



**International Association
for
Christian Education**



**Intereuropean Commission on
Church and School**

newsletter

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Editorial

“What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values”. This is the title of an open letter issued in June 2016 by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) to churches in Europe and other partner organisations. It includes an invitation for dialogue. The outcomes will be presented at the General Assembly of CEC in 2018. The purpose is not to re-establish “Christian” values, but to launch an initiative to resist the threatening fragmentation of Europe, and to rethink Europe by strengthening its basic values. This seems imperative in the face of increasing tendencies towards re-nationalisation in many countries and an increase of populist opinions. The debate about the future of the European project must be reopened. The main purpose should be to secure human rights and basic values such as peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity.

Both the Council of Europe and the European Union support these central concerns. These European organisations develop concrete initiatives and invite churches and other organisations within civil society to participate and to enter into dialogue. Concrete examples of this can be found in this issue.

For ICCS and IV this is linked with challenges for education: How can religious education and how can Protestant schools contribute to these issues? Principles that guide us include bringing together and creating links between policy, science and practice. This needs policy that recognises the religious dimension, science that serves the common good and practice that is sensitive to those who are disadvantaged as well as discriminated against, with a view to empowering them.

Approaches to a Pedagogy of Hope as well as contributions to reconciliation and justice also will guide us in our work in the coming year.

Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer and Dr Wim Kuiper (IV)
Dr Tania ap Sïon and Dr Peter Schreiner (ICCS)

Information from IV and ICCS

IV: News from the IV Board

The focus of the Board Meeting of the International Association for Christian Education, which took place on July 5th/6th in Hannover, was on the preparation for the General Assembly. An invitation by the Slovak member association meant that it would take place in Bratislava. In terms of timing, it was also decided to link the long planned study conference for head teachers and education experts with the General Assembly. The promised subsidy of the Protestant school foundation of the EKD for internationalisation of educational work would be used for this study conference. At a further board meeting, taking place on November 18th in Bratislava, the development of the association budget and the contacts to the member associations were worked on. The board noted that regrettably Rita Révész had to end her engagement as a board member due to work-related changes.

IV: General Assembly 2016 in Bratislava

Coming from 10 European countries the 25 delegates of associations as well as individual members and guests met on November 18th, 2016 in the Hotel Tatra in Bratislava. Professor Dr L'ubomir Batka and Dr Marián Damankoš presented the education system of Slovakia and the Protestant schools of the country. Folk dance performances and a buffet with Slovak specialities completed the evening programme. On November 19th participants of the General Assembly were impressed by the work of Protestant schools during an on site visit, and a city tour took participants to places with Protestant traditions.

Following a welcome by the president of the European Committee for Catholic Education, Dr Christine Mann (Vienna), the afternoon programme began. The Revd Nigel Genders (London) presented the work of the National Society for Promoting Education of the Church of England and its schools. Examples of good practice regarding the topic "... and you took Me in" – Initiatives of Christian Schools in Europe from Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland followed. During the statutory part of the meeting, the National Society was accepted as a new member. Furthermore, a change in the statute will allow "sponsoring memberships" in the future.

IV: Identity and Diversity – Profiles of Christian Schools in Europe

From 16th to 18th November, experts on Protestant schools met in Bratislava for a study conference on this topic. The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia provided the conference room. The goal of this novel conference, which was organised jointly by IV, the Comenius-Institute and the Department for Research and Development of Protestant Schools, was the exchange of ideas, projects and results between research and school practice. Professional understanding of teachers in Protestant schools, criteria of parents for their school choice, handling religious diversity, and the evaluation of school quality were some topics explored in contributions from Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Wales. After an initial input, there was a response from a school practitioner which led to a general discussion. A summary of the conference is being prepared, which should also make the presentations available for everybody. The organisers see this conference as the beginning of many more meetings engaging research and practice at a European level.

IV & ICCS: Soesterberg Conference

“Gaining common ground” for Protestant schools worldwide was the topic and objective of an international conference within the project “schools500reformation”, which took place from 14 to 17th December in Soesterberg (The Netherlands). Forty representatives from 17 different nations and all continents came together to develop a position and agreement paper of Protestant schools worldwide. The result is quite impressive. It contains common theological and pedagogical perspectives without neglecting the diverse contexts in which Protestant schools are placed worldwide. After some editorial work the paper, which received strong approval from participants, will be publically available in January 2017. The conference was also the first step of the transformation of the reformation project of Protestant schools schools500reformation to a “Global Network – Joining in Reformation” (GPENreformation), which wants to further exchange and cooperation beyond the activities in Wittenberg 2017. Dr Peter Schreiner and Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer as well as Dr Wim Kuiper participated in the conference. Further information is available from: www.schools500reformation.net

IV & ICCS: Europe Conference in Bad Wildbad 2017

The Europe seminar for teachers at the Landesakademie in Bad Wildbad (Black forest), which is organised every second year by IV and ICCS in cooperation with the federal state Baden-Württemberg, takes place from 18th to 21st April 2017. The Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sport in Baden-Württemberg has assigned Dorothea Eisele (Heilbronn) and Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer (IV) to lead the organisational team. This team, to which also Anne Adolph (AEED), Dr Uta Hallwirth (Department for Research and Development of Protestant Schools), Janika Olschewski, Dr Peter Schreiner (both CI) and Taco Visser (Versus, NL) belong, have chosen the topic: “A ‘pedagogy of hope’ in a changing Europe: Approaches, perspectives and challenges for schools”. The topics will be about perspectives of youth and teachers regarding the current situation in Europe and inspirations for Europe-orientated work in schools. A detailed programme will be available at the beginning of 2017. Reservations for attendance are via the office of IV: Kerstin.wiechmann@ekd.de

ICCS & CoGREE: Klingenthal Colloquy

For the seventh time now, organised by ICCS together with CoGREE, the Klingenthal Colloquy took place near Strasbourg from 10th to 14th October 2016. At this peaceful location in Alsace representatives of member organisations of CoGREE as well as others from different European countries met to address questions regarding European integration in the future and contributions of religious education. Topics included were, for example, increasing nationalism in European member states (becoming especially apparent with Brexit), challenges due to new migration movements as well as radicalisation trends in relation to young people. Regarding these topics there were also discussions with representatives of the Council of Europe, for example Matthew Johnson. Further information will be published via www.iccsweb.org.

CoGREE and Member Organisations



Meeting of the CoGREE Steering Group

In June 2016, the CoGREE steering group met in Vienna. Main topics were the preparations for the joint conference with EFTRE and for the Klingenthal colloquy, which are run together with ICCS. For the colloquy in Klingenthal it was agreed to collaborate with the thematic reference group “Education for Democratic Citizenship” of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The general secretary of CEC, Heikki Huttunen, and the moderator of the TRG, Hanna Broadbridge, had already confirmed their participation. Through collaborations at European conferences, CoGREE supports and strengthens its member organisations. A revision of the CoGREE website (www.cogree.com) was also considered. The next meeting is planned for January 14th, 2017 in Münster at the Comenius-Institute.

EFTRE: European Conference in Vienna

The XIIIth conference of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE) had as its theme “Believing – Belonging – Behaving. Challenges for Religious Education in the 21st Century”. At the beautiful university of Vienna, 60 teachers and education researchers discussed challenges and perspectives of Religious Education in different European countries. The question how to handle contexts that are increasingly shaped by diversity, respective plurality, and own identity united all participants independently of national and confessional background. Talks, workshops as well as visits to different religious places in Vienna opened up spaces for encounters and exchange. Dr Peter Schreiner gave a lecture on national and European education politics and their effect on Religious Education. Texts of contributions and information regarding the workshops as well as other elements of the conference can be found on www.eftre.net.

EFTRE: Meeting of Executive in Helsinki

The executive of EFTRE met from November 25th to 26th 2016 in Helsinki (Finland). Janika Olschewski participated as a new elected member. The last conference in Vienna was evaluated and the executive started to think about the next conference in 2019 in Dublin. In addition, the statute was revised to take into account changed situations of national teacher organisations in some member states. Besides discussing organisational issues there was opportunity to have an exchange about Religious Education in the participants’ countries as well as opportunity to attend a RE class in a secondary school in Helsinki. Additionally a project on the use of virtual reality in religious places was observed, which EFTRE wants to make known to the whole of Europe.

Barabara-Schadeberg Lectures: Protestant Schools and Religious Education in the World Society

The seventh Barbara-Schadeberg lecture took place on November 27th/28th, 2016. The Otto-Friedrich University Bamberg hosted it this year. Topics of the lectures were for example: “Africa, Europe and the Future of Christianity” (Prof Dr Andreas Nehring, Erlangen-Nuremberg and Dr William Ondieki Obaga, World Mission Prayer League), “Protestant Schools in the One

World" (Prof Dr Annette Scheunpflug and Prof Dr Henrik Simojoki, Bamberg) and "Public Theology within a Global Horizon" (Prof Dr Manfred Pirner, Erlangen-Nuremberg). The Barbara-Schadeberg foundation invited the participants to a ceremony where the Barbara-Schadeberg prize for Protestant schools 2016 was awarded. The first place for the competition "Protestant living and learning within the horizon of globalisation" went to the Laurentius-Gymnasium (Neuendettelsau).

Updates on the READY Project

In the third week of October the international partners of the READY project (Religious Education and Diversity) met in Vienna. The time was spent informing about the status of the work done at the participating institutions and to plan further steps. In the second year of the ERASMUS+ project the focus will be on study visits of students and lecturers of the participating countries. READY involves five different teacher training organisations in different European countries (Austria, England, Germany, Scotland and Sweden), as well as the Comenius-Institute, represented by Dr Peter Schreiner and Janika Olschewski.

CEC and CPCE



CEC: Open Letter for Promoting Central Values in Europe

In June 2016 the Conference of European Churches (CEC) launched an open letter to churches and partner organisations. The letter encourages the development of a joint vision for Europe and a challenge to anti-European tendencies in our societies. For building a common Europe joint values are needed, promoting human dignity, peace, reconciliation, justice, the rule of law, democracy and the respect of human rights. Under the heading "What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values", the letter calls for a discussion about the future of Europe, the role of the European Union and the vision of CEC's common values. The document is available in German, French and English at:

<http://www.ceceurope.org/open-letter>

CPCE: Forum Education & Europe

In December 2016 the Forum Education of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) was organised for the second time. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Bavaria and the organisation "Protestant Education in Europe" (beE) were partners. The theme was: "Distant Home Europe." The contributions of the speakers dealt with issues of migration and refuge and underlined that migration has always been part of European history as well as a leading motif of the Bible. Living in plural societies urges the need to be open to more individually shaped identities and includes the task of starting a dialogue with migrants who bring their different experiences as well as their specific cultural and religious backgrounds.

There is a need for new forms of education in schools as well as in non-formal education. Dr Peter Schreiner (ICCS/CI), Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer (IV) as well as Janika Olschewski (EFTRE/CI) participated in the Forum.

Council of Europe and European Union



Council of Europe: Exchange with Religious Communities in Strasbourg

Since 2008, the Council of Europe has organised a regular Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. The Exchange provides a platform for dialogue between public authorities, religious communities, non-religious convictions, non-governmental organisations as well as representatives of civil society in a wider context. The role of education in the prevention of radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism was the main theme at the 2016 Exchange that took place on 9th/10th November 2016 in Strasbourg. Dr Peter Schreiner (ICCS/CI) introduced the first sub-theme: *Education for Democratic Citizenship in the context of cultural and religious diversity* that encouraged a lively exchange and discussion among the 150 participants. The other sub-theme was on: *Empowering women and the role of the family in counter-ing radicalisation and violent extremism*. There was agreement among the participants that this kind of Exchange should be continued.

Council of Europe: Competences for Democratic Culture

At the meeting of participants of the Klingenthal Colloquy with education staff of the Council of Europe the publication “Competences for Democratic Culture. Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies” was introduced. This is the product of an analysis of different models of competences and proposes a model of 20 central competences. Of particular interest in the section of attitudes is the competence “Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices” as well as the competence “Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability” that is part of the section on “Knowledge and critical understanding.” For experts in religious education it seems important to promote understanding, sensitivity and a critical perception of different religions and worldviews. The publication is available in English and can be downloaded at:

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/competences/CDC.en.pdf>.

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This Newsletter is edited under the responsibility of the Board of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School and the Board of the International Association for Christian Education.

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