

# Religious Education in a Multicultural Society (REMC)

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# Background to the REMC study

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- Growing religious diversity and secularism in many European countries
- Different education systems 'handle' the issue of religion in different ways – faith schools, existence/content of RME
- But little understanding of how this influences the development of religious/ethical values among children, especially for minority faith and secular groups
- Study funded under EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme



# Aims of the study

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- To examine how religious beliefs and values are transmitted in the course of schooling across a range of countries
- To take account of the perspectives of children, parents, teachers and policy stakeholders
- To focus on primary education because of its potentially crucial role in the formation of longer term beliefs and values



# Conceptual framework

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- Core concept of social identity
- Identities are fluid and can be multiple – different dimensions may be more/less salient at different points
- Formation of religious identity (including secular beliefs) as part of other ‘identities’
- Exploring the identities of parents, children and schools

# Primary research

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- Countries:
  - Belgium (Flanders) (HIVA)
  - Germany (Dortmund University)
  - Ireland (ESRI/UCD)
  - Malta (University of Malta)
  - Scotland (University of Edinburgh)
- Capture variation in:
  - Religious profile of population
  - Levels of religiosity/practice
  - Nature of primary schools
  - Role of RME in primary schools



## Primary research (continued)

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- Comparable approach across countries
- Case-studies of schools: interviews with principals, teachers, parents and children
- Interviews with key informants



# Research in Irish schools

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- Five primary schools:
  - 3 Catholic schools
  - 1 Church of Ireland school
  - 1 Educate Together school
- Supplementary interviews with Muslim parents and children
- Interviews with 15 key stakeholders



# Structure of the presentations

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- Emerging findings from the Irish context:
  - Key stakeholders
  - School principals and teachers
  - Parents
  - Children
- Findings from Scotland