



Federal Foreign Office



# Religion and foreign policy





*“As part of our cultural relations and education policy, we have for several years been actively exploring how diplomacy can be used to strengthen ties of cooperation between civil-society organisations in Germany and other countries. This is why cooperation with religious communities – the largest civil-society institutions in the world – is a matter so close to our hearts. In view of the ever more pervasive transmutation of conflicts by religious factors and the “religionisation” of conflicts, our goal is to put the potential religion has as a force for peace in the spotlight once again, and to focus above and beyond this potential on the social responsibility borne by representatives of religious communities in their countries.”*

Dr Andreas Görgen, Head of the Directorate-General for Culture and Communication at the Federal Foreign Office





## “Foreign policy of societies” complements traditional foreign policy between states

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Religious communities are the largest transnational civil-society stakeholders in the world. 84% of the world population belongs to one religion or another.

Religions and religious communities, regardless of background and tradition, are united by one great common goal: that people should live together in peace. And indeed there are countless examples of constructive contributions being made by representatives of the whole breadth of religions in conflict situations and in times of crisis. Religious representatives often have a good sense of how matters are developing in their countries, and are able to influence such developments in many ways. Organisational structures often reach to the most isolated areas and it is in precisely such places that people listen to what religious communities say.

It is for these reasons that the Federal Foreign Office attaches such importance to the subject of religion and foreign policy and aims to strengthen the potential of religious communities to work as a constructive force for good.

The Federal Foreign Office hosted two conferences in Berlin on the responsibility of religions for peace in May 2017 and June 2018. These events were the launchpad for a global network designed to link representatives of religions, religious communities and civil-society organisations. The conferences also demonstrated that religions are not the cause or catalysts of conflicts, but rather campaigners for tolerance and peace.



## Religions for Peace World Assembly

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The Federal Foreign Office Division for Religion and Foreign Policy is providing practical support and thematic input for the 10th World Assembly of the non-governmental organisation Religions for Peace (RfP). The Assembly will take place in August 2019 in the town of Lindau, Lake Constance. The German Bundestag has approved Government funding for the event, which will be opened by Federal President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Nearly 1000 religious representatives from more than 100 countries will work together to decide on common steps towards assuming responsibility for peace and cooperation around the world.

## Conferences and expert discussions

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Besides the two large-scale conferences in 2017 and 2018, recurring round-table-discussions bring together experts from the worlds of religion, academia and diplomacy to debate current international religiopolitical issues. So far there have been talks on religion in the context of displacement and migration, the Orthodox Church as a factor in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and tolerance of Islam in pluricultural societies, the latter focussing on Azerbaijan and Indonesia.



## Workshops and training sessions

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The Federal Foreign Office is helping to foster responsibility for peace in a practical way by funding training courses and workshops for faith-based actors on mediation, peace education and media relations.

## Foreign cultural activities of the German Churches

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As part of Germany's cultural relations and education policy, the Federal Foreign Office supports the cultural activities of the Churches abroad as a key element of Germany's cultural presence in many parts of the world. Close cooperation between the Churches and the German embassies and consulates plays a key role in this regard.

Further information:

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/kulturdialog/-/229304>

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Photograph, top of p. 2: Dr Andreas Görgen, Head of the Directorate-General for Culture and Communication at the Federal Foreign Office

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