SIG 19 Religions and Worldviews in Education *Newsletter*

Issue 1/2026

Dear SIG 19 Members and Friends,

The Earli SIG 13 and SIG 19 Conference "Navigating Polarisation & Fostering Civic Engagement through Education" is just around the corner. We are looking forward to meeting you soon in Kristiansand, especially at our **business meeting** on Thursday, 4th of June 16.45-17.30. Further information about the conference programme can be found in this newsletter.

We would like to highlight that **Janine Kuropka**, a SIG 19 JURE member, has been selected to hold the **JURE keynote**. Congratulations! We warmly invite you all to attend her keynote on Friday, 5th of June 10.45-11.30.

Another keynote speaker at the conference is **Elisabeth Graf.** We are happy to introduce the SIG 13 member in our newsletter.

Furthermore, we are sharing **an interview** with **Olga Schihalejev** from Estonia. She speaks about her research focuses and importance of religious education today.

Finally, we would like to announce **Save the Dates** for the upcoming JURE 2026 in Estonia and the next EARLI Conference 2027 located in Belfast.

We would like to wish you an enjoyable Summer break!

Petra and Sanna

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NUMBER OF SIG19 MEMBERS
23

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS IMPORTANT!

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIG 13 & SIG 19 CONFERENCE 2026

Theme: Navigating Polarisation and Fostering Civic Engagement through Education

Date: 3rd- 5th June 2026

Location: University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway

Keynotes:

- Christer Mattson, University of Gothenburg/The Segerstedt Institute, Sweden

Constroversial Matters, Schools' Democratic Assignment, and Empathetic Curiosity

- Arniika Kuusisto, University of Helsinki, Finland

Cultivating Existential Resilience and Belonging in an Age of Polarisation

- Elisabeth Graf, TU Dortmund, Germany

Classroom Emotions in Civic Education: the Role of Open Classroom Climate for Emotion anc Civic Learning

- Janine Kuropka (JURE Keynote), TU Dortmund, Germany

How Overestimating the Muslim Population Shapes Explicit and Implicit Attitudes Among Pupils

SIG 19 Business Meeting: Thursday, 4th of June 16.45-17.30

Further information and programme for the SIG13 & SIG19 conference can be found here

More detailed PDF programme

Elisabeth Graf, TU Dortmund University, Germany

Elisabeth Graf is a Postdoc at TU Dortmund University, Center for Research on Education and School Development (IFS). From 2020 to 2023, she worked as university assistant (pre-doc) at the Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, University of Vienna, where she obtained her PhD in psychology. In her dissertation, she investigated the role of emotions in political learning, particularly in civic education among adolescents. Her research focuses on motivational and emotional processes in education, with a strong interest in motivational interventions and the context of political learning.

At the EARLI SIG 13 & 19 conference 2026, her focus will be on classroom emotions in civic education. In her talk, she will give insights into theoretical conceptualization and empirical evidence for antecedents and outcomes of emotions in this domain. Thereby the classroom context, specifically on open climate for diverse opinions, is positively related to students' experience of emotions. Emotions are further a relevant predictor for civic learning, with activating emotions relating positively to political participation and enjoyment relating positively to political knowledge.

(Text was provided by Elisabeth Graf and picture is from web page: https://fair.tu-dortmund.de/professur/wissenschaftler/elisabeth-graf/)

Institution: TU Dortmund University
Country: Germany

What is your Keynote Speech "How Overestimating the Muslim Population Shapes Explicit and Implicit Attitudes Among Pupils" about?

My keynote focuses on how pupils' perceptions of the Muslim population in Germany relate to their attitudes toward Muslims. My data show that pupils strongly overestimate the size of the Muslim population. Building on this finding, I analyze how such misperceptions relate to both explicit attitudes, consciously expressed opinions, and implicit attitudes, understood as more automatic associations.

I further investigate whether this relationship is mediated by symbolic and realistic threat perceptions. While symbolic threats refer to perceived threats to values, norms, religion, or cultural identity, realistic threats relate to perceived economic or physical threats. To interpret my findings, I draw on socio-psychological theories such as the availability heuristic and illusory correlation.

In your point of view what is the relevance of your Keynote Topic for the conference audience and the educational scientific community?

My presentation highlights how distorted perceptions of social reality and perceived group threats may shape attitudes among young people in school contexts. In particular, the substantial overestimation of the Muslim population points to widespread demographic misperceptions, whose relationship with attitudes toward Muslims is examined in the study.

Schools are not only places where attitudes and social understandings are shaped, but also important spaces for addressing demographic misperceptions and group-related threat perceptions. The findings suggest that educational approaches should go beyond the mere provision of factual knowledge by strengthening media literacy, encouraging critical reflection, reflecting on threat narratives, and fostering dialogue about religious and cultural diversity.

If the conference attendees were to take home just one message from your presentation, what could it be?

Negative attitudes toward religious diversity cannot be understood without considering the social and psychological mechanisms that shape them. Perceptions of demographic reality, threat narratives, and social representations all influence how people relate to religious minority groups. Socio-psychological perspectives help make these mechanisms visible.

(Text and Picture were provided by Janine Kuropka)

Position: Associate Professor, Dr.
Institution: University of Tartu
Country: Estonia

What started your career as a researcher in the areas of religions and worldviews in education?

My professional journey began as a secondary school teacher, teaching about religion in a largely secular context. These experiences made me increasingly aware of how limited students' contact with religion often is, and how complex it can be to make religions meaningful and understandable in such settings. I found myself asking questions that went beyond teaching practice alone: questions about understanding, dialogue, and the role of education in shaping both.

A decisive moment was being invited to join the REDCo project (Religion in Education: A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries). For a novice researcher, this was an exceptional entry point into academia. I became part of an international network of highly experienced scholars. What I valued most was not only the academic quality of the project, but the sense of shared inquiry and a supportive research community. We shared a desire to understand how religious education can contribute to dialogue rather than division. That experience gave me both confidence and direction, and it continues to influence how I approach research today.

What is your focus in the research and teaching of religious education?

My focus is on how to navigate religious plurality in secular contexts, contexts where religion is present in society, but often absent or unnoticed in personal experience. This creates a particular pedagogical challenge: how to make religion and religious people understandable to students who may have little or no direct encounter with them. I am interested in approaches that help students interpret religious expressions, recognise diversity within traditions, and engage with different worldviews in a reflective and dialogical way. At the same time, I see it as essential

to support teachers in this work, as these conversations can be sensitive, complex, and sometimes uncomfortable. My aim is to contribute to forms of teaching that do not simplify religion but make its complexity accessible and meaningful.

Many of your research projects examine the school context. What, in your opinion, is the most important area for religions and worldviews in education today?

One of the key challenges today is how we understand religious literacy. Rather than treating it as the accumulation of as much knowledge as possible, I see it as a question of identifying what is essential: what kind of foundational understanding enables people to make sense of religions and worldviews and to continue developing this understanding throughout their lives. This raises important research questions. What constitutes the minimum yet sufficient knowledge about religions? Which interpretive and analytical skills are necessary for meaningful understanding? How do learners develop the ability to recognise internal diversity, deal with ambiguity, and engage with different perspectives? Without such competencies, knowledge risks remaining superficial; with them, even limited knowledge can become meaningful and generative.

At the same time, more research is needed on how to make religious education intellectually stimulating, especially for students who are curious and motivated. What kinds of tasks, formats, and learning environments foster deeper engagement? How can excellence in religious education be supported and recognised? In Estonia, for example, national RE Olympiads offer one promising approach, but comparable initiatives are largely absent at the international level. Exploring how such models could be developed and adapted across contexts would be a valuable direction for future research.

(Text was provided by Olga Schihalejev and Picture is from https://ut.ee/en/employee/olga-schihalejev)

Upcoming Conferences:

JURE 2026 - 30th JURE Conference

Host: University of Tartu (Estonia)
Date: 6–10 July 2026
Theme: Learning in Transition: Science, Society and the Challenges of Tomorrow
Link: https://www.earli.org/events/jure2026

EARLI 2027
Location: Belfast, Northern Ireland
Date: 23-27 August 2027

Further information will be published on the EARLI web page.

A REMINDER TO SUBSCRIBE EARLI MEMBERSHIP

Dear friends of SIG 19,

As you know, we are one of the smaller SIGs within EARLI and need every year a minimum of 50 members to continue our work. The Religions and Worldviews in Education SIG brings together researchers from various backgrounds, such as theology, religious studies, psychology, pedagogy, educational studies and philosophy. The SIG 19 is advocating empirical and theoretical research that includes cognitive, social and emotional components.

If you have not subscribed yet, please consider renewing your membership in our SIG for 2026.

Please note, when you purchase an EARLI membership, you can join up to two SIGs free of charge!

Become a member now!

NEW MEMBERS IN EARLI SIG 19

Prof. Dr. Nicola Brauch, University of Bochum, Germany

Assist. Prof. Dr. Alexander Elmies-Vestergren, University of Agder, Norway

Dr. Simone Hiller, KIBOR (Catholic Institute for research on religious education in vocational schools), University of Tübingen, Germany

Prof. Dr. Guzmán Pérez Montiel, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Spain

Dr. Etelka Seres-Busi, Lutheran Theological University in Budapest, Hungary

Dr. Susanne Timm, Otto-Friedrich-University of Bamberg, Germany

Elina Vilenius (Doctoral researcher), Tampere University, Finland

We are very happy to be able to welcome new members to SIG 19!

We hope our new members will enjoy being a part of Earli SIG 19.

For any questions, please contact the SIG 19 coordinators or Newsletter editors who will be happy to help you.

SIG 19 NEWSLETTER: NOTES AND GUIDELINES

We want to encourage a wide participation in SIG 19 and in the Newsletter. If you intend to contribute to the Newsletter, please take into account the following issues. You can make suggestions concerning to content of the SIG 19 and the Newsletter. However, the editors retain the rights to alter and modify the contributions.

Interviews:

In each Newsletter we will focus on one or two researchers connected to the SIG 19. One of the covered researchers is preferably a junior researcher. Please do not hesitate to make suggestions concerning the interviewees.

Reviews:

In this section the SIG members can review different things, such as, books, articles and conferences, etc. Please do not hesitate to contribute and to present also your own works. A review should not exceed 250 words.

Special feature:

This section we feature some interesting and inspirational aspect concerning the SIG 19 areas of interest. The author is invited by the editors with regards to the suggestions by the members. The contributions should not exceed 500 words.

Announcements:

If you feel that there is something relevant happening in the interest areas of SIG 19, please use this section. Such things are up-coming conferences and projects. This section can also include propositions for shared projects. The announcements should be 100 words at maximum.

New members:

We wish new members warmly welcome to our SIG 19! We will list the new members in this section after we have been informed by them.

Publication & Contact:

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Sanna Väisänen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

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APPENDIX: PUBLICATIONS

Altıntaş, M. C. (2025). The worldviews of theology students in higher education. *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 24*(4), 1761-1784. https://doi.org/10.21547/jss.1661491

Altıntaş, M. C. (2026). The unity of precaution and Tawakkul in building disaster awareness: The February 6 earthquakes and a holistic religious education model. *ÂSÂR Akademik Dinî Araştırmalar Dergisi, (Deprem ve Din),* 257–290. https://izlik.org/JA66RW66KN

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Brodthage, M. (2026). Top-Influencer:innen und ihre Kritik an Religion in YouTube-Videos. Reichweitenstarke Videos als Herausforderung für die Anbahnung digitalitätsethischer Souveränität. In F. Höhne, K. & Lindner, M. Pirner (Eds.), Digitalitätsethische Souveränität. Theologisch-ethische und religionsdidaktische Perspektiven am Beispiel „Influencer“ (pp. 227–243), Bielefeld: transcript.

Brodthage, M. (2026). *Religion und ihre Kritik in YouTube-Videos deutscher Top-Influencer:innen. Eine qualitativ-rekonstruktive Studie zu Selbstpositionierungspraktiken der beliebtesten deutschsprachigen Top-Influencer:innen der 12- bis 19-Jährigen zu Geschichte und Gegenwart von Religion*. Berlin: Logos-Verlag. DOI: 10.30819/6022.

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Fuglseth, K. (2026). The past was once future. Reenactment of values and virtues on historical grounds in education. In G. Gelardini, K., S. Fuglseth, & P. J. Bekken (Eds.), *Virtues et humanitas. bridging virtues and values of Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian paideia* (pp. 80-96). Waxmann.

Fuglseth, K. (2026). Direct and indirect relevant knowledge: Strategies for handling diversity and unity in teacher education. *McGill Journal of Education, 60*(1), 155-171. https://doi.org/10.26443/mje/rsem.v60i1.10347

Gelardini, G., Fuglseth, K., & Bekken, P. J. (Eds.). (2026). *Bridging educational virtues and values: Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Early Christian paideia and its relevance in past and present*. Waxmann

Hiller, S. (2026). Der öffentliche Diskurs zu islamischem Religionsunterricht 1992–2021: Ein ambivalenter Ort von (Anti-)Diskriminierung. In N. Kamcili-Yildiz, B. Konz, & J. Willems (Eds.) *Religiöse Diversität intersektional. Herausforderungen für die Lehrkräftebildung* (= Comparative Theology, Islam, and Society 4), Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 27–47. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111676609-003

Pérez Montiel, G. (2025). De tiovivos, bicicletas y enlaces covalentes. Educación y Teología: una simbiosis posible y deseable. In Guzón Nestar, J. L. & Esteban Garcés, C. (Eds.), *Educar la inteligencia espiritual y la experiencia religiosa* (pp. 9–28). Madrid: PPC.

Unstad, L., & Jørgensen, C.S. (2026). Disciplinary learning in Norwegian religious education from a plurality of perspectives—Individual convictions and academic conventions. In: Ubani, M., S. Tremblay, A. Unser, S. Garvis (eds). *The Palgrave handbook of religion in public education.* Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-02890-7_22

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