

## **BELGIUM – Speaker Siegfried Bracke**

### **The investigation committee on the terrorist attacks in Belgium**

The Belgian parliamentary investigation committee that was created after the terrorist attacks in Brussels and in the national Belgian airport in March 2016, focused in its 4th report on violent radicalism and examined the central role of the school and of education as a means of integration.

In its report, the investigation committee considers that education is a means of integration and therefore a weapon against radicalisation. Compliance with compulsory education must therefore be followed very strictly. A few weeks ago, the Belgian Parliament votes a law that lowered the mandatory school age from 6 to 5 years. And in the years to come we have the intention to lower this to 3 year-olds.

Everyone who works in education should learn to recognise the signs of radicalisation. Control of the learning content of homework schools is necessary, as is regular contact with young people from the traditional educational networks, to help to prevent unhealthy developments.

The basic training of religious teachers in general, and of Islamic teachers in particular, must be geared to current social issues. More teachers and inspectors are needed to monitor uniform application of the school program if we advocate an education that is in line with the basic values of the Belgian State.

Of course, freedom of education and religion should not be challenged, but security is also a basic human right of religious lessons should not lead to isolation, but should instead be a road to inclusion.

An education that makes connections with other philosophical, ethical and cultural-historical approaches can counteract polarisation. Teach to look at the world with an open mind, so that we can develop a critical attitude towards all kinds of ideologies and information presented through (social) media.

Unknown is unloved. As we expect newcomers to embrace our values and culture, we must also show interest for the culture of the countries of origin and what they contribute to our society. With only one goal: integration, to one shared community.

After all, there's only one world.