

# NEWSLETTER

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## Welcome

The first year of the READY project has passed and a lot has happened. Although the project members are all developing, testing and improving international cooperation on a European level, sometimes it seems like anti-European groups grow stronger by the day and that fear, or even hate, against the unknown increasingly becomes part of our societies. This shows how important learning about diversity and learning to live in diverse societies is.

In order to develop good ways to teach about diversity, READY connects trainee teachers from Austria, England, Germany, Scotland and Sweden. They have begun to get to know each other in the last year and have worked on RE lessons about diversity together. In addition, the first study visits took place, which enabled some trainee teachers to meet in person. Information about these encounters features in this newsletter. But this is not the only thing reported here. In this second newsletter you will find updates on eTwinning, the new website and upcoming events. Furthermore we want to give some insights into current developments in RE in European countries other than those participating in the READY project.

READY provides a new way to map out RE lessons on diversity in a range of contexts. Many ideas are starting to take shape and these will be accessible on our website: <http://www.readyproject.eu/>

### Transnational Project Meeting in Vienna

It is exciting to see the READY project develop. In October another transnational project meeting took place. With a view of the Stephansdom in Vienna, the team met to discuss what has been achieved so far and what needs further development.



*READY consortium in front of the Stephansdom (Vienna)*

The diversity of religious and denominational traditions together with complex organizational and framework conditions in the schools challenge conventional denominational Religious Education in Austria more and more. Particularly in the metropolitan areas, the pluralistic demographic situation requires wider perspectives. And it requires that we deal with innovative concepts of RE in order to strengthen and enhance what works well for the future. In this way, the everyday experience of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity has become a central focus of RE. In order to meet these challenges professionally, the project of a 'dialogical-confessional RE' has been developed and approved by all Christian churches. The outcomes of the READY project are expected to provide new insights and aspects in the respective forthcoming decision making process.

The Viennese church board of education and religious educationalists at the theological faculties of the University of Vienna are highly interested in the results of the project READY.

## Study visits

### Tübingen visiting Aberdeen

From 28<sup>th</sup> November until 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 3 teacher educators and 3 trainee teachers from Tübingen and Jörg Lohrer (Comenius Institute) travelled to Aberdeen on a study visit. The Scottish hosts came up with an interesting programme. There was the chance to get to know the Scottish educational programme for trainee teachers. It was especially interesting to see RME (Religious and Moral Education) teachers in action at a state funded and at a private school.



*German and Scottish trainee teachers and teacher educators talking to pupils of Milne's High School, Fochabers*

A more detailed report about the learning event will follow soon. In the meantime it might be inspiring to have a look at the messages, photographs and video reportages posted on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/EuropeanReadyProject/](http://www.facebook.com/EuropeanReadyProject/).

This week has intensified the contact between Aberdeen and Tübingen. At the end of May 2017 the Scottish students and colleagues will come to Tübingen and the discussion on interesting and also controversial topics will be resumed and intensified.



*German and Scottish trainee teachers & Jörg Lohrer in an Aberdeen pub*

### Report from London on visiting Vienna



*Austrian and English trainee teachers (with Jo Pearce and Jane Savill) in class with Heinz Ivkovits*

From November 21<sup>st</sup> to November 25<sup>th</sup>, three trainee teachers and two course leaders from the London UCL Institute of Education visited Vienna to explore the Austrian education system and how Religious Education (RE) is taught in Austria.

We were warmly welcomed by our hosts, who presented a number of opportunities to experience RE, including both the education of future teachers and actual classroom practice. The week was highly informative and we were surprised by the significant differences in approaches between the English and Austrian teaching of RE. Furthermore, the visit allowed us to reflect on our own practice and consider how a more authentic teaching of RE could be implemented within our lessons. Our final discussions with Austrian trainee teachers really highlighted how they perceive their subject going forward and the developments which are already taking place.



*Group selfie after school visit with Gerlinde Mesenich (r.)*

A huge thank you must be given to Martin, Jo, Jane and Heinz who organised the visit, and to the Austrian students and teachers who allowed us into their classrooms. Indeed, we look forward to welcoming you all to the Institute early next year and I'm sure we can continue to enhance our understanding when we meet again.

by Michael Dove (RE PGCE student, UCL)

## What else is new?

### Upcoming study visits

The next study visits will take place in spring 2017. In March the trainee teachers from Vienna will meet trainee teachers from London again, but this time in England. And then in April trainee teachers from almost all participating countries will be invited to go to Karlstad, Sweden.

### Launch of READY website

We are delighted to announce the launch of our new READY Project website: [www.readyproject.eu](http://www.readyproject.eu). The website, which will be continually updated over the coming months to reflect developments in the Project, contains not only information and resources, but opportunities to interact and share ideas. Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter (both of which are accessible from the READY website homepage) so that we can interact as a global online community concerning Religious Education and Diversity.

We look forward to sharing our Project with you, and to you joining with us in our exploration.

### First products

In the first year of the READY project some material has already been produced. Besides an overview of RE and RE teacher education in the participating countries, lesson plans were created, tested and uploaded to the eTwinning website. Questions about diversity and tradition, new diversity through migration and diverse places relating to religion in the hometowns of the pupils were dealt with. Also some vignettes about school visits of the project team were collected and compiled. Further products will follow, in particular the reports about the study visits.



Identity Tartan inspired by Aberdeen

### New material on etwinning

In Karlstad, the trainee teachers working on lesson plans have been divided into three groups. One of the groups has just finished teaching in a upper secondary school; two lessons which were both video recorded for the READY project. In their first lesson, the trainee teachers challenged the school students conception of what religion might be, and how it could be expressed. In the second lesson, the students did an exercise in a tool called Google Earth, mapping out where in their vicinity expressions of religion might be found. As would be the case in Swedish classrooms, there were pupils from various religions in the classroom, and the pins marking religious expressions in the city included multicultural youth centres, food malls catering for religious communities, churches, and jewellers selling items related to religious festivals. The lesson plan, material and reflections on the lessons were uploaded to eTwinning.



*Gabriella Dahlhjelm (to the left) and Lisa Lannerås (to the right) teaching about religious expression in their vicinity*

Another group is currently doing field studies in North India for their Bachelor's essay in Science of Religion. They will also use this material in their planned lesson, which will be taught in a Swedish upper secondary school around February. This lesson, too, will be video recorded.

Further activities are planned.

# Going beyond

## A place for interesting material on RE in Europe



This summer the READY project was presented at a conference of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE). This organization is a wonderful platform to get in touch with people all across Europe, who are involved in RE. On their website ([www.eftre.net](http://www.eftre.net)) there is a vast amount of material regarding RE from many different European countries. For example you can find reports about how RE is organized in the member countries and all the materials of this year's conference. Another interesting project is "Talking heads", where Europeans answer the question: "What does RE contribute to the aims of education?"

## New developments in Luxembourg

A fundamental change concerning RE happened in Luxembourg with the new school year 2016/17. In gymnasium the longstanding subjects RE and Ethics were replaced by a non-confessional obligatory subject called "Life & Society". One reason was to bring all pupils together and to create a safe space for dialogue in a context of increasing diversity. Are these aims not valid for RE? See <http://www.gouvernement.lu/5422950/rahmenlehrplan> for more information (in German language).

## Interesting new publication

There is an interesting new book for all in the field of Religious Education published by Routledge with the title "Education about Religions and Worldviews. Promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding in secular societies" edited by Anna Halafoff, Elisabeth Arweck and Donald L. Boisvert (2016), 155 pages. It is originally published as a special issue in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*.

This book has a sociological approach and presents the findings of research, both empirical and theoretical studies on education about religions and worldviews undertaken in Britain, Ireland, Canada, Norway, Finland, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. All countries which can be said to have a Christian heritage, but also indigenous cultures.

Educational programs with religion and world views at its core, have begun to be implemented as strategies to encourage interreligious understanding and social cohesion, particularly following the 2005 London bombings as the fear of youth radicalisation and home-grown terrorism have become dominant. As the authors state in the introduction: "...state actors are currently grappling with the reality that we are living in increasingly multifaith and non-religious societies, and government education systems have become places of contestation" (p. 3). This, of course, is expressed in different ways in different national contexts which is very clear in the different chapters in the book.

This book therefore examines education about religions and world views (ERW) research and policies in a number of different and diverse places, trying to identify themes and insights that can inform research as well as policies and education. I recommend the book as it gives thoughts and insights for all taking part in the discussion of education and how to educate our future citizens.

by Kerstin von Brömssen (Karlstad University)