



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Education in the Curricula of European Studies

Horga, Ioan

University of Oradea, Institute for Euroregional Studies

2011

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/44999/>
MPRA Paper No. 44999, posted 13 Mar 2013 06:32 UTC

ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE *CURRICULA* *OF EUROPEAN STUDIES*

Ioan HORGA*

Abstract. *Our initiative first aims at introducing the topics on ethnicity, religion and intercultural dialogue in the Curricula of European Studies in 12 European Union Member States (Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Romania, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark). Although the number of courses approaching topics relating to culture, social realities and historical experiences is low (only 4.5% out of the total number of inventoried courses), there is a great variety of such courses. Second, our initiative is an attempt to settle the trends in the evolution of the curricula in the field.*

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Religion, Intercultural education, Curricula of European Studies, Old Europe, New Europe.*

In a world where cultural and religious interdependencies get deeper due to economic, political and cultural globalization on the one hand, and isolationist outbursts meant to separate cultures, religions and communities on the other hand, one seems to question humanity trends for harmony of interdependences as an expression of diversity where multiculturalism is contested by both rational political voices and irrational anarchic actions. We consider that the fight for religious and ethnic diversity and intercultural dialogue is both justified and morally necessary. On the one hand, intercultural education contributes to establishing a set of values due to which students pass from the level of understanding and affirmation of their own culture to the level “where spatial and cultural borders are becoming ever more permeable” (Checkel, J.T & Katzenstein P.J, 2010: 2). On the other hand, intercultural

* PhD, Department of European Studies and International Relations, Faculty of History, Geography and International Relations, University of Oradea, e-mail: horga@igri.ro

education contributes to affirming diversity in a joint cultural space of democratic values, which could turn into a real European citizenship policy (Howard M. M, 2009).

From this point of view, this event is not only a scientific initiative, but also a civic enterprise meant to seize, explain, and draw people's attention. Our endeavour referring to topics focusing on ethnicity, religion and intercultural dialogue in the *Curricula of European Studies* is meant to respond to these three objectives.

1. Fields with courses contributing to intercultural education

Our endeavour is based on data collected in 2008 – 2010 under the Erasmus Thematic Network project referring to the curricula on European Studies in 12 European countries: Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Romania, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark¹. Out of the nine operational fields in which we have divided the courses selected², in five we can find a greater number of courses relaying information referring to the topic of our paper to the students.

EU Political and Administrative Studies	EU Historical Studies	EU Interdisciplinary Studies	EU Intercultural Dialogue Studies	EU Communication and Information Studies	Other
102	115	89	130	46	9

The *EU Intercultural Dialogue Studies* is the richest field for these types of courses both as absolute value and as average out of the total number of courses we have identified in our database³ (130 courses out of a total of 331, i.e. 0.3 courses). It comprises a large diversity of courses that belong to this field, especially at the BA and MA levels. We have identified three major subfields where we can insert the following courses: *Islam and Europe*, *Europeanization and cultural diversity* and *European dialogue with other geo-cultural spaces*.

¹ Parts of this survey belong to the chapter entitled “Current Problems in the Development of the European and/or EU Studies Curriculum”, in print. It will be published in the volume entitled *Teaching European Studies Curricula and Teaching Methods*, edited by Stephania Baroncelli, Ioan Horga, Sophie Vanhoonakar, Roberto Farneti, Springer Editions

² *EU Political and Administrative Studies, EU Legal Studies, EU Historical Studies, EU Economic Studies, EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, EU Intercultural Dialogue Studies, EU Communication and Information Studies, EU and Comparative Regionalism Studies, EU Interdisciplinary Studies* -

³ www.iser.rdsor.ro

At the BA level, within the *Islam and Europe* group, we have noticed that this issue is becoming more active in the quest for a clear European identity, addressed to other cultures as a consequence of the “traditional ethnic immigration of the non-European” (Favell, A. 2010; 167). Religion, culture and language are the three variables that affect the curricula. Within the EU universities, specific courses are investigating *Pluralism and Religious Minorities in the European Union*, *Religious Plurality and Religious Conflict in Modern Europe* (Spain), *Identities in Contemporary Europe* (UK), *Sociology of Religions in Europe* (France), *Islam in Europe* (Lithuania). As we can notice, these courses belong to the paradigm of the “religious border in decomposition”⁴ (Antes, P., 2008) phenomenon. Even if the issue of Islam is not necessarily specified within the name of the courses, the religious and cultural differentiations often arise, thus contributing to the “identification with Europe’s internal diversity” (Kaelble, H. 2010: 201) and integration is becoming “more flexible and fragmented” (Moravcisk, A, 1998: 5).

The subfield of *Europeanization and cultural diversity* holds a core place within the European universities. There is a large number of courses that are gathered within this category. Therefore, there is a series of common courses investigating social and cultural aspects of European integration, European cultural heritage, Religion and cultural bases of European civilization, European identity, Cultural identities in Europe, etc. The concept of cultural diversity used here is in accordance with two types of European multicultural approach: a western traditional one and an eastern dynamic one (Horga, I & Brie, M, 2010).

From this perspective, it is very important to mention that in each country, within the category of *Europeanization and cultural diversity* there are courses aiming to integrate local, national, and regional culture to the European identity (Checkel, J.T & Katzenstein P.J, 2010: 9). For example, there are courses on *Slovenian culture in European context*, *Slovak Cultural Heritage in European Context* or *Poland in Europe*. The integrative cultural and intercultural approaches became part of rediscovering and strengthening the European dimension of the national “symbols and rituals of power” (Donnan, H & Wilson Th. M., 1999: 63-86). A curriculum with European touch has to reflect the voices, hopes, and dreams of the students from diverse ethnic and social-class group contributing to shaping the European identity (Fligstein, N. 2010: 136).

The other group dealing with intercultural dialogue - *European dialogue with other geo-cultural spaces* – becomes a subject of most recent teaching and investigation efforts as a consequence of cultural influences of globalization and the EU new borders (Anderson, M., 2004: 178-192; Howard M. M, 2009: 169-193). One of the objectives of intercultural education is to help students learn how they could cross their cultural borders and establish intercultural dialogue and action. The study of the *Other* and the *Outside* has increased in importance

⁴ Most studies on the matter were published in issue 5/2008 of *Eurotimes* journal.

within the academic curricula. We have identified courses that specifically questioned these matters: *Dominant Religions of Europe & Middle East*; *Euro-American Relations* (Slovakia); *Extra-European Worlds*; *International and European Culture*; *Extra-European Influences, Extra-European Civilizations* (France); *Intercultural Euro-Asian Relations* (Portugal), etc.

On the MA level, the *EU Intercultural Dialogue Studies* are subject to the same interest where the curriculum has developed on more strictly basis focusing more on specific matters. There is no obvious direct interest for the Islam, with some exceptions addressed to Mediterranean space and Muslim influences (for instance, in France there are course *Turkey and European political Debate* or *Euro-Maghreb culture*). This can be explained by the increasing need for understanding intercultural approaches where religious aspects are addressed in a comparative and integrative manner among Christianity, Judaism and Islam (Santagostino, A., 2008; Brie M. & Brie, I, 2008). A more comprehensive approach is dedicated to the *Europeanization and cultural diversity*. There is much more interest on the MA level for teaching and research of intercultural dialogue. The most covered issues are gathered within courses such as: *European cultures and identities*; *European culture and civilization*; *Identity, Heritage and Cultural Diversity in Europe*. There might be a distinction on two different approaches of intercultural dialogue in Europe: first, there is a comprehensive approach that tries to have a general European view (Horga, I. & all, 2009) and second, there is an approach with different national or particular cultural character (such as language, literature, theatre or cinema). With reference to *European dialogue with other geo-cultural spaces* (Contogeorgis, G, 2010) on the MA level the same interest is maintained for curricula development, especially in the context of a deeper multidisciplinary approach.

The PhD level that covers intercultural issues in Europe is subject to interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary pursuits that make it difficult to set as a distinctive field because of its multiple specialized perspectives: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, languages and religious studies. From this perspective, the curriculum reflects the cultural learning styles of the students within the university community.

The *EU Historical Studies* come in second in the field of EU studies made up of courses particularly referring to ethnicity and confession. Yet the weigh of these courses is approximately 1/10. These topics mainly belong to general courses on *European Cultural History* and *European Religions History*, but also to specific courses showing contemporary religious patterns (Kocsis, K., 2008) in Central and Eastern European Countries, such as: *Ethnic minorities' political representation in Central and Eastern Europe*; *Political modernity's in South-East Europe*; *The Jewish Intellectuality in Central and Eastern Europe* in universities like: University of Bucharest, Alexandru Ioan Cuza of Iasi, Western University of Timisoara; *Rights and values of European History* at Universidad de Salamanca.

An important aspect of this topic makes us underline the fact that within the newcomers to the EU there is a great interest for *European Identity*, which folds perfectly on their interest of identifying themselves with the public sphere and European Union's political identity (Medrano, J. D., 2010: 81-110). Belonging to the same logic of cultural, ethnic and religious realities of newcomers (Maron, F., 2007: 116-121), there is also an interest of academics belonging to "old Europe" in courses such as: *Central and Eastern Europe since 1945*, University of St Andrews, *Civil society and the state in Central and Eastern Europe, An economic and social history of Eastern Europe 1918–89*, University of Glasgow, *Europe East and West, 1943-1991*, Durham University, *Where is East Europe*, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen; *The Decay of the Eastern Block – The end of Communist Systems in Central and Eastern Europe (1985-1991)*, Justus -Liebig-Universität Gießen.

From a quantitative point of view, the *EU Political and Administrative Studies* are the second within the field of EU studies. They can be considered as belonging to the topic of the paper. However, their weigh is barely 1/10 courses.

These courses *help the students develop their social participation skills and their decision-making abilities as the very strong association between political factors and citizenship liberalisation* (Howard M. M, 2009: 53). These topics are approached in general courses on *Elites and Power - Political Elites in Europe?* (Technische Universität Darmstadt), *Where does Europe end? - Ukraine as a Border Region of the EU*; *Forms of Families and Gender Arrangements in European Comparison* (Technische Universität Dresden); *National Competition and/or European Social Model?* (Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig).

They are also present in special courses, such as: *Pluralism, freedom of belief and integration in Europe* (University of Almeria); *Consideration of public policy in the process of European economic integration* (University of Carlos III de Madrid)

The *EU Interdisciplinary Studies* is a highly complex field, where courses contributing to intercultural education provide not only an interdisciplinary perspective, but also a multidisciplinary one. If the BA curriculum of *European Ethnology*, another sub-domain of EU Interdisciplinary Studies lists only a few courses, they are varied in countries where they are offered. In Germany we have found several courses of European Ethnology: *Times, Spaces, Cultures - Introduction to European Ethnology, Current Questions of European Ethnology* (Katholische Universität Ingolstadt-Eichstätt), *Introduction to European Ethnology* (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), and in Romania - *European Ethnology* (Universitatea din Bucuresti). There are no such courses in the other countries that we have studied. However, we have found that all universities hold courses about *European multilingualism*. This proves, on the one hand, the interest of each EU Member State to develop such important area, and on the other hand, the

development of students' skills and competences to master foreign languages (Ugalde, E.G 2007: 124-133).

Regarding *Other studies on Europe* sub-domain, most courses are in the field of *Euroregional Studies* or *Studies of European Regions*. This is the result of the fact that we included here the perspectives that go from the territory to the de-territorialisation (Albert, M., 2002: 58-62), such as: *Geography of Europe tour* (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia) in Spain, *Territorial Studies-Europe* (Univerzita Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici) in Slovakia, *Geography of European Union* (Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca) in Romania, or *Regional Geography: Europe* (Otto-Friedrichs-Universität Bamberg) , *Urban Europe* (Technische Universität Chemnitz) in Germany. Within this sub-domain there are also several religion courses with various forms: *Communication and Ecumenism in a Christian Europe* (Universitatea „Ovidius” din Constanta), *Religious relations of contemporary Europe* (Uniwersytet w Białymstoku) in Poland, *Deaconry in European and Ecumenical Context* (Fachhochschule der Diakonie Bielefeld), *Churches and Denominations in Europe* (Technische Universität Darmstadt). All these courses are relatively balanced in all the countries that we have reviewed. Taking into consideration that this sub-domain is very wide and that the EU Interdisciplinary Studies include the largest range of courses, we will point out some of them that we have found most interesting, which we have considered necessary to integrate as European Studies as they refer to Europe through their very interdisciplinary nature: *States, European Union and Marine* (Universidad de Cadiz, in Spain), *Food quality in the European Union* (Uniwersytet Rzeszowski in Poland), *Design of Eurocodes* (Vilniaus Gedimino Technikos Universitetas in Lithuania), *Famous European Fairy Tales* (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen in Germany), *Opening to Europe* (Université Lille 1).

Regarding the courses about multilingualism, we can mention the following types of courses: *Structures des langues européennes: phonologie lexicque syntaxe (MA)* and *Intercompréhension: les 7 langues de l'ouest européen (MA)* at Université de Reims -Champagne-Ardenne, *Areal Linguistics-Language Structures in Europe* at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, etc.

The distinct approach of *EU Communication and Information Studies* as a *New EU studies* field has come to our attention due to its increasing importance and presence within the EU Studies curricula. Due to these courses, the students should develop cross- cultural communication skills, examining media of ethnic groups, clarifying ethnic and cultural attitudes and values. There are several factors that induced the emergence and development of these approaches (Banus, E, 2007: 134-140). First, the communication structures and technologies must be adapted to the EU's need for legitimacy. Second, communication and information are instruments to strengthen the European dialogue in the sense of enhancing both intercultural dialogue and European identity (Hoffman, M, 2008). To this end, the *EU Communication and Information*

Studies field represents one of the most challenging new visions within the EU studies. Our investigation has collected some data that emphasize this new approach. For a better understanding, we have split this new field in two secondary subfields: *European Media Systems* and *Other forms of EU Communication and Information Studies*.

At the BA level, the *European Media Systems* represents a group of courses that are trying to relate the EU messages with the European and national media forms of communication (Horga, I, 2007). There is no integrative approach for the study of the media at this level, only with few multidisciplinary (but notable) exceptions. In Germany, for example, there are specific courses on subjects such as: *Democratic media discourse in Europe; Focusing European integration by media analysis; European Media Systems; Journalism and European public Spheres; EU integration as reflected in the Press*. These courses are listed in different teaching programmes, addressing EU Studies, Communication and Journalism at the same time. Therefore, it seems plausible to associate these courses within an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary framework of other study programmes. Other examples can be found in Spain (course *Advertising in the EU; Communication policies in the EU*), France (*European communication*); Poland (*Contemporary media systems in Europe; European information*) or Romania (*Mass-Media and the challenges of EU*).

We have also noticed courses addressed to intra-communitarian communication, communicating cultures in Europe (Tavares Ribeiro, M.M., 2010), language policy in Europe or European identity sources. Within the perspective of this subfield, there are no clear standards to set the specific courses directly responding to the strengthening of this new field of EU studies.

The MA level comes with more specialized courses within the same multi, inter and trans-disciplinary approach.

The *EU Communication and Information Studies* curriculum is adapted and responds to the most challenging current needs of the EU. Within the different programmes that might benefit from these courses we can single out public communication and journalism, in their quest to adapt the courses to the needs and particularities of the European communication environment.

The analysis of the curricula in European Studies has shown that there is a variety of studies of cultures, social realities, historical experiences, and existential factors of ethnic and cultural group evolution. Certainly, at a closer look, we can see that the number of courses related to ethnicity, religion and intercultural dialogue is very small in the totality of the curricula of EU Studies, that is only 448 courses to 9929 courses inventoried (4.5%)

2. *Where to the intercultural education in the Curricula of European Studies?*

A detailed analysis shows that there is an unbalance between the countries from the Old Europe and the New Europe. For instance, over 7.5% of the courses are in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Portugal and UK. Between 5-7.5% of courses are in France. Paradoxically, the lowest number of courses, between 0-5% of the courses are in Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, and Slovakia. Even though we cannot make a definite approximation, we still have to mention that there is an interesting coincidence between a certain excess of “intolerance” in certain countries (Moravkova, K., 2009) and the low number or absence of courses supporting students understand that persons from all ethnic groups have common characteristics and needs on the one hand and acquire the ability to interpret events and conflict situation from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives on the other hand.

We can also see that there are more courses at the Bachelor level than at the others levels. In New Europe, there are a few courses relating to **Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue** on Bachelor level. The biggest number is at on Master level. We assume that such a situation is mainly due to the idea that the topic is considered to be an area of expertise. In Old Europe, there are more courses related to **Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue** on Bachelor level and less on Master level. The civic side is more pronounced. There are a few courses at the Doctoral level in all countries, except for Germany and Spain.

The impact of European Commission through Jean Monnet Action is low in supporting courses in the field. Only 49 courses out of the total number of 1215 (4%) are supported by the “Jean Monnet” Action in countries on which our analysis has focused. Initiatives like the Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) who have stimulated the introduction of the courses and other projects (Horga, I. & all, 2009) related to **Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue** in the university curricula must be encouraged. For example, only in the period 2008-2010, 19 courses were introduced through Jean Monnet Action Projects (over 1/3 out of the total number of courses financed by this program in the countries assessed).

In conclusion, considering the ever more multicultural reality of European societies and the ceaselessly altering integrating area, the study of *Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Education* are highly important, in order to teach the students how they could preserve cultural diversity in the European Union and to reinforce its cohesion and promote the respect for joint values. They allow Europe engage in partnership with neighbouring countries. The idea of intercultural dialogue in the curriculum on European Studies opens an

enriching topic leading to the respectful division of ideas and values and encouraging the communication of these ideas and values.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albert, Mathias (2002), "On boundaries, territory and Postmodernity: An International Relations Perspective", in Anderson, M., *Frontiers. Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press, pp. 53-68
- Anderson, Malcom, (2004), *Frontiers. Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, Cambridge, Polity Press
- Antes, Peter (2008), "Regional Borders in Decomposition", in *Eurotimes*, 5, pp. 152-158
- Banus, Enrique (2007), "Images of openness –Image of closeness", in *Eurotimes*, 4, pp. 134-140
- Brie, Ioan & Brie, Mircea, 2008, "The Interreligious Dialogue in the Context of the New Europe. The European Ecumenical Movement", in *Eurotimes*, 5, pp. 95-107
- Checkel, Jeffrey.T. & Katzenstein Peter J, (2010), *The European Identity*, Cambridge University Press
- Contogeorgis, George, (2010), "Cultural European and Geopolitics", in *Eurotimes*, 9, pp. 11-20
- Donnan, Hastings & Wilson Thomas. M., (1999), *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Oxford, New York, Berg
- Favell, Adrian (2010), "Immigration, migration, and free movement in the making of Europe", in Checkel, Jeffrey.T. & Katzenstein Peter J, *The European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 167-189
- Fligstein, Neil (2010), "Who are the Europeans and how does this matter for politics?", in Checkel, Jeffrey.T. & Katzenstein Peter J, *The European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 132-166
- Hoffmann, Martin, (2008), "New spatial theories and their influence on intercultural dialogue. Observing relational space in Oradea", in *Eurotimes*, 6, pp. 92-100
- Horga, Ioan (2007), "Medias europeens et non-mention des raciness chretiennes dans la Constitution europeenne", in *Eurotimes*, 3, pp. 28-46
- Horga, Ioan; Suli-Zakar, Istvan & all (2009), *The European Parliament, Intercultural Dialogue and European Neighbourhood Policy*, Oradea University Press.
- Horga, Ioan & Brie, Mircea, (2010), "Europe: A cultural Border, or a Geocultural Archipelago", *Eurotimes*, 10, pp. 155-169
- Howard, Marc Morje, (2009), *The Politics of Citizenship in Europe*, Cambridge University Press

- Kaelble, Hatmut (2010), "Identification whit Europe and politicization of the EU since the 1980s", in Checkel, Jeffrey.T. & Katzenstein Peter J, *The European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 193-212
- Kocsis, Karoly, (2008), "Contemporary Religious Patterns in the Carpatho-Pannonian Area", in *Eurotimes*, 5, pp. 56-63
- Maron, Fabienne, (2007) "Les nouvelles frontières de l'Europe: repenser les concepts", in *Eurotimes*, 4, pp. 112-123
- Medrano, Juan Diez, (2010), "The public sphere and the European Union's political identity", in Checkel, Jeffrey. T. & Katzenstein Peter J, *The European Identity*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 81-109
- Moravcsik, Andrew (1998), "Europe's Integration at Century's End", in Moravcsik, A, eds, *Centraliyation or Fragmentation? Europe Facing the Challenges of Deepening, Diversity and Democracy*, A Council on Foreign Relations Book, New York,
- Moravkova, Kristina, (2009), "The Roma Population in Slovakia: The Study Case of the Intercultural Dialogue", in Horga, Ioan; Suli-Zakar, Istvan & all, *The European Parliament, Intercultural Dialogue and European Neighbourhood Policy*, Oradea University Press
- Santaugustino, Angelo (2008), "How European can Dialogue whit Islam", in *Eurotimes*, 5, pp. 84-94
- Tavares Ribeiro, Maria Manuela (2010), "Europe of Cultural Unity and Diversity", in *Eurotimes*, 9, pp. 21-27
- Ugalde, Esther Gimeno, (2007), "Multilingualism as a new EU-strategy and the impact of European political border shifts on languages", in *Eurotimes*, 4, pp. 124-133