



International Association
for
Christian Education



Intereuropean Commission on
Church and School

newsletter

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Editorial

The course of events and result of the referendum the UK held concerning their European Union membership showed anew in a drastic manner the dangers posed to the European project. Also in other countries beyond the UK, a regression into nationalism, xenophobia, and isolation can be observed.

In the context of our work we want to refer to voices that distinctively object to these developments and that contribute to a Europe of solidarity and understanding.

For example, Pope Francis invited Europe to regain its “capacity to integrate” on the occasion of the conferral of the charlemagne prize on May 6th this year. He links the future of the European project with the integration of migrants who knock on the doors of the ‘old continent’. Through this combination Europe will be able to retain its “dynamic and multicultural identity” and find its way back to its old quality – a quality which the world needs. The conflicts that are responsible for the current state of affairs regarding refugees should not lead to a breaking apart of the EU. The 28 member states should be motivated to work closer together and thus stimulate a new process of integration. One of the basic principles with which Pope Francis clarifies his position is: “The whole is greater than the part.” We must “broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all.” However, this cannot have the characteristics of an escape or of becoming rootlessness.

During a time when a slim majority in the UK voted against remaining in the EU, and in which the refugee crisis shows how some governments just pass on the problems to their neighbours, or where the crisis in Greece tests European solidarity, the principle “The whole is greater than the part” has to be remembered over and over again. Especially by the 28 member states during their negotiations.

The Secretary General of the Conference of European Churches, Heikki Huttunen, declared on Europe Day 2016: “In the midst of these critical situations the churches’ task is to give a voice to prophetic hope. Europe must continually rediscover its identity as a project for peace, democracy, and human rights. This can happen only in transparent interaction for the good of all humanity.”

It is a matter of the heart for us to contribute with the activities of IV and ICCS to the realization of this prospect. We wish all readers a refreshing summer 2016.

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

Information from IV and ICCS

IV : Three New Member Organizations in the IV (General Assembly 2015)

The General Assembly 2015 of the International Association for Christian Education (IV) welcomed three new members: Church of Ireland (Board of Education Dublin), Church of Ireland (Board of Education Belfast), and Union of Estonian Christian Private Schools (Estonia). President Dr Wim Kuiper has been re-elected as the chairman of the Association for an additional four-year term. As a new member of the Board the Assembly assigned Dr Marián Damankos from Slovakia. Hosted by the three local traditional protestant schools (Freies Gymnasium Bern, NMS and Campus Muristalden) in Bern (Switzerland) more than 30 attendees from nine countries were welcomed to the General Assembly on November 29th/30th 2015.

IV: Board in Augsburg

The Board of the International Association for Christian Education met for the first time in Augsburg on February 19th/20th for their regular meeting. After visiting the long-standing grammar school for girls of the A.B. von Stetten'schen charity further consultations took place in the Evangelische Forum Annahof. This is located just next to St Anna's church, which is closely linked with the Reformation and Luther's stay in Augsburg in 1518. Furthermore, in this church the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed in 1999 as a key document of the ecumenical movement.

ICCS & IV: Study Tour to the Netherlands 2016

For the second time now, IV and ICCS made a study visit for school leaders and education experts to the Netherlands possible. From April 19th-23rd the IV member association Verus welcomed participants from Germany, Georgia, Ireland, Latvia, Romania, and Switzerland. They provided them with extensive insight into the theory and practice of the Christian school system in the Netherlands under the reliable leadership of Taco Visser. A continuation of this programme with visits to further countries is intended.

AGES: New Board

The Association of Protestant School Confederations (AGES) represent the interests of protestant schools in Germany especially from the point of view of head teachers. They also cooperate closely with the Barbara-Schadeberg-Foundation for the Promotion of Protestant Schools and the Department for Research and Development of Protestant Schools. At the General Assembly on April 21st/22nd 2016 the longstanding board led by school foundation director Pastor Erwin Meister concluded their activities and handed over the responsibility to the new leadership team consisting of Michael Schopp (Nuremberg), Sabine Ulrich (Leipzig), and Stefan Giesel (Königsfeld).

ICCS & CoGREE: Klingenthal Colloquy October 10th – 14th

The next Colloquy in Klingenthal takes place in October 2016. The thematic focus will be on questions of migration and education. So there will also be cooperation with the thematic reference group of CEC that is concerned with Education for Democratic Citizenship. The General Secretary of CEC, Heikki Huttunen, will contribute an input to the meeting.

IV & ICCS: Updates from the Project Schools500reformation

The international steering group of the project met on April 20th/21st 2016 in the Archbishop Tension High School in East Croydon/London. The group was invited by headmaster Richard Parish. Besides planning for the Reformation year 2017, the morning assembly was attended. Also, various classes were visited and it was possible to talk to pupils. At an event with representatives of the Anglican Church and several schools there was deliberation about options on how church schools could be involved in the project. Plans were prepared for Wittenberg in 2017. As an addition to the already existing homepage www.schools500reformation.net a forum for dialogue www.forum.schools500reformation.net for pupils, teachers etc. was established. An expert colloquium to work out an international charter of protestant schools is planned for autumn. Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer and Dr Peter Schreiber are part of the steering group.

RE Teacher Training in Europe: READY Project

The question of appropriate RE teacher training within a given cultural and religious diversity context stands as the focus of an Erasmus+ supported project: “READY: Religious Education in Diversity. Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of ‘Education and Training 2020’ (READY)”. In this setting different teacher training institutions from Austria, Germany, Scotland, England and Sweden work together. Parts of the project are study visit to one another, case studies about the training in the participating countries and teaching concepts that address the aspect of diversity in a special way. The first issue of the READY newsletter is out now. It can be accessed via www.comenius.de.

CoGREE and Member Organisations



Meeting of the CoGREE Steering Group

At the meeting of the steering group on June 18th 2016 in Vienna the preparations for the European conference in Vienna “Believing, belonging, behaving. Challenges for RE in the 21st Century”, which will take place from August 31st - September 3rd 2016 (see below) as well as the next Klingenthal Colloquy (October 10th-14th 2016) were continued. There will be personnel changes due to the occupational change of Dr Peter Schreiner.

EFTRE: European Conference in Vienna

In cooperation with CoGREE the next conference of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE) will take place in Vienna from August 31st - September 3rd. Topic: "Believing, belonging and behaving. Challenges for RE in the 21st Century". Details of the schedule and the context can be found on www.eftre.net. Places are still available. Bookings can be done via the stated homepage.

RE as a Companion on the Way to Emmaus – EUFRES Meeting in Katowice

The XVII. European Forum for Religious Education in Schools reflected on the potential problems of RE in a "European Society between Fast Changes and Christian Identity." For this, 30 clergy and laymen, who work in the field of catholic RE, came together from March 30th - April 3rd 2016 in Katowice (Poland). Through the lectures and talks enormous differences in public acknowledgement of churches and secularism in the various countries became clear. The closing communiqué in Italian, English, German, and Spanish demanded among others situation conformal didactics and a reorganization of the school/church-youth-work relationship (www.eufres.org). Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer attended the forum as a guest on the behalf of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE) and presented in his contribution the EKD-memorandum "Religiöse Orientierung gewinnen" (Developing Religious Orientation).

International Education Initiative PILGRIM

"Living Consciously – Giving Future" is the motto of the PILGRIM network, which promotes education for sustainable development. Their focus is in particular on the ethical-religious dimension. This is why in many associated institutions RE plays a leading role in the relevant projects. The initiative sees itself as inter-denominational as well as inter-religious and widened its activities systematically beyond the borders of Austria, the country of origin. This is why at the certification ceremony 2016 on June 14th not only schools from Austria – among which was a Muslim private school – but also institutions from Poland, Hungary and even Peru were incorporated. PILGRIM is a member of the International Association for Christian Education. Out of thanks for all his support and guidance over the years the Secretary of the IV was appointed honorary member during the certification celebration.

CEC and CPCE



CEC: Together on the Way to Climate Justice

“A European Contribution to Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – European Churches on the Way to UN Climate Summit in Paris.” This was the headline of a meeting organized by the Conference of European Churches on October 12th-14th 2015 in the Protestant Academy Villigst (Schwerte/Ruhr). Senior Church representatives (among others the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and the Chairman of the council of the EKD) appealed to the numerous attendees not to waiver in their struggle for climate justice. Facts about climate change as well as activities of the Churches and other civil organisations in the run-up of the UN Climate Change Conference were part of the programme. On October 13th the participants – among whom was Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer as a representative of ICCS and IV – joined the ecumenical pilgrimage for climate justice and the closing event in the evening in Lengerich.

CEC: Meeting of the European Secretaries from the Conference of European Churches

“Conflicts and Reconciliation: The Role of the Council of Europe” was the topic which united the European Secretaries from the Conference of European Churches and representatives from partner organisations on November 16th-18th 2015 in Strasbourg for a meeting. Among all meetings with experts and officials the one with Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks stood out. Socio-ethical topics on the agenda of the different churches and the roadmap 2015-2018 “Forging our Future” of the Conference of European Churches were discussed as well. Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer participated in this meeting as representative of ICCS and IV.

CEC: Thematic Workgroup regarding Education for Democratic Citizenship

Since its establishment the thematic reference group of the CEC regarding Democratic Citizenship came together for two meetings. Its purpose is to work out inputs and activities of the CEC for this central European issue. Part of this is an active accompanying of the politics of the Council of Europe. The panel consists of 10 representatives of the member churches and partner organisations of the CEC. The Speaker is Hanna Broadbridge from Denmark. To represent ICCS and the EKD Dr Peter Schreiner was nominated for the panel.

CEC & CPCE: Discussions about RE at European Schools

Questions about the future of RE at European Schools – an institution of the European Commission and the member states at sites of EU institutions (see <http://www.eurasc.eu/index.php?l=3>) – were discussed at a meeting organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). It was held in Brussels on May 9th 2016. The reason given for this was a proposal for an extensive reform of this special type of school. In an evaluation report of the University of London it is suggested that the curricula should be organized in pathways henceforth. “Religious Studies and Ethics” would then be part of the field Humanities. This would mean a pro-

found change regarding the current form of denominational RE, and also for the option to choose this subject in the final exams. This discussion was attended by Matthias Otte (EKD church office) and Dr Peter Schreiner (ICCS). Included were also RE teachers and those responsible for RE in local churches. Agreements were reached regarding further monitoring of the developments.

CPCE: Focal Points for Protestant Education in Europe

After long preparation the second Forum Bildung Europa conference of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) took place in Tutzing from October 26th-28th 2015. The four main topics were “Protestant Schools”, “The contribution of voluntary services to education and formation in church and civil society”, “Religious education in local churches in the face of discontinued traditions and a new religious diversity”, and “Society related education by example of the Protestant Academies”. The field of schools was moderated by Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer. The presentations were given by Pastor Dr Eszter Kodácsy-Simon (Budapest) and Dr Birgit Sendler-Koschel (Hanover).

The conference series will be continued in Tutzing on December 5th-7th 2016 with the theme: “Europe as a foreign home. Migration and identity from the post-war era to the present day – challenges for Protestant educational activity in the church and social welfare”.

Council of Europe and European Union



Committee for Education of the Council of Europe

The committee has the task to accompany the education activities of the Council of Europe critically. For a few years now the CEC has had observer status in the committee. This opens up many opportunities to contribute their own perspectives to the discussion and to come into contact with national education experts as well as the different education departments from the Council of Europe. At this year's meeting Hanna Broadbridge, Speaker of the thematic workgroup Education for Democratic Citizenship, together with Richard Fisher, attended as observers.

European Ministers of Education from April 11th-12th in Brussels

The 25th Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education was held on April 11th and 12th 2016 in Brussels. The representatives from the 50 nations of the European Cultural Convention agreed on a new set of tools: “Securing Democracy through Education” – Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. They reached an agreement to implement this instrument in practice by supporting tests at national, regional and European levels.

In his speech at the conference, General Secretary Thorbjørn Jagland declared: “This is about setting out, for the first time ever, the specific competences needed by young citizens across all

of our democracies. How to live in society where not everyone thinks like you [...]. As we look across our societies today, it should be obvious that, in the long-term, education policies and practices will be more decisive for tolerance and stability than any counter-terror measure, any asylum reform, any law.”

The text of the declaration can be found here: https://www.conference-service.com/25_standingconference/documents/E%20MED-25-3%20Final%20DECLARATION.pdf

Council of Europe: Exchange with Religious Communities in November 2016 in Strasbourg

The next Exchange of the Council of Europe with the religious communities is planned to be in Strasbourg on November 9th-10th 2016. It is standing in the light of the Action Plan for the “fight against violent extremism”. The chosen topic is: *The Role of Education in the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. The topic will be divided and discussed in two sub-themes: *Sub-theme 1: Education for democratic citizenship in the context of cultural and religious diversity*; *Sub-theme 2: Empowering women and the role of the family in countering radicalisation and violent extremism*.

Since 2008, this regular exchange underlines the importance of the contribution of religious communities to the work of the Council of Europe. Last but not least, this can be found in the shared roots of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

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