

THE GERMAN COUNCIL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES (WR) ADVISES THE GERMAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE GERMAN LÄNDER ON ISSUES CONCERNING THE TOPICAL AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RESEARCH.

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Religious pluralization calls for further development of the theologies and sciences concerned with religions

German Council of Science and Humanities recommends establishing Islamic Studies at state-run universities

The growing plurality of religious affiliations in Germany and the increasing demand for scientific expertise regarding religion puts new requirements on the organization and capabilities of the sciences concerned with such issues. Therefore, the German Council of Science and Humanities recommends that the field of theology and sciences concerned with religions should be further developed within the German system of science and higher education. The necessary structural adjustments concerning the Christian theologies and the expansion of other disciplines, especially including the establishment of Islamic Studies at universities, should be implemented *within* the state-run higher education system. This will be the best way to ensure the scientific quality of research and teaching, intensify the discourse with other forms of scientific world-interpretation, and provide a robust, theological basis for the inter-religious dialog.

In more detail, the Council recommends:

The **Christian theologies** should aim to build a stronger profile of the faculties and intensify their participation in trans-faculty, interdisciplinary research projects. Facing the new plurality of religious denominations, Religious Education teachers require more comprehensive, specialist skills. To meet these rising standards, theological institutes training secondary school teachers should be properly endowed with at least five professorships and associated facilities.

Contact:

Dr. Christiane Kling-Mathey
WR Head Office
Brohler Straße 11
50968 Cologne / Germany

Phone +49 221 3776-243

Fax +49 221 3884-40

kling-mathey@wissenschaftsrat.de

Press releases:

www.wissenschaftsrat.de

As the conferral of professorial qualifications is a purely academic matter, the Council of Science and Humanities urgently appeals especially to the Catholic Church to withdraw from involvement in the habilitation process. Regarding appointments, any church involvement should be through a swift process, consistent and transparent for all parties.

For **Judaistics/Jewish Studies**, as well as for scientific studies of religions/Religious Studies, the Council recommends institutional separation from the theological faculties. Their development as disciplines should be secured by the establishment and expansion of institutes that should cover four to five focus areas of the respective discipline with the requisite academic staff. These are institutional preconditions for the independent development of the disciplines and the training of the next generation of their academics.

Islamic Studies is not an established discipline at German universities. This situation does not do justice to the importance of the largest, non-Christian religious community in Germany. Therefore, beyond the establishment of individual chairs focused on Islamic religious teacher education, the Council of Science and Humanities recommends setting up larger, autonomous organizational units for Islamic Studies at two or three locations within the state-run higher education system. These units should train not only teachers for Islamic religious education, but also Islamic religious scholars, professionals for social and community work and, especially, young academics in the discipline of Islamic Studies.

In view of the institutional requirements arising from the constitutionally guaranteed right to self-determination and participation of the religious communities, the Council proposes the establishment of competent advisory boards for Islamic Studies at the respective universities. The advisory boards should participate in any setting-up, modification and discontinuation of theological study courses, and the appointment of professors. The participation in appointments should not include the assessment of the academic quality of any candidate, but should only extend to checks whether there could be any objections on religious grounds against the appointment of the candidate preferred by the university. Members of the advisory board should include representatives of Muslim associations, Islamic religious scholars and prominent Muslims from public life.

The expansion of sciences concerned with religions and the establishment of Islamic Studies require additional financial resources. All this, as well as the coordinated restructuring of the Christian theologies can only succeed through a process of intensive, mutual information and coordination across the boundaries of dioceses, Länder (the German states) and Landeskirchen (the regionally organized protestant churches). The council of Science and Humanities considers it desirable that this process, in its initial phase, is supported by targeted, federal funding.

Note: The full text of the “Recommendations on the Advancement of Theologies and Sciences concerned with Religions at German Universities“ (Drs. 9678-10) is available in the Web (http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/9678-10_engl.pdf); alternatively, it can be ordered from WR Head Office via email (post@wissenschaftsrat.de).