

STATE-DIALOGUE IN ITALY AND GERMANY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRATION OF MUSLIMS.

Italy and Germany are following the example of other EU-countries and have started to establish a dialogue between the state and Muslim communities in order to promote integration. The objective of these initiatives is to develop joint and commonly owned solutions with representatives of Muslim communities, and to strengthen the moderate voices with a view to preventing radicalization. Due to divisions within and the heterogeneity of the Muslim minorities in both countries it has so far not been possible to establish single Muslim representations with genuinely representative organs. Therefore both initiatives in Italy and Germany followed a top-down approach with the Ministers of Interior carefully selecting the members of these Councils and thus establishing a forum of state-dialogue for the first time. The future will show whether this policy is successful.

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While the presence of Muslims in Western Europe often relates to the era of colonial rule –especially Britain and France experienced significant immigration of Muslims after the collapse of their empires¹– in Germany and Italy the situation was and is different: The majority of Muslim citizens in Germany came either as so-called “guest-workers” or as political asylum seekers fleeing political oppression and/or economic hardship in their home countries.² More recently immigration to Germany seems to be declining³ while Italy –in contrast to Germany until the 1970s itself predominantly an emigration country– is and has been experiencing large scale immigration and an ever more rapidly growing Muslim population only as a rather recent phenomenon.

In Germany, around 800,000 out of 3.3-3.5 million Muslims hold German passports, so far only a small minority of ca. 50,000 out of ca. 1-1.5 Million Muslims in Italy has Italian citizenship. Unlike in Italy with its recent immigration flows, in Germany the integration of Muslim citizens has been a major topic since the late 1990s; in 1999 the then center-left government adopted a new citizenship-law, which facilitated access to German citizenship especially for “second generation foreigners” born in Germany. But it became obvious, that granting citizenship was not always sufficient to ensure integration. In fact many of those who came to Germany as well as their children did not integrate and remained segregated from German society, living in their own communities and sometimes having little contact with the host society and often not even learning German. This is, in particular, regarded as a problem concerning segments of Germany’s Muslim population,⁴ however integration problems are increasingly also an issue in Italy, demonstrated by incidents such as recent honor killings.

It is only recently that Italy and Germany have joined the efforts of other EU member states in founding or encouraging the creation of national Muslim councils or commissions in order to encourage actively moderate political Muslim voices and prevent radicalization.⁵ These efforts aim at establishing a “home-grown Islam,” and seek to involve local Islamic associations and, in particular, the imams in conveying European values in contrast to Islamic radicalization. Often unfamiliar with the fractioned milieu of Islamic associations in their countries, governments also hope to create national Islamic leaderships, which could

¹ For a recent overview of immigration and integration policies towards Muslims in the EU see: Congressional Research Service (ed.), *Muslims in Europe: Integration Policies in Selected Countries*, (Washington: CRS Report for Congress, Received through the CRS Web, Order Code RL33166, 18 Nov. 2005); Mirjam Dittrich, *EPC Working Paper, No 23: Muslims in Europe: Addressing the Challenges of Radicalisation*, (Brussels: European Policy Centre, March 2006, www.epc.eu).

² For further information, http://www.zuwanderung.de/english/1_fluechtlinge.html.

³ Germany’s brain drain, *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 3 January 2007.

⁴ “OSZE prangert Gesinnungstest für Muslime in Deutschland an” (OSCE criticizes conviction-test for Muslims in Germany), at: www.islam.de/5247.php (27 April 2006); “Treffen der Innenminister: Einheitlicher Einbürgerungstest gescheitert” (Meeting of Interior Ministers: Uniform Naturalization test failed), in: *Spiegel-Online*, 1 May 2006.

⁵ S. Silvestri, “The Situation of Muslim Immigrants in Europe in the 21st century: The Creation of National Muslim Councils,” in: Holger Henke (ed.), “Crossing Over” Comparing Recent Migration in Europe and the United States, (Lenham: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 101-129

serve as future partners and counterparts for dialogue.⁶ This hope is reflected by initiatives to establish Muslim faith councils, which are to serve as official interlocutors and advisory bodies to governments in Spain (since 1992),⁷ the UK (since 1996),⁸ Belgium (since 1998),⁹ and more recently also France (2003)¹⁰ and the Netherlands (2005). Besides other very practical problems with or of the Muslim faith communities, like the legal framework for building mosques or Islamic religious education in school, one of the prime targets of these efforts is the training of “home-grown imams” to minister to the needs of their Muslim communities and contain radicalism.

Italy

Muslim Communities and Constitutional Framework

Italy is home to approximately 1 to 1.5 million Muslims, coming from a great variety of countries, in particular, Morocco, Albania, Tunisia, and Egypt but also Senegal. There are a number of rivaling Muslim organizations in Italy that are usually established as associations without a public legal status.¹¹ One exception is the Centro Islamico Culturale d’Italia (Islamic Cultural Center, CICI) which was awarded public legal status in 1974. The CICI is based in Rome and has played a leading role in the construction of the most important Mosque in Italy, the Grand Mosque of Rome which was opened in 1995. Its Board is largely composed of the ambassadors of Islamic States.

The *Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia* (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy, UCOII), a federation of about 50 mosques which claims to control about 80 percent of the mosques and prayer-rooms in the country, seems to enjoy stronger popular support. Unlike CICI, UCOII does not have a public legal status but is part of a network which stretches all over Europe and has sought recognition from the European Parliament as a confessional minority in Europe that supports “not individual but collective integration.”¹² Other smaller organizations such as the Association of Italian Muslims (AMI) and *Coreis*, which are composed predominantly of ethnic Italian converts, also lack public legal status. There are also a number of independent groups centered

⁶ Silvio Ferrari (ed.), *Musulmani in Italia: La Condizione giuridica delle comunità islamiche* (Muslims in Italy: The legal situation of the Islamic communities) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000).

⁷ Augustin Motilla, “L’accordo di cooperazione tra la Spagna e la Commissione islamica. Bilancio e prospettive,” in: Ferrari, *ibid.*, p. 243-308.

⁸ CRS-Report, *ibid.*, pp. 10-21 (p. 14-16); M. Dittrich, *ibid.*, 2006, p. 25.

⁹ Maria Luisa Lo Giacco, “La rappresentanza unitaria dell’Islam in Belgio,” in Ferrari, *ibid.*, pp. 289-300; M. Dittrich, *ibid.*, 2006, p. 17, 23.

¹⁰ On the French Muslim Council (CFCM), see: Protocol for the agreement to establish the CFCM at: <http://fides.ifrance.com/fides/html/islam7.html>; “L’Europe est devenue un lieu de radicalisation islamique,” (Europe has become a place of Islamic radicalization) *Le Monde*, 9 July 2005, p. 7.

¹¹ “Italy” at: www.euro-islam.info.

¹² According to Information from the Italian Ministry of Interior, UCOII is allegedly in contact with the “International Muslim Brotherhood.”

around local mosques, which have neither claimed legitimacy nor are allied with other larger organizations.

The Italian constitution guarantees religious freedom. Every citizen has the right to practice his own faith and propagate it as long as its rites do not infringe the public order. Religions and faith communities, other than the Catholic Church,¹³ are protected by Article 8 of the Constitution, which states that all religions are equal before the law and may organize themselves freely as long as their practices do not violate Italian law.¹⁴

Their relationship with the Italian State is regulated by laws, which are based on covenants, called “intese.” An intesa with the Italian state empowers non-catholic faith groups to obtain an almost similar status as the Roman Catholic Church. The opening of negotiations for an intesa can only be requested by those faith communities, which have been officially recognized and awarded public legal status (s.a.) according to the Law of Admitted Cults.¹⁵ Critics argue that the institute of the intesa has privileged faith communities, which have a uniform hierarchical structure with representative organs –a “proper representation”– which is able to stipulate the opening of negotiations for a covenant with the State. Muslim communities, Orthodox Christians, and the Hindu communities lack such a structure, which makes the recognition as public legal personalities and the subsequent conclusion of an intesa with the State difficult, if not impossible.¹⁶ On the other hand, there is always a possibility to establish federations or unions, as has been done in the past by the Valdese Table and by the Union of Jewish Communities in Italy.¹⁷

So far a federation of the rivaling Muslim organizations in Italy is not in sight. In fact, all of the Muslim associations mentioned earlier have presented individual drafts for intese with the Italian state. The Italian state is therefore faced with a dilemma: Once it recognizes one of the faith groups as representing the entire Islamic community, with powers to appoint imams, administer and receive public funding contributed to religious denominations, etc., other Muslim groups may refuse to recognize that group on the basis that it lacks legitimacy of representativeness. Therefore Italian officials have argued that an intesa with the Muslim community will only be concluded when the Muslim community will be better rooted in Italian society and when proper representation emerges.

¹³ Article 7 of the Italian Constitution specifies that State and the Roman Catholic Church are sovereign and independent and that their relationship is regulated by the Lateran treaty from 1929, modified in 1984.

¹⁴ For an official view on religious freedom in Italy see: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri and Ministero dell'Interno, *L'attuazione della libertà religiosa in Italia: Note essenziali di legislazione e dottrina (The reality of religious freedom in Italy: essential remarks on the laws and the legal doctrine)* (Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato- P.V.-1995).

¹⁵ Eight of the Constitution and allows other cults than the Roman Catholic to practice their religion as long as their rites do not contravene with public order or public morale (Article 1 of the law).

¹⁶ In the absence of an intesa with the state the relationship of these faith-groups with the Italian state continues to be regulated by the law No. 1159 of 24 June 1929.

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis, see: Ferraro, *ibid.*

Meanwhile the debate on practical issues linked to practicing Islam in Italy continues: Apart from the building of mosques, another key-issue is the introduction of Islamic education (Koran lessons) for young Muslims in public schools which will have to be solved in the near future as the number of Muslim students continues to grow.

The Council for Italian Islam

The Italian EU Presidency in 2003 was the first to actively promote and encourage interfaith-dialogue on the EU level.¹⁸ Despite such early activity on the European level, it was only after the London bombings in July 2005 with successive raids and after the trials against 20 alleged members of terrorist cells in Italy –some of them connected to al Qaeda– that on 10 September 2005 the Council for Italian Islam within the Ministry of Interior was established by, then Minister, Giuseppe Pisanu.¹⁹

The ministerial decree setting up the Council for Italian Islam describes it as a consultative body to which the Italian Minister of Interior can refer to in order to gain more comprehensive knowledge of the Islamic community in Italy.²⁰ The Council is not a representative organ with decision making powers, but is asked to formulate opinions and proposals with regard to particular questions raised by the Minister on particular topics concerning the social integration of the people of Muslim culture and religion who live in Italy.²¹ The officially proclaimed objective of this initiative is to create an Italian Islam, which is respectful of Italy's identity, its legal framework, and its cultural and traditional norms. In return, Italian Islam shall be respected as far as its identity and diversity are concerned and insofar as it is compatible with the Italian legal system. By offering such a covenant, based upon rights and duties for those Muslims who are willing to build a better future and contribute to the prosperity of Italy, the Ministry of Interior seeks to establish a basis for future integration.²²

Minister Pisanu chose sixteen people of Islamic culture/background from various professional and ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, and confessional orientations to sit on the Council.²³ Among them is an imam from Salerno, two journalists of Muslim origin, a professor of Islamic sciences from the University of Urbino,

¹⁸ Declaration on interfaith dialogue and social cohesion", adopted by EU- Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs in Rome (Doc. 15983/03 JAI 373).

¹⁹ Decree of 10 Sept. 2005, published in the Official Gazette No 250 of 26 October 2005 and press-release of the Ministry of Interior of 10 September 2005, published at: www.interno.it. On the Council for Italian Islam see: Maria Patrizia Paba, "Council for Italian Islam", contribution to the conference of the Ministers of Interior "Dialogue of Cultures and Religions" in Vienna, 19 May 2005; Antonella Ratti, "Nasce presso il Ministero dell'Interno la Consulta per l'Islam italiano" (Establishment of the Council for Italian Islam in the Ministry of the Interior), *Associazione Italiana dei Costituzionalisti*, *Cronache*, published on the website of: www.associazionedeicostituzionalisti.it/cronache/attivita-organi/consulta_islam, 29 November 2005.

²⁰ Article. 1 of the Ministerial Decree of 10 September 2005

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The Ministry has made it clear, that there is neither an intention of assimilating the Muslims in Italy, nor of taking away their identity, but that the aim is respect for diversity in view of a "participatory inclusion."

²³ Press-release of the Ministry of the Interior of 30 November 2005, www.interno.it.

a student-representative of Moroccan origin, a writer of Iraqi origin, a social worker of Senegalese origin, a Somali nurse, and the former Italian ambassador to Saudi Arabia who converted to Islam. Only two of the members of the Council are women. The Minister of Interior has selected people who have promoted initiatives favoring dialogue and integration, respected the democratic system, and from whom he expected a pertinent contribution to dialogue.²⁴

Furthermore, particular attention was paid to the inclusion of representatives who came to Italy from countries from which major immigration flows originate in order to reflect the diversity of Italian Islam. Half of the members of the Council have Italian citizenship whereas the others hold Albanian, Algerian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Libyan, Moroccan, Pakistani, Senegalese, Syrian, Somali, and Tunisian passports. Regarding the religious aspect, two imams and a Shiite representative have been included. The top representatives of Islamic religious organizations and associations have also been selected to sit on the Council, but it was made clear that they were not chosen to represent their organizations, but that they were to serve in an individual capacity.

In 2006, the Council met three times, chaired by Minister Giuseppe Pisanu and three times chaired by his successor Professor Giuliano Amato. At the first meeting which took place on 8 February 2006, members expressed their condemnation of the satirical Mohammad caricatures published in Denmark and at the same time of the orchestrated violent and disproportionate reactions, which followed the publication in the *Islamic World* and agreed on a work-plan, which is to focus on the following topics:

- integration-related problems (housing-situation, schools, work sector etc.);
- issues concerning peculiarities of the Muslim religion and traditions with particular regard to women's rights, the use of the veil, observance of Islamic holidays, Islamic Halal butcheries, Islamic cemeteries etc.;
- problems related to preaching in Italian in the mosques and the education of imams;
- problems related to the location of the places of worship;
- initiatives to facilitate procedures for immigrants (asylum, protection against deportation, concession of stay-permits, family reunion, citizenship issues);
- problems related to the Islamic representatives' access to prisons and hospitals.

During the following meetings members of the Council tabled a Manifest of Islam in Italy, which contained a condemnation of any form of violence or terrorism but also of the "ridiculization" of religious symbols. The members of the Council also confirmed their commitment to building an Italian Islam, which would be united and pluralist, based upon common religious and cultural values, but also upon the complete acceptance of the Italian political system and its laws.

²⁴ M.P. Paba, *ibid.*

Under Minister Pisanu's successor, Professor Giuliano Amato, the Council was called upon in June 2006 to provide the new center-left government with an opinion on reform of the citizenship-law, which was later taken into account when the ministry worked out a proposal for a new citizenship law which was approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2006.²⁵

An ad-hoc meeting of the Council was called by Minister Amato on 28 August 2006 in order to deal with an event which had caught the attention of the Italian media: On 19 August 2006, the UCOII had published an advertisement in various Italian newspapers in which they stated that the Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Gaza could be compared to the crimes of Nazi-occupation in Italy: "Marzabotto = Gaza, Fosse Ardeatine = Lebanon" and "Yesterday Nazi-massacres, today massacres by the Israelis." These advertisements have been met with unanimous condemnation in the media as well as by all political parties. The opposition even called for the exclusion of UCOII-leader Mohammad Nour Dachan from the Council. After a meeting with Jewish representatives, Minister Amato eventually decided that future membership in the council would depend on the endorsement of a Charter of Italian Values. The first elements of the Charter, which contains a condemnation of war and unilateral aggression, a clear dedication to the founding values of the EU, as well as the endorsement of the principle of non-discrimination, religious pluralism, and mutual understanding, the freedom of conscience and choice, and the equal rights of women and men were discussed during the meeting of the Council on 28 August 2006. Since the president of UCOII refused to excuse himself for the advertisement but distanced himself from anti-semitism, the matter had been deferred to the following Council meeting on 3 October 2006. In this meeting Minister Amato appointed a scientific committee which has the task of formulating a Charter which now is to be extended to all immigrants, not only to Muslims and members of the Council.²⁶

Germany

Muslim Communities and Constitutional Framework

Germany is home to 3.3 to 3.5 million Muslims. Turkish Muslims are by far the largest group, followed by Muslims from the former Yugoslavia, Arab States, and Southeast Asia. Muslims now form the third largest religious group after Roman Catholics and Lutherans. The German Muslim community is composed

²⁵ The proposal aims to facilitate integration of immigrants by introducing elements of the *ius soli* into Italian citizenship law in order to facilitate the acquisition of Italian citizenship by children of immigrants born on Italian soil, shorten the required time of (legal) residence for foreigners to claim citizenship from ten to five years, and establish the basis for an integration test by which the claimant would prove his ability to integrate into Italian society. See for further discussion: "Cittadinanza per gli immigrati"- (Citizenship for immigrants) *La Repubblica*, 5 August 2006, p. 2.

²⁶ Press-release of the Italian Ministry of Interior issued 3 October 2006, www.interno.it/stampa.php?sezione=1&id=23045 taken up by the *Corriere della Sera* on the same day, "Carta dei valori riguarderà ogni immigrato (Charter of values will regard every immigrant)", www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2006/10_Octobre/03/amato.html. See also: Heinz-Joachim Fischer, *ibid.*

of different groups: approximately 2.4 million of the Muslims living in Germany are Sunnis (80 percent), ca. 500,000 Alevites (17 percent) and ca. 130,000 Shiites (3 percent). Of these only a small number of about 10-15 percent are members of the approximately 2,500 mosque-associations –out of which 140 are classical Mosques with Minarets– looked after by ca. 2,250 Imams. The majority of Germany’s Muslims are considered to be religious moderates, since the majority of the Turkish and Yugoslav Muslims have traditionally not been drawn to radical forms of Islam. Only a relatively small percentage even belongs to formal religious organizations.²⁷ There is no official umbrella organization of the Islamic faith, but rivaling associations who claim to represent Muslim interests on the national level:²⁸ The *Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany), dominated by the *Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs* (Islamic Community Milli Görüs, IGMG) which allegedly has links with the radical Muslim brotherhood and is under supervision of the security services,²⁹ the smaller *Zentralrat für die Muslime in Deutschland* (Central Council for Muslims in Germany), the *Föderation der Aleviten Gemeinden in Deutschland* (Federation of the Alevite Communities in Germany) representing the Alevites, and the Diyanet, which is associated with the official Turkish Authority for religious affairs and the Türkisch-Islamische Union (Turkish-Islamic Union, DITIB) which manages various non-profit ventures. These organizations mostly have the status of registered associations.

The German Basic Law (Constitution), with Article 4, grants extensive religious freedom to all religious groups and protects individual religious beliefs and convictions, as well as the profession and propagation of faith. Though Church and state are separate under German law and the German state considers itself a secular state, a historically strong partnership between Government and the dominant religious groups that have an official status as public entities exists. These include the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant denominations, and the Jewish faith.³⁰ As in Italy –where no intesa with the state has so far been

²⁷ According to Germany’s annual “Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2004” a small minority of less than 0.1 percent or about 32,000 Muslim residents in Germany were members of 24 Islamic organizations with extremist ties, www.bmi.bund.de/cln_012/nn_121894/sid_07FFFD51648A8BDE07F0D2FA7B8CB8F1/Internet/Content/Broschuere/2005/Verfassungsschutzbericht__2004__de.html, (in German), released on 17 May 2005. According to the President of the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Investigation Agency) in November 2006 there were 220 ongoing investigations with an Islamist background in Germany; five attacks have been prevented, Reuters, 15 November 2006.

²⁸ “Germany”, www.euro-islam.info.

²⁹ On IGMG Germany’s annual “Report on the Protection of the Constitution 2005,” p. 215-222, available in German, www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/publikationen/verfassungsschutzbericht.

³⁰ Paying tribute to the historical development of state-church relations in Germany the recognition of a faith group as a public entity is connected with extensive privileges and an elevated degree of autonomy from state intervention. The status as public entity is based on Article. 136-139 and 141 of the German Constitution of 11 August 1919 (“Weimar Constitution”), norms which have been incorporated into the German Basic Law of 1949 in Article. 140. Privileges include: full independence in matters of employment, recognition of the community’s religious oath in a court of law, freedom to organize councils and chains of command, automatic membership of the followers with the community, fiscal protection and exemption from real estate taxes on property designated as belonging to the public domain, and the right to receive a percentage of the national revenue based on tax payers’ declarations of membership. See: Reinhard Zippelius, *Staat und Kirche: Eine Geschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (State and Church: The History from Antiquity to the Present) (Munich, C.H. Beck, 1997).

concluded by Islamic organizations –thus far, also in Germany, Islam has not been recognized as a public entity. This is –like in Italy– above all due to the difficulties of rivaling Islamic organizations in establishing a federated structure with a clear leadership.³¹

In most of the German Länder –which are in charge of public schools– religious teaching is included in the standard curriculum. Generally, the denominational religious instruction in public schools is provided by religious communities under Länder-government supervision. By law, any community with a sufficient number of students may take part in the program. However, attempts to establish Islamic religious instruction in public schools have also been hampered by the lacking recognition of Islam as a public entity.³² Fears that students may be exposed to extremism in unsupervised Koran classes have led to the setting up of teacher training programs at the Universities of Münster and Frankfurt/Main, which aim to train competent instructors for Islamic education.³³

While there is no Federal Law against the wearing of headscarves in schools, the federal courts have upheld measures taken in Länder banning teachers from wearing headscarves in public schools.

The German Islam Conference (DIK)

In Germany –as in Italy– “dialogue with Islam” was for a long time limited to the local or at most the Länder level. However, since the attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, and other recent terrorist incidents, public suspicions of extremist activities by Muslims residing in Germany have also been heightened. The fact that three of the 9/11 hijackers had lived and plotted in Hamburg and other parts of Germany for several years and that terrorists saw Germany as one of the easier places in Europe from which to operate,³⁴ increased the sensitivity of German authorities – on the federal and the Länder level. They started to pay greater attention and scrutiny to Germany’s Muslim communities and became increasingly concerned about radical Muslim clerics who may be preaching in German mosques.³⁵ At the same time, German authorities have realized that repressive measures are not enough to deal with the root-causes of extremism but

³¹ Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, “Muslime in Deutschland,” FAZ, 27 September 2006.

³² Over the last years, some of Germany’s 16 states have come to agreements with various Islamic groups for religious instruction. In other Länder, teaching about Islam is included in a comparative course on world religions in order to sidestep controversy. Where different forms of Islamic education have been incorporated into the curricula, some of the above mentioned Islamic organizations have been called upon to participate in providing instruction in the schools, as the Protestant and Roman Catholic Church generally do.

³³ “College Launches Disputed Islamic Program,” *Deutsche Welle*, 27 March 2005. On CRS, see: www.uni-muenster.de/ReligioeseStudien/Religion%20des%20Islam.htm.

³⁴ Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz: Aufgaben, Befugnisse, Grenzen (Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution: Tasks, Competences, Limits), 2002, p. 62. Available in German, http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/publikationen/allgemeine_infos/abg/abg.pdf.

³⁵ Peter J. Katzstein, “Same War — Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counter-terrorism,” *International Organization*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2003, p. 731-760.

that it is necessary to put more emphasis on the integration and participation of Muslim communities in Germany.³⁶

Following a general consensus in German politics that the increasing social and emotional segmentation especially of young Muslims belonging to the second and/or even third generation of immigrants has to be stopped in order to contain the danger of radicalization, the Federal Minister of Interior, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble, initiated the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, DIK) in 2006 to serve as a negotiation and communication forum between representatives of the German state and representatives of the Muslim communities living in Germany.³⁷ With the DIK, the Federal Ministry of the Interior hopes to develop concrete recommendations for solving central issues such as Islamic education, training of imams, use of the hijab etc. In the course of this conference-process, representatives of the state and the Muslim communities are to explore common ground for improving the integration of Islam into the constitutional framework of Germany and containing Islamist extremism.³⁸

One of the particular challenges faced by the DIK will be the insertion of Islam as a “religion without church” into the legal framework, which regulates relations between the state and churches with respect to other religious groups in Germany. The Motto of the DIK “Muslims in Germany-German Muslims” can be seen as an illustration of the idea of incorporating the Muslim communities in Germany into the German nation.

Like in Italy, the DIK will not have decision making powers but is to articulate recommendations which are to be based on broad consensus. The results achieved by the DIK will be subject to evaluation every six months in order to ensure that its objectives will be reached within a timeframe of two to three years.

The DIK is composed of 30 representatives: 15 state representatives (federal level, Länder, and communes) and 15 Muslim representatives (five of the biggest Muslim organizations and ten individuals from different fields of Muslim life in Germany). As in Italy, the members of the DIK have been selected personally by Minister Schäuble after a series of intensive meetings and consultations. By choosing representatives of organizations and individual representatives, Minister Schäuble reportedly intended to achieve a certain degree of legitimacy (rep-

³⁶ In 2006 both of the major German political parties CDU and SPD but also some of the Länder-Governments have published action-plans for integration policy. See the CDU-position paper: “Für einen nationalen Aktionsplan Integration” (For a national action-plan on integration), 4th April 2006, www.politikerscreen.de/index.php/Common/Document/field/document/id/41240 (download: July 2006), and the SPD- “Leitlinien zur Integrationspolitik” (Guidelines for Internal Policy), published 10 July 2006, www.spd.de, as well as the “20-Punkte-Aktionsplan Integration” (20-point action-plan on integration) of the government of North-Rhine Westphalia published on 27 June 2006, www.nrw.de.

³⁷ German Federal Ministry of the Interior, http://www.bmi.bund.de/cln_012/nn_148130/Internet/Navigation/EN/Topics/German_Islam_Conference/German_Islam_Conference__node.html__nnn=true.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

resentation) that will go beyond organized Islam in Germany. Since the leaders of the biggest Muslim organizations only represent, at most, 15 percent of the Muslim population in Germany (the members of these associations) the Minister also selected 10 individuals who reflect the diversity of the Muslim community in Germany, and last, but not least, gave a voice to the female Muslim population which otherwise is scarcely represented by the official associations (all led by men).³⁹

The first meeting of the DIK took place in Berlin on the 27 September 2006 in the historical Castle of Charlottenburg and received a very positive echo in the German media.⁴⁰ All Islamic organizations and the individual members pledged allegiance to the German Basic Law in the beginning of the meeting thus contributing to neutralizing concerns which had been uttered in the media that some elements of the DIK were not willing to respect the values of liberal democracy as a condition for dialogue. The day after the conference meeting, Minister Schäuble pointed out in a speech in Parliament that he had abandoned his initial project of reaching a “social-contract” with the Muslim Communities since there had been the general understanding that Islam in Germany would be professed within the limits of the German constitution.⁴¹

The technical work of the DIK is to be conducted in three working groups and a discussion circle which are to meet at least six times a year. The work of the DIK is supported by a secretariat at the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees, BAMF) in Nuremberg.⁴² The working areas which are to be addressed during the working sessions reflect contentious issues, which have hampered integration in the past:⁴³

(1) The German social system and German values

- Equality between men and women
- Developing an informed political opinion
- Family/education/self-determination of young people
- Accepting the diversity of democratic cultures
- Secularization (international comparison of criteria and trends)

(2) Religious issues and the German understanding of constitution

- Separation of the state and church as a basic principle
- Dealing with religious symbols
- Mosque-building

³⁹ This strong element of individual representatives has been strongly criticised by the representatives of institutional Islam. Comp.: Yassin Musharbash, “Islamkonferenz. Lob für Schäuble- erste Konflikte zwischen den Muslimen” (Conference on Islam. Praise for Schäuble- first conflicts among the Muslims), in: *Spiegel-Online*, 27 Sept. 2006.

⁴⁰ Y. Musharbash, *ibid.*

⁴¹ http://www.bmi.bund.de/cln_028/nn_122688/Internet/Navigation/DE/Themen/Deutsche__Islam__Konferenz/deutscheIslamKonferenz__node.html__nnn=true.

⁴² BAMF, www.bamf.bund.de.

⁴³ http://www.bmi.bund.de/cln_012/nn_1026710/Internet/Content/Themen/Deutsche__Islam__Konferenz/DatenUndFakten/Islamkonferenz__Kurzinfo__en.html

- Islamic religious instruction in German and under state control of the Länder
- Providing/expressing the intention to take German lessons (policy of give and take); pre-school instruction/models at Länder level
- Equality of girls and boys, co-education (physical education and swimming lessons, school trips, sex education, attitude of Muslim boys to non-Muslim girls of their own age, etc.)
- Training of imams/chairs for Islamic studies (universities/colleges)

(3) The private sector and the media as bridge-builders

- Young people on the job market (e.g. training)
- Recruitment policy in the private sector and public sector/self-employment
- Information policy to overcome prejudices in the Turkish media
- Information policy to overcome prejudices in the German media
- Religious and cultural identity of select personalities/role models
- Secular forms of Islam

(4) Security and Islamism

Additional issues of internal security, Islamist activities against the free democratic basic order and the prevention and exposing of Islamist acts of violence will be debated in a discussion group assigned to the Conference.

Conclusion

While the German and Italian governments view integration as a social need beyond combating terrorism, it is clear that terrorist acts have spurred further action by state authorities to encourage integration. In both countries, greater state involvement in and observation of Muslim life in their societies started in particular after September 11. With regard to the integration of Islam into their societal and constitutional framework, both countries –Germany as an “old” immigration country and Italy as a country with a very rapidly growing new Muslim population– face similar challenges: They have to promote an institutionalization of Islam which, above all, involves finding and building-up legitimized partners for dialogue among the Muslim communities in order to create a common understanding on how Islam can be reconciled with the national legal framework and with western values. For decision makers it will be important to find true partners, backed by their Muslim communities, with whom they can seek commonly shared solutions for practical issues such as teaching Islamic religion in schools, building mosques, and training imams which are familiar with the values and customs of western societies.

The absence of true legitimation or representativity, which could only be achieved through democratically elected representatives, is a common feature of both the Italian Council and the DIK. The underlying thought is that the Muslim communities have to somehow “mature” into national faith groups, a process which is to

be promoted by the Council and the DIK. The privileged access to Government aims to facilitate the formation of moderate and democratic leaders within the Muslim communities and the articulation of new Muslim identities in their new home countries.

The institutionalization of the Council in Italy and the DIK in Germany demonstrate awareness for the challenges, which both countries face with regard to the integration of their Muslim populations. Several factors have to be considered: Firstly there is the reality that Germany and Italy's Muslims are there to stay. Demographic trends indicate that Muslims will become growing segments in both societies, even without further immigration, given the continuing decline in the ethnic German and Italian population and the high birth rates among their Muslim populations.⁴⁴ In addition, in order to take care of their aging populations, Germany and Italy may eventually have to expand their younger work force substantially, which at this point seems possible only through immigration. A large portion of those wanting to immigrate to Germany and Italy are likely to be Muslims from developing nations. Another factor for pressing Muslim integration is that given the growing security threat of terrorism, neither country can afford to have an increasingly hostile and alienated population among whom some might be susceptible to terrorist recruitment.

While the institution of the Council on Italian Islam and the DIK in Germany have been welcomed by the media throughout the political landscape, it is still too early for an assessment of the future success of these efforts in promoting the integration of Muslims. The experience, which so far has been gathered with the Council for Islam in Italy, shows however that the Council has already become an important instrument for dialogue between the State and its Muslim citizens. It reflects the different expressions of the Muslim community in Italy and focuses on emerging social issues. In the short time of its existence, it has already served to formulate opinions on important issues of domestic policy such as the reform of citizenship. But also with regard to contentious foreign policy issues, such as the war in Lebanon, it has been an important forum and instrument for channeling conflicts which otherwise might have led to (further) alienation and hostility between different faith communities in Italy.

The avenue of dialogue is the only option in order to address integration problems and build bridges of mutual understanding between government authorities, the non-Muslim majority, and the Muslim communities in both countries. The first step has been made and an ambitious program for the future activities of both fora have been presented.

⁴⁴ The birth rate among the German Muslim population is three times higher than for non-Muslims and the population is expected to roughly double by 2015, see: <http://www.pbs.org/wbgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/de.html>. Also, in Italy, persons coming from traditional Muslim countries are the fastest growing immigrant group. Although, Muslims only account for ca. one percent of the total population, ISTAT (Italian Statistical Institute), www.istat.it.
