria is amongst populations of 'Deutschböhmen' and 'Deutschmährer'. The church is a member of the 'Utrechter Union der Altkatholischen Kirchen'. It is recognized by the German state and it has status as a legal person. The origins of the Old Catholic Church can be traced to reactions to certain dogmatic decisions taken at Vatican I, 1870. See the self-understanding on the website <http://www.altkatholiken-rosenheim.de/alt-katholisch.html>

³⁰ The Alevi community also has its own confessional RE

³¹ According to Kothmann 2007, p. 63 the number of pupils attending Neuapostolische Religionslehre in gymnasium in Bavaria in 2004/5 was 138, the number attending Orthodox RE 80, while 286 pupils attended Jewish RE. It must be remembered that the demand to have the school in question establish the confessional RE must come from a sufficient number of parents, and even if there is a sufficient number of parents adhering to the religious community in question, they may not be interested in RE or they may judge it more valuable for their children to attend to another kind of RE or the alternative, Ethik.

³² The 'Neuapostolische Kirche in Süddeutschland' had its RE, also in gymnasium, interrupted in 2009/2010 because the number of pupils was not sufficient. According to the website of the church, the pupils now attend the confessional RE that is offered at the school in question or the alternative to confessional RE, Ethik. See <http://www.nak-sued.de/wer-wir-sind/gemeinschaft-erleben/kinder/unterricht/>.

The Bavarian authorities granted Old-Catholic confessional RE status as an ordinary school subject in 1994. It is the 'Alt-Katholische Kirchengemeinde Rosenheim' that is responsible for RE and for a teacher certificate.

Orthodox RE was granted status as an ordinary school subject in 1983/84. A program in Orthodox RE is offered as an additional subject at the Wilhelms-Universität Münster and in the University of Munich. The Orthodox 'Bischöfskonferenz' (formerly known as KOKiD) in Germany is responsible for the Orthodox RE. Responsible for the implementation in the various 'Länder' on behalf of the 'Bischöfskonferenz' in some places may be so-called 'Länderkoordinatoren'.

The training of the teachers for Jewish RE (Israelitisch Religionslehre) takes place at the 'Hochschule für Jüdische Studien' in Heidelberg. It takes 10 semesters, and it ends with 'Staatsexamen'. It is the 'Landesverband der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Bayern' that is responsible for the Jewish RE.

The teacher training for Islamic RE has since 2002/2003 been located with the 'Interdisziplinären Zentrum für Islamische Religionslehre' at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, often called the 'Erlanger – Modell'.³³ It is the same 'Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Islamische Religionslehre' Erlangen that is responsible for the Islamic RE.

At the moment, the 'Kultusministerkonferenz' (KMK) has not issued a standard for the demands pertaining to the respective academic subjects and the subject-related didactics of the orthodox, Jewish and Old Catholic RE. Profiles, self-understanding, and curricula (also for the various grades) of the mentioned confessional kinds of RE all show the common characteristics described above.³⁴ Worth noticing may be the very explicit mentioning in the profile for the Islamic RE that the teaching about 'other religions', in the thematic area number 7 with the same name, is, as the curriculum in general, directed towards inter-religious understanding and based upon

³³ See http://www.izir.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1

³⁴ For Orthodox RE, see <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=27514>; for Jewish RE, see <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26982>; for the Old Catholic RE, see <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=27042>;

a notion of religion as manifold phenomenon, and the teaching therefor aims at a solidaric (emic) description of the other religions³⁵.

4. Ethics (Alternative to Religionsunterricht/Ersatzfach Ethik)

As is now clear, confessional RE (Religionsunterricht) is thus to be offered - with a state guarantee - as a school subject in public schools in Germany at the same time as freedom of religion is also guaranteed. Consequently, it is, after all, not a *totally* normal school subject: there has to be a possibility for the parents/pupils to opt out if for some reason they do not want confessional RE.³⁶

Therefore, the Länder offer an alternative to Religionsunterricht. This 'Ersatzfach' or alternative has various names and its contents also vary to some degree from Land to Land. The most widespread name is 'Ethik', but some places it is named, respectively, 'Ethikunterricht', 'Allgemeine Ethik' or 'Werte und Normen'. Also 'Philosophy' may serve as an alternative to Religionsunterricht, and sometimes the subject and its name depends on whether it is offered in primary or secondary school and/or Gymnasium. Whatever the name, this subject often includes *some* teaching about religion(s). Sometimes mainly or with special focus on the moral or ethical dimensions of the religions.

While the teachers teaching confessional Religionsunterricht are trained primarily at relevant theological university departments and also have to be formally approved by the religious society in question,³⁷ teachers teaching the alternative are often educated with a mixture of Philosophy, Study of Religions and Social Science as their three basic academic disciplines. But the education of teachers in Ethics is not equally well established in all Länder.

³⁵ See p. 4 at http://www.viuk.ch/files/Lehrplan_Bayern_-_Hauptschule.pdf

³⁶ In Bayern students can opt out independently of their parents only from the age of 18 according to BV Art. 137, 1.

³⁷ The terms for this approval or authorization are *vocatio* for the RE teachers teaching the Lutheran-Protestant RE, and *missio canonica* for those teaching Catholic RE.

4.1. 'Ethik' in Bavaria

General provisions

The school subject 'Ethik' was mentioned already in 1946 in the Bavarian Constitution (BV § 137, 2) as a subject for the pupils who did not participate in the confessional RE in order to provide them with teaching about the 'generally acknowledged moral principles'.³⁸ It is thus evident that the alternative is meant to do more than provide information about religion(s) and ethics from a non-confessional point of view: it is meant to function as some kind of substitute to a confessional RE conceived of as a provider of personal and societal moral formation, the 'construction' of a moral citizen. Consequently, it is not just optional: it is a must for the pupils who do not choose confessional RE.

It must also be remembered that 'Ethik' is, like confessional RE and other school subjects supposed to comply with the general religious and moral aims quoted above from BV § 131, 1-3.

The profile and self-understanding of the subject today

The profile and self-understanding of the subject today (§ 47, 1, BayEUG) reads:

The subject Ethik supports the quest of young people for a trustworthy moral orientation in today's world. It is based on the existential given: that human beings are in need of an ethical competence for making moral decisions.³⁹ (our translation)

Furthermore:

³⁸ "Für Schüler, die nicht am Religionsunterricht teilnehmen, ist ein Unterricht über die allgemein anerkannten Grundsätze der Sittlichkeit einzurichten".

³⁹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26356> . The German text reads: "Das Fach Ethik unterstützt die Suche jünger Menschen nach einer verlässlichen moralischen Orientierung in der Welt von heute. Es basiert auf der Grundsituation, dass Menschen für ihr Handeln auch eine ethische Entscheidungskompetenz benötigen."

The basic teaching aims are guided by the fundamental moral principles of Bavaria as these are reflected in the Bavarian as well as German constitution. *The subject, furthermore, takes notice of the pluralism of confessions and world views.* It is, more specifically, aware of its responsibility in regard to the words of the Bavarian Constitution (BV) § 131 [...]. For pupils who do not participate in 'Religionsunterricht', participation in Ethik is compulsory (§ 47, 1, BayEUG).⁴⁰ (our translation and emphasis)

The subject is time-tabled with two lessons per year. The profile operates with four key themes:

- I. The individual and the community ('Der Einzelne und die Gemeinschaft')
- II. Competence as regards judgment and action ('Urteils- und Handlungskompetenz')
- III. Religions and their ethics ('Religionen und ihre Ethik')
- IV. Professional ethics and interdisciplinary questions ('Bereichsethiken und interdisziplinäre Fragen')

In what follows we shall thus concentrate on key theme III.

Theme III: Religions and their ethics ('Religionen und ihre Ethik')

As for the aims and contents of the various levels/grades in the gymnasium, the following may be highlighted (our translation):

*Grade 5: Freedom, Decisionmaking, and Action*⁴¹

No mention of religion.

*Grade 6: Anthropology ('Menschenbild') and Ethics in Judaism and Christianity*⁴²

⁴⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26356>

⁴¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26328>

⁴² <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26313>

It is stated that Christianity is rooted in Judaism, that the Jewish-Christian traditions still influence European culture, and the pupils are supposed to develop sensitivity and tolerance vis a vis the various aims of the religious denominations.

Teaching about key figures in Jewish and Christian religion (Abraham, Moses, Jesus) and their geographic and historical settings, as well as about central narratives from the Old and New Testaments, and ethical prescriptions (e.g. Ten Commandments, love of God and your neighbour) and their relevance today.

*Grade 7.3: Anthropology ('Menschenbild') and Ethics in Islam*⁴³

It is said that the pupils must learn about key aspects of the ethics of Islam and learn how to relate to these with tolerance. The pupils must also deal with problems of integration and develop insight in aspects of Islamic culture, e.g. architecture.

Teaching about the life of Muhammad, the Quran as revelation, the five pillars and other duties. Furthermore, the teaching must provide knowledge about Islamic ways of life in various countries and to differentiate between traditional versus pro-western positions. Various kinds of Islamic art must be taught, and fundamental ethical sayings too. Likewise, the influence of Islam on Europe as regards science, art and daily life must be taught.

*Grade 7.4. Festivals and celebrations ('Feste'), their meaning and importance ('Bedeutung für die Gemeinschaft')*⁴⁴

Pupils must learn about the general importance of festivals, as sort of a trans-individual expressions of life ('Möglichkeit überindividueller Lebensgestaltung'), as well as of specific festivals pertaining to various cultures, and religions. Mention is made especially of Jewish, Christian and Muslim festivals, and the pupils must develop an open and tolerant attitude. It is said that Easter is the very best example of the possible pervasiveness of a festival.

⁴³ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26290>

⁴⁴ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26240>

Teaching about the celebrations (and the emotions and experiences linked to such) in connection with special occasions or events, celebrations of a private, cultural-religious or national nature (birthday, harvest festival, national holiday), and Jewish, Christian and Islamic festivals linked to the annual cycle.

*Grade 9.2. Religious Interpretations of life and its meaning ('Religiöse Sinndeutungen des Lebens')*⁴⁵

Linked to the search for the meaning of life, the pupils work with the basic ideas of Buddhism and Hinduism and compare these to the Abrahamic religions [the term is not our's but in the original].

Teaching about basic ideas of Hinduism, about karma and samsara and their impact on the understanding of life; the teaching of Buddha about the four noble truths and the middle path, and comparison with the Abrahamic religions especially with regard to differences between revelation and enlightenment, prayer and meditation.

*Grade 10.2. Philosophy of religion and comparison between the world religions*⁴⁶

More in-depth teaching about and comparison of the notions of the human being within Judaism, Christianity and Islam; the problematics of the theodicy; the truth claims of the religions and problems related to interreligious dialogue; contemporary positions within the tradition of criticism of religion ('Religionskritik'), e.g. Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Whitehead)

Education of Teachers for 'Ethik'

There is, at the moment, no definite and full program for the education of 'Ethik'-teachers at the universities, at least not one comparable as regards confessional

⁴⁵ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26240>

⁴⁶ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26210>

Catholic and Evangelical RE. There are no subject-specific standards issued by the KMK.⁴⁷

Up to 2002, the right to teach Ethik could be obtained via in-service training in prolongation of a teacher education in Dillingen. Since 2002 there has been some kind of training linked to lectures given weekly on themes relevant to the curriculum for Ethik in the gymnasium. At some Bavarian 'Hochschulen' (München, Regensburg, Augsburg) courses on respectively Philosophy/Ethics as an additional subject ('Erweiterungsfach') are offered. The students can thus take Ethics as an optional subject adding it to his/her two compulsory subjects. Ethics, thus, cannot replace a compulsory subject.⁴⁸

From the contents of the 'Erweiterungsfach' Ethik/Philosophie offered at Augsburg by the chair in 'Philosophie/SP Ethik' mention may be made of key sources for philosophical ethics, for the religious traditions, and for contemporary ethical discussions. The study is cross-disciplinary. The primary academic basis is Philosophy and philosophical Ethics. As for the dimension of religion in the school subject, it is Philosophy of Religion and Religionswissenschaft.⁴⁹

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

Cross-Curricular Aims and Learning

The teaching and learning aims mentioned for the specific school subjects and the specific grades include certain themes or aims that connect the different subjects and grades, and each subject in its own way are supposed to contribute to the learning aims. Worth mentioning with special regard to confessional RE, the alternative Ethik,

⁴⁷ The standing Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed) (2008), *Zur Situation des Ethikunterrichts in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Bericht der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 22.02.2008*, 8. Online at: http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2008/2008_02_22-Situation-Ethikunterricht.pdf

⁴⁸ <http://www.gesetze-bayern.de/jportal/portal/page/bsbayprod.psm1?showdoccase=1&doc.id=jlr-LehrPrOBY2008rahmen&doc.part=X>

⁴⁹ http://www.philso.uni-augsburg.de/studium/bayerisches-ethikstudium/Grundlagen/2_2_EW_Phil-Ethik/2_21_Phil-Ethik_als_St- und_U-Fach/

and the teaching related to teaching about religion that takes place in other school subjects (see below) are the following:

- Interkulturelles Lernen/Interkulturelles Verstehen und Handeln
- Religionen und Kulturen im Alltag entdecken
- Werte und Weltanschauungen

Geography

Apart from its possible contributions to the mentioned common themes and aims and its indirect links to teaching about religion and religion-related issues, explicit mention is made of the following in the curriculum and learning aims for the various grades:

- Grade 8 : Ad Orient/North Africa, Near and Middle East: teaching about this area as a 'Kulturraum' strongly influenced by Islam and as a 'Spannungsraum der Weltpolitik' with ethnic, religious, political and social conflicts. Also problems related to migration may be discussed.⁵⁰

Grade 12: Demographic transformations, including issues pertaining to migration and integration.⁵¹

History

Apart from its possible contributions to the mentioned common themes and aims and its indirect links to teaching about religion and religion-related issues, explicit mention is made of the following in the curriculum and learning aims for the various grades:

Understanding cultural diversity is said to be a part of profile of the subject, but at the same time it is stated that the subject contributes to "making the pupils conscious about the roots of our Christian-Western culture and their importance for the identity construction in state and society."⁵² Mention is made (same page) of the possibilities for cooperation with other subjects:

- Religionslehre, Ethik: Value orientation ('Wertorientierung'); the historical development of religions, confessions and denominations ('Kirchen').

As for the various grades:

- Grade 6: giving the pupils a basic notion of, inter alia: Egypt: Hieroglyphs, Pharaoh, and Pyramids; Polytheism; Monotheism [Beliefs in Egypt and in Judaism]; Judaism;

⁵⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26283>

⁵¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26548>

⁵² <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26390>

Greece: Polis, Aristocracy, Olympian Games, the Iliad and the Odysse; Hellenism; Rome: Consul, Republic, Emperor; Christianity: [from persecution to state religion; Islam [beginning and spread of]; Middle Ages; Monastic orders [as influential in terms of tradition of culture e.g.]. Proposals for going more in depth with certain themes are mentioned, and one such proposal to be mentioned is "Cult of the dead in e.g. Egypt, Roman empire, Christianity".⁵³

Grade 7: Humanismus and Reformation and 'religious wars ('Konfessionskriege'); 1517: beginning of Reformation; 1618-1648: Thirt Year War. Teaching supposed to foster capacities for peaceful living together with people with different religious and cultural backgrounds. European Middle Ages: religious confrontation and encounter of cultures at the time of the Crusades; marginalisation of 'others': Jews and Heretics.⁵⁴

Grade 9: Second World War and Nazism, includes teaching about the persecution and killing of Jews and other ethnic groups, and teaching about the aftermath includes teaching about Israel; Middle East conflicts.⁵⁵

Grade 10: 'World politics and developments in Germany from the 60s to the 80s' includes discussion about socialism and the role of the churches in DDR, and the subject cooperates also with social science about teaching about migration, integration and immigrant groups in Bayern.⁵⁶

Grade 11: teaching about the 'Gütergemeinschaft' ('Estates of the Realm') in the 15.-18. centuries; includes teaching about Jews and minorities; Anti-semitism, and teaching about Hitler and Holocaust, an Arianism.⁵⁷

Grade 12: Teaching about the roots of European ways of thinking and the foundations of modern political systems in Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modern Times includes the role of Christianity and monastic orders for the tradition of the learning of Antiquity, and attention must be paid to ambivalent or contradictory roles of Christians and Christianity vis a vis tradition of non-Christian and Christian testimonies.

In grade 12, there is also teaching about the historical roots of the conflicts of the Middle East. This includes teaching about the Roman Empire and the Jews in Palestine/Israel of old, about the 'Holy Land', and the mythic origins of the Jewish

⁵³ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26302>

⁵⁴ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26282>

⁵⁵ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26228>

⁵⁶ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26733>

⁵⁷ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26818>

people, the demolition of the temple in Jerusalem etc. All with special regard to the present problems and issues. Also in regard to this, there should be teaching about religious and cultural conflicts between Christians and Muslims during the age of the Crusades, and teaching about Zionism, and traces of the Ottoman empire; the founding of the state of Israel, Israel and its Arab neighbours.⁵⁸

Arts ('Kunst')

Art and architecture and other material culture related to religion may of course be part of the school subject dealing with art and the history of art (and architecture). This is the case also in Bavaria, where the curriculum also makes explicit mention of obligatory teaching about religion-related objects and topics. It can be in terms of periods and in terms of various kinds of art. Throughout the various grades mention is made of this:

Grade 5: Art, magic, and sacred buildings (cave and cave art, temple, pyramids), sacred objects (visits to ethnological museums or museums with pre-historical exhibitions)⁵⁹

Grade 6: Antiquity: teaching about the magical, respectively religious function of early artefacts; Roman ancestor cult; Christian crucifix.⁶⁰

Grade 7.: Middle Ages and Modern times, e.g. gothic cathedrals. Mention is made of a transition from a theocentric to an anthropocentric world view recognized by the pupils through the teaching about various ways of representation and perspective in e.g. painting.⁶¹

Social Sciences ('Sozialkunde')

Though no explicit mentioning of religion or religion-related topics, topics that might be related by the teacher to topics also mentioned in confessional RE-or in Ethics may be traced in the curriculum:

Grade 9: The importance of teaching tolerance and human dignity, mechanisms of prejudice and stereotypes, and constitutional basic values is stressed, and in relation to that minorities? in Germany, inter alia religious minorities are to be taught about.

⁵⁸ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26818>

⁵⁹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26336>

⁶⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26322>

⁶¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26304>

Also the idea of Europe as a community based on common values and roots is to figure in the teaching.⁶²

Grades 10/11/12: A cross-curricular project to be coordinated with the school subject history must deal with migration especially in Bayern. Globalization and challenges due to it. Migration and its consequences. Basic rights.⁶³

Biology

Again: next to no explicit mentioning of religion, except for grade 8.3. where mention is made of the theory of evolution and there is a reference to the teachings about creation by God in Catholic and Evangelical RE.⁶⁴

German

Grade 11: some teaching e.g. about the philosophical foundation of the Enlightenment and the German 'Idealismus' in regard to German literary classicism, and mention also of teaching about criticism of religion ('Religionskritik') in the 19th century.⁶⁵

English

Grade 11/12: Mention is made of teaching about spiritual background and important fundamental values in the UK and the USA, inter alia "Protestant work ethics", and the role of religion.⁶⁶

French

Grade 11/12: Mention is made of teaching about: Society and politics in France: the multicultural society, integration, identity, racism, and religions.⁶⁷

Latin

The profile of the subject is said to be characterized by the importance of the subject for bridging the past (Antiquity) and present, paving the way for a knowledge of European identity, at the same time as it is supposed to inculcate openness and unprejudiced encounter with other cultures. The identity of Europe is explicitly said to be based on three pillars: the Greek, Roman and Christian. The origins and values

⁶² <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26230>

⁶³ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26725>;
<http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26812>

⁶⁴ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26281>

⁶⁵ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26539>

⁶⁶ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26513>

⁶⁷ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26499>

of Christianity are an explicit part of the teaching and the reading the Latin source material.⁶⁸

Special mention of religion or religion-related topics can be found in:

Grade 5: The Culture of Antiquity: religious life, ideas about gods. Figures of myth.⁶⁹

Grade 6: The Culture of Antiquity: Myths and themes and motives of the myths; religious life.⁷⁰

Grade 7: The Culture of Antiquity: the beginnings of Christianity in Rome.⁷¹

Grade 8: Language: selected passages from Vulgata and the influence of Vulgata. The pupils are to learn about what is seen as the fundamental text, in and for Christian-Western thinking, in its Latin version.⁷²

Grade 10: Language: myths and figures of myth and thinkers, philosophers, and theologians.⁷³

Grade 11/12: Language: Philosophers and also Christian texts. State and political philosophy: Augustine: De civitate Dei.⁷⁴

Greek

Not unlike what is stated in regard to Latin, the profile and self-understanding sees Greek as a key subject for providing knowledge about the fundamentals of European culture and thinking. At the same time the subject shall contribute to better integration and understanding of the different European countries and peoples. Fundamental influences can be found in art, literature, philosophy, politics, moral orientation and worldview. 'Antikenrezeption' in Bavaria in the 19th century is also paid special attention.

Grade 8⁷⁵

Important elements of Greek religion (divinities, sacred places and festivals), central themes in Greek mythology, art and architecture (e.g. temples)

Grade 9⁷⁶

Central themes in Greek mythology (Olympian gods, epics, heroes) and values that have influenced European thinking and life (freedom, human dignity, tolerance)

Grade 10⁷⁷

⁶⁸ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26362>

⁶⁹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26330>

⁷⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26309>

⁷¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26292>

⁷² <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26273>

⁷³ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26212>

⁷⁴ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26534>

⁷⁵ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26244>

⁷⁶ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26213>

⁷⁷ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/q8.de/index.php?StoryID=26423>

Sokrates, The Odyssee and Odysseus, Herodotus, reception of Greek culture
Grade 11/12⁷⁸

The Iliad (theology and anthropology, ideas of fate, as well as the system of honor and shame, gift and giftgiving), Pre-Socratic philosophers, sophists, Plato and Socrates, the Greek tragedy (Antigone)

Music

The profile and self-understanding of the subject makes mention of music being a mirror of 'Zeitgeist' and worldview, and it also makes explicit mentioning of making pupils aware of Christian-Western characteristics and values.⁷⁹

Grade 7: Barock: Händel and Bach: mention is made of music as praise of God, with a reference to Evangelical RE.⁸⁰

Grade 11/12: teaching about spiritual 'oeuvres' from various cultures, and pupils are supposed to see that music and religion is closely related and to learn about different musical ways to relate to religious texts. Also mention is made of meditation and music (e.g. the music of Sufis), and of musical aspects of the Latin Mass, and general expressive forms and means in spiritual music ('geistlicher music').⁸¹

⁷⁸ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26537>

⁷⁹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26404>

⁸⁰ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26305>

⁸¹ <http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/index.php?StoryID=26523>

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Federal law:

GG (Grundgesetz)

http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/basic_law_for_the_federal_republic_of_germany.pdf

(English version).

<http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bundesrecht/gg/gesamt.pdf> **(German version).**

WRV "Weimarer Verfassung" (official 'Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs')

Excerpt:

<http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bundesrecht/wrv/gesamt.pdf> **(Articles of the Weimarer Verfassung, that are still part of the GG).**

Entire Document

http://www.jura.uni-wuerzburg.de/fileadmin/02160100/Elektronische_Texte/Verfassungstexte/Die_Weimarer_Reichsverfassung.pdf

Bavarian law:

BayEUG ('Bayerisches Gesetz über das Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesen')

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