

EASR Working Group on “Religion in Public Education” General statement

About the Working Group (organization)

The EASR Working Group on “Religion in Public Education”, in accordance with the objective of the EASR, aims to promote the academic study of religion/s through the international collaboration of scholars normally resident in Europe whose research has a bearing on the subject (c.f. EASR Constitution §3(i)).

The Working Group was established in 2007. The specific purpose of this EASR Working Group on “Religion in Public Education” is to critically study European ways of teaching religion. In addition, the group is engaged in the development of a study-of-religions based approach to public education about religion/s. The group’s activities include individual research, networking, the organization of conferences and panels within and outside the EASR annual framework, as well as the contributing to relevant publications.

A study-of-religions based Religious Education (RE) and RE research

In research, as well as in direct and indirect contributions to the development of RE, several academic disciplines are thought of as relevant. In its research and work towards a study-of-religion/s (non-confessional and integrative) based RE in public school, the Working Group draws on the following principles regarding religion and RE:

- ‘Religion’ – as the core subject of RE and the study of religion/s – is understood as a human, cultural, social and historical phenomenon.
- Granted that scientifically based knowledge of humankind, history, nature, culture, social formation, identity formation, etc. is considered to be valuable knowledge, then scientifically based knowledge of religion/s must be considered equally valuable.
- A study-of-religions based research on and development of RE builds on theories, methods and self-critical reflections on how religion, religions and religious phenomena can be studied and taught from a non-religious, study-of-religion/s perspective.

In Europe multiple forms of RE in the different educational systems exist. The research and other activities of the Working Group include study-of-religion/s based research on all the forms. It also includes pedagogical approaches deemed relevant for the research as well as for the development of a study-of-religion/s (non-confessional and integrative) based RE and study-of-religion/s based knowledge relevant for other school subjects in public schools.

Theologically based research and/or promotion of theologically based (religious, confessional, apologetical) RE and ‘religion in school’ lies outside the activities of the Working Group.