Research project:
The Network for the Study of Religions in Contemporary Europe
(NetSoRCE)

The background for this research project is the ignorance of what is happening in our own backyard in Europe. All observe that the religious landscape is changing, but we have too little data to back this observation and stimulate our reflection. We see that other religions than Christianity gain in strength. In the 19th and first half of the 20th century many churches were built in Europe; in the second half of the 20th century churches are closing and mosques and temples are being built by the hundreds. Allthough we can observe such developments we know far too little of this emerging religious plurality: Who are those religious adherents? How many are there? What do they believe? How do the traditions change in a European context?

Also Christianity changes. Europe is undergoing a rapid change from mono to multi. Within the Danish Pluralism Project (see http://www.teo.au.dk/cms/Pluralismeprojektet/) affiliated with the American pluralism project. (see http://www.pluralism.org/about/index.php) we have been inspired by the British sociologist Grace Davie to ask if Europe is a special case? (see http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0232524254/qid=1092136023/sr=8-7/ref=sr_8_xs_ap_i7_xgl14/104-1028413-7320756?v=glance&s=books&n=507846). There are indications that Europe indeed is an exceptional case. Many researchers and research groups all over Europe are dealing with some of the issues raised by the new religious plurality. But the gained knowledge is not coordinated. Therefore it is the object of the Network for the Study of Religions in Contemporary Europe (**NetSoRCE**) to gather the existing knowledge and thus make it fruitful for extended reflection.

As of now **NetSoRCE** is a Network of Excellence (NoE) between 22 European outstanding universities and research institutions committed to enhance the knowledge within the society about the intricate dynamics between religions, values, worldviews and culture.

By studying the emergence of new forms of values, religions and cultural identities the network will inform and improve the general understanding of the evolution of citizenship and identities in Europe in the context of religious and cultural diversity with the aim of strengthening European integration and contribute to a peaceful development of a united Europe.

The network **NetSoRCE** will work with these issues through a number of initiatives designed to cross fertilize between academic disciplines within religious and cultural studies, anthropology and the social sciences. Through the network an extended exchange of scholars and research students will be facilitated in order to disseminate information and spreading of excellence. In addition a number of Joint Programme Activities (JPA) will enhance the integrative effect and generate new knowledge. This includes
- building a **NetSoRCE** knowledge and resource database,
- mapping the changing religious landscape in Europe
- researching the emerging transnational religious networks
- analysing the historical, legal, political, social, economic and cultural contexts of religious plurality in Europe and
- interpreting the impact of this development towards multi-culturality and multi-religiousity on European knowledge based societies.

Special emphasis will be put on the manifold interrelations between cultural and religious diversity and the development of a Europe in line with established social objectives, realising that the social cohesion of knowledge based societies will be an issue of great importance for the development of citizenship, democracy and new forms of governance.

The initial conference will be held at the
University of Aarhus, Denmark,
May 26 – 30 May, 2005,
Sponsorship: Center for Multireligious Studies, University of Aarhus.

Participation is open to researchers of all backgrounds studying religious plurality in Europe.

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