

International Conference on Confirmation Work

From 4-6 March 2024, leading experts gathered at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin to present the results of the 3rd international study on confirmation work and to discuss innovative approaches and challenges in this field of church work. In her welcome address, Bishop Kirsten Fehrs, Chair of the EKD Council, stressed the far-reaching implications of the study results, which are not only important for confirmation work, but for all church programs geared towards young people.

The study, coordinated by Prof. Dr Henrik Simojoki from the HU Berlin and Prof. Dr Wolfgang Ilg from the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg, surveyed more than 9,000 young people, examining their perspectives during the pandemic. Full-time and volunteer staff were also included in the study, capturing a broad spectrum of the organisational and structural challenges faced during this time.

The results from Germany, Finland, Norway, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Hungary show that high-quality confirmation work continues to be of great importance in building positive relationships between young people and the church, providing them with positive experiences, even during the pandemic. Having long offered a wide range of innovative didactic possibilities, confirmation work programs remain very popular with the vast majority of participating adolescents. As a result, confirmation work can still be regarded as a very successful model of church education.

The confirmation work study and Berlin conference also showed how digital media and feedback tools can enrich the quality of confirmation work, strengthening relationships and opening up new avenues to future church youth work. It was shown that social media and other digital tools are not yet widely used in confirmation work and therefore represent both a challenge and opportunity for further professional development.

The possibilities provided by digital communication and education can be seen as a response to pandemic-related restrictions, as well as an opportunity to further develop the educational programme in a youth-oriented and church-oriented way. One of the core topics of the conference was confirmation work as a driver for church development. In view of societal changes and a continued search for relevance and connection by the church in today's world, this programme offers an excellent opportunity for young people to experience a sense of community within a church setting and to help create a space for building these relationships. The importance of cross-functional collaboration was particularly emphasised in order to meet the diverse needs and backgrounds of the young people. Interaction with confirmands who have not been baptised represents a particular opportunity in confirmation work.

The conference highlighted how inclusive approaches, need-orientated work and welcoming meeting spaces can both support and significantly enrich the participation of all young people, further contributing to their faith development. The international nature of the study showed that, despite regional differences, positive experiences of

community within a church setting and a high level of satisfaction of all involved characterised confirmation work across borders in the participating countries.

The study results and discussions at the conference emphasised the need to continue to cultivate confirmation work as an important part of future church development. The conference in Berlin not only provided important impetus for the future of confirmation work, it also showed that the church is prepared to break new ground in order to accompany and support young people on their faith journeys.

The results of the studies will be made available to the public later this year through a series of German and English-language publications. An overview can be found here: <https://konfirmandenarbeit.eu/en/articles-and-books>



The team of researchers from eight European countries at the international conference in Berlin on 4 March 2024

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