



befreit verbunden engagiert
liberated connected committed
libérés liés engagés

8. Vollversammlung der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa
Basel, 13.–18. September 2018



Continuing education for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

Final Version 2018

Approved by the 8th General Assembly

Original Version: German



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communión d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

Content

Introduction	1
1 The status quo	2
2 Basic principles	4
2.1 Continuing education as a process that accompanies and sustains a profession	4
2.2 Continuing education compared with training	5
2.3 Pastors' identity and dimensions of pastors' continuing education	6
2.4 Aims	7
2.4.1 Developing strengths and intensifying reflection upon practice	7
2.4.2 Reflection and reassurance	8
2.4.3 Development of specialisations	8
2.5 Encouraging a thirst for learning	9
3 Guidelines for continuing education	9
3.1 The basic understanding of education	9
3.2 Aims of continuing education	10
3.3 Criteria for good practice in continuing education	11
3.4 Organisational structure	12
3.5 Education process	12
3.6 Results	13
3.7 Forms of continuing education for ordained ministers	14
3.8 The importance of academic theology for continuing education	15
3.9 Didactics and methods	16
3.10 Digitisation and e-learning in continuing education	17
4 Recommendations for theological continuing education in the CPCE	18
4.1 Expanding theological expertise and developing professional strengths	18
4.2 Framework for theological continuing education	18
4.3 The value of informal spheres of learning and encounters	18

4.4	Principle of solidarity and sponsorship	18
4.5	Collaboration and networking amongst pastors	19
4.6	Parallel academic research	19
4.7	Concrete measures	19
Appendix: Contributors to this study process.....		23

1 Introduction

2 The history of this document dates back to the 6th General Assembly of the CPCE in Budapest
3 in 2006. The General Assembly instructed the Council of the CPCE to convene a project group
4 on the subject of “Training for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Eu-
5 rope”, which would be responsible for compiling a corresponding report. This instruction was
6 based on the conclusion that the mutual recognition of ordination between those churches party
7 to the Leuenberg Agreement warrants an understanding of one other’s pastoral training.

8 The document¹ that emerged from a multi-stage process involving the member churches was
9 presented to the 7th General Assembly of the CPCE for resolution in Florence in 2012. It was
10 very well received there. The General Assembly deemed the document a directional contribution
11 “to mutual agreement on good practice in respect of theological training” and recommended that
12 the member churches use it as a reference for training reform.²

13 Furthermore, the 7th General Assembly was in favour of implementing the recommendations
14 outlined in the conclusion.³ These addressed the continuing education of pastors in particular. In
15 light of current challenges, this area was identified as needing “a didactic concept and clear in-
16 tensification”.⁴ The report stated that in the realm of the CPCE there are good opportunities for
17 developing international exchange programmes for continuing education and for setting up in-
18 ternational pastoral colleges and multilateral continuing education partnerships.⁵ Furthermore,
19 “Suitable instruments for coordination and agreement should be created. With regard to the
20 need for specialised further education – e.g. for managers in the church and welfare – forms of
21 provision need developing that multiple churches in a given region can participate in.”⁶

22 Accordingly, ongoing work has focused in recent years on continuing education for pastors. The
23 Council of the CPCE instigated another project group on the subject. This group started off by
24 preparing and holding a consultation in Strasbourg that was attended by 42 representatives of
25 Protestant churches from thirteen European countries in November 2015 to discuss challenges,
26 organisational forms, programmes and major issues in continuing education for pastors, to
27 share experiences and to develop key aspects for continuing education. The results and conclu-

1 ‘Training for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe’, in: Michael Bünker, Martin Friedrich (Eds.): “Amt, Ordination, Episkopé und theologische Ausbildung / Ministry, ordination, episkopé and theological education”, Leipzig 2013 (= Leuenberg Texts 13), pp.185-256.

2 Ibid. p.185.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. p.219f.

5 Ibid. p.220.

6 Ibid.

1 sions from the Strasbourg consultation have been incorporated into this report. Apart from this,
2 the project group was able to refer to the statements contained in the document passed in Flor-
3 ence in 2012, which addressed continuing education for pastors within the overall context of
4 theological training.⁷ In this respect, part 2 must be considered as adopting and building upon
5 the fundamental statements contained in the 2012 document accepted by the General Assem-
6 bly.

7 A preliminary version of the document was sent to the member churches of the CPCE in sum-
8 mer 2016, allowing them a good year to formulate their responses. Ten responses were re-
9 ceived. Besides individual churches, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) together with
10 the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany, the Union of Evangelical Churches and
11 the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches also submitted a verdict. The text was revised in
12 autumn 2017 to reflect their suggestions and remarks for presentation to the 8th General As-
13 sembly of the CPCE in 2018.

14 [...] The structure and elements of this work also reflect the 2012 document. After a description
15 of the status quo, the basic principles of continuing education are laid down. In turn, the guide-
16 *lines* are intended outline elements of a common understanding of what constitutes good con-
17 tinuing education. The *recommendations* contain suggestions and emphasise the opportunities
18 for collaboration between the CPCE's member churches when it comes to continuing education
19 for pastors these days in Europe.

20 Considering the complex challenges and processes of change faced by Christians in European
21 churches and societies, this document aims to achieve an understanding of the basic principles
22 that have proven themselves in practice and outline forthcoming investigations in the field of
23 continuing education in the churches.

24 **1 The status quo**

25 Practising a career competently requires continuing education – without continuing education it
26 is impossible to do so. This principle applies to every profession in society nowadays. Pastors
27 are no exception. On the contrary; they face demands that were unknown to earlier generations.
28 Many do not understand the traditions of Christian faith. Pastors must be capable of speaking
29 and imparting information in a secular environment and be able to translate the Gospel into the
30 living environments of strangers to the Church. They need to make their community work inviting
31 and attractive. Demands are placed on their personal credibility, and at the same time they have

⁷ Ibid. pp.209-213.

1 to demonstrate style and professionalism in the mainly media-driven public arena. Successfully
2 proving the knowledge, insights and abilities they acquired during their academic and church
3 training bears a direct relation on the way they develop their professional skills.

4 The continuing education landscape in the member churches of the CPCE is extremely diverse.
5 The challenges faced by the churches, and thus also in continuing education, are certainly simi-
6 lar. Demographic trends are resulting in dwindling financial and human resources. The process-
7 es of social change are linked with contradictory expectations from pastors. Further challenges
8 arise from the increasing pluralisation of the environment, changing religious and ideological
9 contexts and the associated polarisations. In addition, the dissipation of both ties to the church
10 and the formative power of Christian traditions and the different pace of processes of social
11 change are plainly evident. [...] In the countries that formed part of the Communist bloc until
12 1989, [...] pastors have faced a growing volume of duties in recent years that they were formerly
13 unaccustomed to, e.g. the scope for working in public education, the media or welfare.

14 These factors all lead to increased and more diverse requirements in terms of training and con-
15 tinuing education. In the Protestant Churches of Europe, training and continuing education are
16 increasingly viewed as interrelated in function, the basic tenets of which will be elaborated here.

17 Continuing education for ordained ministers has played a major role in the Protestant Churches
18 ever since the Reformation. Besides the private study that was expected from all pastors, formal
19 institutes of continuing education soon developed in the form of ministers' conferences and as-
20 sociations. Theological faculties, and later newly created preachers' seminaries, also assumed
21 roles in continuing education. As part of the general process of professionalisation and differen-
22 tiation, many churches established special facilities for continuing education during the 20th cen-
23 tury – some independent, others linked to institutes for theological training.

24 Nowadays, continuing education in the Protestant Churches of Europe is structured in different
25 ways. In most churches, continuing education for pastors is governed by regulations. In some
26 churches, regular participation in continuing education measures is compulsory, particularly dur-
27 ing the initial years in office. A number of churches have introduced a points system for such
28 courses. This means that in some churches pastors are required to complete certain specific
29 courses during their early years in office along with a “pastors' exam” to acquire a permanent
30 position.

31 In the larger churches, dedicated institutes or officers are responsible for further vocational train-
32 ing and continuing education, offering a wide range of courses and one-off events. Some
33 churches run this kind of facility jointly (e.g. in France and Switzerland), and in other countries
34 (e.g. the Netherlands and Norway) the theological faculties are also involved in continuing edu-

1 cation. Although the smaller churches have less resources at their disposal for continuing edu-
2 cation, they are also able to develop a diverse programme by means of regional and interna-
3 tional collaboration. Besides this, pastors are given time off duty and are funded to attend con-
4 tinuing education courses run by providers other than the Church.

5 The CPCE member churches' strategies for pastors' continuing education are very varied. This
6 reflects the churches' theological foundations and their different ecclesiological perspectives –
7 such as the where the perception of the Church lies between institution and organisation, or its
8 approach to challenges within the church and society. All the same, there is basic consensus as
9 to what constitutes good practice in pastors' continuing education.

10 **2 Basic principles**

11 **2.1 Continuing education as a process that accompanies and sustains a** 12 **profession**

13 The member churches of the CPCE have faith in their ordained ministers to proclaim the Gospel
14 of Jesus Christ in word and deed, in public and imbued with their own personal talents, on be-
15 half of and according to the mission of the Church. At the same time, they expect ordained min-
16 isters to carry on deepening the theological expertise⁸ they acquired during their training and
17 their personal attributes in the light of the practical professional experience they gain and to in-
18 dependently carry the responsibility associated with the ministry. This includes the willingness
19 and ability to process their experiences in a self-critical manner, to recognise their own strengths
20 and talents, but also to perceive and work on their weaknesses and potential risk factors. Or-
21 dained ministers are supposed to maintain, deepen and expand their theological expertise by
22 means of independent study, combined with colleagues' and perhaps professional advice, and
23 by making use of the special continuing education programme offered by the churches.

24 In turn, the Churches are obliged to provide appropriate advice and continuing education for
25 ordained ministers in order to help them to refresh and build upon their theological expertise and
26 personal attributes, to reflect upon social transformation processes from a theological perspec-
27 tive and to adopt new courses of action for themselves and the parishes and integrate these into
28 the Church as a whole and their activities. Just as a willingness to participate in continuing edu-

⁸ Cf. *Training for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe* (see footnote 1):
Theological expertise “consists of the ability to intertwine theological knowledge, a scientifically based
power of judgement, personal insights gained into the truth of the Gospel, and the requisite practical
skills.” *N.B. approximate wording* (p. 193; cf. *Ibid.* 198f, 206 and 210).

1 cation forms an integral part of ordained ministers' professional lives and their duties of service,
2 it is equally an integral part of the Church's mission to facilitate this and provide good opportuni-
3 ties for continuing education.

4 **2.2 Continuing education compared with training**

5 In order to participate in continuing education in the member churches of the CPCE, pastors
6 must have completed theological training, in which they accrued the knowledge, insights and
7 skills that make up the theological expertise required for the ministry. This training forms part of
8 a person's overall educational journey in theological expertise and forms an internal unit, an
9 ambitious process of personal growth and increasing maturity, which can also include crises and
10 disruptions. The overall context of these personal educational journeys also determines their
11 continuing education.

12 The special feature of *theological training* is its aim to lay the foundation for the *elementary form*
13 of theological expertise, which lies in the acquisition of its key knowledge, insights and skills. It
14 seeks to provide the pastors in training with a basis from which they can devise their profession-
15 al activities, reflect upon them, evaluate them, amend them and repeatedly tangibly contextual-
16 ise them according to the Gospel. Theological expertise should be perceived as the solid foun-
17 dation for the various facets of pastoral duties (particularly worship, education, pastoral care,
18 developing and leading a congregation, as well as welfare, missionary and ecumenical aspects)
19 and as the core prerequisite for forming pastoral identity.

20 *Pastors' continuing education* assumes this teaching and accumulation process has already
21 occurred and can therefore not simply be viewed as a continuation and update of their training.
22 Rather, it is intended to deepen the previously acquired theological expertise based on the ex-
23 perience they have gathered under real church conditions. Pastors learn to perceive the abilities
24 and skills they have already acquired as the fundamental basis for properly appreciating the
25 responsibility they have been awarded in the constantly changing and diverging situations in
26 European societies. The continuing education measures offered to pastors should encourage
27 them to happily embrace the service they have assumed in relation to the core components of
28 theological expertise – theological knowledge, personally acquired insight into the truth of the
29 Gospel, and acquired methodological skills. They should learn how to combine professional
30 prowess with alert contemporaneity and ecumenical open-mindedness and to understand the
31 many different and changing circumstances in which they meet people as chances to communi-
32 cate the Gospel. Continuing education helps ordained ministers to identify and use the power
33 inherent in theological expertise to succeed in passing on the Gospel in vague, confusing and

1 changing practical situations. At the same time, it should enhance the ordained ministers' ability
2 to motivate congregation members to share testimony of their faith.

3 **2.3 Pastors' identity and dimensions of pastors' continuing education**

4 Pastors' continuing education helps them to understand and further develop their own identity.
5 This is the only way the ministry can be performed and that ministers can cement their own *pas-*
6 *toral identity*.

7 Pastoral identity is forged in an ongoing process. It is not a finite process and takes the form of
8 personal development oriented around the minister's ecclesiastic mission in intellectual, faith-
9 related, communicative and practical life terms. Pastoral identity is the key condition for perform-
10 ing service in the ministry with regard to the mission of the Christian congregation, someone's
11 own faith and their life experience in a way that makes the relationship with the Gospel apparent
12 and tangible to other people. It is the task of pastors' continuing education to support and facili-
13 tate this process.

14 Four dimensions of pastors' continuing education⁹ can be distinguished:

15 [1.] *Personal dimension*: In order to enable pastors to communicate the Gospel in a way that is
16 personally authentic and inspires confidence under circumstances presenting diverse, confusing
17 personal and social communication, pastors' continuing education should help develop their
18 personal development. It opens up possibilities and space for recognising their own strengths
19 and weaknesses and for reflecting upon, examining and working on their own lifestyles and
20 practices (health, time management, balance between work and private life, career and family,
21 etc.).

22 [2.] *Theological dimension*: In order for pastors to be able handle the extremely diverse, plural
23 and complex relationships that exist in the church and society and the confusing, disparate per-
24 sonal and social life circumstances that abound, pastors' continuing education seeks to help
25 deepen their theological expertise in relation to their experiences and to facilitate their further
26 development. Working on Biblical topics and texts and on key issues of faith and its ethos illus-
27 trates the liberating potential of theological understanding, strengthens hermeneutic sensitivity,

⁹ The following points are attributable to Detlef Dieckmann in: "Vertiefung und Diversität, Überlegungen zu einem didaktischen Konzept pastoraler Fortbildung unter Berücksichtigung ihrer internationalen Reichweite" ("Deepening and diversity - thoughts on a didactic concept of pastors' continuing education considering its international scope", manuscript, Strasbourg, 19 Nov. 2015).

1 counters a lack of words and ideas and thus makes pastors aware of the strong orientation sup-
2 plied by theological expertise.

3 [3.] *Spiritual dimension*: Pastors have made preaching the Gospel their life profession. They
4 promote the liberating, consoling, assurance-giving power of the Gospel in the various fields of
5 their service. They can only be capable of this if they allow themselves to be liberated, consoled
6 and reassured by the Gospel. In this sense, they are always the first addressees of the message
7 they deliver. Continuing education should provide the space for this experience – space for
8 prayer, space for listening, space for meditation, space for Bible study, space for praising God
9 and for praying for the Holy Spirit.

10 [4.] *Functional dimension*: In order for pastors to be able to perform the Church's mission appro-
11 priately to each situation, they require reliable skills in various fields, such as pedagogy, congrega-
12 tion development and leadership, management, promoting voluntary activities, and [...] inter-
13 religious and intercultural dialogue. All this calls for an appropriate continuing education pro-
14 gramme.

15 The four dimensions of pastoral continuing education must always be viewed in close correla-
16 tion. The order in which they come is fluid – different emphases can be set, and the individual
17 dimensions can be given a different weighting in the design of continuing education pro-
18 grammes. However, no continuing education programme can omit any one of these dimensions.

19 **2.4 Aims**

20 Three complementary objectives apply to the thematic and curricular design of continuing edu-
21 cation: 1. Developing strengths and intensifying reflection upon practice; 2. Revisiting the rela-
22 tion between theological expertise, spiritual life and personal identity and gaining reassurance
23 therein; 3. Developing specialisations.

24 The dimensions of pastors' continuing education run perpendicular to and right through these
25 objectives and are linked with them to differing degrees of intensity. The dimensions that domi-
26 nate are personal and theological in number 1, theological and spiritual in number 2 and func-
27 tional in number 3.

28 **2.4.1 Developing strengths and intensifying reflection upon practice**

29 Pastors are being particularly challenged by current processes of change. New missionary
30 tasks, the need to align church work to suit local circumstances, and considerably increased
31 qualitative expectations from pastoral work call for new plans of action and working methods
32 and new ways of organising church work and enabling members of the congregation to show

1 voluntary commitment in the direction of the priesthood of all believers. Continuing education
2 helps pastors to identify their own strengths that correspond with the task in hand and to devel-
3 op these and incorporate them into the work for which they are jointly responsible.

4 Tried-and-tested and contemporary methods for specifically developing strengths, intensifying
5 reflection upon practice and extending collaboration include: peer reinforcement and advice,
6 visitations, and contemporary forms of personal development and professional advice.

7 **2.4.2 Reflection and reassurance**

8 Besides developing their own strengths and acquiring specialist knowledge and skills, reflection
9 and reassurance of the relation between theological expertise and personal piety remain a defin-
10 ing element of their identity, both individually and for the community of ordained ministers. A
11 sum of individual elements of expertise alone does not make ordained ministers capable of per-
12 forming the Church's mission under the current circumstances. As vital as the development of
13 individual abilities is, they can only unfold in ordained ministry if they are imparted together with
14 a quality of life that manages to link theological expertise with a way of conducting life that pro-
15 duces a specific form of identity.

16 In this context, continuing education programmes serve the acquisition of new skills and the
17 deepening of existing ones and the examination, further development and cementing of funda-
18 mental insights into the truth of the Gospel faced with scientific developments, changes and con-
19 flicts in European societies and developments relating to religions and ideologies in Europe.

20 Furthermore, by providing times of quiet, contemplation and spiritual exercises and colleges for
21 personal consideration of lives led, they help clarify pastors' current professional and personal
22 situation and provide reassurance of their mission.

23 **2.4.3 Development of specialisations**

24 In order to take on new challenges and perform the relevant tasks, it is also the purpose of con-
25 tinuing education to develop programmes for acquiring the knowledge and skills required for
26 special activities. These include:

27 The continuing education required for offering special services (e.g. hospital chaplaincy, prison
28 chaplaincy, military chaplaincy, school service, welfare work);

29 Preparation for community work that presents special challenges (e.g. youth churches, inner-city
30 churches, "culture churches", work with migrants, fundraising);

31 Training to raise awareness of community-mindedness;

1 Preparation for particular leadership duties and continuing education for managers.

2 **2.5 Encouraging a thirst for learning**

3 Good continuing education starts with pleasure in one's own vocation and ordination. It encour-
4 ages and inspires, opens up and leads people along a path away from rigid procedural actions,
5 offers new ideas, unleashes new creativity and strengthens the conviction of one's vocational
6 calling to serve in the Church and the community. An essential element lies in revisiting Biblical
7 sources, communal worship of God in life, and the discussion of spiritual issues in the company
8 of other ordained ministers. Continuing education can promote and expand personal resources
9 and resilience in the face of increasing professional strains. There is something liberating about
10 discussing productive experiences, on the one hand, and tribulations, on the other. It can be
11 helpful to involve participants in planning and conducting continuing education. There should be
12 sufficient time and space during the continuing education events themselves for spontaneous
13 discussion.

14 Continuing education is not restricted to dedicated events for this purpose. It creates a thirst for
15 gaining new insights. It provides motivation for continuing individual work – for further reading
16 and trying out new ideas. It inspires independent learning and autonomous intellectual explora-
17 tion of important questions and subjects.

18 **3 Guidelines for continuing education**

19 **3.1 The basic understanding of education¹⁰**

20 By supporting universal educational processes at all levels for and with all professional and vol-
21 untary members of staff, the member churches of the CPCE make it clear that they permanently
22 measure the form of their organisation and their ordinances against the Gospel and remain open
23 to change. They trust in the fact that precisely the diversity within the CPCE enables every
24 church to bring its own interpretations and conceptions into contact with those of the others in
25 order to work constructively on both elements that confirm as well as those that cause friction in
26 the Community. The CPCE's understanding of church fellowship encompasses teaching and
27 learning. In this respect, it is also an educational fellowship.

¹⁰ The German term "Bildung" is not directly translatable into many other languages. The word "formation" in English and French has a different meaning.

1 Educational processes depend not only on designing and attending educational events, but also
2 occur beyond all methodical and organisational pragmatic parameters in many ways – in inter-
3 personal contact, in encountering regional traditions, in exchanging key experiences, in spiritual
4 life, in independent learning, in music, in aesthetics and many other ways that expand people’s
5 horizons. Thus educational processes in the Church Community not only occur in addition to
6 church practice but also form an integral part of church life.

7 From a Protestant perspective, at least five dimensions need bearing in mind:

8 1. *Education is both a gain and an event.* People accept education as a means of deepening
9 their knowledge and broadening their courses of action. One might also say that no person is
10 fixed in just one “image” or “form” but that people can always become free of their limitations
11 and predefinitions. Education is also a means of communicating the Gospel.

12 2. *Education is a subjective process of accumulation and change.* Self-education forms a major
13 part of a person’s education. Education involves both educating oneself and being educated. It
14 is not the sum of objectively learnable expertise or skills, but rather affects people’s inner atti-
15 tude, personal conduct in life and their identity in special ways.

16 3. *Education is a socially imparted process.* People gain education in social contexts; they learn
17 with or from others, for or about others, about the living and the dead, from the experiences of
18 others, their cultures and insights, in family contact, in a certain environment or precisely from
19 those who are alien to them. Educational processes thrive on a willingness to change perspec-
20 tive and be objective, and to learn, experience and share new things.

21 4. *Education encompasses more than knowledge and skills.* Education is an infinite process that
22 encompasses far more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. It requires a willingness to
23 be astonished. Education expands people’s personal horizons – the quest for the meaning of life
24 goes beyond the quest for the meaning of one’s own life.

25 5. *Education involves hermeneutic processes.* It means participating in tradition and history
26 while juxtaposing distance and contemporisation.

27 **3.2 Aims of continuing education**

28 The consideration of education as a subjective process of accumulation and change gives rise
29 to further specific aims (see above: 3.2.4.). When the member churches of the CPCE plan, con-
30 duct and evaluate continuing education measures, they do this so that:

31 In connection with intensive reflection upon practice, pastors can develop their strengths and
32 identify and work on their weaknesses and risk factors;

- 1 Their theological expertise is deepened and further developed;
- 2 Their pastoral identity is strengthened and they experience reassurance;
- 3 Pastors can train in the specialisations required to complete their tasks;
- 4 The ongoing dialectics of knowledge and ability are fostered.

5 These aims of continuing education should not be reserved exclusively for pastors. In fact, the
6 aims designated by the terms “strengths”, “reassurance”, “specialisation” and “dialectics of
7 knowledge and ability” apply to everyone who works professionally or voluntarily for the Church.
8 In particular, voluntary workers should be assisted in the fields in which they assume responsi-
9 bility, e.g. in leading the congregation, in ministry, in children and young people, in welfare ef-
10 forts or in pastoral care. Doing something for and with others in the Church and experiencing
11 this as a personal gain has positive effects on the motivation and ability to self-assuredly deter-
12 mine one’s own life and professional circumstances. A key pastoral task lies in getting people to
13 work for the Church and congregation and supporting them in this role. Pastors are expected to
14 competently perform this demanding leadership role and should be given the necessary support
15 for the tasks this involves in the form of continuing education. It is important for the future of
16 church work to also strengthen collaboration between the different agents involved by means of
17 joint continuing education.

18 **3.3 Criteria for good practice in continuing education**

19 As education is not simply the sum or product of learnable individual components, the quality of
20 continuing education can neither be predefined nor measured as the result of multiple individual
21 qualities. From the point of view of participants in continuing education events, the quality is de-
22 termined by the degree to which their expectations correspond with the benefit they gain. It is a
23 matter of communication between those who arrange, provide and design the continuing educa-
24 tion formats and those who make use of these continuing education measures or associate cer-
25 tain aims with them.

26 In addition, theological education lies within a multifaceted internal and external frame of refer-
27 ence. The internal framework of reference for example includes the different theological disci-
28 plines, methods and hermeneutics. The external framework of reference concerns the under-
29 standing of theology as teaching and science, its relationship to the Church and religion and its
30 function in communicating faith. The Church’s educational organisation therefore has to be
31 viewed from a holistic perspective, which primarily encompasses three levels: a) the organisa-
32 tional structure, b) the education process, and c) the results.

1 **3.4 Organisational structure**

2 The structures and material and human resources with which continuing education is organised
3 in the member churches of the CPCE are regulated in different ways, as are the aims they pur-
4 sue therewith. High-quality resources, the size of organisation or degree of institutional differen-
5 tiation do not automatically guarantee high quality per se. What counts is how the educational
6 facilities position themselves in their environment so that they can tailor their educational mis-
7 sion to suit the needs of the workers in the church.

8 Open communications at organisational level have an extremely profound effect on the quality.
9 The more clearly aware church education providers are of their organisational possibilities, the
10 better they know their church and social frameworks, the more closely they focus on the continu-
11 ing education requirements of their target group, and the better they will manage to cultivate a
12 good educational culture with the means at their disposal.

13 A process of dialogue addressing this subject within the CPCE could focus on the following key
14 questions for the individual church education facilities:

15 What concrete tasks does church educational work pursue, and how are these communicated
16 (church ordinances, role models, concepts)?

17 What material and human resources are available for conducting continuing education (staff,
18 facilities, collaboration, funding)? How are the staff involved in continuing education trained for
19 their roles?

20 How are the programmes and offers for the respective target groups compiled, carried out and
21 evaluated? How is the target group involved in this?

22 What continuing education opportunities can be developed in collaboration with ecumenical
23 partners?

24 When considering these questions, the member churches of the CPCE should pay particular
25 attention to the value of their collaborative efforts in continuing education, how these are incor-
26 porated within the organisation, and what initiatives are developed to implement them.

27 **3.5 Education process**

28 The education process lies at the heart of the churches' continuing education work. It is the task
29 of the educational organisation to support and enable this and the task of the students them-
30 selves to form the process. For this reason, standardised procedures or instruments for monitor-
31 ing education only make sense if the educational institutions' targets can be clearly defined and

1 linked to parameters that render these processes examinable and controllable. But even then it
2 remains true that applying what has been learned to church practice can hardly be controlled, as
3 those who initiate the education processes remain separate from the students. However, in or-
4 der to provide constructive support for education processes, it is possible and important to exert
5 influence on the following factors:

6 The subject matter of a continuing education measure is presented in a professional, methodical
7 and didactically competent manner and is coherent with the participants' respective continuing
8 education requirements.

9 The churches' continuing education programmes also provide a spiritual form of realising church
10 fellowship for a given period of time. It has proved to be the case that these experiences are
11 made all the more intensive and conducive by the diversity of the people gathered in the group.
12 The process should not only be supported by the continuing education programme in the realm
13 of the CPCE but also by providing adequate space for contemplation and prayer during this kind
14 of event.

15 The way a continuing education measure is run and presented is shaped by respect for and
16 consideration of participants' needs.

17 Other, external factors that support the education process include a good venue, adequate
18 technical facilities, media and materials, administrative and planning support, and information for
19 the target group concerning the elements of the programme.

20 Further education promotes a change of perspectives. Taking a step back from everyday life
21 can foster physical and psychological recuperation.

22 Trust is a vital factor at all levels of education. Opting to take part in an education process re-
23 quires an element of trust in advance of the event with regard to the people, the facilities and the
24 settings from and in which people want to learn something.

25 **3.6 Results**

26 With regard to the immediately preceding point, sometimes the results of an education process
27 differ greatly from what was expected and planned. In any case, there is the benefit of liberation
28 from former limitations, a departure from accustomed familiarities and the experience that get-
29 ting educated stems only partially from what one can achieve oneself.

30 In a broader sense, this also applies to the continuing education institution as a "learning organi-
31 sation". In order to be strategically well-equipped, it is important to determine the relationship
32 between the invested resources (*input*) and the result (*output/outcome*). Even if the question of

1 learning outcomes ultimately cannot be answered objectively, but only subjectively by the stu-
 2 dents, the perceptions of the participants, managers and the teachers, where appropriate, can
 3 be set against one another in a way that allows quality criteria to be developed for planning con-
 4 tinuing education and for sharing experiences between different facilities, for example. In order
 5 to ascertain relevant evaluation criteria for recording results, the aims must be stated (“What is
 6 meant to be achieved?”). Only then are the results (“What has been achieved?”) really mean-
 7 ingful. It should be asked what effects the continuing education has within and across congrega-
 8 tions. Conversely, it should also be asked how the changes instigated by the continuing educa-
 9 tion then affect the continuing education institution and its programme.

10 Many procedures exist for evaluating results. Regular, ongoing, qualitative procedures (i.e. ways
 11 of enabling participants to give personal feedback) during a continuing education course help
 12 provide orientation for managers and the presenters. Qualitative and/or quantitative procedures
 13 (e.g. questionnaires) are important at the end of a measure.

14 **3.7 Forms of continuing education for ordained ministers**

15 The following legend is offered to facilitate comparison between the different formats, terminolo-
 16 gy and reference systems pertaining to continuing education in Europe.

17 *A. Compulsory courses*

18 Compulsory events for formal vocational training

19 *B. Continuing education events*

20 Medium or short-term measures (including academic) leading to a certified qualification

21 *C. Continuing education events and pastoral colleges*

22 Short or medium-term education formats without a certified qualification aimed at maintaining
 23 and expanding professional skills or further developing pastoral identity

24 *D. Pastoral conventions*

25 Regular discussions, exchange and advice amongst/between ordained ministers with the aim of
 26 common theological continuing education, spiritual support and identifying relevant subject mat-
 27 ter or projects for continuing education for pastoral practice

28 *E. Coaching / mentoring / supervision*

29 A range of formally recognised forms and methods of professional mentoring aimed at promot-
 30 ing personal, task-oriented and demand-focused reflection

1 *F. Sabbaticals / study periods / contact studies*

2 Extended (paid) leave from regular duties in one of the above forms for the purpose of (academ-
3 ic) (independent) study, salutogenesis, recuperation, prophylaxis

4 In part, these variations are differently combinable, interchangeable, are limited to specific cate-
5 gories of profession, or are organised in the educational culture of the different countries in mod-
6 ified forms or in collaboration with other education providers (universities or academies).

7 **3.8 The importance of academic theology for continuing education**

8 Academic theology – above all, when it assumes an interdisciplinary orientation – creates a help-
9 ful and critical distances to one’s own immediate mindset and circumstances. It considers all
10 levels of pastoral practice in a methodical, scientific manner and from this critical self-
11 examination can open up access to new courses of action.

12 Within continuing education, academic theology cannot be ascribed the limited function of simp-
13 ly ensuring its academic credentials, but has its own interest in dialogue with those actively in
14 the service of proclamation as a means of subjecting its own theory to practical interrogation.
15 Conversely, pastors have the chance to not only participate in theological debates but also influ-
16 ence them. A sabbatical at a theological faculty provides a good opportunity for this.

17 Deepening pastors’ theological expertise is a lifelong education process in itself, which from
18 familiarity with the scripture, the symbols and rituals of Christian tradition enables themselves
19 and others to interpret life by translating between tradition and the present. In the face of in-
20 creasing secularisation on the one hand and the fundamentalist reduction of religion on the oth-
21 er, this expertise in translating and interpreting is more important than ever. As they accrue pro-
22 fessional experience, pastors become able to integrate their own experiences into this theologi-
23 cal process of reflection and thus expand their skills in orientating themselves and taking action
24 from the foundation of Christian faith.

25 The Reformation perspective views learning from the scripture as an indispensable, fundamen-
26 tal task. This renders academic work on the Bible particularly important. Further intersections
27 with pastoral fields of action emerge with respect to practical theology (liturgy, pastoral care,
28 cybernetics, church theory, education, welfare) and systematic theology (here in particular the
29 exploration of key theological treatises, their historic and cultural contexts and the formation of
30 the appropriate discerning and discursive abilities for dealing with challenges relating to the
31 church, ethics, science and society, including ecumenism, criticism of religion and inter-religious
32 dialogue).

1 **3.9 Didactics and methods**

2 Adult education, in which the didactics are focused on the self-led acquisition of expertise and
3 knowledge, supports the theologically gained insight that man himself – *coram deo* – is the sub-
4 ject of unavailable educational activity.

5 Here, didactics in the strictest sense relate to all questions of mediation between subject matter
6 and people. Methods are systematic procedures that mentally or emotionally facilitate educa-
7 tional processes in individuals or groups, enable people to communicate with one another and
8 stimulate them to acquire new knowledge and to expand their courses of action.

9 The following aspects are important for the didactic expertise of anyone involved in planning,
10 conducting and evaluating continuing education:¹¹

- 11 • Didactic action

12 Participant orientation, tolerance of ambiguity and interpersonal skills (not only forging good re-
13 lations, but also the ability to maintain them even in difficult situations), own readiness for con-
14 tinuing education

- 15 • Didactic awareness of potential issues

16 The ability to distinguish between the person and the leadership role, to identify obstacles to the
17 learning process and one's own part in this; sensitivity for challenges in the learning process
18 related to people's biography, socio-cultural and religious situation

- 19 • Didactic knowledge

20 Knowledge of inroads into adult pedagogy, the related theological issues (above all, the underly-
21 ing concept of education and view of humanity) and the correlation of the relevant professional
22 and personal circumstances of learning motives

- 23 • Didactic expertise

24 Solid knowledge and skills in applying methods, techniques and evaluations

25 Pastors' continuing education that brings together different churches and countries also calls for
26 particular intercultural expertise. Continuing education officers must be able to identify "critical
27 interaction situations" (Alexander Thomas) in cultural encounters and to handle stereotypes and

¹¹ According to Horst Siebert: "Didactic action in adult education: Didactics from a constructivist perspective", 7th edition, Augsburg: 2012 (1996).

1 prejudices in learning contexts in a constructive manner. It would be appropriate to develop and
2 conduct train-the-trainer continuing education models in and for the CPCE's educational work.

3 **3.10 Digitisation and e-learning in continuing education**

4 "Digitisation" is a truncated description of the current digital revolution, i.e. of how our way of life
5 is being fundamentally changed by digital technology. The resulting changes in the use of digital
6 media in continuing education are summarised under the term "e-learning". These include many
7 different forms (e.g. computer-based or web-based learning, blended learning as a hybrid of e-
8 learning and traditional face-to-face forms, MOOCs [massive open online courses] and serious
9 games). Besides the general and well-known risks related to these technologies (data security),
10 discussions currently focus on identifying the fields and conditions in which the use of e-learning
11 is proven to be appropriate and beneficial.

12 The appeal of blended learning, in particular, lies in the way it "focuses on the entire learning
13 process of the individual student and thus no longer perceives learning as a series of detached,
14 discrete events, but as a continuous process. The transparency of teaching processes is in-
15 creased, and this enables the student to perform further-reaching, independently organised and
16 managed learning activities."¹² Further advantages include international continuing education
17 events and programmes and better compatibility with family responsibilities.

18 The obstacles to implementing blended learning more broadly clearly lie in the high technical,
19 financial and personnel outlay for developing and maintaining the appropriate programmes.

20 All the same, more intensive inclusion of elements involving procedures and techniques linked
21 to e-learning (video conferencing, use of cloud services for teaching and learning material, fast
22 data connections) is increasingly becoming the norm even in conventional continuing education
23 settings.

¹² See Ulrich Iberer: "Vom E-Learning zum Blended Learning: Aktuelle Entwicklung und didaktische Chancen virtueller Lehr- und Lernformen", in: TheoWeb 9/2010, p. 20. <http://www.theo-web.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe-2010-01/04.pdf>

4 Recommendations for theological continuing education in the CPCE

4.1 Expanding theological expertise and developing professional strengths

The changes to society at a global and European level have clear effects on the demands and profile of the pastoral profession. Joint continuing education in the realm of the CPCE provides the chance to learn how similar issues and challenges are encountered and addressed in other countries and churches. Regional and national diversity represents an enrichment for those participating in continuing education. Their own perception, theological knowledge and core pastoral expertise are questioned and expanded by getting to know other world views and theologies and through exchange with people from other cultural and religious settings.

4.2 Framework for theological continuing education

Continuing education requires adequate time and space. Besides brief formats (one-day events) and longer-running programmes (e.g. one day per month), it would be a good idea to offer compact theological courses (for one to two weeks). From time to time (every 6-10 years), the churches should enable their pastors to take sabbaticals lasting several months, which could also be completed at the training and continuing education facilities run by other CPCE member churches.

4.3 The value of informal spheres of learning and encounters

International and inter-church continuing education should provide exciting new ideas and allow adequate time for working on them, e.g. in guided group discussions with planned free time and breaks. It is important not only that the leaders and participants communicate, but that the participants get to talk to each other as well. Thus the chosen methods should ensure equal opportunities for getting actively involved. The ideal composition of such events would mix countries and languages and include both men and women, which is something that should be encouraged and aimed for. Heterogeneity increases the didactic and methodical demands; but it is precisely this that creates the added value in international, inter-church continuing education.

4.4 Principle of solidarity and sponsorship

All of the CPCE's continuing education activities should be planned and conducted according to the principle of solidarity. The respective financial and organisational resources (e.g. 2-5 % of all

1 spending on continuing education) should be deployed in a way that offers mutual support and
2 opens up access to educational activities to others for discussion and learning from and with
3 one another and thus enriching the entire experience. Churches with greater potential in this
4 respect are particularly encouraged to act as a platform for international projects and to sponsor
5 partnership arrangements.

6 **4.5 Collaboration and networking amongst pastors**

7 The complexity of the challenges requires pastors to collaborate with one another more inten-
8 sively and to encourage voluntary and professional church officers to work together more. Con-
9 tinuing education can help them to achieve this. So it would make sense, wherever possible, for
10 representatives from different fields of work, and perhaps also volunteers, to participate in such
11 continuing education measures. This encourages and tests the potential for collaboration in a
12 special way.

13 Pastors can join forces locally with members of different professions and volunteers from other
14 churches to conduct joint research on a specific theme (e.g. rural ministry, urban ministry, with
15 specific age groups, in specific environments), which will reveal new perspectives and ap-
16 proaches to finding solutions.

17 **4.6 Parallel academic research**

18 International continuing education measures should be even more closely defined by means of
19 parallel academic research. Empirical research into adult pedagogy (re. evaluation and quality
20 assurance), and particularly with regard to intercultural education, is desperately needed. The
21 fruits of international continuing education should be researched in close contact with theological
22 faculties, universities and adult education, and a grant should be offered to this effect.

23 **4.7 Concrete measures**

24 *Annual summer college*

25 Every year, a European summer college, similar to a European pastoral college, should take
26 place. Each should be prepared and organised by one of the CPCE's member churches with
27 input from representatives of further CPCE member churches.

28 *Opening and networking continuing education opportunities*

29 In order to promote exchange between countries and churches with regard to the common chal-
30 lenges and continuing education topics that exist in the Protestant churches in Europe, the
31 member churches of the CPCE need to open their continuing education events to participants

1 from other member churches. Invitations to participate should be published on the CPCE's web-
2 site as a platform. In addition, it is conceivable that individual continuing education facilities run
3 by the CPCE's churches might work on collaborative continuing education projects. Forming a
4 conference of the heads of continuing education institutes in the CPCE's sphere should be con-
5 sidered (comparable to the International Conference of Preachers' Seminaries) in order to effec-
6 tively harness opportunities for collaboration.

7 *Peer visitations*

8 This form of continuing education involves a group of pastors from different CPCE churches
9 visiting a congregation or church community in order to familiarise themselves with church work
10 on a specific issue (e.g. a church in a rural-peripheral area). This sharpens awareness of their
11 own situation, opportunities and limitations. It is also conceivable that such a group could in-
12 clude representatives of different professions.

13 *The CPCE's website as a platform*

14 A platform should be set up on the CPCE's website for ascertaining the status quo, recording
15 existing collaborative efforts and encouraging further networking of continuing education activi-
16 ties and practitioners in order to:

- 17 • Publicise continuing education measures and issue invitations to specific events;
- 18 • Develop topics, share resources and working practices, and discuss aids;
- 19 • Exchange advice and the contact details of speakers and experts;
- 20 • Facilitate sharing experiences between students and teachers;
- 21 • Provide access to the outcomes of education processes;
- 22 • Aid the exchange of academic and practical findings; and
- 23 • Raise the CPCE's profile as an educational fellowship of Reformation churches in inter-
24 religious, cultural and socio-political dialogue.

25 *e-learning / blended learning*

26 Nothing can replace the direct contact between people in continuing education. But elements of
27 e-learning and blended learning should complement existing formats, not least because they
28 offer a simple way of opening up access to theological continuing education for people in specif-
29 ic circumstances (raising families) or from churches with little scope for continuing education. It
30 would be desirable to run a pilot project for a number of years for establishing e-learning mod-
31 ules step-by-step. The experiences of the Methodist Church can be drawn upon with regard to

1 developing this format. It should be examined whether any of the modules from this course
2 could be offered to pastors in other churches.

3 *International mobility*

4 Leading on from Training for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Eu-
5 rope, programmes are recommended that “enable a temporary exchange of pastors and ensure
6 the greatest possible gain in experiences and perspectives for the exchange partners.”¹³ A
7 temporary visit can grow into the desire to move long-term from one church to the other. Even a
8 temporary – and most certainly long-term – exchange of pastors within the CPCE presents con-
9 siderable challenges to the host church. On the one hand, the new arrivals need integrating well,
10 but on the other hand, they should inject their own previous experiences to good effect. This
11 requires customised continuing education measures to offer basic orientation in the “history, law
12 and liturgy of the respective Church” (ibid.) and to enable the guests to act confidently within the
13 respective culture. “This situation also means considering the recognition of training and qualifi-
14 cations that have been completed outside the CPCE.” (ibid.)

15 Experience from previous international continuing education has shown it is likely that new part-
16 nerships between churches and continuing education facilities within the CPCE will emerge and
17 existing partnerships intensify, which will invigorate the fellowship within the CPCE. Shared
18 practices create experiences that at the end of a fairly long process should be combinable to
19 produce core principles for good theological continuing education. This will develop theological
20 continuing education further and improve mutual recognition of continuing education within the
21 CPCE.

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

¹³ Ibid. Footnote 1, p. 219.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

1 **Appendix: Contributors to this study process**

2 ***A. Participants at the consultation in Strasbourg, 12–15 November 2015***

- 3 Revd. Dr. Jacques-Antoine von Allmen (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)
4 Educator Mika Aspinen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland)
5 SCC Mag. Ingrid Bachler (Protestant Church A.C. in Austria)
6 Prof. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
7 Theologian Maximilian Bode (EKD)
8 Revd. Dr. James Coleman (United Reformed Church)
9 Private lecturer Dr. Detlef Dieckmann (United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany –
10 VELKD), speaker
11 Revd. Karol Dlugosz (Evangelical Church A.C. in Poland)
12 Prof. Sándor Fazakas (Reformed Church in Hungary)
13 Revd. Dr. David Field (United Methodist Church in Southern-Central Europe)
14 Rt Revd. Peter Fischer-Møller (Lutheran Church in Denmark)
15 Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE)
16 Dr. Didier Halter (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)
17 Revd. Dr. Andreas Heieck (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)
18 Prof. Beate Hofmann (Wuppertal Church University), speaker
19 Revd. Wiltrud Holzmüller (Regional Church of Lippe)
20 Henk Hogendoorn (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
21 SCC Karl Ludwig Ihmels (Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Saxony)
22 Revd. Eszter Kalit (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania)
23 Revd. Kerstin Kask (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church)
24 SCC Prof. Hiltrun Kessler (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
25 Director Kari Kopperi (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland)
26 School Dean Herbert Kumpf (Evangelical Regional Church in Baden)
27 Dr. Manacnuc Mathias Lichtenfeld (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria)
28 SCC Dr. theol. Holger Ludwig (Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau)
29 Revd. Peter Martins (Evangelical Church in Berlin–Brandenburg–Silesian Upper Lusatia)
30 Revd. Markus Merz (CPCE)
31 Rector Dr. Hans Vium Mikkelsen (Lutheran Church in Denmark)
32 Prof. Hallvard Mosdøl (Norwegian Church)
33 CC Bettina Mühlig (Evangelical Church in Central Germany)
34 SCC Gottfried Müller (Evangelical Church of Palatinate)

- 1 Pastor Paul Philipps (Evangelical Church in Northern Germany)
- 2 Dr. Steffen Schramm (Evangelical Church of Palatinate)
- 3 Prof. Regina Sommer (Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck)
- 4 Prof. Lajos Szabó (Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary)
- 5 Revd. Dr. Christof Theilemann (Evangelical Church in Berlin–Brandenburg–Silesian Upper Lu-
- 6 satia)
- 7 Pasteure Esther Wieland-Maret (Eglise Unie Protestante de France)
- 8 Dr. L. Theo Witkamp (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
- 9 SRCC Michael Wöller (Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Hannover)
- 10 ***B. Members of the editorial group in 2016***
- 11 Prof. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 12 Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE)
- 13 SCC Karl Ludwig Ihmels (Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Saxony)
- 14 SCC Prof. Hildrun Kessler (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 15 Revd. Peter Martins (Evangelical Church in Berlin–Brandenburg–Silesian Upper Lusatia)
- 16 Revd. Markus Merz (CPCE)
- 17 Rector Dr. Hans Vium Mikkelsen (Lutheran Church in Denmark)
- 18 ***C. Members of the editorial group in 2017***
- 19 Prof. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 20 SCC Dr. Christiane de Vos (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 21 Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE)
- 22 SCC Karl Ludwig Ihmels (Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Saxony)
- 23 Rector Dr. Hans Vium Mikkelsen (Lutheran Church in Denmark)
- 24 Revd. Kathrin Nothacker (CPCE)
- 25 Prof. Regina Sommer (Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck)
- 26 Private lecturer Dr. Péter Szentpétery (Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary)
- 27 SRCC Michael Wöller (Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Hannover)
- 28 Rector Frank Zelinsky (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria)