



## **MINUTES OF THE FIFTH REMC MEETING, VIENNA, 1-2 OCTOBER 2009**

### **Presentation of findings from primary research**

The bulk of the meeting time was devoted to a presentation and discussion of findings from the primary research in Belgium, Germany, Malta, Ireland and Scotland. This discussion allowed participants to reflect on aspects of their analyses which could be elaborated and indicated areas of commonality and difference across the systems studied. It was agreed that each country chapter should be ‘stand-alone’ in terms of the methodology and findings but that the chapters should refer back to the conceptual framework chapter rather than repeating this material. It was also agreed that it would be useful to have a brief outline of religion and the school structure in the particular country at the start of each chapter.

An important substantive point was highlighted by the German presentation, that is, the fact that ‘home’ is not necessarily homogenous since parents may not share the same views on religion. It would be important to reflect this issue in the revised conceptual framework and to take it on board in the comparative chapter.

*Action:* Emer to circulate copies of the PowerPoint presentations from the meeting.

*Action:* Written comments on country chapters to be sent to the project teams by the 30<sup>th</sup> of October.

*Action:* Revised versions of the chapters are to be circulated by 30<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Comparative analysis**

There was a very useful discussion of commonalities and differences across the study countries along the key dimensions of the conceptual framework. Some of the issues raised included the following:

#### 1. Context

- The importance of trying to mesh our discussion of micro-level processes within an understanding of the macro-level structures;

- The importance of the historical legacy within systems, which may no longer reflect the religious and social profile of the population;
  - The significant impact of the legal framework regarding equality and human rights; the implications for EU legislation should be taken into account in the policy recommendations.
2. School identity
- Provision of separate faith schools – does this result in segregation or protection of minority groups?
  - Relationship between choice of schools on a religious basis with other issues relating to social selectivity and school ‘quality’.
  - The need to recognise variation across schools within the same sector in the actual school climate in relation to inclusion.
  - The way in which religious education is provided can make difference more or less ‘visible’ within the school setting.
  - Insecurity among some teachers in dealing with religious/values issues.
3. Individual identity: parents and children
- Marked differences were found in the range of positions adopted by parents and children in relation to formal labels such as ‘Catholic’ and ‘no belief’; categories are not what they seem.
  - Is it a question of ‘transmission’ or ‘negotiation’ between parents and children about these issues? How much agency do children have?
  - Children use different strategies to handle complexity and insecurity.
  - Distinction between public and private spaces re religion.
4. Home-school interaction/tensions
- ‘Home’ is not necessarily homogenous so it is not a simple contrast of home and school. Home, school and child are not unitary categories.
  - Parents appear to adopt a more active role in faith formation when the school does not match their own belief system.
  - It is not just the home-school nexus but also the Church/community.
  - There is a discursive positioning of the self in different spaces – home, school etc. – and in different relationships. There are spatial, interactional and symbolic dimensions.

**Action:** Emer is to write up a summary of the main issues arising and circulate it to the group for comment. The chapter will then be revised iteratively. Individual teams may be asked to write notes on specific topics to contribute to this process.

**Action:** Mary Darmanin is to draw up a template for mapping diversity among families and schools so that there is a consistency across teams.

## **Policy conclusions**

A preliminary discussion indicated a number of areas which should be highlighted in our policy conclusions:

- Teacher education
- Inclusion at the school level
- Addressing difference – critical interculturalism v. recognition/tolerance
- Right to education – legal issues and Church/State relations.

## **Briefing from EU project officer**

The EU project officer gave a very useful briefing to the project team. The main points covered were:

1. The necessity to produce a policy brief based on the findings of the study. This should establish our target audience, elaborate our key messages and focus on the policy-relevant parts of our findings. This would be hosted on the Commission website.
2. Reporting. The final report should not be the same as the book we are planning but should be 40-50 pages outlining the main findings according to the Commission template.
3. New approach to funding research: Future calls within FP7 will focus more on very large-scale studies though some smaller studies will also be funded.

**Action:** Emer to circulate template for final report and FP7 ‘roadmap’ which indicates future funding areas.