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## **The Academic Training of Imams: Recent Discussions and Initiatives in the Netherlands**

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THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND THE TRAINING OF  
MUSLIM CLERGY IN EUROPE

Cover illustration: Ibn Rushd, also known by the Latinized name as Averroës, was a Muslim scholar in the Middle Ages (Cordóba, c. 1126-Marakesh, c. 1198). Detail of fresco *Triumph of St Thomas and Allegory of the Sciences*, in the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, by the Florentine painter Andrea da Firenze (Andrea Bonaiuti; flourished between 1343-1377).

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**The Study of Religion and the Training of  
Muslim Clergy in Europe**

Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Edited by  
Willem B. Drees,  
Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld

**LEIDEN UNIVERSITY PRESS**



The fresco *Triumph of St Thomas and Allegory of the Sciences* in the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, by the Florentine painter Andrea da Firenze (Andrea Bonaiuti; flourished between 1343-1377). Ibn Rushd is depicted with two other 'defeated heretics', Sabellius and Arius, sitting at the feet of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1274). Photo Credit: Corbis.

Europe paid a bloody price to reach the point of democracy and human rights that we have now. See I am here in Leiden – speaking as a grand mufti, freely and academically in Europe [...]

How many generations had to pay the price to ensure that Ibn Rushd is not positioned underneath Thomas of Aquino anymore? Now he is here, with his picture telling me: This is your predecessor, your great grandfather. You should be proud of him and place him above instead of below. So know how much blood had to be shed for the Europeans to be ready to come to this stage. And because of that the Europeans do not allow anyone to break these democracy and human rights rules.

*Dr. Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in an interview with the Nederlands Islamitische Omroep, aired March 4, 2007, on the occasion of the conference *Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom: Tensions and Compromises in the Coexistence of Two Fundamental Rights* held in Leiden on 27 and 28 February 2007.*



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## Preface and acknowledgements

In September 2006, the Faculty of Religious Studies of Leiden University – itself a public university – started a bachelor and master programme in Islamic Theology. This development formed a major incentive to organize a conference on *Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom: Tensions and Compromises in the Coexistence of Two Fundamental Rights*, held on 27 and 28 February 2007 in Leiden in the most interesting setting of *Naturalis*, a museum of natural history. The volume presented here offers most of the lectures and a few additional contributions, invited to provide a more balanced consideration of recent developments in the training of imams in Europe. The training of Muslim clergy in the context of modern academic life was a major dimension of the conference, correlating with the recent establishment of the programme of Islamic Theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies. However, this was a sub-theme in the conference as a whole, as questions of the combination of confessional and academic identity gave rise to more general reflections on academic freedom, religious freedom, and the academic study of religion in contemporary contexts.

The Minister of Education at the time of preparation, Mrs. Maria van der Hoeven, had addressed on various occasions, both in the Netherlands and abroad, issues of religion, higher education, and the development of Islam in European and other contexts. Her interest in these issues provided an additional stimulus for the conference. As she left office as Minister of Education when a new cabinet took office just a week before the conference, she did not participate in the conference itself. However, we want to express our gratitude to the Minister and to the staff of the Ministry of Education for financial and moral support when organizing this conference.

The editors also want to express their thanks to two assistant editors, Abdurraouf Oueslati and Anne Marieke Schwencke, who did a most substantial amount of work both in preparation for the conference and in the editorial process resulting in this book, as well as the translation of the German contribution of Ednan Aslan. Without their efforts the book would not have been the way it is, nor would it have arrived at the time it does. We also thank the staff of Leiden University Press for their cooperation in producing this book on an issue of genuine relevance in our time.

Leiden, November 27, 2007

Willem B. Drees and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld

## 13 The Academic Training of Imams Recent Discussions and Initiatives in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>

*Mohammed M. Ghaly, Lecturer in Islamic Theology,  
Leiden University*

Three main parties have always been involved in the issue of training imams in the Netherlands, namely, the government, the academic educational institutions, and Muslims. The two fundamental rights of academic freedom and religious freedom were always present in the theoretical discussions and debates as well as in the practical establishment of three recently established academic programmes funded by the government in the framework of training imams.

This paper is going to trace, in broad lines, the main developments of training imams working in the Netherlands which started almost twenty-five years ago and then recently crystallized in establishing three new programmes at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam, Leiden University and the Higher Vocational School, Inholland. At the end, this paper presents an overview of these programmes besides a short sketch of other Muslim initiatives in this regard.

This paper is restricted to tertiary education, viz., university and higher vocational education.<sup>2</sup> Discussions on training imams at lower educational levels have remained theoretical and fall outside scope.<sup>3</sup>

### **Historical Survey**

Discussions on training imams in the Netherlands can be divided into three main periods:

### First Initiative: The 1980s

The first suggestions to train imams in the Netherlands was made by the Waardenburg Committee in 1982. The committee, at the request of what was known at the time as the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture (Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur), was to search the need for religious facilities among foreign workers. One of the committee's conclusions was that an imam training programme is desirable. Such a programme would help the imported imams from the countries of origin express themselves in Dutch and gain adequate knowledge about the position of Muslims in Western industrialized society.<sup>4</sup> Preliminary trials were also introduced in this period. For instance, from the beginning of the 1980s till 1990, there was a project of an upgrading course jointly organized by Turkish organizations and the Dutch government under the title of 'How does Islam function in a Western context?'.<sup>5</sup>

### Serious Proposals: The 1990s

On November 29, 1993, the Mulder-van Dam motion, calling for studying the possibilities of an imam training programme in the Netherlands, was submitted to the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. The motion was taken seriously by the government.<sup>6</sup> However, until the end of 1993, the Ministry of Education declared that no concrete requests for instituting such a programme have been received on the part of Muslim organizations.<sup>7</sup>

On March 10, 1994, a round-table discussion was organized by the Ministry of Education between representatives of Muslim organizations and those of relevant educational institutions.<sup>8</sup> On May 18, 1994, the Minister of Education reported, on the basis of the round-table conclusion, that the Muslim community was interested in an imam training programme starting at the secondary educational level and followed by one on the tertiary level.<sup>9</sup>

In 1995, Dr. Nico Landman, Utrecht University, was requested by the Ministry of Education to conduct an exhaustive study on the opportunities and obstacles of creating a Dutch imam training programme. This study was published in December 1995.<sup>10</sup> On January 16, 1997, the State Secretary of Education presented the aforementioned report of Landman to the Second Chamber of the Parliament. On this occasion, five main points of strategic importance concerning the issue of training imams were presented.<sup>11</sup> They focused on: a) cooperating with other countries like Morocco and Turkey; b) regulating an *inburgeringscursus*<sup>12</sup> for imams

as long as the prospective imam training programme had not yet been realized; c) studying the further developments of the next generations within the ethnic groups and their influence on the form of mosque boards in the future; d) starting a scholarly dialogue with Islam. The then to-be-established institute, the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, was expected to play a role in this respect and e) keeping in mind the recommendations of the Landman Report especially those with relevance to the secondary education.<sup>13</sup>

In 1998, the government formed a committee to study three main possibilities for an imam training programme, viz., a) preparatory courses for imams coming to work in the Netherlands. Such courses were to be given in the country of origin before leaving for the Netherlands. b) Introducing a course in Dutch citizenship (*inburgeringscursus*) tailored for religious leaders coming from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), and c) introducing an upgrading course (*bijscholings cursus*) for imams already working in the Netherlands.<sup>14</sup> These proposals crystallized into a series of such courses continuing till the present day. Thus, imams sent by the Turkish government are given a course in the Dutch language and culture before coming to the Netherlands.

In January 2002, foreign imams who work temporarily in the Netherlands were obliged to follow an *inburgeringscursus*.<sup>15</sup> For them, the course involved not only the regular programme for every newcomer, but included also teachings on religion and society as well. Under large national and international media attention, the first course started in September 2002.<sup>16</sup> Such courses are now also given to teachers of language and religion active in the Muslim communities in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup>

#### Complete Training Programmes: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

On January 29, 2002, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Major Cities and Integration Policy formed a committee to study the possibilities of creating a complete imam training programme and of funding this programme. The committee submitted the advice on July 30, 2003 and the report was published in December 2003.<sup>18</sup>

In December 2004, the Ministry of Education invited proposals for a national imam training programme in existing institutions.<sup>19</sup> The academic year 2005-2006 witnessed the start of the first programme at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam. The next academic year, 2006-2007, two more programmes started, one in Leiden University, the other in the Higher Vocational School (*HBO*) Inholland.



## The Dutch Legacy

One central factor of making an imam training programme a typical solution to improve the integration of imams and Muslims in general in the Dutch society, certainly is the Dutch legacy of ‘pillarisation’ (*verzuiling*) and its relevance to theological education with the two main educational systems of *simplex-ordo* and *duplex-ordo*.

Pillarisation (*verzuiling*) is a term used to describe the way the Dutch and Belgians used to deal with their ‘multicultural’ (but not multiethnic) societies. Society was ‘vertically’ divided in several smaller segments or ‘pillars’ according to different religious confessions, political ideologies or life philosophies, which operated separately from each other allowing, however, for cooperation and negotiations at their top levels. These pillars all had their own social institutions: their own newspapers, broadcasting organisations, political parties, hospitals, schools, universities, etc.<sup>20</sup>

The legislation of 1876 outlined the basic relationship between church and state in regard to education. The theological faculties at Dutch public universities had originally been Reformed Church but with the formal separation of church and state, the chosen solution was to have what could be called a ‘public theology’ at the state universities, while confessional training was placed at seminaries run by the churches ‘at but not part of’ the universities.<sup>21</sup> This model is called *duplex-ordo* and was intended to free the universities of confessional ties.<sup>22</sup>

However, some of the churches objected to the notion that the study of the word of God could be neutral and favoured an integral study of theology, within a university environment. For this reason, the Free University (*Vrije Universiteit*) was founded in 1880. This model is known as the *simplex-ordo*.<sup>23</sup>

It was therefore, in the Dutch society, a logical option to build on the above-mentioned legacy to solve the problem of the academic training of spiritual leaders of Muslims (imams), both following the *simplex-ordo* model as well as that of the *duplex-ordo*.

The main obstacles standing in the way of realizing such solutions can be divided into three categories a) those pertinent to the Dutch secular system, b) those related to Muslims themselves and c) those joint obstacles.

## The Dutch Secular System

Due to the secular structure of Dutch society where separation between state and church is a main principle, the government cannot initiate religious education itself.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, in the Law of the Denominations (*Wet op de kerkgenootschappen*) it was laid down that the state must refrain from interfering in internal matters of these associations including the appointment of clerical officials. In 1988, this law was replaced by the Law of Public Manifestations (*Wet openbare manifestaties*) stating that each denomination has ‘... the total freedom to regulate anything that concerns their religion and the practice of it in their own circle’ as guaranteed by the revised Constitution of 1983, particularly the first and sixth articles.<sup>25</sup>

However, within the prevailing ‘pillar system,’ institutions within a given ‘pillar’ can obtain official recognition, which also implies financial support for a religious training programme for clergymen.<sup>26</sup> This, however, requires the existence of a specific cooperation partner representing the people of that denomination that consults with the government and takes full responsibility of the programme.<sup>27</sup>

In the case of Muslims, such a cooperation partner was lacking. This situation played an important role in the discussions concerning the possibility of the government taking part in the imam training programmes and whether this would harm the principle of separation between church and state.

One party stated that government should remain neutral in this issue. Initiatives should come first from Muslim organizations.<sup>28</sup> On the basis of the separation between the church and the state, the government should be confined to the responsive role. It should wait for proposals submitted by Muslim organizations and educational institutions and can just give assistance in the form of information or advice.<sup>29</sup>

The other party called for a governmental role that would go beyond the advisory or responsive dimension. The main advocates of this approach were members of the Foundation of the Extraordinary Chair Islam (Stichting Bijzondere Leerstoel Islam)<sup>30</sup> occupied by the former professor of the Sorbonne University in Paris, Mohammad Arkoun, who was appointed as holder of this chair in 1993. Before occupying the chair, Arkoun already objected to importing imams from the countries of origin and called for a governmental intervention to promote European Islam.<sup>31</sup> Arkoun warned: ‘In case you think that (the imam training) is the business of Muslims themselves – because you respect religious freedom – you will slow down

the modernizing process of European Islam.<sup>32</sup> Almost the same approach was adopted by C. Çörüz, the chairman of the foundation<sup>33</sup> and the two board-members, Fadime Örgü<sup>34</sup> and Ousama Cherribi, member of parliament<sup>35</sup> on behalf of the VVD Party<sup>36</sup> The VVD leader of the time, Frits Bolkestein, went even further. He suggested to limit some of the work permits given to imams in a bid to force the Muslims to accept a Dutch imam training programme.<sup>37</sup>

### **Muslim-Related Obstacles**

#### The Divergence of Muslims

A collective initiative by Muslim organizations would have put the aforementioned obstacle to an end. However, such an initiative was hampered, among other things, by the divergence of Muslims living in the Netherlands.<sup>38</sup>

First of all there is no national coordinating organization for imams in the Netherlands, not to mention for Muslims in general. Sectarian, denominational as well as ethnic and national differences played a role in this regard. Because of these differences, there is not one common viewpoint about the imam and the functions he is supposed to fulfil. As a corollary, there is no common standpoint concerning the content or the structure of the prospective imam training programme.<sup>39</sup>

To overcome this obstacle, reports submitted to the government suggested more than one possible solution. One suggestion was to stimulate the formulation of a national coordinating Muslim organization.<sup>40</sup> Another practical suggestion was that the government should deal with the current situation and be ready to start cooperating with one group or organization among Muslims.<sup>41</sup> In this case, having more than one imam training programme would be an option.<sup>42</sup> The third suggestion was to make use of a number of independent experts, who could be acceptable among Muslim organizations, for the sake of developing projects for the imam training that might later gain their support.<sup>43</sup>

#### The Unprivileged Position of the Imam

Juridically speaking, the imam holds the office of a clergyman and thus his legal rights and duties as an employee are not protected by the government. For preachers and priests, these rights and duties are often centrally regulated by their own religious denominations (*kerkgenootschap*-

*pen*). However, imams are usually employed on the basis of a written or a non-written contract with the board of the mosque against a very low salary and under precarious legal conditions. With the first conflict with the board, they can be easily dismissed without any legal protection. The main exception here are the Turkish imams, who are employed for a four-year period by the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs. They are Turkish state employees and thus their legal position is regulated by Turkish Law.<sup>44</sup>

In the light of such conditions, fears were expressed that a prospective imam training programme would not be attractive for the younger Muslim generations.<sup>45</sup> While some observers considered this situation as one of the main obstacles in the way of realizing an imam training programme, others saw it as just a stage in a continuing process.<sup>46</sup> A third group opined that future students would be motivated to work as imams not because of the financial attractiveness of this office but because of believing in the importance of the message that the imam stands for.<sup>47</sup>

To overcome this obstacle, reports submitted to the government suggested stimulating a discussion among Muslim organizations to study the main ways of improving the work conditions of the imams. Another suggestion was that imams would continue to work in mosques as volunteers and that other financial sources, from outside the mosque, should be made available to fund them, such as work in the field of spiritual care in prisons and hospitals.<sup>48</sup>

#### The Shortage of Competent Teachers

Establishing a high quality imam training programme necessitates having a competent teaching staff that will also be acceptable for the Muslim organizations. At first sight, one would think of difficulties concerning the availability of such staff in the Netherlands. It was suggested, in case this staff would not be available, to import qualified teachers from outside the Netherlands and give them intensive courses in the Dutch language.<sup>49</sup>

It is to be noted that all programmes to be discussed below did not have to import any foreign teachers. The staff was composed of teachers who were already living in the Netherlands.

## **Joint Obstacles**

### **Divergent Aims**

The two main parties, viz. the Muslims and the Dutch government, who were supposed to work together in this respect, did in fact not have identical aims of training the imams.<sup>50</sup>

The two parties shared two main common motives, namely, mastering the Dutch language and minimizing the cultural gaps between imams born and educated in Islamic countries and secularist Dutch society. However these two aims do not create sufficient grounds for establishing an imam training programme. These aims can be achieved by separate courses in Dutch language and culture.<sup>51</sup>

The core aims of starting such a programme showed, however, clear points of divergence between Muslims and the government. One of these controversial aims is promoting the so-called 'Dutch Islam', viz., interpreting Islamic beliefs and ethics in a way consistent with the current situation of Muslims in the Netherlands as a religious minority living in a strongly secularist country. Another debatable aim is that these imams should actively participate in the integration of Muslims into Dutch society, a role which is negatively affected by the currently imported imams.<sup>52</sup>

These two aims are central for the Dutch government while very controversial among Muslims and especially the mosque communities. By promoting 'Dutch Islam', Muslims fear the universal character of Islam would be denied. They also fear that 'integration' would eventually end up in 'assimilation' in case there would be an exaggeration in adapting Islam to the Dutch context and thus losing its religious and cultural identity.<sup>53</sup>

In opposition to such aims, Muslims also have their own aims which may not be shared by the government or at least not given the same priority. For them, such a programme should create imams who could combine the traditional tasks of the imam with the new requirements of his office in a non-Islamic Western country. Additionally, imams should participate in formulating the Islamic identity of Muslims in the Netherlands. The content of this Islamic identity is to be decided by Muslims only.<sup>54</sup>

## **Changing Circumstances**

Despite the abovementioned obstacles that would have hindered realizing imam training projects, a number of drastic incidents took place in Dutch society which a) gave a clear indication that training imams is an

urgent necessity; and b) swept away, or minimized, the abovementioned obstacles or at least some of them. The first group of incidents would be discussed below under 'worrisome incidents' and the second group as 'further developments'.

### **Worrisome Incidents**

Besides the events of September 11 with their clear repercussions on the entire world including the Netherlands, there has been a series of local incidents in Dutch society which gave signs that practical steps must be urgently taken.

A number of NOVA (a well-known current affairs programme on Dutch television)<sup>55</sup> episodes tackled issues with relevance to imams, almost all of which gave a negative image about these imams. This gave rise to severe critique among Muslims against NOVA which was accused, for instance, of spreading untrue information about imams.<sup>56</sup>

An early example was the episode broadcasted on September 20, 1995. NOVA paid attention to the case of a Turkish husband who killed his wife because she committed adultery. According to NOVA, the man went to consult two imams who said that he had the right to kill his wife for this reason.<sup>57</sup>

The imams themselves became the main subject of this programme with the case of Shaykh al-Moumni, the Moroccan imam of al-Nasr Mosque in Rotterdam, who said in an interview with NOVA in 2001 that homosexuality was an illness with inherent dangers for society as a whole.<sup>58</sup> Being attacked for this opinion, other imams expressed their support for al-Moumni's statements.<sup>59</sup>

The second case was the episode of June 13, 2002, entitled 'Imams Preach Violence in the Mosques' which broadcasted recorded parts of some Friday sermons carrying an anti-Western attitude, refusing democracy and commending violence against America and Israel.<sup>60</sup>

Some observers said that such viewpoints are caused by the fact that those imams do not know Dutch society and are not well-integrated.<sup>61</sup> Plans for training imams were revived again.<sup>62</sup>

On April 21, 2004, the Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw* stated that the al-Tawheed Mosque in Amsterdam was circulating books that could be read as promoting female circumcision and the killing of homosexuals.<sup>63</sup> On April 28, the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament held a debate on this issue and calls were voiced to stop importing imams from countries of

origin,<sup>64</sup> insisting upon the necessity of establishing a Dutch imam training programme and stipulating that only graduates of this programme would be allowed to work as imams in the Netherlands.<sup>65</sup>

On November 2, 2004, the Dutch cinematic director Theo van Gogh was murdered by a Dutch Muslim of Moroccan origin. Van Gogh was known for his anti-Islamic statements and standpoints. The murderer was said to have been a constant visitor of al-Tawheed mosque where he would have also attended religious lessons.<sup>66</sup> Al-Tawheed mosque was not unique in this regard but can just be seen as an example of mosques that have been, along with their imams, a target for media and politics accusing them of spreading hate against members of Dutch society, disdaining Dutch norms and traditions or at least hampering the integration of Muslims in the Netherlands.<sup>67</sup>

### **Further developments**

#### **Developments in Muslim Organizations**

On November 1, 2004, after a two-year preparation, a coordinating national Muslim organization was recognised by the Minister of Foreigners' Affairs and Integration. The new organization, Committee for the Relations between Muslim Organizations and Government (*CMO*), said to represent about 50 percent of Muslims living in the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, an additional body, the *CGI* (Contact Group Islam) representing the Twelver Shi'is, Alevites, Ahmadiyya and a council of Sunnis who were willing to work with all Muslim sects including the Ahmadiyya (contrary to *CMO*) was also recognized as a partner for discussion and consultation with the government on January 13, 2005.

On the same day, the *CGI* declared that they do not want to import imams from foreign countries any more. Imams working in the Netherlands should also be trained in the Netherlands.<sup>69</sup> On January 29, 2006, the *CMO* declared its desire to realise, in the near future, an imam training programme.<sup>70</sup>

### **Practical Steps and Three New Programmes**

After all these incidents, the Dutch government started to speed up the establishment of Dutch imam training programmes. First, the Second Chamber expressed their intention in December 2004 to close the Dutch

borders to the imported imams starting from 2008.<sup>71</sup> As a consequence, the Second Chamber pushed for a Dutch imam training programme and asked the government to come up with speedy solutions.<sup>72</sup>

The academic year 2005-2006 was proposed by the government to be the starting-date of this programme, to be financed by the Dutch government, but on the basis of initiatives from Muslim organizations and from educational institutions.<sup>73</sup> In December 2004 the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science invited proposals for a national imam education from existing institutions.<sup>74</sup> In January 2005, four universities, Leiden University, Groningen University, the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam and the Humanistic University in Utrecht submitted their plans for the prospective imam-training programme.<sup>75</sup> Further developments, to be discussed below, led to three new programmes, two on the university level at the VU and at Leiden University and one on the level of Higher Vocational Education (*HBO*) at Inholland.

### **Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam**

VU's Theological Faculty, founded in 1880 within the framework of the aforementioned *simplex-ordo*, was the first to start a Master's programme for training imams. Being the pioneer in this respect, the VU became the target of a lot of criticism. The immediate response from the CMO and the CGI was negative saying that it was not possible to train imams in two or three years with adequate skills in Arabic and Islamic sciences. This would take much longer, maybe six or ten years, and the imams to be educated by the VU would never be accepted by the Muslim communities. They might have a university degree in Islamic Theology but they would never be able to hold authority in a mosque.<sup>76</sup>

The university received a governmental subsidy of 1.5 million Euros for a six-year period.<sup>77</sup> The programme-coordinator is Prof. Dr. Henk Vroom, specialist in the Philosophy of Religion.<sup>78</sup>

### **Simplex-ordo**

The *simplex-ordo*, where confessionalism is a legitimate part of the academic sphere, was seen by the VU staff as one of its main strengths for a Dutch Islamic education.<sup>79</sup> According to Vroom, the approaches operative at Faculty of Theology for 125 years now are equally valid for the Muslim community.<sup>80</sup> In this vein, the courses aim to both provide knowl-



edge about Islam and to make this knowledge ethically and spiritually relevant in the current setting. It is therefore crucial that a spiritual and moral commitment from the students is an integral part of the study.<sup>81</sup> Through this approach, which could be termed as ‘committed or engaged’ as opposed to ‘neutral’, VU staff are assuring that they are able to provide an education in chaplaincy which can be perceived as legitimate among Muslims.<sup>82</sup>

Despite its merits in this sense, confessionality gives rise to potential critiques. For instance, there would be no room for differences of opinion, as it promotes a certain truth-claim. In response, the VU staff assured that this programme is not promoting a certain school of law or a certain tradition of interpretation of Islam and thereby annihilating parts of the Muslim communities.<sup>83</sup> The fear was also expressed that academic freedom of thought and speech would be threatened by the confessional approach, both in the form of individual adherence to absolutist forms of argumentation, and in the form of certain groups, institutions or organisations influencing the work of the university. However, the focus on the academic standards of the teaching methods was presented to assume that this would not happen at the VU.<sup>84</sup>

### Programme

The programme consists of a three-year Bachelor and a one-year Master. Integrating this programme as a sub-section of the main programme Religion and Philosophy of Life (*Religie en levensbeschouwing*), saved the VU the official accreditation process.<sup>85</sup> The Master is officially called Religion and Philosophy of Life: Islamic Spiritual Advisor (*Islamitische Geestelijke Verzorger*).<sup>86</sup>

### Bachelor

The Bachelor’s programme (total 180 ECTS), called Religion and Philosophy, specialisation Islam,<sup>87</sup> consists of three parts: Arabic language (total 30 ECTS), Islamic Theology (total 78 ECTS) and Religious Studies (total 72 ECTS).

Islamic Theology is composed of fifteen courses; the history of Islam (6 ECTS), Islamic history till 1800 (6 ECTS), an introduction to the Quran and Hadīth I (6 ECTS) & II (6 ECTS), Islamic ethics I (3 ECTS) & II (3 ECTS), Islamic theology (6 ECTS), *Usūl al-Fiqh* (6 ECTS), *Usūl at-Tafsīr* I (6 ECTS) & II (6 ECTS), Islamic philosophy (6 ECTS), and Islam and Eu-

ropean culture (6 ECTS). Finally, two courses are dedicated for preparing and writing the bachelor thesis (12 ECTS).

Religious Studies include also fifteen courses; history of philosophy (6 ECTS), Hinduism (6 ECTS), Christianity (6 ECTS), Judaism (6 ECTS), Encyclopaedia of Science of Religion A (3 ECTS) & B (3 ECTS), Phenomenology I (3 ECTS) & II (3), Philosophy of Religion (6 ECTS), Secular Philosophy and Sense-Giving (6 ECTS), Ethical Theories/Ethics (6 ECTS), Philosophy of Religion: Advanced (6 ECTS), Public Theology I (3 ECTS) & II (3 ECTS) and Introduction to the Social Sciences (6 ECTS).<sup>88</sup>

### Master

The Master's programme, Religion and Philosophy: Islamic Spiritual Advisor (*Islamitische Geestelijke Verzorger*), is available in full-time (one year) and part-time (two years).<sup>89</sup> The programme demands a basic knowledge of the Islamic sciences and Arabic and focuses more on the practical application of Islam in the social context of pastoral care than on providing basic knowledge about Islam.<sup>90</sup> This programme has three main variations with 60 ECTS for each programme: a) Islamic spiritual care, b) deepening Islam and c) preparing imam (ISN).

Islamic spiritual care (total 60 ECTS) is divided into a) compulsory courses (33 ECTS) and b) optional courses (27 ECTS). Compulsory courses are Islamic Theology with Relevance to Spiritual Care (6 ECTS), Islamic Ethics and *Fiqh* I (3 ECTS), Psychology (6 ECTS) and the writing of the Master's Thesis (18 ECTS). Optional courses are Training/Research (6 ECTS), Islamic Ethics and *Fiqh* II (3 ECTS), Contemporary Islamic Theology (6 ECTS), Deepening Islamic Spiritual Care (6 ECTS), as well as Theory of Spiritual Care (6 ECTS).<sup>91</sup>

The second specialisation, Deepening Islam, is only available via a distance learning system because the teacher, Prof. Dr. P.A. van Doorn Harder, resides abroad. This programme is also composed of compulsory (33 ECTS) and optional courses (27 ECTS). The compulsory courses are Master College I (6 ECTS), Faculty Module (3 ECTS), Islamic Philosophy (6 ECTS), and Master's Thesis (18 ECTS). The optional courses are Islam in Europe (6 ECTS), Quran Explanation and Jurisprudence (6 ECTS), and Advanced Specialisations I (6 ECTS) and II (3 ECTS).<sup>92</sup>

On the website of the Faculty of Theology, a link refers to a third specialisation, preparing imam for (ISN) *Islamitische Stichting Nederland* (Islamic Foundation Netherlands). However, there is no further information available yet.<sup>93</sup>

In June 2006, it was declared that the VU concluded an agreement with ISN, the organisation managing Turkish mosques in the Netherlands. ISN imports the imams from the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). According to the agreement, the graduates of the new specialisation in the Master's programme would be qualified to follow a two-year imam training programme in Turkey. This agreement raised doubts about a possible Turkish intervention in the VU programme. The Ministry of Education accepted the agreement provided that no more than 40 percent of the VU programme would be changed; otherwise the VU has to submit a new request to be approved by the ministry. The VU informed that it would remain within these borders.<sup>94</sup> This specialisation will entail adapting the study programme and enlarging the teaching staff.<sup>95</sup> However, further details are still dependent on further negotiations.

### Leiden University

Leiden University, established in 1575, is the oldest university in the Netherlands.<sup>96</sup> Five main arguments were mentioned to support the eligibility of Leiden University for this new programme. First, Leiden University has a long tradition of Islamic Studies tracing back to the sixteenth century, including, for instance, the production of the various editions of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. This unique experience was also conceded by the international accreditation committee.<sup>97</sup> Second, the programme emphasizes modern issues, especially related to Islam in the European context. Third, intra-Islamic pluralism represented by the different schools of Islamic thought, including the Sunnis and the Shi'is, are represented in the various seminars of the programme. Fourth, the presence of a highly qualified and renowned staff graduated from reputable Muslim and European academic institutions.<sup>98</sup> Finally, Leiden University Library contains one of the best collections of Islamic printed books and manuscripts in the West, attracting many research scholars from all over the world.<sup>99</sup>

### Islamic Theology

After being criticized for choosing the VU proposal, the State Secretary of Education decided, in April 2005, to organize a second round to give the other universities an opportunity to submit new proposals.<sup>100</sup> In this new round the Leiden University proposal was chosen to be funded by the government as declared in January 2006. The university received 2.3

million Euros for the period 2006-2010 to set-up a four-year programme consisting of a Bachelor's and Master's degree.<sup>101</sup> The coordinator of the programme is Prof. Dr. P.S. van Koningsveld, Professor of Islamic studies since 1994 and specialist in the history of Islam in Europe.<sup>102</sup>

#### Duplex-ordo

Unlike the VU, teaching in Leiden University is based on the aforementioned system of *duplex-ordo*. Making use of this system, the Leiden proposal distinguished two parts of this programme, a) Scientific and b) Confessional.

The first part, funded and run by the university would focus on the scientific and academic approach of education whereas the second part would give space for Muslim organizations to set up their own supplementary confessional training programme. This two-fold system had already been realized for the training of ministers of religion since 1876, as described before.<sup>103</sup>

The academic part (both the first year of the Bachelor and the Master) started in September 2006. The confessional part, however, is still waiting for the conclusion of agreements with the Muslim organizations concerned.

#### Accreditation

The scientific part underwent a process of accreditation by an international committee of well-known Islamologists in Europe.<sup>104</sup> That is because Islamic Theology was set up as an independent programme and not as a variation or sub-section of an existing programme. The committee concluded that 'the 'Islamic Theology' programme of Leiden University is unique in Europe and one of the earliest of this sort. There are already other comparable initiatives in Europe and the Netherlands but none of them offers a complete Bachelor-Master accompanied with an imam training programme.'<sup>105</sup>

The academic part of the programme is divided into a three-year Bachelor and one-year Master.

#### Bachelor

Keeping in mind the centrality of the Arabic language in this programme, a large part of the first year is dedicated to an extensive study of the Arabic language.

During the second and the third years, attention is paid to studying the classical disciplines of Islam with the help of Arabic sources and texts. The main focus of the second year is the classical period of Islam whereas the modern time is the focus of the third year.<sup>106</sup>

The three-year Bachelor's programme has a total of 180 ECTS, with 60 ECTS per year. The programme falls in three main parts: Arabic (15 ECTS), Islamic Theology (total 100 ECTS) and Religious Studies (total 35). There are two slots for optional courses (total 30 ECTS) in the second year (10 ECTS) and 20 ECTS in the third year. Optional courses are meant to give space for following courses that would deepen one's knowledge about any relevant field or to create future work-opportunities.<sup>107</sup>

The first part consists of eleven courses: Outlines of the History of Islam (5 ECTS), Modern Trends in Islam 1 (5 ECTS) & 2 (15 ECTS), Islamic Sources 1 (10 ECTS), 2 (10 ECTS) & 3 (5 ECTS), Classic Sources (10 ECTS), Religious Law and Ethics 1 (10 ECTS), 2 (5 ECTS) & 3 (10 ECTS), Modern Islamic Theology (5 ECTS) and Bachelor's Thesis (10 ECTS).

The second part consists of seven courses: an Introduction to the Science of Religion (5 ECTS), History of Christianity (5 ECTS), Philosophy of Religion (5 ECTS), Introduction to Judaism (5 ECTS), Comparative Religious Science (5 ECTS), Psychology of Religion (5 ECTS) and Sociology of Religion (5 ECTS).

### Master

The Master's programme (total 60 ECTS) places strong emphasis on the study of contemporary Islam, focusing particularly on Islam in the European context, as well as the study of the primary sources of Islam. The programme is available in full-time (one year) and part-time (one and a half years).

Students follow four seminars (10 ECTS for each), three of which are obligatory: Approaches in the Modern Study of the Quran and Hadith, Empirical Study of Islam in Europe and the Significance of *Fatwā* Literature with Relevance to Islamic-Western Relations. The student is free to choose a fourth seminar within or outside the Faculty of Theology.<sup>108</sup> The obligatory MA thesis (20 ECTS) will focus on Islam within the European context.

## Inholland

Unlike the VU and Leiden University, Inholland is a Higher Vocational School (*HBO*) and thus provides a profession-oriented education. Inholland claims in this regard to be the first to start a profession-oriented programme for the training of imams in Europe.<sup>109</sup> Inholland is not without experience in this field. In 1995, Inholland started an HBO-Islam programme for preparing teachers to teach the course 'religion' at secondary schools. This programme is still continuing. At the time, there were already discussions on an imam training programme. Inholland did not claim that this training programme for Islam teachers was meant for creating imams but said it can be a good basis for those who want to become imams. At the time, Muslim organizations were not inclined to cooperate with Inholland in this direction.<sup>110</sup>

### Imam/Islamic Spiritual Care Counsellor

After the government decision to choose the Free University to start the imam-training programme, CMO decided not to cooperate with it.<sup>111</sup>

In April 2005, 400,000 Euros were earmarked by the Ministry of Integration for a joint imam training programme between Muslim organisations and a recognized educational institution.<sup>112</sup>

On 25 November 25, 2005, five members of CMO<sup>113</sup>, not including the Turkish Institution Netherlands (ISN), signed a contract with Inholland to start the imam training programme in September 2006.<sup>114</sup> The programme started as a sub-section of 'Religion and Pastoral Work', because the official accreditation was still in process and has not yet finished.<sup>115</sup>

There are two main project-leaders of this programme: Mrs. Rimke van der Veer from Inholland and Mr. Rasit Bal from CMO. Mrs. van der Veer told me<sup>116</sup> that four other teachers are also involved, namely, Marzouk Aulad Abdellah, Stella van de Wetering, Mohamed Tahier Wagid Hosain and Mucahid Sagsu.

The four-year programme includes courses like theoretical and practical theology, Arabic, sociology of religion and work-field orientation where students work on a regular basis at their potential workplace (a mosque, prison or hospital).<sup>117</sup>

What is available currently is an overview of the courses of each year.<sup>118</sup> These are divided under three main headings, namely: a) Knowledge and Concepts, b) Insight and Application and c) Skills and Reflection.

The first division includes written sources, studying sources, history of the religion, science of religion and gender-studies. Courses of the second division are sociology; empirical field orientation, pedagogical instruments, ethics within philosophical contexts and belief. The last division includes practical theology and liturgical rituals, Arabic I & II, and career-study supervision.

After the first year, students can choose one of three possible specializations: a) imam, b) Islamic spiritual counsellor and c) pedagogical worker. Diversity of Islamic trends including the conservative and the liberal are also well considered in the programme. The graduates will be officially-certified imams, but this does not mean that a mosque will be obliged to accept them. According to Rasit Bal, in order to guarantee work opportunities for the graduates, one has to ensure that they are well-qualified. They then will be able to find a job.<sup>119</sup>

### **Non-Recognized Muslim Initiatives**

In 1997, the first Islamic University, known as the Islamic University of Rotterdam (IUR) was founded as a result of initiatives taken by Muslims living in the Netherlands.<sup>120</sup> In 2001, the IUR was split into two universities, the IUR and the Islamic University of Europe (IUE).<sup>121</sup>

None of the two universities is recognized as an educational institution. However, they have always been involved in the discussions on training imams and they see themselves fit for training imams in the Netherlands, sometimes even more fit than the aforementioned Dutch universities.<sup>122</sup>

#### **The Islamic University in Rotterdam (IUR)<sup>123</sup>**

Besides the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, there are two other faculties, the Faculty of Languages and Civilization and Faculty of Islamic Arts, which are still in an initial stage. The Faculty of Islamic Sciences has three departments: Imam Training, Spiritual Care Counsellor and Scholarly Research of Islam. Each of the three programmes includes a three-year Bachelor's and a one-year Master's.<sup>124</sup>

#### **The Islamic University of Europe (IUE)<sup>125</sup>**

IUE does not see itself as a secession of the old IUR but, on the contrary, as a legitimate continuation. It claims that a large part of the IUR teaching

staff and students moved to IUE. That was because of the authoritarian administration, the absence of financial transparency, and the over-concern paid to educational models of the countries of origin such as Turkey and Morocco at the expense of the Dutch dimensions, etc.<sup>126</sup>

Waiting for further developments in the Master's programme, the Bachelor's programme is the current main focus of the IUE.<sup>127</sup> The chairman of the IUE foundation explains the main lines of the programme as follows: 'The programme is a combination of the best and most relevant elements of the Islamic religious sciences, as developed in the Muslim world, and the Western academic tradition.'

In a response to a question about imam training, the chairman explained: 'Training imams could be one of the targets but not the sole one. First of all, being an imam is not a well-paid job here in the Netherlands. In this regard we focus more on the field of spiritual care in prisons and hospitals, which is better paid. Moreover, our graduates would be well-trained to fulfil leading and advisory functions in various public and private institutions and organizations. Spiritual care and many other professions also offer labour perspectives for female graduates.'<sup>128</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Creating an educational programme for training imams in the Netherlands went through a very complicated process of discussions and negotiations for almost a quarter of a century.

The two fundamental rights of academic freedom and religious freedom witnessed different forms and phases of tensions and compromises. In the end, three new programmes were realized and it seems that Muslim organizations are going to cooperate with these programmes in one way or another. Muslims are already participating in these programmes as teachers and students. The main questions to be raised in this regard are: will these already existing programmes achieve their main targets; will they create imams or Islam specialists who would meet the aspirations of the Dutch government and the Muslim community as well? For the time being these remain open questions which are to be answered only in relation to further developments in Dutch society, and it would be no surprise if the answers take more than the previous twenty-five year period that was needed to create such programmes in the first place.



## Notes

- 1 An earlier and somewhat modified version of this paper was presented at the conference, 'L'enseignement de la théologie universitaire aujourd'hui: l'exemple de l'islam' held in Strasbourg, France, November 30 and December 1, 2006. My deep gratitude goes to P.S. van Koningsveld, Leiden University, for the relevant important information and the documents he provided me with and also for his insightful remarks on the first draft. Other colleagues provided me also with other relevant information and documents; I hereby submit my sincere thanks to them all. To mention the most important, Umar Ryad (Leiden University), Fatih Okumus, M.A. Abdella (Free University, Amsterdam) and Firdaous Oueslati (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden).
- 2 In the Dutch system of education, there are four main levels: a) pre-primary education (*pre-primair onderwijs*); b) primary education (*primair onderwijs*); c) secondary education (*voortgezet onderwijs*) and d) tertiary education (*hoger onderwijs*) comprising higher professional education (HBO) and university education (WO). This last level is the focus of our paper. For an overview of the Dutch educational system, see *Education System in the Netherlands*.
- 3 For a general overview of developments in this respect, see A.H. de Groot and R. Bakker, *Haalbaarheidsonderzoek; advies van de onderwijsraad*, Leiden, 1994; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding in Nederland*, Den Haag, 1999, pp. 8-10, 43-60.
- 4 *Religieuze voorzieningen voor etnische minderheden in Nederland*, Rijswijk, 1983, pp. 53-54, 71-72; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 7.
- 5 Jak den Exter & Ruud Strijp, *Voorbereiding inburgering en bijscholing van Turkse en Marokkaanse imams*, Alkmaar, 1998, pp. 32-33.
- 6 *Tweede Kamer 1993-1994, 23409 nr. 8, d.d. 29/11/1993; advies van de onderwijsraad over de opleiding van islamitische geestelijken (imams) in relatie tot het voortgezet onderwijs*, 's-Gravenhage, 1994, p. 2; W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming over de imam in Nederland' in: W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld (eds.) *Religie, cultuur en minderheden*, Tilburg, 1999, p. 60.
- 7 Shadid, W.A. & P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming', op. cit., p. 60.
- 8 Landman, N., *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 7.
- 9 Ibid, p. 8.
- 10 Ibid, especially pp. 9-10; W.A. Shadid & P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming', op. cit., pp. 60-61
- 11 *Het integratiebeleid betreffende etnische minderheden in relatie tot hun geestelijke bedienaren*, Den Haag, 1998, p. 3.

- 12 It is difficult to give an accurate translation for this term. It is a course focusing on adopting Dutch customs and preparing the immigrant to realise his/her rights as a Dutch citizen and to fulfil his/her social rights. See Marli Tijssen, *Inburgering van geestelijke gedienearen*, Den Haag, 2001, preface; Welmoet Boender, *Teaching Dutch Ways to Foreign Imams*, Paris, 2003, p. 1.
- 13 *Het integratiebeleid*, op. cit., p. 3.
- 14 Jak den Exter & Ruud Strijp, *Vorbereiding*, op. cit., p. 2.
- 15 'Imams Moeten naar Cursus Inburgering,' *NRC Handelsblad*, January 2, 2002, p. 3; 'Imams: nu Verplicht Inburgeren,' *Het Parool*, January 2, 2002, p. 3. It is to be noted that this amendment was already suggested in February 1998 by the committee which prepared the report on integration policy concerning ethnic minorities; see *Het Integratiebeleid*, op. cit. p. 27.
- 16 Welmoet Boender, *Teaching Dutch Ways*, op. cit., p. 1.
- 17 See for instance [www.shiaparlement.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=45](http://www.shiaparlement.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=45)
- 18 See *Imams in Nederland: wie leidt ze op?*, 2003, p. 4.
- 19 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, Copenhagen, 2006, p. 13.
- 20 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillarisation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillarisation)
- 21 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 17, quoting from Hendrik M. Vroom, 'Theology and Religious Studies' in: M.E. Brinkman e.a. (eds.) *Theology Between Church, University and Society*, Vol. 6, Assen 2003, p. 88.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Jan M. Bremmer, 'Confessional Theology and Academic Freedom' in: M.E. Brinkman e.a. (eds.), op. cit., p. 78, quoted by Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, p. 17.
- 24 See Paul Statham and Ruud Koopmans, 'Problems of Cohesion?' in: *European Political Communication*, no. 7, 2004, p. 6, quoted by Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 16
- 25 Welmoet Boender, 'Freedom of Religion in the Netherlands' in: Welmoet Boender & Matthijs de Jong (eds.), *Exploring Religious Identities*, Leiden, 2000, p. 160.
- 26 See Paul Statham & Ruud Koopmans, 'Problems of Cohesion?', op. cit., p. 6, quoted by Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 16
- 27 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 16
- 28 *Advies van de onderwijsraad*, op. cit., p. 9; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 46.
- 29 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 79. This standpoint is also adopted by different figures in the Dutch academic life such as Prof. Dr. W.A. Sha-

- did, Prof. Dr. P.S. van Koningsveld, Prof. Dr. Herman Beck and Dr. Abdelilah Ljamai. For the first two, see W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming', op. cit., p. 75. For the other two, see Herman Beck and Abdelilah Ljamai, *De Imam en zijn opleiding in pluralistisch Nederland*, n.d., pp. 8-9.
- 30 This government-supported foundation was instituted in 1992 by a governmental subsidy of 50,000 Dutch Guilders. Its establishment was in the context of imam training in the Netherlands. The Extraordinary Chair in Islam, occupied by Mohammad Arkoun, was situated at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The Chair came to an end in 2002 when the UvA refused to continue funding this chair because it fell short of the UvA's expectations. See 'Einde nadert voor leerstoel islam'.
- 31 See Luuc Panhuysen, 'Interview with Arkoun,' *De Krant van Zondag*, January 12, 1992, quoted by W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, *Muslims in Nederland*, Houten/Diegem, 1997, pp. 60-62; W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming', op. cit., p. 70.
- 32 *Vertel mij eens wat bedoelen jullie met integratie?*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 18, quoted by Herman Beck & Abdelilah Ljamai, *De imam en zijn opleiding*, op. cit., p. 9.
- 33 C. Çörüz, 'De Nederlandse Imam-Opleiding,' *Justitie verkenningen*, no. 6, 1997, pp. 138-139.
- 34 Frits Bolkestein, *Moslim in de Polder*, Amsterdam/Antwerpen, 1997, pp. 145 & 146.
- 35 Frans van Deijl, 'Onvrede over het Functioneren van Turkse en Marokkaanse Imams,' *Elsevier*, May 5, 1995, pp. 28-32; W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, 'Beeldvorming', op. cit., p. 61.
- 36 VVD (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*), in English: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, is a Dutch liberal political party. See [www.vvd.nl/index.aspx?ChapterID=1304](http://www.vvd.nl/index.aspx?ChapterID=1304)
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 See for instance N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., pp. 13 & 15.
- 39 *Imams in Nederland*, op. cit., p. 20; *Advies van de onderwijsraad*, op. cit., p. 7; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 13. For a sectarian and denominational overview of Muslims living in the Netherlands, see N. Landman, *Van mat tot minaret*, Amsterdam, 1992; J. Rath e.a., *Nederland en zijn islam*, Amsterdam, 1996.
- 40 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 74.
- 41 Jak den Exter & Ruud Strijp, *Vorbereiding*, op. cit., p. 34; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 15.
- 42 *Advies van de onderwijsraad*, op. cit., p. 8; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 16.

- 43 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 15. In this regard, the Foundation of Extraordinary Chair in Islam (*Stichting Bijzondere Leerstoel Islam*) was established in 1992 by a governmental subsidy but it came to an unsuccessful end in 2002.. See p. 4 & note 30.
- 44 See K. Wagtendonk, 'Imams in Nederland' in: P.S. van Koningsveld & J.G.J. ter Haar (eds.), *Schriftgeleerden in de moderne islam*, Muiderberg, 1990, p. 108; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.
- 45 See 'Islamitische jongeren willen liever geen imam worden', *Trouw*, July 20, 2002, p. 1.
- 46 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 26.
- 47 An opinion expressed in the workshop, 'Imam als Professional', led by Abdulwahid van Bommel, in the Symposium *Samen leren, samen leven in de school*, organised by the High School Inholland, Amsterdam, November 15, 2006. One of the main aims of the symposium was to celebrate and promote the opening of the imam training programme which started September 2006.
- 48 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 26.
- 49 Ibid, p. 70.
- 50 Beck, Herman & Abdelilah Ljamai, *De imam en zijn opleiding*, op. cit., p. 8.
- 51 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., pp.20-21.
- 52 Herman Beck & Abdelilah Ljamai, *De imam en zijn opleiding*, op. cit., p. 8; N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 21.
- 53 N. Landman, *Imamopleiding*, op. cit., p. 22.
- 54 Herman Beck & Abdelilah Ljamai, *De imam en zijn opleiding*, op. cit., p. 8.
- 55 For more information on this programme, see [nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/NOVA\\_\(televisie\)](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/NOVA_(televisie)); for a summarized English version, see [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova\\_%28television\\_series%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova_%28television_series%29).
- 56 'Aanklacht niet namens imams of organisaties', *Trouw*, June 21, 2002, p. 3; 'Moskee eist vernietiging tv-beelden' in: *Trouw*, June 29, 2002, p. 4; 'Besturen moskeeën vooral boos op media', *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, June 21, 2002.
- 57 Benjamin, Mark, 'Zoon moordenaar', *De Dordtenaar*, December 21, 1995, p. 3.
- 58 For the whole text of the interview, see [www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=artikelen.details&achtergrond\\_id=39](http://www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=artikelen.details&achtergrond_id=39)
- 59 'Kritiek politici op opinie imams', *Trouw*, May 11, 2001, p. 2.
- 60 See [www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage\\_id=899](http://www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage_id=899)
- 61 [www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage\\_id=17](http://www.novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage_id=17)
- 62 Jan-Willem Wits, 'Reactie van liberalen op imam', *De Volkskrant*, May 18, 2001, p. 7; Wasif Shadid 'Niet imams zijn radicaal', p. 7.

- 63 Lodewijk Dros, 'Moskee promoot homohaar,' *Trouw*, April 21, 2004, p. 1.
- 64 *TK 72-4720*
- 65 *TK 72-4719 & 37*
- 66 'Zondaar doden is een zonde,' *NRC Handelsblad*, November 3, 2004, p. 1; 'Soldaten van Allah,' *De Telegraaf*, November 6, 2006.
- 67 For instance in November 2004, an Imam refused to shake hands with the Minister of Integration, Rita Verdonk, an incident which created a lot of fuss in the Netherlands. See 'Imam geeft Verdonk geen hand,' *NRC Handelsblad*, November 22, 2004, p. 3. For a general overview, see [novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=artikelen.details&achtergrond\\_id=3417](http://novatv.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=artikelen.details&achtergrond_id=3417),
- 68 'Verdonk erkent CMO als gesprekspartner,' *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, November 1, 2004; *Basisdocument Contactorgaan Moslims en de Overheid*, July 6, 2002.
- 69 'Moslimorgaan wil geen imams meer uit buitenland,' *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, November 23, 2004; 'Imam alleen opleiden in Nederland,' *De Volkskrant*, January 14, 2005, p. 2.
- 70 'Imamopleiding,' *Trouw*, January 29, 2005, p. 14.
- 71 'Ministers maken haast met imamopleiding,' *De Volkskrant*, January 29, 2005, p. 4; [http://www.justitie.nl/images/Beleidsregels%20imamopleiding\\_tcm34-3687.pdf](http://www.justitie.nl/images/Beleidsregels%20imamopleiding_tcm34-3687.pdf) In July 2005, the Advisory Committee on Aliens Affairs (Adviescommissie voor Vreemdelingenzaken – ACVZ) submitted a report where they did not approve such procedures. See <http://www.acvz.com/publicaties/Advies-ACVZ-NR16-2005.pdf>
- 72 'Pessimisme over komst Nederlandse imamopleiding,' *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, November 23, 2004.
- 73 'De Nederlandse imamopleiding,' *FEM Business*, January 22, 2005; 'Ministers maken haast met imamopleiding,' *De Volkskrant*, January 29, 2005, p. 4; 'Tweede Kamer Verdonk,' *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, December 13, 2004.
- 74 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 13.
- 75 See 'Moslims bepleiten uitstel van imamopleiding,' *De Volkskrant*, January 29, 2005, p. 4.
- 76 See Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 13; 'Wij zijn straks de werkgevers,' *De Volkskrant*, February 18, 2005.
- 77 Raoul du Pre, 'VU begint nog dit jaar opleiding tot imam,' *De Volkskrant*, February 2, 2005, p. 1.
- 78 See <http://www.filosofie-oostwest.nl/fwphp/framelarge.php?fnn=documenten&krk=39>. Three Muslim teachers were appointed to teach subjects with relevance to Islam in this new programme: Dr. A. A. Karagül, who was an imam in the Utrecht Medical Centre and the Medical Centre of the VU;

Dr. M.A. Abdella, who got his PhD degree *cum laude* from the al-Azhar University and worked as teacher at the Islamic University of Europe (IUE); and Drs. Fatih Okumus who studied in Turkey and was a PhD student at the Islamic University of Rotterdam. See [http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Nieuws/index.cfm/home\\_section.cfm/sectionid/1C346631-FECC-4E73-A8E6699665DD96A](http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Nieuws/index.cfm/home_section.cfm/sectionid/1C346631-FECC-4E73-A8E6699665DD96A)

- 79 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 17.
- 80 Henk Vroom, 'Islamic Theology at the *Vrije Universiteit*' in: Petra Bos & Wantje Fritschy (eds.), *Morocco and the Netherlands: Society, Economy, Culture*, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 47.
- 81 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 18.
- 82 Ibid., p. 17.
- 83 Ibid., p. 20.
- 84 Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, op. cit., p. 20.
- 85 This process implies checking the scientific quality of the study programme, teaching staff, etc. by an international expert-committee. This is regulated by the NVAO (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders. It was established by an international treaty and guarantees the quality of higher education in The Netherlands and Flanders by means of accrediting study programmes. See <http://nvaio.net/content.php?a=s&id=153>
- 86 [www.vu.nl/Aankomende\\_students/index.cfm/home\\_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/C7A8C341-C214-4F9A-8EEF7D4F1A45E852](http://www.vu.nl/Aankomende_students/index.cfm/home_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/C7A8C341-C214-4F9A-8EEF7D4F1A45E852)
- 87 [www.vu.nl/Aankomende\\_students/index.cfm/home\\_file.cfm/fileid/3DB94A11-3F00-43C2-ADAD014EDA1B0239/subsectionid/7E3277CD-7C9C-4D04-A83B1510DoB2EE34](http://www.vu.nl/Aankomende_students/index.cfm/home_file.cfm/fileid/3DB94A11-3F00-43C2-ADAD014EDA1B0239/subsectionid/7E3277CD-7C9C-4D04-A83B1510DoB2EE34)
- 88 *Godgeleerdheid & Religie en Levensbeschouwing*, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 54, 177-187. Cf [www.studiegids.vu.nl/index.html?home\\_file.cfm?objectnaam=PROGRAMMAFASSEN&ruid=55317938&vak\\_ruid=0&datum=01-Sep-2006&taal=NL](http://www.studiegids.vu.nl/index.html?home_file.cfm?objectnaam=PROGRAMMAFASSEN&ruid=55317938&vak_ruid=0&datum=01-Sep-2006&taal=NL)
- 89 [www.vu.nl/Aankomende\\_students/index.cfm/home\\_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/C7A8C341-C214-4F9A-8EEF7D4F1A45E852](http://www.vu.nl/Aankomende_students/index.cfm/home_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/C7A8C341-C214-4F9A-8EEF7D4F1A45E852)
- 90 In an interview with Hendrik Vroom, September 28, 2005, in: Brigitte S. Johansen, *Islam at the European Universities*, p. 16.
- 91 *Godgeleerdheid & Religie*, pp. 71-73 & 209-211. Cf [www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Onderwijs/index.cfm/home\\_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/A600752B-EBBo-BoBA-4F7E6AF810E1F148](http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Onderwijs/index.cfm/home_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/A600752B-EBBo-BoBA-4F7E6AF810E1F148)
- 92 See *Godgeleerdheid & Religie*, op. cit., pp. 70 & 71. Cf [www.studiegids.vu.nl/index.html?home\\_file.cfm?objectnaam=PROGRAMMAFASSEN&ruid=55317938&vak\\_ruid=0&datum=01-Sep-2006&taal=NL](http://www.studiegids.vu.nl/index.html?home_file.cfm?objectnaam=PROGRAMMAFASSEN&ruid=55317938&vak_ruid=0&datum=01-Sep-2006&taal=NL)

- 93 [www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Onderwijs/index.cfm/home\\_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/A600752B-EBBo-BoBA-4F7E6AF810E1F148](http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/Onderwijs/index.cfm/home_subsection.cfm/subsectionid/A600752B-EBBo-BoBA-4F7E6AF810E1F148)
- 94 'Scholing imams in Turkije,' *Het Parool*, June 8, 2006, p. 15.
- 95 In a telephone call, on November 17, 2006, with Prof. H. Vroom.
- 96 [www.leidenuniv.nl/universiteit.html](http://www.leidenuniv.nl/universiteit.html)
- 97 *NVAO toets nieuwe opleiding*, p. 4. The committee consisted of Prof. Dr. Jan Peters (Emeritus Professor of Arabic and Islamic studies of the Nijmegen University, Netherlands), Prof. Dr. J. van Ess (Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies in Tübingen) and Prof. Dr. P. Lory (Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Sorbonne).
- 98 The teaching staff responsible for subjects with relevance to Islamic Theology includes, besides the well-known Prof. Dr. P.S. van Koningsveld, two other Muslim teachers, Drs. Umar Ryad and Drs. Mohammed M. Ghaly. Both are graduates from the al-Azhar University in Egypt where they studied Islamic Studies in English and then moved to Leiden University where they did a Masters and they are now in the final stage of their PhD programme in the same university.
- 99 All arguments are recorded in the Master folder made by Leiden University for this programme, p. 3
- 100 'Rutte gunt universiteiten herkansing imamopleiding,' *Trouw*, April 20, 2005, p. 5.
- 101 'Islamitische Theologie in Leiden,' *Dagblad van het Noorden*, January 27, 2006; [www.nieuws.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=&c=777](http://www.nieuws.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=&c=777)
- 102 [leidsewetenschappers.leidenuniv.nl/show.php3?medewerker\\_id=670](http://leidsewetenschappers.leidenuniv.nl/show.php3?medewerker_id=670)
- 103 [www.nieuws.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=&c=777](http://www.nieuws.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=&c=777)
- 104 See note 97
- 105 *NVAO toets nieuwe opleiding*, 2006, p. 3
- 106 [www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5105&garb=0.5350933842470722](http://www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5105&garb=0.5350933842470722)
- 107 For a general overview of the Bachelor's courses, see [www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5105&garb=0.17071952045059563](http://www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5105&garb=0.17071952045059563) For a detailed description of course given in the first year, see [www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5104&garb=0.7732120798178752](http://www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5104&garb=0.7732120798178752)
- 108 [www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5156&garb=0.49689097054287445](http://www.studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/index.php3?m=22&c=5156&garb=0.49689097054287445)
- 109 Derk Walters, 'Geestelijke leiders in spe, Europese primeur,' *NRC Handelsblad*, October 11, 2006, p. 11.
- 110 For information on this program, see 'Veel animo lerarenopleiding islam,' *Het Parool*, October 17, 1995, p. 15. For an overview of the content of this programme, see *Studiegids Tweedegraads Lerarenopleiding Godsdienst/le-*

*vensbeschouwing, Islam-Godsdienst & opleiding Godsdienst-Pastoraal Werk, voltijd 2000-2001..*

- 111 Raoul du Pre, 'VU begint nog dit jaar opleiding tot imam,' op. cit., p. 1.
- 112 'Voor imamopleiding EUR 400.000 van rijk,' *Leeuwarder Courant*, April 30, 2005; 'Vier ton voor uitwerking plannen imamopleiding,' *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*, April 29, 2005.
- 113 They are Three Turkish organisations, (Milli Görüs Noord Nederland, de Nederlandse Islamitische Federatie en de Stichting Islamitisch Centrum Nederland), one Moroccan (de Unie van Marokkaanse Moslimorganisaties in Nederland) and one Surinamese (World Islamic Mission Nederland). See Derk Walters, 'Geestelijke leiders in spe' op. cit., p. 11.
- 114 'Hogeschool begint imamopleiding,' *De Volkskrant*, November 25, 2005, p. 3
- 115 Derk Walters, 'Geestelijke leiders in spe' op. cit., p. 11.
- 116 Via an email dated, February 21, 2007.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 I hereby submit my thanks for Mrs. Rimke van der Veer for providing me with this information.
- 119 Derk Walters, 'Geestelijke leiders in spe' op. cit., p. 11.
- 120 [www.islamicuniversity.nl/en/showcontent.asp?id=113](http://www.islamicuniversity.nl/en/showcontent.asp?id=113)
- 121 *Imams in Nederland*, op. cit., p. 20.
- 122 The source of this information is a personal interview with Johan Meuleman, the chairman of the Islamic University of Europe Foundation on November 2, 2006.
- 123 For a general overview of the IUR, see *The Islamic University of Rotterdam into the Third Millennium*, Rotterdam, 2000. The website is [www.iur.nl](http://www.iur.nl). See also the contribution by F. Oueslati 'Non-Formal Islamic Higher Education in the Netherlands, with some comparative notes on France and the United Kingdom' in: this volume.
- 124 *Imams in Nederland*, op. cit., p. 19. For a detailed description of the program-content, see *Islamitische Universiteit Rotterdam: studiegids*, esp. pp. 49-50, 131-134, 213-251. In contact with the IUR, they made clear that this study guide is the most up-to-date available guide and further changes are minimal.
- 125 The website of the university is [www.iueonline.nl/index.php?lang=en](http://www.iueonline.nl/index.php?lang=en) see also Johan Meuleman, 'The Training of Spiritual Leaders', p. 8.; *Stichting Islamitische Universiteit van Europa: jaarverslag 2001*.
- 126 In an interview with Johan Meuleman, the chairman of the Islamic University of Europe Foundation on November 2, 2006. see also *Imams in Nederland*, op. cit., p. 20.
- 127 According to the study-guide of 2004-2005, there are also the same three Master's programmes as those of the IUR, for a detailed description of the



programme-content, see *Islamic University of Europe: studiegids*, p. 18-21 & 26-29.

128 In an interview with Johan Meuleman, the chairman of the Islamic University of Europe Foundation on November 2, 2006.

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## 14 Non-Formal Islamic Higher Education in the Netherlands: With Some Comparative Notes on France and the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>

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Ever since the first droplets of Muslim migration started seeping into Western Europe from the second half of the twentieth century on, Muslims have been setting up facilities that formed the basis of their own social infrastructure. Every host country of course had its own story of receiving different groups of Muslim migrants, and rules and regulations varied from country to country, but we can still discern the following general trend in the development of Muslim social structures. One of the first issues that were addressed upon arrival in Western Europe was the establishment of places of worship where congregational prayers could be performed. Shortly after this the supply of *halāl* meat was taken care of, and with this, the first Islamic butcheries appeared. After satisfying the primary needs of worship and nourishment, development of Muslim education became the next issue to be dealt with. In the field of education we find that after a process of arranging for primary and secondary education for Muslim children – both in the form of formal schools and as educational programmes in weekend classes – we now see the emerging trend of forming Islamic institutions of higher education. These institutions fulfil the needs of Muslims who want to deepen their knowledge of their own religion, and at the same time they cater for religiously well-trained minds living in a Western context, which might facilitate the development of religious thought and tradition in this same context.

This article provides a brief sketch of the situation of institutions of Islamic higher education in the following Western European countries: France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. I will start with highlighting two examples of non-formal Islamic higher education in the Netherlands, namely the Islamic University of Rotterdam and Dar al-Ilm.