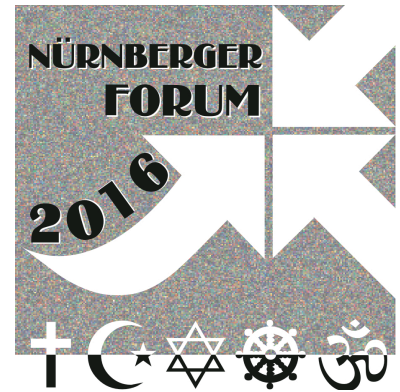


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## The Contribution of Religious NGOs (RNGOs) to public Education



### ABSTRACT

During the past decades, the number of Non Governmental Organizations worldwide has increased massively. According to the Union of International Associations, there are approximately 33.500 international NGOs in the world. They have an increasing impact in the fields of social, humanitarian, cultural and ecological development. According to a study of 2010 (Marie Juul Petersen: International Religious NGOs at The United Nations - Journal of Humanitarian Assistance) 3,183 NGOs hold a consultative status at ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council at the UN), of which 320 can be characterized as religious (in comparison: 2003 there were 263 - according to an Analysis of Julia Berger, Harvard University). Berger quotes: "Although religious NGOs operate within the same legal and political frameworks of secular civil society, their mission and operations are guided by a concept of the divine and a recognition of the sacred nature of human life." Most of the RNGOs are related to a specific religion: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (by far largest number), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim ...- Only a few of them are multi-religious and internationally working. Among them are Religions for Peace (RfP), the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the United Religions Initiative (URI) and the World Parliament of the Religions. They have in common that they draw on the spiritual sources of the religions as a basic power for humanitarian development. They work for common action in parallel fields as secular NGOs - for justice, peace, the integrity of life, as advocates for children, empowering women and youth, for socially deprived ... - focusing specifically on freedom of religion and belief and overcoming prejudice against between different cultures and traditions. But until now, comparatively little has been done for public and state education.

In my paper, I will explore selected examples of activities in this field - namely the initiatives of the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC) of Religions for Peace: the incorporation of interreligious studies in Schools, curricula and teacher training, the possibilities of interreligious textbook development, the development of teaching material and media resources. Additionally, the endeavors of foundations like the Global Ethic Foundation, the Quandt foundation and the Tanenberg foundation and the possibility of international cooperation for public and state education will be explained.