



International Association
for
Christian Education



Intereuropean Commission on
Church and School

newsletter

July 2014, No. 5

Editorial

This year the world will mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, and this “seminal catastrophe” is a topic on everyone’s lips. From today’s perspective a “European civil war” started then that continued with short interruptions up to 1945 and still flames up in the eastern part of our continent again and again today. For most of the European countries there has been peace for more than half a century. No one can deny that this is mainly a fruit of the European integration process. Considering the results of the current European elections, one can ask if national egoism with its horrific dreams and fears is really permanently eliminated. What is the task and what responsibility comes out of this analysis for Christian educators and Christian schools?

The roots of the International Association for Christian Education (IV) lie in the years after the First World War, when Christian educators from Germany and the Netherlands strove together to overcome enemy images and emotional harms. Is this all just a long time ago?

The following scene happened at the general assembly of IV in Poland. Educators from the Slovak Republic and Hungary started to talk at the closing time beer. Hesitantly they present their reservations against the neighbour country, rooted in the history and minority policy. But common concerns and the wish to cooperate are stronger. Finally, they drink and dance together and take the surprising experience back home, how an open dialogue can overcome stereotypes and accusations.

There is no need to overvalue such a single experience. It is more important that the spirit of openness, the search for justice and the efforts of dialogue and forgiveness is promoted day by day in our schools. This includes reflection on how we should live like this and where we can gain energy. An excellent place for this is Religious Education, but also other subjects should be taught in this “horizon of attention” (Karl Ernst Nipkow).

How we as ICCS and IV try to make progress in this perspective together with our members and partners is documented in this Newsletter. We wish all our readers a relaxing summer.

With kind regards

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

Information from IV and ICCS

ICCS: Board meeting in Strasbourg in April

The board of ICCS met at the end of April for its annual meeting in Strasbourg. The office of CEC, of which ICCS is an organisation in partnership, hosted the meeting. In addition to the preparation for the consultation of ICCS correspondents and an exchange about current projects that are organized mainly in close collaboration with IV, further perspectives of ICCS were discussed. The board welcomed Lesley Prior, the new Secretary of CoGREE, and Dr. Gerhard Pfeiffer, Secretary of IV and a permanent guest of the ICCS board.

ICCS: Consultation of national correspondents



A meeting of ICCS correspondents was proposed at the conference in Prague 2011 and now this has happened as a consultation, which took place at the end of April 2014 at Klingenthal. Nineteen participants from 15 different European countries came together to discuss which challenges ICCS should take up in the field of “church and school” in the forthcoming years. It was agreed to promote ICCS as an ecumenical structure in which Anglican, Protestant and Orthodox representatives work together on issues

of church and school, to clarify the future profile of ICCS and take account of context-related developments in the relation of church and school. One proposal includes spelling out ICCS as follows: Innovation, Collaboration, Connections, Sharing (of resources). A report in German about the meeting is available at: http://www.comenius.de/themen/Evangelische-Bildungsverantwortung-in-Europa/Klingenthal_2014.php?bl=849.

IV: Board meetings in Frankfurt (February) and Nuremberg (July)

The board meeting in February mainly discussed the general assembly 2013 in Soesterberg that was organised together with the CoGREE conference “Religion in schools in secular Europe?” This combination was valued as very positive – as well as the generous support of the Besturenraad. For future events the target groups should be identified more clearly in relation to the items of the agenda. The board discussed also its involvement in the Reformation Project “500 schools“. Dr Wim Kuiper and Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer are members of the steering group. IV is involved in acquisition and management of funding, and disseminates information among its members but is not in a position of organising its own campaign.

At the meeting the preparation for the general assembly in 2014 and the European seminar in Bad Wildbad in 2015 started. This work was continued at the July meeting in Nuremberg. The Revd Erwin Meister, Chairperson of the Association of Protestant School Alliances and of the Protestant School Foundation in Bavaria was a guest at the board meeting. Visiting the Wilhelm Löhle School, the board learned about one of the most important Protestant schools in Germany. Retired principal Michael Otte (Neuendettelsau) reported to the board about the Conference

“Churches' Voice on Human Rights“ (30.10./01.11.2013, Palermo) and shared with the board his experience with the school project: “Model United Nations“.

IV: Launch of a network of French-speaking Protestant Schools (RIEP)

The network “Réseau International de l'Enseignement Protestant” (RIEP) has officially been founded on 28 May 2014 at a (virtual) meeting in Paris. The International Association is one of the 11 founding members that come from Europe, Africa, Madagascar and the Caribbean and has appointed its Secretary as a member of the responsible committee (Comité d'Orientation et de Suivi). The board (Bureau) will meet in autumn to develop a working programme. The main intentions of the founders, which have been formulated at two previous conferences in 2011 and 2013, include in-service training for teachers and head teachers, a participatory pedagogy with emphasis on peace education and education for democracy, responsibility for the environment and inclusion. A blog on “Enseignement Protestant 2017“ should serve for exchange of information and ideas.

AEED et al.: Between departure and resignation (10th Conference on Education, Eisenach, 13to 15.February 2014)

For 20 years now the Association of Protestant Educators in Germany (AEED) has organised every second year an Education Conference together with the German Association of Catechists, the professional ethics association and the trade union of education and science (GEW). The tenth in this series had the title: “Between departure and resignation – a critical review of developments in education policy“. Marianne Demmer (GEW) asked in her review of the reforms after the first PISA study where education (Bildung) had gone. Dr Jürgen Frank and Prof. Eckhard Nordhofen discussed the impact of church documents on education and all associations considered the “Changes in religious education and ethics in the mirror of changes of school“.

ICCS: Current developments in teaching Religious Education in Hungary

Teaching Religious Education has become a very complex phenomenon in present-day Hungary. Before 1989 it was only possible in congregations and in a few state-schools after the school lessons. The curriculum of RE lessons was mainly teaching Bible stories thus giving a biblical knowledge and basic information about church, the respective congregation and the church year.

After the 1989 changes quite a number of formerly church-run but in 1948 nationalized pedagogical institutions (kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools) were given back to the church and to the congregations. In these schools, teaching Religious Education has been part of the curriculum, mostly with two lessons a week. The RE curriculum in these schools covers teaching the Bible, teaching Christian ethical issues, church history and world religions.

In the past decade a new curriculum was developed with up-to-date RE study books for teaching in state-run schools. Here the curriculum has allowed one RE lesson per week, always after the compulsory school lessons. In this scenario RE has become an extra lesson, an optional one for those pupils who specifically and voluntarily enrolled for a denominational RE education. These lessons have always been organised by the congregations and mostly taught by the pastors or a few voluntary helpers.

This situation has been greatly changed by the educational reforms concerning the teaching of RE in 2013. Talks had started between the government and Hungarian churches on the organi-

sation of Religious Education, which is offered as an option during school hours as of September 2013, under new public education laws. The new rules, requiring pupils to attend one ethics class per week or choose Religious Education organised by a church, will apply to all primary schools.

The ethics classes will be taught by teachers at the school, after they complete a 60-hour training session, but the Religious Education classes will be provided by qualified RE teachers or pastors from outside the school. Parents will be able to choose among classes offered by several churches registered in Hungary and choosing the materials for instruction will be in the church's competence. The new system is being introduced gradually, starting from 1st and 5th grade student every year, thus reaching a full-fledged RE education in 4 years. (Hungarian elementary school education is an 8-year long system).

The challenge of this new system is organising the practicalities of introducing RE in such a context. The churches welcome this new possibility but are lacking the required number of qualified RE teachers. It seems that organising RE in this new system is a big question for the churches and the congregations in terms of teachers and available classrooms in the schools. For example, one class may be organized into 3 to 4 different groups (Ethics and RE) at the same time, requiring the school to provide space they do not necessarily have. In urban areas where schools are scattered, the RE teacher or the pastor may have to travel from lesson to lesson to teach just a few students. The organisational matrix is becoming more and more difficult. The working out of the financing of RE has also been a complex process. The new curriculum is also a new challenge as it must incorporate biblical and ethical knowledge as well.

From the point of view of the churches there are further questions to think over.

- What is the role of congregations in this new situation? Is RE connected to local congregational life or is it only a school lesson where religion and ethics are both taught? What is the interest of the church and what is the interest of the pupils and their families?
- How are denominations viewed in this context? Does biblical and ethical instruction require the denominational background or can it be taught without it?
- What are the challenges of the new curriculum? What should it teach about religiosity? Should it give only informative knowledge or should it contribute to the faith formation of children?

These are the main questions and challenges that Religious Education must face in present-day Hungary. It will be a very interesting process in the coming years to monitor the development of these most recent changes.

Lajos Szabó, ICCS correspondent

ICCS: The Situation of RE in Georgia

Georgia is a multicultural, multi-confessional country. The total number of non-orthodox people is 16.1% of the population (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2002). Planning and implementation of adequate educational policy are of special importance in the context of existing diversity in Georgia.

ICCS correspondent Prof. Dr. Sofiko Lobzhanidze has written a short article that is available on the ICCS website (www.iccsweb.org) about the current situation. The Constitutional Contract between the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia and the State in 2002 and a new Education law provide the space for confessional RE in the 35 schools of the Patriarchate. A law about religion is planned, to clarify the issue of institutionalisation of religious minorities.

ICCS: Confessional and non-confessional Religious Education – the example of Switzerland

In Switzerland with its small-scale educational organisations in the cantons a harmonisation process takes place in education. This is based on the assignment of a new article in the Swiss Federal Constitution. With the Curriculum 21 that will be finalised in 2014, religion will become part of the “Sachunterricht“ (a general subject class) “Human-Nature-Society“ (or Ethics - Religions - Community in secondary I level). This lesson will be taught to all children irrespective of their religious affiliation from kindergarten up to grade 9. (Confessional Religious Education can be organised additionally in the cantons, but will not be part of the common curriculum.) There is an intense debate about the relation between a confessional approach to RE (religious instruction) and a common non-confessional RE (religious education). It was an initiative of German religious educators to publish an extended collection of articles that discusses the relationship between the mentioned approaches using the example of Switzerland. Current developments in school and church are introduced. Most of the contributions reflect in a general way the place of religion in school, the differentiation between the learning locations of church and school, about the subjects of teaching and learning as well as the self-understanding of religious education as an academic discipline. The book provides an opportunity for students and experts, to study the issue from different perspectives. D. Helbling, U. Kropač, M. Jakobs, St. Leimgruber (Hrsg.): Konfessioneller und bekenntnisunabhängiger Religionsunterricht. Eine Verhältnisbestimmung am Beispiel Schweiz, Zürich (TVZ) 2013, 400 Seiten

IV and ICCS: School Leaders' study tour to the Netherlands

A study tour arranged by IV and ICCS for school leaders offers encounters with Dutch schools and their concepts. Those who are interested can pre-register at the office of IV (kerstin.wiechmann@ekd.de). An agreed date will then be fixed with the provisional participants. The final date for pre-registration is 30 September 2014. More information is available at www.int-v.org.

ICCS: New Blog on RE in Europe

Current documents, developments and publications will be introduced on a newly launched blog of Dr Peter Schreiner on Religious Education in Europe. The blog www.religious-education.de already contains contributions on RE in France, England, Finland and Switzerland. Comments and further proposals are welcome.

IV: National Meeting of Lutheran educators in Hungary, 30 June to 2 July 2014 (Aszód)

The conference of Lutheran educators in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools was held at the re-established Protestant Gymnasium with boarding school in the little town of Aszód east of Budapest. “Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength“ has been the motto of the conference that served as both in-service training and common celebration and recreation at the end of the school year. Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny, who preached also at the opening service, organised an inspiring workshop for RE teachers on “Reformation and Culture“. After excursions to nature and cultural sites, on the second day there was a visit to a well-known institution for juvenile delinquents, a lecture by State Secretary Gergely Pröhle about the term

“Christian Europe”, and a presentation of the project “500 Protestant schools worldwide celebrate 500 Years of Reformation“ by Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer and Rita Révész.

IV: General Assembly 20./21.November 2014 in Pápa (Hungary)

The small town of Pápa with its lovely baroque townscape, stands out in the history of Protestant schools in Hungary. With support from the school administration of both the Lutheran Primary School and the Reformed Gymnasium, the International Association is able to hold its general assembly in 2014 there. Participants will be introduced to the Hungarian education system as well to the practical work in both schools. Reflections on and practical examples of “Human Rights / European values as part of the Pedagogy of Christian schools“ will be the main focus of the general assembly according to the current state.

Sixth Federal Congress of Protestant Schools: “A strong I for a strong We“ (29.-30. September 2014, Stuttgart)

The congress will deal with the role of Protestant schools in the field of education. Lectures, fora and workshops will introduce theory and good practice and demonstrate what the opening toward the civil society can mean for Protestant schools and their players. Dr Uta Hallwirth from the Academic Work Unit for Protestant Schools (WAES) writes: More than 1000 general and vocational schools complement and enrich the state-funded school system. Their self-understanding includes providing impulses for a school culture of respect and responsibility and also offers a Protestant-shaped education. Protestant schools are open for all students. They do not serve private interests but offer a concept of schooling that is also in the interest of the whole public school system. Read more about the event at www.bkes-2014.de.

IV & ICCS: Current information about the ‘Schools500reformation’ project

By mid-July more than 207 Protestant schools from all over the world have registered at the webpage of the project www.schools500reformation.net. Important signals came from two regional conferences in Africa. In Ghana IV secretary Dr Gerhard Pfeiffer participated on behalf of the steering group. The webpage includes didactical tools, prepared by the project office of the University of Bamberg. Schools are encouraged to use the logo of the project (a tree) in a creative way, to make songs of Reformation and to report about the roots and the history of their school related to the Reformation. A platform for dialogue and exchange, www.forum.schools500reformation.net, will be provided for schools, teaching staff and students.

CoGREE and member organisations



CoGREE: Steering group agrees to revise the Common Statement

At its meeting in June 2014 in Amsterdam the CoGREE steering group decided to revise their Common Statement. This was discussed at a workshop at the CoGREE Conference in November 2013 in Soesterberg. The Common Statement includes thematic guiding principles on religion and education. Another item on the agenda has been the enlargement of membership.

CoGREE: Klingenthal Colloquy will meet the new Director for Democratic Citizenship and Participation for the Council of Europe

The Sixth Klingenthal Colloquy of CoGREE and ICCS will take place from 6 to 10 October this year at the Chateau Klingenthal near Strasbourg. The theme is: "Intercultural Education and the Religious Dimension". As part of the program a meeting with Jean-Christophe Bas, the new Director for Democratic Citizenship and Participation is planned. The Directorate includes the department of education and of youth. Also an exchange with Dr Claudia Lenz from the European Wergeland Centre on the implementation of the Signpost document of the Council of Europe is part of the programme. Registration is possible up to mid of September at schreiner@comenius.de.

EFTRE: Board meeting and new issue of the Newsletter

The board of EFTRE evaluated the European Conference in Malmö 2013 at its meeting in Vienna in April 2014. Ideas about the next conference in Vienna in 2016 were also discussed. The concept of the new issue of the EFTRE Newsletter was further developed, and the Newsletter is now published and can be downloaded at www.eftre.net. Dr Norman Richardson is the Editor of the Newsletter. He represents also Northern Ireland at the board of EFTRE.

EuFRES: Prague, April 2013 - the Sixteenth forum on the teaching of religion in public schools

The EuFRES forum, Towards the Periphery of Christianity took place in Prague in April 2014. The gathering examined certain aspects of the teaching of religion, particularly in the Catholic tradition. The debate was related to the Second Vatican Council of which certain groups have not always taken full account. The conference was particularly interesting for your correspondent, who worked with the English Benedictines in the wake of the Council. It was a framework for the re-examination of the relationship of the Church to a rapidly changing world. The work of the EuFRES Conference was set in the context of current thought and development.

Particularly important documents were the Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. In looking again at the Pastoral Constitution we were led to consider universal aspects of the Christian faith, for example, the justification for (Roman) Catholic openness towards other religious groups or other Christian churches. The diversity of models for the presence of the Catholic Church in Europe before the Council reflected historical, ecclesial and cultural diversity before the fall of the Berlin wall. Today we take account of life in a society with

little knowledge of the language of Christianity. The school has an important role because it is the living synthesis of civil society; that means that the school may be the only contact of its pupils with Christianity or, indeed, with the "religious" world. Furthermore, what is learned in school may be the sole opportunity for well-motivated and culturally valid contact with the religious interpretation of human existence.

Howbeit, in relation to the religious education (sic) of pupils whose families no longer fully believe, we are aware that it is difficult to acquire a uniform vision of "the faith" in a "humanist" school that is open and confronted by other ideologies. Liberty of choice is accompanied by cultural values that is humanist or Christian values, which respect freedom of conscience as well as the freedom to belong to different groups. The Council was a linguistic "event" which gives us a new perception of the function of language while trying also to transmit the depositum fidei. In respect of the examination or redefinition of doctrine we must consider institutional questions while also making a "civic" translation of religious language. It is always essential to preserve the traditional centre of Christian faith.

In a somewhat different theme, *Nostra aetate* which looks at the church's relationship with other religions does not reject Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or Judaism for example. In respect of certain traditions or certain axioms indeed, for example *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, the Bible does not mention the concept. Furthermore, it is essential to compare terms like 'heretic' or "schismatic" with St Augustine's teaching about those who live outside the institution of the Church, while *Nostra aetate* underlines a vision of the unity of the human family.

In looking at certain tendencies in today's diverse and plural Europe, the gathering included a good overview of the problem of conviction (in this case Catholic) and of confessional questions in contemporary Europe – therefore of liberty of conviction, conscience and religion in the context of plurality.

(English mother tongue readers should note that "humanist" does not necessarily carry the implication of being "without religion").

James Barnett

EuFRES: ERENews published

Prof. Flavio Pajer is the editor of European Religious Education-News (EREnews). The aim of this quarterly multilingual electronic newsletter is to inform about facts, events, publications related to religion/s managing in the public educational and academic space in Europe. The current issue of 30 pages can be downloaded at http://www.comenius.de/themen/Evangelische-Bildungsverantwortung-in-Europa/Newsletter_EREnews_2014_2.pdf.

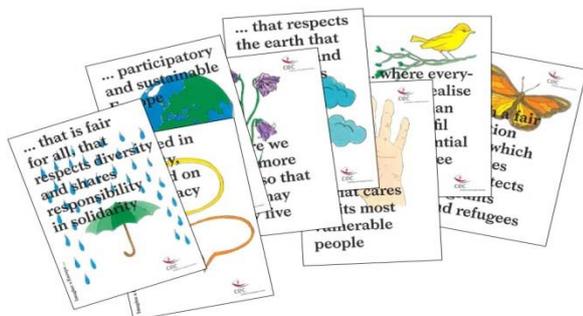
Conference of European Churches (CEC) and Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)



CEC: Report of the 14th General Assembly available now

The report about the 14th General Assembly of CEC, “And now, what are you waiting for? CEC and its Mission in a Changing Europe”, held from 3 to 8 July 2013 in Budapest is now available. It contains the adopted documents as well as reports, presentations and words of greeting. An electronic version of the report is available at: <http://www.ceceurope.org/>. Orders for printed copies can be sent to the CEC offices or with ISBN 978-91-86781-21-7.

CEC: Set of postcards about the future of Europe



The working group “Education” of the Church and Society Commission CSC has published a set of postcards on behalf of CEC with eight visions of the future of Europe. The motto, “Imagine a Europe that...” distributes messages such as, “that is fair to all, respects diversity and shares responsibility” or “in which we all live more simply so that all can simply live“. All visions are accompanied by a related verse from

the Bible. A German version of the set can be ordered at the bookshop of the Comenius-Institute, <http://www.cimuenster.de/bookshop/buecher.php>, more sets by refunding expenses and delivery costs at the office of CSC.

CEC: CSC Plenary in December 2014

A final plenary of the Commission on Church and School is planned for the beginning of December 2014 in Brussels. The aim of this event is to discuss in which new working structure and with which format the issues and challenges will be further tackled that have been a concern of the Commission so far. The mandate of the working group “Education” of CSC will also officially come to an end with this plenary. Dr Peter Schreiner was a member of the working group with a mandate of the Protestant Church in Germany and of ICCS.

GEKE: Invitation to the Forum Education (Bildung)



The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe invites their member churches and collaborative partners to join their Forum Bildung from 27 to 29 October 2014 at the Protestant Academy in Tutzing. The theme is, “It’s about Europe – it’s about education. How Protestant Churches can contribute towards a European Civil Society”. IV and ICCS were involved in the preparation process through Dr Gerhard

Pfeiffer and Dr Peter Schreiner and will also participate in the conference. The programme includes statements from a sociological, theological and educational view as well as reports from regions and churches. The aim and perspective of the conference is to work out possible projects and activities of CPCE in the field of Europe and education.

Council of Europe and European Union



EU: Open Education Europa

The European Commission launched *Open Education Europa* in September 2013 as part of the *Opening up Education* initiative to provide a single gateway to European OER. www.openeducationeuropa.eu

The main goal of the *Open Education Europa* portal is to offer access to all existing *European Open Educational Resources* in different languages in order to be able to present them to *learners, teachers and researchers*.

Open Education Europa is a dynamic platform built with the latest cutting-edge open-source technology, offering tools for communicating, sharing and discussing. The portal is structured in 3 main sections:

- The *FIND* section showcases MOOCs, courses, and Open Educational Resources by leading European institutions. Each institution is also featured in this section alongside the MOOCs, courses, and the Open Educational Resources it provides.
- The *SHARE* section is the space where portal users (scholars, educators, policymakers, students and other stakeholders) come together to *share and discuss solutions* for a diverse range of educational issues by posting blogs, sharing events, and engaging in thematic discussions.
- The *IN-DEPTH* section hosts *eLearning Papers* — the world’s most visited e-journal on *open education and new technologies* — provides an exhaustive list of EU-funded projects, and highlights the latest news about open education as well as the most relevant recently published scholarly articles.

Council of Europe: New director for Democratic Citizenship and Participation

In June 2014 Jean-Christophe Bas became director of the Council of Europe for the directorate on Democratic Citizenship and Participation. He succeeded Olöf Olafsdottier, who retired from service at the Council of Europe at the beginning of this year. Mr Bas served at the United Nations in the secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations and was responsible for Strategic Development and Partnerships <http://cultureswithvivendi.com/en/intercultural-dialogue/jean-christophe-bas/>. Before that he was Development Policy Dialogue Manager at the World Bank.

Colofon

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

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ISSN: 0921-0393

IV & ICCS Newsletter in English, German and French is published electronically on:

<http://www.iccsweb.org> und <http://www.int-v.org>.