

# European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

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## Editorial

### Dear colleagues, dear friends

This is the second anniversary of our Newsletter and the European Network! At the beginning of this third year we are looking ahead to our conference in Bern. Again we invite you all!

In the Newsletter 2/2006 Stefan Huber presented the Structure-of-Religiosity-Test (S-R-T). Based on the S-R-T the Religion Monitor measured religiosity in 19 countries. Stefan Huber and Martin Rieger give an overview on this new tool and its first results. Thanks very much!

*Franz Fischer*

## Topic

### The Religion Monitor

#### Why the Religion Monitor?

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is dedicated to promoting social change. As a functioning foundation it deals with forward-looking issues affecting society in the fields of education, economy, health or international understanding. For about a year and a half, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has also dedicated itself to examining the role of religion in modern society. We firmly believe that religions fulfil important and indispensable social obligations which far exceed people's spiritual orientation. But at the same time, there's a dearth of knowledge about personal religiousness and its impact and dynamics inside societies and religions. As a foundation, an analysis of the situation through an appraisal is crucial to us. That has led to the formation of the Religion Monitor as an important basis for our entire project's work. The results will be the subject of discussion between ourselves and scientists and religious community leaders,

as well as being scrutinized for their political implication.

#### Aspects of Religious Science

The Religion Monitor's findings bring together many diverse aspects of religious science. For example, the survey in Indonesia, Morocco, Nigeria and Turkey provided results from four large Muslim societies for comparison. A comparison of Catholics or Protestants in South America, the USA, Europe or South Korea is also an interesting prospect. Precise analysis of such comprehensive data is certain to take some time, but important aspects of the church's role overall in society are already emerging which we plan to discuss with church leaders in the coming months. A further aim of this project is to promote the inter-religious competence of decision-makers in society.

#### The Religion Monitor as an online tool

The German-language publication „Religionsmonitor 2008“ (ISBN 978-3-579-06465-9) offers a preliminary insight into the results of findings from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Further international results will be presented by the end of April 2008 as part of a scientific journal at the Bertelsmann Stiftung publishing house.

Participants in the survey can answer a large number of the questions by using the online tool at [www.religionsmonitor.com](http://www.religionsmonitor.com). At the end of the survey each participant is recompensed with their own personal religiosity profile. The empirical infor-

mation about the relevance of religiousness to elementary social areas, particularly with regards to education and health, will make further reviews of the project necessary. Further analysis of the link between religion and health is not only expedient, but also perhaps necessary. It would certainly represent a meaningful contribution to psychosomatic interdependences already under discussion.

*Martin Rieger*

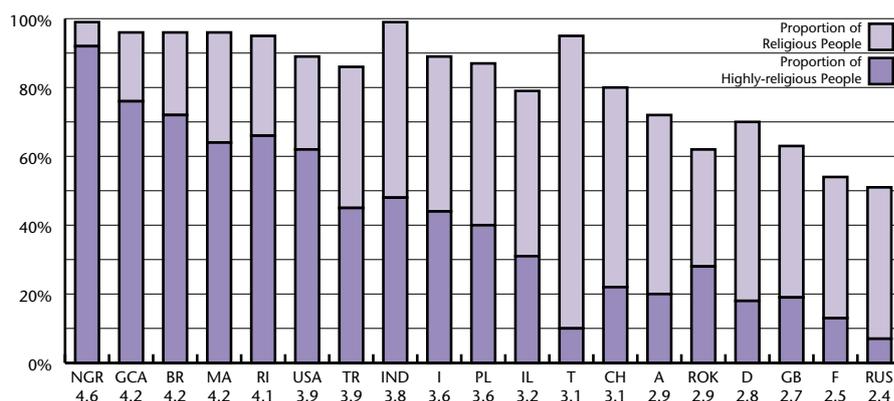
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## Forum

### Structure of the Religion Monitor

The Religion Monitor is an international, cross-cultural and inter-religious instrument for the analysis of religious life and behaviour. It is based on an interdisciplinary model of religiosity (Huber, 2003) integrating aspects of sociology, psychology, theology and religious studies. The Monitor comprises a high degree of differentiation, which in turn allows an in-depth analysis of endogenous religious structures and dynamics.

The Religion Monitor is oriented towards a very broadly concept of „religion“ integrating theistic as well as pantheistic ways of construing transcendence. Inte-



gral to the Religion Monitor are not only features of individual religions (i.e. obligatory prayers in Islam), but also a question on spiritual self-perception which enables the study of the religious profile of spiritual self-concepts. The Religion Monitor consists of 18 general indicators and 83 questions related to religion. The following table illustrates how particular aspects are incorporated into the theoretical structure of the Religion Monitor. It is based on the Structure-of-Religiosity-Test (S-R-T; Huber, 2006) and includes 33 theoretical constructs and 47 questions from the S-R-T. The structural principle focuses largely on the analytical distinction between core dimensions defined by sociology, psychological categories of centrality and the contents of religiousness as reflected in theology and religious studies.

Forming the backbone of the Religion Monitor are six socio-religious core dimensions of religiousness (Glock, 1962; Stark & Glock, 1968; Huber, 1996): intellect, ideology (belief), public religious practice, private religious practice, experience and consequences on everyday life. They offer an extensive and sophisticated insight into the relevance of religious matters to the individual and to society. In the first step, the general intensity of the six core dimensions is ranked in accordance with one or two items that help determine its relative importance. Progressing from there, interviewees are asked in a second step about the individual significance of various religious matters, which can feature as aspects of the core dimensions. This gives an insight into the structures in place in the lives of those classified as religious.

The general intensity of the first five religious core dimensions (compare the grey

fields in the table) offers a very reliable and valid scale for gauging the centrality of religiousness to a personality (Huber, 2003, 2007). This scale represents the psychological bearing and relevance to an individual as well as the intrinsic foothold of religious matters in his or her life (Allport & Ross, 1967). Typically, those surveyed can be broken down into three distinct groups:

- **Highly-religious:** The behaviour and all experiences of those in this group are shaped by religious matters to some extent. Religiousness therefore has a clear effect on the psyche.
- **Religious:** Religious matters feature in the lives of those in this group but only play a subordinate role in their personality. Religious matters therefore only have a weak psychological impact.
- **Non-religious:** The third typical individual is defined by the fact that religious matters feature rarely in their lives. Therefore religious matters do not play a psychological role.

Research into the psychology of religion can especially draw on the category of centrality. That is why the comprehensive empirical results of the Religion Monitor are represented by two groups „religious“ and „highly-religious“ in the international comparison. The illustration at page 1 shows the contrasts in psychological relevance of religiousness when compared internationally.

*Stefan Huber*  
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## References

References are published at [www.rish.ch/pdf/Newsletter2008-References.pdf](http://www.rish.ch/pdf/Newsletter2008-References.pdf).

		CONTENTS			
		General intensity (→ Centrality)		Intensity of specific religious subjects	
		Theistic semantics	Pantheistic semantics		
CORE DIMENSIONS	Intellect	Interest in religious matters		Religious reflexivity, religious quest, theodicy, spiritual and religious books	
	Ideology (Belief)	Belief in God or something divine		Notion of God, world views, religious pluralism, religious fundamentalism, other religious ideas	
	Public Practice	Church service, communal prayer, temple visits, spiritual rituals			
	Private Practice	Prayer	Meditation	Obligatory prayers, family altar	
	Experience	One-to-one experience	Experience of being at one	Religious feelings	
	Consequences	General relevance of religion to every-day life		Relevance of religion in eleven areas of life (i.e. partnership, work, sickness)	
CENTRALITY		Sum indices of the centrality of theistic and pantheistic semantics		Religious and spiritual self-concept	

## Announcements

### Religious Psychopathology: Explorations at the Interface of Psychiatry and Religion

March, 17-19, 2008

Leiden, the Netherlands

Information: <http://www.religionandpsychiatry.com/congress2008>

### European Conference on "Religion, Spirituality and Health"

May, 1-3, 2008

Bern, Switzerland

This Conference aims to enhance the interdisciplinary dialogue between medicine, neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, spiritual science and theology. Experts will give comprehensive overviews on the topic, covering physical as well as mental health issues. Prof. Harold Koenig will inform us about new developments in the United States.

**Call for Abstracts:** We encourage abstract submission for oral and poster presentations. Abstracts (max 500 words) have to be submitted until January 20<sup>th</sup> 2008.

Information: [www.rsh08.eu](http://www.rsh08.eu)

### Pre-Conference Research Workshop with Prof. Harold Koenig

April, 27-30, 2008

Preceding the above announced conference there will be the opportunity to participate in a 4-day research workshop with Prof. Koenig, accepting participants of any education level or degree.

Contact: René Hefti, M.D., [info@rish.ch](mailto:info@rish.ch)

Information: [www.rsh08.eu/workshop.php](http://www.rsh08.eu/workshop.php)

## Impressum

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