

VII. Methodology

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This chapter offers an overview on the second international study on confirmation work in Europe. While the results of this study are presented in the preceding parts of the book, the emphasis in the following will be on the research questions, the design and the procedures of the project. As the methodology has remained the same as in the first study, some parts of this chapter refer to the methodology chapter in the earlier volume (Schweitzer et al. 2010, 32-48).

The introduction to this book provides a basic description of the study that will not be repeated here in detail. In order to make it possible that the present chapter can be read independently, however, some basic information must be given again.

1. Background, Research Questions, Design

The second study on confirmation work was planned as a continuation of the first study conducted in 2007/2008 on the one hand, and was intended to go beyond it by including different and additional questions on the other. In the first place, the new focus refers to the time after confirmation, especially concerning the transition from being a confirmand to becoming a volunteer. The results and the methodological aspects concerning the time after confirmation, however, are not reported in this volume but will be published in another book in the present series. Additional questions that were integrated in t_1 and t_2 , refer to worship services and how the confirmands experience them. This topic was identified as a special challenge in the first study which is why the second study aims at deeper insights in this respect by including additional items.

The present volume then has its focus on a repeated study which, for the first time in the field of confirmation work, makes possible comparisons over time. In other words, the main question refers to a comparison between the results of the two studies conducted in 2007/2008 and 2012/2013. Having data from the two studies greatly improves the possibilities for valid interpretations. As long as interpretations cannot be based on earlier data or on other external references, they will always be in danger of viewing certain results as »high« or

»low«, without being able to base this view on empirical evidence. Consequently, all judgments concerning tendencies or developments remain to some degree arbitrary or at least preliminary. In this respect, researching confirmation work repeatedly means a big step forward towards reliable insights. Comparative evaluations can now be based on reliable data.

The main aim of the first study was to achieve an empirically based description of the practise of confirmation work in Europe from the perspective of the confirmands as well as of the workers. The results were published in 2010 (Schweitzer et al. 2010). An important feature of that study were the questionnaires used at the beginning and at the end of confirmation time. This design avoided the weaknesses of snapshot-type surveys which are still fairly typical for many studies on youth and religion. Another basic decision concerned the representative character of the study and the corresponding samples. This is also true for the second study with its considerable samples that make this study one of the largest studies on youth in Europe available so far (t_1 : 27 969; t_2 : 23 974). The basic design of the second study follows that of the first study, most of all with its t_1 - t_2 -design. In addition to this, a third wave of questionnaires was introduced, concerning the attitudes of former confirmands two years after confirmation. The introduction of a third wave of questionnaires (t_3) follows the interest in the long-term consequences of confirmation work, among others for young people's relationship to the church.

The first international study was conducted in seven countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland (canton Zurich). In order to also include experiences from different situations, the second study was broadened further. In addition to the countries of the first study that took part in the second study as well, Hungary and Poland joined the second study, and this time all Swiss cantons could be included. Moreover, with the Methodists in Germany (Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche/EmK) which is not a regional church but a so-called free or independent church with parishes all over the country (cf. p. 280ff.), the second study allows for comparisons between different church structures in relationship to confirmation work.

The interest in making possible comparisons over time implies that many of the items from the first study had to be retained. Comparisons are only reliable if items do not change. At the same time, the new questions in the second study made additional items necessary. This is why some items had to be dropped and new items had to be developed. Items from the first study that proved hard to interpret or less meaningful than expected were taken out. New items were developed after extensive deliberation among the international team of researchers as well as in consultation with other experts from the field. The resulting questionnaires were again submitted to pretests with confirmands.

The first part of the study reported in this volume was conducted in 2012

(t_1)/2013 (t_2), the last part in summer 2015 (t_3). A graphic description of the different parts of the study as well as a table which presents the sample can be found in the introduction (p. 26).

2. Questionnaires

The study used a quantitative approach with paper questionnaires. Questionnaires were filled in at two points of time by the confirmands and by the workers. In some countries, structural information on the parishes was collected beforehand (t_0).

There are two different numbering systems for the items. Each questionnaire has an ascending question-number, mainly for the use of those who complete the questionnaires. As the questionnaires differ slightly in each country, these ascending numbers could not be standardised for all countries. The item-names that are used for the interpretation of the data, consist of two letters and a two-digit number, e. g., WB07. The first letter indicates the questionnaire (cf. Figure 61 on p. 342):

C = confirmands t_1	K = confirmands t_2	Q = confirmands t_3
W = workers t_1	V = workers t_2	

The second letter indicates the section within the questionnaire. Sections with the same second letter in t_1 and t_2 correspond with each other, for example, CE01 corresponds with KE01. The section-letters between confirmands and workers, however, are independent from each other. All data have been computed in such a way that they can be linked to the respective group. Due to this, it is, for example, possible to relate the methods named by the workers to the feedback of the adolescents. In some countries, the parish is not always the appropriate framework for describing a local confirmation work setting. The setting can also be a camp where confirmands come together from different regions (as it often is the case in Sweden). Thus, in the international context, the framework for one coherent confirmation work group (i. e., workers and »their« group of confirmands) is called a »unit«. The units are relevant especially for the analysis at the group level, for example, if effects of confirmation time on the confirmands are analysed against the influence of methods or structures (Is a camp included in confirmation time? Are there voluntary workers cooperating with the staff?, etc.).

All questionnaires were printed in the languages of the participating countries. Because all members of the team speak English, this language was chosen

for common communication. This allowed for direct exchange within the team but the translations always required an intermediate step from English into the vernacular. Experts in each country translated the questionnaires into their language from the common English versions, also making sure that confirmands could understand the wording. Some items turned out to be not appropriate for specific countries and consequently were left out; these are called »country-specific« items. For some areas of special interest, the four Nordic countries as well as Switzerland incorporated additional items for their contexts. Altogether, the questionnaires in the different countries share more than 80% of their items. They are identical concerning the layout and the order of item-sections. An English version of all questionnaires is available on the internet (www.confirmation-research.eu). One exemplary questionnaire (confirmands t_2) is printed on pp. 395-398 of this book.

Two special cases have to be noted as exceptions to the general set-up of the study. First, as reported below, in Poland it was not possible to have the workers complete the questionnaires. Consequently, the study only includes data from the confirmands there. Second, due to special circumstances, the data from Hungary became available much later than the data from the other countries. This is why they could not be included in the calculation of international means. In the appendix as well as in the tables and figures throughout the book, a double line separating the Hungarian data from the other results indicates this difference.

Finally, the results from territorial Churches and from the EmK (German Methodists) as a Church with different structures as described above (p. 280 ff.) raise special questions concerning possible comparisons. For this reason, the Methodist data were also not included with the calculation of international means. In the tables and figures they are presented after the double line, together with the Hungarian data.

3. Setup of the Samples in the Countries

3.1 General Description

Gaining a representative sample of confirmands was the aim for the selection of the samples in all the countries. As the situation in the countries involved differs concerning the existence of databases on parishes, appropriate procedures had to be chosen by the individual country teams and are reported in the following. For all the countries involved the procedure was such, that a selection of parishes – in some countries, all parishes – received an invitation to participate

in the study. In the parishes willing to take part in the study, the questionnaires were handed out to all confirmands of the cohort heading for confirmation in 2013. In addition, all workers in the parishes selected filled in a workers' questionnaire (with the exception of Poland). As the setting of filling in the questionnaires usually was a classroom-type situation, typically all confirmands and workers were reached, only with few exceptions of those who were sick on that day. Filling in the questionnaires (about 80 items) took less than 20 minutes. It was done on a voluntary basis, but only very few of the confirmands and workers refused to fill in their questionnaires. In contrast to studies where questionnaires are sent out to anyone willing to answer, this method of a full survey in a random sample of parishes guarantees for covering the whole range of confirmands, those that are highly satisfied as well as those who dislike their confirmation time. Through different measures (anonymous codes, rules for the re-collection of the questionnaires by confirmands and not by the minister, etc.) it was made sure that the confirmands could state their real opinions without having to be afraid that the ministers could attribute critical answers to specific persons.

Participation in the study was voluntary for the parishes. In all the countries, there was a dropout of the parishes willing to participate from t_1 to t_2 . Typically the reasons for these dropouts were unsystematic, like a change in the person responsible for confirmation work or simply the feeling of the people involved that, due to an overload of work, they could not manage to continue with the study. It is assumed that these dropouts follow no specific pattern so that they would not affect the representativity of the parishes involved.

An overview on the samples is printed on p. 25.

In the following, procedures in the participating countries are described in more detail.

3.2 Germany

All 19 territorial Churches («Landeskirchen») of the »Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland« (EKD) participated in the study, only the Reformed Church (which is not a territorial Church) did not take part. The territorial Churches vary in size very much, with a range from 180 confirmands up to 33 242 confirmands. As every church received an individual data report on the results, representativity was an aim for each of these regional Churches. Each Church delivered a list of all its parishes along with descriptive data like the parish size or regional information. An external social science institute (GESIS – Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften) then drew a random sample out of these parishes. The parishes of the first study had the same chance to be selected again as all the other parishes.

Out of the 14769 parishes of the EKD, a random selection of 1299 parishes received an invitation letter to participate in the study (8.8% of the total). Via phonecalls, the invitation to participate was repeated after some weeks. 45% of the selected parishes were not able or not willing to participate, for example, because they had no confirmands in the current confirmation period or did not agree to participate. The other 55% (710 parishes) received the t_1 -questionnaires in autumn 2012, out of which 583 finally took part in the study. This means a return rate of 45% of the originally drawn sample and 82% of the parishes that had received t_1 -questionnaires. Altogether 3.9% of all parishes in the EKD took part in the study. It can be assumed that the sample of these 583 parishes is highly representative of all German parishes. In addition, the sample allows for representative results for each territorial Church.

Very small regional Churches were oversampled in the total in order to receive a sufficient number of confirmands involved in the study. The same applies for some Churches with an interest in a higher number of questionnaires for a more reliable report for their regional Church. The overall German results were weighted according to the proportion of the regional Churches.

The task of questionnaire handling (printing, sending, data transcription) was performed by a specialised company (Computer nach Maß), the same procedure with this company also applied for Austria and Switzerland.

3.3 Austria

The 2012/2013 study was carried out by the »Evangelische Kirche in Österreich«. An invitation letter was sent via mail to all 205 parishes. 3 of 9 Reformed (»Evangelische Kirche H.B.«) and 25 of 196 Lutheran (»Evangelische Kirche A.B.«) parishes signed up for participation in this study. 7 parishes, which took part in the study in 2007/2008, agreed to participate again. Only one parish was lost after t_0 . The participating parishes are representative for the Austrian situation concerning the following parameters:

- rural, urban and mixed area,
- minority and non-minority situations (in some regions there exists a Protestant majority),
- historical background (Edict-of-Tolerance-parishes, Away-from-Rome-Movement, foundation after World War II in consequence of immigration, suburban development areas).

The size of a confirmation group in Austria varies between 2 and 50 confirmands. In the year 2013, 2488 young people celebrated their confirmation and about 500, i. e., one fifth of them, were included in the study.

Working closely with the research team at the University of Tübingen and the Comenius-Institute in Münster, Austria used the same questionnaires for confirmands and workers as in Germany, with only some country-specific alterations, for example, concerning school types. The data were electronically registered and processed by the German research team.

3.4 Switzerland

In preparing the study at the beginning of 2012, all cantonal Churches were asked to participate in the study. All of the 24 cantonal Churches not only agreed to this but also named a contact person for supporting the study. The Swiss team decided to do a complete inventory count due to the fact that the cantonal Churches and the research team saw this as a chance to draw attention to the whole project in all the parishes. The cantonal Churches delivered lists of all parishes with contact addresses of the main responsible persons, who typically were not the ministers but the heads of the local church councils. In spring 2012, these persons received a letter in which they were invited to take part in the study. About a third of the almost 1400 parishes reacted positively to the invitation and were willing to take part.

Due to the fact that in each cantonal Church a person was chosen to accompany the study and encouraged the ministers and groups to be part of the project, it is by no means that only well-meaning workers or parishes with a positive attitude participated in the study. On the other hand, the commitment depended strongly on the knowledge and inner-cantonal publicity of the study, provided by those cantonal contact persons.

This means that German, French and also Italian speaking parishes were included. The cantonal Churches vary in size very much, with Bern and Zurich as the largest and also some Churches with only a very few parishes. The main part of participating parishes are located in the German speaking parts of Switzerland, from the Italian speaking area only one parish contributed, mostly because in this area the Catholic Church is more dominant. From the French speaking parishes, which with around 150 parishes comprise a bit more than 10% of all Swiss Reformed parishes, also about a third reacted positively. The mixture from urban, rural and mixed backgrounds of parishes is warranted, although the participation was voluntary.

In setting up the questionnaires and especially in translating them into French, some important differences in meaning, content and also in length of confirmation work had to be considered, which was also supported by the bilingual cantonal contact persons.

It can be assumed that the sample of the 477 (t_1) and 427 (t_2) participating parishes is highly representative of all Swiss parishes. In addition, the sample allows for representative results for at least the larger cantonal Churches. In t_1 , 7217 confirmands and 905 workers participated, the corresponding figures in t_2 were 6437 and 688.

The Swiss data-sets were processed by the Tübingen team, as the data-collecting-process concerning timelines followed the German model in most parts. The questionnaire handling was performed by a specialised company (Computer nach Maß). The overall Swiss results were weighted according to the proportion of the regional Churches.

3.5 Denmark

For most confirmands in Denmark, confirmation takes place in March, April, and May after seven to nine months of confirmation work, which normally starts in August or September the year before. In order to study the confirmands of 2013, the first questionnaire was sent out in September 2012 and the second questionnaire in April 2013. For data collection a variation of the cluster sampling technique was used. Of the 114 deaneries in Denmark one deanery from each of the ten dioceses was selected in order to cover the theological geography of the Church. All parishes in each of these ten deaneries were invited to participate in the study. There are some difficulties identifying the most relevant unit. Some parishes have more than one pastor and other parishes need to share one pastor. There are 236 parishes in these ten deaneries, but as some of them share the same minister, they were invited en bloc. A total of 97 invitations were sent out, but in some parishes the minister's position turned out to be vacant at the time and some pastors were suffering from long-term illness and did not respond. Responses were received from 61 ministers (covering almost twice as many parishes). The questionnaires were sent to the ministers who distributed them during confirmation classes. The number of confirmands in the parishes varied from a single confirmand to 145 confirmands. A total of 2024 confirmands filled in the first questionnaire.

In addition to the general difficulties with having people fill in questionnaires twice, the t_2 rounds of questionnaires suffered from a teachers' strike. Although confirmation work takes place during school time in Denmark, it is independent from the school. However, a lot of the confirmands connect school with confirmation work and thus did not attend classes, and the response rate suffered as a consequence of this. Only 70% of the parishes that participated in the first round also participated in the second, with an overall response rate of 53% of the original invited sample. 1507 questionnaires from the second round

were collected, and 727 of them could be matched (48 % of t_2), although 994 confirmands state that they remember filling in the first questionnaire for potential matching of 66 %.

3.6 Finland

In Finland, the 2012/2013 study was conducted by the Church Research Institute. The sample of parishes was selected by the researchers in collaboration with the staff of the Church Council of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The t_1 questionnaires were sent to the parishes in November 2012 and for t_2 in February 2013. Altogether 2436 confirmands, 510 volunteers and 169 main responsible workers replied in t_1 and 2298 confirmands, 506 volunteers and 156 main responsible workers in t_2 . Volunteers and main responsible workers had separate t_2 questionnaires but t_1 was integrated, although there were a large number of country-specific items for the volunteers. The country-specific items investigated the attitudes and work of the young confirmed volunteers (YCVs) participating in the confirmation groups together with the main responsible workers and confirmands because they are an important institution in the Finnish confirmation work.

The sample included confirmands, volunteers and main responsible workers from 13 parishes and one Christian association. Altogether, the sample consisted of 111 confirmation groups (= units). The Finnish confirmands were equally divided between males and females. The split of respondents for the questionnaire was likewise even (50%/50%). Most (98%) confirmands were 14 to 15 years old. About 6% of all the confirmands in Finland participate in the confirmation work organised by Christian associations and revival movements. In the sample there were 4.5% of the confirmands in t_1 and 6.5% in t_2 who participated in confirmation work organised by a Christian association. 10.3% of the respondents in t_1 and 10.7% in t_2 belonged to the Swedish minority, which is more than their share of the confirmands overall.

Comparing the results of this study to the previous study from 2007/2008, major changes can be observed. Some of these changes may be due to the fact that the parishes that took part in the new study are different. However, in both cases the sample includes the same share of small countryside parishes and large city parishes in different parts of the country, and the differences between the units do not seem to explain the changes. Because similar results can be found in other studies that took place in Finland at the same time as the present study, the results can be regarded as reliable and caused by the general changes concerning the relationship to the Church in Finland. The sample can be regarded as quite representative.

3.7 Norway

The aim of the study was to include 2915 confirmands, approximately 7% of the confirmands from each diocese in the Church of Norway. Based on the selection from the 2007/2008 study, a total of 65 parishes were initially invited to participate, the selection criteria being geographical differences and the different »religious landscapes« in the dioceses. Initial contact was made by a letter of invitation that included a recommendation from the head person of the bishops in the Church of Norway. Further contact was made by telephone. In the process, parishes from a surplus standby-selection were included to remain representative in all dioceses. In total, 79 parishes (or organisational units gathering several rather small parishes) were contacted, 19 of which declined to participate. In the end, the total figure for the confirmands was 3215, the smallest confirmation group counting 13 confirmands, the largest 230. Of these, 2337 questionnaires (73%), were received in t_1 and 2166 (67%) in t_2 . 38 parishes from the 2007/2008 study are included in the sample from 2012/2013. The study was registered with and approved by Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD). Data processing was carried out by the company Viascan AS.

3.8 Sweden

The Church participating in the Swedish study was the Church of Sweden. The Church of Sweden is regulated by Swedish law to be a country-based Church organised in more than 1000 parishes that together equals the territory within the Swedish borders. In order to achieve a representative sample that makes it possible to generalise concerning the population of confirmands and workers in the Church of Sweden, the first step of the sampling strategy included selecting a random sample of parishes. This was accomplished by using the comprehensive database of parishes which the Church of Sweden maintains as a sample frame. Out of all parishes, 238 parishes were randomly selected. The selected sample of parishes was invited to participate in the study. In total, 80 parishes chose to answer this invitation positively and all of them were included in the study. The response rate for this first call was 34%. When agreeing to participate, the parishes gave an estimate on how many confirmands and workers they would have at the respective time. Based on these estimates, the number of questionnaires was calculated. For confirmands the total number of questionnaires was 2958, whereas for workers the total number of questionnaires was 1082. Of the 2958 confirmands, 1381 chose to answer the questionnaire giving the t_1 study a response rate of 47%. In the case of the workers, 357 of the in total 1082 workers answered the t_1 study (33%). In comparison with the t_1 study, the

participation rates for t_2 study were lower. In total, 779 of the confirmands (26% of the population) and 202 of the workers (19% of the population) participated. No in depth analysis was performed in order to find out if there was any selection bias concerning the parishes, confirmands and workers that chose to participate or not to participate. However, there are no indications in the data that suggest they would not reflect the general population and Church of Sweden.

3.9 Poland

This was the very first study about confirmation work in the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (Lutheran Church in Poland, Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski w RP). Before the survey started, it had to be endorsed by the Church consistory (by the bishop of the Church as well as by the diocesan bishops). The survey was financially supported by the Church. In 2012, every diocese of the Church was visited by the researcher who attended diocesan meetings of the ministers, informing them about the international study. Its goals, details, target group, expected outcomes, and deadlines for the questionnaires were introduced to the participants. After that, each parish minister decided himself if he wanted to take part in the study or not. However, they were not willing to fill out worker questionnaires. All parishes of the Church received a letter of invitation for participation in the study. This invitation was repeated after some weeks via phone. Confirmand questionnaires were sent to all parishes willing to participate. Some parishes were not able to participate, for example, because they had no confirmands at the time, others just were not willing to participate.

The Lutheran Church in Poland has 133 parishes, 50% of them had no confirmands in 2013. 30.8% of the parishes in Poland responded to the t_1 questionnaire and 27.5% in t_2 . All six dioceses of the Church were represented in the survey.

Parishes in Poland vary in size very much, with a range from 60 confirmands down to 1 confirmand in minority contexts. In the parishes that answered the questionnaire, the average number of confirmands is between 4 and 7. The majority of the confirmands live in small towns.

3.10 Hungary

A total of 943 confirmands and 134 workers from altogether 160 congregations responded at least in one or both rounds of the questionnaires. The participat-

ing parishes from the Reformed Church in Hungary were selected by disproportionate stratified random sampling by the 27 presbyteries (i. e., dioceses) and by settlement types. Although the capital Budapest is divided in two presbyteries, these were merged for sampling purposes. Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Methodist Church the total population was reached, that is, all parishes were approached where confirmation groups were presumably available. In line with the agreed international sampling procedures, participating parishes were requested to survey all confirmands in the groups for which the confirmation service was scheduled for spring 2013. However, it was not possible to control selection of the individual respondents.

A large number of congregations from all three denominations withdrew from participation. Very few indicated that they were not willing to be surveyed, and some, especially in minor settlements, replied that no confirmands were present or only in such a low number that the parish was unable to start a confirmation group either in the year of the study or already for a longer period. A considerable share of the parishes addressed did not respond at all. The low response rate and high share of drop-outs reflected the unexpectedly low level of trust and extreme workload of ministers in charge of confirmation work.

Sampling issues and response rates certainly raise questions concerning the validity, reliability and generalisability of the results. As the first large-scale survey of its kind, the study bears a good face-validity and mirrors certain Hungarian specificities which are known from everyday practice. Thus, it is arguable that the results provide a good basis for international comparison. However, high refusal and non-response rates imply that the confidence level cannot be measured. That is why also cross-denominational comparisons were not undertaken. It is a further problem that there are no reliable church-wide congregational-level statistical data available on the topic for proper sampling or comparison. Detailed results of diocesan annual data collections are treated as confidential and these are not available even for the Synod offices (only cumulate tables are public).

As the timing of the Hungarian study was different from the rest of the international study, the Hungarian results are not fully integrated in the total results, but stand for themselves (see pp. 331, 341).

3.11 The EmK Germany (Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche)

The Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche (EmK) in Germany, which is a part of the worldwide United Methodist Church (UMC), participated in a study on confirmation work («Kirchlicher Unterricht«, KU) for the very first time. In

2014, the EmK nationwide had 53 500 members and affiliates in 520 local congregations, grouped in 245 circuits, obviously one of the minority Churches in Germany. Because of the small total sample, the study was carried out as a nationwide full-scale survey.

In t_0 (2012) the questionnaires were sent to all EmK circuits nationwide. There was feedback from 226 (92%), 166 (73%) of them stated that they conduct KU (Methodist confirmation work is called *Kirchlicher Unterricht*), some in regional cooperation. 99 units participated in the study. In t_0 the KU leaders stated a total of 1048 confirmands. In t_1 the study involved 761 confirmands and 138 workers from 89 units. In t_2 628 confirmands and 114 workers from 89 units filled in the questionnaires. These response rates provide a solid basis for statistical analysis of the assembled data.

Since the EmK has a two-year curriculum for KU, in t_2 the confirmands had to be grouped in two cohorts, celebrating their confirmation (*Einsegnung*) either in 2013 (t_{2a}) or 2014 (t_{2b}). While the EmK study followed the international research schedule as much as possible, in t_2 the inquiry needed to be divided up in two points of time, in order to achieve a sufficient number of cases. In t_{2a} all participating parishes were addressed; in t_{2b} only those with *Einsegnung* in 2014. This is why the number of KU units involved differs between t_{2a} (89 units) and t_{2b} (62 units).

Due to the special situation and structure of the EmK, the EmK results are not fully integrated in the total results, but stand for themselves (see pp. 331, 341).

4. Handling and Presentation of the Data

As described for the different countries above in more detail, the confirmands were asked to fill in the questionnaires in each parish, usually during a group meeting. Completing the questionnaires was voluntary for the confirmands as well as for the workers and parents. All of them were assured that the results would be anonymous. The respective codes of ethics and judicial guidelines were observed.

All questionnaires were recorded either manually or by a scanning system into the software SPSS. Plausibility analyses were performed, for example, to exclude questionnaires in which a confirmand had ticked the same box for all answers. These analyses, but also the feedback from workers in the groups, affirm that most confirmands were indeed very open to the questions and felt taken seriously by the questions about their experiences and opinions.

Technically, all data were stored in three different SPSS-data sets: a data set for the confirmands, a data set for the workers, and a data set on the unit level

storing structural data for each unit as well as the mean values of all confirmands' and all workers' items for the unit (aggregated data). Where there was only one leader per unit, his or her answers on the leaders' questionnaire were taken as structural data for this unit. In a unit with several leaders, a mean value of their answers was computed for the unit level data set. Most of the items in the study are listed with their detailed results in the appendix of this book (p. 363 ff.). Due to the large number of items, though, only the items with the (usually 7-point) Likert-scales typically used in the study are documented. Additional items, that were used only in selected countries, are not reported in the appendix.

The results in the appendix display all results for the individual countries as well as for the Total. The Total comprises the data from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, and is weighted according to the number of confirmands in these countries. In other words, the Total mirrors the average answer of all confirmands in the named countries. Due to reasons explained above, the data from Hungary and the EmK were not integrated into the Total. This is the reason, why these results are printed in two separate columns in the appendix marked off by the double line.

5. Comparisons

The data from the present study allow for a number of comparisons: between the beginning and the end of confirmation time; between the results from the study conducted in 2007/2008 and the study from 2012/2013; between the results from different countries.

5.1 Comparisons between the Beginning and the End of Confirmation Time

The study worked with two sets of questionnaires, one in the beginning of confirmation time, the second one shortly before the day of confirmation. While it was possible to do the second round of interviews at the same time in all of the locations, the different durations of the confirmation time (between one and two years) created a problem concerning the first round of interviews that could not be solved. If all of the first interviews would have been done at the beginning of the confirmation time, the interval between t_1 and t_2 would have been very different. This is why t_1 was set for about 9 months (if possible) prior to t_2 thus mirroring the situation in the beginning phase of confirmation time

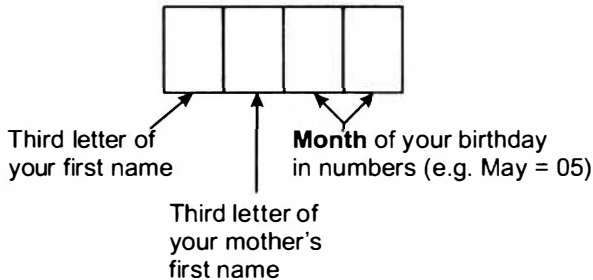
for some parishes and the situation »half way through« confirmation time in others (for the special way of t_2 data collection in the EmK see 280 ff.).

There are two kinds of correspondence between t_1 and t_2 :

- Items concerning personal attitudes towards faith and church have exactly the same wording in t_1 and t_2 . The difference between both indicates a change of attitude during confirmation time. These items can be found mainly in sections CE/KE, CF/KF and CG/KG.
- Other items relate an expectation (t_1) to an experience (t_2), like »During the time of my confirmation training it is important for me ... to have a lot of fun« (CK05) – »During my confirmation time ... I had a lot of fun« (KK05). These items can be found mainly in CB/KB, CK/KK and CS/KS for the confirmands and WB/VB, WC/VC and WD/VD for the workers. It is noteworthy that not all of the expectations are matched with a respective experience and vice versa.

The individual matching of the questionnaires of t_1 and t_2 was based on an anonymous code which remained the same over time (cf. Figure 61). This method makes it possible, for example, to analyse, on an individual level, the statements of those adolescents whose interest in youth groups increases strongly against those with whom it decreases. Altogether 16991 pairs of t_1 - t_2 confirmands' questionnaires could be matched, accounting for 74% of all 23 039 t_2 -questionnaires. The exact percentages of questionnaires matched are given in the respective country reports. The use of the anonymous code has proven to be a very helpful technique. Most of the confirmands were able and willing to fill it in. As the code is invariant over lifetime, it is one of the easiest methods to match questionnaires individually without asking for the person's name.

Figure 61: Anonymous code (in some countries the layout was different)



As the matching rates certainly do not reach 100%, the existence of matched and non-matched questionnaires allows for two ways of presenting data. On the one hand, it is possible to compare the overall results in t_1 and t_2 for all

questionnaires. On the other hand, the comparisons between t_1 and t_2 become more precise if only matched cases are used because this guarantees for the same data base in t_1 and t_2 . In this book, results for all questionnaires are usually presented. Only when it comes to specific questions about changes from t_1 to t_2 , are the results based on »matched cases only« and can thus deviate slightly from the overall values. Practically, the difference between using all questionnaires and only the matched ones is not really that great as Table 85 shows for an exemplary item.

Table 85: Comparison between results of all vs. »matched only« questionnaires for CG01/KG01

CG01/KG01: It is important for me to belong to the Church.	N (all)	Mean (all)	N (matched only)	Mean (matched only)
CG01 (t_1)	26067	3.84	16674	3.97
KG01 (t_2)	22614	4.08	16674	4.13
Difference of mean values		(0.24; not used)		0.16

5.2 Comparisons between the Results from the Study Conducted in 2007/2008 and the Study From 2012/2013

Another major interest guiding the present study was to make possible comparisons over time. With the two parallel studies from 2007/2008 and 2012/2013, for the first time suitable data for such comparisons became available. In order to make sure that valid comparisons would be feasible, a number of steps had to be taken:

- The design of the two studies had to be identical.
- The samples in the different countries had to be as representative as possible.
- The questionnaires had to include identical questions – a requirement that the project fulfilled with about 60% of the items.

Another challenge arises from the question how differences can be interpreted. In other words, what can be considered the threshold beyond which differences can be considered meaningful? In order to be consistent and follow transparent procedures it was decided that usually only differences of 3 or more percent points should be reported. Smaller differences can be taken as an indication of the possible direction of certain tendencies or developments but must be viewed as below the margins of robust results.

Comparisons could only be done concerning the countries that took part in both studies (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and, in the case of Switzerland, the canton Zurich). As far as comparisons are based on totals it was made sure that only the data from these countries were included in the calculations.

5.3 Comparisons between the Results from Different Countries

For an international project like the present one, international comparison naturally is one of the leading intentions. Making sure that the preconditions for such comparisons would be fulfilled, was, consequently, a constant aim of the whole study.

From the beginning, the emerging discussion on comparative religious education was taken up (cf. Schweitzer et al. 2010, 207-211, 212-221, also see Schweitzer 2013). On a more concrete level, the following steps were taken:

- As far as possible, the same or at least comparable procedures were followed in all participating countries and Churches. It has to be said, however, that this possibility was limited, due to the different situations and circumstances in the different locations.
- The team of researchers proceeded in line with agreements on details of the study (data handling, etc.) that were made during the regular international meetings of the group or through internet-based exchanges.
- It was important not to just use the data for comparative evaluation without paying heed to the different contexts from which they come. Contextually sensitive interpretation was another guiding principle.

For international comparison, the same margin of a minimum of 3 percent points was used for defining meaningful differences. This applied to international comparisons for developments over time, i. e., between the two studies conducted in 2007/228 and 2012/2013, as well as for comparisons between individual countries or Churches.

6. Indexes

Indexes are computed in order to facilitate analyses and comparisons and to improve the validity of interpretations. The present indexes were created by using factor analysis (Varimax with rotation). They are computed as the mean values of all the items enclosed in the index. Only indexes with Cronbach Alpha > 0.7 for the whole dataset and additionally with Cronbach Alpha > 0.6 in each of the participating countries were used. The index-name starts with an »i«, followed by two letters indicating the relevant item-section and a number (e. g., iCB1). The complete list of all indexes is given below. The overall Cronbach Alpha is stated in brackets. Cronbach Alpha for the individual countries is reported in Table 86. The results of the indexes of each country are printed in the appendix (p. 363 ff.).

iCB1

Faith related motives (t_1) (0.80)

- CB01: to learn more about God and faith.
- CB03: to come to my own decision about my faith in God.
- CB08: to be strengthened in my faith.

iKB1

Experience of growth in faith (t_2) (0.75)

- KB01: I have learnt more about God and faith.
- KB03: I have been enabled to come to my own decision about my faith.
- KB08: I have been strengthened in my faith.

iCE1

Christian beliefs (t_1) (0.86)

- CE01: God created the world.
- CE02: There is life after death.
- CE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.
- CE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.
- CE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.
- CE09: I believe in God.

iKE1

Christian beliefs (t_2) (0.89)

- KE01: God created the world.
- KE02: There is life after death.
- KE03: God loves all humans and cares about each one of us.

- KE04: Jesus has risen from the dead.
- KE08: Faith in God helps me in difficult situations.
- KE09: I believe in God.

iCL1

Interest in conduct of life (t_1) (0.71)

- CL08: Justice and responsibility for others
- CL09: Friendship
- CL11: The meaning of life

iKL1

Interest in conduct of life (t_2) (0.77)

- KL08: Justice and responsibility for others
- KL09: Friendship
- KL11: The meaning of life

iCL2

Interest in the Christian tradition (t_1) (0.91)

- CL01: Baptism
- CL02: The Lord's Supper
- CL03: Course and meaning of Sunday services
- CL04: Your own parish
- CL05: Jesus Christ
- CL06: The Bible
- CL22: God
- CL24: Resurrection

iKL2

Interest in the Christian tradition (t_2) (0.91)

- KL01: Baptism
- KL02: The Lord's Supper
- KL03: Course and meaning of Sunday services
- KL04: Your own parish
- KL05: Jesus Christ
- KL06: The Bible
- KL22: God
- KL24: Resurrection

iKK3

Involvement and participation (0.72)

- KK03: I came into good personal contact with the leaders and workers.
- KK04: we could influence the decisions about the topics.
- KK05: I had a lot of fun.
- KK11: my questions concerning faith were addressed.
- KS01: I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e. g., youth services).
- KK37: In our parish I feel welcome and accepted.

iKN3

Satisfaction (0.88)

- KN01: the whole confirmation time
- KN03: content/topics of lessons in confirmation work
- KN07: minister/person primarily responsible for confirmation work
- KN08: other teachers/workers
- KN10: church services
- KN11: camp(s)
- KN14: music, songs and singing
- KN20: working methods (for example, working with biblical texts, group work, etc.)

iKS1

Experiences with church services (0.83)

- KS01: I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e. g., youth services).
- KS05: I listened to interesting sermons.
- KS12: Singing old church hymns was nice for me.
- KS13: Singing modern church songs was nice for me.
- KS14: The services usually dealt with things that concern me and my life.
- KS16: I liked being part of the worship community.

iKS2

Sense of security & well-being in the group during services (0.72)

- KS04: I met nice people.
- KS15: I felt secure in the group.
- KS16: I liked being part of the worship community.

iWA1

Importance of Christian tradition (0.76)

- WA03: Baptism
- WA04: The Lord's supper
- WA07: Jesus Christ

iWB1

Faith-related aims (0.82)

- WB10: get to know other people to whom faith is important.
- WB20: experience the presence of God.
- WC02: be strengthened in their faith.
- WC11: learn to live their everyday life in relationship to God.

iWB2

Aim of focusing services (0.81)

- WB30: meet nice people in the services.
- WB31: feel secure and accepted in the group in the services.
- WB32: get orientation for their daily life.
- WB33: experience a friendly atmosphere in the services.
- WB34: get acquainted with the liturgy.
- WB04: experience forms of worship adequate for young people.
- WB28: be given the opportunity to contribute their own ideas to the preparation of a service.
- WB29: have tasks in the services (for example, do a reading).

iWP1

Encouraging voluntary work (0.79)

- WP11: get to know young people working in the church as volunteers.
- WP12: get to know parts, programs and tasks in the church where they can work as volunteers.
- WP13: be won for continuing as voluntary workers in the church.

Table 86: Cronbach Alpha for all indexes for all countries

Cronbachs Alpha Index	Total	DE	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	PL	HU	DE
		EKD									EmK
iCB1: faith related motives (t ₁)	0.80	0.79	0.77	0.79	0.74	0.83	0.83	0.81	0.80	0.83	0.79
iKB1: Experience of growth in faith (t ₂)	0.75	0.78	0.78	0.80	0.74	0.70	0.73	0.67	0.85	0.78	0.81
iCE1: Christian beliefs (t ₁)	0.86	0.85	0.85	0.87	0.81	0.91	0.88	0.84	0.78	0.86	0.86
iKE1: Christian beliefs (t ₂)	0.89	0.88	0.89	0.90	0.86	0.93	0.91	0.89	0.90	0.89	0.89
iCL1: Interest in conduct of life (t ₁)	0.71	0.68	0.71	0.73	0.69	0.80	0.73	0.70	0.76	0.69	0.63
iKL1: Interest in conduct of life (t ₂)	0.77	0.75	0.71	0.78	0.75	0.81	0.81	0.74	0.81	0.66	0.73
iCL2: Interest in the Christian tradition (t ₁)	0.91	0.89	0.89	–	0.88	0.94	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.90	0.87
iKL2: Interest in the Christian tradition (t ₂)	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.92	0.88
iKK3: involvement and participation	0.72	0.69	0.73	0.69	0.72	0.79	0.77	0.68	0.71	0.68	0.66
iKN3: satisfaction	0.88	0.87	0.92	0.89	0.85	0.91	0.90	0.88	0.91	0.90	0.89
iKS1: experiences with church services	0.83	0.81	0.83	0.84	0.85	0.88	0.88	0.80	0.79	0.79	0.77
iKS2: Sense of security & well-being in the group during services	0.72	0.72	0.76	0.70	0.71	0.72	0.77	0.61	0.79	0.73	0.77
iWA1: Importance of Christian tradition	0.76	0.67	0.64	0.71	0.78	0.81	0.74	0.81	–	0.77	0.65
iWB1: faith related aims	0.82	0.77	0.78	0.74	0.78	0.86	0.73	0.86	–	0.70	0.66
iWB2: aim of focusing services	0.81	0.79	0.82	0.77	0.72	0.86	0.76	0.80	–	0.79	0.74
iWP1: encouraging voluntary work	0.79	0.74	0.75	–	0.88	0.83	0.75	0.74	–	0.86	0.75