

# NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 June 2016

## Welcome

In the three-year Erasmus+ project "Religious Education and Diversity – Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of 'Education and Training 2020' (READY)", teacher training institutions in Austria, England, Germany, Scotland and Sweden will explore the topic 'Religion and Diversity' in two respects: the mutual exchange of diverse forms of Religious Education (RE) and the variety of approaches to subject teaching and learning, in which the question of religious diversity will be considered and discussed. The results will be examined and proposals for teaching Religion and Diversity in Europe will be published.

A main target group of the project are student teachers for Religious Education. One of our first steps was to organise each country group into pairs/small groups, to facilitate easy communication between students teachers – so Scotland has paired with Germany, and Sweden is working with England and Austria. The project begins with structured online communication between student teachers in the above pair and group. The first students to meet online were from Austria and Sweden – the technology worked and students enjoyed sharing their experiences. This process is leading to each pair/group developing a joint educational module on 'Religion and Diversity'. At the same time, profile descriptions of the situation of teacher education in the participating countries are being exchanged, an interactive READY website is being set up, and a guideline for one week study visits,

we visit each other's institutions, is under development. In the second year of the project, groups of five teacher educators and student teachers from each country will observe RE lessons in a partner country for a week, and hold discussions with student teachers, pupils and other stakeholders of RE. These experiences will inform a practical guide to European RE. In parallel to these exchanges, local RE lessons on 'Religion and Diversity' will be evaluated, and where possible their delivery in the classroom videotaped. The pupils will be encouraged to establish eTwinning contacts with an RE class in a partner country and in this way deepen their knowledge and experience of religious diversity across Europe.



READY consortium, from left: Kristian Niemi, Prof Dr Kerstin von Brömsen, M.A. Heinz Ivkovits, Dr Graeme Nixon, Dr David Smith, Dr Jo Pearce, Prof Dr Peter Kliemann, Prof Dr Martin Fischer, Dr Christof Schilling, Dr Peter Schreiner



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# Planned products

## Case studies on RE teacher training in the participating countries

One of the planned intellectual outcomes of the project are case studies to introduce the situation of RE teachers in each of the countries. A special emphasis will be given to the issue of diversity in the classroom, in school and in society.

## Etwinning

eTwinning is a tool developed for Erasmus+, the EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, launched in 2005. 'eTwinning' is also a verb: to communicate live through the web-based tool. It is used by schools all over Europe for connecting classrooms across the continent. By now there are over 370,000 members on eTwinning and almost 45,000 projects – for each project two or more schools engage in 'eTwinning'. Pupils link-up online, communicating across borders.

So far eTwinning has only been used in primary and secondary education. The READY project is a first, in terms of using eTwinning in higher education. The READY partner areas are 'twinned' (London, Vienna and Karlstad is one group; Aberdeen, Tübingen and Münster another). The two groups are 'eTwinning', communicating live with video, as well as in writing. Students have begun to post updates on the project and publish texts they produce. Read more on [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)

## Study Visits

Study visits constitute an important part of the READY project, by providing a unique opportunity to share experiences between teacher educators and student teachers with different religious, cultural and pedagogical backgrounds, and to learn about the existing organisational and didactic conceptions of RE in the participating countries.

The guidelines developed shall help to structure and facilitate the study visit process. It is hoped that the experiences documented from our study visits will be useful to other institutions and individuals interested in dialogue and exchange between European partners, and may thus also contribute to a further development of exchange programs.

## Lesson plans

Student teachers have begun to work with European partners to create lesson plans on religion and diversity. Through eTwinning, student teachers are being given the opportunity to exchange ideas about the nature, purpose and practice of Religious Education in their own context with student teachers from a different European context.

During the initial planning stage, students were excited to meet each other online and to learn from each other, hearing about diverse approaches to Religious Education. Many students were surprised to learn about the kinds of differences in the different approaches, and ended the first meeting keen to hear more. Following the first online meeting between students from England and Austria, students worked together to create a short sequence of lessons on religion and diversity. Students decided together which aspects of religion and diversity are most relevant to their schools and pupils, and therefore what the specific focus of the lessons should be. Having worked on the planning stage together, students refined the plans for their own specific contexts and delivered the lessons.

## Website in the pipeline

Keep up-to-date with developments within the READY project by visiting [www.readyproject.eu](http://www.readyproject.eu). There you will find a range of ways to keep in touch – as well as information and resources, such as: case-studies; lesson plans; talking heads; and profiles of the different institutions who are participating in the project. We hope that you will find the website a helpful resource and look forward to your engagement with the project through the website.

## Participating institutions



### The University College of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems (KPH) / Austria

The University College of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems (KPH) was founded in 2007. The institution is unique in Europe in its ecumenically oriented approach to interreligious, intercultural and inter-confessional learning in Europe. It offers teaching qualifications for primary and secondary schools and Religious Education as well as in-service teacher training courses for teachers of all school types, kindergarten teachers, and social education workers. Moreover, with its five campuses in Vienna and Lower Austria, it is Austria's largest private university college of teacher education. Based on a balanced curriculum of initial teacher training, in-service teacher training and continuing professional development, the KPH offers opportunities for teachers to acquire qualifications and professionalisation in order to be able to meet the challenges in the fields of general pedagogy and religious education. Prof Dr Martin Fischer and Mag Heinz Ivkovits coordinate READY activities. Read more at [www.kphvie.ac.at/home.html](http://www.kphvie.ac.at/home.html)



### Comenius-Institut / Germany

The Comenius-Institut is a Protestant Centre for Research and Development in Education based in Muenster/Germany. It is sponsored by the Protestant Churches in Germany, as well as Protestant teacher and school associations. Projects on Religious Education are part of the profile. Also research on intercultural and interreligious learning is organised by the institute. In the READY project the institute is responsible for the case studies, the dissemination of the intellectual outputs and for evaluation of the process. Dr Peter Schreiner, the director of the institute, is a member of the project consortium. Read more at [www.comenius.de](http://www.comenius.de)



### Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung Tübingen / Germany

The "Staatliche Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung" in Tübingen is a Higher Education Institute, which is responsible for an 18-months professional preparatory course for future Gymnasium (grammar school) teachers. The staff consists of over 100 teacher educators covering 25 different subject areas. At present, we have 550 student teachers for teaching, of whom there are 70 religious education and ethics/philosophy trainees. All student teachers have completed their university studies with a master's degree or equivalent. Apart from the courses they have to take at our institution, our student teachers are assigned to almost 50 different grammar schools in the area for teaching practice guided by experienced mentors. Our instructors visit their student teachers in their lessons several times for analysis and guidance. The final examinations consist of the presentation of lessons, a thesis and oral exams on methodology in two subjects, pedagogy.

Being a "didactic centre" by status, another important part of the Seminar's work is in-service training, the development of teaching materials and school-based pedagogical research. A large proportion of the staff also lecture at the University of Tübingen. Prof Dr Peter Kliemann is an experienced teacher educator for protestant RE and coordinates the READY project. Dr Christoph Schilling brings in the perspective of the alternative subject "Ethics/Philosophy". Read more at [www.seminar-tuebingen.de](http://www.seminar-tuebingen.de)



## University College London, Institute of Education

Dr Jo Pearce teaches on the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) Secondary Religious Education programme, as well as the MA in Religious Education, at UCL Institute of Education, University College London. She previously taught Religious Education in a range of London secondary comprehensive schools.

UCL Institute of Education sits in the heart of London, working with an extensive range of schools in and around London. Staff and students come from more than 100 countries, making for a diverse and lively learning and teaching environment.

As part of the READY project, Jo's PGCE RE students are working with students from Sweden and Austria. Read more at [www.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ucl.ac.uk)



## School of Education University of Aberdeen

Drs David Smith and Graeme Nixon work at the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. They are both previously teachers of Religious Education (or Religious and Moral Education) in Scotland. They both teach on the four year undergraduate programme for primary teaching and the one year graduate programme for primary and secondary teaching that allows students to become teachers in Scotland. David and Graeme specialise in RE, values education, thinking skills, mindfulness, Philosophy and citizenship. As part of the READY project David and Graeme's secondary RE students will be working with students from Tübingen university in Germany, developing and sharing ideas about how to teach RE effectively, particularly relating to diversity. Read more at [www.abdn.ac.uk](http://www.abdn.ac.uk)



## Karlstad University (KAU)

is one of Sweden's young and dynamic universities, located at the beautiful lake Vänern in the western part of the country. Currently Karlstad University offers a wide range of programs in humanities and fine arts, social and economic sciences, natural sciences, engineering and technology, health care and teacher training. Teacher training has a long history in Karlstad – longer than KAU's status as a university, in fact, teacher education thus lies at the core of the university; it enjoys a good reputation, and many teachers have got their basic training there. The field of religious education is an essential part. Early on, KAU developed an RE-didactics based on the stories found in the various religious traditions.

A unique feature of KAU's religious education is its international connections, enabling students to study both in Jerusalem and Varanasi, India. The "India program" has been running for more than 25 years, and through it many teacher students and scholars of religion have acquired knowledge and experiences invaluable in their practices. Kristian Niemi and Prof Dr Kerstin von Brömssen are members of the consortium. Read more at <https://www.kau.se/en/about-university>

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## Colofon

This newsletter is published and distributed by the consortium of the READY project 4 times a year (between 2016-2018).

When the website [www.readyproject.eu](http://www.readyproject.eu) is installed you will find a link to register for the Newsletter.

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