

4.1 Potentials and Difficulties of International Comparative Research on Confirmation Work and Religious Education

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The authors of the present study are convinced that international comparative research in the field of confirmation work is a promising enterprise. This conviction has led to the collaboration of the researchers in the first place, and the actual process of working together across different national contexts has further supported the initial intuition that this kind of research can be of great value to everyone involved. The value of international cooperation in this field includes a number of different aspects: the acquaintance with forms of different ecclesial and educational practises, insights into the theological and pedagogical rationales operative in different countries and, not least important, support for ecumenical efforts in respects that had barely been touched before. On a more technical and academic level, the availability of international data allows for new research questions and for many insights that are beyond the reach of regional or national studies. On the basis of our data, not only individual methods or teaching and learning materials can be compared but whole systems of confirmation work on many different levels – a possibility that appears to be very promising at a time when many traditions and traditional practices have become unstable.

Yet there can also be no doubt that international comparative research on confirmation work or on religious education in general is a much uncharted field that holds many obstacles and serious difficulties. In the following, we want to consider some of the difficulties and obstacles that international comparative research has to face. Our focus will be on confirmation work and on religious education which means that we will leave aside the more general methodological considerations and issues raised, for example, in the area of general comparative education (cf. Schriewer/Holmes 1990, Kodron et al. 1997, Allemann-Ghionda 2004)

A first issue with this kind of research obviously is language. It begins with the terminology of the area under study itself. While the traditional term *confirmation* is used in all participating countries, concepts like *confirmation work*, *confirmation training*, *preparation for confirmation*, etc. are not. Moreover, even the understanding of general terms like *religious education* varies greatly. In some countries, pedagogical practises related to the Church are called *religious nurture* and are not considered as truly educational because, at least supposedly, they are aiming at teaching young people into the Christian faith or at recruiting them for the Church. In other countries, the term religious education is

used in a more general sense for all processes of religious socialisation, development, and education independently of their location and there also is more openness for appreciating confirmation work as educational. Difficulties with different languages and with translations also occur at the level of the items used in the national questionnaires.

While at least most of the linguistic problems could be solved through extensive checks, there remains a fundamental question that refers to confirmation work in different countries as common object of research. Does this common object really exist or are we dealing with many different kinds of practises that may go by the same name but cannot be compared in any meaningful way?

It is certainly true that confirmation work is organized in different ways in the participating countries. Finland, for example, with its heavy emphasis on camps and with its systematic reliance on young volunteers, certainly is unique, at least to some degree. In Austria and Germany, with their continued practise of denominational school Religious Education, confirmation work operates in a context that is very different from, for example, Sweden where school and church have maintained their distance from each other by now for several decades. Other differences refer to the aims of confirmation work that can be more ecclesial in some places or more related to social or even national aspects in others.

Empirical approaches can avoid some of the difficulties posed by such differences by trying to capture the actual experiences and aims of the participants themselves. Yet even with this idea as the guiding principle, interpretations remain difficult. The only response adequate to this situation is contextual sensitivity. All comparative statements must be treated with utmost care and with a constant eye on their limitations. Contextual sensitivity must exclude, for example, naïve one-to-one comparisons, be it of materials and textbooks, of lesson plans or individual teaching/learning units, etc. (cf. the critical discussion in Schweitzer 2004). At a first glance, such comparisons are attractive because they appear to be quite manageable. Yet it should not be overlooked that it is the whole framework of confirmation work that determines the use and the possible influence, for example, of materials produced for working with confirmands. In some cases, such materials can be operative as the guiding principle of whatever content is presented to them. In other cases, they are rarely used, depending on the agenda of the workers who follow their own personal ideas more or less independently.

To some degree, issues of international validity and reliability can be settled by empirical testing (Francis 2009). Yet even with all statistical precautions, we cannot escape the contextuality of all data and, even more, the contextual nature of all interpretations. This is why we decided that our data should be presented in the shape of national portraits in the first place (part 3 above). Coun-

try reports of this kind are a very valuable source for a field of study and discussion that is still in the process of establishing itself at an international level and of finding ways for gaining an understanding of confirmation work and religious education in other countries. This is why, for example, publications on the structures and institutions of school Religious Education in different countries have received broad attention (cf. Schreiner/Holt 1995, Schreiner 2000, Kuyk et al. 2007). A similar interest may be anticipated for descriptions of confirmation work in different Churches and countries.

The present volume takes up the current interest in international descriptive publications but goes beyond them in important respects. Most of all, the results presented in this volume are based on an integrated empirical approach. In this respect, it parallels recent attempts in the field of school Religious Education that are also aiming at international comparisons on an empirical basis (Ziebertz/Riegel 2009, Knauth et al. 2008). Earlier accounts could at best draw on data from studies that were available in the different countries by putting them together and trying to reinterpret them at a different level. Such studies may show some overlap in their general focus as well as in their research questions. Yet it is easy to see that they can hardly lead to a cohesive understanding since their data are too diverse and only allow for indirect combinations and comparisons. Moreover, with the inclusion of the perspectives of the adolescents and of the workers, the present study aims at aspects of confirmation work that have not received sufficient attention in the international consultations on confirmation in the past (for such consultations that were organised by the Lutheran World Federation cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009, 199-202). Such consultations tended to focus on the theological understanding of confirmation or on the models used by different Churches. In religious education research in general, it has been an important step to gain empirical insights into the relationship between youth and religion (Ziebertz/Kay 2005, 2006, Ziebertz et al. 2009) and into young people's views of (school) Religious Education (Knauth et al. 2008). Yet there can be no doubt that a more complete account of the situation of religious education and of confirmation work must also include the teachers or workers (Ziebertz/Riegel 2009). They also play an important role in mediating between the adolescents on the one hand, and the religious traditions and contents on the other.

Our main focus in this book is on empirical comparisons as a basis for a deeper understanding of the situation and the meaning of confirmation work in different countries as well as an important part of non-formal education in Europe. Other possible comparisons will receive much less attention, for example, the different models or organising confirmation work or the choice of contents, the ways of celebrating confirmation or the understandings of the Church embedded in the different ways of doing confirmation work (cf. Adam 2009).

What do these observations mean for international comparative research? The main implication of the differences between the situation of religious education in different countries is that we are not dealing with a unified structure that can be studied in its respective modifications. Instead we are faced, as it were, with individuals – individual realities of teaching and learning – that cannot be compared to each other without careful consideration of the feasibility of the comparison intended. Strictly speaking, individuals do not compare. They are just different. This insight does not exclude comparisons altogether. Yet in order to arrive at meaningful comparisons, one must be explicit about the comparative perspectives chosen. In other words, with comparative research, we have to be quite mindful of the perspectivity and contextuality of the research, even more so than with other academic endeavours.

In sum: international comparisons cannot replace national reports. Instead, there must be a continuous interplay between national accounts and international comparisons – with special attention being given to the balance between contextual and more decontextualised approaches that should complement each other. National accounts will continue to operate as the basis for international comparative research that, in turn, can greatly enrich all national understandings.

After these necessary caveats, however, more must also be said about the possible value of the comparative chapters in this part of the book. Most importantly, it must be stated that the present study is the very first of its kind. While earlier international studies in the field of religious education – as mentioned above – for the most part focus on the students and on their attitudes in relationship to religion and religious education, the present study refers to both, the adolescents as confirmands as well as to the workers (full-time and volunteers) who are in charge of the respective programmes in different European countries. Moreover, the study operates with questionnaires that were administered at different times during the programme – a procedure that allows for insights into the changes effected by the programme.

In this respect, the present study is innovative and promises new insights into an area of religious education or confirmation work that is of central importance. Given the observation typical for many countries that the traditional function of the family for religious nurture and education has at least been subject to severe changes or – as some observers put it – is more and more losing its influence on the process of religious tradition between the generations altogether, the influence of professional religious educators and of intentional programmes offered by the Churches can hardly be overestimated. While they might not be able – or willing – to take over a compensatory function that makes up for what the family used to be, their role in the continuation and transmission of religious traditions to new generations will inevitably gain in

weight if other institutions become less involved in this process. In this sense, professional religious educators and intentional programmes deserve additional awareness in the contemporary situation, especially from those who are interested in the future of religion in Europe.

Discussions on the shape of religious education involving teachers as well as other specialists have become available internationally through conferences and publications. It is noteworthy and remarkable how the interest in such exchanges has grown over the last few decades. Yet it is also easy to see that such exchanges have been limited to those who are willing and able to participate in English language discussions. Moreover, reports about the actual practise of religious education in the classroom that have been included in this conversation tended to be second hand, i. e., from specialists reporting on the generalisations of their personal observations. In this respect, the present study promises a decisive step forward. The empirical approach allows for new insights into how confirmation work is actually understood in different countries not only by a few spokespersons but by a much larger group of practitioners. This approach can bring us much closer to what religious education looks like in a particular country. It can also make sure that the actual mix of approaches and experiences that is typical of any larger group of practitioners, will be included. This is why the empirical study of teachers' or workers' attitudes can complement the international academic debates that have been dominant so far, in important respects.

It should also not be overlooked, however, that the data from the country reports are sometimes hard to interpret. First of all, this is due to their newness itself. Interpreting data always means comparing them to other data and results. In the absence of earlier or parallel data to be used as points of reference, such comparisons are difficult and sometimes not possible at all (for additional observations cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009). In this respect, the data presented in this volume can be considered as pioneering insights that should be used as reference points for later studies. In fact, the results of the present study include strong motives for doing this research on a more regular basis, for example, at five to ten years intervals. As will become clear in more detail in the different chapters of this part of the book, the results from this study are important and challenging not only for the different Churches and their future but also for society at large. Moreover, they indicate that the future of religion in Europe will also be of importance for the future of Europe altogether, for example, in terms of the values transmitted between the generations or in terms of the social attitudes acquired by young people.

4.2 Similarities and Differences of Confirmation Work in the Seven Countries – First Orientations

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The task of the present chapter is to identify similarities and differences in the respect to confirmation work in the participating countries. While the subsequent chapters will focus on specific comparative aspects – didactics, motivation and expectation, changes in the attitudes towards church and religion, gender, the contribution of confirmation work to society – the focus of this chapter is more preliminary and more general. In a first step, we are interested in the overall picture. The chapter can be read as an introduction to the following chapters and as a first overview.

The question of similarities and differences can be treated in different ways. In the past, consultations, for example, organised by the Lutheran World Federation since the 1950s (cf. Schweitzer/Ilg/Simojoki 2009) focused on the theological rationales and aims of confirmation work and confirmation as stated in the official documents of the Churches. The focus of this procedure was on the theology of confirmation. At that time, this was a helpful approach to ecumenical and international dialogue among the Lutheran Churches in different countries and cultures around the world. Yet how much can official statements and normative accounts tell us about the different realities of confirmation work? As we can see from the responses of the workers in the present study, the influence of official guidelines is generally limited. This does not mean that considerations of the different models and of their theological backgrounds stated in the official documents would not be of use or interest anymore. The preceding chapters on the individual countries rightfully make ample reference to the pertinent documents. Yet in the present chapter we follow an empirical approach that is based on the data of our own study and that can bring us closer to the practice of confirmation work.

Our overview in the following is organised around four questions. First, we are interested in common features which implies that we will also have to consider different profiles. Second, we will be considering the current situation of confirmation work in Europe in terms of its stability and fragility. Third, we will discuss the influence of the age group – adolescence – and of social modernisation as possible homogenizing factors that exert their influence independently from the different national contexts and in addition to all processes of pluralisation. Fourth and last, we will have a look at the one question that is of crucial interest in all of the countries: Does confirmation work really matter?

4.2.1 Common Features and Different Profiles

Researching confirmation work in Europe presupposes that there are enough similarities in the confirmation work of the different countries in order to create a common object for empirical research. A first possibility for examining this question is to compare the different models by focussing on the different activities that occur during confirmation time. Our data on this question are not complete. Nevertheless they allow for some interesting insights.

Table 42: Activities in confirmation time in the seven countries

	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
VQ01: numbers of meetings over all	35.79	42.86	13.71	29.57	25.67	13.93	15.94	
VQ02: hours of ›normal instruction‹ (hours à 60 min.)	47.06	45.74	21.89	30.06	51.54 [38.25]	68.85	20.76 [15.57]	
VQ03: special days with the group (at least 3 hours)	3.07	3.21	1.96	2.71	2.36		2.36	
VQ04: trips/outings of at least 3 hours	1.01	1.02	0.75	1.49	1.29	0.68	1.18	
VQ05: overnight events in the context of trips/outings/camps (number of nights altogether)	3.98	3.26	2.61	2.71	0.48	7.96	1.58	11.08
VQ06 Internship in the parish (hours per confirmand)	2.14	2.27	1.04	1.74	0.93 [0.70]		2.29	
VQ07: Other, i. e. ... (times during confirmation training)	1.51	1.42	0.43	2.31	1.17		3.20	
VQ09: joint activities with Christian youth work in our parish (number of meetings / activities)	1.96	2.1	1.04	0.40	0.85		1.98	

Data collected by the leaders (t_2). In this section Sweden included only item VQ05, Finland only items VQ01, VQ02, VQ04 and VQ05. In VQ02 Denmark and Norway asked for lessons of 45 min, in VQ06 Denmark asked for hours of 45 min: The results adapted in a 60 minutes-format are given in square brackets.

Table 42 shows that the different elements are not equally emphasised in the different countries but that there also is a fair amount of overlap. According to the overview, confirmation work typically means a mix of instruction, special occasions with the group, some outings and the possibility for internships in the parish, even if not all of these elements are realized in all places at the same time and at the same level. Moreover, we can see that the amount of instruction can vary greatly. Finland and Sweden emphasise overnight outings and camps while Denmark has very little of this kind of activity.

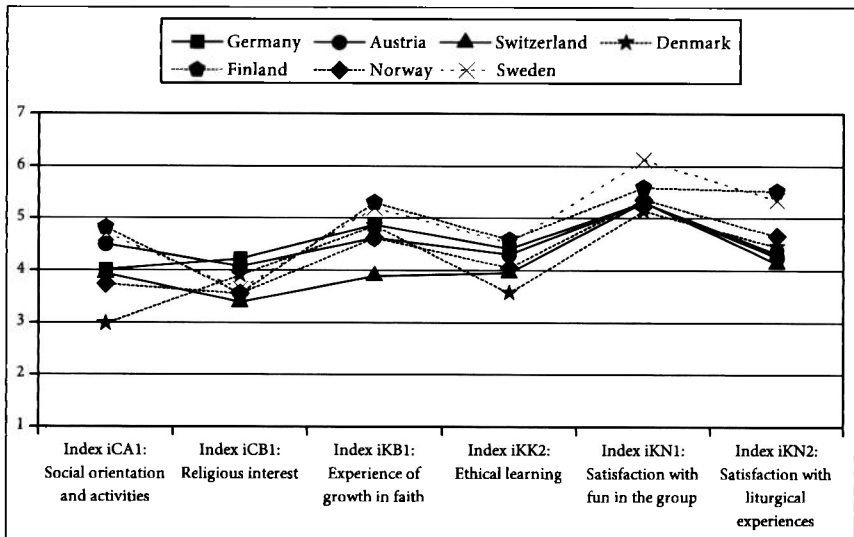
Another helpful approach is based on the workers' responses (cf. Figure 10 on p. 229 and p. 306 in the appendix). The strongest agreement here is about the satisfaction of the workers. Moreover, there is much agreement on the importance of topics related to the life-world. Nevertheless there also are differ-

ences in this respect. Workers in Sweden and Finland emphasise this aspect most while Danish and German workers give it the least emphasis. One might expect that the sequence with the importance of Church dogmatics is the mirror image to that of the interest in the life-world but this is not the case. It is true for Danish workers but the Finnish workers score even higher with dogmatics, in spite of their stressing the relationship to the life-world. Even clearer differences show up with the importance of relating to the parish. The extreme positions are found with Finland on the one hand and with Denmark on the other. In this case, Sweden comes close to Denmark.

A first conclusion from these observations (for a more detailed analysis cf. chapter 4.3) could be that the popular assumption of a »Nordic pattern« does not really hold true. It probably makes more sense to speak of different profiles or types that are realized in different countries. Denmark seems to be closest to the traditional model of the school or catechetical instruction while Finland has made the strongest move in the direction of making youth work the guiding model for confirmation work.

Does this impression also hold true when we take the responses from the confirmands as our lens? Figure 7 allows for a comparative view of these responses, based on selected indexes.

Figure 7: Results of confirmands' indexes in the seven countries



Again the picture shows both, a basic common structure but also many variations. The aspect of social orientation and activities is strongest in Finland and

weakest in Denmark (iCA1) – which fits very nicely with the aims of the workers above. The results also indicate that the experience of growth in faith can nevertheless be strong (cf. Denmark: iKB1). In many ways, Switzerland seems to be a special case which indicates that a different theological tradition (Reformed instead of Lutheran) and a different understanding of the relationship between confirmation and baptism (Switzerland is the only one of the participating countries involved that does not require baptism before confirmation) could make a difference – a hypothesis that should, however, be treated with much care because we have to assume that there are many other cultural factors involved as well. Yet even in the case of Switzerland, there is a fair amount of overlap with the values in other countries. Another question that cannot be taken up here, however, refers to differences within the countries themselves.

Concerning satisfaction, Finland and Sweden show the highest results. This goes along with a positive change in the confirmands' attitudes towards church and religion – a topic that is further discussed in chapter 4.5. A deeper analysis of the satisfaction of the confirmands is reported in Table 43. This table shows that confirmands in general are quite satisfied with their confirmation time. Aspects of community and the camps are considered the most precious parts of confirmation time in most of the countries involved.

Table 43: Satisfaction with different aspects in confirmation time in the seven countries

Item	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
KN01: the whole confirmation time	72 %	67 %	68 %	66 %	63 %	87 %	72 %	88 %
KN02: having fun	68 %	72 %	76 %	70 %	43 %	65 %	53 %	88 %
KN03: content/topics of lessons	58 %	49 %	48 %	52 %	66 %	81 %	60 %	76 %
KN04: feeling of community	77 %	71 %	69 %	73 %	83 %	88 %	82 %	86 %
KN07: minister / person primarily responsible for confirmation work	76 %	72 %	76 %	74 %	72 %	84 %	76 %	87 %
KN08: other teachers/workers	72 %	69 %	70 %	66 %	60 %	84 %	65 %	89 %
KN10: church services	52 %	47 %	47 %	43 %	44 %	73 %	52 %	65 %
KN11: camp(s)	77 %	73 %	69 %	76 %	66 %	86 %	76 %	91 %
KN13: prayers in the group	52 %	43 %	40 %	40 %	46 %	77 %	50 %	72 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	60 %	51 %	48 %	44 %	55 %	84 %	58 %	80 %

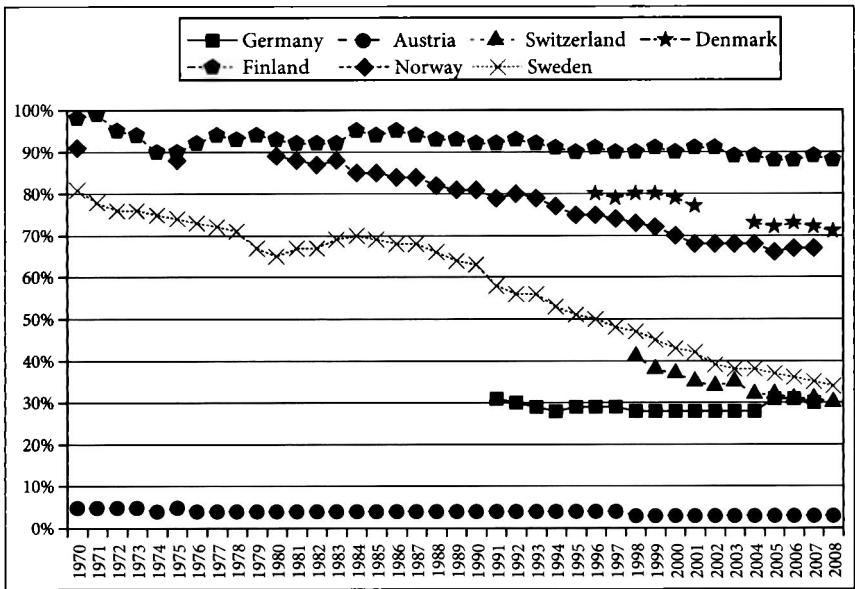
N = 15370-17904 (confirmands). Option 8 »we didn't have that« was used as a filter.

In sum: The general picture shows that there is indeed a basic common structure that justifies referring to »confirmation work in Europe«. At the same time, there clearly are different profiles corresponding to the different national and theological presuppositions, traditions and understandings. Yet none of the countries is unique. The general picture is a continuous mix of commonalities and differences.

4.2.2 Stability and Fragility of Confirmation Work in the Future

The present study shows that confirmation work is very successful in terms of the satisfaction of the confirmands as well as of the workers. Together with the centuries old tradition of this institution, this result could lead to the assumption that no one has to be worried about the future of confirmation work in Europe. Yet things are not quite so simple. On the one hand, the participation rates in the different countries provide additional evidence for the stability and scope of confirmation work – in some countries, most of all in Finland, we find participation rates of more than two thirds of the total population; on the other hand, the rates are obviously not stable over time, as Figure 8 shows impressingly.

Figure 8: Participation rates in the seven countries



Partly based on Niemelä 2008, 7.

The example of Sweden shows that the assumption of stability might be quite treacherous. Participation rates there went down from more than 80 % in 1970 to approximately 35 % in 2006. In Norway, the decline is less marked but it is also impressive – from close to 90 % in 1980 to approximately 65 % in 2006. These examples can remind us of the fact that the future of religious institutions should not be considered a given. As the country reports above express repeatedly, there are many worries about the future concerning confirmation work.

Some of the worries in the different countries refer to the general changes of society and culture. The effects of migration, urbanization, pluralisation and individualisation make themselves felt even in once isolated areas of rural Europe. Right now it is mostly in the urban areas where participation rates are decreasing. Is this indicative of the future for other parts of the countries as well? Given the demographic tendencies in Europe, it seems obvious that the absolute number of confirmands will become much smaller in the future. If the effects of migration continue as many analysts expect or even wish for, the confirmands will turn into a minority in places where they still form a majority today. Is confirmation work prepared for this challenge? This should not necessarily be taken as a threat. Future models of confirmation work could include dialogical elements that bring together young people with different religious backgrounds, possibly not only from the different Christian denominations but also from different religions.

Another worry is related to the competition for the time of the young people. Most of all the school has turned into a place that has much more to offer than just teaching and learning. Additional programmes and activities related to the school also imply time demands. The same is true for the increasing number of commercial offers or for other programmes in fields like sports or music. The changing shape of religious socialisation, in the family but also through the media, must also be taken into consideration here. Confirmation work is a limited programme that only lasts for a certain period of time. Will this time span be sufficient for reaching the aims of this programme if there is no (more) support from other institutions?

Although confirmation has lost most of its civil meaning in all of the countries involved, there are still some remnants of state approval concerning the pedagogical efforts of the Churches. The strongest support can be seen in Denmark where schools have their pupils go to the minister for two hours per week during school time (a tradition currently under debate). A weaker but legally guaranteed way of support exists in half of the German federal states, where one or two afternoons per week must be kept free of school obligations in order to give the Church the opportunity for doing confirmation work. How much such legal regulations depend on the historical background can be seen from the fact that none of the former (socialist and atheistic) GDR-states have such a rule whereas the majority of western German states do.

4.2.3 Adolescence and Social Modernisation as Homogenising Factors?

In addition to the influences from a shared Protestant tradition that account for the identity of confirmation work in different countries, we can also think of

more contemporary influences that operate as homogenising factors. In the first place, confirmation work in the participating countries is dealing with the same age group – adolescents around the age of 14 or 15. Moreover, all of the participating countries belong to the Western world that sociologists often describe as modern or postmodern. So it makes sense to ask if the influences of adolescence and social modernisation work towards a kind of homogeneity that has little to do with common aims. Instead, this homogeneity would be the more or less automatic consequence of the influence of modern adolescence. One can even wonder if such influences are so powerful that they can even override different aims, for example, because certain aims simply cannot be reached with today's Western adolescents.

The religious presuppositions that the adolescents bring with them to their confirmation time are indeed very similar across the different countries. As especially index iCB1 »Religious interest« shows the values in all of the countries are either between 3 and 4 or slightly above 4 (cf. Figure 7). Before the confirmation time, religious practice does not play a major role for the adolescents. This can also be seen from a number of the individual items. There is a fair amount of agreement among the adolescents in reference to personal religious outlooks and practices. The confirmands are rather not sure what to believe (33%; CE05). Only 11 % state that they often talk about God with others (CE06) which speaks for a privatised and not very communicative type of religion that is quite common in modern individualised societies. The flip-side of this individualisation can be seen from another response. Very few of the confirmands say that they are ashamed to tell their friends that they are taking part in confirmation work (6%; CE07). This fits with the view that everyone has a right to make his or her choices and that no one is entitled to criticise such choices. To some degree, this is not completely true for Austria. Here the share of those who feel at least sometimes ashamed to do so, rises from 8% in t_1 to 13% in t_2 (CE07/KE07). The reason behind this might be the minority situation of Protestant confirmands in a Catholic country like Austria.

While there can be no doubt that the age of the confirmands and the social and cultural situation in the Western world lead to some kind of homogeneity or at least to circumstances that can be compared in a meaningful way, this clearly is not the whole story. The comparative table with the national and international means shows a lot of variety (cf. appendix). The table presents all differences between the national and the corresponding international means that are bigger than 0.3. The great number of variations indicates that the presuppositions might be similar across the countries but that the experiences within confirmation work can still be very different, depending on how this work is carried out. This observation also is a first indication for the question of the effects of confirmation work that we will take up in the next section.

A view that is aware of the commonalities between young people in modern Western societies but is also open for the differences between them is in line with contemporary understandings in social theory. The time of general expectations of secularisation, for example, that assumed an irrevocable and indiscriminate loss of religion effective throughout the modern world, seems to be over. The theory of secularisation has been greatly modified and refined or has been given up altogether by many social scientists (cf. Berger 1999, Pollack 2003, Taylor 2007). More than in the past, we should expect different national or ecclesial traditions and practises to make a difference, with confirmation work no less than with other fields.

4.2.4 Does Confirmation Work Matter?

The title of this section is taken from Kati Niemelä's (2008) Finnish study that, for good reasons, is being quoted quite frequently in the present volume. Her study is the first example of a longitudinal approach in the context of confirmation work. It shows that, even many years after confirmation, there are positive effects. The present study does not include longitudinal data. Yet with the t_1 - t_2 -design it allows at least for some insights into the effects of confirmation work (cf. chapter 4.5). Moreover, it includes a number of items that indicate in which ways confirmation work can matter for the Church as well as for society (cf. chapter 4.7).

In the present context we focus on differences between t_1 and t_2 . The following values present the means of the individual differences in the responses of the confirmands for each country and for all of the interviews:

Table 44: Mean differences between t_1 and t_2 in the seven countries

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
DIFF_CE01: God created the world.	0.05	-0.02	-0.23	0.06	0.00	0.30	0.05	0.24
DIFF_CE02: There is life after death.	0.27	0.25	0.09	-0.02	0.17	0.49	0.13	0.28
DIFF_CE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us	0.17	0.05	-0.15	0.04	0.11	0.60	0.12	0.52
DIFF_CE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.	0.28	0.21	0.01	0.14	0.16	0.59	0.31	0.45
DIFF_CE05: I am not sure what I should believe.	-0.05	0.02	-0.04	-0.12	-0.26	-0.05	-0.01	-0.28
DIFF_CE06: I often talk about God with other people.	0.24	0.19	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.31	0.39	0.41
DIFF_CE07: Sometimes I am ashamed to tell my friends that I am taking part in confirmation training.	0.09	0.12	0.31	0.19	0.11	-0.14	0.21	0.12

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE
DIFF_CE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.	0.22	0.13	-0.05	0.24	0.11	0.53	0.17	0.52
DIFF_CE09: I believe in God.	0.10	0.00	-0.12	0.02	0.00	0.40	0.08	0.50
DIFF_CE10: I know what the Christian faith entails.	0.62	0.49	0.27	0.45	0.93	0.76	0.53	1.13
DIFF_CE11: I try to live according to the Ten Commandments.	0.31	0.25	-0.18	0.19	0.16	0.56	0.20	0.63
DIFF_CE12: By the end of the confirmation time I definitely want to be confirmed.	0.12	0.03	-0.05	0.03	0.05	0.44	0.00	0.38
DIFF_CG01: It is important for me to belong to the Church.	0.31	0.26	0.07	0.39	0.26	0.29	0.34	0.67
DIFF_CG02: The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me.	0.18	0.21	0.15	0.27	0.12	0.02	0.34	0.18
DIFF_CG03: If I will have children, I want to have them baptised.	0.04	0.04	-0.18	0.02	-0.07	0.15	-0.13	0.09
DIFF_CG04: Church services are usually boring.	0.21	0.26	0.58	0.09	0.01	-0.09	0.30	0.44
DIFF_CG05: The Church does a lot of good things for the people.	0.17	0.11	-0.07	0.23	0.22	0.28	0.20	0.33
DIFF_CG06: If I should have personal problems, I would turn to a minister.	0.24	0.21	0.16	0.33	0.12	0.40	0.13	0.41
DIFF_CG07: Our church building means a lot to me.	0.20	0.18	-0.09	0.26	-0.02	0.29	0.29	0.40
DIFF_CG08: I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation.	0.48	0.41	0.38	0.23	0.18	1.12	0.11	0.60

The table displays the mean of individual differences, computed as t_2 -value minus t_1 -value. Only matched cases were used.

The means describing the changes between t_1 and t_2 are generally positive. There are only three exceptions concerning religious practise where there is a very slight change to the negative. The strongest positive change concerns knowing the Christian faith (increase of 0.62; DIFF_CE10). Also very strong (0.48) is the increase with DIFF_CG08: »I would be interested in taking part in a Christian youth group after confirmation«. With 0.31 the increase is also remarkable for DIFF_CG01: »It is important for me to belong to the Church«. This corresponds with a better image of the Church: DIFF_CG05: »The Church does a lot of good things for the people« (increase of .17). It is also noteworthy that a number of the items referring to personal faith – for example DIFF_CE04: »Jesus has risen from the dead« (increase of .28) – clearly change from t_1 to t_2 .

In the absence of other data or results it is, of course, difficult to say if these changes are »big« or »small«, »satisfactory« or »disappointing«. Changes that refer to religious attitudes and orientations probably are slow to come in general. Not too much should be expected from the limited time period of confirmation work. Yet we could also say that the results are encouraging, at least on the whole – especially when taking into account that the confirmands typically are at an age when many young people increasingly distance themselves from faith and the church. Confirmation work does matter.

It should not be overlooked, however, that the increases between t_1 and t_2 also include two attitudes that are very critical for the Church: DIFF_CG04: »Church services are usually boring« (increase: .21) and DIFF_CG02: »The Church does not have answers to the questions that are important for me« (increase: .18). In this case, the effects of confirmation work are certainly not the intended ones.

As pointed out repeatedly in this volume, the results of the present study should be seen as a starting point for new and additional efforts of the Churches to renew their confirmation work. Moreover, there are a number of questions that deserve special attention in future work. At the end of this chapter, we want to state at least three of these questions. The first question refers to the aims of confirmation work. As has become obvious, these aims can be different in the countries involved in the present study. What role could the empirical data gathered in this study play for the definition of such aims? The second question is about the organisational models and the resources used in confirmation work. Are they in line with the aims stated for this work? The third question refers to short-term as well as to long-term effects of confirmation work. Which factors are important for supporting the positive effects of confirmation work, right after confirmation but also in the longer run? And how can the influences of family, school, peers, the media, etc. be taken into account with such attempts?