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# Education for a future

## **Educational work of Protestant churches in South, Central and Eastern Europe – A study of the Regional Group Southeast Europe in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**

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## Content

Education for a future.....	i
<b>Educational work of Protestant churches in South, Central and Eastern Europe – A study of the Regional Group Southeast Europe in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe</b>	
<b>... and wisdom is rejoicing in His presence (Proverbs 8,30).....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. The study and its context – Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.3. The project „forum bildung Europa“ .....	4
1.4. The project „Education for a future“ of the Regional Group Southeast Europe.....	4
1.5. Structure of the study .....	5
1.6. Concrete concerns .....	5
<b>2. „The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.“ (Proverbs 9,10) – Biblical and theological assurance .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1. „But Mary treasured up ... and pondered them in her heart “ (Luke 2,19). Protestant education, culture of faith and religious education.....	7
2.2. Biblical Dimensions of Protestant Education .....	9
2.3. Education in the history of Protestant Christianity .....	15
2.4. Systematic–theological reasons for Protestant education .....	19
2.5. The profile of Protestant education .....	24
<b>3. Education as a leading medium of post–modern society –Challenges for the churches..</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.1. Education in transition.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1.1. Between the Middle Ages and Modern Times – the educational programme of the Reformation.....	27
3.1.2. Education as and in the Transformation Process – Example Germany – From the lamentable state of education to an education society and education church.....	28
3.1.3. The upheaval in Europe – the Lisbon process .....	29
<b>3.2. Trends in education and challenges for the future .....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.2.1. Trends in education and society.....	30
3.2.2. Educational research and future planning .....	31
3.2.3. More than professional competence!.....	33
<b>3.3. Europe, the churches and education.....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.3.1. Education in transformation processes.....	34
3.3.2. Farewell to old Europe and its educational ideals.....	34
3.3.3. Education, the Europeanization of Europe and the unfinished Reformation project.....	35
3.3.4. Protestant educational action in the European educational area – areas of conflict.....	35
<b>4. Focal points of Protestant educational action – case studies .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.1. Six learning fields – a selection.....</b>	<b>40</b>

<b>4.2. Training and further education of full-time staff and volunteers.....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.2.1. Further education and training of pastors and laymen in the Reformed Church in Hungary	42
4.2.2. Training for the preaching ministry – training opportunities for lay preachers and pastors within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia.....	44
4.2.3. "Hurry out into the streets..." (Luke 14:21) – Culture of faith for non-evangelical parish workers in the Protestant Church of A.C. in Romania.....	46
4.2.4. Guide to Volunteering for Reformed Church communities in Switzerland.....	47
4.2.5. Insights and challenges.....	49
<b>4.3. Passing on the faith publicly – schools and kindergartens in church sponsorship and religious instruction at public schools .....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.3.1. Protestant schools and religious instruction in the Protestant Church of A.C. in Slovakia	51
4.3.2. Questionnaire on religious education in schools. Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brothers / Czech Republic .....	53
4.3.3. Religious education in Bavaria.....	54
4.3.4. The Curriculum 21 as the origin of a new model of religious education in Switzerland realized in joint responsibility of the churches and the state .....	57
4.3.5. Insights and challenges.....	59
<b>4.4. Understanding the Other – Learning by Faith.....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.4.1. Intercultural (youth) educational work – Young people learn together at the Josefstal Study Centre in Bavaria .....	60
4.4.2. Ecumenical learning – The academic year in the Centro Melantone in Rome .....	61
4.4.3. Interreligious Learning – Further training for pastors and imams: A Case Study from Württemberg (and Baden) .....	62
4.4.4. Intercultural education in the Waldensian and Methodist Church in Italy.....	62
4.4.5. Insights and challenges – Interdenominational, interreligious and intercultural learning	64
<b>4.5. Families – where faith is born.....</b>	<b>65</b>
4.5.1. Culture of Faith in the family from the perspective of the Lutheran Minority in Hungary	65
4.5.2. The controversial family paper of the Protestant Church in Germany – when family lifestyles are 'officially' discussed .....	67
4.5.3. Insights and challenges.....	68
<b>4.6. Diaconal training .....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.6.1. Roma education in the Evangelical Methodist Church in Eastern Central Europe .....	69
4.6.2. Educational work with refugees – a snapshot from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria .....	71
<b>4.7. Becoming able to speak in faith, bringing faith into conversation .....</b>	<b>73</b>
4.7.1. Longing for one's own language – from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia .....	74
4.7.2. Courses of faith in transformation – an overview of developments in the German-speaking world.....	76
4.7.3. Insights and challenges.....	79
<b>4.8. Results and conclusions from the learning fields and case studies .....</b>	<b>80</b>

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<b>5. The Educational Action of the Protestant Churches in Europe – Impulses and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>5.1. Theological justification of Protestant educational action</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>5.2. The Church as a place of Protestant educational action</b> .....	<b>82</b>
5.2.1. Education, pastoral ministry and teachers in the church.....	82
5.2.2. Formation of preachers and lecturers.....	83
5.2.3. Education and volunteer work .....	83
5.2.4. Educational action in churches and current challenges .....	83
<b>5.3. Education as an essential dimension of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.</b>	<b>83</b>
5.3.1. The CPCE as a learning community .....	83
5.3.2. Education as a dimension of all CPCE topics .....	84
5.3.3. Exchange of experience between those responsible for education .....	84
5.3.4. Education as encounter and through encounter .....	85
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>86</b>

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## **... and wisdom is rejoicing in His presence (Proverbs 8,30)**

Preface by Consistory Rev. Michael Martin, Director of the Regional Group Southeast Europe of CPCE

„And here, right beside the church, there is the school“, we, the members of the Regional Group Southeast Europe, are told proudly by the pastor of Eferdingen. What at first glance seems perfectly natural is it not at all. The roots of the Eferding congregation, located near Linz, date back to the Reformation. In the year 1783 a dilapidated house was bought and patched up as a prayer house. It was only in 1830 that the permission to build a church was received, and contemporaneously a new pastor's home and a school building were erected. And in 1924 another school building was added.

Church and school, worship and teaching – how closely are they linked in the history of Protestantism, not only in Eferding. And this also goes back to the Reformation. Next to the reformer Martin Luther stands Philipp Melancthon, the Praeceptor Germaniae (teacher of Germany), who was actually a Praeceptor Europae in view of his Europe-wide networking and his scholarly teaching of Protestantism. Or let us think of Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670), who began as a teacher, became bishop of the Bohemian Brothers, had to flee across Europe during the Thirty Years' War, and became one of the first modern educators in Europe. Or just remember that in the Reformed tradition the ministry of teachers is firmly anchored, and that one of their tasks, according to the Geneva Church Constitution (1541/1561) largely drawn up by John Calvin, is "to instruct the faithful in the salutary doctrine, so that the purity of the Gospel will not be clouded neither by ignorance nor by false doctrines". – And as a special service: the "encouragement of young talents".

This close connection between church and school, or church and education, is still characterizing Protestantism today with its many shining but sometimes also somewhat darker academic sides – even if this connection is not always realized and conscious. With the study "Education for a Future", the Regional Group Southeastern Europe has asked about the ties existing between church and school, between worship and classes today – in short: about the importance of education for Protestantism. Here, we have discovered an enormous diversity of educational forms in our churches, a wealth of educational institutions, of theological and pedagogical concepts, of modern forms of teaching and learning. Where today education is flourishing, in Reformation times the catechisms and Bible reading, the sermon as *publice docere* stood as the evangelical form of a teaching profession. We could discover this area as an indispensable part of the communication of the Gospel. "Religious education" became a good key word for this. And we have rediscovered an old insight.

What role does education play for the church, has been asked. One answer for us is, for instance, that wisdom is rejoicing before God: it opens leeway for the faith in the world.

## **1. The study and its context – Introduction**

### **1.1 The study project "Education for a Future" in the context of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**

#### **a) Plenary Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Florence, 20–26 September 2012**

In European Protestantism, education had and still has an identity-forming significance. It represents an outstanding field of work of Protestant churches in Europe. Protestant educational work should be deepened in the context of developments in the European educational area, and in the cooperation between the churches and their educational institutions. Dealing with political, social and scientific educational processes in Europe is of great importance for this. That is why the Plenary Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in Florence passed the following resolution: "The Plenary Assembly asks the Council to have a study prepared on the subject of 'Education for a Future'. The Assembly proposes that the Southeastern Europe Regional Group be entrusted with this task."<sup>1</sup>

This resolution is closely linked to other CPCE topics and issues that were dealt with until the Plenary Assembly in Florence. The study „Die Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa“ ("Training for the ministry bound to ordination in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe") (presented at Florence in 2012) is worth mentioning here<sup>2</sup>, and the publication „Glaubensbildung. Die Weitergabe des Glaubens im europäischen Protestantismus“ (Religious education. Passing on faith in European Protestantism)<sup>3</sup>, or the symposium „Bildung der Zukunft. Zwischen Qualifizierung und Orientierung. Evangelische Perspektiven für einen europäischen Bildungsraum“ (Future education. Between qualification and orientation. Protestant perspectives for a European area of education") (Tutzing 2011)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **b) Council meeting of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe from 15 to 17 February 2013 in Vienna**

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1 Final report on the 7th Assembly, Florence 2012, Chapter 3.6. No. 1 (online: [www.cpce-assembly.eu/media/pdf/Unterlagen/Schlussbericht-D-26-9.pdf](http://www.cpce-assembly.eu/media/pdf/Unterlagen/Schlussbericht-D-26-9.pdf); last login: 14.08.2017).

2 Die Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa, in: Michael Bünker / Martin Friedrich (Hg.), Amt, Ordination, Episkopé und theologische Ausbildung (Leuenberger Texte 13), Leipzig 2013, 185 ff.

3 Martin Friedrich / Hans Jürgen Luibl (Hg.), Glaubensbildung. Die Weitergabe des Glaubens im europäischen Protestantismus, Leipzig 2012.

4 See the report on the symposium by Hans Jürgen Luibl: Bildung der Zukunft zwischen Qualifizierung und Orientierung, in: GEKE *focus* 14 (2011), 3.

In February 2013, the Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe met in Vienna and passed the following resolutions, among others:

"1) The Council decides to make 'education' a priority in the working period up to the next Plenary Assembly.

2 The Council commissions the CPCE Regional Group for Southeastern Europe to prepare a study on 'Education for a future' in accordance with the decision of the Assembly in Florence. This study shall be presented to the next Plenary Assembly.

3. The Council decides, in cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELKB) and the Academy in Tutzing, to establish a 'Forum Education in Europe' for the entire working period and thus to take up the impulses from the Education Forum 2011. As an annual consultation, the Forum shall aim primarily at the participation of experts and church leaders in the member churches regarding the subject of education.

4 The Council asks Klára Tarr Cselovszky to take over the management of the Education Project and to clarify the financial and organizational conditions for implementing the project in negotiations with ELKB and the Academy in Tutzing."

## **1.2 Preliminary considerations for the work in both subprojects of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**

The aim is a *theological and pedagogical understanding* of a common gospel-oriented notion of education that would correspond to current educational theories. There are many approaches to be found in the history of denominations and churches that cannot be unified into a single educational concept, but may be bundled into guidelines that open up some future perspectives.

Each church has developed *its own ways of church educational work* and has expanded its own focal points. To appreciate such focal points, to share them in fraternal solidarity, and to develop them further in the context of European challenges, will pave the way to a common Protestant understanding of education.

Finally, education is a pan-European issue, but it is developing in national contexts. It is therefore all the more important to consciously consider the respective *national, regional and cultural challenges of educational work*, in order to better understand the specific educational challenges of the individual churches and their responses, and to be able to make them fruitful in discussions among the churches.

The central question is about what the profile and contribution of Protestant educational action in the European educational area actually consists of. Especially in view of the educational activities of European bodies (Council of Europe, EU), even more attention needs to be paid to ecclesiastical responsibility in education for the international horizon.

### 1.3. The project „forum bildung Europa“

In order to come to an exchange of CPCE churches and their educational institutions, to work on common issues here, and to develop guidelines for the educational action of the CPCE churches, the "forum bildung Europa" has been established, which is to meet annually in the Evangelical Academy Tutzing (Germany). The topics of the forums were:

- **Focuses and profiles of Protestant educational action in Europe**, 26–28 October 2015, Evangelische Akademie Tutzing (Bavaria / Germany)
- **Foreign homeland Europe. Migration and Identity from the Post–War Period to the Present – Challenges for Protestant educational work in Church and Diaconia**, 5-6 December 2016, Schloss Fürstenried, Munich (Bavaria / Germany)<sup>5</sup>

Despite common topics, the project "forum bildung Europa" and the study "Education for a Future" must be clearly distinguished from each other. The forum is advertised throughout Europe in the context of the CPCE churches and deals with various topics on an annual basis.

The study "Education for a Future" is a project of the Regional Group in Southeast Europe, which is working on this topic during the entire period between the Plenary Assemblies. Of course, the questions are also linked. The results of the forum, which shall lead to guidelines for CPCE educational action, were therefore also received and discussed in the Regional Group. People from the Regional Group were involved in the forum work. Ms Klára Tarr Cselovszky, President of the CPCE, who had taken over the management of the educational projects according to the Council decision, guaranteed on the one hand the linking of the two projects in terms of personnel and content, and on the other hand she ensured the connection of the processes with the resolutions passed in the Council.

### 1.4. The project „Education for a future“ of the Regional Group Southeast Europe

The main approach of the Regional Group is dealing with the current experiences and challenges of the Protestant understanding of education and educational action by the churches in the region. The core of the project are significant case studies wherein Protestant responsibility for education becomes exemplarily clear. The aim is to identify profiles and focal points of the churches in the region.

A theological–pedagogical reflection is indispensable here, as far as it serves making educational action in church and society understandable and optimizing it. In doing so, the results of the CPCE's educational work up to now must be taken up. The basic

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<sup>5</sup> On the Forum 2016 see the documentation of the meeting, prepared and edited by Sylvia Losansky, Erlangen 2017, call under: [www.bee-erlangen.eu/content/forum-bildung-europa-2016](http://www.bee-erlangen.eu/content/forum-bildung-europa-2016). the contributions of the Forum 2015 are to be found under: [www.bee-erlangen.eu/content/forum-bildung-europa-2015](http://www.bee-erlangen.eu/content/forum-bildung-europa-2015); last login: 14.08.2017.



question is how faith and education are linked in the different Protestant traditions, and how they correspond with the understanding of education in society.

The study wants to develop perspectives and guidelines for Protestant educational responsibility in the European educational area, and introduce them to the CPCE.

### **1.5. Structure of the study**

The aim of the study is to raise awareness of the diverse educational activities of the churches of the Regional Group. This raises the connected question of what is meant by Protestant educational action and what role it plays in the various educational areas for the further development of our churches. Finally, considerations shall be developed as to how Protestant educational action is to be shaped in the future.

The study is therefore divided into the following topics and chapters:

If and insofar as education is a basic function of the church, it must become clearer visible as a part of church action based on faith. This means that the biblical foundations, the marking developments in the pious history of Protestant education, and the theological justifications should increasingly be unearthed (Chapter 2). The secular European challenges for education, in which Protestant education is taking place, will be named and put into to a relationship with the question about what the role of the church in the European educational area could be (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, the focal points of Protestant educational action will be presented in case studies, and insights and challenges are worked out. Finally, Chapter 5 will present guidelines for church educational action in the future.

The style of the study is the systematizing and reflective work on and with case studies from the member churches of the Regional Group – thus the study is neither a theological case study in the classical sense, nor a purely theological–pedagogical study on education. The linguistic design presented translation challenges of a special kind. Under the keyword and the phenomenon of "education", theological and pedagogical concepts and ways of thought come together in this study; educational traditions that are shaped differently in church and society, come together and must be put in relation to one another. And since education is in the responsibility of states throughout Europe, the individual country contexts in their marking traditions and the legal framework must also be taken into account – this again represents a special challenge for the translation work.

### **1.6. Concrete concerns**

In the theological work done by the Regional Group and in the reflection of the case studies, the insights into both the fundamental interrelationship of church and education and into the relevance of the topic of education for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe has been deepened. The Regional Group would therefore like to introduce the following concrete concerns for the further work of the CPCE:

- a) In the ecclesiological processes of self–understanding in the CPCE, education as an essential basic function of the church must always be taken into consideration. The CPCE should therefore be understood not only as a teaching community, but more comprehensively as a learning community. How this should be understood within the framework of the CPCE doctrinal talks so far on the church and on church unity, and how it may be imagined for the future of CPCE, that should be considered through a study process on the topic "The CPCE as a learning community".
- b) An improved communication among the churches of the CPCE in their educational activities, and a more intensive networking of their educational institutions are of central importance.
- c) To further promote this, the "forum bildung Europa" should be continued.
- d) The concepts of "culture of the heart" and "culture of the faith" as guiding concepts of a specific Protestant educational work should be further researched. This could be done through Protestant educational institutions, theological faculties, and in academic conferences. Already existing approaches to selective cooperation between the CPCE and scientific institutions could be expanded for this purpose.

## **2. „The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.“ (Proverbs 9,10) – Biblical and theological assurance**

### **2.1. „But Mary treasured up ... and pondered them in her heart “ (Luke 2,19). Protestant education, culture of faith and religious education**

Protestant education comprises many different educational acts. It is defined by the fact that it takes place in Protestant responsibility and out of the evangelical faith. However, its concrete goals and its content are determined by the target groups and the institutional contexts.

An essential field of Protestant education is culture of the faith.<sup>6</sup> Culture of faith is the process in which "person and faith are integrated"<sup>7</sup>. This takes place in a complex procedure: The believer understands and lives his or her life in all its aspects out of faith. He or she understands faith in the light of the own life within all its social references. This individually very different process can be continuous, but it can also include breaks, new beginnings and doubts.

This process of a culture of faith includes the capability to talk about one's belief with other people, to express oneself and to understand others in their belief. Education takes place in dialogue, culture of faith is an event of relationship. Humans amaze each other, alienate each other, or challenge each other to respond. They enrich each other by telling about their life (in faith) and sharing their longings, their wounds and their hopes. People often speak indirectly or only in hints about their faith. They search their individual expressions. It needs sensitive listening and a space of trust for this.

Integrating faith and life means placing one's life in the light of the Gospel, living from the Gospel, and exploring its meaning together with other persons. Culture of the faith is an open process. For that process to be enabled, celebrating services, listening to the Gospel, receiving the Lord's Supper together, praying together and alone, religious art and religious rituals are important. Culture of the faith takes place in everyday situations just as in contexts of formal education, in friendly conversations, and in Bible studies. Lectures or writing workshops, ecumenical discussion groups, participation in the congregation feast stand for a variety of other possibilities.

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Jürgen Luibl has introduced the concept of „Glaubensbildung“ (culture of faith) as a central concept of Protestant theory of education: Hans Jürgen Luibl, Glaubensbildung als Zukunftsweg? Glaube & Bildung in nachmodernen Zeiten, in: Forum Erwachsenenbildung 1 (2009), 12–16.

<sup>7</sup> Eberhard Harbsmeier, Glaube und Bildung – Glaubensbildung. Historische und systematische Annäherungen, in: Martin Friedrich / Hans Jürgen Luibl (Hg), Glaubensbildung. Die Weitergabe des Glaubens im europäischen Protestantismus, Leipzig 2012, 48–69, hier 52.

Culture of the faith as an integration of faith and life thus always also contains a reflective moment: "Culture of faith is that education which assures itself of its reason and its own developments, that is a conscious, reflective attitude towards religion and to one's own religiosity."<sup>8</sup>

Protestant Christianity has often been particularly sensitive in recognizing the respective concrete educational challenges. For this reason, the individual churches have in the past also set very different priorities in their educational theology and in their concrete educational action. Many congregations, churches and single Christians are intensively and creatively engaged in educational action. This must be appreciated in detail. In addition, it is necessary to recognize the high proportion of church activity lying in educational action. Education is a fundamental mission of the Church, because its mission to proclaim the Gospel always requires education and releases education. In this respect, the Church is always also an educational institution.<sup>9</sup>

"Religious education" in contrast to "culture of faith" means knowledge about religion and religions in their diversity, but also empathy for religious interpretations of life, independent of one's own religious or non-religious orientation. In this sense, religious education should be part of general education and lifelong learning in pluralistic societies.

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What do I do with this fact, God, that it was you who made me?

You formed Adam out of earth.  
And you made me in secret. Out of almost nothing.  
From two tiny cells.  
And a breath.  
So little and so much is man.  
Your likeness.

What is your idea of man?  
And what is my idea of man?  
My image of the other and of myself.  
Do I fulfill the image others have of me?  
And do I fill your image of me?

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8 Hans Jürgen Luibl, Glaubensbildung als Zukunftsweg? Glaube & Bildung in nachmodernen Zeiten, in: Forum Erwachsenenbildung 1 (2009), 12–16, here p. 16.

9 Cf. on this Michael Bünker, Der europäische Protestantismus. Eine Lerngemeinschaft des Glaubens und das Entstehen einer europäischen Bildungsgesellschaft, in: Martin Friedrich / Hans Jürgen Luibl (Hg), Glaubensbildung. Die Weitergabe des Glaubens im europäischen Protestantismus, Leipzig 2012, 19–33, here p. 28.

Where can I be educated and trained?  
Does it really educate me – every book, every newspaper?  
Can a person be distorted by images on the screens?  
What are you forming, God, out of all this within us?  
How do you, God, train us further?

You're an artist, God.  
A visual artist.  
In an endless educational landscape: eternity.  
Sometimes I can sense it, your education plan for me.  
Sometimes I notice them, your education assistants by my side.

I want to be like clay in your hand, my God.  
You, my maker, my creator.  
You are the potter who makes me into a vessel,  
that can grasp your Holy Spirit.

Andrea Aippersbach

## **2.2. Biblical Dimensions of Protestant Education**

The following considerations have emerged from the Regional Group's discussions. They make no claim to a systematic development or complete presentation of biblical educational thought and action. Rather, central texts of the Old and New Testaments are to open up biblical horizons for education, and – in the close connection between the Old and New Testaments – biblical educational processes initiated and supported by faith shall come into view.

### **a) God creates life – reference to God, acceptance of oneself as a creature, and understanding creation**

**20** When thy son asks thee tomorrow, What are these ordinances, and statutes, and judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? **21** And thou shalt say unto thy son, We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, **22** and the LORD did great and wicked signs and wonders unto the Egyptians, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his house before our eyes; **23** And he brought us out from thence to bring us here, and to give us the land, as he had sworn unto our fathers. **24** And the LORD commanded us to act according to all these statutes, and to fear the LORD our God, that it might be good for us always, and that he might keep us alive, as is the case today. **25** And righteousness shall reign with us when we keep all this commandment, and act according to it before the LORD our God, as he commanded us.

Genesis 6:20–25;

Where does education begin in the Old Testament? It begins in a story of liberation by God, begins with His wonders and deeds. The central act of God for the people of Israel is liberation from slavery and entry into the Promised Land.

This primal scene of divine action is repeatedly recalled in order to gain strength for the future. This memory is double: on the one hand it is Passover in its ritualized form; on the other hand it is the narrative of exodus, preservation and land taking. The memory leads to the consequence connected with the liberation, the experience and the realization of liberation: the right knowledge of God and the right action.

This is the primal scene of education: It begins with God's action and thus forms "God's" people and its identity. This action is experienced and known ritually – and it opens up the knowledge of God and the world. What is important here is that God acts first and foremost and addresses the people of Israel. The individual is included in this event: Education is an in–formation into this history: being taken in, being able to celebrate, learning to understand. Education is holistic, but always oriented towards God's action and always referred to the fact that the individual can become involved in the People of God and thus into God's will to salvation.

**23** For I have received from the Lord what I then delivered unto you: Jesus the Lord took bread the night he was delivered, **24** said the prayer of thanksgiving, broke the bread and said, This is my body for you. Do this in memory of me! **25** And he took the cup after the feast, and said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink from it, in memory of me! **26** For whenever ye eat of this bread, and drink of the cup, ye proclaim the death of the Lord until he come.  
1 Corinthians 11:23–26;

In this New Testament text referring to Jesus' last meal, it is also expressed: God's action opens up experience and knowledge, people learn what is going on and are enabled to participate in the salvation.

What is particularly exciting now is the keyword of *paradosis* ("transmission"): "For I have received from the Lord what I have then passed on to you". What is learnt here is not a matter of tradition, but of God Himself. God gives the educational mandate, or in other words: the educational action is part of divine action. The central event of divine action, the *paradosis*, the handing over of life to death, in which the handing over of death to life is included, coincides with the *paradosis* as the handing over of this message. So also from the understanding of words we see: the salvific event creates its own form of transmission, education as a formation of the new world.

### **b) Teach, learn, obey and follow the Torah ("law") – conscience, orientation and responsibility**

The primal scene of biblical education has undergone certain shapes throughout history. There is a break in the exile. Here, the Torah becomes Israel's new place of learning with circumcision as a ritual assurance. The Torah must be taught and learned. This is what the repetition of the Torah, Deuteronomy, stands for. This is

connected with a twofold goal: to do justice to God and to live properly. That is why the Torah is holy, because it is the way of salvation.

To the extent that salvation focuses on the Torah, teaching and learning the Torah becomes central. Knowing the Torah is the way to salvation. That's why the Torah should be taught to the children, they should be inculcated and familiarized with it in its depth and complexity. Torah learning becomes a lifelong learning – the Torah is not self-explanatory. It has been and continues to be reinterpreted and commented on. One grows into the Torah as a great web of salvation. People should be encouraged to continue to interpret the Torah for themselves even in the present. The learning act consists of two parts: understanding and following.

If education is cognitively narrowed, one may also raise critical questions: Where is the liberating element of education and upbringing? The biblical texts remind us that learning also includes smelling and tasting, experience and primary adventures. Education and learning don't exhaust themselves biblically in reproducing, but demand independent appropriation and liberated creativity. Education does not exclude people, rather it unites different people in the experience of God's bequest of salvation.

**14** Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned to Galilee. The news of him spread all over the area. **15** He taught in the synagogues and everyone spoke of him with the utmost respect. **16** So Jesus also came to Nazareth, where he had grown up. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read from the Holy Scriptures, **17** and the synagogue servant handed him the scroll with the words of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus rolled them up and chose the place where it says: **18** "The Spirit of the Lord has taken possession of me because the Lord has anointed and empowered me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to announce to the prisoners that they should be free, and to the blind that they will see. I shall bring freedom to the mistreated, **19** and proclaim the year in which the Lord will turn graciously to his people." **20** Jesus rolled up the book again, gave it back to the synagogue servant and sat down. All in the synagogue looked at him curiously. **21** He began and said: "Today when you hear this prophet's word from my mouth, it has come true among you.

Luke 4:14–21;

Jesus is presented here as a Torah teacher – but in a very specific interpretation: there is no teaching of something, no instruction of something, but the special teaching is the fulfilment of what is to be taught and learned.

When Jesus teaches, he not only interprets the wording of the Torah, but proclaims the will of God and proclaims salvation. Teaching is the disclosure of God's presence. Education is the visualization of God as participation in salvation.

The teacher of salvation does not simply have students who learn to follow the Torah, but this teacher of salvation has followers who participate in salvation. So learning is

itself the discovery of salvation and a salutary process. Here we may also see a connection at the end of Matthew's Gospel.

**16** And the eleven disciples went up to Galilee, where Jesus had sent them. **17** And when they saw him, they fell down before him: but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, **All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth.** **19** Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, **20** and teach them all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days to the end of the world.

Matthew 28:16–20;

"All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth – therefore go and teach all nations." One may derive a Great Commission from this: The mission was to proselytize the peoples, to make them Christians. Thus in Luther's Bible it was translated earlier: "and make disciples of all nations". But one must read more precisely: they should become disciples, followers, learners of salvation. A salutary concept of learning and a liberating understanding of education are expressed here. And it has worked the same way: Education opens spaces of salvation and liberates.

### **c) Wisdom and its limits – shaping life and dealing with the world**

In post-exile, Hellenistic times, another accent of knowledge and awareness comes into the culture of faith: wisdom. It comes from experience. It bundles empirical knowledge that is intended as orientational knowledge to open up living spaces. In a second step, this orientational knowledge is then transferred onto the relationship with God. Wisdom is also an option to understand God and his actions. In some texts, wisdom itself is personified again, it becomes the first birth of creation, it is the sister of the Spirit, the alter ego of the Logos.

The fascinating thing about the concept of wisdom is that secular knowledge is thus absorbed and becomes religious orientational knowledge. You can watch, consider experiences, and understand your own world: God has given the world His wisdom, and people can understand God and the world by their wisdom. Here, education is comprehensive orientational knowledge. So far that approach had dominated: understanding the world from the perspective of God's actions and the Torah. Now the focus is on understanding the world that was created by God out of oneself and in this way learning to understand God.

**22** The LORD created me as the beginning of his way, before his works in prehistoric times; **23** I was formed in the earliest days, in the beginning, at the origin of the earth. **24** When the primeval seas were not yet, I was born, when there were not yet springs, the waters rich. **25** Before the mountains were set down, I was born before the hills. **26** Nor had he made the earth, and the fields, and all the plaice of the mainland. **27** When he built the heavens I was with him, when he measured the earth over the waters, **28** when he fortified the clouds above / and let springs flow from the primordial sea, **29** when he gave his law to the sea / and the waters were not allowed



to transgress his command when he measured the foundations of the earth, / **30** then I was with him as a beloved child / I was his joy day after day / and played before him always. **31** I played on his earth, and my joy was to be with him. **32** Now, you children, listen to me! / Blessed are those who watch my ways. **33** Hear the reminder, and become wise, and do not reject it. **34** Blessed is the man who hearkeneth unto me, who watcheth over my gates day after day, and guardeth my doorposts. **35** He that findeth me shall find life, and shall obtain the pleasure of the LORD. **36** But whosoever faileth me hurteth himself: all that hate me love death.

Proverbs 8:22–36;

**22** The LORD created me as the beginning of his way, before his works in prehistoric times; **23** I was formed in the earliest days, in the beginning, at the origin of the earth. **24** When the primeval seas were not yet, I was born, when there were not yet springs, the waters rich. **25** Before the mountains were set down, I was born before the hills. **26** Nor had he made the earth, and the fields, and all the plaice of the mainland. **27** When he built the heavens I was with him, when he measured the earth over the waters, **28** when he fortified the clouds above / and let springs flow from the primordial sea, **29** when he gave his law to the sea / and the waters were not allowed to transgress his command when he measured the foundations of the earth, / **30** then I was with him as a beloved child / I was his joy day after day / and played before him always. **31** I played on his earth, and my joy was to be with him. **32** Now, you children, listen to me! / Blessed are those who watch my ways. **33** Hear the reminder, and become wise, and do not reject it. **34** Blessed is the man who hearkeneth unto me, who watcheth over my gates day after day, and guardeth my doorposts. **35** He that findeth me shall find life, and shall obtain the pleasure of the LORD. **36** But whosoever faileth me hurteth himself: all that hate me love death.

Proverbs 8:22–36;

In the New Testament we find wisdom and wisdom teaching in the form of Parables. The wisdom teacher Jesus uses them to lead people into the coming and growing of the Kingdom of God. The point here is not that you could read something out of the world that simply is there, but rather there is something in the world that refers to another world. The parable tells of this leap from this world into the Kingdom of God. The process of transmission takes man rooted in this world into the Kingdom of God. Whoever listens to the parables is not simply instructed, but – similar to the teaching of the Torah – transferred into this new reality. The parable is the original form of education: it enables transfer, it creates freedom and counts on the dialectic of success and failure.

Wisdom includes knowing one's own limits and those of wisdom. Wisdom and knowledge biblically refer to God's love, which is all in all. St. Paul expresses this definition of the relationship between wisdom and love in this way:

**8** Love never ceases when prophetic speaking will cease and tongues will cease and knowledge will cease. **9** For our knowledge is piecework, and our prophetic speaking is piecework. **10** But when perfection comes, the piecework will cease. **11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, and thought like a child, and was wise like a child; but when I became a man, I did away what was childlike.

1 Corinthians 13:8–11;

Knowledge is piecework, it remains bound to earthly life. Full knowledge, holistic cognition is only possible after the end, through God. But where God recognizes man, there the full knowledge can already now be experienced to some extent. However not as *Gnosis* ("earthly knowledge"), but as love. In biblical parlance, recognition as *ginosko* is also a holistic, a carnal and erotic event, even more: a being attracted, perceiving and touching. The right knowledge is love and happens in answer to love.

#### d) God's image from clay and breath – dealing with time and eternity

**7** Then the LORD God made man of dust from the earth, and blew the breath of life into his nose. And so man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7;

**26** And God said, Let us make man, an image like us, that reigns over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the worms that creep upon the earth. **27** And **God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; and created them as man and woman.**

Genesis 1:26 f.;

The basic history of education expresses an action of God: it is the formation of man from clay and God's breath. As a person being educated by God towards the communion with God, man is the image of God. It was Master Eckhart who took up this idea of education and developed his theory of education from it.

Education is a double event: it begins with the formation from clay. Therefore, as an educational task, it demands to go into the fragile creatureliness, which is always interpersonal and imagined socially. This connection with the body is possible through the mind. Here, education as a spiritual event comes into view.

That explains: Education is a basic human act and a lifelong process. This education is and remains God's task and gift. God educates humans to live. Education is a tedious, strenuous educational work. The fact that education here has to do with breeding and chastisement, with punishments and suffering, has found its way into

educational work in a problematic way, especially into Protestant modern educational work.

**5b** My son, do not despise the discipline of the Lord, and do not be afraid if he reprove thee. **6** For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth him: he smiteth with the rod every son whom he loveth. **7** Endure if you are chastised! God treats you like sons. For where is a son whom his father does not chastise? **8** If you were not chastised, as it has happened to all, then you would not be legitimate children, you would not be his sons. Hebrews 12:5b–8;

What has been lost here is the idea that it's not man who chastises and toughens man, but that life with and in God also leads through suffering and hardship, which people sometimes interpret as punishments by God. What has been lost is that the horizon of education is love, that education is an intense personal relationship, that all education and training serves the salvation of man in a biblical argumentation.

That is why there should be another text at the end: The knowledge of God and of the world coincides with the knowledge of Christ.

**1** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and he who loves him who begat him also loves him who is begotten of him. **2** By this we know that we love the children of God: if we love God and do what He commands. **3** For this is the love of God: that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not heavy. **4** For all that is begotten of God conquers the world. And that is what makes us defeat the world: our faith.

1 John 5:1–4;

### 2.3. Education in the history of Protestant Christianity

Education played and still plays a central role in Reformatory Christianity. Many European educational institutions owe their existence to reformatory impulses. The theological justification and the concrete church commitment to education are varying greatly according to contexts, historical situations and current challenges. Protestant efforts for education were always linked to efforts of reform in church and society.

A process of education was a prerequisite for a mature participation in church services in the Reformation churches. The sermon aimed to impart knowledge of God and the Bible. The point in catechesis, which was aimed not only at children but also at parents, and in school lessons was very much about teaching and knowledge. No life without teaching! "Believe me... the Church of God can never hold its own without catechism"<sup>10</sup> – writes Calvin in 1548. Both Luther and Calvin associated with the catechism the

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<sup>10</sup> Letter by Johannes Calvin tot he duke of Somerset of 22.10.1548, in: Johannes Calvins Lebenswerk in seinen Briefen, Band 1, edited by Rudolf Schwarz, Tübingen 1909, 323.

perspective of lifelong learning in order to gain an understanding faith. You can only love and serve God if you know Him, and you only know Him if His Word is understood well. Part of being a Christian are also the right and the duty to be capable of judging the preached Christian doctrine.

Calvin succeeded in productively combining knowledge and knowing God. This has brought about a culture of reading. The claim to a direct relationship with God (originating from Calvin's covenant theology) no longer wanted to see people as objects, but as subjects in the face of God, who can and may freely develop their individuality and personality with the help of educational offers. Therefore, beyond knowledge of faith, education aimed at a biblically standardized family and social life in responsibility for the family, the neighbour, for work and profession.

Three roots of theological educational thinking have a particularly strong impact: scholastic–mystic traditions of the Middle Ages, reformatory impulses of the 16th century, and concerns from Enlightenment and Pietism.

In the Middle Ages, Master Eckhart developed a theological concept of education based on the idea of man's image of God. For him, education means that man becomes the image of God. The subject of education is God alone, who imagines the image of Christ into the human soul, so that the soul can approach God in a lifelong process. It approaches God by letting itself be filled more and more by God, and in this way becomes more and more like him.

The Reformation in all its different movements and formations has also taken place as an educational movement. At that time, just as today, this aspect played an important role in the self–image of many Protestant Christians. The close connection between Protestantism and education was also highlighted in recent years by non–theological research, in German studies, pedagogy and historical studies.

This relationship is due to some complex factors. On the one hand, these are theological motives, and on the other hand reasons of the history of ideas: In its beginnings, the Reformation was also strongly connected with humanism and humanistic concerns, and integrated many of these humanistic impulses. In addition, there are socio–historical and media–historical factors of the Reformation movement: At the beginning, the Reformation was a literary movement, mediated by leaflets and writings, which primarily reached and appealed to the educated circles in the cities. At the same time, it was only with the Reformation movement that a literary public emerged outside the academic world at the university.

The reformer Martin Luther battled with theological arguments, for example for the following concrete goals: the introduction and implementation of a universal compulsory education for girls as well, the financing and organization of schools by the municipal authorities, or the financial support of schools by all citizens.

Luther presupposes that Christian life involves participation in God's two ways of governing, the secular and the spiritual one. Both regimes require education and

training. The better education and training are, the better Christians can fill the secular and the spiritual state.

Philipp Melanchthon says: "Two things are there to what life as a whole must be aimed at: piety and education."<sup>11</sup> Melanchthon urges for changes in the school organization. He emphasizes the importance of language promotion and training for the entire educational process. Latin schools were established in Nuremberg and Strasbourg based completely on Melanchthon's reformatory educational concept.

Melanchthon also gave an important impulse to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Transylvania, whose educational concept was clearly oriented towards the transmission of faith and knowledge. The reformer of Transylvania Johannes Honterus (1498–1549) was a European well networked humanist, an outstanding universal scholar and a gifted teacher. In 1543 he published the Reformation Booklet, in which the basic lines for the implementation of the ecclesiastical reformation in Transylvania are recorded. In the same year the booklet was published in Wittenberg, with a preface by Philipp Melanchthon. On top of that, Honterus also issued school order and devoted himself purposefully to the transformation of the Transylvanian Saxon school system.

The other reformers, from Calvin to Zwingli, from Bugenhagen to Bucer also promoted intensive educational reforms. In Geneva, compulsory education was introduced in 1536. In 1559 Calvin founded the Geneva Academy. In many parts, the Reformation initiated school reforms; especially in rural areas, an orderly school system developed for the first time ever, even if the success often did not meet the high expectations of those responsible.

The Huguenots established their own church education system, which included elementary schools for the literacy of as many (Protestant) children as possible, as well as colleges and academies.<sup>12</sup> Theology, philosophy, law and medicine could be studied there.

In the UK, John Wesley made a strong commitment to improving the education system by raising money for schools and setting up public libraries.

Since the end of the 17th century, Pietism and the Enlightenment have increasingly shaped Protestant church life in Europe. Pietism aims at a new reformation, which should be not only a reform of teaching, but a reform of life. This includes an intensive study of the Bible and a strong lay participation, especially also of women. Striving for the reform of life means, on the one hand, the individual life but also always the social conditions.

In a completely different context, the quest for the reform of life, for a solid culture of faith and heart, appears as a necessary measure against the Counter–Reformation.

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11 Philipp Melanchthon, *Pietas et eruditio*; zitiert nach Martin Greschat, *Philipp Melanchthon. Theologe, Pädagoge und Humanist*, Gütersloh 2010, 77.

12 See Eberhard Gresch, *Die Hugenotten. Geschichte, Glaube und Wirkung*, Leipzig 2005, v.a. 39–48.

Towards the end of the 17th century, when Transylvania became part of the Catholic Habsburg Empire and counter-reformatory tendencies became visible, the Protestant Church opposed this endeavour with a broad educational programme that affected both children and adults. This educational program, developed and designed by a Transylvanian–Saxon theologian, Markus Fronius (1659–1713), had a concrete conviction: the Christian way of life and the broad knowledge of the Holy Scriptures were sufficient to withstand the counter-reformatory measures.<sup>13</sup>

The Moravian theologian Jan Amos Comenius strove for a world improvement by changing people in the Christian spirit. World improvement is referred by Comenius to a universal reform covering the world as a whole, i.e. a reform covering all areas for really all people. Man, by his nature, has the capacity to knowledge, to morality and to love of God (religion). It is part of human nature that it unfolds gradually. But a learning process is necessary for gradual development. This learning process needs impulses and content from the outside, i.e. teaching. So education is intended by God's creative action. Anyone who refuses education to people denies the nature of man and rebels against God's will as the creator.

In Enlightenment theology and in Pietism, pedagogical questions gain a central importance. The whole world history is interpreted as God's pedagogical action on man, and in this respect also God's action on the individual as an educational action. Friedrich Schleiermacher develops an explicit theory of religious education and general pedagogy at the beginning of the 19th century. He puts education into the focus as a development of individuality in interaction with others and the world. "Man forms himself and is formed in the tension of receptivity and spontaneity, of dependence and freedom, of remaining inward and emerging to the outside. The tension between you and I, isolation and community, peculiarity and generality, the individual and the supra-individual is also decisive."<sup>14</sup> Love is constitutive for the process of forming oneself: "No education without love, and without self-education no perfection in love; complementing one the other, both are growing inseparably".<sup>15</sup>

The diaconal efforts to address the social question of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also included educational efforts for disadvantaged children and youth. In Germany, for example, Johannes Daniel Falk (1768–1826) built centers for orphaned young people in order to give them an independent future and a Christian life through education and vocational training.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many theologians were skeptical about the concept of education because, on the one hand, it seemed to be problematically associated with an optimistic view of man and, on the other hand, because it seemed individualistic and

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13 See Daniel Zikeli, Ach schläfst du Siebenbürgen noch? Der siebenbürgisch-sächsische Pfarrer Markus Fronius. Leben und Werk, Bukarest 2007, 317 ff.

14 Joachim Ochel (Hg), Bildung in evangelischer Verantwortung auf dem Hintergrund des Bildungsverständnisses von F. D. E. Schleiermacher. Eine Studie des Theologischen Ausschusses der Evangelischen Kirche der Union, Göttingen 2001, 25.

15 Friedrich Schleiermacher, Monologen, in: KGA I,3, 22.

too little community–based. They then preferred the term 'upbringing' and concentrated more on questions of the school system.

Our present time is marked by intensive debates on education, in which reference is made to these traditions, but also to the educational aspirations of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher.

The topic of education has always been particularly relevant for churches and theology in times of crisis. Although the situation of the Protestant churches in Europe differs greatly, almost everyone has a basic experience uniting them all: people turn away from the church and congregations, many baptized children no longer grow into congregations, and religious traditions are no longer cultivated in families. Much that is precious is lost in the process, and will come in the future is still open. Education stands for the hope of shaping the church's transformation processes in a forward–looking way. But there are also fears of further promoting secularization and the distance of people to the church through education. The ecclesiastical debates on education offer opportunities for a new contemplation and new beginnings, but are also associated with fears and skepticism. It is therefore important to reflect theologically on a church educational action, to focus on it according to the church's situation, and to exchange ideas among the churches.

#### **2.4. Systematic–theological reasons for Protestant education**

The Protestant churches agree with the social consensus that education is a great good and decisive for the individual and social future. Every person, young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, has a right to education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 declares education a human right in Article 26 and explains the principles of education as follows: "Education must be directed towards the full development of the human personality and towards the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It must contribute to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial or religious groups and be conducive to the work of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

Although education as a human right and as a social goal is undisputed, it is nevertheless important for the churches to justify education not only ethically, pedagogically or culturally, but also theologically. The *theological reasons* for education help to decide *how* churches shape education. Thinking about this in depth is a task for all theological disciplines.

"Education" is not a classic dogmatic topos. But "education" plays an implicit or explicit role in many dogmatic topoi. Accordingly, education can also be explained from different dogmatic topoi. These reasons are not to be understood as alternatives, but as complementary to one another. They are open to further aspects and differentiation.

In the following, some important theological perspectives are unfolded, their challenges are identified, and their impulses for future educational action in the churches are outlined.

**a) Education and the image of God, education and creatureliness**

The theological explanation of creation may be articulated in two different lines of argumentation: either over the idea of God–image and therein God–relatedness of man, or over the idea of the creatureliness of man. Christians believe: Man was created in *God's image*. Man's undetachable purpose is to become God's image. In the Ancient Oriental context, the image of God was attributed solely to the King. If in the Old Testament (especially Genesis 1:26 f.) all people are now decisively awarded the image of God, then not only their equal dignity is expressed, but also their royal assignment of working for justice and peace. This requires education in a broad sense: In order to responsibly shape life and the world, people need world knowledge, orientational knowledge, practical skills, communicative and social skills, and above all critical reflectiveness.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Christian churches associated the biblical conviction of the image of God for all people with the philosophical speech of human dignity and human rights.

And the idea of education is also closely linked with the creatureliness of man. Man is created as a socially related individual and as a being of finite freedom. As such, every human being needs education because responsible freedom requires an awareness of other people, of the world and of one's own possibilities and limitations. Education is education for self–education.

The theological explanation of creation draws attention to the universal educational need and the capacity of mankind. Every person needs education and every stage of life needs education, so that people can develop individually and bring in their abilities. This concerns human life in all its dimensions: physical, emotional, intellectual, communicative, cultural and political. Education is never just about the content, but always also about the form and design of educational processes. Many Protestant institutions of education are increasingly striving for the aesthetic design of teaching. Spaces and places of education become important here, but also language forms, sound and silence, staging and movement.

Because Christians regard all human beings as creatures of God, many Christians are passionately committed to education worldwide, for girls and boys, for young and old, for the sick and the healthy, for Christians and non–Christians. Christians are, like many others, concerned that the illiteracy rate is alarmingly high worldwide, and even in Europe, and that many children still cannot complete or even attend primary school. Particularly children and young people who are fleeing or living in refugee camps are affected. Providing them with an education is an urgent task.

The Church, which is committed to the education of all and to school education, attunes to God's love for all people. It is therein a church at the service of others.

**b) Education and the sin of man**



Hamartiological reasons for education are more often found in the Lutheran tradition, but they have become rare in recent decades. Education and sin are connected in two ways: education is necessary to limit the effects of sin. Education can contribute to greater peace, justice and prosperity in a community, thus reducing the consequences of sin. But education itself is also perverted by sin; it then becomes an instrument of exploitation and self-improvement, of arrogance and exclusion of others. Then education exacerbates sin. Thus, education as such is equivocal and ambivalent.

Protestant faith must critically address the ambiguity of education: Education can deepen the good, but education can also stabilize injustice. Knowledge can improve living conditions, but knowledge can also be used for purely destructive purposes. A central theological criterion for the differentiation is: Does education serve to distinguish and distinguish oneself from others, or does it serve to unite with others and assume responsibility?

In the face of sometimes overly great expectations of education, this theological perspective may reveal the limits and illusions of education. Education alone does not lead to social justice, peace and tolerance. Education is not a panacea. Therefore, the church's commitment to education ever includes criticism of education, and also an insight into the limits of education.

From a Protestant perspective, an awareness of the limits of education is important. Theologically, the renewal of man cannot be a goal of upbringing or education that would be attainable by human means only. Renewal is to be understood comprehensively and is reserved to God, otherwise man would be the almighty Creator of a new man.

### **c) Education and justification**

The connection between faith, justification, salvation and education requires important distinctions.

Education cannot bring about or teach faith, but education can lead to and prepare for faith. In particular, education can help to ensure that openness to faith is not obscured and that obstacles are removed. So education does not belong to the constitutional context of faith, but to the life context of faith.

Protestant faith strives for education: being able to read the Bible independently, to understand one's own faith, to take up responsibility for it, and to communicate it. Living faith is formed in struggling for one's own understanding and individual expression. Self-education is the process in which people seek their own way with faith and in faith. Freedom of faith and the social communication processes are belonging together.

It is faith understood as a new constitution of the person what enables processes of education and development. Faith gives freedom to education, to self-education. In faith, man is newly related to God, to his fellow human beings and the common world:

this relationship is thematized and reflected upon in education. It turns people into mature Christians.

#### **d) General Priesthood and Education**

Every believer is also a priest together with all other believers. This includes the personal development as a believer in all dimensions. And this is the basic event of the culture of faith. The priesthood also includes the proclamation of the Gospel, that is, the communication of faith, both in the community of believers and to non-believers. The proclamation of the Gospel requires education as the capability to express faith. Expressiveness can refer to artistic, ethical, political forms as well. The general priesthood also shows itself in judging the preaching and teaching within the church on whether it corresponds to the Gospel. Such a discernment matures in one's own confrontation with questions of faith, in reading the Bible, and in the exchange with others. Here, it remains important to emphasize that faith and the general priesthood do not have education as a prerequisite, but release it out of themselves.

One of the great challenges is how to shape education in such a way that its individualizing power does unite Christians, not individually but in a living community. Another challenge is to balance out the fact that the church opens itself in its educational action to everything that moves people on their personal path (in faith), and yet remains recognizable as a church.

The church also needs the public proclamation of the Gospel and various other ministries. Therefore, the appropriate training for these tasks is a central concern. What these tasks require in terms of competence, knowledge and gifts depends on the constantly changing concrete challenges that churches are dealing with, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

It is becoming increasingly important for people to be involved in the communication processes and the decision-making processes of their church. For this to succeed, everyone involved must learn, practice and also try out a lot: the full-time staff, the volunteers, the church leaders, everyone who works in the church and for the church.

Education counteracts authority understood wrongly or unilaterally, but education can also tempt people to a problematic awareness of their own authority or to a negation of any form of authority. Here, too, the decisive criterion is: Does education serve to distinguish from others, or does it serve community and responsible action. Responsible action includes criticism and questioning, but also new ideas and creative impulses.

The church, which makes the further education of full-time staff and volunteers as its concern, focuses especially on its self-image as *ecclesia semper reformanda*. It is a learning church that trusts in the Holy Spirit to work in ecclesial communication. Church

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<sup>16</sup> See hereto the GEKE-Texts „Amt, Ordination, Episkopé“ and „Die Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt“: Beide Texte sind veröffentlicht in: Michael Bünker / Martin Friedrich (Hg.), *Amt, Ordination, Episkopé und theologische Ausbildung* (Leuenberger Texte 13), Leipzig 2013.

needs educational processes for a change, and educational processes initiate transformation processes in churches. Therefore, the church is also essentially a community learning together (“learning community”).

### **e) Education and public theology**

In contemporary societies, education itself becomes the bridge to give public witness to the Gospel, to bring Christian perspectives into dialogue, and to have an effect in society. This represents a particular challenge for Protestant churches that are in a minority situation, be it in relation to a society marked by a secular structure or by another denominational majority. Public opinion and civil society are also very differently structured in the various European countries.

In the course of modern times, education in connection with culture has become a formative concept of life for many people. Education thus took on functions now that are actually assigned to religion and faith: Holistic orientation, conveying the meaning of life, crisis management. This happened in the Renaissance, then increasingly in the Enlightenment, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in the present. Education seems to compete with religion; high (formal) education and religious distance even seem to some people to belong together. This makes it all the more important that Christians make it clear how education and religion can be combined, and why they have something to do with each other. The topic of education can become a focus in order to bring Protestant Christian perspectives to non-denominational, secular societies. This may open up new opportunities for dialogue for the churches in Europe.

This is a common task especially for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. Questions of education, social and ethical issues are challenging us to give evangelical statements. Many of these questions concretely concern the individual states or regions, but only pan-European solutions can be found for most of the problems. Public theology, which addresses this and other issues, requires educational processes involving the European horizon and the fellowship of churches.

### **f) Education and justice**

Education must also and essentially be justified ethically. Recent ethical drafts are focusing on justice. Education and the unequal educational opportunities of people should also and primarily be seen as a problem of justice. Christian commitment to justice must then also include the commitment to educational justice. Fairness in education means that people, irrespective of their social background and gender, have educational opportunities, that disabled and non-disabled children learn together, and that lifelong learning is made possible for all people. There is a close connection between inclusion, integration and education. Commitment to educational justice is becoming more and more urgent, as participation in society and politics is increasingly dependent on education and a competent access to modern media. There are great differences within and between European societies in terms of educational opportunities. To address these injustices politically is an important task for the churches, especially for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe.

However, education is not only an important topic of ethics, but education is also the prerequisite for Christians that they are able to express themselves publicly on ethical issues. The problems discussed in society, ranging from bioethics and sustainability issues to peace and security policy, are highly complex, so that only those with sufficient expertise, conceptual differentiation and mediation skills can position themselves convincingly.

### **g) Education and religious–cultural diversity**

Pluralistic societies increasingly need religious education. Only with religious education can the conflicts in the face of various religious practices (circumcision of male infants, church bells and muezzin calls, wearing headscarves, religious symbols in public spaces) be discussed and resolved constructively and peacefully with public relevance. Religious pluralism is often associated with cultural diversity. Interreligious and intercultural learning therefore belong closely together.

Churches are committed to religious education in this broad sense in many ways. In the numerous Protestant communities of migrants, the churches themselves represent such intercultural learning spaces. The CPCE churches are differing in part considerably among each other, with regard to their political orientation and in their social–ethical positions. East–west and north–south differences play a role alongside denominational differences. In the CPCE as a whole, together with the theological processes of discussion, also a mediating understanding takes place between Christians from different cultural contexts. In this way the CPCE is making an important contribution to European peace and solidarity. In the CPCE, people do European hermeneutics; in and through the CPCE an ecclesial European public sphere is emerging.

Conclusion: For Protestant Christians education is connected with all aspects of their faith. The multitude of aspects of faith also corresponds to a wealth of educational focal points: the multi–dimensionality of education, lifelong learning, integrative learning, the inter–subjectivity of educational processes, the political and social dimension of education, informal education and everyday education.

## **2.5. The profile of Protestant education**

The Protestant understanding of education is specifically Christian and especially Christological.<sup>17</sup> It is not primarily about the development of natural potencies, but about the development of humanity in communion with Christ with the goal of perfection: "...we...exhort all men and teach all men in all wisdom so that we make every man perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

Education is always a process of perfection – without any claim to achieve this goal. Education itself remains in the process, is itself both capable of improvement and in

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17 Christoph Marksches, *Zur Freiheit befreit. Bildung und Bildungsgerechtigkeit in evangelischer Perspektive*, Frankfurt/M. 2011.

need of improvement. According to the Biblical understanding, education does not aim at the perfection of man, his competences or abilities, but at the formation of the relationship with God: "Therefore you should be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Johann Amos Comenius reflected about the nature of a perfect education.<sup>18</sup> For him it seemed attainable: "Then we demand that man be instructed not in one respect alone, in few or in many things, but in all that really makes human nature perfect."<sup>19</sup>

Not only Comenius was optimistic, the whole time was optimistic about human improvement skills. The idea of a constant, infinite perfection of man, technology, society and even nature, has gripped mankind with the development of science and technology since the Enlightenment era. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this optimism also permeated the Church and theology.

However, the idea of perfection changed into an enlightenment–rationalistic, purpose–oriented idea of a better world, which the constantly perfecting human being was to build with the help of science and morality. This was linked to the idea of a more perfect society built on better scientific and moral foundations. As a result, modern education has increasingly led to the specialization of individual areas, sciences, subjects and competences. Perfection should appear as a sum of many independent improvements. Where this idea became real, the consequences were more destructive, and a perfection of modern technological society has proved to be a threat.

This mistake of the project of modernity became obvious after the World Wars, and the fragmentation of reality has, conversely, triggered a search for a comprehensive (holistic) education – always in danger of a new forced perfection of reality.

A holistic education that brings people to perfection is one or even the characteristic of an Protestant approach to education. What distinguishes this Protestant concept of perfection from such ideals of perfection that proved problematic? What are the characteristics of this education aiming at an overall perfection? A verse from the letter of Ephesians may serve as a guideline: Thus "we are all to arrive at the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, at the perfection of man, at the full measure of the fullness of Christ...". (Ephesians 4:13).

Four basic elements can be worked out:

#### **a) Universality as a basic orientation**

Perfection (teleiotes) is wholeness, is a life with respect to the totality of creation. Communion with Christ is communion with all creation and responsibility for it. This

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18 Johann Amos Comenius, Pampaedia. Allerziehung, übersetzt und herausgegeben von Klaus Schaller, Sankt Augustin 1991.

19 Op.cit., 13.

orientation remains there as a horizon of hope even where it has not (yet) been fulfilled in reality.

### **b) Inclusivity**

Because creation is a living whole (without being a highly complicated machine), Christian education must not be exclusivistic. It must be open in principle. In possible disputes, commonalities with other persons responsible for education are rather to be taken into consideration. Education to perfection can only be found and developed under the joint responsibility of all educational institutions.

### **c) Justice and mercy**

"To do right, to love goodness and faithfulness" (Micah 6:8) is part of the claimed perfection. The claim and the promise of justice in all human relationships and activities are sustained by the Gospel, but it is not an exclusive perspective of Christianity alone. And mercy, on the other hand, is much less popular in a secular context, but plays a central role in Christianity and thus in Christian education – this too is a contribution of Christianity to the necessary education of society today.

### **d) Humility**

Although the goal of Christian education is a perfection in communion with Christ, the knowledge and understanding of sin make us aware that education will not bring about "harmony of creation" and will not simply redeem the fallen creation. Thus the limits of man and the salutary limitation of education and by education come into view. This enables educational action that teaches new ways of dealing with ruptures and boundaries.

"Perfection" as the goal of education, which means growing into the communion with God, can also be formulated in general categories, for example under the keyword of "value-oriented education" in specific areas of learning. For Protestant education, the following aspects are central: the orientation towards freedom in responsibility, the Christian view of man, for human dignity and human rights, and the orientation towards the common good. Protestant education affirms democracy and civil society; it sees itself as part of civil social processes. Protestant churches never pursue education only for the sake of denominational self-preservation or for the sake of demarcation, but for the sake of people. Protestant educational action is therefore open to cooperation with other educational institutions, relies on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and enjoys educational initiatives that feel similarly committed to these values.

### **3. Education as a leading medium of post–modern society – Challenges for the churches**

#### **3.1. Education in transition**

The historical snapshots of the diverse fields of educational action have shown that, on the one hand, it is a classic field of work, but on the other hand it is precisely here that something new is being created and perceived. The raised attention for education is also a signal of increased sensitivity to changes in church and society. One of the essential questions is what role does education play in situations of change, to what extent is education a motor of ecclesial–social transformation processes, and in what way does education thus also change in its content. In the following, some ecclesial–social upheaval situations are sketched as models in which education was or is of particular importance and in which it simultaneously also changes.

##### ***3.1.1. Between the Middle Ages and Modern Times – the educational programme of the Reformation***

The Middle Ages and the early modern period knew a rich educational culture. In addition to monastic education, humanistic education was established and numerous educational initiatives developed before and alongside the Reformation.

The Reformation placed particular emphasis on education, and thus gave Protestantism an essential characteristic. The Reformation began with the upheaval of Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and helped to shape the transformation processes. It discovered faith as a fundamental way of existence, which it represented universally and carried out the coexistence of secular and religious institutions, of attitudes to world and values. Here, education is not primarily the transmission of the faith tradition, but develops out of the perception and the design of the transforming processes. Here, Reformation has acted in the tradition of the church since its beginnings, thus activating its foundation of faith. In short: education becomes an essential proprium of the Reformation. In most countries and churches, education was becoming a central evangelical profile. This has given rise to freedom, maturity, knowledge and decision–making abilities. Right from the beginning Protestantism was an educational movement that discovers faith in its form of existence, generates education as orientational knowledge, and thereby has concentrated knowledge at its disposal, thus institutionalizing and professionalizing the educational processes.

Reformation and education are also closely related in the fact that, in the upheaval of times, faith in God asks anew for its own rationality, for a reliable culture of faith, which at the same time opens up orientational and available knowledge for social and biographical upheavals. Catechisms make man capable of speaking before God and of providing information in the church and in the world, thus enabling responsibility right down to the ethical realm. Catechisms have often printed an alphabet on the first or

last page, so that people with the catechism and then the Bible could also learn to read in general. A literacy programme of Protestant churches has developed from this.

With the confidence to be able to read the Bible and thus to be able to answer for faith, the idea of the readability of the world and the responsibility of the mature person have developed. In different historical constellations and upheavals, education based on faith has allowed both church and society to develop further – not least through the culture of the heart in Pietism, which contributed to the cultivation of emotionality, or diaconal education, which has had an effect even in social policy.

### ***3.1.2. Education as and in the Transformation Process – Example Germany – From the lamentable state of education to an education society and education church***

However, this does not mean that the relationship between Protestant churches and education has always remained free of conflict. In Germany, in the upheaval phase of the 1960s, student unrest led to the query of social changes – they were an expression of a new university-educated elite and led to a political education offensive. First of all, the so-called "educational catastrophe" came to the fore, which showed itself in the fact that there were too few schools and teachers, but also not enough suitable teaching material and corresponding concepts. As a result, a contingency plan was developed to secure the framework conditions for education.

In this context, education in and as a process of transformation also became a topic of the Protestant churches. Education was ambivalently received and evaluated. In the first study on church membership of the Protestant Church in Germany in 1972/74, the so-called "dilemma of education" was formulated.<sup>20</sup> The second study in 1984 still stated: "The educational dilemma of the People's Church: The persistence of the People's Church is increasingly dependent on a factor that also threatens it most – namely education understood as a debate and a reflective approach to tradition and passing on."<sup>21</sup> Formulated negatively: Education dissolves the traditional structure of the church; formulated positively: Education helps the church to find a new place within social change. The Protestant churches have only slowly recognized and expanded their educational potential.

Today, Germany (according to German Chancellor Angela Merkel) is calling for an "education republic". In Protestant churches, the idea of an education church came concurrently into play. But as important as these impulses are, they also run the risk of functionalizing education. On the one hand, they try to expand education under economic aspects, primarily as vocational training and further education, what reduces education regarding essential dimensions of humanity in aesthetic, ethical and

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20 Cf. *Wie stabil ist die Kirche? Bestand und Erneuerung. Ergebnisse einer Meinungsbefragung*, herausgegeben von Helmut Hild, Gelnhausen und Berlin 1974.

21 *Was wird aus der Kirche? Ergebnisse der zweiten EKD-Umfrage über Kirchenmitgliedschaft*, herausgegeben von Johannes Hanselmann u.a., Gütersloh 1984, 17.



religious terms. On the other hand, the economic functionalization of education is reinforced by empirical educational reporting.

Thirdly, questions of educational justice are neglected in a non-value-based education, and finally: non-value-based educational action opens up education as an unlimited process of self-perfection of people and society. At the same time there is the threat to lose the notion that education is especially important at the borders of life, in order to be able to deal with ruptures, suffering and the irreversible. In all these developments, Protestant churches in particular are called upon to develop an independent educational concept. In this way, they are not alone, but close to all those educational approaches that aim for freedom and individual maturity and holistic education. Because education policy is the social policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the churches can and must also take part in the educational debates out of social responsibility. Europe needs forums and places to discuss different understandings of education, educational goals and values of education. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe can be such a forum.

### **3.1.3. The upheaval in Europe – the Lisbon process**

Education has been booming in the European context since the end of the last century. The strongest impetus for the development of a European Education Area was provided by the so-called Lisbon Process. It was launched by the Heads of State and Government in early 2000 with the aim of making the European Union a world-class economic center by 2010. The aim was to "become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".<sup>22</sup> At the heart of this is the concept of creating a European Research Area (ERA) to overcome the current fragmentation of European research, and to develop new approaches for the development of a competitive common European research landscape. The EU strategy is reiterating here the conviction that knowledge is power, and sees this as hope for a knowledge-based economic growth that should be able to create jobs and strengthen social cohesion. Research networking and the concept of lifelong learning are meant to help here. With the Lifelong Learning Programme, the European Commission supports the Council's course. It is seen as the key to ensuring social integration and equal opportunities. A similar concentration of education on learning is to be found in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. The right to education is set out in Article 14(1): "Everyone has the right to education and access to vocational and further training."<sup>23</sup>

Europe will gain the future through education in a very specific perspective: as research, learning, knowledge, as education and vocational training, as further

22 Lisbon European Council 23–24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions, No. 5, unter: [www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm); last login: 18.08.2017.

23 Charta der Grundrechte der Europäischen Union (2016/C 202/02), Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union vom 7.6.2016, C 202/396.

education and training. But this raises the question of whether this EU–standardized understanding of education really meets the requirements of European transformation processes, as are to be organized in communication between the European Union and its member states, and even more: whether this really is already education in the broadest sense. The Protestant churches are called upon here to present a European concept of education and integration that would extend beyond their own national and confessional boundaries.

## **3.2. Trends in education and challenges for the future**

### ***3.2.1. Trends in education and society***

Modern education ties in with normative premises as well as social trends: Self–determined and self–confident personalities should be prepared in their biographies in such a way that they are able to act independently and at the same time together. The central social trends in modern society include the demographic change with the necessary cooperation between aging social groups and young renewable generations, the climate change and environmental change, the high complexity due to the differentiation of social groups, the ongoing trend of technologicalization that is challenging forms of works organization and further qualification, the change in values with its trend towards individualization, the globalization with the simultaneous need for regional and local adaptation of knowledge concepts and knowledge of individuals, and the ongoing digitalization that permeates both professional and private areas of life.

Education would be inconceivable without a concept of lifelong learning as was promoted in the 1970s by UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the OECD. Heuristically we can state,

- that motivation to learn and the ability to learn can be awakened already in early childhood, or that this is perhaps omitted in learning worlds with little appeal,
- that basic skills are developed in childhood and adolescence on the basis of compulsory learning,
- that in young adulthood, specialized skills must be developed in vocational training,
- that knowledge can be passed on in older adulthood, but that concurrently relearning and new learning is necessary due to technological, works organizational and cultural changes,
- and that the very elderly can acquire skills through learning and education so that a self–organized way of life is guaranteed for as long as possible.

When education and approaches to social theory are combined, very different concepts of social theory are currently under discussion:

- In the knowledge society, some strong problem-solving skills, practical intelligence and creativity are required above all,
- In the risk society, the goal is securing identity within the framework of highly flexible and fluid life biographies,
- In the labour society, the question arises of how to achieve higher professional skills and prevent unemployment through training,
- In civil society, the participation competence and solidarity of the individual is challenged, because every personality develops the ability to form social networks,
- In the immigration society, religious orientation and tradition are addressed specifically so that one is able to live intercultural competence,
- In the adventure society, special lifestyles, the challenges of consumption and the habitual behaviour, always in distinction to other social groups, are addressed,
- In the society of long life, the demographic change and the trend towards the extension of age is finally addressed, but also the work phases under the claim of a balance of work and leisure, and the trend towards inter-generation learning are brought to the fore.

### **3.2.2. Educational research and future planning**

The planning of the educational system requires clear, empirically unambiguous findings on early childhood education, general education, vocational training, extra-curricular youth education, higher education, and finally also a continuing vocational and general and political education. On the basis of scientifically based educational reporting, it is possible to inform the public interested in education about trends in education, to better orient educational planning and educational practice. However, it is not possible to derive indispensable concrete guidelines and social technologies from the empirical knowledge. That requires a rational action, which, following Max Weber, is conscious of the fact that the setting of goals and purposes in democracies lies in the hands of politics and practice, but that science can exert a certain influence on these goals and purposes through education monitoring.

In the recent debate, mainly competence development and the notion of competence have gained some importance. This involves the development of a broad professional ability, a methodological and learning competence that enables the individual to independently collect information. It is about the development of a strong social competence, an individual personal and general cultural competence. The competence-based approach in education assumes that these areas of competence

only make sense if they can be translated into a capacity to act, i.e. into experience-related knowledge and life practice.

Empirically, it can be assumed that academic education will be increasingly significant, which can be attributed to the higher demands of the employment system on the one hand, but must also be interpreted as a generative change, because parents often expect the same or higher educational qualifications from their children than they themselves had achieved. In addition to higher education, continuing education has also been very expansionary in recent years, so that it can be said today that the activity in continuing education and the continuing education rate will only decline from the age of 60 onwards. The third area of strong expansion is early childhood, because a high demand for early childhood support has also been identified. Family development and dual employment within families have a particularly strong influence on this.

Due to demographic change, the education of older people (45 to over 80 years of age) is of growing social and societal interest. The educational interests of the elderly can be typified, for example, into a social-emotional type of education that primarily aims at social contact through education, a type of public welfare orientation that primarily supports voluntary work and the improvement of social welfare, a utilitarian type that is strongly oriented towards one's own educational needs, and a self-absorbing contemplative type that primarily expresses a need to catch up in education.

The specific competency measurements in adulthood show that older people in Germany, but also in the overview of OECD countries, are less able to read and calculate than younger age groups. This should not be interpreted hastily as an age effect, because it is quite possible that generational effects will also be reflected here. Older people, as a post-war generation, had less education (especially women) than is the case for the younger generation.

Modern practice-oriented educational research also shows a social milieu orientation: Social milieu orientation means that educational research brings together people who differ from others in their social situation (vertical differentiation according to income, educational level, etc.) and according to values, views of life and lifestyles (horizontal differentiation), but who are highly homogenous within a milieu. In a sense, social milieus, from the traditional milieu to the performer milieu and the expeditive milieu, constitute social units expressing very different educational needs and interests. A similar differentiation can also be made with migrant milieus, distinguishing between traditional migrant worker milieus ingrained in religion, uprooted milieus, adaptive migrant milieus very willing to integrate into society, and also hedonistic milieus. The discussion sometimes fails to sufficiently consider the fact that there are also intellectually cosmopolitan and multicultural performance milieus in the field of migrants, who have an extremely high level of education.

### **3.2.3. More than professional competence!**

Education is always more than just professional competence. Of course, the mastery of the lingua franca, a basic arithmetic competence, a foreign language competence, an information technology competence, and also the self-regulation of the acquisition of knowledge are a basis for all other forms of the world encounter. But a concept of education in modernity has also to take into account,

- that beyond the acquisition of basic skills, it is also a matter of normative–evaluative examination of the economy and society, and this can be conveyed through history, economics, politics and law,
- that there is an aesthetic–expressive encounter and design of this world, which is enabled through technical domains such as language, music, painting, fine arts and sports,
- that there is a cognitive–instrumental modelling of the world, taught through mathematics and the natural sciences,
- and that it is, and this should be emphasized, also a matter of dealing with the problems of the constitutive reality, and for this philosophy and religion are absolutely necessary.

We therefore have to warn against a too limited concept of competence; rather, interdisciplinary competences in the curriculum vitae such as learning competence, life competence, moral and political competence, media competence, intercultural competence, artistic and aesthetic competences are of very high importance.

In summary, it can be said that education certainly refers to finding the cultural identity of each individual, but that education can and must also address economic demands, political and public components, the challenge of the social community, and cultural abilities with the mediation of values.

If one relates educational research and educational planning with each other, the following is at stake today:

- an expansion of early intervention,
- promoting future-oriented school learning by imparting solid specialist knowledge and interdisciplinary competences on the basis also of educational standards,
- strengthening all-day schools due to family changes,
- maintaining the dual and full-time school-based vocational training system, while still increasing the proportion of students and academics,
- shaping lifelong learning, i.e. to strengthen further training and adult education, always promoting the quality of pedagogical staff as the key to educational development,

- trying to ensure that women and men participate equally in the education system, in order to avoid and reduce exclusion and thus promote inclusion,
- and reducing dropouts in the education system, what also means educating and qualifying migrants.

Education therefore focuses on the individual's ability to develop the personality throughout the entire life span, but also on coping with social trends and social change.

### **3.3. Europe, the churches and education**

#### **3.3.1. Education in transformation processes**

Transformation processes are essentially educational processes. The formation of Europe as a political process and education in Europe and as a learning process are closely linked and intertwined in a multi-layered form.<sup>24</sup> This is all the more true when the political education process has to cope with changes. Education in the pedagogical sense becomes a medium for self-assurance, for the development of competences, for understanding and surviving transitions, and for orientational knowledge, also for shaping changes. Education is primarily not the canon of knowledge that is conveyed, but the perception and design of a deep-rooted change – necessary knowledge is generated here. This can be demonstrated for all large and small European transition processes. What is thought of here collectively also applies individually: education mainly appears in life processes that request new orientation.

#### **3.3.2. Farewell to old Europe and its educational ideals**

European integration has developed from the Enlightenment to the present day in the horizon of nationalization. Protestantism was also oriented towards this nationalization with the discovery of, for instance, the mother tongue as a medium of communication of the Gospel, and with the elaboration of a church structure corresponding to the national system.

The lack of integrative power of the national system since the end of the Second World War has led to the search for new forms of integration, for example in the various approaches to transnational institutionalization. Protestantism has remained an ambivalent phenomenon herein. On the one hand, it continues to be nationally oriented, in line with the matrix of the political. On the other hand, there are Protestant forces (people who initiated the European integration process and did reconciliation work beyond the borders of post-war Europe, etc.) who think and work integratively across borders. The CPCE, with the Leuenberg Community as its forerunner, is rather a late birth in this process and an attempt to strengthen transnational responsibility on the basis of its own mission. One could speak here of the aim of completing 500 years

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24 Recalling a formula by Klaus Schleicher, editor of the three main textbooks „Zeitgeschichte europäischer Bildung 1970–2000“ (Münster u.a. 2000/2002).

later the Reformation project, which has narrowed nationally and thus remained unfinished.

### ***3.3.3. Education, the Europeanization of Europe and the unfinished Reformation project***

That education plays an essential role in the context of European integration in order to generate the necessary orientational knowledge for the various transformation processes – social, political, economic and religious – has become clear in recent decades, at the latest since the Lisbon process in 2000. So far the Protestant Church is only timidly involved here. Two tasks have to be mastered:

On the one hand, it is necessary to generate the orientational knowledge that helps people to perceive and shape changes out of faith. Here, the churches have some catching up to do. Curricula, for example, are still nationally oriented – the experiences on the ground (one travels in Europe as in one's own country, but that remains with leisure experiences; Europeans are increasingly present on the ground – without really being perceived by the church; labour mobility from academic studies to work are realities that are seldom addressed by the church) are hardly taken up. Europe is Europeanizing from below (beyond political institutionalization), but these places of learning lie fallow within the church. If one takes this approach of basic Europeanization, which starts from new experiences, then a new understanding of faith and of the culture of faith would develop. The culture of faith (language, thinking, forms of expression) is itself subject to a process of transformation that the church is afraid to approach.

On the other hand, it is important to gain orientational knowledge in order to be able to understand and shape political changes. This knowledge may come from the good experiences of European exchange in and through churches – keyword "reconciliation work". But it doesn't seem to be possible at present to translate these experiences into a political concept. Yet, the CPCE has a theo-political guiding idea, the unity in a reconciled diversity, which however would have to be practiced through education. Here applies what is true for the culture of faith as well: Transformation processes also change formations of the church – but a thing that could be called a change management is missing.

Protestant churches in particular have to contribute their traditions and their experiences – both painful and positive – to the European educational area. In the course of the Europeanization of Europe – with visions and new limitations – something could be made thereof: a new education for a new Europe. The CPCE would be the ideal "learning community" for this.

### ***3.3.4. Protestant educational action in the European educational area – areas of conflict***

At first glance, it seems that developments in the European educational area determine Protestant educational action, but not vice versa. However, we must bear in mind that

the European educational area is not a self-contained system, but that it is itself undergoing radical changes and is transforming itself in response to social changes: knowledge society, risk society, labour society, civil society, immigration society, adventure society, society of long learning (cf. Section 3.2.1.). Just like education in the secular space, the church must also find answers here with its educational action – and thus it becomes part of a comprehensive, differentiated educational activity with various accents and profiles of designing this educational activity.

The analysis of social educational action also makes it clear that church educational activity can, at least in principle, meet the challenges, because it addresses ecclesial, especially Protestant issues.

### **a) Lifelong-learning and the total catechumenate**

An essential element in the perception and design of education is the view of larger interrelationships of educational processes under the keyword "lifelong learning". Education cannot be limited, either biographically or institutionally, to certain stages of life or certain institutions, but must perceive precisely the transitions (between stages of life and learning phases / institutions) and sharpen the view for the entire process. Here, the concept of the catechumenate as a whole, anchored in the ecclesial tradition, as a lifelong learning imagined by the individual and his or her needs can once again come into focus. The fact that lifelong learning is reduced to work qualifications and mobility, and thus economically, within the framework of the educational development of the European Union, again restricts the basic approach.

### **b) Civil society engagement and the priesthood of all faithful**

Civil society involvement is becoming increasingly important for late modern societies. This requires increased education for this civic or voluntary activity. With the guiding idea of the priesthood of all believers, the Protestant Church in particular has a good approach for voluntary commitment in ecclesiastical and social contexts, and at the same time a long tradition of qualification and support of people in honorary ministry, who with their charisms (which are more than competencies only) can participate in educational action and act on their own responsibility (see 2.4.).

### **c) Informal learning – learning on occasion**

Besides formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is increasingly perceived as an essential part of educational action. This does not mean pedagogizing everyday life, but, conversely, taking experiential learning as the basis of educational processes more seriously again. Church education does not only begin where the catechism is learned, but already where (it) is prayed, where there is preaching, where the trombone choir communicates on a new song and practices on it, where diaconal and aesthetic work is "educating" for congregations, etc... The combination of experiential learning with explicit and organized learning processes thus also gives those a special accent: they serve as orientational knowledge for everyday learning.



**d) “Education is more than professional competence” (cf. 3.2.3.)**

This is a keyword that is not applied from the outside to secular educational activity, but is resulting as a new perspective from the logic and dynamics of secular educational processes. Protestant educational action can build on this if it knows how to make the added value of its own education understandable within a social context.

**e) Professionalization and the office of the teacher**

An essential element of the European educational development is increasing professionalization and qualification. This firstly sounds as a kind of additional task that would have to be performed by the society and thus also by the Church. However, it ties in with the Protestant understanding of education and church educational organization. In the Reformed area there is the office of the teacher, which serves as an office with special qualifications for qualifying the congregations and the faithful.

However, the fact that the Protestant Church can connect to the challenges of secular educational action with its own understanding of education does not necessarily mean that it can easily meet the associated challenges. Protestant educational activity can learn here from the political, scientific and secular impulses. Discussion forums between theological and secular educational approaches, between church and school, between teachers of religion, pastors, parish students, and students of religious education are extremely important for this. The forum bildung Europa and CPCE student conferences can clearly promote this in their special way respectively.

**f) Educational qualifications and reports**

An essential element of optimizing educational action in the secular sphere is the instrument of an education report, which opens up steps of further development by analyzing the standards of educational activity, communicates and guides them, and which in turn evaluates such "learning progress". Churches are taking this path with new educational concepts. One step in this direction could be the instrument of an empirical education report. One basic question has to be taken into consideration: What are the criteria according to which successful learning processes can be described and designed?

**g) Building educational landscapes**

Networking educational processes means increasingly building up regional educational landscapes in order to guarantee local education. For churches, this would mean to understand and organize themselves as a specific part of regional educational activity – against the danger of closed educational activities in fields – and internally to link various educational processes more closely together.

**h) Development of a Protestant understanding of education**

In order to make Protestant educational action socially plausible, a theological–pedagogical and ecclesiastically anchored understanding of education is required. For this purpose, education must occupy ecclesologically a special place in the church's

activity, and at the same time be organized as a cross-cutting theme. The fact that Protestantism has had an affinity to education since the Reformation is a traditional brand that would have to be examined historically and verified with regard to the educational activities of the churches. Reformation has made specific use of education, needed education to open up Protestant prospects for life and action, and thus has shaped education in church and society. Protestant understanding of education today should be the attempt not to define education in principle as Protestant, but to develop Protestant ways of using education. This Protestant understanding of education would then have to be communicated socially, in order to thus be able to act in the context of the educational institutions and in cooperation with them.

The special contribution of Protestant educational action within the social context is usually seen in the fact that education under Protestant sponsorship means responsibility for the individual in his educational development (man as the measure of education, culture of the heart, personal learning, model learning, etc.) and thereby strengthens the idea of holistic education. With regard to the educational processes, the freedom of education in general as well as of learning processes (against purposefulness) and the limits of educational activity (against the logic of educational perfection) are recorded.

Often the specific contribution of Protestant educational action is seen in a specific value orientation resulting from the communication of the Gospel. However, it must be borne in mind that there is no self-contained canon of values in social education, but values are pluralized and are part of social discourse. Church values are not opposing a closed secular world of values, but are part of the discussion of values, i.e. the added value of Protestant education is part of the discourse itself, and the discourse is a value in educational action. This makes learning locations necessary where the differences in values become clear. There is also a variety of traditions in Protestant churches.

#### **i) Learning places and institutionalized formats of Protestant educational action**

The Leuenberg Agreement was not drawn up in the meeting room of a church board, but at an academy where new ideas were thought of and agreed upon, apart from day-to-day business. Academies are among the outstanding places in the Protestant educational tradition. In recent years, more and more city academies have joined the rural houses. Places with a specific programme – such as churches of culture and art, Protestant schools with a proven learning culture, but also parish houses for broad sections of the population and for church (religious/confirmative) education – are indispensable for the Protestant educational landscape. Within the church as a "learning community", special formats of educational action have also become institutionalized. Current topics of the ecclesiastical learning community and educational action for the society are dealt with by means of discussion synods (open consultations for church employees, volunteers and other interested parties in the Reformed churches of Switzerland), with study days (of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria), student conferences (cf. section 5.3.4.) or study years (as at the

Centro Melantone or in Sibiu), as well as within the framework of regular synods or Protestant church congresses (Kirchentag).

## **4. Focal points of Protestant educational action – case studies**

### **4.1. Six learning fields – a selection**

Six fields of action are particularly important for the churches of the Regional Group in their special situation of minority churches:

- Training and further education of full-time staff and volunteers,
- Responsibility for education in schools and kindergartens as church bodies (learning places) and religious instruction in public schools,
- interdenominational, interreligious and intercultural learning,
- Family education, early childhood socialization,
- diaconal education,
- Courses of faith, ability to talk about faith in the face of a break in tradition.

This selection is deliberately a selection – not everything that is indispensable for an evangelical culture of faith could be included – for reasons of space alone. Those learning fields were included that are changing significantly and where the churches of the Southeast Europe Group are working intensively to reform them.<sup>25</sup>

For Protestant educational action, there is also a musical–aesthetic education important, coming from the Reformation as a singing movement, to the formation of choirs and church music as part of culture. This area has remained open for reasons of work area limitation, not for fundamental considerations. Moreover, it seems to be an area of the Protestant Church and Protestant educational action that is characterized by great stability even in times of upheaval.

Another focal point of Protestant educational action is education in the digital age. Not having explicitly taken up this topic is an expression of the great disparity of approaches and questions and the few concepts that allow a reflected handling of it in the churches of the Regional Group. Digitization has found its way into the communication of the Gospel – starting with homepages of the congregations to text messages of the daily watchwords up to Facebook groups for mourners or conversations of faith.

Especially in diaspora churches, in which the parishioners live widely scattered, new media serve communication, education and common identity and celebration. It is clear that new forms of communitization are emerging in virtual spaces, which represent an

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<sup>25</sup> Part of the traditional fields of evangelical culture of faith, that have not been further mentioned – also for reasons of lacking space – are the confirmation classes. As standing in for this we may refer to extensive Europe-wide research projects and large publications, like „Confirmation Work in Europe. Empirical Results, Experiences and Challenges. A Comparative Study in Seven Countries“ und „Youth, Religion and Confirmation Work in Europe. The Second Study“, both edited by Friedrich Schweitzer u.a., Gütersloh 2010. The two volumes appeared as vol. 4 and vol. 7 of the series „Konfirmandenarbeit erforschen und gestalten“, herausgegeben von Volker Elsenbast u.a.

alternative to direct face-to-face communication. The ecclesiological consequences, educational implications and theological interpretations seem open at present. Is a worship service, as an example, where chat members meet virtually, where the Lord's Supper is also taken and all equally shape the worship service, an adequate form of evangelical worship? Is the Word bound to certain realities or, because word-bound, is worship communication in virtual spaces also "real" worship service, which relies on the effect of the Word and on a God who in itself is the virtuality of being?

In the following, the mentioned six selected learning fields will be examined from the point of view of what is currently happening in the churches, where the particular challenges (problems and opportunities, weaknesses and development potentials) are lying, and which perspectives are emerging. These are always individual perceptions and assessments from the churches presented, but they do not necessarily express a consensus.

The selection made is based on the prioritisation by the Regional Group, but largely coincides with the fields of action in education as are mentioned in education plans of other churches.

The case studies are usually oriented in such a way that experiences of larger churches are compared with those of smaller ones, experiences of churches from Western Europe with those from Eastern Central Europe. Attempts were also made to take up the denominational breadth of the member churches. The question of whether there are educational specifics of the denominations within Protestantism have arisen, but this could not be clarified on the basis of the material introduced. This would require a separate study. At the beginning, each time a small characteristic of the church is given from which the case study originates. The authors are listed in the appendix.

#### **4.2. Training and further education of full-time staff and volunteers**

If we talk about education in the Protestant churches, we often focus primarily on the training of full-time staff, but now increasingly on the training and further education of volunteers as well. And with a new intensity, we are also looking for a link between the training of full-time staff and of volunteers. The examples from the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia show this in an exemplary way. In the case of voluntary ministry the service during worship is primary (here the questions of preachers and lecturers come into play), but also the ministry in congregation leadership (presbyteries, church councils), and the accompaniment, counselling and training of volunteers in many different functions in the congregation (from visiting service to mourning and death accompaniment) – this is what the volunteer model from Switzerland stands for. What is important is that further and continuing education in and for voluntary ministry is not a small form of pastor training, but is oriented towards the experiences, abilities and skills that volunteers bring along, and shall further and develop them for their own areas of responsibility – in order to be able to do what is not directly part of the tasks of pastors. It is interesting to see that

meanwhile a new group of employees in the church needs further education, e.g. administrative staff (the example from Romania).

#### **4.2.1. Further education and training of pastors and laymen in the Reformed Church in Hungary**

The Reformed Church in Hungary has 27 seniorates in four districts and 1.15 million members (600,000 of whom are active parishioners) in 1,249 parishes. It has 1,550 pastors working there. Rev. István Szabó is the leading bishop.

##### **a) The historical and social background**

The claim and the obligation of training and further education of pastors came up in the Hungarian Reformed Church almost already with the introduction of the Reformation. The reason is that the Reformation doctrine has placed the pastor in a completely new role: instead of celebrating a rite or mass, the teaching of the Holy Scripture should be put into a (hermeneutic) connection with the respective life experience of the people. This was a spiritual and especially an intellectual challenge, which required an academic education and a permanent further training. According to the resolutions passed by the Synods of Erdőd (1555) and Debrecen (1567), the pastors who were unwilling to teach and learn should be removed from their office. In terms of content, this learning referred to the regular reading of Holy Scripture and the Bible commentaries, and was examined by church leaders during the "visitation" of the congregations. In the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> century, the content criteria for further and advanced training were expanded: their strictly speaking (1) theological content was to be supplemented by other (2) knowledge of the humanities or natural sciences if possible, and (3) competencies for "popular education" (i.e. education of parishioners) were to be acquired, a circumstance reflected in the curricula of the traditional ecclesiastical "colleges", i.e. universities. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in the theological–ethical reflection on world events began to emerge. After the Second World War and during the period of totalitarian–communist regimes (while the churches were being brought into line), the official advanced training events served as "horizon widening seminars" or ideological training courses aimed at bringing about loyalty to the state and the official church leadership among the pastors. This last system overshadowed for a long time the work in further education, so that it could recover only slowly after the turn 1989/1990 and could be filled with new contents only during the last 10 years.

##### **b) Shifts of emphasis in church and religious life**

After the wall came down, the concerns of pastors and further education were confronted with various demands that are calling for new accents:

- The reconstruction of ecclesiastical structures and institutions and thus the perception of the functions of the church in society (e.g. in the area of social

deaconry, religious instruction in public schools, pastoral care in the military and in hospitals, etc.) have led to a shift of accent in the pastors' self-perception and role identification. These changes require the acquisition of new theoretical and practical knowledge in pedagogical work, of pastoral psychological skills, of management and leadership.

- The perception of the churches and pastors in dimensions of religion on the part of the secularized or non-church-going strata of society requires a reinterpretation of the pastoral ministry (as an actor of religion with expectation of spiritual content);
- The pluralization of lifestyles (changes in family life and partner relationships), the drop in standards and the relevance of innovative scientific knowledge and progress for one's own life (e.g. with regard to medical ethics and bioethics, or services in this area) arouse the claim for theological-ethical reflection and opinion-forming.

### **c) Reorientation for the content of continuing education**

In view of the above-mentioned changes, urgent questions and the need for a reorientation of the pastor's further and advanced training work have come up:

- How much and what theology needs to be taught, learned and deepened in order for the pastors to be able to cope with the structural and content-related challenges facing them from the changes described above?
- How are the shifts in the role and self-perception of the pastors to be evaluated? Is the theological-cerygmatic function of the ministry to be maintained consistently, or should it be reinterpreted in view of the social, communicative, psychological, economic etc. competences, and the educational content to be designed accordingly?
- How do the two main requirements: "personally reflected attitude of faith" and "good theology" relate to each other?
- Depending on the cultural character of a church community and the segmentation of church membership, the differences must be resolved and the different group expectations must be communicated. Which competencies are required here and what is the relation between empiricism and theology?

### **d) Harmonizing the further training of pastors with that of the "lay faithful"**

In order to correspond to the extended social functions of the churches, the further and advanced training of church employees must also be taken into account. Social-

diaconal, legal and economic, pastoral and counselling competences are in demand here. And as in the case of pastoral training, the correspondences between theological and non-theological teaching content must also be analysed at this level.

In general: If one wants to do justice to the Protestant (and especially also the Calvinist) basic conviction regarding leadership in the church – i.e. instead of a parity of parish and lay persons in leadership achieving a "collegial cooperation" – then the education and further training of church ministers is of considerable importance. It is inconceivable that the various ministries in the congregation (and in the church-owned institutions) could work together without deepening the competences acquired. It is not simply a matter of looking at "Christian education" as separate and isolated from other ministries, but, rather, of integrating it into an interaction in order to do justice to the "assignment of the Church".

*God does not want to build his church without people*<sup>26</sup> and this knowledge must be acquired in the conscience that we are a *gift-oriented church*<sup>27</sup> (Calvin). In concrete terms, this means that pastors must see themselves as part of a team and therefore not do and decide everything alone (even if their ministry as preachers is a special one). The congregation also needs people who enrich the church with their gifts and abilities and also see themselves as part of a team. In order to exercise the gifts and skills on both sides competently, knowledge, education, further education and training are required, as well as content-wise discussions on an equal footing. With the IV. Barmer thesis it is said: "The various ministries in the Church do not establish the rule of some over others, but the exercise of the ministry entrusted and commanded to the whole community"<sup>28</sup>. This is typically Protestant – and not only in Hungary.

#### **4.2.2. Training for the preaching ministry – training opportunities for lay preachers and pastors within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia (ELCR) consists of two churches (Evangelical Lutheran Church in European Russia and Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East) and has about 20,000 confirmed congregation members. 173 Pastors and lay preachers care for 208 congregations. Archbishop Dietrich Brauer in Moscow is head of the ELCR.

#### **a) Motivation for the project**

26 Karl Barth, KD I,2 (§ 21), 741–830, in particular 778.

27 Johannes Calvin, Inst. IV,3, 1–2.

28 Barmer Theologische Erklärung (1934), These IV (online: [www.ekd.de/download/handzettel\\_barmer\\_theologische\\_erklaerung.pdf](http://www.ekd.de/download/handzettel_barmer_theologische_erklaerung.pdf); last login: 21.08.2017).



In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the former Soviet Union, the way to find an appropriate theological training is quite difficult.

For many years the training concentrated on the Theological Seminary in Novosaratovka (near St. Petersburg), where the main focus of the work was on full-time on-site training for future full-time pastors. However, with the development of the churches in recent years, it has become clear that the focus must be different.

Recognizing all the positive aspects of traditional seminary formation (and in an effort to facilitate "full" theological training in other ways), it is seen that the Church needs more opportunities today for the training of lay preachers and specialized clergy, for ordained pastors, and the more distant communities where the congregations wish to engage in missionary activity. The central vision for the project "Training for Preaching" is therefore a maximum access to qualified training opportunities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia through a program that is planned jointly, and shall be flexible and decentralized.

#### **b) Implementation of the project**

In the two years since the program was launched, significant progress has been made in achieving the goal of bringing profitable education to the various places, including far-flung places in this vast country. Hundreds of participants have not only acquired skills and new knowledge, but they have also had additional opportunities for spiritual development through community with other participants and teachers. All this is very cost effective, as the teachers are taken to different locations rather than gathering a large number of participants in one central location.

Some of the first results of the program were surprising – in various areas (especially in Siberia), events planned during the seminars have not only influenced life in one's own congregations, but resulted to be ways to initiate contacts with other denominations and representatives of other religious communities. A less positive experience, however, was to see how difficult it was to organize events in the geographically remote places of the church – the communities themselves are often so isolated and without self-confidence that they are unable to do the necessary organizational work on site. To a certain extent, the program has strengthened the existing initiatives there; however, no completely new measures have been established. Ultimately, however, this result could be regarded as a change in expectations and not necessarily only a negative one.

Since the church sees this project as an opening for new possibilities, it becomes clear that in the future this program will be more and more limited to producing well-trained preachers. In this sense, the program will lose some flexibility, but will bring benefits in terms of organization and focus on training highly competent lay preachers.

#### **4.2.3. "Hurry out into the streets..." (Luke 14:21) – Culture of faith for non-evangelical parish workers in the Protestant Church of A.C. in Romania**

The Evangelical Church in Romania (ECR) is divided at the regional level into five church districts and has 12,241 members. 38 pastors serve 239 parishes. The leader is Bishop Reinhart Guib in Sibiu.

An essential challenge for the Protestant congregation of Bucharest, as for every parish in a large city, is the complex field of administration. In addition to coordination, the many administrative tasks require above all specialist knowledge and professionalism. The fact that people in the congregation are not always willing to enter this area has often become apparent, due to emigration and the open labour market. This means, after all, that action must be taken according to the evangelical principle "Hurry out into the streets" (Luke 14:21). Competent employees are sought outside the community, either by recommendation or through a job exchange. This in turn has a double consequence: As soon as employees are found who are highly qualified, they must first understand how a Protestant congregation is working and acting. On the other hand, there is also a linguistic barrier, because church life is mainly in German, while economic life is conducted in the national language, Romanian. Thus, within the same congregation, two realities are confronting each other: the classical congregation with its demands for pastoral and spiritual life, and the "administrative church" with its qualified staff. The latter, however, is mainly made up of people with a different denominational background. For them to work in a Protestant congregation, they must first learn what tasks and what church profile a Protestant congregation has. This also raises questions about the concrete content of faith. Thus, an educational task develops inevitably and often unconsciously, which consists in training the different denominational and ethnically different circles of employees and motivating them for the interests of the congregation. Often the aim is to break through a border, namely that of the ordinary church official. Working in a Protestant parish is more than just working eight hours a day. It means compassion, sharing in the various tasks, selfless commitment and participation in spiritual life.

However, it is not an aim of the church to act as a missionary. The new co-workers are invited to participate in the various church events, are expected to attend services and devotions, but are not invited to convert in any way. The general ecumenical principle of the recognition of Christian baptism and the general priesthood is prevailing. Certainly there are cases in which, after some time of activity in a Protestant church, differences to the other denominations are seen, theological questions of content are uncovered and practical experiences are made, which are sometimes so convincing that they lead to a change of denomination, but this is not the rule.

The staff is guided through specific meetings, discussions and excursions to get to know the Protestant Church, to read the Word of God, to lead a more intensive prayer life, to experience concrete characteristics of Protestant spirituality (church music, teaching, celebrating festivals, church year, diaconia, etc.) and to participate in the concrete tasks of the congregation.

This makes the congregation itself a place of education. Every home visit or visit at a sickbed becomes a deep experience for the Orthodox employee of the diaconal ward. Every participation in a worship service or a community celebration becomes a lasting experience for the Catholic administrative staff. The image of a Christian community is changing. A new image emerges, which consists of mutual respect and help from fellow believers. Not only the masses are in demand, but every individual gains in importance and requires attention and affection: An attitude that is particularly sought after and expected in the big city. Such experiences also change one's own perception. It often happens that one's own Christianity is questioned and a passive Christian becomes an active Christian person.

A Christian community has a public mission that it must carry out, and for this it needs competent people who can also implement this mission. It is not only the own church members who are needed, but also the "other" employees who want to get seriously involved.

Certainly there are also employees who persist in their simple civil servant status and remain unimpressed by the whole congregation life. In the course of time, they are also retiring. The others who stay gradually will identify with what they do. They enrich themselves in their own experiences, deepen their faith and thus contribute, often unconsciously, to a part of the Kingdom of God. Above all effectiveness there is the apostolic encouragement: "And all that you do with words or with works, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and thank God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

#### **4.2.4. Guide to Volunteering for Reformed Church communities in Switzerland**

The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FSPC) is the union of the 24 Reformed cantonal churches, the Protestant–Methodist Church and the Église Évangélique Libre de Genève in Switzerland. The Federation of Churches thus represents around 2.4 million Protestants. 1050 parishes are looked after by 2350 pastors. 450 of these are employed in other services. The SEK Council President is Pastor Gottfried Locher.

In the summer of 2015, the Reformed Churches of Switzerland published a new "Guide to Volunteering"<sup>29</sup>. On the front page is written the motto "Without volunteering, society stands still ... and the Church too". Volunteering is less and less for honour, but is increasingly seen as a necessity for the functioning of the church. When churches run out of professionals, they try to find volunteers and provide access to church vocations through flexible third level education. In this perspective, the Reformed churches of Switzerland have written their guide to volunteering. The way in which volunteers are treated, as is recommended therein, testifies to the high expectations of the people who work here. It distinguishes formal voluntary work within the church organization from informal voluntary work in the private sphere. Here and there one is also inclined to ask critically whether it is appropriate to treat volunteers in the church formally as employees – with professional personnel management, clear framework conditions, contract and supervision – or whether they do not simply want to participate as "actively involved persons or as church movers" in the church.

### **On the understanding of honorary work**

The guide defines honorary work in four points:

- "The commitment is voluntary and excludes tasks within the core family and gainful employment. This means that overtime is not volunteering.
- Volunteering is free of charge. Neither working time nor performance is remunerated financially. The reimbursement of actual expenses, contributions to further training, and recognition gifts are not considered financial compensation within this definition.
- Volunteering should complement paid work. The annual average is limited to 6 hours per week.
- Voluntary commitments are self–chosen and not tied to any legally binding employment contract. The committed persons participate in determining the type and scope of their tasks. Agreements made may be amended in consultation."<sup>30</sup>

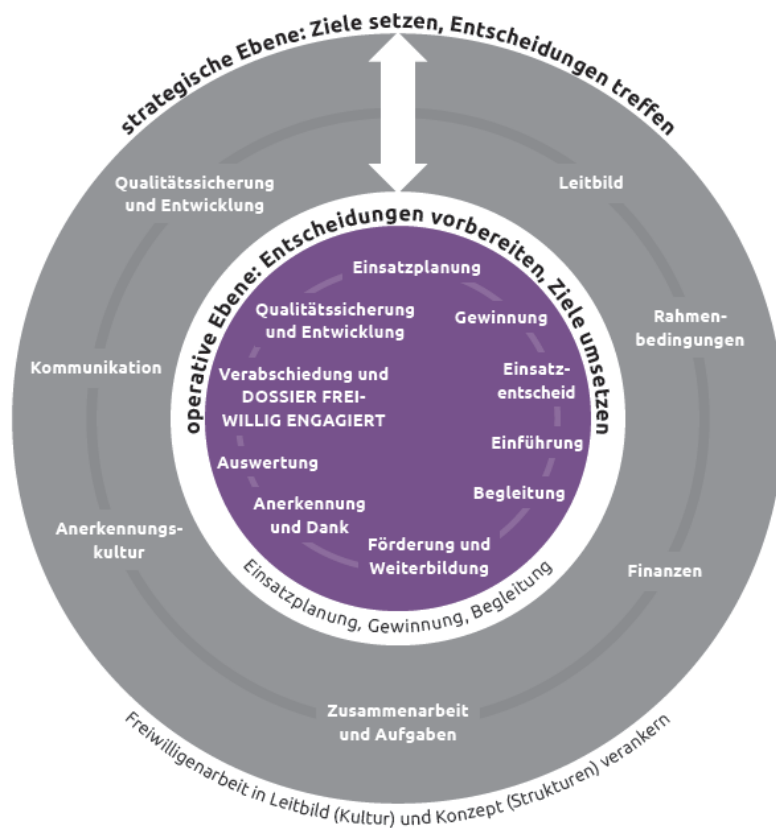
Following the definition, a theological reference to volunteering is established. This again sets itself apart from the initially described necessity to secure the future of the church. "Volunteering in the context of the church is solidarity lived in the form of social or diaconal action in church and society.<sup>31</sup> And with reference to Matthew 22:37–39, a successful being human is designated as a motivation for voluntary action.

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<sup>29</sup> In the Swiss context, the concept of "volunteers" prevailed. In the following, it has been replaced as far as possible by the term "honorary office".

<sup>30</sup> Without volunteering, society stands still.... and the church too! Guide to voluntary work for Reformed parishes, published by the Reformed Church of Aargau et al., 3rd revised edition, s. I., 2015, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Loc. cit., 7.



The graph<sup>32</sup> gives an overview of the tasks of responsible employees of the parishes in the face of volunteers.

Little or no attention is paid to the promotion and training of volunteers in relation to the recruitment and management of volunteers. Some churches offer free training to volunteers as part of their culture of recognition. The paragraph on further training in the guide says: "Volunteers need contacts, especially in the beginning and in difficult situations. ... Support includes encouraging volunteers through spontaneous feedback, personal discussions, exchange of experience and further training. This allows volunteers to deepen their skills and develop personally. Especially committed people with demanding tasks appreciate it when their parish finances external further education courses."<sup>33</sup>

#### **4.2.5. Insights and challenges**

It comes as no surprise that education as basic, advanced and further training for both full-time and honorary staff and church employees plays a key role in the educational activities of the churches. Attention is directed on the personnel of the church institution, which must be trained in the best possible way. It may rather come as a surprise though that it is taken for granted that continuing education and training in particular will become a constitutive component of the further development of the church. Social developments are also reflected here: management positions and

32 Loc. cit., 12.

33 Loc. cit. 14.

positions of responsibility in society, in business and in the area of civic engagement are increasingly defined by qualifications that must be continually renewed. Here, the question arises as to whether and to what extent the church can really provide the qualifications necessary for employees, and whether the continuing education and training system meets the challenges.

The example from Romania, the continuing and advanced training in the administrative area there, is a good example of the tension between continuing and advanced training: on the one hand it is about reliable basic knowledge, and on the other hand it is about special qualifications and professionalization for individual functions. It can be observed that especially in this area of "manual" qualification and professionalization in voluntary work, if possible also with a certificate, ecclesiastical action becomes a social action in education. What one learns in the church is so good that it also promotes civil society commitment. In this way, the Church invests in qualifications that are also used outside the Church, and thus sometimes "loses" trained personnel for social work. In this way, the Church remains attractive for voluntary or civil society involvement, and thus indirectly participates in social education. In some churches, academies are being established that are on purpose open to people who are looking for qualified further training for church or for society, or simply for themselves. Conversely, it remains to ask how the church could make better use of qualifications that were trained in the secular sphere.

If one sees (Protestant) churches as part of the civil society, it has to be noted that the understanding of civil society in the countries of the Regional Group is differing due to history. It is not yet possible to speak of a uniform or in all countries comparable European civil society.

"The complexity of civil society and its manifold connections... to business, state, culture and other institutions such as the family or the media allow different priorities to be set. Two of these are central: a more individualistic perspective that emphasizes individual values, behaviour and public participation, with civil engagement and social participation moving into the middle ground; and a more institutionalist approach that looks at the size, structure and functions of civil society organizations (non-profit or third sector, including foundations, associations, confederations, etc.). In the social-democratic countries of Scandinavia, civil engagement and social participation are usually most pronounced; least in the southern European and former socialist countries; the corporatist countries lie in between. However, they are characterized by a higher role for service providers in the welfare state sectors, typically in the social, health, education and cultural sectors. This function is hardly developed in the Scandinavian countries."<sup>34</sup>

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34 Helmut K. Anheier, *Zivilgesellschaft in Europa*, herausgegeben von der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2014 (online: [www.bpb.de/politik/wahlen/europawahl/71376/zivilgesellschaft-in-europa](http://www.bpb.de/politik/wahlen/europawahl/71376/zivilgesellschaft-in-europa); last login: 21.08.2017).

### **4.3. Passing on the faith publicly – schools and kindergartens in church sponsorship and religious instruction at public schools**

The public transmission of the faith in schools and kindergartens under church sponsorship on the one hand, and religious instruction in schools on the other hand represent a broad field of work, which is dealt with very differently in the churches of the Regional Group, according to their own traditions and the framework conditions of the states (in states such as Germany or Switzerland again differentiated by the cultural sovereignty of the länder and the autonomy of the cantons). This variety is hardly representable in the following. As starting points for a comparative overview in discussion we offer the questions:

- Who finances church schools and kindergartens?
- Is there a conflict between religious instruction in the churches and school teaching – or do they complement each other?
- How important are schools and kindergartens under Protestant sponsorship for the development of the congregations?
- Where are religious classes given? In school, in church or in both?
- Who teaches in religious lessons (church staff or state teaching staff)? Is there a tension here?
- How are curricula created? What is the responsibility of the churches?
- What is the relationship between denominational instruction and denominational–neutral religious instruction?
- What is the interest parents have that their children should attend religious instruction at school?

#### ***4.3.1. Protestant schools and religious instruction in the Protestant Church of A.C. in Slovakia***

The Protestant Church of A.C. (PCAC) in Slovakia consists of 14 seniorates in two districts (western and eastern district) and has 316,250 members. 366 pastors look after 320 parishes. Bishop General Miloš Klátik is the leader.

The school system is of particular importance for the Protestant Church of A.C. in Slovakia. Since the Reformation, the Church has sought to establish a school in every congregation so that it can educate its children. It should be remembered that before the communist dictatorship (1948) the diaconia and the school system were in full bloom. Almost every parish had at least one fully functioning primary school. After 1948 the church education system was completely destroyed, no church school remained intact. Teachers and educators who confessed their faith were persecuted, many could

no longer exercise their profession. Only those who testified that they had finished with religion were admitted to the pedagogical studies. After the fall of Communism 25 years ago, the Church was finally able to exercise her vocation freely in society. This was not easy, because only in a few areas was it possible for the church to continue or to develop its fields of work.

In 1990 the school system in Slovakia had to be rebuilt. Although the church regained many school buildings in the restitutions, these were in a dilapidated condition and did not meet the demands of today's school system. Many repairs were necessary. It was also difficult to find good teachers with a religious background. Other problems and challenges were: a lack of plans and programs for church schools, a lack of funding for building maintenance, repairs, equipment and personnel. In addition, the parents were suspicious because they had no (more) experience with the ecclesiastical school system.

Despite all the problems, the blessing of God was felt in the foundation of the ecclesiastical schools. Today EKAB runs 10 kindergartens, 6 primary schools and 7 secondary schools in Slovakia. One of a kind in the whole Republic is a special boarding school for deaf–blind children. The number of church schools shows – albeit slowly – a continuously increasing tendency.

Religious instruction is held today on the basis of an agreement between the Slovak Republic and the registered churches. Through this agreement, religious instruction can be held denominationally in public, private and ecclesiastical schools. Religious instruction is a compulsory subject for public schools in the state education programmes in all years of primary school, and in the first grades of all secondary schools and also in the second grades of grammar schools. Religious education is taught one hour a week. On the basis of the above–mentioned agreement, the Church cannot establish its own ecclesiastical schools.

Religious instruction in the public state schools is mainly given by the pastors, but there are also teachers of religion. There is a separate centre and various educational programmes for their further education. The school system is financed by a basic amount paid per pupil. However, the financial security is unequal in comparison between state and church schools, or schools that are financed by self–government. In church schools it is only 80%.

In the church schools religious lessons are taught for 2 hours per week. Religious instruction at all schools is financed from state funds. Outside of religious instruction in the schools, 2 years of confirmation classes are also held in the congregations. In some congregations, religious lessons are also held in the kindergarten. At present, there are textbooks and workbooks for all years of religious instruction. Methodological manuals are also being worked on.

Ecclesiastical schools, that does not only mean more religious lessons. The basic task here is to create a spiritual environment for the growth of faith, while maintaining a pedagogical standard of quality. That is why every school has a spiritual director who



has a theological formation and is ordained in the church – i.e. a school chaplain or a school pastor. Its task is to hold devotions, Bible studies, religious lessons, prepare various events and regular services. This also includes contact with the teachers. Experience shows that, taken together, this has a great impact on the life of the whole school. It is very important that the Church does not only place great value on the education of children, but also on the spiritual life and biblical training of its teachers. Of course, the Church also trains its own teachers – because the spirit of the school is always formed by its teachers.

It is also very important that the school cooperates with the parish where the school is located and where the children who attend the school come from. Good cooperation is also reflected in the community work with the children and youth.

But not everything is ideal. Life changes, just as students, teachers and pastors are changing. But the goal remains the same – the focus is on young people who need a solid foundation for their lives. They need a good education, the result of which is wisdom, but not just any wisdom, rather that from the horizon of religion. They need an ethical and biblical foundation and the experience of love, which is also practical. All this is given by faith in Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Saviour. He guides us, so that we as a church and in education can lead young and old people towards Him.

EKAB has a school committee, which is a synodal council committee for the field of education. Its tasks are to prepare the documents for the school legislature and to organize all activities in this area.

#### **4.3.2. Questionnaire on religious education in schools. Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brothers / Czech Republic**

The Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brothers (EKBB) is divided into 14 seniorates. 78.299 parishioners in 250 parishes are looked after by 278 pastors. Synodal senior Daniel Ženatý is the leader.

##### **a) Starting point**

A questionnaire was sent to all congregations (250 in total) to provide an overview of the situation of religious education in the Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brothers in the Czech Republic. The question is, where and if religious education takes place in schools. 88 parishes responded.

##### **b) Results of the survey**

- 37 congregations replied that religion was taught in primary schools, sometime after 1989.
- At some point, the majority of the congregations tried to get in touch with the schools, but then stopped trying to get religious instruction at school.

- Less than 10 congregations are still trying to get religious instruction at the school, but so far without success.
- The majority of parishes (52) hold religious instruction only in the parsonage, a minority only in school (5).
- In several congregations there is no religious instruction at all (not even in the parsonage).

### **c) Summary**

Religious instruction at school is practiced by only a small part of the congregations. Other congregations have tried, but for various reasons are no longer trying.

It is difficult to introduce religious instruction where there is no tradition. But where a longer tradition is still alive, the number of children participating increases. In addition, society's interest in biblical instruction is growing in some places.

The most important characteristic is that the religious class is not a school subject, so it is not compulsory; rather it is a meeting with the children. Therefore it is appropriate that the word "religious instruction" is often no longer used.

The congregations have developed their own ways of making religion a living history of the biblical message with interactive elements. This is done in the parsonages. The teaching of biblical stories is usually not offered as a school subject.

### **4.3.3. Religious education in Bavaria**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria has about 2.41 million church members and is divided into 6 districts. 1,538 parishes are looked after by about 2,500 pastors. Its leader is Bishop Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, who is also Chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

### **a) Historical background since 1945**

After the end of the Second World War, the reconstruction of a civil society in Germany was the main political task. This included the establishment of a school system which, after the perversion and destruction by National Socialism, enabled children and young people to find their way into a democratic society.

The representatives of the state governments and the churches had again to deal with questions of school reform with the Allies. From the perspective of the Protestant churches, the following points were important criteria for the development work: the relationship to the local church community, the gradual development of guidelines for

teaching, and the establishment of working groups of pastors and teachers. This was a legacy of the Confessing Church, whose members continued to play an active role in shaping the Protestant educational mission in society in the post-war period.

The US military government wanted to reform the school system in Bavaria in order to enable a democratic education of the young population. The Catholic Church had a strong influence on the guidelines of education and cultural affairs. The Bavarian Minister of Education and Culture, Mr Alois Hundhammer (CSU), had been able to support the Church's interests in a confessional school system and assert them in parliament. Thus the project of a community school for all children, as proposed by the military government, was off the table.

In agreement with the Catholic and Protestant church leaders, the state government had kept the way open for a reintroduction of the denominational school. In the negotiations, those in charge of the Protestant and Catholic churches tied in with the State Church Treaty of 1924 and the Bavarian Concordat of the same year. The conditions before 1933 should be restored. Article 135 of the Bavarian constitution of December 1, 1946 also laid down the following legal solution: "Public elementary schools are denominational schools or community schools." The denominational school remained the rule. At the denominational schools, teachers were only allowed to teach the pupils according to the principles of the denomination in question. At the request of parent/guardian, a community school could be introduced in places with a denominationally mixed population.

This basic decision for the denominational schools promoted a close conceptual connection with the catechetical work in the congregations in the Protestant Church in Bavaria. The nestor of Protestant religious education, Kurt Frör, therefore spoke of an overall catechumenate, by which he meant an overall pedagogical responsibility of the church at the places of learning such as congregation and school.

At the end of the 1960s a groundbreaking ecumenical cooperation took place: The Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria agreed on guidelines for a school reform. These opened the door to the introduction of a Christian community school in Bavaria. After long negotiations, the parties represented in the Bavarian Parliament jointly advocated amending Article 135 of the Bavarian Constitution: The public schools became common schools for all primary school children.

Simultaneously with the introduction of the Christian Community School in Bavaria, religious pedagogy in teaching and school practice also received new impulses. With the empirical turn around 1970, religious pedagogy in western Germany developed using its historical roots since the Enlightenment, and with a clear distinction from catechetics as an independent discipline. The integration of educational, human and social science findings led to an approximation of religious pedagogy to general pedagogy. Religious upbringing and education have now been increasingly reflected in theory from an empirical perspective.

Karl Ernst Nipkow (1928–2014), a religious educator from Tübingen, developed an integrative model combining both lines of tradition. He describes religious pedagogy as a science linking pedagogy and theology. According to this, questions of religious education must be dealt with equally from an educational and a theological perspective. Nipkow interprets religious education as expression of an educational responsibility for the church, and as an educational co-responsibility of the church for the social sphere. This paradigm still guides Bavarian religious education in teaching and school practice today.

Basically the following is valid at the moment:

Protestant religious education in Bavaria

- is given under the joint responsibility of the Church and the State;
- is imparted by church or state teachers who, depending on the type of school, must have a qualified degree from church or state universities and must have church teaching authority (*vocatio*);
- is basically open to all Protestants and to interested pupils who do not belong to a Protestant church. They can participate in Protestant religious education upon request.

## **b) New challenges**

In a society characterized by increasing cultural and religious pluralization, religious teachers and the church are facing new challenges:

- At the latest since the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and the events of recent years, it has become clear that religion and knowledge of religion are an important part of intercultural dialogue, the religious dimension of which is gaining in importance in the public sphere. An important challenge is therefore an *intercultural education in the school context*. Protestant religious education in Bavaria will have to aim in the future at enabling pupils to think together both denominational orientation and the increasing plurality in our society, in the appropriation of faith and religious culture.
- Aesthetic experiences are an essential access to religion for many people. In the media, films, advertising and pop culture we encounter religious motifs. Religious education at school wants to enable pupils to *learn to interpret these cultural phenomena* so that they can establish *connections to the faith lived in private and church life*.
- Phenomena of lived religion are very different in the life contexts of people. What unites us, however, is that we are also experiencing increasing *globalization* even in the field of religion. How does change in a globalized world affect people's lives and religions?

- In our society, *new ethical questions are always being raised by technological and medical progress* and students and teachers of religion are faced by this: How do we deal with ethical questions at the beginning and the end of life? How do we evaluate from a Christian perspective the preimplantation diagnosis and the demand for legalization of euthanasia? How do we evaluate human life? When does it begin? Are people allowed to intervene in natural processes at the beginning and the end of life?
- An important task in this context is *diaconal learning*. In internships, pupils learn something about dealing with the disabled and sick or old people.
- In view of a decreasing attachment to the church and a loss of religious culture, the religious teachers are faced by the challenge of developing the sources of the Christian faith together with the pupils and pointing out the relevance of faith for people's lives.

#### **4.3.4. The Curriculum 21 as the origin of a new model of religious education in Switzerland realized in joint responsibility of the churches and the state**

Protestant Reformed Church in Switzerland (see 4.2.4.)

Between 2010 and 2014, the German–Swiss Conference of Directors of Education has developed the "Curriculum 21". With this first joint curriculum for primary schools in Switzerland, the 21 German and multilingual cantons implemented Article 62 of the Federal Constitution to harmonize the objectives of the school. In autumn 2014, the Curriculum 21 was approved by the German–Swiss Directors of Education. Then each canton decided on its introduction, in accordance with its own legal bases. There is a Swiss state version of Curriculum 21 as well as the cantonal versions. The churches are directly concerned and involved in the elaboration of the subject "Ethics, Religions, Community (ERG)". In the canton of St. Gallen, ERG is offered as an elective subject divided into ERG School and ERG Churches.

#### **a) Differentiation between religious culture and religious education**

*Religious culture* is primarily the responsibility of the parents. Some children are consciously told religious stories, get explained religious objects and holidays at home. For others, religion is not an issue. But all children develop ideas about religious questions based on pictures, children's stories, television programs, songs and games. *Religious education*, on the other hand, has the task of clarifying and expanding these subjective ideas and leading them to a common language with regard to religion and ethics, as well as offering pupils some orientation in the plurality of traditions, one's religion and world views.

## **b) Church co–responsibility for religious education at school as a place of learning**

The Protestant Reformed Church of the canton of St. Gallen and the Diocese of St. Gallen not only assume responsibility within the church, but do so at various levels for the society and the state as well. They not only understand religious education as catechesis within the church, but also as religious–ethical education within the framework of the state school system. That is why they are committed to a religious–ethical education at the school as a place of learning. Religious instruction in school is founded and described functionally: What does religion achieve? Which tasks does it solve? What questions does it answer? Religious education in the church as a place of learning, on the other hand, is more substantially justified and asks what religious practice means for members of a religion.

## **c) The model Ethics, Religions, Community (ERG) in the cantonal guidelines**

The Education Council of the Canton of St. Gallen (Ministry) has decided by decreeing the Curriculum Elementary School in 2015 that the contents of ethics, religions, community (ERG) shall be taught in the elective subjects ERG School and ERG Churches, which are instructed by the elementary school on the one hand, and by the national churches on the other hand. The implementation of the ERG School and ERG Churches is regulated in the "Framework Conditions for Teaching Ethics, Religions and Community (ERG)" of March 2016.

<b>School as a place of learning</b>		<b>Church as a place of learning</b>
Curriculum 21		
ERG School	ERG Churches	religious lessons
The school is responsible on the basis of the Curriculum 21	The Church is responsible on the basis of the Curriculum 21	The Church is responsible on an ecclesiastical basis

The principles state that teaching in the ERG is not religious instruction in the sense of the Federal Constitution, but is part of the compulsory primary school teaching. It must therefore be designed in such a way that it can be frequented by pupils irrespective of their religious affiliation or lack of denomination, while respecting the freedom of faith and conscience. The basis and aim of ERG teaching is an unbiased, open attitude and a non–discriminatory treatment of religions and world views. ERG is a compulsory elective subject for all pupils from the third primary class onwards: parents decide whether their child shall attend the lessons at school (ERG School) or at the regional church (ERG Churches). From the 3rd primary class to the 3rd upper level there is a weekly lesson either ERG School or ERG Churches. ERG Churches lessons are

taught ecumenically. A further division into Roman–Catholic and Protestant–Reformation is not made.

In the Canton of St. Gallen, the curriculum for ERG Churches was drawn up by an ecumenical working group and presented to the public in March 2017.

### **c) The development of the model**

The ERG model in the Canton of St. Gallen was developed in two steps. At first, Curriculum 21 was drawn up at the national level, in which the churches were also involved through consultations. Then, the present model was negotiated at cantonal level between the churches and the canton and adopted by the Cantonal Council (parliament). The central question, which dominated the negotiations between church and state, was whether or not the churches should still be involved in the school as a place of learning for the subject ERG. Strong voices against were heard from the cantonal teachers' association. The Director of Education (Education Minister) was factually on the side of the churches, but also felt committed to the teachers' association in terms of education policy. It was he who then proposed the current compromise model with shared responsibility for ERG School and ERG Churches. Another helpful argument was that Article 3 of the Elementary School Act of the Canton of St. Gallen says that leadership of public schools shall be done according to Christian principles.

#### **4.3.5. Insights and challenges**

Religious education is one of the most important fields of learning in faith, church or religion. Its traditions go a long way back in history. It becomes apparent, however, that it is precisely in this field of learning, which is the joint responsibility of the church and the state, that new challenges have to be mastered. One of the central questions is whether churches will have a say or a right of design in this field of learning, or whether the state will establish its own religious studies or its ethical education (and the churches will concentrate more on community education). Thus, religious education has become an outstanding field of public discourse with religion and church – and thus a profile building element of Protestant culture of faith is endangered.

#### **4.4. Understanding the Other – Learning by Faith**

Interdenominational, interreligious and intercultural learning, with contributions on

- Young people learn together in the Study Centre Josefstal, Bavaria
- Place of ecumenical learning – Centro Melantone, Rome
- Further training for pastors and imams in Württemberg
- Intercultural education in the Waldesian and Methodist Church in Italy

#### **4.4.1. Intercultural (youth) educational work – Young people learn together at the Josefstal Study Centre in Bavaria**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (see 4.3.3.)

Protestant youth work in Germany and in Bavaria follows a long tradition of youth education, which is also undergoing a change. Whilst in the 1970s and 1980s the political education of young people still played a major role with hot debates, there are now significantly fewer cognitive approaches that determine the picture. What has remained, however, is the relationship to the lives of young people and the social constellations in which young people find themselves in today.

Non-formal youth education in Protestant youth work currently faces the challenge of taking seriously the intercultural situation that young people are experiencing on a daily basis. This applies equally to open youth work in the cities and to social youth work. Also at "Days of Orientation", which are anchored in Bavaria by the Protestant side in the Protestant Study Centre in Josefstal, in the Neukirchen Youth Training Centre and in the Pappenheim Education and Conference Centre, it becomes clear that the participating school classes include not only Protestant and Catholic pupils but also Muslim and non-denominational pupils. In addition, the number of young people with a migration background is increasing in all groups. This must be taken into account in planning and design.

All those who work in these areas of youth work and youth education need intercultural competence.

The Study Centre for Protestant Youth Work in Josefstal e.V. therefore offered in 2014–2015 for the eighth time a long-term in-service training as an intercultural trainer, in cooperation with the LIDIA-Netzwerk e.V. Munich. This further education combines the topics of intercultural understanding, of (anti)discrimination/(anti-)racism, as well as democracy and tolerance. It sees itself in the context of an integrated human rights education for the immigration society.

How to constructively deal with cultural diversity and differences is the core concern of the concept, which takes religious and ideological orientation into account, as well as other factors (diversity of life plans, gender, age, origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, social milieus, political attitude, etc.). The participants in the training programmes reflect themselves in the aspects mentioned. They develop conflict resolution strategies and acquire skills in dealing with cultural diversity. The focus is on all levels of society – from the private to the institutional sector.

The competencies of intercultural trainers are not only important in the field of youth work, but also in other fields of social and educational work. However, in view of the increasing cultural, ideological and religious diversification of society, which is clearly



evident in kindergartens, schools, training institutions and youth (social) work, they are playing a major role, especially in the education, support and training of young people.

Intercultural competence is not only indispensable for educators and social workers, but young people themselves must also be guided to recognize their own norms and values and to classify them in relation to others, to recognize and endure differences, and at the same time to develop ego–strength and to accept others, strangers, and to resolve conflicts constructively.

#### **4.4.2. Ecumenical learning – The academic year in the Centro Melantone in Rome**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (ELKI) has about 7,000 members. 15 parishes are looked after by 18 pastors. In addition, pastoral care for tourists is offered at 16 locations. Head is Dean Heiner Bludau in Torino.

The Centro protestante di studi ecumenici a Roma / Centro Melantone is an institution with the aim of profiling Protestant theology within an ecumenical perspective in the European spirit of the Leuenberg Agreement and in the horizon of worldwide Protestantism. The sponsors are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (ELKI) and the Facoltà Valdese di Teologia in Rome. The Management Board of the Centro Melantone is assisted by a scientific advisory board.

The academic year of the Centro Melantone is an offer for students of Protestant theology to study in Rome for two semesters. The students (Melantonini) are enrolled at the Facoltà Valdese, but also study upon their own choice at the papal universities of Rome (Gregoriana, San Anselmo, Lateran University, Augustinianum, and many others). The Centro Melantone supports these studies financially and accompanies them by a study director. In addition to study counselling and a language course, two study trips in Italy, two scientific block seminars, several excursions, guided tours, meetings, etc., as well as regular meetings with students of the Catholic Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum on topics of their choice are an integral part of this support. What has been learned and experienced is discussed and reflected upon in internal discussions within the group.

The pedagogical concept of the academic year:

The learning objectives include: Promotion of academic–theological knowledge and competences in the context of ecumenism, promotion of the capacity for speaking in ecumenical dialogue, opening up of ecumenical, i.e. interdenominational and global horizons.

Places of learning are the Valdesian Faculty and the Pontifical Universities, of particular importance is the exchange of students among each other. Rome is also an ideal place where to learn as a city of the Ancient World, a city of Christianity and a modern city of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **4.4.3. Interreligious Learning – Further training for pastors and imams: A Case Study from Württemberg (and Baden)**

The Protestant Church in Württemberg is divided into 4 prelatures, 47 church districts and 50 deaneries and has 2,054 million members. About 1,300 parishes are looked after by about 2,000 pastors. The Protestant Church in Württemberg is headed by Bishop Dr. h.c. Frank Otfried July.

The Church of Baden has 1.2 million members in 24 deaneries. 600 parishes are looked after by 690 pastors. Bishop Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh heads the regional church.

Since 2008 we have the following offer in Baden–Württemberg: joint advanced training courses for pastors of the two Protestant regional churches, and imams and female theologians of the DITIB (Turkish Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion), of almost one week, once a year, as part of the advanced training program of the regional churches. In the meantime, a great deal of trust has grown. What was once a risk is now taken for granted.

What are the characteristics of the joint seminars?

- The topics are identified, prepared and managed jointly by the Islamic representatives of the two regional churches and the dialogue representatives of the DITIB in the regional associations of Stuttgart and Karlsruhe (currently Annette Stepputat/Karlsruhe – Fatih Sahan/Karlsruhe – Ali Ipek/Stuttgart – Heinrich Georg Rothe/Stuttgart). It is important: the participants want to learn together, the topics must concern and challenge both sides;
- Shared experiences and living together: an excursion is an integral part of it, as are shared meals, conversations and evenings;
- The topics are theologically demanding and topical. Examples: Gender issues in religions and institutions, interpretation of Scriptures, pastoral care, responsibility for creation;
- Discussion culture: topics are not tabooed, controversies are also discussed. People treat each other with care.

#### **4.4.4. Intercultural education in the Waldensian and Methodist Church in Italy**

The Valdensian Church in Italy has about 47,500 church members, about 4,000 of whom are now migrants. 130 parishes are looked after by 70 pastors. The Waldensian Church is headed by Pastor Eugenio Bernardini.

For more than 20 years, the life of the parishes in the Waldensian and Methodist Church, especially in the north–east and in the large cities, has been determined by intercultural dialogue with brothers and sisters who came to Italy through immigration from different continents and countries (Asia, especially the Philippines and South Korea; Latin America; Africa, especially Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon; Eastern Europe, especially Ukraine, Moldavia, Romania).

This multifaceted, multicultural situation was accompanied from the beginning by the project "Essere Chiesa Insieme" ("Being Church Together"), for which the "Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy" is responsible. As the name says, it was not only about solidarity and diaconal help for brothers and sisters from immigration right from the start, but about the challenge of knowing one another as walking on the path of faith, despite all differences, and being church anew, in a different, multifaceted form together with one another.

As a first response to this new situation, the churches have, for some years, been developing intercultural education programmes in which "locals" and "migrants" learn together and from one another.

#### **a) Laboratorio Interculturale di Formazione e Accoglienza (LINFA)**

The "Intercultural Laboratory for Education and Dialogue" is currently one of the greatest challenges for the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy.

It is co–organized and supported by the Faculty of Theology of the Waldensian Church, the Department of International Churches of the Baptist Church, the Faculty of Religious Studies of the Federation of Pentecostal Churches, and the multicultural service of the Adventist Church in Italy. There is a theological leadership team, in which all these bodies are represented, and which develops content and methodology. The Protestant Youth Organization (FGEI) is also significantly involved in all, and not only in "youth–specific" topics. The aim is to promote and integrate charismatic and talented "leaders" among immigrants in the now multicultural Protestant communities on the one hand, and to raise awareness and further training for "natives" on the other hand. LINFA is not a training programme for immigrants, but a common educational and growth process for all who want to take responsibility in intercultural communities. The boundaries between teachers and learners are fluid here: Cooperative learning, the use of multimedia techniques, and various animation methods characterize this innovative and experimental educational path.

The training lasts for 2 years and includes regional and national seminar days and weekends. At the local level, students are accompanied and encouraged by tutors to gain practical experience in their community.

More than 70 students from different countries of origin and different Protestant faith traditions have now taken part in LINFA.

The aim is above all to impart knowledge and to learn a dialogical and unprejudiced attitude towards "foreign" spirituality and theology, in order to be able to be one Protestant church together in many different ways.

### **b) Master's Program in "Intercultural Theology and Religious Practice"**

In the academic year 2016/2017, the Facoltà Valdese di Teologia introduced a completely new two-year academic course in "intercultural theology", intended primarily for pastors and lay people already working in multicultural communities of the Valdensian and Methodist Church.

This project of a course in "intercultural theology" at the faculty's academic level has arisen in response to a very concrete request from the churches, and out of the need to address multicultural reality in communities and society in an even more profound way.

The two-year training course consists of five intensive weekend seminars annually at the Valdensian Faculty in Rome, which are prepared and accompanied by individual studies and practical experience in their own community context. The professors of the faculty, as well as external experts, work out the following topics in interdisciplinary dialogue and in various forms of work:

- Introduction to Intercultural theology and mediation (cross-cultural studies);
- Religion, Immigration and Integration;
- "After Babel": languages, ways of communication, translations;
- Mission history and post-cultural studies;
- Church – transcultural and intergenerational;
- African/Asian studies;
- Ethical challenges in intercultural dialogue.

The two-year course is given as a Master's program.

#### ***4.4.5. Insights and challenges – Interdenominational, interreligious and intercultural learning***

In view of the Regional Group Southeast Europe, which consists mainly of minority churches, it may be surprising how intensively interdenominational, interreligious and intercultural education is asked for. It doesn't seem to be the case that minority churches only concentrate on themselves and their survival; on the contrary, they have a strong interest in other denominations and religions and the cultural development of the majority society. It may also come as a surprise that by no means only "official" meetings at church-led level come into view, but that such meetings are generally sought at the level of the congregations, especially by the full-time and voluntary

workers in general. It is also interesting that these contacts are essentially learning contacts, presenting themselves as learning places: in a first step it is about knowledge of the other, then it is about learning in encounters, about learning together at certain challenges, and finally it is about joint actions – thus in the three–step run of learning: knowledge, meeting, action.

This learning does not only signal openness to the outside world, but it is also an element of internal church developments. This can be seen, for example, in the educational work of the Valdensians: African migrants have arrived in the congregation – intercultural learning thus begins in the community itself, and it brings not only new learning contents and topics, but also new forms of learning. Global learning has thus reached the congregations.

#### **4.5. Families – where faith is born**

The Regional Group offers a wide range of different approaches in the field of family education. Even a partial list of them would be beyond the scope of this work. So two concepts only are presented here that outline the overall framework of Protestant family education, clarify differences and commonalities, and point out options for action.

##### ***4.5.1. Culture of Faith in the family from the perspective of the Lutheran Minority in Hungary***

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary has about 215,000 members and is divided into three church districts and 16 seniorates. 320 parishes are looked after by 306 pastors. The leading bishop Péter Gáncs heads the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Family is the elementary place for the culture of faith in Lutheran theology. The family is considered the smallest unit of human togetherness. It is fundamentally responsible for the upbringing and education of the individual life. This task and responsibility of the family can only partly be delegated to the school education and the parish.

The general crisis of the traditional Western ways of life, especially of traditional family forms, leads to a fundamental conflict with this theological foundation. The challenge reveals to be particularly complex in the minority situation of Lutheranism in Hungary.

The Lutheran Church has a share of 2.5% of the Hungarian population. In this context, two different realities are determining its situation: on the one hand, a diverse ecumenical environment (the absolute majority is Roman Catholic also in the sense of the Christian–religious dominant culture, in Protestantism a strong Reformed tradition and a diverse neo–Protestant orientation are formative), on the other hand there is a growing secularization in the Western style, especially among the youngsters. Although the majority of the population still describes themselves as religious ("in their

own way"), the proportion of active Christians is limited to about 10% of church members.

Today's situation may be characterized in more detail by some current phenomena:

- According to a representative inner–church sociological survey, the absolute majority of Lutherans (over 80%) believe that the family has played the most important role in their own Christian–religious character and church affiliation.
- This result – the leading role of the family in religious and faith culture – is all the more important because these families are mostly multi–denominational – as a result of the minority situation. The "inherently" ecumenical culture is an essential characteristic that makes "Lutheran religion" a positive social phenomenon.
- Several years ago, a choice between ethics and (confessional) religious education at the state primary schools (at the age of 6–14 years) has been introduced by law. Although the number of practicing Christians is relatively low, the majority of pupils – after the parents' autonomous decision – chooses religious education. That means that these families have delegated the task of religious education (because of their own lack of competence) to the schools or churches. Furthermore, these decisions show an elementary claim to religious education. The Lutheran Church has also received an invitation from many "unknown" families to educate their children religiously and thus also to participate in the culture of faith of these families.

Considering the experiences, where the Lutheran Church in its work with and for families has received an open welcome or positive reactions in recent years, further leading perspectives can also be seen:

- The young grandparents – where they are still actively practicing their faith in the church or privately – are at the centre of the culture of faith in their own families, whereby they can also set a personal example for the next generation. Special education for them is a priority at congregation and church level.
- A central area of personal religious education and the culture of faith is prayer. The culture of prayer came to an end during the communist dictatorship and the ensuing Western liberal culture of commerce. In order to encourage personal conversation with God, the Church has published a prayer book for children that aims to provide an introduction to this religious world.
- The strategic focus regarding the culture of faith in the family is pastoral care for the family. The preparatory discussions with young couples before the wedding, and the counselling competence in crisis situations are just as important as a self–evident care culture towards the families "in everyday idleness". However, experiences in this area are often negative: Hungarian people want to solve their problems "privately", i.e. without external help. Thus the problems are usually not solved at all.

- The Lutheran family care in principle has an ecumenical dimension: practical questions (e.g. how to attend church together or celebrate Holy Communion) are much more important than the traditional dogmatic differences.
- One Lutheran characteristic in religious instruction is that a theological and religious culture of dialogue is connected with the concrete establishment of contacts with the local church communities. In church schools it is an official expectation of the Church that there should always be a parish behind the school. It is not a central requirement for religious instruction in state schools, but the families of these children are also regularly invited by the local congregations.

#### **4.5.2. The controversial family paper of the Protestant Church in Germany – when family lifestyles are 'officially' discussed**

The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) is the association of the 20 Lutheran, Reformed and unified regional churches in Germany. It comprises a total of 22.3 million members in 14,152 independent parishes. The governing bodies of the EKD consist of the Synod, the Church Conference and the 15-member Council. Chairman of the Council is Bishop Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm.

The orientation guide "Between autonomy and dependence. Strengthening the Family as a Reliable Community" of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in 2013 was received in a highly controversially manner and also discussed in an unusually broad public-media context.

After several years, the questions raised by the orientation aid have still not been answered or have shifted to the levels of the Regional churches. At least, however, the country-wide controversy has made it clear, which questions for the family-supporting work in Protestant responsibility are still lining up urgently.

The debate was focused on the question to what extent the partnership form of marriage should be regarded as the normative model of family life on the Protestant side, or whether other forms of family could also have equal status. With a more folk-church and life-world tenor, one side aimed at systematically upgrading various family lifestyles alongside marriage, and it refused to allow Protestant churches to continue to support the material and social disadvantages of those other family lifestyles. The other side insisted, with a more pastoral and ecumenical tenor, argued that a criteriological procedure – a retreat onto general virtues such as reliability, responsibility, solidarity, etc. – could not yet result in a contemporary theological assessment of family practice.

Below the central point of contention, however, two facts can be stated:

#### **a) The weighting of biblical source texts**

The weighting of biblical source texts on family life and their practical–theological interpretation is more controversial than it previously seemed. Largely ahistorical approaches to family duties and constellations described in the Bible – readings focusing exclusively on marriage liturgy and Jesus' ban on divorce – are closing their mind to substantial developments in family understanding under civil law. On the other hand, biblical and reformatory points of contact for an evangelical understanding of families have so far not been sufficiently developed, and correspondingly were not practically theologically plausibilized.

#### **b) Autonomy and reliance**

The title "Between autonomy and dependence" suggests that the EKD publication should talk a lot about 'education', in particular about offers for the development of 'partnership', 'parenthood' and 'educational justice'. But it did not come to that point, educational concerns are only addressed in one sub-item and limited perspectively on the child–centred spectrum "from nurseries to all–day schools"<sup>35</sup>. After all, the entire argumentation counts significantly on the *maturity of parents*, especially in terms of partnership<sup>36</sup>, religious family practice<sup>37</sup> as well as in case of need<sup>38</sup>. This is new in that clarity. But 'maturity' cannot now mean naively that parents already know and are able to know everything necessary and interesting for them in their families. If it stands for the fact that parents can confidently decide in what form and respect they develop their knowledge and skills, where and in what way they learn, and where and in what way they do not, then the EKD publication at least offers a steep model for approaches to family–related adult education.

#### **4.5.3. Insights and challenges**

Families as traditional forms of community are undergoing great changes in post–modern society. This also has an impact on the image of family and the related family education of the Protestant churches, in which family has traditionally been an essential place of life and faith and thus also a place of learning for religious socialization. If one wants to see families in a process of change as a continuing place of religious education, new forms of family education are needed – as the two examples from Hungary and Germany show in different ways. A keyword that is mentioned in both examples is *cross–generational and cross–location educational*

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35 Zwischen Autonomie und Angewiesenheit. Familie als verlässliche Gemeinschaft stärken. Eine Orientierungshilfe des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, herausgegeben vom Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Gütersloh 2013, Ziff. 138.

36 Constantly, church actors are invited „to recognize the variety of private life forms impartially“ (see op.cit cipher 132).

37 Protestant family work should „...consider that people in the future will take the decision on their own religion consciously in awareness of and in dialogue with other religions““ (there c. 142).

38 It would be „...necessary to see poor families and families with tasks of caring more as congregation members and less as exclusive addressees of diaconal services““ (see there c. 144).



*work*. Despite all the differentiation and appreciation of each phase of one's life (early childhood, youth, working life, older generation, the latter again differentiated into "young old people", seniors and very old people in line with demographic development), it will be important to perceive the phases of life in an overall context (educational biographies; biographical learning, recorded ecclesiastically in a new understanding of the whole catechumenate). In addition, it is important to link the different learning places more closely together: early childhood education is part of the classic family as well as day care centres and family facilities in the congregations, which in turn have to adapt to changing family structures and corresponding needs. The new family education is being transferred into the social task of the churches to become politically involved in decision-making processes on family issues. Whether church family education succeeds will, however, be shown less by concepts and programmes, but rather by the fact how family-friendly a church is being experienced. Educational work then begins with very simple questions: Who supports parents in partnership issues, in care challenges and losses, in puberty and when their children start work – and also in maneuvering and scuffling in educational institutions?

#### **4.6. Diaconal training**

Two examples from the Regional Group are taken here from the large area of "diaconal education": Roma education in the Evangelical Methodist Church in Eastern Central Europe and, for current reasons, educational work in the refugee field of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

##### ***4.6.1. Roma education in the Evangelical Methodist Church in Eastern Central Europe***

The Evangelical Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe (EMC) has about 33,500 members and friends in 16 countries who hear from God in over 20 languages and pass on the love of God to their fellow human beings in even more languages. Acting Bishop is Dr. Patrick Streiff.

#### **A forgotten nation**

Europe is home to some 12 million Roma, most of whom are living in Eastern Central Europe and the Balkans. Even though most of them are resident, their social integration has failed in many places. Roma are discriminated against and often confronted with prejudice and verbal and physical violence. And they also face other problems: high unemployment (up to 90%) and a low level of education. This goes hand in hand with poverty, poor nutrition and a lack of medical care.

## **The work of the Evangelical Methodist Church (EMC)**

The Evangelical Methodist Church in Eastern Central Europe and the Balkans began working with the Roma already over 50 years ago to improve their living conditions. As a result, around 20 communities and house districts were created, most or all of them made up of Roma. On the other hand, short- and long-term social projects were also set up – because it was recognized that the proclamation of the Gospel can only be credible if new perspectives for the future are opened to people through practical help.

### **A faith that is active in love**

The EMC helps the Roma in various ways:

- School support (start-up aid for primary school, preparation camp; scholarships for secondary school attendance);
- Reading and writing courses for adults;
- Help for self-help (Roma families receive seeds, fruit trees or animals to be able to take care for themselves, or guidance and help to earn a little money);
- Help with integration into the labour market through government working programmes, health services and family counselling
- Emergency aid (food packages, medical aid, firewood for the winter, etc.)
- Spiritual help (according to a long-term sociological study in Slovakia, social integration is best achieved where Roma become part of a religious community and where their whole lifestyle changes).

### **Concrete examples**

Where God's love touches hearts, it affects not only individual persons but also their milieu. Roma from the EMC congregation of Alsózsolca (Hungary) have collected garbage at their location several times in the past. This happened not as a PR campaign, but as an expression of their will to be there for others. The EMC-congregation in Jabuka (Serbia) offers Roma writing courses for adult illiterates. The children are given tutoring for school. Roma are often very musical. The church has organized instruments (trumpet, horn, etc.) from Germany for the community. Furthermore, a German music teacher was found to give music lessons. The Roma use these new skills, for example, to frame funerals with their music.

These examples show how congregations of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Eastern Central Europe are training the Roma and empowering them to continue their lives.

#### 4.6.2. Educational work with refugees – a snapshot from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (see 4.3.3.)



This picture – a mosque, a church and the Mediterranean with a refugee boat – was painted by Mohamed Ali, who fled from Syria and has been living in Germany / Erlangen since 2 years.

The picture was taken in the exhibition: "Mein Blick auf Erlangen" (my view of Erlangen) in the context of Protestant educational work. Here, migrants with and without escape experience and long-established Erlangers were asked: Which picture do you have of Erlangen? What will you remember forever when you think of this town?

#### Context

The Protestant–Lutheran Deanery District of Erlangen comprises 80,000 Protestant congregation members.

There are currently 3,500 refugees in the Deanery district of Erlangen (2,000 in the city, approx. 1,500 in the regional district)<sup>39</sup> to be looked after. There are about 14 parishes (Protestant, Catholic, free church) which are responsible for the church asylum, some of them again and again, others only once. In the area of Erlangen City alone there are about 80 initiatives (municipal, associations, ecclesiastical...) that are involved. In the Regional District, each individual congregation in which refugees move in, has its own circle of helpers. This means that about 2,000 people in the area of Erlangen–City and District are involved in refugees' support on a voluntary and unpaid basis, about another 1,000 people in the Regional District. At least 60% of the highly

<sup>39</sup> These and the following numbers regard the year 2016.

committed volunteers in this working field are fully or partially employed as engineers, lawyers, educators, the other estimated 40% are pensioners, students, pupils or looking for work. The training courses (five very intensive and extensive courses in 2016, plus about 8–10 rather short training courses on special topics in 2016) are attended by 10–60 people each.

The educational work of the Protestant–Lutheran Deanery Erlangen primarily comprises the following points in the field of refugee work: accompaniment and further training of congregations and volunteers; processes for and with refugees; establishing contacts with other social groups; conceptual work.

### **Accompaniment of congregations and the concrete work in the helper circles, contact networks**

Contact persons have now been found in almost all congregations of the Deanery and networked with one another.

A special cooperation takes place with some congregations and groups, within the framework of "FiDE – Refugee Work in the Deanery Erlangen" and other refugee initiatives.

Topics at these meetings or discussions are:

- Questions about the organization of refugee care,
- legal questions,
- Questions about the implementation of a church asylum,
- Request for networking or good tips on specific topics.

### **c) Trainings for volunteers**

The advanced training series "Accompanying refugee workers" includes:

- Trauma research,
- Dialogue with helpers from Zirndorf's central recording facility,
- collegial counselling for volunteers and full–time staff in refugee work.

### **d) Processes that have been initiated**

- Spaces of encounter for / with refugees: The commissioner invited 50 initiatives, from the Helferkreis Alterlangen to the Caritasverband, from the Ausländer– und Integrationsbeirat to the Amt für soziokulturelle Stadtteilarbeit, to discuss the possibilities and limits of "spaces of encounter".
- Awareness building processes are shaped, for instance by organizing an interreligious commemoration ceremony for the refugees drowned in the Mediterranean with Islamic, Protestant, Catholic congregations and the Jewish religious community. An exhibition "The forgotten refugees of South–East Europe" showed photos.

### e) Contact with other social groups

- Contacts exist in particular with the municipal administration, the Advisory Council for Foreigners and Integration, the Church Asylum Working Group and the BAMF (Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees).
- There are also meetings with politicians from various political groups in the city council.

### f) Conceptual work

This includes:

- Application for financing the work,
- FiDE–Meeting (refugee work in the Deanery of Erlangen) for networking and exchange,
- “Spaces of Encounter” as a conceptual project,
- newly installed meetings with other educational institutions: "Training in refugee work"
- multiplier meetings.

### g) Outlook

This work is necessary in order to meet the social situation and the needs of committed persons, and to be able to *constructively* shape the topic of "good treatment of refugees and strengthening of committed persons" on the part of the church. The tasks will increase significantly, because the growing number of refugees also implies a growing need for counselling among volunteers and church congregations.

New priorities could be:

- continued work on the above,
- response to the increased need for advice from the congregations (this should be sufficient in terms of the number of hours, but not in terms of content),
- supporting volunteers by expanding training opportunities,
- Support of committed groups in the search for translation services (possibly setting up a process on the topic of "Setting up a fund for reimbursement of translator costs"),
- Networking of the committed in the congregations,
- Exhibitions on the topic, etc.

## 4.7. Becoming able to speak in faith, bringing faith into conversation

From the abundance of faith courses offered and conducted in the churches of the Regional Group, two basic models were chosen, rather than individual examples:

#### **4.7.1. Longing for one's own language – from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia (see 4.2.2.)

Finding a language, starting to speak about faith or at least *wanting* to speak of it in a meaningful language, not only with "unspeakable sighs" – the faithful in Russia must learn this today.<sup>40</sup>

Religious socialization in Russia is determined by several factors. The most important are:

- the legacy of Soviet atheism and a rejection of religion, which has been preserved in one way or the other by many members of the society;
- today's pan-European processes involving secularization;
- the predominance of the Orthodox Church with its characteristic features in religious life;
- the global growth trend of fundamentalist tendencies;
- paradoxically, it glorifies both the conservative Orthodox and Soviet traditions;
- The ideologization of thought – a legacy from the Soviet era that is still being actively developed today: everything is attributed to simple and clear systems of statements; the idea of the possibility of different points of view and free thought processes within a single denomination simply seems impossible to many.

This results in the following significant phenomena:

- A frightening ignorance of religious issues (doctrine, structure and practice of this or that church), which also occurs among experts – among historians, philosophers and religious scholars: excellently educated and clever people with much authority often begin to present an obvious ignorance when it comes to questions concerning religion (especially at non-orthodox churches).
- A deep gulf between the ecclesial and secular languages, the ecclesial and the secular living spaces: the representatives of the Orthodox church hierarchy (and they are shaping the idea of the church) prefer to speak an "ecclesial" language in their public appearances, i.e. many ancient words and old Church Slavic words, very rare use of modern words and terms, a monotonous, "ecclesial" flow of speech. Incidentally, this phenomenon does not only affect the linguistic field. It is also typical for the perception of ecclesiastical rites, ecclesial morality and ecclesial doctrine. A person who considers him- or herself to be a believer but is not particularly active will almost inevitably experience a split in consciousness. Life in the Church and everyday life hardly touch each other at all.

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<sup>40</sup> See on this the unpublished Master thesis by Anton Tikhomirov: *Sehnsucht nach eigener Sprache. Russische Übersetzungen von deutschen Kirchenliedern.*

- A rather serious polarization between fundamentalists and church opponents: Recently, on the one hand, a relatively small but extremely active group of various aggressive fundamentalists (mainly, but not exclusively, Orthodox and Islamic) has emerged. On the other hand, there is an increasing rejection of the church and even its active rejection in the educated classes of society, as many questions have accumulated about the morals of the representatives of the church hierarchy and the socio-political position of the Orthodox church. This rejection is mainly directed against Orthodoxy, but it inevitably "touches" all other Christian churches as well.
- Separately, one should point out the perhaps not so important, but extremely interesting phenomenon of the "blind spot": It means that ordinary people simply (quite literally!) do not perceive non-Orthodox expressions of churchliness. One of many examples: At a concert in a Protestant-Lutheran congregation, a visitor asks for the opportunity to speak with the pastor. The pastor comes to her. Her question is astounding: "Is this church actually in operation?" She knows she's talking to a priest, and they're standing by an altar with lit candles.

For the Church's educational work within the framework of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, everything mentioned above means, among other things, the necessity of fulfilling a whole series of interlinked requirements:

- The most important thing is to first simply find people who are interested in learning about the Protestant-Lutheran faith. This is not so easy: for people outside the ESCR this one is in most cases simply non-existent (even if they come there for concerts, as in the example mentioned), and among their own parishioners there are not so many who are looking for the occasion to speak of their faith. It is a fundamental task to raise interest in faith and awaken the desire to reflect and talk about it.
- When those who are interested have found each other, it is the church's first task to tell them the most important simple facts about church history, practice and doctrine, as well as about the Holy Scriptures. This includes: the composition and history of the canon, the classical dogmas, the main stages of church history, the foundations of the Reformatory doctrine of justification, the most common traditions in church life, the foundations of the church year. The difficulty here is that one has to do this without trivializing the material, but in a rather rational, "positivist" language (since this is the way the consciousness "works" in people who grew up in the very rationalist, "mathematical" Soviet educational system). Practice shows that it is not possible to speak of deep levels of religious meaning without the listeners having a secure factual basis. Otherwise the speech is understood completely inadequately: either as "babbling about nothing" or as mystical truth in the last instance. Here, many "Western" pastors made a major mistake. For example, confirmation classes often consisted only in free thought games of the participants on some spiritual topics, the actual teaching of "hard facts" did not occur.

- However, it must be shown immediately that these facts cannot be significant "in and of themselves", that they require and receive an interpretation. It must be explained that church doctrine is not yet another ideology. A "hard framework" must be created, but leeway for freedom must be pointed out. People should learn to think independently, but not in aloofness, rather by relying (possibly even critically) on the main moments of the ecclesial doctrine of faith.
- The latter two claims and the following are closely linked to each other, without which they cannot be successful. People must learn to read and hear church texts (songs, sermons, speeches) not as a lulling flow of pious words, but as texts that have a certain content and express it. In fact, language must be rediscovered in the church as a means of communication, not as a collection of incantations, as is usually the case.
- The rift between the ecclesial and the secular worlds and the two languages should be gradually overcome. It must be shown that one can and must speak in "normal" language about ecclesial topics. We have to explain where and how questions of ecclesial doctrine affect everyday life. It will be necessary to consciously distance oneself from the Orthodox church language and the expressions of Orthodox piety (especially primitive Orthodox piety). Sometimes this even has to be done very definitely, and resistance on the part of the learners has to be overcome.

But to return to the beginning, we repeat: the main task is to help people to speak of their faith, even only wanting to speak of it, to dress their faith and religious experiences in words, in an informative, understandable language connected with normal life, not in the language of incantations and ready-made formulas. If this wish is awakened, the matter is already half done!

#### ***4.7.2. Courses of faith in transformation – an overview of developments in the German-speaking world***

The challenges of Protestant education today include changes in the church–religious context (loss of tradition and religious renewal) on the one hand, and changes in education (from the knowledge society to the education society) on the other hand. Two developments for courses of faith are of particular importance for church educational work: the loss or interruption of tradition, and the return of religion to public consciousness. Both are important for the specific Protestant profile of the formation of a culture of faith, especially for the development of courses of faith.

##### **a) Abandonment of tradition**

The abandonment of tradition or its interruption, this phenomenon has been known for some time, in Western Europe at the latest since the 1960s and 1970s of the last century. After the fall of the Wall, one had to take note of the fact that not only the churches in Central and Eastern Europe have shrunk in the times of communism, but that simple and basic knowledge of faith has also dwindled.



Not only many specific ecclesial–theological questions remain unanswered – both in the East and in the West – e.g. as to how far Jesus was the Son of God or Mary the Virgin. Often quite elementary questions remain unanswered: why Christmas is celebrated or what is symbolized by the sign of the cross. This loss of knowledge of faith is accompanied by a loss of subjective expressiveness: the individual already believes something, but the ability to say what one believes and how one connects it responsibly with one's own life and actions is decreasing. This loss of objective and subjective knowledge of faith is combined with a loss of trust in the institution that mediates faith, in the church.

In addition to this decline, there has also been a new wave of religiosity since the 1980s of the last century. Some initially saw in this a new upswing in matters of faith and churchliness. But the religious wave mostly ebbed away outside the walls of the church. The so–called return of religion had reasons. Life has become more incalculable, from job security to internal security against terrorism. Belief in the ability to shape the world in a sustainable positive way – that is, in peace and justice – has diminished. A development can be observed from a "risk society" in the 1980s to a "catastrophe society" and finally to a "crisis society" in the long term. Religion is developing complementary to this. However, it is no longer limited to the mediation of religion, for example in and through the churches, which as institutions have a share in the loss of social confidence in the institutions. That is why religion in social and individual responsibility becomes a phenomenon of civil religion, at least in some regions of Europe. New questions arise hereby: what kind of religious knowledge is this, how can it be expressed by words and communicated, what significance does it have in shaping one's own life and that of society, is it separate from everyday knowledge or is it a critical–productive part of a new reflected life development, does it enter into social educational action? And finally: How does this new religious knowledge communicate itself with the traditional knowledge, but also with the criticism of the religious that has been brought back into consciousness over the return of religion?

The new discovery of religion is further reinforced by an increased public presence of Islam in Europe. This has created a new need for knowledge on the one hand, but also an additional need for certainty on the other. This concerns both fundamental religious questions about God and faith, and the open question about the socio–political significance of Islam.

### **b) New forms of knowledge**

However, a new formatting of religious knowledge is not independent from the social knowledge constellation. This is the formatting of knowledge that the European Union has adopted within the framework of its Lisbon Strategy, when its goal is to make the EU "the most competitive and dynamic *knowledge–based* economic zone in the world

by 2010".<sup>41</sup> Knowledge thus becomes the basis of economy. However, knowledge is not only a factor in the economic process, but is itself economised: it becomes information that can be modularised and pragmatized, evaluated and certified. The economization of knowledge requires a surplus of knowledge and a lifelong learning process. The multiplication of knowledge and the concept of lifelong learning are interdependent. A new self-understanding about the function and the limits of knowledge, a certainty about the content and the scope of knowledge, and the associated transformation of a knowledge and information society into an education society that knows how to deal with its knowledge stocks is lost – and becomes necessary again.

Here, religious knowledge has a critical, opening function, insofar as it is a different kind of knowledge, orientational knowledge or certainty knowledge, which – trained in religious border experiences – may depict and accompany social transformation processes and which can open up other experiences in view of the experience of the other.

### **c) Courses of faith – church internal**

The culture of faith is an essential and integrative part of Protestant identity and an opportunity to qualify the Protestant Church internally and externally. In this context, courses of faith can become an instrument for to shape processes of change in the church within society. If things go well, people are not being schoolmasterly taught in these courses, but the church learns from people to orientate itself in the changes, and to develop future perspectives. Here even more courage would be needed to Europeanize courses of faith in the Protestant area. Part of the "basic knowledge of Christianity", the faith course of Bayerisches Sonntagsblatt is, for example meanwhile, a view for European togetherness in Protestantism as a standard. Internet-based courses that bring people from different countries together via e-learning are a good option to enable Europe-wide networking. Furthermore, we should consider how "basic knowledge of Christianity" could be combined with similar attempts in Islam or Judaism, and what role this basic knowledge plays in the context of basic knowledge in the society.

### **d) Courses of faith – socially open**

Courses of faith, however, are not only instruments of inner-church communication and signs of the learning church, but as a form of learning they are also open to participants who are not bound to the church. This openness to target groups is also associated with an openness in principle to the education society. In this sense, courses of faith are an attempt, on the one hand, to institutionalize non-formal education and, on the other hand, specifically religious education in such a way that they can formulate religious knowledge at the level of the education society, and thus

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41 European Council, 23.–24. March in Lisbon, conclusions by the chairman cipher 5, under: [www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_de.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_de.htm); last login: 27.08.2017.

also enrich forms of knowledge of the secular education society. In courses of faith religious knowledge is concentrated in the form of certainty. In this way, religion can be communicated reflexively, without this shrinking into useless factual knowledge and drowning in the flood of media information. Courses of faith serve different options of the knowledge society: one option is knowledge, the other is reassurance; one option is the free search for meaning and interpretation, the other is that of being at home in a tradition that has become strange. In both cases, religious knowledge communication as a culture of faith limits and enriches a knowledge society on its way to an education society.

#### **4.7.3. Insights and challenges**

Faith courses are booming in the Protestant education sector. This is usually justified with the break of tradition and the resulting lack of knowledge about religious and ecclesial topics. As important as the courses of faith are in this objective, they are also in a double jeopardy. On the one hand, knowledge of faith threatens to become a purely cognitive phenomenon, the transmission of faith a modularized learning process. On the other hand, courses of faith could narrow and become a pure compensation for the loss of knowledge.

Against the first threat it is important that courses of faith are community learning, learning in and for community, i.e. that they become part of the formation of a congregation. Its community–building elements are therefore of particular importance.

The other threat of a pure compensation of losses must be addressed by giving room to the innovative power of the culture of faith: it will be about examining new and one's own beliefs in conversation and making them fruitful for one's own life and for being together in community. Culture of faith increasingly means that the participants are enabled to formulate their own questions and (!) to find answers, so that thereby all those involved, also teachers, pastors, religious educators themselves find a new language for the Gospel, and that finally what is ecclesial teaching develops from listening to one another and out of qualified language training in this exchange. In connection with this change in and through the culture of faith, new places are also being sought for the well–known places of faith mediation.

In this dual orientation, courses of faith can also contribute to religious education in a secular society and thus have a missionary effect.

The keyword of the faith courses must be seen within the broader context of finding a language and language ability of faith. In the future it will increasingly be a matter of a finding new, authentic language for faith. Education here means saying goodbye to an old language that has become isolated, and walking on the way towards a new language of faith that comes from the heart and touches the intellect. Language education is one of the most urgent tasks of Protestant educational action.

#### **4.8. Results and conclusions from the learning fields and case studies**

The six learning fields with the case studies initially show a wide variety and range of Protestant educational activities in the churches of the Regional Group. Protestant churches have their educational perspectives ranging from family education, school and religious instruction, the qualification of full-time and honorary employees, to social education, for example in diaconia and in inter-religious dialogue. This was not necessarily to be expected in view of the minority situation of the churches, but shows conversely: even for smaller churches – or to the point: especially for them – educational work is an essential part of the communication of the Gospel. It is also interesting to see that these areas of education are important both in the churches of the West and in the East of the region. Differences can be seen in *how* they are dealing with the common challenges in the European (educational) area. This in turn depends on their own educational traditions and on the state and social framework conditions, for instance whether the churches want to become involved in the state school system or not, or how the development of civil society has evolved.

If one disregards this differentiation of educational action due to history and society, it becomes apparent that Protestant churches try to deal with those challenges that are posed by social transformation processes in post-modern Europe, and that education is an instrument, medium or even engine for dealing with these upheavals. Education is understood and organized as an individual and collective integration process.

In this perspective the strengths as well as the weaknesses of Protestant educational action, which comes from faith and has an effect on society, are visible. The strength is that Protestant educational action is primarily not subordinated to any purposes or objectives, but results from the communication of the Gospel, links up with life contexts, is able to shape places of life into places of learning, is oriented towards challenges in order to gain orientational knowledge here. This basically gives Protestant educational action freedom and flexibility. This is also what makes it dynamic in social issues, such as interreligious and intercultural dialogue, in the new issues of migration and integration, etc.

But this is also one of the weaknesses of Protestant educational activity. That it must again and again and anew associate itself explicitly with its own foundation, the communication of the Gospel, in order to become identifiable and organizable as a differentiated but uniform field of work of the churches. It must resist the temptation to reduce itself to the function of internal church organization and retention of members, etc.

The other challenge is that Protestant educational action is quite naturally connected with social educational action – but that it must also make itself understood in this context: it must know the thinking and working methods of secular educational processes in order to be able to participate and articulate itself therein. In the future, changes in the secular educational area will have to be perceived even more intensively. Protestant educational action thus includes educational achievement in

clarifying educational processes from the theological foundation to church–social organization. The case studies show that Protestant educational work has its own profile here, that this profile is also recognizable and that its special feature is a contribution to social education – from its commitment to participatory educational processes, a criticism of functionalization, the sensitivity to the dialectics of educational processes to the curative limitation of education. Here lies one of the tasks of Protestant educational action.

This means that this opening of horizons from the basis of faith to the shaping of educational processes is also connected with a critical view of the Protestant churches' own educational structures. If the starting point of educational action is the seeking person, and if educational action is the ability that people find their own answers with their undreamt–of possibilities, then this will also be reflected in the organizational structure of Protestant educational action and have it newly developed.

## **5. The Educational Action of the Protestant Churches in Europe – Impulses and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Theological justification of Protestant educational action**

The basis of Protestant educational action is the action of God on human beings. The basic act of education is the creation of man in God's image – the German word "Bildung" (Master Eckart) also has its roots here. And not only there: this linguistic connection also exists in Serbian, for example. This passion of education as being-formed corresponds to the education of man as a constant formation and mutual education of all. Because of their likeness to God, all people are needy and capable of education. Education is therefore an essential part of human life in accordance with creation. All humans have a right to education.

Education is also an essential part of Christian life based on faith. Protestant education takes place for the transmission of faith and for the sake of a deeper understanding of one's own faith. Jesus Christ's mission to his disciples is: "Go and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

The close connection between worship and teaching is the basis for the profile of the Protestant Church – laid down in the *publice docere*, the public proclamation of the Gospel. The preaching church is a *teaching church* by being a church that listens to the Word of God. This link is the basis of Protestant educational action. This task is performed in various fields of action and by a large number of different qualifications and professional groups.

In the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, a common theological understanding of education to guide the activity must be developed. Church educational action is to be understood as an essential dimension of the church.

### **5.2. The Church as a place of Protestant educational action**

#### ***5.2.1. Education, pastoral ministry and teachers in the church***

Education concerns the churches with regard to their own ministers. For churches it is important to consider the formation of pastors, the training for ordained ministry, and to keep orienting it anew towards the current tasks in the church. In the training for parish service, the ability to act professionally for education in all phases of life must also be anchored, and the ability to cooperate with all other church educational actors must be practiced.

In this context, it is a particular challenge to recognize not only the pastors but also the other church teachers (catechists, teachers of religion, university lecturers, etc.) more strongly as part of church educational work, which also takes place in the public space, and to deepen the connection between all church educational action.

### **5.2.2. Formation of predicts and lecturers**

For many congregations it becomes important that devotions or worship services can be led by non–ordained people. The reasons may be a lack of ordained full–time staff, a pronounced diaspora situation, or even the desire for more creative opportunities for committed parishioners. This increasingly requires liturgical and theological (further) training opportunities for non–ordained persons.

### **5.2.3. Education and volunteer work**

The formation of volunteers and church education by volunteers represents a great chance for the churches. The many professional and other competencies of Christians need to be increasingly integrated into the church's work, and much room for its development should be opened up.

### **5.2.4. Educational action in churches and current challenges**

Protestant education serves the transmission of faith and the individual and community life of persons as believers. It promotes an identity capable of dialogue. Especially in diaspora situations, Protestant education strengthens the own identity of believers in the awareness of their Christian–denominational originality, their special history, and their specific cultural forms of expression. A clear personal identity is a prerequisite for dialogue and openness.

In the current challenges, Protestant education has to support people especially in coping with complex transformation processes in social, political and ecclesial respects. This includes dealing with heterogeneity, plurality and ambiguity, within and outside one's own ecclesial community. In this way, church educational action prevents fundamentalist tendencies in religious and political terms.

## **5.3. Education as an essential dimension of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**

### **5.3.1. The CPCE as a learning community**

Since its beginning the CPCE has proved to be a learning community. Together the CPCE churches learn to understand the Gospel more deeply amongst the current challenges, they learn to better understand and respect one another in their denominational, regional and cultural diversity.

In the South–Eastern Europe Regional Group we have experienced how important it is to be willing to let oneself be transformed in this common learning process by meeting the other. This willingness is not self–evident but requires openness to listen, to name and to endure differences. It implies the trust in the Holy Spirit that a change is really possible. For example, the following aspects play a role in the Regional Group:

- overcoming competition between Protestant churches,
- large churches learn from small churches,
- working out what is specifically Protestant in a diaspora situation,

- learning to complement each other.

The aim is for the CPCE churches to learn how they can live their fellowship even more constructively and comprehensively.

It is suggested to consider, through a CPCE study process, what constitutes the church as a learning church, what promotes common learning as a church, how understanding between different churches succeeds, and what role the CPCE can play in this. The CPCE Regional Groups, the synodal meetings and the many regional church partnerships must be acknowledged in their relevant specific significance for the CPCE church community.

### **5.3.2. Education as a dimension of all CPCE topics**

Just as all CPCE theological work always has ethical and ecumenical dimensions, so too it has an educational dimension. This essential importance of education for the work of the CPCE and for all church action should be taken into account more strongly.

It is therefore recommended to establish a "Specialized Circle of Education", structurally comparable to the Circle of Ethics and the Circle of Ecumenism.

The expert group on education would have the task: to identify the subject of education as a dimension of many other topics in the CPCE communication processes, to contribute to a common theological understanding of education within the CPCE, to reflect on the development of European framework conditions in education and science policy in their significance for church educational activity, and to advise the Council on all education-relevant questions. An education report, which will be prepared for each Plenary Assembly, could be helpful for this.

The expert group on education could include scientific institutions and church institutions from the individual CPCE churches, for example the office "bildung evangelisch Europa (beE)".

Beyond the foundations of a common theological understanding of education, however, no uniform educational concepts in the CPCE churches should explicitly be aimed for, since concrete educational concepts must be specific for the respective contexts, e.g. for confirmation work or for voluntary education, and must be oriented towards the given challenges, goals, framework conditions and resources.

### **5.3.3. Exchange of experience between those responsible for education**

Education grows where people meet each other with interest and commitment. In this way churches are "learning communities". This is done when churches exchange ideas, concepts and experiences among each other. It is therefore proposed to further promote the networking of those responsible for education in the CPCE churches. The "forum bildung Europa" could continue to play an important role in this regard, in that experts (those responsible for education, scientists) could advise each other on individual topics. A close coupling of these experts to their respective churches, especially to the Synods, would be desirable. At the same time, we should strive for



an even stronger "Europeanisation" of the forum, among other things with regard to the organizational team, to sponsorship and financing, as well as through an intensified networking with other organizations, e.g. with the Evangelische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Erwachsenenbildung in Europa (EAEE), in order to expand the target groups.

In addition to education topics in the narrower sense, the forum bildung Europa could also specifically address socio-political topics to which the churches want to respond with educational offers. Whilst the expert group on education (see 5.3.2.) would primarily mean an upgrading of the education topic within the CPCE, the strength of the forum would lie in the practice-oriented work *towards the outside*. To strive for both is all the better.

#### **5.3.4. Education as encounter and through encounter**

Churches have a political dimension and impact by their very existence. Churches in their ecumenical, European and global cooperation offer their staff cross-border education and experience. In this way, churches can provide global education and counter nationalist ideas about education. European and global learning is a special opportunity for the churches, because their orientation of thinking is universal. The CPCE churches should promote this by facilitating the exchange among theology students (as future teachers of religion, pastors). These could include guest semester stays at CPCE church faculties, ecumenical study years (as at the Centro Melantone or in Sibiu), but also so-called student conferences (as for example 2011 and 2013 in Rome).

An internship exchange in the field of education, for example in adult education, should also be encouraged. Here the CPCE South East Europe Regional Group could be a platform for educational exchange.

The CPCE lives from a concrete community in witness and service, as well as from concrete experiences of encounter. Wherever possible, initiatives for exchange and encounter should be encouraged, welcomed and appreciated.

## **Appendix**

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6. Dr. Thomás Butta, Prague, Czechoslovak Hussite Church
7. Rev. Mag. Jan Ciešlar, Karviná, Silesian Protestant Church of A.C. in the Czech Republic
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