Reformation – Education – Transformation
International Twin Consultation Project 2015/2016

Joint Project between Bread for the World, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), Faculdades EST São Leopoldo, Francke Foundations and Halle University in cooperation with national and international ecumenical partners

Background
Churches of the Reformation traditions in Europe and at global level are journeying towards the 500th centenary of the Reformation in 2017. German Protestant churches have planned a journey towards 2017 within the “Reformation Decade” 2007–2017 in which each year has a special theme. For 2016 the theme is “Reformation and the One World”, and preparations are now underway to mark this year involving several national and international actors.

The leadership of Bread for the World (Berlin) and of the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW, Hamburg) have agreed to mark the Reformation Decade and the thematic year “Reformation and One World” with a major international Twin Consultation Project under the title “Reformation, Education, Transformation” reflecting on the contribution of Reformation traditions and theology in several ecumenical contexts towards strengthening civil society and its transformation towards justice, peace, sustainability and human rights – locally and globally. Special emphasis will be placed on the transformative role of education.

Bread for the World and EMW are organizing the Twin Consultation project together with important academic and diaconal institutions which represent the venue and context of the two consultations planned, namely Faculdades EST, São Leopoldo in Brazil (for November 2015) and
Francke Foundations, Halle in cooperation with Martin Luther University Halle–Wittenberg, Faculty of Theology (for May 2016).

Since this initiative has been designed to serve the dialogue process on Reformation, Education, and Transformation in the context of World Christianity, cooperative partners representing worldwide contexts have also joined: WCC, LWF and WCRC as well as Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). They are contributing to the planning of the consultations and will nominate participants representing their constituencies and their engagement in the thematic areas (see below). The EMW is acting here on behalf of its members who partner with this project in various capacities.

The Twin Consultation Project understands itself as a contribution towards

a) highlighting the engagement of all the partners involved in the Twin consultation in the fields of transformative education and participation in civil society as a vital expression of the spirit of the Reformation traditions,

b) deepening international dialogue on the overall theme “Reformation and One World” among EKD members churches and to include insights from contexts beyond Europe;

c) accompanying the WCC program of an international ecumenical “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” and the ongoing work of the Ecumenical Formation Unit in WCC/Bossey following from the Busan Assembly.

d) linking to LWF and WCRC projects of understanding Reformation in global perspectives and to unfold the core relevance of Reformation tradition in ecumenical perspectives;

Ownership and planning process

Both consultations are being planned by an Executive Planning Group (EPG) which is currently composed of representatives of: Bread for the World, the EMW, Faculdades EST, Francke Foundations and Halle University, the EKD, Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) and WCC. This group meets frequently to plan the process, organize the work flow and administer the budget. With them all other cooperative partners form a Refer...
ence Advisory Group (RAG) as a forum to voice their interests and assist in planning, advise the EPG and nominate participants for both consultations. A project coordinator located at the EMW in Hamburg is now providing the administrative and coordinating work; further capacity for organization is foreseen for São Leopoldo and in planning for Halle.

**General goals**

The common goals of the two consultations are,

a) To highlight how churches and faith-based development bodies had an impact in civil societies based on their Reformation heritage – especially through the promotion of education and formation. New trends and challenges for education and for public theology will be highlighted in order to mark education as a key contribution of the Protestant churches towards the transformation of society. *The main point here: Education as a core concern of the Reformation traditions.*

b) To highlight how churches and faith-based development bodies had an impact on their societies with regard to strengthening civil society and their role in development and politics, the responsibility of political power and protection of the common good, based on their Reformation heritage. Although there are significant differences between the various Protestant church traditions, their impact in many cases was significant for the development of the society at large in which they exist. *The main point here: Public Theology as a core concern of the Reformation traditions.*

c) To scrutinize and define the contribution which Protestant church traditions have made in creating an awareness of belonging together in One World, of sharing with other forces in the tasks for new models of sustainable development, just and peaceful societies and towards a just and participatory world society. *The main point here: Justice and reconciliation as a core concern of the Reformation traditions.*

d) To define when churches of the Protestant traditions started to have an impact on the education and formation of leadership in different contexts within the ecumenical missionary movement. *The main point here: Special contextual forms of Reformation traditions within the churches in the Global South.*
e) To study how the churches of the Protestant traditions have reacted and responded to the influences and challenges they have received from other actors in the respective societies, how that has affected their reflection in using and applying the theological instruments of the Reformation traditions and how this could be helpful to cope with the challenges ahead of us in our globalized world. *The main point here: Contemporary needs to consider, to reinterpret and to update the theological essence of Reformation traditions with regard to current challenges.*

**Organisational Frame**

The first consultation will take place from 19 to 23 November 2015 in São Leopoldo/Brazil. The second consultation will take place from 18 to 22 May 2016 in Halle/Germany.

Both consultations will provide opportunity for some 80–100 participants to work together for a period of 3–4 days. Participation in both consultations will vary to a certain extent, but some 50 participants will participate in both so as to provide continuity and to discuss the same thematic track areas in two different contexts.

Participants will come from different countries, different denominations and different professional backgrounds.

**Content of the Twin Consultation**

The consultation title for both the São Leopoldo and Halle event will be

**Reformation – Education – Transformation**

*The Relevance of Reformation traditions to the participation of churches in the public space*

*An international ecumenical dialogue on Christian contributions to education and development*

There will be six thematic tracks organized with thematic panels and working groups in both conferences. These tracks are:
Reformation traditions engaging with key areas of education and societal transformation:

a) Public theology and the churches’ social witness,
b) Political participation and democratization today,
c) Human dignity, integrity of creation and alternative development,
d) Education, liberation and societal transformation,
e) Suffering, solidarity and theology of empowerment,
f) Public witness amidst religious pluralisation and secularisation.

Participants will be invited to work in two of these thematic tracks (each with contextualized input in both conferences).

**Building blocks for both consultations**

The building blocks will be

a) An ecumenical exposure program in the local Brazilian and German contexts meant to provide insight and interaction with relevant social witness projects of Christian churches in Brazil/Germany pertaining to the overall theme of the consultation;
b) Two key-note lectures (both in a “twin setting”, i.e. with two speakers from different contexts) providing a general introduction and setting the theological agenda for the conference topic;
c) Six thematic tracks, each starting with a thematic panel and shorter inputs from two different contexts (also based on a “twin” approach). Each participant will be assigned to two of these tracks, which will continue also (for a major group of the participants) in the second part of the Twin Consultation in Halle;
d) Two or three open “Paper-Sharing Sessions” to provide a platform for young scholars and students to share and introduce research papers with a relevance to the conference topic (“open fringe of the conference”)
e) Encounter with projects and church initiatives in the local context during the conference (a kind of market of local initiatives/Markt der Möglichkeiten)
f) An official opening and/or reception evening with the hosting churches.
Expected outcomes

In terms of results the following are intended for both conferences:

- The consultations will provide a forum for listening and a dialogue process between Bread for the World, the EMW and their ecumenical partners on current trends, processes and needs regarding the public role of churches in the area of education, transformation and development;
- The participants will identify new challenges in the changing contexts within the landscapes of World Christianity and reflect in the light of these on the common agendas of those participating;
- The consultation bodies will take stock of existing research and encourage further transcontextual studies in the thematic areas;
- They will assist theological institutions, churches and organizations in identifying areas for further reflection;
- The consultations will help to strengthen dialogue and networking between churches in the global North, South and East with regard to important movements and projects in the area of education, formation, and transformation with special reference to the Reformation heritages;
- Christian leaders and especially young theologians will be encouraged to develop a fresh understanding of what Reformation traditions and their implications for education and transformation mean for them in their contemporary contexts.

Both consultations will produce a statement, including common convictions, key learnings and questions raised with regard to the interaction between Reformation traditions, education and social transformation. Suggestions and recommendations for future priorities and concerns for follow-up will enrich the future ecumenical working profile and agenda of both the organizers and their partners involved. Within Germany the results will be channeled into the preparatory process towards the Reformation Jubilee in 2017.

A documentation of key contributions is planned, primarily as a web-resource on the projected website. The cooperating partners will decide...
whether and in what format the documentation will be made available as a printed resource at a later stage.

Contact

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