

**The Study of Religion**  
**and**  
**the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe:**  
**Academic and Religious Freedom**  
**in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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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 a conference on *Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom: Tensions and Compromises in the Coexistence of Two Fundamental Rights*, held late 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 invited 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. Without their work 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, September 18, 2007

Willem B. Drees, Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld