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IRENE

Innovative Religious Education NETwork:
educating to the religious diversity

KA2 - Agreement Number: 2020-1-RO01-KA204-080071

Anne Burghardt, Triin Käpp, Liina Kilemit, Kerstin Kask, Evelyn Timuska, Risto Aikonen

IRENE IO 1 – COMPARATIVE STUDY

FINAL REPORT Estonia, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Finland, Romania

INTRODUCTION

- **Framework and Objectives**

- *The current research is part of the two-year program IRENE Innovative Religious Education NETwork: educating to the religious diversity, Network for the Renewal of Religious Education: Teaching Religious Diversity, which is part of Erasmus+, funded by the European Commission and includes scientists from Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, Estonia, and Finland.*

The IRENE program analyzes how religious education and religious literacy are implemented and cultivated in the participating Member States, and in particular, education in diversity and religious pluralism. In addition, it proposes teaching methods and teaching materials as well as a common training program to help all those who deal with religious diversity.

In particular, the program has the following objectives:

- To improve the teaching methods of religion teachers, professional theologians and pastors who deal with diversity and multiculturalism.
- To facilitate the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and innovative methods around religious education.
- To increase the digital, social, and learning skills as well as the cognitive competence of the participants regarding multiculturalism.
- To promote interfaith practices dealing with religious diversity and social exclusion at the local level.
- To train teachers/professionals of religious education in order to take a more active role in society.
- To create a sustainable network of expanded collaborations with strategic goals between the members of the Program.

The above is part of a wider EU educational policy, is based on a strong legal framework and promotes the European way of life. Many global and European organizations recognize the need to enhance knowledge about religions and beliefs and focus on educating young people. Young people can contribute to the fight against intolerance and discrimination if they are trained on a theoretical and practical level and in subjects related to basic human rights. At the same time, the development of national educational policies and strategies should include measures to promote a better understanding of different cultures, ethnicities, religions, or beliefs (see Decision No. 13/06 on combining intolerance and discrimination and promoting mutual respect and understanding).



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The source of inspiration for the European Union is “religious and humanist inheritance, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law” (see Preamble to the Treaty on European Union).

It is well known that the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) launched the dialogue between the EU and the Churches, religious communities, and beliefs. Article 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the aim of the Union is to combat all forms of discrimination based on "sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation". In addition, article 17 declares that “the Union respects and does not prejudice the status of Member States under national law of churches and religious associations or communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations" and “recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations”.

Research Methodology

In all studies semi-structured interviews were used as the main methodological tool for data collection. The semi-structured type of interview was chosen because (a) it allows the interviewee to develop his/her experiences and views freely without the strictly defined framework of the fully structured closed-ended interview; and (b) is largely free from the problems that arise in unstructured interviews. In any case, this intermediate type of interview should be structured around a relatively rigorous interview plan, which is quite similar to that of an open-ended questionnaire. The interviewees were selected based on certain characteristics, such as studies, experience, educational status, etc.

SECTION I. THE PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEE AND HIS/HER EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Bulgaria

The sample of **Bulgarian** research consists of ten (10) teachers, belonging to all three levels of education. The interviews took place during the period of March to May 2021 *with 10 people* teaching religion in various forms and conditions. *Interviewees* came from one of our extended informal recent research teams of *Faculty of Theology*, therefore among the informants were recent *Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Christian theologians* with sustainable long-term experience and successful religious research and pedagogical practice – associate professor, assistant professor, two university teaching assistants – PhD candidate – special pedagogue, and PhD student – director of parish centre, PhD student – kindergarten musical pedagogue, two prospective PhD students – linguistic pedagogue and primary teacher, and three other colleagues, two of which – with adequate research experience in PhD programs, working for some periods as college, school, and kindergarten teachers. All interviewees are religious education experts in their field, successful in teaching religion part time, additionally to their other basic profession; four of them had also been regular full-time religion teachers for some periods, one of them permanently for his whole career and three others – for 5 or less years in the past.

Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)

National, religious and learner’s composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17)



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National/ethnic composition of the region of *teaching* 40% and *groups of students* in the last 5 years, 50% is defined as more than 80% homogenous. That is natural proportion if theologians teach basically only 1 ethnos, not experiencing *segregated or regionally located dominating minorities*, which is often the case of some *target groups of educational projects in the field of religion* that aim also social inclusion. So only 40% of teachers work in a 60% – 80% *homogenous environment*, and they teach only 50% *homogenous classrooms*, at least as far as they are aware, because any attempt at *informal statistics on teachers' sites may be discriminatory*.

About the religious composition of the *region*:

1. *Homogenous region* (predominant population of one religion/confession >90%) – 30% 2. *One basic religion/confession* (60 – 80%), and other well represented minor (20 – 40%) – 60%. 3. *Multireligious region* (population of various non-dominant religions/confessions) – 10%. 4. *I do not know* – 0%

About the religious composition of the *students* in the last 5 years: 1. *Predominantly of one religion/confession* – 40 %. 2. *Predominantly one, but also some students belonging to other religions/confessions* – 50%. 3. *Predominantly multireligious/multiconfessional students* – 10% (from mixed families or identity). 4. *Predominantly unreligious* – 0%. Point 5. *It is hard to say* – 0%

In Question 15 teachers are asked in *only one answer* to define religious belonging of their students in last 5 years, in a manner similar as in Questions No 8A, and No 8B:

1. *Almost all see themselves as belonging to specific religion* – 70%, 50% defining it as *Orthodox(y)* (Informants No 1, No 2, No 7, No 8, and No 10), 10% as *Orthodox Christian(ity)* (Informant No 4), and 10% as *Christian(ity)* (Informant No 3). 2. *Predominant students identify themselves as belonging to a specific religion, but some of them do not* – 20% *Orthodox(y)* (Informant No 6, and No 9); 3. *Approximately half of students belong to a specific religion, and half do not belong to any* – 0%. 4. *Most students do not belong to a specific religion, but only some have religious belonging* – 10% *Christian(ity)* (Informant No 5); 5. *More students do not belong to any religion* – 0%. 6. *It is hard to say* – 0%.

14&16. Between 2016 and 2021 most of the informants 90% teach in group manner, with the exception of one (10%), who is working individually; 50% <25 children and youth, 10% >25 adults, and 40% equally from both groups <> 25, and 0% had answered “it is hard to say”, or referred to mixed groups (collegial, parent or grandparent and children presence together, in church school or occasionally in public schools) or lack of exact data that they do not usually collect about their students (Informant No 8, Question No 19, Table No 4 and No 5). As we could see from most of the interviews, the more important division is children/youth, i. e. pupils/school students/university students.

17. Teachers generally find difficulty to evaluate the knowledge on religion-related issues, acquired by their students from the last 5 years, partly because the subject still needs more social approval. From formal perspective, religion is not a subject forming general score in the diplomas, there is no such evaluation as in regular subjects, neither there is sufficient standard against which to judge on students' development, or just because the envisioned enculturation is of spiritual matter and usually it cannot be measured or controlled, either by attendance, or by behavioural changes, found in students. Still teachers are optimistic (Table No 4), and respond: 1. Very well 30%, 2. Well 30%, 3. Predominantly deficient 0%, 4. Very deficient 0%, and 5. Hard to say 40%, from which 10% explain that teachers usually do not count or evaluate children (Informant No 8, probably meaning church school,



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but not only), other 10% specify that students vary (Informant No 9), 10 % – “since many of the students come from Sofia Theological Seminary (boys and men), from parishes, church families, even from monastic communities, but completely unprepared youth and adults also come” (Informant No 10).

Respondents’ description of the students' dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)

90% of Bulgarian interviewees are very optimistic about their students, and replies are the following:

1. “The attitude to religious matters is very good.”
2. “They have a positive attitude, and they are interested not only in knowledge about religion, but also in participation in church life.”
3. “Predominantly informational, but also general attitude – about culture, identity and values”.
4. The attitude is heterogeneous: Part of the children are fascinated by the touch of new knowledge, other parts are bored and enrolled (only) by the will of their parents. Children accept faith with pure hearts, and we sow its seeds in them. It is hard to say what (kind of person) will grow up from them and whether it will develop for the future, because we do not (usually) keep in touch, when they live kindergarten.”
5. “An interest, provoked by expectation of a more balanced, calm, and valued life.”
6. “Positive attitude, understanding and acquiring of knowledge necessary at their age of 8 – 13 years”.
7. “Sincere interest, perseverance, (expectation of) inspiration, and improvement.”
8. “Children live their faith and socialise adequately and spontaneously.”
9. “Expectations are great and generally related to culture, national identity and patriotic feelings.”
10. “Students’ attitude is part of the whole variety of their spiritual vocation, and their expectations are to be empowered to instruct people in their life in faith.”

Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

Estonia

Age, gender, working experience, education, work grade and place, religion (Q0-Q8)

The sample of **Estonian** research consists of nine (9) teachers, four of the nine (9) interviewees were women and five (5) were men. All were clergy and had studied theology, of which six (6) have a Master's degree, two (2) a Bachelor's degree and one (1) a Doctorate. Eight (8) of the interviewees were Lutheran and one Baptist. The interviewees were recruited from a diverse range of people with experience in teaching religion, preferably those who would teach religion to children (e.g. in general education) and adults (e.g. in a church or in some other institution in the form of adult continuing education, confirmation classes or similar). However, not all interviewees currently teach in schools, but some carry out their teaching responsibilities mainly among adults in a church environment. One informant also interested us because he has developed a programme of religious education for adults, which is about to be launched in a public institution.

Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)

Firstly, the interviewees stand out for their remarkably long experience in teaching religion. Three of them have been teaching religion for 30 years or more. They started with teaching religion at quite a young age, right after finishing their studies in theology or at the same time. They are also quite highly educated. Several have obtained or are in the process of obtaining a doctorate. All of them have studied theology, several have also studied pedagogy in addition. Many have attended complementary training. Thus, the interviewees can be considered highly qualified and very competent in teaching religion.

About half of the interviewees teach in Estonia's larger cities, where, in addition to ethnic Estonians (Lutherans make up the majority of ethnic Estonian believers), a significant number of people of Slavic background - Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians - live. Most of the believers among this group are Orthodox. In smaller towns, villages



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and rural areas with scattered settlements, the majority of the population are ethnic Estonians and the majority of believers are Lutherans.

National, religious and learner's composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17). Respondents' description of the students' dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)

The teaching background diverges in three different directions:

1) Teaching in the church (mainly adults attending Lutheran confirmation classes), 2) Teaching in public general education school, 3) Teaching in a Christian private school.

In the first case, students come with the desire to be baptised and confirmed in the Lutheran Church. Their prior knowledge of religion is either poor or rather weak. Often there is no deeper interest in religion at first, but a desire to receive ecclesiastical services (baptism of a child, getting married in church, becoming a godparent). Fewer are those who have developed a deeper interest in religion as such and a desire to become a member of a church. This group is mostly mono-ethnic (ethnic Estonians) and not previously religious. The worldview of their teaching is Christian, Lutheran. Students/course attendants are prepared to become members of this church. They usually come alone or together with a family member.

The second group are students from general education schools, who come to the class, which is mostly an optional elective, and during which students are also given a basic knowledge of the different world religions. These lessons are called differently in different schools, e.g. religious studies, cultural studies, etc. Knowledge about religions may also be shared in philosophy or history lessons. These lessons are based on a neutral worldview. Pupils' prior knowledge of religion is almost non-existent and, as some respondents argued, has even deteriorated over time (although one would expect the opposite to be true following the change in the societal background since 1991). As most of the informants teach in Estonian-language schools, the pupils are mainly of the same nationality, but there are exceptions.

The third group consists of pupils from Christian private schools. In that case, the teaching is based on Christian worldview and a significant proportion of pupils come from either Christian backgrounds or from families with a positive attitude towards Christianity. Pupils' prior knowledge of religion tends to be good. The majority of informants taught in private Lutheran schools, although one respondent reported that children from other denominations also attend the lessons.

Although there were exceptions (e.g. private Christian schools), informants characterised their students' prior knowledge of religion as very poor or even non-existent. Moreover, there are many fears and prejudices about the church and religion, which is characteristic of Estonia as a largely secular country distanced from Christianity. Against a background of poor basic knowledge, teaching must begin with the most elementary basic knowledge. Students who come to attend confirmation class are rather cautiously mindful of what is going on, and the teacher must take this into account. Teachers in public schools noted that the attitude of the home towards the teaching of religion in schools may not be benevolent. Thus, teachers of religion the field of religious education in Estonia have to "fight" not only with the lack of knowledge but also with negative preconceptions about religion(s).



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Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

Italy

The sample of **Italian** research consists of ninety (90) interviews/questionnaires to two different groups of individuals: (1) Eighteen (18) professors at Theological academic departments (hereinafter referred to as Group A). (2) Seventy-two (72) individuals among Catholic religion schoolteachers and/or Catholic educators, i.e. parish catechists, Scout leaders and others (hereinafter referred to as Group B). These groups are not representative national samples according to the Italian report; however, they reflect the country-specific socio-cultural and socio-religious characteristics of Italy, a country experiencing a long-lasting significant influence of Catholicism along its history. The groups of interviewees were identified as to reflect the religious composition of Italian society; therefore, professors at the Waldensian faculty as well as professors at Orthodox theological institutes were encompassed in the survey too.

Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)

They mainly (90 %) taught in larger and medium size cities. Only ten respondents work either in a small city or in a village. Most interviewers (70%) worked in an area that is “mainly mono-ethnic / mono-religious (more than 80% of the inhabitants belong to the same group and the same religion, Catholicism). It reflects the religious differentiation of Italian society: 75% of the population still declares themselves Catholic (twenty years ago it was 82%), while is growing the presence of Muslim, Orthodox, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu religious communities and immigrants from Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa who belong to the many and diverse Neo-Pentecostal churches.

National, religious and learner’s composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17)

The religious composition of the classes/students according to the teachers for the last five years was determined by the 90 % of the respondents as “mainly one religion/denomination”. Thus, there were 10 % of the groups in which there were pupils belonging to other religious/denominational groups, in line with those answers given to the question about the religious composition of the place of work.

72% of the respondents stated that they work with “groups/student classes” in public schools, meanwhile another 26% are teaching at the Theological faculties of the Catholic Church. In the first case they mostly serve in public schools where although the teaching of religion is optional, such teaching is followed by 85,8% of the student population (see table n. 1)

Table 1 Pupils Attending Catholic Religion Classes in 2019-20 (in %) by School Grades

	Total	Nursery School	Primary School	Secondary School (I grade)	Secondary School (II grade)	
Italy (full country)	85.8	89.2	89.5	87.4	79.6	
North	81.7	84.8	85.9	83.7	74.9	
Centre	84.7	89.3	90.4	86.7	75.4	
South	97.1	97.5	97.6	97.1	96.5	



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(Source: IRC - Italian National Office for the teaching of the Catholic religion in schools.)

68% of the respondents teach groups over 25 years. 63% of the respondents considered students' background knowledge about religion as good/very good, while the rest considers it poor.

Respondents' description of the students' dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)

Nearly seven out of 10 teachers believe their students are motivated and curious about other non-Catholic religions.

Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

Only 4 respondents answer this question. If there should be a topic raised, it relates to the identity issues and specially concerning the minorities and the question of ethnicity and religion. Another topic concerns the growing interest in Buddhism.

Romania

The sample of **Romanian** research consists of 25 interviews with the profession of religion teachers from southwestern Romania, aged between 28 and 62 years. Of the 25 respondents, 10 are men and 15 are women. 6 of the respondents are clergy and 19 are lay people. All respondents are graduates of higher education, and 70% of them have also completed master's studies. Two teachers, among those surveyed, also completed their PhD studies. The respondents are graduates of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, in specializations such as: Pastoral Theology, Letter Theology, Social Work Theology. 30% of the respondents also completed the studies of other faculties, having double specialization, in fields such as: Medicine, History, Economics and Foreign Languages. Almost 2/3 of them worked in primary school. The rest are in church or church related organizations, NGO or Sunday school (6), high school (5) and vocational school (2). Of the 25 respondents, 6 are clerics (priests and deacons), and 19 are lay people.

Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)

They mainly (60 %) taught in larger cities in Romania. Every fifth respondent worked either in a small city or in a village. All of the interweaves worked in an area that is "mainly monoethnic / monoethnic (more than 80% of the inhabitants belong to the same group). Also, the religious composition of the region was 100 % consisting mainly of one religion/denomination (90 % and more).

National, religious and learner's composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17)

Almost all (90 %) of the respondents stated that in the last five years they have worked with students who were of "mainly monoethnic" of origin. Only 10 % answered that there are also groups which are, "mainly mono-ethnic and there were some students from other ethnic groups" of origin. "mainly multiethnic" groups were not at all.

As a consequence, based on the previous question the religious composition of the classes in which they taught for the last five years was determined by the 90 % of the respondents as "mainly one religion/denomination". Thus, there were 10 % of the groups in which there were pupils "mainly from a religion/denomination, but there



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were also students belonging to other religious/denominational groups”. These answers are in line with those answers given to the question about the religious composition of the place of work and reflect to a large extent, the Romanian reality, where the Orthodox religion prevails with very high percentages among the population.

All respondents stated that they work with “groups/student classes”. The answer is expected because they mostly serve in public education, where religious education is taught as a compulsory subject.

In the Romanian questionnaire there was not a question related to what kind of relation students have had with religion during the last five years. However, in the Romanian case it can be assumed a quite strong relationship with the “religious affiliations”.

All the respondents teach groups under 25 years. More than half (55 %) of the respondents considered students’ background knowledge about religion as very good. Every fifth was rather good and every fourth as rather deficient.

Respondents’ description of the students’ dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)

From Romanian’s answers it can be found out that pupils’ attitude overall is positive, curious with respect and eager to learn.

Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

No.

Greek

Age, gender, working experience, education, work grade and place, religion (Q0-Q8)

The **Greek** survey sample consists of fifteen (15) informants. The age of the interviewees ranges between 35 and 72 years. Most of them belong to the age range of 50-60 years (9 statements). Among interviewees were 7 men and 8 women. The sample stated that they have been working for more than 12 years with the majority ranging between 22 and 35 years old. All participants hold a higher education degree. Eleven (11) people stated that they hold a master's degree. Of these, five (5) stated that they also have a doctorate. Also, seven (7) hold a second university degree. Only one (1) person holds only one (1) university degree. Fourteen respondents hold a bachelor's or master's degree in Theology. Only one (1) person does not hold an academic degree in Theology.

Three (3) respondents work in Higher-Tertiary Education, three (3) in Primary Education, and nine (9) in Secondary Education. This distribution is perfectly expected, since the teachers of the Religious Studies course in the Secondary School are exclusively graduating from Theological Schools. Only one (1) interviewee holds a clergy status. Four (4) respondents hold a position of responsibility in educational administration. Thirteen (13) respondents state that they are Orthodox Christians, one Muslim and one Lutheran.

Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)



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Twelve (12) respondents work in a "Big city", two (2) in a "Town" and one (1) in a "Village". Only one interviewee holds a clergy status. Eleven (11) respondents work in an area that is "mainly mono-ethnic/mono-ethnic (over 80% of the inhabitants belong to the same ethnic group)" and four (4) in an area where "apart from the national majority, other groups are also represented (60 -80% the national majority, 20-40% other ethnic groups)". Eleven (11) respondents work in an area where "mainly one religion/denomination (90% or more)" prevails and four (4) in an area where "there is a majority religion/denomination, but the others are also substantially represented (60-80% dominant religion/denomination, 20-40% other religions/denominations)".

National, religious and learner's composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17)

In this question, ten (10) respondents stated that in the last five years they have worked with students who were of "mainly mono-ethnic" origin, but "there were some students from other ethnic groups", three (3) said that they were of "mainly mono-ethnic" origin while two (2) persons "mainly multiethnic". Migration flows, especially from Balkan countries, over the last thirty years have created a multinational dynamic in educational units which, as is normal, is reflected in the present research.

Seven (7) respondents stated that the religious composition of the classes in which they taught for the last five years was determined by "mainly one religion/denomination, but there were also students who belonged to other religious/confessional groups". Also, seven (7) stated that their students belonged to "mainly one religion/denomination" and only one (1) stated that their class was "mainly multi-religious/multi-denominational". These answers are in line with those given to the question about the religious composition of the place of work and reflect, to a large extent, the Greek reality, where the Orthodox Christian faith prevails with very high percentages among the population. At the same time, there are small population groups, which belong to other religions-denominations.

All respondents (15/15) stated that they work with "groups/student classes". The answer is expected because they serve in public or private education, where the subject of Religious Studies is taught.

Eight (8) participants answered that most of their students had something to do with religion, four (4) said that half of the students had something to do with religion while one answer was recorded in the other three statements. The answers in Figure 4 show that more than 65% of the students had something to do with religion.

From the statements in this question, it appears that most respondents (14/15) teach in age groups up to 25 years. One (1) refused to answer. This result is absolutely expected because students and university-level students in the three levels of education in Greece range in age between 6 to 22 years. Ten (10) respondents, i.e., 67% of the total, considered the background as insufficient. Four (4) respondents, i.e., 27%, considered the background as quite good and only one (1), i.e., 6%, considered it as very good.

Respondents' description of the students' dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)

Among the Greek respondents the answers show, initially, a large difference of opinion between the students. Five of the fifteen (5/15) respondents state that the basic attitude of their students towards the religious phenomenon



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is **indifference**. Seven out of fifteen (7/15) consider that students hold a **cautious, suspicious, and even negative attitude** towards the institutional expression of religion. Nine out of fifteen (9/15) state that students have a positive attitude towards religion. Three out of fifteen respondents (3/15) state that a smaller portion of students understand religiosity as an individual event.

Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

Eight (8) **respondents answered negatively**. Out of the respondents who answered positively, three (3) consider that the present research should focus on religious diversity, the “*meeting with the other (where the definition of the other can refer to all kinds of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture) but also in matters related to love and religion*”. This shows that there is a great need to create training material that favours the relationship with the other.

One (1) respondent answered that we should focus on the “*social implications of the relationship between ecclesiastical institution and faith/ believers*”, one (1) on how “*religion in general and Christianity affect people's lives*”, one (1) “*in the forms of manifestation of religiosity and religious authority*” and one (1) “*in popular religiosity and in matters of religious tolerance*”.

Finland

The **sample of Finnish research** was carried out with fourteen (14) interviewees. The survey data was collected between 22.3-30.4.2021. The study coordinator selected the persons with the different educational and teaching backgrounds of the interviewees in order to obtain the most diverse picture possible. People from different educational backgrounds with experience of teaching religion to children and young people in different contexts (e.g. in general education) and to adults (e.g. in a church or other institution in the form of adult education) were recruited as interviewees. However, not all interviewees currently teach in schools, but some teach mainly adults in universities and church settings. As a consequence, some answers were analyzed based on those three categories. Some have no direct connection with practical educational work at the time of the interview.

Gender, religion and working place (Q0-Q5)

Of these interviewees, 5 were women and 9 men. They belonged to different religious communities. These included the Orthodox, Lutheran and Catholic Churches, the Methodist Church and the Jewish and Islamic faiths. One interviewee did not belong to any religious community. Interviewees worked in universities (3), church organizations (6) and general education (5). The interviews took between 40 and 90 minutes. They were conducted anonymously in Finnish. All 14 interviewees selected for the study participated in this study without refusal.

Age, working experience, education and religion (Q1-Q8)

Their average age was 53 years, the youngest 43 years and the oldest 63 years. They had a strong teaching background, having taught for an average of 25 years, with a maximum of 40 years. They also had a high educational background. Eleven of the respondents had a master's degree and three had a PhD. They had studied Orthodox or Lutheran theology, Orthodox or general history, physics, mathematics, Islamic religion, religious studies, philosophy, psychology, social sciences and pedagogy. However, not all respondents had the pedagogical studies required to qualify as a teacher. Of the respondents, 12 were Christian (Orthodox, Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist). Other religions included one Jew and one Muslim. Five respondents were members of the clergy and the rest were lay people.



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Size, population and religious component of the working place and work grade (Q9-Q11)

They mainly taught in larger cities (12) in different parts of Finland. Only one taught in a small town or sparsely populated rural area. Eleven (8) respondents work in an area that is “mainly mono-ethnic/mono-ethnic (over 80 % of the inhabitants belong to the same ethnic group)” and five (5) in an area where “apart from the national majority, other groups are also represented (60 -80% the national majority, 20-40% other ethnic groups)”. Five (5) respondents work in an area where “mainly one religion/denomination (90% or more)” prevails and nine (9) in an area where “there is a majority religion/denomination, but the others are also substantially represented (60-80% dominant religion/denomination, 20-40% other religions/denominations)”.

They had taught in a variety of settings, but mainly in the public sector in primary or secondary school (5), in a church-related organization (6) or at university (3). Some had also taught in the private sector in primary or secondary schools.

National, religious and learner’s composition of classes/students, their relationship with religion, age groups and the cognitive religious background in the last 5 years (Q12-Q17)

Six (6) respondents stated that in the last five years they have worked with students who were of “mainly mono-ethnic” origin, but also six (6) stated that “mainly mono-ethnic and there were some students from other ethnic groups” of origin while two (2) persons “mainly multiethnic”.

Eight (8) respondents stated that the religious composition of the classes in which they taught for the last five years was determined by “mainly one religion/denomination, but there were also students who belonged to other religious/confessional groups”. Also, five (5) stated that their students belonged to “mainly one religion/denomination” and only one (1) stated that their class was “mainly multi-religious/multi-denominational”. These answers are in line with those given to the question about the religious composition of the place of work and reflect to a large extent, the Finnish reality, where the Lutheran faith prevails with very high percentages among the population. At the same time, there are small population groups, which belong to other religions-denominations.

Eleven (11) stated that they work with “groups/student classes”. The answer is expected because they mostly serve in public education, where the subject of Religious Studies is taught.

Nine (9) participants answered that most of their students had something to do with religion, four (4) said that most of the students had something to do with religion, but there are also pupils without relationship with religion. One answer was “difficult to say”.

Majority of respondents (8) teach groups under 25 years and five (5) of them are adults over 25 years. One respondent stated the age groups are equal. Six (6) respondents, i.e., 43 % of the total, considered the religious background as quite good. Four (4) respondents, i.e., 29 %, considered the background as very good and only three (3), i.e., 21 %, considered it as quite insufficient.

Respondents’ description of the students' dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality, according to what they have encountered in their work in recent years (Q18)



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Because the respondents work in three different educational environments, the dominant attitudes towards religious issues and expectations about religion/religiosity/faith/spirituality are reported based on those working environments.

Informants' experience of education in primary and upper secondary schools

In Finland, religion is a compulsory subject in comprehensive and upper secondary schools. Pupils have a positive attitude and a good knowledge and understanding of religion in the world. On the other hand, the subject is seen as part of school subjects and is subject to prejudice. According to the informants, the teacher must have a personal relationship with religion. There are questions about how to put the content into practice and adapt it to everyday life, and it is not perceived as natural.

Informants' experience of teaching at university

The majority have a positive attitude towards religion. Seeing the importance of religion as both a personal and a social issue (theology students). On the other hand, there is also a range from neutral to negative (not theology students).

Most of them have had religious affiliations and have a fairly/very good background knowledge of religion (theology students). Also, there are students with religious affiliations, and to a lesser extent non-religious student, with a fairly poor background knowledge of religion (non-theology students).

Informants' experience of education in church organizations

Attitudes are positive and receptive, even highly motivated. Most of them have had religious affiliations and have a good/very good background knowledge of religion.

Additions related to the issues that the respondents think research should be focused on (Q19)

Half or the (7) respondents **did not answer** this question. The rest who stated, due to their different backgrounds their comments varied quite much. If there should be a topic raised, it is connected with the identity issues and specially concerning the minorities and the question of ethnicity and religion. As one respondent stated: "Before you bake the bread, you have flour, water, oil, sugar, salt and yeast on the table and when you put them in the oven, you can't separate them."

SECTION II. EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, TEACHING METHODS AND BEST PRACTICES

1(20) What is the title of the course you teach, concerning religion?

Most of the **Estonian** Lutheran informants were teaching or had taught a confirmation class in a Lutheran church. These classes/courses are preparatory courses for persons who would like to join a congregation, and they precede the confirmation. The purpose of the confirmation class was aptly described by informant 1: "*It is a pre-baptismal teaching, a teaching about the most important points in the life of a Christian, that a new member of the congregation should know*"

Bulgarian RE teachers name their subject differently (as they and host institutions or parents would like), because, according to *Toledo Guiding Principles*, teaching (about) religion/confession is yet to be conducted in a locally socially-cultural acceptable manner. Therefore, the local *Concept of teaching religion*, as well as the *official name of the school subject matter* are ambiguous or disguised to integrate the maximum variety of students and teachers into normal



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educational processes in the most diplomatic and balanced way. Still, even in parish or monastery school almost nobody defines teaching confession as *Divine Law*, because traditional archaic term *Faith Teaching* is used, where church characteristics of education are explicit.

The answer of **Romanian RE** teachers was equal. They teach (orthodox) religion and as previously mentioned, mainly at school.

Most respondents in **Greece** teach religion as a subject of compulsory public and private education (Elementary and Secondary Education). The main content of the course is the Orthodox Christian tradition. The education also includes individual subjects such as Christianity and the World, Christianity and Ethics, Christianity, and Society. Finally, basic elements of the other Christian traditions (Catholicism, Protestantism) as well as other Religions (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Eastern religions, etc.) are taught. Three respondents (3/15) teach the courses Ecumenical Movement and Theology, Ethics and Sociology of Christianity, respectively, in higher education. One (1) respondent teaches Islamic theology at a minority school.

As previously mentioned among the **Finnish** respondents the answers are dealing with the three different teaching environments. *In High Schools* in spring 2021 the topics were Religion as a phenomenon and the Religions of the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). *In primary school*, foreign religions or world religions. In the Jewish school, the emphasis in secondary school is on the life cycle of Judaism with its festivals and customs. The lessons for Islamic RE were dealing with the diversity of Islam for the Muslims.

Teaching at university related to the Practical theology content, such as Orthodox worship, practical and pastoral dimensions of theology. Priesthood in the Church. These, however, have a research dimension. On the other hand, the content of the teaching also includes the practical teaching of Orthodox worship and services. For the teacher students there are courses dealing with the Pedagogical foundations of the Evangelical Lutheran religion. Multicultural education and religion, ethics and multiculturalism are also part of the university curriculum for teacher students.

Teaching in church organisations may include information on topical issues (teaching materials, organisation of school education or curriculum issues). In a Catholic Church organisation, the teaching of one's own religion. In Orthodox Lay Academy courses to familiarise people with Orthodoxy. Other topics mentioned included confirmation education, cooperation between schools and parishes, religious events in schools, working life skills and the application of information technology to the church's educational work.

Italy



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The respondents are divided into two groups. The first (of 18 subjects) is made up of professors of theological faculties of the Catholic and Waldensian Churches, while the second group (of 72 subjects) comprises mostly teachers from public schools. Those who teach at theological university departments or higher institutes of religious sciences, which means that they all teach in private institutions (only one interviewee teaches half time in a State university too). Second group is composed by a major homogeneous batch of Catholic religion teachers (working mostly in State schools, 70%) and a minor batch of children and teenager educators who cooperate on a voluntary basis in the educational activities promoted by parishes or Catholic associations like the Scouts.

2(21) Is your course part of a curriculum? If YES, please tell us the title of the curriculum it follows.

It is evident for **Estonians** that this course is based on Christian worldview. The course is open to students from the age of 15, but the attendants are usually older. The confirmation class is a stand-alone course and its content is put together by the course leader. There are, however, a couple of popular books that many churches use as textbooks for confirmation: Toomas Paul's „Halfway through the Earthly Journey“ and Jaak Aus' and Meelis Holsting's „Is there Anybody?“. Some respondents also mentioned Jaan Lahe's "The Essential Question of Christianity". The first one was considered a little difficult and more suitable for advanced learners. However, these books were generally praised. One respondent mentioned that he follows the structure of the first book when developing a study programme, as the necessary topics are well covered in it.

In Bulgaria RE is usually optional, only in some cases also regular and in the program, and in sometimes even parishes offer many activities to choose, and catechism or faith teaching is basic, but often children attend all activities together, while adults usually attend only one paid course a year.

The answers concerning the **Romanian RE** were not analyzed by report writers to summarize those in certain classes or to give an overall condensed characterization of the answers. Despite that and based on respondents' background it can be said as an outcome that the course is part of a curriculum.

According to **Greek** respondents, all religion courses taught in primary and secondary education are included in the curricula approved and prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Theological courses taught in theological schools and colleges are part of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes organised and run by the institutions.

In Finland the teaching contents are based on the existing primary or secondary school curricula and are part of the compulsory religious education in the school. At the university the teaching contents are part of the university's theology or class teacher training programme.

In Italy as regards the courses given by the 18 teachers of the theological faculties, these are compulsory courses, foreseen in the training curricula of both the Catholic and Waldensian Churches. In particular, the names of the teachings can be grouped under three main headings: fundamental theology (5), theology of interreligious dialogue (9), history of the churches and missiology (4).

For courses held by teachers (70) of Catholic religion (it is the name) in public schools, the subject is not compulsory, even if in fact it is widely followed by students. Only the two cases of educators engaged in Catholic catechism activities or in similar formative courses are an exception. In any case, by law the course is part of the



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curriculum, the teachers, framed in the roles of the state, are paid by the state, even if their training is provided by the individual dioceses through special training institutes in religious sciences

3(22) Is the content of this course predetermined (by the curriculum) or can you, as a teacher, determine its content? If YES, to what extent?

However, a lot of material for carrying out the confirmation classes is searched for by the **Estonian** RE teachers themselves, including sources from the internet; also references and links are provided to literature that is recommended for students to be read independently. Some respondents have also suggested watching films on YouTube, e.g. about the life of Jesus. The general opinion was that the situation is currently quite good as far as materials for confirmation classes are concerned. While in the early 90s the Germans and Finns were envied for their excellent teaching materials, and some of them were translated into Estonian after a while, almost everything needed is now available in Estonian. Informants also mentioned the "Credo" or "Journey to the Land of Faith" materials as positive examples.

Bulgarian respondents did not provide very clear and consistent answers, because usually informants do not make a difference between teaching curriculum, lesson plan, and teaching program.

In Romania, based on one respondent's answer that a teacher has a certain flexibility with the content we can assume that those are parallel with the compulsory syllabus.

Even a quarter of the contents in RE could be at the disposal of a teacher. In practice there is more freedom for a teacher to modify, complete or replace the learning activities. A certain combination of the flexibility in some terms with the contents and a freedom with methods aims to achieve a customized teaching approach. This supports teaching and learning in a creative way.

In **Greece** all contents of RE for Primary and Secondary education are included in the curricula approved and prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The educational institutions form the contents and goals by themselves. In the **Finnish school system**, a teacher can apply and localize in some terms the teaching contents based on the curricula. At the *university* the teaching contents are part of the university's theology or class teacher training programme, where the teacher has some autonomy over the content. In *church organisations* teaching is determined by demand and current needs. Some may be qualifying, compulsory diploma training, such as ordination and pastoral training. Those are with content predetermined by the diocese. Training is also provided in the form of in-service training, where a theme may be chosen each year. The teacher can also decide on the content of the course.

In **Italy** with the sole exception of the two educators who work at the parish or associative level and who can adapt the guidelines given by the Catholic Church or the Scout movement with a certain degree of freedom, all teachers, both from theological faculties and public schools, where the latter teach the Catholic religion, the programs are predetermined either by the ecclesiastical authority or by the Ministry of Education.

4(23) Please outline the aims and objectives of your course

Estonia: The objectives of the course were formulated by the respondents in different ways and with varying degrees of detail, but in general terms it is an "introduction to the life of a parishioner". One **Estonian** respondent highlighted Bible classes as a way of teaching religion in the church, usually attended by adult members of the



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congregation, with the aim of gaining a better knowledge and understanding of the Bible. The content of the Bible lessons is also entirely up to him/her as the facilitator. He found (and this has been confirmed by several other sociological studies of religion carried out in Estonia) that Lutherans are very knowledge oriented. Many of the new parishioners feel that something is missing after completing the confirmation class and think that there could be a 'course for advanced learners', i.e. some kind of common endeavour oriented towards the improvement of knowledge. In response to this need, a Bible course has been initiated in this congregation, which has been very well received by the congregation members.

Bulgaria: On the objectives of courses or subject matter, *i. e.* expected results potentially attained by religious education, a large percentage of Bulgarian teachers are quite optimistic, idealistic, still diverse.

The answers concerning **Romanian RE** were not analyzed by report writers to summarize those in certain classes or to give an overall condensed characterization of the answers. All the respondents had various aspects of the goals and aims of RE. Some of those underlined goals to “*learn a religion*” and to be in that way believers (i.e. “*Christian Life, spirituality*”), some of had oriented to achieve the skill needed in a society and life (i.e. *respecting religious identity and diversity*). There were mentions related to the competences of moral skills (i.e. *Christian morality*) and behavior. One respondent stated that RE has a meta-formative character and thus it is difficult to measure how the objectives could be reached through RE.

According to the **Greek** respondents the main objectives of the courses are rather various. The list of those is as following: “religious literacy” of the students, the understanding, the elaboration of basic concepts around religion, the cultivation of moral values and religious conscience, c) the knowledge but also the experiential attitude and the formation of “personal” critical attitude and expression in the issue of religiosity, but also of life itself”, d) the socialization of students, the cultivation of cooperation, interaction, dialogue, respect for otherness, e) socialization, acquaintance of students with the course of the Church in history and the world f) the acquaintance of the students with the existential and metaphysical search of man.

In **Finland**, the aim of religious education in *school education* is to provide general religious education and information about one's own religion, other religions and religious diversity as a means of building religious identity. In Jewish schools, the emphasis is on strengthening the student's Jewish identity.

The *university courses* aim to provide knowledge and skills for the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church through both research and practice. From the perspective of teacher training, the aim is for students to be able to apply methods of teaching religion or belief appropriate to the level of education and the age of the children.

Depending on *the church* organization's role in the educational settings there are a variety of the aims. In the Orthodox Church the objectives are to inform Orthodox RE teachers about administrative or other changes in religious teaching. As well, to develop issues related to the growth of the spiritual life of the students and, on the professional side, to deepen the pastoral professional skills of priests.

In **Italy**, the objectives change according to whether they are teachers of theological faculties and those of the Catholic religion in public schools. For the former, the aim is the basic and specialized theological preparation of



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future priests and pastors; for the latter it is the knowledge of the Catholic religion, from a historical-cultural and non-dogmatic point of view, with a growing attention to other religions, those present in Italian society today.

5(24) Can you tell us, what worldview/philosophical approach/religious belief is the basis of your course?

In **Estonia** RE lessons in general education are generally optional. If the school has a humanities strand, these are compulsory subjects for that strand. Common names for this subject are 'religious history', 'religious studies', 'world religions', etc. A few informants, however, talk about religion as a subject in history or philosophy. Religious studies, religious history, etc. are separate subjects with no prerequisites. In the case of religious studies, it is possible to base the content on the religious studies curriculum of general education schools. Again, informants said that they still search for learning materials themselves if necessary, although textbooks and booklets are available for the respective subjects. This is often done with the help of the internet. But there are several differences of teaching in a Christian private school: the pupils are generally younger and have a Christian worldview, and they have a better prior knowledge of the faith and lack the usual fears and prejudices about it. The subject is called 'faith education' (NB: not 'religious studies', which deals with all religions on an equal basis). Such schools also base their teaching and education on Christian foundations.

To describe particular worldview (philosophical or religious view) that shapes basics of the religious subject matter taught by them, **Bulgarian** teachers use mostly the *confessional language of virtues* "Love and care to God and neighbour" or 10% simply and logically refuse to discuss (work with/on students' belief/orientation), and just reply to this question "No". Other Bulgarian teachers do not *differentiate between values and worldview*.

Without any condensed characterization of the answers concerning the **Romanian** answers to this question, an obvious answer to describe a worldview (philosophical or religious view) that underlines basics of the religious subject matter taught by Romanian teachers is a religious one. There was no mention of other worldviews. The expressions were such as "Trinitarian God", "Christocentric principle", "the knowledge of God and the acquisition of the communion of love with Him" or "Love and existence of God."

It is obvious and natural that in **Greece** most of the respondents (12/15) generally refer to the Christian tradition and especially to the Orthodox Christianity. As different orientations were mentioned "biblical view of God, as recorded in the Bible", Islam, "Philosophy for Children" and "Human Rights".

Among **Finns**, the worldview, philosophical approach or religious approach depends on the general mission or working environment of the institution. In Finland, *school education* cannot be confessional, but the values of each religion, broadly expressed, underlie it. They reflect how each religion emphasises and interprets them (Orthodox, Lutheran, Catholic, Jewish and Islamic). An appreciation of religious diversity. Exploring also the religious studies perspective.

At *university*, it is natural that courses in Orthodox theological education are based on a Christian worldview rooted in the tradition of the Orthodox Church. The training of classroom teachers aims at an anthropological ecumenical philosophy, with a broad understanding of religions and beliefs.



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In *ecclesial* contexts, the approach is based on each church's own religious starting point (Orthodox, Lutheran or Catholic).

In Italy, the worldview (philosophical, theological, and educational approaches) depends mostly on the institutional position of the subjects interviewed: in the case of teachers of theological faculties (Catholic and Waldensian) they reflect the educational purposes of the institutions to which they belong, with an accentuated attention to the issue of the comparison with other religions and the interreligious dialogue. Catholic religion teachers in public schools, in contact with the new generation, secularized cohorts, adapt their wealth of theological, philosophical, and historical knowledge to the reality of the classes they face.

6(25) How and why do your students participate in the lesson you teach? In addition, indicate if it is a compulsory or elective course. Provide, if you deem appropriate, additional information.

Ways how one has come to attend the course in **Estonia**: in general education schools, students come to attend the courses on religions as they progress through the curriculum. Religious studies are mostly optional in general education schools and compulsory in private Christian schools.

In **Bulgarian** case only 10% of teachers note that *in church school it cannot be obligatory*, while in public school it can be optional yet regular – included in curriculum and schedule, but attended by part of the students (and then placed at the beginning or at the end of the classes), still teachers have *to present the subject* as an option.

Because of the environment from which the most **Romanian** informants were coming, the Orthodox RE lessons are part of the compulsory education as a school subject in a curriculum. Schools have a mandatory requirement to offer this subject. To participate in these lessons is based on the request addressed to the school by the parents or legal guardians. Pupils have also a right to opt out of these lessons by the permission of their parents or legal guardians. The members of the minority religions have a right to have education according to their own religion as a part of the school education. Here raises a question: what do those pupils do if they are not joining RE lessons?

In **Greece**, because of the mandatory RE in Primary and Secondary education the students are required physically to participate in the course, because it is part of the Curriculum, which is provided by law. However, the option to opt out of the RE has been given to those students who “invoke reasons of religious conscience”. The respondents of the tertiary education teach compulsory courses and/or elective courses, according to the curriculum of their institutions. It was mentioned that “*there is a gradual development of secularization tendencies and distancing from the dominant religiosity.*”

In **Finland** RE *teaching in primary and upper secondary schools* is mandatory for the pupils as a part of the Curriculum. As well, at the *university courses* for undergraduate students are part of the compulsory study program. In church organizations the (in service) training is on a voluntary basis for teachers, clergy or other parish workers, except for the pastoral qualification for the priesthood.

In Italy, Catholic RE lessons are part of the compulsory education as a school subject in a curriculum. Schools have a mandatory requirement to offer this subject but the participate is optional. Pupils have also a right to opt



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out of these lessons by the permission of their parents or legal tutors. In the faculties of theology, the lessons are compulsory part of the curriculum.

7(26) How do you diffuse your lesson? (Internet, social networks, presentations, seminars, articles, etc.)

By contrast, there are many ways in **Estonia** to attend confirmation classes, which are voluntary and mostly attended by adults. In most cases, clergy informs about the beginning of a confirmation course either through the parish website or social media channel, or by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper or on the notice board of the church or cultural centre. Sometimes the information is passed on orally as well. However, personal invitations seem to be very rare - only a few informants mentioned this possibility: „*personal contacts, meeting people, asking if they have been baptised and confirmed, and if not, I invite them*“.

About the (communication) channels **Bulgarian** RE teachers use to share/spread information about their course or subject matter, most of the interviewees rely on institutional support 60%. Some do not at all sound willing to consider helping their institution develop religious education better (or prefer to stay quiet, to avoid too much competition or control, not to be prohibited from gaining more students by colleagues-educational or church authorities). Meaning “technology”, 10% of elder teachers reply: “I do not use (any)” and 10% “That is not my duty/responsibility”, partly because some of them do not actually get in touch with parents, and also because the presence of religion teacher is, either too controlled, or even quite ignored by authorities, sometimes including theologians and clergy, and compared to other pedagogical domains or practices. On the other hand, there is the same relation to availability of data and statistics, including such questionnaires and interviews that are more likely to be conducted with theologians who use technology in their work, and do not need to much extra effort or any other resource such as time, subsidies, etc. 10% did not quite understand that the question is not about finding educational or religious information. And no one of the teachers discusses unwillingness to be visible/invasive, which is not at all an option for religion teachers.

In **Romania** the information concerning the lessons is disseminated through two ways. There is a so-called conventional way on site meaning at schools through class activities, the involvement of different churches, museums, libraries, etc. The second way is digital over different Internet platforms (i.e. Google meet, Facebook, Instagram).

Majority of the **Greek** teachers diffuse their lesson by posting their work, such as “picture observation ???, students' personal experiences, video projection” on the Internet (Facebook), personal blogs and by participating in seminars and publishing articles in educational magazines.

As religious education is compulsory in **Finland**, the *school* curriculum or the lessons themselves are not advertised anywhere, but upper secondary schools can advertise themselves on social media. *Universities* provide information through a special portal and website on the content of their curricula. It seems that in the *ecclesiastical* context, a variety of information methods are used. Information on courses of study is provided on the website of the ecclesiastical organisation and through targeted emails. In addition, the organiser uses various social media applications and some personal contacts.



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In Italy, the 98% of the interviewees report that the lessons are still set up according to the traditional method (frontal) with moderate use of new teaching tools (internet, power-points, electronic blackboard). As far as the teaching instruments and methods used are concerned, the answers reveal that they are diverse and multiple, thus reflecting a higher creativity freedom. Lectures are in most cases alternated with role plays, group work activities, text analysis, the use of multimedia instruments and also strategies for a more direct engagement of pupils in the class like cooperative learning, flipped classroom and similar.

8(27) Please refer to some of the teaching methods you use in your lesson.

In Estonia in the most general terms, all informants were in favour of active learning methods and most of them use them. This is true for all three target groups mentioned above, although the teaching situations and assumptions vary. What was meant by active learning methods? In particular, methods where the learners could, for example, ask questions during the lesson, give feedback, give their opinion on what is being taught, discuss, search for relevant information in books or on the web, etc. Of those informants who conduct confirmation classes (which means mainly teaching adults), none do so in the traditional monologue form, but in a conversational way. A good example for active learning methods used in confirmation classes was given by informant1: *Well, I've noticed that if you have the course attendants do some kind of exercises, some kind of group work together that interests them, they're engaging, they get excited ... that's one of the many methods I've used myself. I've also shown films and then explained the basis of those. Watching a film together which might be about the era or, or the people who are being talked about, for example, biographies of biblical characters (I1).* Active learning for school pupils has different methods, but here too it was noticeable that the informants wanted to leave as much space as possible for the pupils to search and discover for themselves, with the teacher only as a "guide". Students also need to be able to discuss and ask questions. Here, of course, the age of the pupils is an important determinant - the choice of topics and active learning methods should be based on the age and maturity of the pupils. What are the principles behind this preference for active learning? Mainly on the desire that active participation, exploration and discussion of religious topics will help participants to better accept the views and perspectives that are being taught. In this case, learning is like an expedition in which the student 'discovers' the necessary knowledge on his own from among the material, which is being offered, and the teacher is merely a facilitator and careful guide.

The information from Romania concerning teaching methods contained not only descriptions of the methods but also detailed lesson plans with its phases as examples. Over all the answers were many sided and informatively very rich. Unfortunately, as previously, the answers were only listed, not analysed. In the principles can be found a strong didactically theological based orientation i.e. *"the Christological, ecclesiological and triadological principle"* and general didactic principles. As far as the methods are concerned there are well known methods of today such as *"expository, interrogative, active-participatory methods (case study, document analysis, feedback, portfolio), action-based methods (didactic game, dramatization), modern active-participatory methods (cube, brainstorming, cluster, thinking hats, quintet), conversation, guided observation, KWL- method, audio-video aids etc."* to mention those as examples. The *"Living Library"* is a method based on specialists and visitors from different areas of life in the school's neighbourhood.

In Greece the teaching methods are depending on what level the lessons take place. In primary and secondary education, most respondents use collaborative teaching, experiential techniques, *"play and action techniques, problem solving, dialogue and direct instruction, web browsing, text-to-art conversion, project (with video creation) and techniques of evaluation"*



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and reflection” as well as the *method of artful thinking and drama in education*. Also, methods and techniques, such as *project creation and presentation, interviews, visits to monuments, museums*, etc., are applied. The methods in tertiary education are quite limited and the most common way is lecturing, but the use of ICT is increasing.

As the Greeks have pointed out, the methods depend on the level of education. In **Finland**, based on the respondent’s answers, *schools* use fairly traditional methods, such as teacher-centred teaching in its various forms, study visits and visitors, self-study to activate pupils and group work in its various forms. As could be observed, digitalisation has not caught up with teaching methods, especially among school teacher interviewees, and as one interviewee stated, "digitalisation limits the use of methods to some extent".

Universities seem to be more advanced in terms of teaching methods. In addition to traditional lecturing, the following were mentioned: flipped classroom, group work including discussions, self-study in study groups, recorded lessons and experiential learning.

The teaching methods used by the *church* organisations included lectures on site and with different applications over the internet, group work, posters, recorded lessons, learning by doing, visits, observation, pair work, interaction and involvement.

In Italy, the answers given about the purposes and the position of the subjects taught are not particularly significant. Teachers in State schools usually follow the guidelines set by the Italian Ministry for Education and take into account the purposes set by the Catholic Church that trained them professionally. Educators, on the contrary, have a higher degree of freedom in defining the purposes and structure of their programmes. In parallel, the answers to the question about the philosophical-religious approaches taken mainly focus on the purpose of introducing the Christian and Catholic religion by comparing them with other religions, provided that the time to do that is enough considering the low number of class hours per week and per class group.

The interviewees who added some further information reported that they try to use the Bible or the narrative method for the purpose of introducing students to those elements that refer to Catholicism in the Italian culture. As they are not required to carry out catechesis teaching, Catholic religion teachers employ – or report to employ – an overall approach typical of a basically optional course of religious culture rooted in the history of a country with a Catholic tradition. We do not know if this approach is always effective – nevertheless the survey did not aim at investigating this point –; however, the above-mentioned answers seem to reveal that the results are not in line with the approaches that most teachers learnt during their training courses at the institutes of religious sciences established since a long time within the dioceses of the Catholic Church.

9(28) Needs for training and/or continuing training to teach one's subject even more effectively.

The **Estonians** interviewees' answers diverged quite strongly. They depended on what specialisation (besides theology) the informant had studied and worked in. For example, if the informant had obtained a teaching qualification as an additional specialisation and had also attended further training, (s)he considered her/his pedagogical knowledge to be sufficient for teaching the given religious subjects. There was also a correlation in that younger informants were more willing to have complementary courses, i.e. they indicated more areas in which



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they would like to acquire additional knowledge. Probably the least sought-after is additional knowledge in theology. Those who had previously studied pedagogy also considered their knowledge in this area to be sufficient.

Bulgarian RE-teachers need in order to teach their course better qualification for working (teaching) in online environment and for distance learning; recent topics in children’s literature, child psychology, comparative local cultural practices, Christian confessions, and world religions or new religious movements, art and communication skills, all in special age and needs perspective; work with interactive devices as interactive whiteboard and LCD display, document camera, voting system, etc. Bulgarians have pointed out the importance of psychology – education at preschool age is basic component of teaching religion at kindergarten; there are needs for religion teaching materials for children with special needs; expert and coordinator of parish activities in local eparchy; competence in contemporary psycho-therapeutic educational methods, ice braking, energising, meditation (in our case prayer or other church rituals), motivation, creative, charity, work and team building; Media competence; better theological language competency; strategies of non-discrimination, assertive communication, conflict resolution, temperament balancing along teamwork, and stress or social tensions reduction.

In **Romania** over 50% of the teachers interviewed reported the need for additional training in the field of psychology, with an emphasis on child psychology, while 10% believe that they are quite well-prepared that they no longer need additional training.

The **Greek** informants listed their needs about the contents for continuing training to teach the subject even more effectively as follow: philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology of Islam. As well, the issues of religious diversity, religion, and interfaith dialogue were mentioned. In addition, concerning the substance-based contents some of the teaching methods were highlighted. Among those were “inverted class”, “theatre”, familiarity with new technologies, such as “image tools, video production” and “asynchronous distance education”.

Despite **Finland** being a pioneer in digitalisation, it seems that there is still work to be done in the field of education. The need for further training depended to some extent on the respondent's background organisation. Two themes emerged among *primary and upper secondary* school teachers. Training was requested on the use of e-learning environments and the pedagogical challenges they pose.

At *university* level, it would be desirable to increase training in pedagogy and the wider and more diverse use of digitalisation in pedagogy. It is also considered important to develop a broader knowledge of the content to be taught.

In *church* organisations, training to develop pedagogical and technical use of the online environment was also mentioned.

In Italy, the analysis of the answers dedicated to the training needs results in a map with three clusters of needs that educator (on one side) and teachers (on the other) report: a) training in new subjects (art, cinema, theatre, literature); b) refreshing the acquired knowledge more oriented in psycho-pedagogical studies, referring to the adolescence; c) specific religious training (ecumenical and interfaith dialogue). A small number of interviewees – basically only educators that participate in catechesis activities in parishes – report a more frequent calendar of prayer gatherings and spiritual retreats as their main need, since ‘we have no competences in what we do, but only faith’ as one of the interviewees reported.



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10(29) Attended and completed an educational training program related to the teaching of religion and its content and the reasons why it was considered important.

For **Estonians** once again the courses stand out that use interesting group work and active learning methods. Also courses that involve excursions, visits and practical activities, are mentioned positively. Courses which were highlighted: Teacher traineeships at school; Bible drama, symbol drama; Teamwork processes; The Institute of Theology's various training courses for clergy; Training of instructors of the Defence League, during which active learning methods were learned; Training on confirmation class methods, which included group work practice; A course for teachers of religious education run by the University of Tartu, which included visits to places of worship of different religions, including a mosque and a synagogue.

For **Bulgarians** evaluation of education and qualification courses attended (completed) by teachers and recalled as important (which in teachers' language means **inspiring or practical**) for religious subjects that they teach vary and demonstrate their interests. Courses which were highlighted: pedagogical, (Christian) psychological, digital, youth work courses, world history, social care, Bibliodrama, homiletics.

The **Romanian** informants (11/25) have mentioned topics in which they have attended to join an educational training program. Here, between the lines one can interpret that people have not been very active to reach in-service training. The most common topic has been dealing with teaching methods. Also, class and crisis management and theory of multiple intelligences were mentioned among the topics. Further information was not available concerning the experiences of the training.

Almost half (7/15) of the **Greek** interviewees have not joined any training program related to the teaching of Religious Studies. Those, who have attended, mentioned courses dealing with “*teaching methods and techniques of school religious education*”, “*issues about interreligious and intercultural relations*” and “*education in the encouragement and empowerment of groups*”

Concerning the **Finnish** respondents one remark must be done. It was so that not all the training courses that respondents considered important were directly related to the delivery of religious education. Among those teaching in *primary and secondary* schools, the following were perceived as important: small training courses, information and communication technology, interpretation of images, self-study.

In *universities* the following training courses were perceived as important so far by those working: doctoral/doctoral training, teacher training and master's/university pedagogy.

Among those working in *church organisations*, the following were considered important: e-learning, higher education, doctoral/doctoral studies, education, Greek language course, training of supervisors.

Italy: In a society that is undergoing socio-religious changes and is becoming more pluralistic than in the recent past – when the collective memory's social frameworks were defined by Catholicism – the survey on the two Groups A and B evidenced the limits and potentials of the provision of religious diversity education. Although the two groups are not representative samples – as declared at the beginning of the report – they return a glimpse of



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a reality (the Italian one) that cannot ignore the plurality of affiliations to religions that up to 20-30 years ago were new and unknown. To turn this situation into an opportunity of educational improvement and teaching innovation, most interviewees report to be aware of the current change and to give attention to the presence of religious pluralism in society and at school. Through the comparison of the two groups we understand that the interviewees widely require training to live up to a religiously changed society which is not mainly Catholic anymore but is layered into different new and old religious expressions.

Group A (professors of theology) reveals such requirement through the high number of professors that focus their training activity on ecumenical and interfaith dialogue topics. Teachers of Group B (teachers of Catholic religion) mainly stay faithful to the institutional rules of engagement with both the Catholic Church and the Italian State, but are also firmly convinced that the widespread religious illiteracy among pupils – maybe balanced by genuine curiosity especially among young pupils in primary schools – is connected with the Catholic socialisation model on one side (which proves to be still partly effective with young people till 14-15 years of age) and the difficulty to put in praxis in class the teaching innovative ideas and projects for religious diversity education on the other.

11(30) The importance (important or very important) of training in the areas of theology, pedagogy, teaching methods, psychology, group work methods, knowledge about society and societal processes as a whole, anything else.

GRAPH 1. The importance of training areas.

Subject /Country	Greece	Finland	Romania	Bulgaria	Estonia	Italy
1. Theology	80 %	58 %	88 %	90%	78%	80%
2. Pedagogy	73 %	79 %	96 %	100%	78%	72%
3. Teaching methods	80 %	86 %	92 %	90%	78%	88%
4. Psychology	73 %	50 %	96 %	90%	67%	84%
5. Group work methods	86 %	57 %	80 %	100%	78%	58%
6. Knowledge about society and societal processes as a whole	66 %	57 %	80 %	50%	67%	80%
7. Anything else?	-	90 %	-	40%	44%	-

Most **Estonians** wanted to learn more about *psychology* (how to motivate and engage people), *group work methods* (in particular active learning methods) and *digital skills*, e.g. how to conduct online courses. The latter has become topical due to the limitations imposed by the COVID pandemic, when it is not possible to physically attend classes. This is likely to be a very topical complementary education need for all educators, not just teachers of religion. In addition to the above, one respondent suggested foreign languages: Greek, Hebrew and German and another suggested knowledge of management and knowledge of research.



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On the degree of importance for **Bulgarian** teachers to gain additional *knowledge* in several fields in order to *teach better* their subject or course 0% had chosen any of the topics as *not important at all*, and only 10% had pointed *Psychology* as not so important. 40% added substantial fields of interest as: *“human rights’ defence”*, *“work with contemporary interactive devices”*, *“Specifics methods for children and adults with impairments”*, *“Exchange with foreign colleagues – in situ and online”*. In most of the cases such deficits are also related to current social situation, keeping the permanent social status of religion teachers unstable, and therefore unavailability to necessary resources for appropriate teaching, and finally, last, but not least, problems of personal skills, related to teachers’ profiles, or just lack of awareness that contemporary software and devices are designed to be studied personally, by he build in tutorials, online from internet, with the support of online manuals, many videos demonstrations, network advices form other customers and customer support services, and other kind of qualification is quite an inappropriate loss of time in our dynamic everyday life, with the exception of cases of people with special needs that, of course deserve special adequate care.

The **Romanians**, in order to improve the way to teach the course, stated that the most needed two topics are *pedagogy and psychology*. That was the opinion of almost all the respondents (96 %). Among them, no one has chosen any topic not important at all. As not so important felt 4% of the respondents concerning knowledge about society and 8 % concerning group work methods. What was interesting, was that more than half (68 %) stated their insecurity about their training needs and chose *“hard to say”*. There were no substantial fields of interest.

Most of the **Greek** respondents (86%) consider their training in *group work methods* very or very important. Somewhat surprisingly, the second highest interest among the theologians was the fact that the subject of continuing education was *theology*. With the same percentage (80%), the second most popular subject with theology was teaching methods education. Also, among the Greeks 67 % stated their insecurity about their training needs and chose *“hard to say”*. For substantial fields of interest were listed topic such as art history, political Science, ICT, educational Drama, interdisciplinarity, culture-history-folklore and art in education. It was stated in Greek’s report that *„the need for training in these fields of knowledge arises from the application of relevant teaching methods, which are positively evaluated, and have already been mentioned in the answers to questions 27 and 28.”*

Among the **Finns** most of the interviewees stated that the biggest training needed (90 %) among them are the contents concerning “the other”. Those showed a wide variety of subject contents. These included animal rights, internet and media, democratic society, the relationship between the Catholic Church and society, environmental protection, community service, religious disputes (slaughter, circumcision), individual and communal aspects of religiosity, dialogue, faith awareness, structural discrimination, gender and sexual diversity. In addition, two teachers' responses highlighted training in media literacy. Behind this can be seen that the Curriculum for Basic Upper secondary schools (2019) now includes a new course on "Religion and Media" in RE.

Of the individual in-service training contents, respondents considered after “the other” the following to be the most important in order of importance: teaching methods, pedagogy, teamwork methods, theology, social awareness and psychology. Compared to the needs of other countries, training in psychology was less needed. Somewhat surprisingly, despite the high level of teacher training in Finland, the need for teaching methods was considered the second most important issue (86%).

Italians stressed the relevance of pedagogical and psychological training to improving the method to teach the course, particularly those who teach in the public school. Also among the teachers of the theological faculties most



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of interviewees outlined the importance to present in the course some sensitive issues such as human rights, conflicts in multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies in Europe, dialogue between faiths that have become close due to migration, and the theology of religious pluralism.

12(31) The importance (important/ very important) of the below mentioned topics in the context of each course.

GRAPH 2. The importance of training contents.

Topics/Country	Greece	Finland	Romania	Bulgaria	Estonia	Italy (T)*	Italy (P)*
1. Relations between nations and races	83%	54 %	84 %	60 %	33 %	89 %	-
2. Issues related to refugees and migration	93 %	86 %	76 %	50 %	11 %	61 %	16%
3. Issues related to sexual minorities	66 %	62 %	68 %	30 %	33 %	50 %	11%
4. Topics related to the beginning and end of life	100 %	79 %	88 %	100 %	67 %	33 %	-
5. Dealing with social crises (e.g., disasters, conflicts, pandemics, and natural disasters)	93 %	77 %	84 %	100 %	67 %	44 %	11%
6. Climate justice issues	86%	64 %	64 %	80 %	33 %	56 %	
7. Human rights	93	93 %	88 %	80 %	67 %	72 %	21%
8. Interchristian and interreligious dialogue	93 %	71 %	92 %	60 %	78 %	94 %	63%
9. Other	-	76 %	-	-	44 %	6 %	-

*) Teachers. *) Priests.

On this question **Estonian** respondents' opinions diverged quite significantly, and there was a noticeably high proportion of "don't know" answers. If one tries to generalise the responses, it can be said that the first three questions in the block (relations between nations and races, issues related to refugees and migration, and issues related to sexual minorities) are perhaps considered somewhat less important to address than the next three. One of the reasons given was that these subjects are already covered in other lessons in general education. However, some informants also gave the opposite assessment. For example, one informant said that the topics of ethnicity and race and refugees and migration became important when refugee families came to his area and were helped by the church to receive them. Clearly, in such a situation, the topic needs to be addressed in the classroom, even if the topic was not initially planned to be part of the curriculum. The situation is somewhat similar in view of the



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topic of sexual minorities. It turned out that most respondents don't raise the issue themselves, but if students ask about the church's stance on the issue, it needs to be discussed.

The fourth area of the tables, that of the beginning and end of life, was interpreted in different ways by respondents: some understood it as a cloning and euthanasia issue, while others viewed it more broadly as a religious understanding of the world in general, and considered it to be the most important issue that must necessarily be addressed in religious education. For the former, there was more reluctance to address the issue, or it was felt that it should remain a pastoral subject. The issue of human rights was also considered important. Informant 5 aptly mentioned "*human rights is a timeless issue*". Some clergy mentioned that they also address the first three aspects (relations between nations and races, refugee and migration issues, and issues related to sexual minorities) primarily in the context of human rights. The issue of inner-Christian and inter-religious dialogue was also considered to be very important. Mostly, informants discussed topics already proposed. However, some informants also wished to add topics: Theme of family models, „honeycomb-families“; Politics, Fair trade in the context of Christian ethics.

20 % of **Bulgarian** informants considered all topics very important. 40% of interviewees did not add other topics, and 60% of teachers had new dimensions of religious education:

- "*Renovation (accessibility) and management (public image) of parish centres, animation and preservation of religious sites, organisation of activities and communities*"
- "*Ethnic issues related to national identity/ self-awareness*" – main point of risk of stereotypes, and cultural clashes, along teaching religion (without geopolitics), and field of necessity of comparative knowledge.
- "*Rights of disabled and bioethics*"
- "*Church social care around the world (what we do not have)*"
- "*Comparative/ transversal local history and culture*"– teaching religious heritage and cultural tourism
- "*Teaching homiletics concerns all issues of contemporary life, as well as catechetics, in somehow more individualised manner. The orientation of teaching towards theological interpretation of recent social problems (with empathy and understanding) is the only way to support church cadres to be able and willing to inspire contemporary culture and society*"

Compared to the previous question, among the **Romanian** respondents' their answers were more divergent. Also, the insecurity of the opinions was higher meaning that more than 3/4 stated "*hard to say*". However, most of the respondents (92 %) stated that according to them a very important topic is interchristian and interreligious dialogue. After that comes two topics, as seen very important, topics related to the beginning and end of life and human rights (88 %). Somehow the opinions were polarized because concerning the topics (see p.21) about aspects of social life 84 % stated that those are "*not at all important or less important*". There were not added topics or further information related to this question.

Every one of the **Greek** respondents (100 %) considered the issue of *life and death* as important or very important for their lesson. The second place, as important or very important, was shared with four topics with the same presentence (93%). They covered issues related to refugees and migration, social issues, human rights and inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue. Among the other topics considered to be important in the course, interviewees mentioned dialogue with the religiously indifferent, the place and role of religion in the public space, the question of love, dialogue between religion and contemporary culture and environmental issues. Two respondents also considered religious fanaticism, and fundamentalism important.



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With the Greeks the **Finnish** respondents (93 %) stated as an important or very important topic for their lessons the *human rights*. The next most important topics were in order of importance refugees and immigration, beginning/end of life, social crises, Christian/religious dialogue, climate rights, sexual minorities. The least important topic was the relation between races and nations. Further information could be provided, e.g. in the form of a booklet or other material, in addition to physical training. Information packs with links and websites could also be one form of provision

The Italians interviewed expressed their preferences for the development of educational programs focused on the theme of interreligious dialogue or a theology of dialogue. The other themes evoked receive lower scores not because they are not considered relevant or irrelevant. Indeed, in the free answers of the questionnaire, the conviction of the professors of theologians interviewed that one cannot speak theologically of the Gospel message without "embodying" it today in the questions of our time is broad and seriously considered.

13(32) Knowledge level regarding the issues in the previous question? Additional training needs, educational material.

In general, **Estonians' own** knowledge of these topics was considered to be sufficient and one did not see much need for additional teaching materials. Rather, it was felt that a foreign language learner would have access to everything he or she needed via the internet and that the problem was that there was so much material that it was difficult to work through everything that was available. Given the rather high educational and professional level of the Estonian informants, one can agree with this.

Bulgarian RE teachers evaluate their own knowledge on above mentioned topics (*from 60% defining their knowledge as they were asked to reflect on themselves, and mention it first, 30% evaluate it as sufficient, recent and sufficient, but they develop, and high level, 20% define it as insufficient – too local or general, and one teacher: Informant No 6, at the age of 62 and with 5 year experience, says she finds literature herself*). Second, to define their need (if any) of training and materials to improve their knowledge (they understand work), and specify what exactly they would need: Informant1: Yes, methods and approaches of teaching adults (maybe also elderly, and field of andragogy and gerontology). Only some of the more experienced teachers consider their training insufficient: “My background on those topics is at the level of general knowledge, and I would always like to learn more on them, to have manuals to actualise my contextual teaching religion and improve my communication with students on those topics.”

According to the **Romanian** RE teachers' estimation of their needs to deepen their knowledge their biggest need was concerning *refugees and migration* (28 %). Almost with the same percentage the second most popular topic was *nations and races* (24 %). The rest topics were less popular: *sexual minorities* (16 %), *social crises* (12 %), *climate justice* (12 %) and *human rights* (8 %). The refugee situation in Europe in spring 2021 goes some way to explaining the popularity of these two main themes. There was also a remark regarding the needs for additional training: “*religion teachers are interested in participating in training sessions in the areas of interest presented below, regardless of the form of their organization (exchange of experience, training, workshop, etc.), being aware of their benefits in relation to students.*”

Most **Greek** respondents generally agreed that more training and training materials are needed. The training needs in the thematic areas and disciplines are presented in the previous questions. Regarding materials, it was noted that



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materials should be easily accessible and in an updated digital format. A particular need is for material on Greek-language Islam.

The **Finns** were quite satisfied. Especially among *primary and secondary* school teachers, the current knowledge of the topics mentioned in the list was considered sufficient. On the other hand, additional training was requested from other sources (*university, church organisation*) on the following topics: human rights in the context of refugee and immigration issues, dialogue on religion and immigration and refugees, human rights and nature protection, understanding the thinking and experiences of children and young people.

In **Italy**, those (almost seven out of ten interviewees) who expressed the need to connect the great theological issues at a formative level to the crucial issues of the secular world (human rights, inter-ethnic conflicts, gender, religious majority and minorities relationship, dialogue between different faiths in context, etc.) also ask to have access to recurring advanced training courses; not only, therefore, they ask for professional refresher courses in the specific subjects they teach, but in other social science courses (anthropology, sociology, political science, etc.).

14(33) Do you think that the existing textbooks and teaching materials are sufficient for your lesson? What is their main disadvantage? What else is needed and why?

Only a few **Estonians** informants mentioned that such learning materials would be welcome in some areas mentioned. However, they felt it necessary to stress that such materials should either be thoroughly contextualized or developed in Estonia in order to avoid the feeling that "something has been handed down from Brussels again" (I2).

Bulgarian RE teachers are not eager to just point out basic deficits or omit critique on widely available (or those provided by the institution) teaching materials. It has been mentioned that there are no teaching materials for work with adults" (meaning recent). The manuals usually do not correspond with level, age, and students' group composition and interests, and even less – to church education, therefore I compile my own improvised readers, and working notebooks.

A bit more that every fourth **Romanian** informant shares his/her opinion about the materials in use. Three teachers were not that pleased with the current teaching aids and teaching materials (more textbooks and more digital materials). Four teachers saw that they can work with the current situation.

The remarks concerning the sufficiency and disadvantage of the teaching materials among the **Greeks** were related to the materials offered by the Greek Ministry of Education for the compulsory RE in Primary and Secondary Education. More than half (11/15) said they were not satisfied with the current teaching materials and considered them unsuitable for achieving the course objectives. Among the disadvantages were mentioned "lack of openness", "unbalanced structure of thematic units", "contents don't face the contemporary social reality", "book centred and difficult contents for children's agelevel" and "insufficient contents concerning Islam".

Among the **Finns**, the educational sectors are satisfied with the adequacy of tools and materials. In *basic education and upper secondary education*, informants' responses had in common that only those belonging to minority religions lack sufficient learning materials. In other respects, teachers in schools were satisfied with the availability of tools



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and materials. At *university* level, the situation was considered good, although the digital availability of learning material could be improved, and the language selection increased. *Church* organisations were also satisfied with the situation in terms of tools and materials, with some reservations. However, the importance of traditional materials was also highlighted.

Italy: In general, the majority of respondents express satisfaction with the didactic material available to them.

15(34) What innovative, modern, and learning-friendly methods do you know, and have you put into practice? How does their use facilitate the learning process? Describe them briefly and give relevant examples.

In general, **Estonian** informants mainly understood innovative solutions as different group work and active learning methods or digital solutions. A lot of respondents had been affected by the pandemic situation, which had already lasted for a year, during which social distancing measures were implemented and a lot of things had to be done online. This has led to ambivalent attitudes towards the use of digital solutions - on the one hand, there is a realisation that the old days are not coming back, and that we are likely to become even more dependent on the internet in the future, an area that needs to evolve rapidly. On the other hand, it was felt that there is perhaps even too much 'digital stuff' and that at least the lessons should involve close, personal face-to-face interaction.

In **Bulgarian** report one can find detailed answers from kindergarten and primary teachers, also some of church, high school and higher school teachers really went into substantial detail and gave us longer texts, quite interesting for analysis: "Visual method – complex use of music, speech, and image by audio and audiovisual means. Use of a combination of static image, sound, and music on the topic of Resurrection of Christ" – sober image on the background of a musical fragment from „The Final Right of Death“(band: „Nights Amore“) with added fearful sounds depicting earthquakes. Children are let to maximally approach the topic by emotional impact of image, music, and sounds." It is quite a challenge to teach priests and catechists how to evangelise this world, transforming it by divine grace, or how to just inform and educate inspired and church-friendly people, remaining at the same time pious and adequate to real situation, as any creative process as education should be performed.

The **Romanian** report presented a variety of "modern approaches" as the responses (9/25) were not analysed to produce a summary. However, the respondents introduced the point of view that "a very effective method is the direct contact of students with the life of the Church, their involvement in the projects carried out in the Church." In the list of methods there were named methods such as games, e-religion and other platforms, cube-method and KWL-method (Know-Want to Know- Learn). Assuming that *Starbusting* can be included in modern approaches, it is worth describing it in some terms. It is a creative method that starts from the centre of a concept and spreads through questions related to the topic. Usual questions are the set of W5 (What, Who, Where, Why, When). There were not many comments on how the methods facilitate the learning process.

Referring to previous questions (27,30), **Greek** interviewees did not mention that much more innovative, modern and learning-friendly methods are used in religious education. However, they did mention methods such as 'value and knowledge education (VaKE)', 'role-playing and drama techniques', 'digital methods' and 'teaching through art'.



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The **Finns** stated that regarding the adequacy of teaching tools and materials and the use of methods in *the school* environment, teachers were somewhat reserved about the use of modern learning applications. Classroom, Thinglink, Socrative, Kahoot and Quizlet were mentioned as examples of cloud-based applications. They do not necessarily facilitate learning, but at least they increase interest in teaching. For example, videos give a living face to learning about different religions. Films offer opportunities for deeper and broader content analysis. Distance learning enables international cooperation.

In *university* teaching the innovative and modern methods mentioned included co-teaching, flipped teaching and the use of videos. The latter was seen as a useful way of gaining a deeper understanding of the subject and learning.

Surprisingly the *church* related organization was the most advanced in modern methods. They have used augmented reality (AR). This augmented reality is used, for example, to make an iconic person speak. Among the various recent cloud computing applications on the web, Zoom, Teams, Meet, Prezi, Genial, Moodle and YouTube were mentioned, too.

Italy: Although innovative teaching practices that exploit the potential of new technologies are not widespread, the general appreciation of such potential is high among the interviewees, particularly those methods or digital tools could promote innovative solutions for the active participation of the pupils. When the questionnaire was administered, the interviewees had been affected by the pandemic effects on the educational process. They learned to teach online. Therefore, the attitudes towards the digital methods changed: on one hand they perceived the risk to depend on the communication assisted by computer, reducing the personal interaction; on the other, they realistically are trying to adapt themselves to the unprecedented situation, hoping that they can soon return to face-to-face lessons.

16(35) Do you use innovative digital tools and applications in your teaching, which you would also recommend to your colleagues? If not, would you like to learn more about such applications and tools?

Estonian informants have mentioned an Estonian Bible App for children, and also highly praised a video game that his grandchildren use, which he thinks gives a fairly comprehensive overview of the Bible.

All **Bulgarian** respondents for sure would like to learn more than they know, and apply, because the world is developing dynamically. No one said they do not use any, or digital means have nothing to do with teaching religion (or teachers would disregard information available through technologies, because it is students' obligation to access it).

Among the **Romanian** answers there could not be labelled a general digital solution in their teaching, but all of them stated that they use digital solutions in teaching. This approach was also accelerated by the constraints on education in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The answers (9/25) were dealing with a variety of different approaches connected to the digitalization of education. Among the educational platforms were named such as *Google Classroom, Google Forms, Meet, Zoom, Padlet, Learnings Apps, Wordwall and Kaboot*. An interesting point is that there are two very rich Romanian national platforms for RE education over the Internet (*E-religie and Red-religie*). Also, it was noted that the Romanian Ministry of Education has opened a suggestion page for the digital solutions



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because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the responses, it seems that at least the respondents had adapted to the digitalisation of education in a rather practical way. No special recommendations.

It seems so that the **Greeks** prefer digital tools and applications, as almost all (13/15) mentioned their use. Among the applications were mentioned the following: *slido, padlet, cmap tools, google archives, maps, class blogs, ppt, videos, slide share*. The Greeks have generated their own electronic platform, *Photodentro* (Picture tree), for RE in Primary and Secondary Education. More than half (8/15) respondents expressed their willingness to learn more about the digitalization of education.

Finnish teachers have recommended to their colleagues the use of applications that have already been used unexpectedly positively and of which they themselves have experience. On the one hand, there were questions about what is meant by innovative digital solutions? At the *university*, the Mentimeter application and the game-based components of Moodle have been recommended to a colleague. In church organisations, "mobile apps" have been recommended to colleagues, i.e. apps that can be used on a mobile phone with or without a name. If a tool or application is not familiar, it is not recommended for use.

In Italy, a little more than 50% of teachers use digital tools to set up their lessons and group work (class blog, ppt, videos download from internet, slide share etc.) the rest do not.

17(36) You apply methods of feedback to the teaching process with your students. If YES, which ones?

Getting regular feedback from RE students was considered very important by **Estonian** informants. In general education, feedback is obtained either through active learning, in the form of seminars and discussions with students, or through individual interaction. Confirmation classes usually end with either an interview, oral or written exam (the written exam is usually an essay). During this period, the opportunity is also taken to obtain feedback. Several clergy highlighted that the feedback has always been very positive. As the interviews conducted in other studies show, positive evaluations of their own experience of the confirmation classes are quite common among those who have joined Lutheran congregations. However, this raises the question of whether people dare to give objective and honest feedback to clergy in person if there is no anonymous way to do so. As the groups are usually relatively small, this is unlikely to happen. In larger urban congregations, however, the possibility of collecting feedback anonymously, e.g. through a questionnaire survey, could be considered. Then, more objective (and, of course, more critical) feedback could be obtained. Also, it would not be worth collecting feedback before the confirmation class is passed, which was also referred to by one interviewee.

Asked to describe if and how they regularly get feedback from students, most of the **Bulgarian** RE teachers demonstrate communicative awareness. Similar to the previous question, older generation teachers confess that they identify students' level of involvement by feedback along lesson repetition or along knowledge consolidation and non-formal communications in the breaks, and form direct spontaneous reaction of children, youth, or adults. Younger teachers respond just "Verbally" or explain the process: "They write on the whiteboard, draw emoticons, smile on the pictures taken along the lesson, and seen afterwards in the reports from events, and they are free to react (positively or negatively) directly and spontaneously. *Less old – less young generation* had yet been taught to be more systematic: "I give out questionnaires – initial, on-going, and final (diagnostics)".



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The collection of feedback from **Romanian** respondents was briefly mentioned. *“All teachers periodically collect students' opinions on religion class, using the following methods/tools: question anonymously, free discussions, arguments.”*

Among the **Greek** respondents twelve of the fifteen respondents (12/15) state that they apply methods of feedback of the teaching process with their students. The methods declared are the following: written evaluation of the course by the students based on tests and questionnaires, where “group work report, highlighting positive points, identifying issues that need improvement”. Three out of fifteen answered that they don't collect feedback at all.

In **Finland**, the collection of feedback depends on the type of organisation. In *primary and upper secondary* schools, it is part of the school curriculum. Feedback has been collected (upper secondary school) using a Google form with open and closed questions. Feedback is collected in exams and lessons, especially in small groups, direct feedback is obtained by observing students during lessons.

At the *university*, feedback is automatically collected on an electronic platform at the end of the course. However, a certain number of students must be enrolled before feedback can be collected. In this case, the course organiser collects the feedback independently. The feedback includes both an assessment of the student's own learning and feedback on the course delivery. The students' feedback will be responded to. In small groups, there may also be oral feedback.

Church organisations collect feedback with written feedback either by email or paper form. Oral feedback in small groups. Group feedback has also been used in the form of feedback sessions. In e-learning sessions via online form or chat.

In **Italy**, all teachers of the theological faculties use traditional methods for feedback: oral exams and written tests; some supplement these methods with research reports carried out in small groups.

18(37) Please provide any additional clarifications or remarks regarding the questions in this survey.

The **Estonian** respondents did not state any additional clarifications or remarks regarding the questions in this survey.

60% of the **Bulgarian** informants had some comments. Mainly they discussed already mentioned issues, or added more argumentation to their opinions: *teaching and training in this field is so necessary*. One informant wished to delve deeper into the subject in order to *share how I work, and what are our results with my students*.

The Italian respondents did not provide any additional comments.

The **Romanian** respondents did not state any additional clarifications or remarks regarding the questions in this survey. Actually, their answers ended with a question about collecting feedback.

Eleven of the fifteen **Greek** respondents (11/15) do not feel the need to state anything more in relation to the questionnaire. One finds that “questions should be asked about the content of the course. E.g., denominational, cultural or religious”. One would prefer the course to have “more specific references to the concept of otherness



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and the orientation of religious education". One clarifies that he trains theologians who teach Religion in secondary education. One expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the questionnaire.

Finnish informants had quite a lot of comments. Respondents wondered how they had been selected as interviewees in the study, but after the interview they said that in fact they had been the right target group. As regards school education, the question was asked about its model. Is religious education *"imposed by religious communities, an extension of them in school, i.e. is its general education or identity building?"*, as one informant wondered.

On the other hand, the importance of religious education and its nature as a subject on an equal footing with other subjects in terms of a holistic way of life and understanding and acceptance of other people was also highlighted. The various challenges of religious education, especially in relation to minority religions, were also discussed. These relate to the heterogeneity of the pupil population in terms of language, culture and different levels of ability.

From the point of view of the Catholic minority religion, the lack of the right to tax, the lack of a baccalaureate, the problems of organising their own teaching and the lack of teaching materials, and the lack of training for religious teachers were also mentioned. The development of distance education from the perspective of minority religions was seen as a "Trojan horse" as it could lead to the disappearance of traditional classroom teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

THE PROFILE OF THE INTERVIEWEE AND HIS/HER EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

A total of 162 respondents from six different countries took part in the survey. The sample size ranged from 9 (Estonia) to 90 (Italy). The most homogeneous groups of respondents were in Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. Among Italians there were clearly two distinct groups of respondents (teachers and priests) and among Finns three groups (primary school teachers, university teachers and those working in church organisations). The majority of the interviewees worked in religious education at different levels of education and in parish contexts. Of the Romanian interviewees, all were working in teaching positions only in compulsory schools. The Estonian informants were all members of the clergy. The other groups included both lay people and members of the clergy. In 5 countries altogether there were almost equal numbers of women (32) and men (31) interviewed. The Italian case includes only two women out of 18 professor of theology interviewed. In Greece, Bulgaria and Romania the respondents belonged mainly to the Orthodox Church, in Estonia to the Lutheran Church and in Italy to the Catholic Church. Among Finnish respondents, religious backgrounds were the most divergent.

The majority of respondents had a university degree (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate). In Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy, respondents worked mainly in large, monoethnic and mono-religious towns with school groups of pupils under 25 years of age. In Estonia and Finland there was variation in the above. Pupils' attitudes towards



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religion were generally positive, regardless of whether or not religious education was a compulsory subject in school. Their religious knowledge was mostly good. It was rated as very good by Romanian respondents and most inadequate by Greek respondents

The 19 questions in the first part of the survey were so-called background questions. Due to the small number of respondents, background information cannot be considered as an explanatory variable for the type of respondent groups that need a certain type of additional training. Background data can only be considered as descriptive information about the survey population.

TRAINING NEEDS, TEACHING METHODS AND BEST PRACTICES

The second part of the survey was also mostly of a background nature (questions 20-27). They provided an insight into the objectives, content and teaching methods of the teaching, how it was linked to the school curriculum or some other context, how the teacher could influence the content, what the religious orientation of the teaching was, whether the teaching was compulsory or voluntary and how information about the teaching was shared.

The nature of the teaching depended on the context in which it took place. The ecclesiastical context focused on ecclesiastical orientation in terms of content and objectives, such as Confirmation teaching (Estonia) or Orthodox Lay academy (Finland). In schools (Romania, Greece, Finland) teaching is part of the compulsory curriculum. In Bulgaria, the nature and role of religious education in the school context is complex. In universities, the teaching of theology is aimed at professionalism. Except for ecclesiastical actors, participation is compulsory in schools and universities.

School curricula (content and objectives) have little influence on teachers but can be applied locally to some extent. In Estonia, schools can design curricula. Teaching methods are up to the teachers. The objectives of school education range from learning about religion itself to general knowledge and skills in the diversity of religions needed in social life. In church organisations, teachers have more opportunities to influence the content and objectives alongside the methods. In these contexts, the aim is to "lead to ecclesial life", which also has a strong knowledge dimension (Estonia, Orthodox Lay Academy Finland.)

Respondents' descriptions of the teaching methods and applications used were positive. On the one hand there were traditional, teacher-centered models of frontal teaching, on the other hand very advanced, student-activating practices such as flipped teaching. In Finland, university education seemed to be the most advanced in terms of teaching methods. As regards school education, Romanian and Greek respondents listed a large number of both the methods themselves and the various web-based applications used in connection with them. In the ecclesiastical context, methods varied according to the organisation (Estonia, Finland).

Questions 28 to 36 asked the interviewees what training they had attended and what they thought their training needs were. Questions 30 and 31 were closed, the others were open to respondents to write down their views.

As expected, participation in continuing training varied widely among respondents. Estonian respondents emphasised courses with group work, participatory methods and study visits. For Bulgarians, qualification training



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and courses that dealt with courses that developed subject content knowledge and teaching from different perspectives proved to be important. Romanian respondents also mentioned methodological courses in teaching. Almost one in two Greek respondents had not participated in any in-service training, but 'teaching methods' was mentioned among those who had. A common feature among Finnish respondents was that they had participated in courses not directly related to religious education.

As can be seen from the graph above (p. 20), the emphasis on the content of continuing training varied from country to country. Bulgaria and Romania had the most similar emphasis on content, with the emphasis on theology, pedagogy, teaching methods, psychology and group work methods. The latter was also emphasised by Greek respondents with the Estonians. The Finnish response was somewhat surprising, as the greatest need was for "other" content than that mentioned in the question. However, the second most needed support was for teaching methods, which was also a surprise, despite the training of Master's level teachers.

Views were also mixed on the eight learning contents that are part of the curriculum (see graph p. 21). The Greeks and Bulgarians highlighted in the same way both topics related to the beginning and end of life, and topics dealing with social crises. The Finns highlighted human rights in the same way as the Greeks. Among Estonians, social themes were perceived as less important than in the other countries. Romanians were most uncertain about the importance of these topics, with 3/4 not indicating an opinion by selecting "difficult to say".

Regarding teaching materials, the Estonians were quite satisfied, with only a few requests being mentioned. Instead, it was stressed that the materials should be provided locally and not "provided from elsewhere". Among Bulgarians, a lack of teaching materials for adult education was noted. Among Romanians, a quarter expressed mixed views on materials. Greeks commented that the teaching materials for religious education published by their country's Ministry of Education are slightly out of date, demanding for the developmental level of the child and lacking in the teaching of Islam. The Finns were satisfied with the teaching tools and materials used by schools and church organisations, but there was room for improvement at university level.

The methods and applications used in teaching were already examined and when asked about them, no innovative solutions were identified. Group work and active teaching methods (Estonia) were perceived as innovative. Among Bulgarians, emphasis was placed on audio-visuality. Among Romanians, well under half had responded and one of the answers was "a very effective method is the direct contact of students with the life of the Church, their involvement in the projects carried out in the Church." Various games and two separate online learning platforms for religious education produced by the Ministry were also mentioned. The Greeks mentioned "digital" methods and teaching through art. Among Finns, there were some reservations about digitalisation in teaching, although Finland is otherwise a pioneer in digital learning and teaching. Teachers listed several applications that support teaching. In terms of teaching methods, the church organisations surveyed were the most advanced in terms of innovation. In all countries, digital applications that had been tried and tested were also recommended to colleagues.

In school education (Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Finland), feedback is both curriculum-based and voluntary. It is collected through questionnaires, discussions, writings, observations during lessons and summative tests. At the university (Finland), feedback is collected automatically at the end of the course by the university. In church organisations (Finland) both written and oral feedback is used.



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TRAINING NEEDS OF THE RE TEACHERS AS THE RESULT OF THE RESEARCH

The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in *Estonia* can be concluded in the following:

According to the results of the Estonian report, Estonian RE teachers do not have a high demand for common materials. At least not when it comes to topics such as minorities, climate, immigration, etc. Estonian teachers have developed all their own materials over time, especially since each Estonian school has the freedom to design their own curricula. Those who thought that there could be certain Euro-materials, then one of the important principles was considered to be the so-called "Estonianisation", i.e. taking into account the local cultural context.

The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in *Bulgaria* can be concluded in the following:

1. Increasing social competence by proactive presence participation in civic and religious society and media in global perspective.
2. Understanding and respect of local and global cultural diversity in the clear perspective of human rights and freedoms.
3. Developing digital skills, balanced and detailed informational, communicational, and technological skills without addiction or refusal to approach virtual space and communicate online on religious, cultural, and educational purposes.
4. Sources for funding and opportunities offered by the European Union for development of new skills and competences, volunteering work, participation in mobilities, digital education, exchange of experience and practices.
5. Precise culture and practical skills in children's and religious rights.
6. Operative skills in human rights and church concepts on human dignity.
7. Knowledge of and attitude to local and emigrant Bulgarian cultural traditions, values, virtues, ethnic social psychology, balanced maintaining nationalisms and patriotisms, and respect to church and other traditional and new religious practices in the country in their details as etiquette and potential as ethos.
8. Knowledge of and attitude to international traditions and recent religious life as closely as possible and development of tolerant attitudes and cultural awareness of diverse worldviews, lifestyles, expressions, and practices.
9. Development of sound intercultural, interconfessional, and interreligious communication skills.
10. Building awareness of provision of equal cultural access to religious culture for people of as many as possible social categories, subcultures, lifestyles, attitudes, conditions, etc.



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The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in *Italy* can be concluded in the following:

According to the results of the Italian report, both Italian RE professors (Group A) and Italian RE teachers have good willingness to introduce the topic of religious diversity in their courses. It is a widespread common belief that dealing with such topics is necessary. For RE professors of Group A (potential trainers of teachers) this means investing intellectual and spiritual energies to give theological-practical substance to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. For RE teachers of Group B, instead, this need is expressed through a variety of teaching initiatives aiming at both teaching the fundamentals of a religion and its impact on the culture of a nation and at giving pupils the ground rules in order to know the differences and similarities among the numerous religions represented in society and in the social little world of the school class. The more detailed training needs of religious education teachers and priests were dealing with the following topics:

- Training in disciplines other than the religious ones like art, cinema, literature, theatre.
- Training in how to use images, video, movies and social media to better reach the young people.
(In practice: the need to learn new “languages” and subjects in order to propose a religious narrative suitable for the new generations.)
- Training for updating the acquired knowledge in pedagogical and psychological studies to better deal with youngsters.
(In practice: the need to refresh the basis of the pedagogy and psychology to better understand the epoch change (and not just an epoch of changes) our society is facing.)
- Training on social inclusion methods.
- Specific religious training is requested to:
 - Contribute to overcome religious illiteracy.
 - Help to understand the unprecedented character of religious and cultural pluralism in our society.
 - Know how to approach the crisis of historical religious forms and the search for new spiritualities.

The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in *Romania* can be concluded in the following:

Following the interviews, there is a need to diversify activities in the religious class, but also to better capitalize on non-formal activities: cultural and religious activities, "projects carried out by children to resolve hypothetical conflicts", visits, volunteer activities, charitable activities, meetings with personalities of cultural and religious life, debates, etc. Teachers emphasize the important role of the family in children's education, as well as the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents. The more detailed training needs of religious education teachers and priests, most of which relate to pedagogical issues, were listed as follows:

- Notions regarding preadolescent and adolescent psychology.
- Student evaluation and identification of personal development needs.
- Methods of interdisciplinary approach regarding Religion and Psychology.
- Human rights from a theological perspective.
- Addressing global crises (conflicts, pandemics and natural disasters and so on) from a theological perspective.



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- Modern teaching techniques
 - Active-participatory methods
 - Methods of creative education (non-formal)
 - Digital competences
 - Elaboration of presentations (video / graphic / animation)

The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in Greece can be concluded in the following:

Based on the responses of the Greek informants, they listed the following content needed to teach the subject more effectively: philosophy, psychology, sociology, Islamic theology. As well, the issues of religious diversity, religion, and interfaith dialogue were mentioned. In addition, concerning the substance-based contents some of the teaching methods were highlighted. Among those were “inverted class”, “theatre”, familiarity with new technologies, such as “image tools, video production” and “asynchronous distance education”. Regarding materials, it was noted that materials should be easily accessible and in an updated digital format. A particular need is for material on Greek-language Islam.

Most of the Greek respondents (86%) consider their training in *group work methods* very or very important. Somewhat surprisingly, the second highest interest among the theologians was the fact that the subject of continuing education was *theology*. With the same percentage (80%), the second most popular subject with theology was teaching methods education. Also, among the Greeks 67 % stated their insecurity about their training needs and chose “hard to say”. For substantial fields of interest were listed topics such as art history, political Science, ICT, educational Drama, interdisciplinarity, culture-history-folklore and art in education. It was stated in Greek’s report that „*the need for training in these fields of knowledge arises from the application of relevant teaching methods, which are positively evaluated, and have already been mentioned in the answers to questions 27 and 28.*”

The main needs drawn from the answers of the interviewees regarding religious education in Finland can be concluded in the following:

The need for further training depended to some extent on the respondent's background organisation. Two themes emerged among *primary and upper secondary* school teachers. Training was requested on the use of e-learning environments and the pedagogical challenges they pose. At *university* level, it would be desirable to increase training in pedagogy and the wider and more diverse use of digitalisation in pedagogy. It is also considered important to develop a broader knowledge of the content to be taught. In *church* organisations, training to develop pedagogical and technical use of the online environment was also mentioned.

Among the Finns it was not clear training content specific topics. Most of the interviewees stated that the biggest training needed (90 %) among them are the contents concerning “the other”. These included animal rights, internet and media, democratic society, the relationship between the Catholic Church and society, environmental protection, community service, religious disputes (slaughter, circumcision), individual and communal aspects of religiosity, dialogue, faith awareness, structural discrimination, gender and sexual diversity. In addition, two teachers' responses highlighted training in media literacy. The second important issue (86 %) was teaching methods and the third one (79 %) pedagogy.



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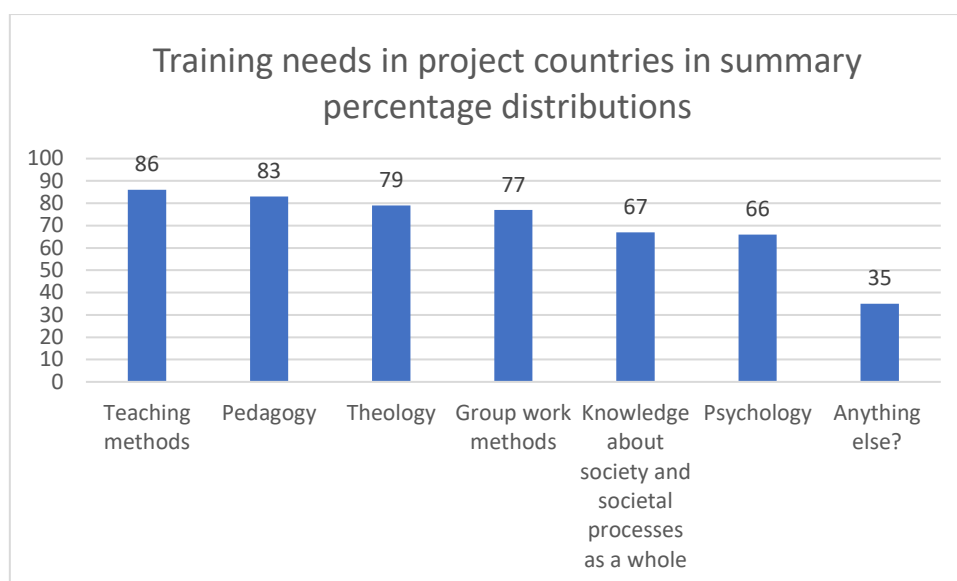
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CONCLUDING REMARKS ABOUT NEEDS AND TOPICS

Overall, it can be said that *the training needs* in the six countries can be divided into two main categories. Clearly, they focus on the pedagogical and didactic development of teaching (see graph below). Overall, it can be said that the training needs in the six countries can be divided into two main categories. Clearly, they focus on the pedagogical and didactic development of teaching (see graph 3). Content issues are clearly perceived as less important.

GRAPH 3. The summarized training needs.



However, some more detailed conclusions can be drawn from the results. In Southern Europe, there is a greater emphasis on theological themes (Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Italy). The greatest need to develop pedagogy and teamwork methods is in Bulgaria (100%). The need for teaching methods is almost equal in all countries. There is less need for psychology in Finland (50%). Italians and Finns do not need as much in-service training in teamwork methods as other countries. The greatest need for knowledge about society and social processes as a whole is in Romania. It seems that the training topics listed for Finns did not meet their needs, as their main need was for "anything else".

As far as *the contents in teaching* are concerned (see graph 4) as an outcome of the results it can be stated that a multireligious approach in teaching is covered in a good way. That orientation in RE takes into notice in a relevant way the changing and changed environment in Europe about the different religions, both Christian and non-Christian. That is the opinion of 4/5 of the respondents. The data of respondents from Italy is concerning RE teachers.



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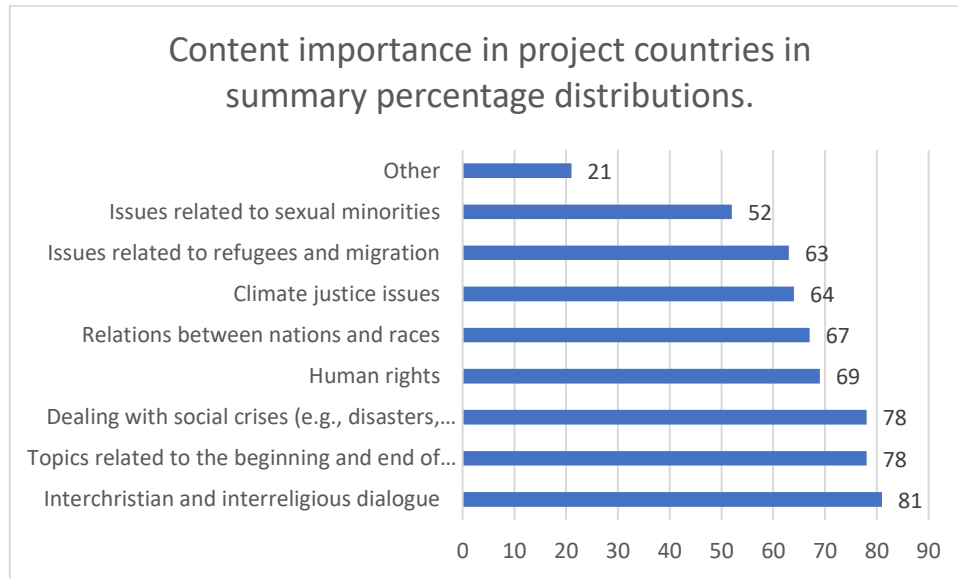
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GRAPH 4. The importance of the contents.



Another important aspect of religious education is the humanistic approach. This is a good observation, because religious education plays an important role not only in religious education itself, but also in society. More than 3/4 of the informants were of this opinion. This result can also be interpreted in some ways the other way around as training needs the less important the educational content is, the more important it is to consider it as training content.



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