



The ACCEPT PLURALISM Consortium

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BASIC INFORMATION

Project type: Collaborative research project (call SSH-2009-3.3.1 "Tolerance and cultural diversity")

Project duration: 39 months (1st March 2010 – 30 May 2013)

EU contribution: 2,600,230 Euro

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WHAT IS ACCEPT PLURALISM ABOUT?

The ACCEPT PLURALISM project addresses the need to explore and understand tolerance of ethnic, racial and religious diversity in European societies and seeks to identify key messages for policy makers.

In particular the project analyses:

- **What kinds of tolerance exist in practice in 14 EU Member States and one accession country.**
- **What tolerance means.** What is the relationship between concepts such as multiculturalism, liberalism, pluralism, and national heritage?
- **What kind of conflicts arise in European societies with regard to ethnic and religious diversity.** What views and practices are—and are not—tolerated, accepted and respected.
- **What kind of institutional arrangements have been put forth by different actors when there is a conflict.** How successful they have been.
- **What kind of policies and practices need to be developed** for European societies to become more respectful of cultural diversity.

Based on this analysis the project will produce key messages for European and national policy makers, civil society, and minority groups.

HOW THE PROJECT OPERATES

Recently, Europe has experienced increasing tensions between national majorities and ethnic or religious minorities, more particularly with marginalised Muslim communities. In some countries challenges relate more to immigrant groups while in other countries they involve native minority claims. It is in this geopolitical context that the project joins the quest to investigate whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years.

Our work starts from a distinction between **liberal tolerance** (not interfering with practices or ways of life of a person even if one disapproves of them) and **egalitarian tolerance** referring to institutional arrangements and public policies that fight negative stereotyping, promote positive inclusive identities and re-organise the public space in ways that accommodate diversity.

The project critically reviews past empirical research and the scholarly theoretical literature on the topic. In addition, we conduct original empirical work in 2 research and policy areas:

- **School life** (language, dress and behaviour of students; content such as teaching history; structure of education system).
- **Politics** (special representation of minority groups; (il)liberal claims made by minority groups; transnational political participation).

The project ACCEPT PLURALISM covers a wide range of European countries:

- **Western European states** with a long experience in receiving and incorporating immigrant minorities: Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, UK.
- **'New' migrant host countries:** Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Ireland.
- **Central European countries that have recently joined the EU:** Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, **and Turkey**, an associated state, all countries that mostly experience emigration rather than immigration but are also characterised by a significant variety of native minority populations.

The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium includes 15 universities and research centres and 3 non governmental organisations from across the European Union and Turkey.

Each country team identifies in each of the above research and policy areas key events of national or European relevance that exemplify different understandings and practices of tolerance.

We examine individuals, groups or practices:

- **For whom tolerance is sought but which we should not tolerate.**
- **That we disapprove of but which should be tolerated.**
- **For which we ask to go beyond toleration and achieve respect and recognition.**

In particular, in each country we investigate:

- **When and whom is being tolerated / not tolerated / respected.**
- **The reasons that different social actors put forward for tolerating / not tolerating / respecting specific minority groups / individuals and specific practices.**

EXPECTED RESULTS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM is generating:

For policy makers and civil society actors

- **A State-of-the-Art Analysis of Concepts of Tolerance and Ethnic, Racial and Religious Diversity**, highlighting relevant policies and practices across the EU.
- **A Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit** using qualitative and quantitative indicators to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity.

For educators and local authorities

- **A Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe** to be used at upper high school level and with local/national policy makers to explain and discuss issues of (in)tolerance and cultural diversity and how to solve them.

For academics

- **A book (and several journal articles)** on conceptual and empirical advances on tolerance, pluralism and cultural diversity in 21st Century Europe.

EUROPEAN ADDED VALUE

The project offers a wide European coverage and brings together two strands of research and policies that have been hitherto treated mainly in separation: notably the research and policy on native minorities and that on migrant populations.

While the research is bottom up and does not pre-determine positions and policy models of tolerance or integration, we have ensured a regional distribution that covers countries with different historical traditions, different experiences of migration, different situations in terms of native minorities, and even different positions with regard to their EU accession and their relative weight in the EU architecture.

Moreover, the Tolerance Indicators that we shall develop will serve as a basis for evaluating practices and policies, comparing between countries, checking trends towards more or less tolerance, and developing new policies and institutional arrangements that promote pluralism and civic cohesion.