

# STATUS OF PRESERVATION OF REFORMATION- LINKED CULTURAL HERITAGE

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# The status of preservation of Reformation-linked cultural heritage in Central Europe

Work paper

## Content

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. DEFINITION OF PROTESTANT HERITAGE</b>                            | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATION</b>                                   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3. CURRENT USE OF REFORMATION-LINKED SITES AND ROUTES</b>           | <b>5</b>  |
| 3.1. DIRECTLY CHURCH-RELATED USE                                       | 5         |
| 3.2. TOURISTIC USE   | 5         |
| <b>4. CURRENT CONDITIONS OF REFORMATION-LINKED SITES</b>               | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>5. THREATS AND CHALLENGES FOR REFORMATION-LINKED SITES</b>          | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>6. FINANCES FOR PRESERVATION</b>                                    | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>7. PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS</b>                                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>8. CONCLUSIONS</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>9. ANNEXES</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| 9.1. LIST OF WEBSITES PRESENTING REFORMATION-LINKED ROUTES             | 13        |
| 9.2. LIST OF WEBSITES PRESENTING ECUMENICAL ROUTES                     | 13        |
| 9.3. LIST OF WEBSITES PRESENTING REFORMATION-LINKED SITES AND NETWORKS | 13        |

## 1. Definition of Protestant Heritage

There is so far no clear and accepted definition for the term 'protestant heritage' or 'testimony of protestant heritage'. The CPCE (Community of Protestant Churches in Europe) has the regulation, that it needs to have testimonies of protestant heritage to be a 'city of reformation', but nevertheless cannot provide a fully discussed definition.

As a general rule three different levels protestant heritage are used:

1. Buildings and architectural heritage from the 16th century, which had a role and history within reformation events. Examples for such reformation events are religious talks, education and instruction, synods, negotiations for the inquisition, political decisions concerning the reformation, prisons and dungeons for the arrest of protestants.
2. In some cases, (indirect) testimonies of the effects and impacts of the reformation are as important as the direct testimonies. Examples for such indirect testimonies are the reformation monument in Worms (Germany), the Melanchthonhouse in Bretten (Germany) or the Gedächtniskirche (Memorial Church) for the protestation in Speyer (Germany).
3. The third level are literary remains and testimonies, e.g. manuscripts or first prints of reformatory scriptures in local archives and libraries, especially if they originated at this spot / region or were addressed to this spot / region.

Specific difficulties of region specific definition of protestant heritage are e.g. seen in Czech Republic with its complex protestant situation of Jan Hus, the Hussites and the hussites wars, the Unitas Fratrum and Jan Amos Komensky; furthermore the war of Catholics and reform churches in the 17th century and the communist times.

For further discussions on the criteria for sites or routes that might be selected for the European Cultural Routes of Reformation, the results of the Transnational workshop in Wroclaw (7.-8. December 2016) and further discussions was as follows:

Within the ECRR project, and for the establishment of the European Cultural Route of Reformation, "Reformation-based Cultural Heritage" is understood as:

*A set of tangible and intangible legacies from movements related to Christianity that took place across Europe mainly in the 16th Century, but rooted in ideas and processes from the 12th Century onwards, which unfolded with diverse regional and national characteristics. These movements led to cultural and religious pluralisation, a transformation of daily Christian practices and in the clergy and contributed to changes in social, cultural and political values and ideas.*

*Their legacies are manifold and range from buildings, written documents, sites of historical events, effects of the counter-reformation, travelling paths, works of art, museums and exhibitions, to culinary traditions, music, oral storytelling, legends and celebrations, as well as contributions such as an expansion in education, a promotion of national identities - mostly through translations into local languages - and values like individual responsibility.*

*These movements' heritage is an integral part of the European cultural environment.*

Individually and together they form visible, visitable and/or experienceable items that can be used to form touristic products and offers - such as visits, excursions, events, hiking- or cycling routes - with an information and educational aspect.

For the connecting marketing of the future Cultural Route an overall narrative is needed. This narrative could and should be based on the following common aspects:

- A time of change towards own personal responsibility and freedom
- Using the own language
- Emancipation against authorities
- Existing linkages and relevance for today's life / regional identity (at least for some parts of the society).
- Plurality within the Reformation → different theological and historical movements, with various forms

Additionally, individual sites, regional or national network of sites or routes can have their own underlying narrative, that gives an authentic insight into the respective heritage.

## 2. Methodology and limitation

The presented results in this paper are mainly based on the answers to a questionnaire, that was distributed in English and German to the ECRR project partners, parishes in diverse protestant regions and experts in Austria. Additionally, personal meetings and interviews with several experts were held.

Questionnaires from seven partners and several questionnaires from Austrian parishes were received.

The situation of the reformation-related heritage is very diverse and different from country to country, and within the countries also different from region to region. This is often directly related to the strength of the protestant church in the respective region.

Therefore, this paper can provide a first overview and food for thoughts - and especially input for further discussions. It was not meant to provide a fully comprehensive and detailed overview of the preservation status of individual sites.

### 3. Current use of Reformation-linked sites and routes

#### 3.1. Directly church-related use

The by far larger number of the sites and buildings that are used for directly church-related activities (such as services, ceremonies, liturgies for special occasions ('Kasualien'), ...) is not directly related to the reformation heritage - aside the fact, that the whole protestant church is based on the reformation.

And vice-versa only a smaller part of the reformation-link sites and buildings are today used for regular church services.

Church services happen both in sites and buildings that are owned by the church as well as in several cases in special sites that are under private ownership. The latter situation regularly leads to problems, as the private owner can forbid the religious use. This happened e.g. in the 'Entrische Kirche' ('Uncannily church'), a cave near Dorfgastein, Austria where secret meetings of the protestants were held in the 16th and 17th century. The private owner forbids the regular ecumenical services due to "touristic overuse".

Church-related activities contain hiking tours or excursions of the rural parishes, religious education, in-door and out-door services.

#### 3.2. Touristic use

The larger part of the reformation linked heritage sites are used in a closer or wider touristic purpose.

Single sites work as museums; churches are used for cultural guided tours. Most of those activities are organized and provided directly by the church or church-related organisations and not (very much) supported by the tourism authorities.

Success stories can either be found where strong organisations, such as the German 'Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt' manage the sites and their offers.

Other successful models are protestant / reformation-linked sites that are connected to routes, be it as hiking- or cycling-routes (such as the German Luther Trail) or just connected with a common marketing as a pearl-chain of interesting offers.

Exemplary for others the Austrian 'Weg des Buches' ('Trail of the Book') should be mentioned, a north-south hiking trail (with some parallel cycling stretches) that follows the routes where the Lutheran bible was smuggled in the time of the counter-reformation.

This route attracts different types of tourists:

- Hikers without any church relation: There is an overall growing societal interest (not only by the group of LOHAS) in holidays that provide authentic information about the region. This in connection with the revival of long-distance-hiking lead to a growing importance of topic-oriented hiking offers.
- Protestant parishes: Either on general interest of a parish activity (in the tradition of the educational journey) or often on the search for their own family's or regional history of (forced) emigration, e.g. in the regions of Nurnberg in Franken, where several Austrian protestants fled to.
- Catholic hikers: As well on the search for the historic background of the religious persecution of their own church. After all the counter-reformation was a traumatic experience for both sides.

The 'Trail of the Book' passes both through touristic intensively used areas and regions with a very low level of tourism. In both types of destinations, the trail could contribute to the overall tourism development and regional development.

Intensively used areas can use the trail without (mega)-events for the strengthening of an authentic offer that brings back regional-specific identity to an often already faceless uniformed destination. In regions with low tourism the 'Trail of the Book' could verifiable increase overnight stays, direct touristic income and regional value creation.

In those cases of added regional value tourism associations are willing to cooperate and even invest - but the investment is rather done in the surrounding touristic infrastructure (e.g. signposting, ...) or marketing material (e.g. maps, ...), but not in concrete preservation measures.

For the cities, villages and sites that are directly related to the important reformers the continuous cooperation with tourism association is significantly easier, especially seen in the area of Mansfeld-Südharz, where Luther was active, and a very active use of reformation memorials by the tourism marketing is seen. In other cases, tourism

associations need special occasions to show interest in capitalisation of protestant heritage - e.g. jubilees as 'windows of opportunity'. In terms of didactics the situation in those intensively used reformation-sites and regions is leading to another challenge: Sometimes those sites are presented in a pilgrimage style, which is near to a cult of personality, that is usually not a protestant approach.

The challenge is to develop ecclesiastical historic offers in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Offers that create awareness for history beyond personality cult. Those offers should look both to the ecclesiastical history and the political history and link those aspects according to the protestant doctrine of the two realms - to be citizen and Christian and to act according to freedom and responsibility to the best of knowledge and conscience.

## 4. Current conditions of Reformation-linked sites

(Also) due to the lack of a consistent definition of reformation-linked heritage the awareness often does not meet the reality. On the one hand, catholic pilgrimage routes are considered in public as protestant or reformation heritage, on the other important areas of the reformation, such as Hallstatt and the Inner-Salzkammergut in Austria, think that they cannot provide reformation-linked heritage as "there are no buildings from those days left".

Furthermore, due to lack of systematic, historic research and assessment often reformation sites are not known or found by chance - as the fundamentals of a protestant church from the middle of the 16th century in Rauris, Austria, which the protestant pastor noticed only by chance in the summer of 2016. Not far from this little church, there is now a rectangular field that might have been the cemetery.

Rauris is a region where gold- and silver mining brought early protestant knaves and miners from Germany. According to the Chronicle of the municipality of Rauris, it dates from the time before the expulsion of the Protestant miners in 1554.

The goldmining is still an important topic that is used for touristic offers, but there was obviously no interest in maintaining this protestant object and to look to the reformation history in the region. According to the information given by the Monument Protection Office, the "eternal oblivion" should be given.

Today the sights and buildings of the reformation are in very different stages and conditions. From well very preserved to ruinous, near to devastation. Sometimes unclear responsibilities of different local stakeholders concerning the preservation, maintenance or e.g. cleaning of the surrounding contribute to the difficult situation of the site.



The local and regional lack of preservation has both pragmatic financial and societal reasons:

Small protestant churches that are minority churches in the country often have only little money to invest in preservation measures. In countries or regions with a strong, active protestant live the church is potential enough and willing to invest in preservation of buildings and sites - also in times without reformation jubilees.

This leads to the situation that investments in preservation of reformation oriented sites are mainly done where protestants are - or the sites are considered to be of overall, general importance, such as sites in Prague, in Mansfeld-Südharz, etc. that today have huge touristic value and everyday use - but no or small active protestant use. A good example for this is also the situation of cultural heritage sites for Jan Hus - one of the most important related sites is the place of his execution in Constance, Germany - a todays strong protestant region. This memorial site is managed by Czech organisations. In the area of Jan Hus' acting, mainly the Czech Republic it is much more difficult to find the money for maintenance and (touristic) use of respective sites. Politics need to have interest in a strong (protestant) church.

A rather secularistic society today has no distinct culture of remembrance over several centuries. In the end in many countries this culture of remembrance concerning the cruelties of WW2 is competing the remembrance of earlier dark times.

And the culture of remembrance of a minority in a majority region still causes political conflicts. There is evidence that the majority church in some regions still does not want to remember that centuries ago e.g. protestant churches were burned down.

## 5. Threats and challenges for Reformation-linked sites

The definite threat for reformation-linked heritage is the deterioration and oblivion - mainly caused simply by weather and time - if there are no financial means for preservation and no touristic potential of the sites. In more rare cases also the (touristic) overuse is a threat as well as the lack of interest by public authorities and tourism marketing - in regions having a weak protestant church.

Reformation-linked sites are manifold; therefore, it is necessary to use different potentials and follow different goals according to the region and the specific history of the site.

Challenges and chances lie in the

- linkage with other cultural topics

- creation of both individual specific and common messages
- ecumenical use

One needs to create public awareness for the connection to other cultural values. E.g. the fact that without Protestantism and Reformation there would be no musical impact of Johann Sebastian Bach. This protestant composer changed the sacred music with a long-lasting impact. Also architecture changes because of the Reformation. First within the churches - the position of the organ, the altar, the pulpit, ... - later the protestant architectures brought the clear functionality to the architecture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - e.g. very visible in the buildings along the Ringstrasse in Vienna.

Another chance is to link exemplary sites with individual specific messages - e.g. the Lutheran City Church in Vienna being the 'first protestant church in Austria' to an overall common message, such as 'Tolerance and Cooperation'.

Especially in the regions where the protestant church is a minority church an ecumenical approach for selected topics and activities could support the visibility of Reformation and its heritage.

In this respect the preservation of reformation-linked heritage cannot be seen detached from the overall position and visibility of the protestant church as such.

One has to mention that it needs multilingualism for connectivity and the ability to cooperate cross-border. The Reformation brought the social advantage of the use of the local language, but increased the problem of internationalisation: Latin was not the lingua franca anymore, so translations of the Bible were necessary before it could be spread. A common language, even if only for the educated class, was lost.

## 6. Finances for preservation

The availability of direct public funds for preservation purposes is rather an exception, primarily available from governmental departments of monument conservation for sites in in strong protestant regions; nevertheless, most of the efforts are coming directly from the church.

A special situation is the already mentioned German 'Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt'. Since 1997 the most important task of the foundation is to maintain five memorials of the Reformation in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, in Eisleben and in the city of Mansfeld. It looks after the historical buildings, museums and collections and makes them accessible to the public. In addition, the Foundation preserves, presents and

promotes the reformist heritage and promotes research and teaching in connection with the Reformation and the Reformation history.

Sometimes the church - local parishes or the national level - can get public funding for cultural events, that is partly reinvested in preservation measures. Examples for such events - related to reformation-linked sites - are the regular 'Music at the 12th' event in the Lutheran City Church in Vienna, an organ concert that takes place regularly at the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Limited mainly by organisational issues (public relation, organisational capacities) and the availability of the organist. This event is sponsored by the Cultural department of the Vienna government.

Also, the annual festival 'Organs without border' that link four tolerance parishes in Austria and Hungary is successful - predominantly without public funds the entrance fees for the festival can contribute to renovation measures of the sites based on the historic tolerance edict by Josef II.

Some of the touristic routes linking reformation based heritage, such as the Luther Trail, the Trail of the Book, a.o. could generate - as described above - cooperation with and investments of the respective tourism associations. Nevertheless, this of often no direct cash contribution to the church and therefore cannot immediately be used for maintenance or preservation measures.

Both aspects - culture and tourism form promising chances for income generation. But as for the cultural event the parish just need to provide the infrastructure and organise the organist or choir or alike, it is more difficult for the development of touristic products.

Current projects of the Austrian Protestant Church in four model regions show mainly two obstacles: The time capacities of the priest and the members of the Parish parochial council on the one hand and the lack of touristic professional skills at the other. This is also underlined by some expressed opinions in the questionnaires, that "Reformation-linked heritage, which is often located in rural areas far from touristic hot-spots, does not bring any financial relevant added-value, neither for the parish nor the region".

Internal training and close cooperation with the local and regional tourism association is needed.

Experiences in countries with a rather weak protestant church show that drivers for the valorisation of reformation-linked cultural heritage are more often people with historic interest than believers. To integrate this group - and the local communities in general - into the preservation interests of the protestant church - without evangelising them - is a big challenge for the church administration.

For further efforts to finance preservation of reformation-linked cultural heritage, e.g. also within the development of the European Cultural Route of Reformation it is

advisable to look for cooperation with both the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE, [www.leuenberg.net](http://www.leuenberg.net)) and the German Gustav-Adolf-Werk ([www.gustav-adolf-werk.de](http://www.gustav-adolf-werk.de)).

## 7. Partnerships and networks

Aside the formation of some protestant heritage routes and the local situation around very important sites of the Reformation structured cooperation initiatives and schemes have hardly been established.

It would be recommended to widen existing and establish new forms of cooperation:

- Involvement of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and the German Gustav-Adolf-Werk e.g. the activities of the truck-of-reformation for the preparation of 2017 provides both information digging and marketing; the City of Reformation established for the first time a structured network that consists of the church, administration and politics
- Involvement of historic research beyond the ecclesiastical history. E.g. the history of gold- and silver mining in Rauris (Austria) or salt-miners in Hallein and Hallstatt is closely connected with the Reformation in those regions. First the protestant knaves and miners came from Germany and in the moment when the mines were closed they had to leave again (or change the profession). Reformation is closely interlinked with working migration.
- Structured cooperation with tourism association, as in the ECRR project

## 8. Conclusions

The situation of the reformation-related heritage is very diverse and different from country to country, and within the countries also different from region to region. This is often directly related to the strength of the protestant church in the respective region.

Whereas in regions with a rich protestant life and the areas of direct acting of the important reformers, especially Martin Luther, the reformation-linked heritage is mainly well preserved and in very good conditions, regions with smaller importance of the Protestant church face much more severe challenges and have to handle often bad

conditions of the heritage sites. This constitutes a very different - and often not comparable - situation between especially Germany and many other countries.

The main reasons for bad conditions - ranging up to devastation and oblivion - is the impact of weather and the lack of maintenance, the latter due to lack of financial means and missing knowledge of and awareness for the sites.

Therefore, one of the first necessities to preserve the reformation-linked heritage is a clear and accepted definition - especially in countries and regions with a very complex historic background - and church-internal awareness raising measures.

Cultural and touristic use can bring public awareness and financial revenues that could support the preservation. Nevertheless, tourism cooperates and invests rather in routes that can prove added value than in single sites, except in those of extraordinary importance.

For the development of touristic products and routes several measures are needed:

- intensive internal training on basic touristic understanding and product development
- close cooperation with the local and regional tourism association
- development of an overall narrative for reformation-linked touristic products and individual story-telling for the different sites
- engagement of the local population.

Internal networks and both existing and new cooperation need to be established and deepened, e.g. with the respective church institutions (e.g. CPCE and Gustav-Adolf-Werk) and through transdisciplinary and inter-sectorial cooperation with historians, tourism and others.

Generally, the preservation of reformation-linked heritage cannot be seen detached from the overall position and visibility of the protestant church as such.

## 9. Annexes

### 9.1. List of websites presenting Reformation-linked routes

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Weg des Buches (Austria)                      | <a href="http://www.wegdesbuches.eu">www.wegdesbuches.eu</a>                         |
| Lutherweg (Germany)                           | <a href="http://www.lutherweg.de">www.lutherweg.de</a>                               |
| Pilgerweg Loccum-Volkenroda (Germany)         | <a href="http://www.loccum-volkenroda.de">www.loccum-volkenroda.de</a>               |
| Hussitische Kulturroute (Czech Rep., Germany) | <a href="http://www.hussitische-kulturroute.com">www.hussitische-kulturroute.com</a> |

Websites of pilgrimage routes that are either pure catholic or portals to both catholic and protestant routes are not listed.

### 9.2. List of websites presenting ecumenical routes

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Ökumenischer Pilgerweg (Germany) | <a href="http://www.oekumenischer-pilgerweg.de">www.oekumenischer-pilgerweg.de</a> |
| Via Regia (Germany)              | <a href="http://www.via-regia.org">www.via-regia.org</a>                           |

### 9.3. List of websites presenting Reformation-linked sites and networks

|  |  |
|--|--|
| European Cities of Reformation           | <a href="http://reformation-cities.org">reformation-cities.org</a> |
| Network of Hussite cities                | <a href="http://www.husitskamesta.net">www.husitskamesta.net</a>   |
| Different sites related to Martin Luther | <a href="http://www.martinluther.de">www.martinluther.de</a>       |

Websites of tourism associations containing inter alia information concerning protestant sites are not listed.