



International Association
for
Christian Education



Intereuropean Commission on
Church and School

newsletter

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Editorial

In January 2018 the question of whether the confessional heritage is an “inspiring challenge” or a “reason for embarrassing consternation” (Martin Sallmann) was discussed at a meeting of representatives of Protestant and Catholic schools in Switzerland. The background to this is the development of many confessional schools, which have during their history become so secularised that their religious profile is not recognisable anymore. Diversity and secularisation puts the question of the profile of Christian schools back on the agenda.

The participants agreed that the clock should not be turned back to the old ways, but recognised that it would also be disastrous if the schools were to lose completely their Christian tradition. A metaphor used by Martin Sallmann appealed to many, which can apply to Christian schools in Europe in general and in a way even to the church-school relation: It is a matter of seeing the Christian heritage as a string instrument, which strings can be plucked more or less. It is also possible that they are sympathetic strings, which are not played actively, but are clearly audible resonating. No matter if they are actively played or just resonating sympathetic strings – the playing has to be exercised and fostered at the schools. Similar images can be found in the bible, if Christians and their faith is seen as the “salt of the earth” (Mt. 5, 13) or in the parable of the “leaven” (Mt. 13, 33). What does that mean in practice?

In his keynote in Bern, Paul Zulehner calls upon the schools to focus on solidarity and fellowship; with the world and humankind. Even with those from different faith and non-religious, atheist communities: “It’s not necessary to be perfect, but to be connected.” (Richard Rohr).

Quality of school can then be determined among others by how many of the graduates get involved in politics and work on the *res publica*.

These are challenging thoughts that stimulate thinking about how to situate the impact and response of Christian faith in Christian schools and other educational perspectives. What are your answers to that?

We wish all readers to be inspired by the text.

Dr. Tania ap Sïon and Dr. Peter Schreiner (ICCS)

Dr. Gerhard Pfeiffer and Michael Jacobs (IV)

Information from IV and ICCS

IV: From the IV-Board

The Board of the International Association has met twice since the last newsletter of August 2017. At the meeting on December 1st 2017, just before the General Assembly in Dublin, questions regarding the statute, number of members, the financial situation of that year, and changes in the constitution of the board including transitional arrangements were mainly discussed. After the General Assembly decided accordingly, the board could meet for the first time in its new composition on February 23rd/24th 2018 in Düsseldorf. The new secretary is Michael Jacobs. He is the head of the Protestant Theodor-Fliehdner-Gymnasiums in Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth and has long been involved with the Protestant educational system through his work and voluntary commitments. Judit Hallgató from Győr (Hungary) has been confirmed as a new member of the board as is also the case with Dick den Bakker. He is director for education and identity at Verus (Netherlands) and represents this member organisation as the successor of Dr Wim Kuiper, whose engagement with Verus ended in September 2017. With the departure of Wim from IV the position of president also became vacant. Therefore, Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer, former secretary, became acting president, limited to a year at the request of the General Assembly. Main issues of the meeting in Düsseldorf were programme planning and supporting contacts with the members.

IV: General Assembly 2017 “What teachers do we need at Christian Schools?”

The General Assembly was held in Dublin (Republic of Ireland) on 1st/2nd December 2017. About 30 participants came from 12 different countries of Europe. The Most Reverend Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, welcomed the assembly on Friday evening with a short reflection about education and the expressions of Christian life in a secular world. The programme included furthermore the visit to an Anglican High School as well as St. Patrick Cathedral. Prof Dr Manfred Pirner (University Erlangen-Nuremberg) gave a key note about teachers in Protestant schools. He explained that they are in the tension between professional conduct and faith commitments. Ideally, they should bring together these two poles by the competence to *Relate their Profession to (their) Religiosity* (RPR competence). The handout and presentation of the speech can be downloaded at <http://www.evrel.ewf.uni-erlangen.de/mitarbeiter-innen/pirner/vortraege-und-ta-gungen.shtml>. Dr Christine Mann, president of the European Committee for Catholic Education (CEEC), and Dr Philippe Richard, General Secretary of Catholic International Education Office (OIEC) were welcomed as guests at the assembly. At the business part of the assembly decisions were made concerning the constitution of the board (see *From the board*) among other discussions. Dr Wim Kuiper was thanked for his dedicated and efficient work as IV president. The decision on a change of the name of the association (“European” instead of “International” association) was postponed until the next assembly.

IV: General Assembly 2018 in Estonia

The General Assembly 2018 will take place in Tallinn (Estonia) at the invitation of the Union of Estonian Christian Private Schools. For those interested in history the city is also known under the name Reval. Estonia is celebrating an anniversary in 2018 because 100 years ago it became independent for the first time. The date for the assembly is set at November 23rd/24th. “Contributions of Christian Schools to a Society in Solidarity” (working title) will be the focus content wise. Dr Jacomijn van der Kooij (Netherlands) has agreed to give the keynote speech. The General Assembly will have to decide on membership applications from Austria and (probably) Sweden.

ICCS: More cooperation with PKN

At a meeting of Dr Peter Schreiner and Janika Olschewski with Corina Nagel-Herweijer and Johan ter Beek, both responsible for the relationship of church and school of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN), current developments and possibilities for European cooperation were discussed. It took place on August 29th 2017 in Utrecht. The PKN established with these two part-time positions support for parish churches and local primary schools (basisscholen) in developing and carrying out concepts of religious education, if parents express their wish to do so. For that, the ministry of education has created solid legal prerequisites that support RE teachers at public schools the same as teachers at Christian schools, which make up two thirds of all schools in the Netherlands. PKN now facilitates projects and supports structures for this work. At the meeting the current situation of the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS) was discussed as well and possibilities for future cooperation with initiatives and projects in the Netherlands.

ICCS: Klingenthal Colloquy 2018

In autumn the next Klingenthal colloquy will take place. The meeting from October 1st to 5th will have the topic “Dialogue, Values, Education and European Integration”. The thematic focus will lie on tackling (religious) hate speech and creating a democratic culture in school. Visiting the European parliament is planned. The colloquy is jointly organised by ICCS and CoGREE. For open questions and interest regarding participation, contact Janika Olschewski (olschewski@comenius.de) and Dr Peter Schreiner (schreiner@comenius.de).

GPENreformation held a meeting in Kigali (Rwanda)

The network “Global Pedagogical Network – Joining in Reformation”, which was founded in 2017 and keeps as well as furthers the connections from the schools500reformation project, organised a conference outside Europe for the first time. From November 4th to 7th 2017, more than 50 delegates learned, discussed and celebrated together at the conference centre of the Protestant Church in Kigali (Rwanda). The theme of the conference was “Peace Education at Protestant Schools as a Contribution to Learning for Sustainability”. The participants heard reports of the exceptional challenges for Protestant education, for example, in Brazil, Poland, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. The shocking confrontation with witness reports of the genocide in Rwanda 1994 emphasised dramatically the necessity of having reconciliation and trauma therapy as part of educational work. Alongside the programme, impressive and lively services took place. The structure of the network was consolidated by the implementation of the council, which is responsible for overall management. Members of the council are Dr Wim Kuiper, Jonathan Laabs, Revd Samuel Mutabazi, Prof Dr Annette Scheunpflug and Revd Dr Birgit Sandler-Koschel. A number of regional supporters was appointed as ambassadors.

7th National Protestant School Congress

The national congress 2017 took place September 28th/29th in Warnemünde. The keynote speakers Prof Dr Peter Fauser (Jena), Prof Dr Frauke Brosius-Gersdorf (Hannover) and Prof Dr Paul Nolte (Berlin) introduced the theme of the conference “Called to be free” from a school point of view, a legal and a historical perspective. In 11 workshops and 10 dialogue stations around 250 participants expanded on the topic and exchanged experiences. Richard Parrish (London) and Dagmara Mielke (Cieszyn) represented the global contacts and showed how international cooperation can be an enrichment of the Protestant profile.

General Assembly of the Association of Protestant School Confederations (AGES)

The members of the association met on November 23rd/24th 2017 in Nuremberg. They adopted a position paper on the topic “Protestant schools need good employees – now and in the future”, which was developed at a symposium in April 2017. Besides the reports of the member associations, the participants also discussed incitations from a symposium of the Comenius Institute “School as a case of emergency – The role of religions in the immigration society – Consequences for the development of Protestant schools?”. Dr Peter Schreiner, guest at the general assembly, presented the work of the Comenius Institute. Christel Ruth Kaiser, the managing director of the Barbara-Schadeberg Foundation, informed participants that the chair of the board has been passed from the benefactor Barbara Lambrecht-Schadeberg to Prof Dr Martin Schreiner (Hildesheim).

France celebrates the anniversary of the Reformation

From October 27th to 29th 2017 more than 1,500 French Protestants met in Strasbourg to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation together with guests from across the world. The programme had the theme “Protestants en fête: Vivre la fraternité”. Between the grand opening with high-profile guests from politics and church in the plenary of the Council of Europe and the major school service at the Zenith auditorium, a varied programme with theatre and music performances, speeches, exhibitions and symposiums unfolded. The Conseil Scolaire de la Fédération Protestante de France organised a symposium with the title “Vivre la fraternité à l'école” with the sociologist of religions Jean Paul Willaime and the IV secretary Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer as speakers.

Switzerland: Education in the context of 500 years of Reformation

The three gymnasiums with Protestant roots in Bern, NMS Bern, Freies Gymnasium and Campus Muristalden, thought together about their history and their tasks today on October 28th 2017. Prof Dr Paul M. Zulehner (Vienna) talked about “Education at Christian Schools in the Context of Reformation and Secularisation” and Prof Dr Martin Sallmann (Bern) chose as a title for his speech “The reformatory heritage of the Free Schools of Bern – Burden or Treasure?”. This theme was picked up at a meeting of Catholic and Protestant schools in Switzerland on January 26th 2018, which focused on the question: “The confessional heritage of our schools: Inspiring challenge or a reason for embarrassing consternation?”

Association of Protestant Teachers and Educators (AEED)

The general assembly of the association met from April 13th to 15th 2018 at the Protestant Academy Meißen. Besides reports of member organisations and of the commission for Religious Education, the delegates heard with interest about the situation of Religious Education in Saxony, which has to find answers for the well-advanced secularisation of the society. At the rotational board elections Martin Pfeifenberger, Hermann Abels, Kurt Wolfgang Schatz, Anne Adolph and Manfred Spieß were confirmed in their offices. Newly voted onto the board was Anne Merkel from the *Mecklenburger Religionslehrerverband e. V.*

Department for Research and Development of Protestant School (WAES): New staff member

Dr Sylvia Losansky has taken on the project position “WAES” at the church office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in Hannover. Ms Losansky brings along manifold theological and ecumenical experiences for the work, which is supported jointly by the Barbara-Schadeberg Foundation, the EKD church office and the Comenius Institute. Beforehand Ms Losansky was the academic project leader at “bildung evangelisch in Europa. Verein zur Förderung europäischer Perspektiven der Bildungsarbeit e.V.” (beE) in Erlangen.

CoGREE and member organisations



CoGREE: Steering group meeting in Soesterberg

The steering group of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE) held its second meeting in 2017 on October 13th/14th in Soesterberg near Amersfoort. Suggestions for a new look for the CoGREE website were presented and developed and the Klingenthal colloquy (October 1st-5th 2018), jointly organised with ICCS, was planned. The theme of the colloquy will be: *Dialogue, Values, Education and European Integration*. PILGRIM was officially affiliated as a new member of CoGREE – PILGRIM has an international network of schools in which sustainable education enriched by a spiritual dimension is promoted (see www.pilgrim.at). Dr Wim Kuiper was thanked at the meeting for his work and the support of CoGREE through Verus that he made possible. As president of IV and Verus he had been a member of the steering group for many years.

CoGREE: Release of new website

On January 29th 2018, the new website of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE) was released. At <https://cogree.org> up-to-date information on the work of CoGREE and its members can be found. The reports are about new developments in the field of education and religion in the context of the European Union and of the Council of Europe as well as announcements and reports of events. Also small extras – for example, the book of the month – can be found on the website.

If you want to know what is going on in the field of education and religion at a European level, the website is a perfect starting point. The contributions are in English. Feedback can be given via info@cogree.org in English, German and French.

EFTRE: Executive in Dublin

On November 18th 2017, the members of the executive of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE) met in Dublin. The new constitution was approved as well as further activities planned. The focus, however, was on organising the upcoming conference. It will take place from August 28th to 31st 2019 at the St Patrick campus of Dublin City University. Matching event locations for the theme “Reconciling Realities in Religious Education” were visited, speakers selected as well as excursions and workshops planned. To stay up-to-date regarding the conference, it is worth visiting the website www.eftre.net on a regular basis.

EFTRE: Board meeting in Gothenburg

The board of EFTRE met on March 3rd 2018 in Gothenburg (Sweden). Olof Franck, new representative of the Swedish members on the board, welcomed the board members at the Education Department of the University Gothenburg. Further board members of 9 member countries were present. Besides exchanging current challenges of Religious Education in the member states with special focus on the situation in Sweden, the time was used to discuss organisational questions. Another important topic of the board meeting was the coming conference of EFTRE. It will take place from August 28th to August 31 2019 in Dublin. As soon as possible, all information regarding the conference will be made available on the website. If you are interested in attending the event, you can contact Janika Olschewski (olschewski@comenius.de).

Current developments in the READY project

The three-year ERASMUS+ project READY (Religious Education and Diversity) is in its final phase. On April 11th/12th 2018, a concluding international event took place in Vienna, at which results were discussed and perspectives on diversity in regard to Religious Education were opened up. In the next couple of months, a final publication will be worked out with insights and documents of the last years. To get more information about the project, visit www.readyproject.eu.

CEC and CPCE



CEC: New staff member in Strasbourg

Revd Sören Lenz is the new staff member and head of the CEC office in Strasbourg. He is now responsible for the topics bioethics, education, human rights and for contacts with the Council of Europe and other European institutions. Sören Lenz’s position is supported by the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine and entails work for the Conference of Churches on the Rhine, a regional structure of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), as well.

“I’m looking forward to work on bioethical questions and questions of education policy on the basis of a Christian anthropology. [...] I’m firmly convinced that it is the responsibility of us Christians to comment openly and if necessary controversially on these questions in our parishes, churches and in civil society”, says Lenz at his introduction. ICCS and IV are looking forward to future cooperation with the new colleague in Strasbourg.

CEC: General Assembly 2018

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) now meets again five years after the meeting in Budapest for a General Assembly. It will take place from May 31st to June 6th 2018 in Novi Sad (Serbia) and has the theme “You shall be my witnesses”. ICCS and IV are invited to participate as partner organisations. The thematic reference group of CEC “Education for Democratic Citizenship”, in which Dr Peter Schreiner works on behalf of both organisations, will contribute to the programme the workshop “Democracy and populism: The role of education and CEC” led by Hanna Broadbridge (Denmark). IV will be represented in Novi Sad by its (provisional) president Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer.

Council of Europe and European Union



EU: Proposal for a Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching

In January 2018, the EU commission has published a proposal for a Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching. The document contains besides the draft for the recommendation information about the context of the proposal, its legal basis as well as results of a preceding consultation on these questions. In relation to the promotion of common values, the proposal recommends that the member states should support education programmes focused on citizenship and ethics. Critical thinking as well as media competence should be strengthened as well. On the topic of inclusive education, the proposal says that all children should be included in the education system from an early age onwards.

The document can be downloaded here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-common-values-inclusive-education-european-dimension-of-teaching.pdf>

Council of Europe: Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

The Council of Europe Education Department has identified the strengthening of democratic culture, as well as the development of open, inclusive and safe learning environments in schools across its member states, as main priorities in the new programme of activities 2018-2019. The reinforcement of democracy in schools will therefore be the fundamental objective of both the implementation phase of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) and the new Council of Europe Education Department initiative “Democratic Schools for All”.

At the invitation of the Danish government, education specialists and practitioners have discussed and defined the implementation phase and action plan of the RFCDC in Copenhagen from 23 to 24 April 2018 and launched one of its key implementation tools, the new “Education Policy Advisers Network” (EPAN).

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