Summary of the proposal

a) European citizenship and identity.
The recent decades’ migration flows have contributed to enlarging the religious composition of Europe. The contribution of the churches and religious communities in the construction of Europe - as special representatives of civil society – and in the promotion a plural, inclusive and safe society (see Horizon 2020) was already widely recognized in the 2001 White Paper on EU Governance. Our proposal's background lies therefore at the heart of European values, promoting integration through the awareness of a stronger European citizenship and identity.

It aims at analyzing - from a EU and ECHR perspective - some highly debated issues involving religions and pluralism in Europe, such as religious freedom in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFREU) and the neutrality of the State; EU antidiscrimination law and religious matters; religions and public space in EU countries; EU countries’ models of relationship between State and Churches as part of common constitutional traditions. Controversial cases involving clothing and religious symbols, places of worship, religious education, treatment of religious groups, objection of conscience decided by the ECtHR will also be explored.

b) New teaching:
The 42-hour teaching module will be supported by research activity on these highly topical issues. Two features characterize the module:

- Interdisciplinary angle
  Within the School of Law of the University of Milano-Bicocca (but the same applies to the other Italian universities) there isn’t – at present - a course coordinated by professors from different disciplines, integrating their expertise and focusing on ties and synergies between religious pluralism, democracy and European integration, with the aim of consolidating European citizenship and identity. With this module such interdisciplinary angle and cooperation will be possible.

- Multidisciplinary approach
  This module is innovative also because it included lectures and seminars by a team of Italian and foreign experts: jurists, philosophers, political scientist, criminologists, sociologist, representatives of institutions and civil society offering a multidisciplinary approach.

The proposal for this module is, therefore, an innovative teaching paradigm within a school of law, traditionally known for very specialized courses.

c) Tools and technologies – debating activities open to civil societies
The module will be taught using innovative methodologies.
Teaching materials and the recording of the lectures will also be available on the University e-learning platform, in which students can interact with one another and with teachers.
The most relevant documents will be posted on well known websites focused on religious freedom (www.olir.it) and the relationship between democracy and religion (www.fidr.it), which will contain a dedicated section for this project. Students will be invited to develop opinions or arguments on specific
issues and the best ones will be published on these websites in order to initiate a debate open to civil society. Such methodology allows students to have easy access to resources and to ensure dissemination of the project beyond university classrooms, thus raising awareness on one of the most urgent problems currently questioning modern societies across Europe and the entire world.

Relevance of the proposal to the specific objectives of the Jean Monnet Action

1. **Foster the publication and dissemination of the results of academic research.**
   The proposal aims at enhancing dialogue between policy-makers and researchers, producing dissemination materials to be uploaded on already known and widely recognized websites. More specifically, these websites will be focused on religious freedom (www.olir.it) and the relationship between democracy and religion (www.fidr.it). This kind of dissemination is aimed at provoking a debate not only between academics but also within civil society, representatives of religious private institutions and confessions as well as policy-makers. Moreover, the best articles and essays will be considered for publication in the peer-reviewed “Stato e Chiese”, of which prof. Marchei is board member. Finally, an annual roundtable where researchers, policy-makers and civil society organizations will have the opportunity to meet and exchange views will also be organized. It will showcase and present the outcome of the participants’ efforts throughout the course.

2. **Introduction of a EU special angle into mainly non EU related studies.**
   The perspective from which we intend to address this research topic is particularly innovative. Differently from the usual statement according to which religious matters pertain to the national states, we argue that:
   a) In Europe, religious issues are increasingly negotiated in a supranational arena, not only between domestic legal orders and European judges, but between two European level systems, namely the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Freedom of religion, and related rights such as non-discrimination on grounds of religious belief, are likely to constitute a path to a dialogue between the two European systems, as the results of the EU research RELIGARE broadly demonstrated and as, more generally, the process of EU accession to the ECHR system will show. Accordingly, a EU angle to study freedom of religion or belief is part of the making of a Europe of Rights.
   b) Even if the status of religious confessions is not EU competence (art. 17.1 TFEU), the fundamental contribution of Churches and confessions to the process of European integration had already emerged in the debate around the “Christian roots” of Europe in the Preamble of the Constitutional Treaty, as well as in numerous binding and non-binding EU acts attesting the relevance of religion in the EU’s policies, both from an internal and external point of view. From the former, the general prohibition of religious discrimination ex art. 10 and 19 TFEU, and art. 21 CFREU (see also directive 78/2000), the recognition of freedom of religion in the CFREU (art. 10, similar to Art. 9 ECHR and art. 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights; see also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), the respect for national identities of the member states (Art. 4, c. 2 TEU) and for their cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Art. 22 CFREU) can be recalled. From a foreign policy’s point of view, the “EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief” of the EU Council (June 13, 2013) should be mentioned, according to which freedom of religion “directly contributes to democracy, development, rule of law, peace and stability. Violations of freedom of religion or belief may exacerbate intolerance and often represent early indicators of potential violence and conflicts”. Due to the lack of competence in substantial part of religious matters, therefore, an indirect or transversal intervention of the EU law aimed at protecting the existence of religious pluralism in Europe is already possible.
   c) European history and a thousand-year experience in the more or less peaceful coexistence of so many religious realities attribute EU institutions a unique and strategic role. The last decades’ migration flows and demographical changes press for new policy responses to face the increasing cultural and religious diversity of Europe. It is not by chance that this is one of the goals set by
the "Horizon 2020" program. A European perspective to face this dilemma - contrariwise to the usual national approach - is therefore crucial: religious integration thus becomes a cornerstone of a shared European identity.

d) The EU's political accession criteria – established in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria – can acquire a special meaning in this project, since they establish the kind of ideas about EU membership that stem from and feed into the EU's pre-accession political monitoring mechanism. Ex art. 49 TEU, any European state which respects the principles set out in article 2 (liberty, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law) may apply to join the Union. The yearly reports of the latter seem to be founded on a logic in which the candidate country engages in constant efforts to measure-up to certain European political standards: freedom of religion and religious tolerance is always mentioned in these reports, as reasons for requirements and critiques. Freedom of religion and EU membership represent another meaningful point to address religious pluralism from a EU perspective.

3. Creates interest in the EU and constitutes the basis for future poles of European knowledge, particularly in Partner Countries.

For the abovementioned reasons, we strongly believe that EU institutions and EU studies should take into account religious issues within its policies and its legislation. Needless to say, this responds to a growing request of the European civil society. To foster a European approach to this field, the project already includes three professors of other EU universities (UK, Spain, Germany and Serbia) in order to create a stable university network to pursue this common interest beyond Italian borders.