

Lucerne, 19 May 2015

The SNSF promotes research into Europe's religious affiliations

Religion is a topic of debate throughout European society. However, reliable and current data on religion in Europe are still not available for many countries. The Lucerne research project 'Swiss Metadata-base of Religious Affiliation in Europe' (SMRE), funded for three years by the SNSF, aims to change this.

In March, work began on the 'Swiss Database of Religious Affiliation in Europe (SMRE)' at the University of Lucerne. In previous years, data had been collected and compared in the context of university research for REGIE. The more data that was collected, the clearer the problem became: Some countries lacked reliable data, in others the data was abundant but contradictory.

Publicly Accessible Internet Database as the Core

At the heart of this project is an interactive, web-based database that will be programmed in the coming months. For the first time, this database will make it possible to survey existing figures country by country, to analyse the structure, origin and quality of the figures, and on this basis to create reliable national data on religious affiliation. The database covers all European countries including Turkey. Online access makes it possible for researchers from a range of disciplines to enter country-specific data with the respective local denominations of the religious communities themselves. The research team at the University of Lucerne then standardizes these data to cross-national standards. The data will then be made available to the public, allowing them to be used not only for researchers but also for students, politicians, journalists and other interested parties.

Broad Cooperation – A Range of Benefits

The SMRE draws on a broad international and interdisciplinary collaboration with partners such as the *ETH Zurich* and the US-American *PEW Research Center*. The SMRE data will provide a database for numerous research projects on religion, as well as providing a reliable source for politicians and public figures discussing contentious religious issues. During the upcoming three-year project, two international conferences on the project's subject will take place in Lucerne – the first is expected to take place on 9th-11th March 2016.

For further information about the project and ongoing news, please visit www.smre-data.ch.

Literature

Liedhegener, Antonius; Odermatt, Anastas: Religionszugehörigkeit in Europa – empirisch. Die «Swiss Metadatabase of Religious Affiliation in Europe (SMRE)». In: Appel, Kurt; Guanzini, Isabella; Walser, Angelika (Hg.): Europa mit oder ohne Religion? Der Beitrag der Religion zum gegenwärtigen und künftigen Europa. V&R, Wien 2014, S. 119-167.

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