

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 and 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 jointly 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. A special focus will be laid on the transformative role of education.

Bread for the World and EMW are organizing the Twin Consultation project together with important academic and diaconical 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 joined. They are contributing to the planning of the consultations and will nominate participants representing their constituencies and their engagement in the respective thematic areas (s. below), namely WCC, LWF and WCRC as well as Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). EMW is acting here on behalf of its members who partner with this project in various capacities.

Organizer

- Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW)
- Bread for the World
- Faculdades EST São Leopoldo
- Francke Foundations and Halle University

Cooperation Partner

- Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- World Council of Churches (WCC)
- World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)
- Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

The Twin Consultation Project understands itself so far as a contribution

- a) To highlight 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) To deepen international dialogue on the umbrella theme “Reformation and One World” among EKD members churches and to include insights from contexts beyond Europe;
- c) To accompany the WCC program of an international ecumenical “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” and the ongoing work of the Ecumenical Formation Unit in WCC/Bossey in carrying out impulses from Busan assembly.
- d) To link 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 planned by an Executive Planning Group (EPG) which is currently composed of representatives of: Bread for the World, EMW, Faculdades EST, and Francke Foundations and Halle University, EKD, Evangelische Mission in Solidarity (EMS) and WCC. This group meets frequently to plan the process and to organize the work flow and administer the budget. With them all other cooperative partners form a Reference Advisory Group (RAG) as a forum to voice their interests and to assist in planning, to advice the EPG and to nominate participants for both consultations. A project coordinator has started to provide the administrative and coordinating work located in EMW Hamburg; further capacity for organization is foreseen for São Leopoldo and in planning for Halle.

General goals

The common goals of the two consultations will comprise,

- a) To highlight how churches and faith based development bodies by tying in with the tradition of the Reformation heritage took and take effect in civil societies – 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 core concern of the Reformation traditions*
- b) To highlight how churches and faith based development bodies by tying in with the traditions of the Reformation heritage made an impact in their societies with regard to strengthening the civil society and their role in development and politics, the responsibility of political power and the protection of the common good. 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 core concern of the Reformation traditions.*

- c) To scrutinize and define the contribution which Protestant church traditions have made in terms of the creation of 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 the moments since when churches of the Protestant traditions began to make impact on the education and formation of leadership in different contexts within the ecumenical missionary movement. *The main point here: Special contextual shapes of Reformation traditions within the churches in the Global South.*
- e) To study how the churches of the Protestant traditions reacted and responded to the influences and challenges they received from other actors in the respective societies, how that 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 carry forward, 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 19-23 November 2015 in São Leopoldo/Brazil. The second consultation will take place from 18-22 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. It is intended that the participation in both consultations varies to a certain extent but that 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 for 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 following working groups in both conferences. These tracks are:

Reformation traditions engaging with key areas of education and societal transformation:

- a) Public theology and churches' social witness,
- b) Political participation and democratisation 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 then with contextualized input in both conferences).

Building blocks for both consultations

The agreed different building blocks will be

- a) An ecumenical exposure program in local Brazilian and German context which is 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 (perhaps 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 would be assigned to two of these tracks, which would continue also (for a major group of the participants) in the second part of the Twin Consultation in Halle;
- d) Two or three open "Sharing Papers Sessions" which provide a platform for younger 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 from 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 both conferences are intended

- The consultations offer a forum for listening and a dialogue process between Bread for the World, 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 identify new challenges of 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 take stock of existing research and encourage further transcontextual studies in the thematic areas;
- They assist theological institutions, churches and organizations in identifying areas for further reflection;
- The consultations 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 younger theologians will be encouraged to develop a fresh understanding on 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 EMW and Bread for the World and their partners involved. Within Germany the results will be channeled into the preparatory process towards Reformation Jubilee 2017.

A documentation of key contributions is planned, primarily as a web-resource at the projected website. Whether and in which format the documentation will be made available as a printed resource will be decided by the cooperative partners at a later stage.

Contact

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