



International Association
for
Christian Education

Annual Report for 2020

Development of the association

The International Association (IV) promotes Christian schools in Europe. It connects school practitioners, educational experts and stakeholders of schools with a Christian background and facilitates the exchange of experience on all levels. The member organisations, currently twenty, are from twelve European countries. The association is based in the Protestant tradition, but has opened up to ecumenism long since, both in the admission of new members and in fraternal relation to the associations of the Catholic school sector. At the European level, our organisation advocates concerns of Christian education with Churches and politics and cooperates with further international organisations that wish to acknowledge the importance of religion for upbringing and education.

This annual report provides an account of the International Association's work since the last General Assembly on 15th/16th November 2019 in Vienna (Austria). Up-to-date information on our activities can usually be found on the website www.int-v.org and in the newsletter that we publish twice a year (together with ICCS).

During the year under review the **board** met only once physically because of the corona pandemic, on 21st/22nd February 2020, in Alphen aan den Rijn (Netherlands). Alphen is the place of the SCOPE scholengroep with 23 schools all together, and our president *Piet Jansen* is chairman of this group. On the sidelines of the meeting the board members could visit one new school building and got information on the extending building projects of six new schools by the SCOPE scholengroep.

In Alphen *Dr. Peter Schreiner*, president of ICCS and director of the Comenius-Institute of the EKD, participated for the last time as a permanent guest. The board is very grateful to him for his longstanding accompaniment of IV and his excellent expert advice. *Bianca Kappelhoff*, staff member of the Comenius-Institute and responsible for *Education in Europe from a protestant perspective*, is now participating in the board meetings in his place. She is also a board member of ICCS.

Since March travelling in Europa was not possible anymore, and the board of IV had to hold his consultations digitally; three digital meetings have taken place (16.05., 13.06., 18.09.).

The International Association's **office** is located further at the EKD (Protestant Church of Germany) and competently managed by Kerstin Wiechmann, who also works for the *Global Pedagogical Network – Joining in Reformation (GPENreformation)*. Piet Jansen, Michael Jacobs and Dr. Peter Schreiner had a fruitful exchange with *Dr. Birgit Sandler-Koschel*, chief officer of the education department of the EKD, on 17th February 2020.

Membership: The number of members will increase this year by admission of Latvia and Lithuania, what still has to be formally decided by the General Assembly on 30th October. We look forward to have Christian schools from all three Baltic States within IV. And we thank *Anna Jermakovica*, headteacher of the Catholic Gymnasium in Riga, for the kind invitation to hold the General Assembly in Riga. We hope that it will be possible in 2021.

The International Association's **finances** are solid. The annual account 2019 has been checked on 24th September. The budget 2020 will not be totally spent because of the cancellation of the study trip to the Netherlands and the merely digital General Assembly. It means that the reserves continue to grow. We hope very much that the study trip as well as the General Assembly – maybe combined with a larger conference – will take place in 2021.

During the year under review our common **newsletter** with ICCS appeared in new shape in May 2020 for the first time. The next edition is planned after the General Assembly. There is still a need for development, the new shape doesn't fulfill all the demands yet. The board is looking for improvement together with *Bianca Kappelhoff* and our webmaster *Hans Groen*.

Key Activities

The **study trip for head-teachers and educational experts to the Netherlands**, which has been planned in autumn, could not take place because of the travel restrictions regarding corona. We are looking for a new date in spring 2021.

The IV had been invited to an **international conference about non-state education** on 20th March 2020. It was supposed to take place at the Lithuanian parliament in **Vilnius**. Dziuljeta Geciene, head-teacher of the Rainbow Way Gymnasium in Klaipeda (Lithuania), had brokered the contact and asked the IV for a contribution. Due to Corona the conference was cancelled and has now taken place on 28th September, but without physical participation from abroad. *Piet Jansens* speech about the successful Christian schools in the Netherlands appeared on screen, as well as the contribution of *Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo*, president of ECNAIS (European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools) about independent schools in Europe. The conference was open to the public via YouTube and provided important impulses for the political discussion in Lithuania and the acceptance of non-state education. We think that the contribution of IV could support it positively.

A new role is taken over by IV within the **Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE)**. The longstanding moderator, *Dr. Peter Schreiner* (president of ICCS), has given up the function, and the IV took over. The CoGREE members met on 5th June 2020 via Zoom and the next meeting, which was planned at the Comenius Institute in Münster on 4th/5th December 2020, will probably also be digital. The biannual meetings serve to exchange and coordinate joint activities on the European level. CoGREE includes besides ICCS and IV the *European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE)* and the *European Forum for Religious Education in Schools (EUFRES)*, as well as *PILGRIM*, which focuses on the educational goal "safeguarding of creation". EFTRE is a non-confessional network and EUFRES represents Catholic Religious Education. The Catholic school association *Comité Européen pour l'Enseignement Catholique (CEEC)* has newly become the sixth member of CoGREE.

On the new designed CoGREE-website (<https://cogree.org>) you can get information about dates, activities and focuses of each association.

The **Klingenthal Colloquy**, which is every two years near Strasbourg under the leadership of ICCS and CoGREE, was supposed to happen this year on 05th - 09th October. It had been already cancelled in the early summer and postponed until 18th - 22nd October 2021. On 8th October 2020 an online-event took place as a small replacement and kind of introduction into Klingenthal 2021 ("Zoomthal"). 18 participants from 10 countries had an initial exchange under the title "Let's tell our stories – the positive impact of religion in public education" by using digital tools. A short report can be seen here: <https://cogree.org/2020/10/12/to-be-continued-the-successful-story-of-zoomthal/>.

The International Association continues to support the worldwide network of Protestant schools, which has been established under the name of **Global Pedagogical Network – Joining in Reformation (GPEN)**. Our association represents the area of Europe in it. Several schools from national member organizations (Germany, Ireland, Hungary, Slovakia) are participating in the ErasmusPlus-project under the title *Schools joining up for Communities of Peace (SchoolCoPe)*, which has been running since 2019.

Other forms of cooperation

On the way to the first **European Christian Convention (ECC) 2024/25** a professional office is now under construction. All member organizations were asked for a one-time contribution; IV gave 500 €. The annual membership fee of IV is 100 €.

ECC aims to organize a large-scale ecumenical gathering for Europe and from all over Europe. It will be open to everybody who is ready for dialogue on the basis of Christian faith and feels responsible for a hopeful future in Europe and the whole world. It shall be carried by services and prayers and shall provide space for discussions, bible lectures and workshops – similar to Evangelische Kirchentage or Katholikentage. ECC follows the vision of the Charta Oecumenica 2001, which says inter alia: *We are convinced that the spiritual heritage of Christianity constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for Europe. On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail. (Charta Oecumenica 7)*

Within the framework of the **Conference of European Churches (CEC)** Bianca Kappelhoff is the representative of ICCS and IV in the thematic reference group *Education, Democracy and Diversity*. She moderated a digital meeting about the questions of an education for pluralism and democracy on 28th/29th September 2020.

In closing, we should once again recall that the tasks of the International Association are described as follows in its constitution:

“The International Association for Christian Education ... promotes mutual exchange and encounter among Christian teachers from European countries, coordinates the interests of Christian schools and Christian teaching in the educational and training systems of Europe, gives them a face and a voice in and before the churches in Europe and European institutions (such as the Council of Europe and the European Union) and provides appropriate institutional conditions for schools and teachers.”

20th October 2020

Michael Jacobs
(Secretary)

 www.int-v.org