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Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education: A Precondition for Ecumenical Encounter and a Tool for Ecumenical Reception

Johannes Oeldemann

Johann-Adam-Moehler-Institute for Ecumenism, 33098 Paderborn, Germany; j.oeldemann@moehlerinstitut.de

Abstract: For many decades, Christian churches have engaged in ecumenical dialogues addressing church-dividing issues and trying to overcome them. Many valuable texts have emerged from these dialogues, but they are hardly known in the churches. One reason for this is that “ecumenism” is rarely a topic in theological education. The article asks why this is so and argues for including ecumenical formation in theological studies. It highlights various initiatives that have pursued this goal and provides examples of cross-denominational theological education. Cultivating awareness and sensitivity among the younger generation of theologians towards ecumenical concerns is a precondition for promoting ecumenical encounter and applying the results of ecumenical dialogues to the life and the teaching of the churches.

Keywords: ecumenical formation; theological education; ecumenical dialogue; reception



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1. Introduction

The ecumenical movement has shaped the history of Christianity in the 20th century. For young people studying theology in the 21st century, it is already a church-historical phenomenon being studied and explored in lectures and seminars. In 2010, the 100th anniversary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was celebrated, which is regarded as one of the starting points and a landmark in the history of the ecumenical movement (cf. [Radano 2012](#)). In 2023, the World Council of Churches (WCC) looks back on 75 years since its foundation in 1948, and in the same year, the Leuenberg Church Fellowship celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Leuenberg Agreement, which was an important ecumenical milestone for the churches stemming from the continental reformation (cf. [Birmelé 2023](#)). In addition, 2024 marks 25 years since the signing of the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (JDDJ) in Augsburg in 1999, in which Lutherans and Catholics succeeded in formulating a basic consensus regarding one of the main points of contention of the 16th century’s reformation. Since then, the JDDJ has also been received by Methodists, Anglicans, and Reformed, so that nowadays, there is agreement on a fundamental question of the Christian understanding of salvation between the five largest churches of Western Christendom (cf. [Notre Dame Consultation Statement 2019](#)). However, nowadays, many of the achievements of the ecumenical movement have become already so ingrained in the life of the churches that they are no longer recognised as remarkable success stories. For ecumenism, this is both a blessing and a curse: a blessing because people no longer suffer from the division between the churches; a curse because the motivation for further ecumenical engagement is in danger of being lost.

Having this in mind, the question of how the agreement on questions of faith that has grown in ecumenical dialogues over decades (cf. [Growth in Agreement 1984–2017](#)) and the familiar relationship that has developed through personal encounters—in other words: ecumenical knowledge and ecumenical experience—can be passed on to future generations is becoming increasingly important. Ecumenical networks such as the “Societas Oecumenica” (cf. [Societas Oecumenica 2023](#)), the European Society for Ecumenical Research, or

the “Ecumenical Research Forum” (cf. [Ecumenical Research Forum 2023](#)) bring together ecumenically committed and interested theologians from different generations in order to achieve precisely this transfer. But in theological faculties and departments of theological studies, ecumenism either does not feature at all in the curriculum or plays only a marginal role. The demand that future generations of theologians be introduced to the significance of the ecumenical quest and informed about the results of ecumenical dialogues is almost as old as the ecumenical movement. This article attempts to give an overview of how this desideratum has been formulated, reformulated, and restructured in the time being, as well as to draw attention to some new approaches that could give ecumenism greater weight in theological education.

2. Ecumenical Formation as a Desideratum of the Ecumenical Movement

Ecumenical formation is vital for the future of the ecumenical movement. The challenge of establishing ecumenical formation in the study of theology as well as in the daily life of the churches was something the fathers and (unfortunately few) mothers of the ecumenical movement were aware of from the beginning. Different approaches to understanding ecumenical studies can be observed in the ways people describe the concept. Terms like “ecumenical formation”, “ecumenical education”, or “ecumenical learning” emphasise different aspects, even from a linguistic perspective. Simply attending lectures and seminars cannot fully convey ecumenical knowledge. Instead, ecumenical formation aims to shape individuals with an ecumenical mindset. “Ecumenical formation is about the formation of ecumenical people” ([Oxley 2005](#), p. 2). To foster genuine motivation for ecumenical engagement, academic courses must be complemented by personal interactions and encounters with people from other churches and denominations.

As early as in 1957, the WCC Central Committee described ecumenical learning as “fostering understanding of, commitment to and informed participation in the whole ecumenical process” ([Becker 2002](#), p. 379). In 1969, the WCC set up an “Office of Education” at its headquarters in Geneva which was strengthened after the integration of the “World Council of Christian Education” in the WCC in 1971. The WCC’s Sixth General Assembly in Vancouver 1983 enumerated six characteristics of ecumenical learning: it (1) transcends barriers of origin and biography, (2) is action-oriented, (3) is done in community, (4) means learning together, (5) is inter-cultural, and (6) is a total process, including social and religious learning (cf. [Becker 2002](#), p. 380). The structures being responsible for educational issues in the WCC were renamed several times, e.g., from “Programme on Theological Education” (PTE) to the “Ecumenical Theological Education” (ETE) Programme, but promoting and supporting ecumenical formation has always been an important task of the WCC. In this context, the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, founded in 1946, played a central role from the beginning (cf. [Sauca 2005](#); [Ecumenical Institute Bossey 2023](#)). In 2018, Pope Francis visited Bossey. His visit was, according to the Tenth Report of the Joint Working Group (JWG) of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, “a further demonstration of the fact that ecumenical formation and education of young people must be at the heart of the ecumenical movement” ([JWG 2022](#), p. 42).

In 1985, the JWG commissioned the preparation of a study document on ecumenical learning, which was completed in 1993 and published in 1998 as “Appendix D” to the Seventh Report of the JWG ([JWG 1998](#), pp. 53–59). In this text, entitled “Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions”, the JWG characterises ecumenical learning as “a process of education by which we seek to orient ourselves towards God, all Christians and in deed all human beings in a spirit of renewed faithfulness to our Christian mission” (No. 10). It continues: “Thus in pursuit of the goal of Christian unity, ecumenical learning takes place not only in formal educational programmes but also in the daily life of the Church and people. While the formation of the whole people of God is desired, indeed is a necessity, we also insist on the strategic importance of giving priority to the ecumenical formation of those who have special responsibility for ministry and leadership in the churches” (No. 13). The JWG encourages mutual visits of theology students in the

course of their formation and encourages them to develop a “spirituality of trust” (No. 16). A pedagogy built on communion should “help Christians to respond wholeheartedly to the ecumenical imperative” and will relate “to the affective as well as to the cognitive dimensions” of ecumenical learning (No. 17). The JWG underlines that ecumenical formation is “absolutely necessary at every level of the church community, church life” (No. 20) and “at all educational levels: schools, colleges, universities; theological schools, seminaries, religious, monastic communities, pastoral and lay formation centres” (cf. [Pobee 1997](#)). It explicitly calls for the “participation of different institutions for theological education in common programmes of formation” (No. 21). While mentioning the importance of inter-religious dialogue with other world religions, the JWG calls to “carefully distinguish it from ecumenical dialogue” (No. 23). In conclusion, the JWG emphasises: “The ecumenical imperative must be heard and responded to everywhere. This response necessarily requires ecumenical formation which will help the people of God to render a common witness to all humankind” (No. 26).

A document in which this requirement was implemented in an exemplary manner are the guidelines of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity on “The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of those Engaged in Pastoral Work” ([Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity 1998](#)). With reference to the rules in the “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism”, approved by Pope John Paul II in 1993, this Roman Catholic document emphasises “the necessity of ecumenical formation for all Christ’s faithful”. It concentrates “on what is needed for the thorough ecumenical formation of those who are preparing to engage in pastoral work, whether as ordained ministers or not, and particularly on recommendations for ensuring that their theological studies have the ecumenical dimension required” (No. 1). Because restoring unity is a task of all, lay people as well as ordained, “formation in ecumenism is crucial in order to enable each person to be prepared to make his or her own contribution to the work of unity” (No. 2). The text reminds us that the Directory calls for a compulsory course in ecumenism and, in addition, requires that each theological discipline should ensure “that an ecumenical dimension permeates every subject taught” (No. 9). The Pontifical Council identifies key elements for the ecumenical dimension of each theological discipline (hermeneutics, the “hierarchy of truths”, and the fruits of ecumenical dialogues) and indicates with regard to ecumenical methodology that it should comprise a presentation of “1. those elements Christians hold in common; 2. points of disagreement; and 3. the results of ecumenical dialogues” (No. 16). The text also includes practical recommendations, e.g., concerning collaboration and coordination between different theological institutions, and a detailed list of topics which are important for the “Specific Teaching in Ecumenism” (No. 22–27). In conclusion, the document reminds us: “Genuine ecumenical formation must not remain solely academic; it should also include ecumenical experience” (No. 28). The given examples underline the importance of personal encounters for deepening the ecumenical commitment.

Concerning the academic level, the *German Ecumenical Study Committee* (“Deutscher Ökumenischer Studienausschuss–DÖSTA”) addressed the issue, too. Between 1997 and 2001, the members of the DÖSTA drew up a paper which was unanimously adopted at the meeting of the DÖSTA in Stuttgart in May 2001. The paper focuses on ecumenical education at university level (cf. [DÖSTA 2001](#)). It states that ecumenical theology is “very rarely a direct subject of the exams” at theological faculties and that the courses offered on ecumenical issues are often dependent on personal interests of the teachers. “An account of the history of the ecumenical movement or an overview of the state of ecumenical dialogues is very rarely offered” ([DÖSTA 2001](#), p. 537). Against this background, the DÖSTA suggests promoting the initial motivation of the students by means of appealing questions or “unusual learning paths” in which the social relations between teachers and learners are of particular importance. The DÖSTA strongly calls for greater consideration of ecumenical formation in the curriculum and justifies this demand as follows: “Ecumenical education and competence in dealing with Christians of different denominations and

cultures is today an indispensable basic requirement both for the exercise of the pastoral ministry and other pastoral services and for religious education in public schools. Therefore, greater consideration of ecumenical issues should be sought in the study and examination regulations" (DÖSTA 2001, p. 541). With these demands, the DÖSTA underlines the huge relevance of ecumenical education for professional qualification.

The Eighth Report of the JWG, published in 2005, stated that "greater effort is needed in the field of ecumenical formation" because "a new generation of Christians is sometimes unaware of the way things were and how much has changed in the decades since the founding of the WCC and since the Second Vatican Council" (JWG 2005, p. 29). Therefore, the JWG in its study document on "Reception", published as "Appendix A" to its Ninth Report in 2013, dedicates a whole section to ecumenical formation as "a key to ecumenical reception" (JWG 2013, pp. 93–100). This section discusses the links between ecumenical formation and ecumenical reception, traces the JWG's ongoing concern for ecumenical formation, and outlines some general principles of ecumenical formation. The study document underlines that ecumenical reception "requires a process of education and formation which embraces both the intellectual and theological dimensions of being trained in ecumenical dialogue and the existential and spiritual dimensions of receiving and recognising one another in the name of Christ" (No. 129). Therefore, the JWG regards "ecumenical formation as a priority in the ecumenical agenda" (No. 132). In its "general principles" concerning ecumenical formation, the JWG states: "Ecumenical formation implies first and foremost a life-long learning process for all members of the church" (No. 140). This process includes: (1) "discerning and enjoying the riches of God's gifts to his people", (2) "acknowledging the need for conversion", (3) "deepening the sense of Christian identity" by "discovering convergences among the various confessions", and (4) "living out the mission of the Church" by "working on common projects" (No. 141). As relevant aspects of theological reflection and church action, the JWG recommends, among other things, dispelling prejudices and stereotypes so as to be able to receive others in the spirit of an "exchange of gifts", and to be engaged "in the process of the healing and reconciliation of memories among Christians" (No. 142). In order to achieve these goals, the JWG demands "that ecumenical formation should be addressed in two ways: (1) a specific course on ecumenism with a detailed curriculum; and (2) the articulation of the ecumenical dimension in each field of theology. Both are part of ecumenical formation, so that ecumenism is not seen as an isolated speciality, but exists as a living component in all theological discourse. Ecumenical formation must be an essential element for candidates for ordained ministry" (No. 143). The main challenge for those responsible for theological education is to put this demand into practice. The second part of this paper will outline some approaches to implement the ecumenical dimension into theological studies.

3. New Challenges and New Approaches to Ecumenical Formation

As mentioned at the beginning, young people's lives today are often no longer shaped by ecumenical experiences, but the ecumenical movement is perceived as a historical phenomenon. What role could and should ecumenism play in studying theology today, in an era that is called the age of "disenchantment of ecumenism" (Link-Wieczorek 2020, p. 11)? Although the ecumenical quest is no longer considered a priority in the life of the church, ecumenical formation should be an essential part of theological education, if the churches want to respond appropriately to the processes of change that most of them are going through at the beginning of the 21st century. The churches are facing new challenges which also require new approaches to ecumenical formation.

A first challenge is the contextualisation of theology in the globalised world of the 21st century. It is impossible to develop a "global" concept of ecumenical formation, because not only the situation of theological faculties and seminaries vary from country to country, but also the ecclesial context is quite different in each case. Therefore, teaching ecumenical theology in North America (cf. Anderson 2005) differs from the way the subject is taught in Eastern Europe (cf. Fedorov 2005), and ecumenical formation in Asia (cf.

[Antone 2005](#)) is distinct from that in Latin America (cf. [Zijlstra 2005](#)). Especially in regions belonging to the formerly called “developing countries”, theologians are pleading for the development of a postcolonial theology (cf. [Kang 2010](#)). Such a postcolonial theology is often also understood as a post-denominational theology, because the denominational character of theological education was linked to the missionaries who had come to the countries together with the colonisers. Ecumenical theology today must deal with the inner connection between cultural mentality and religious denominationalism. The increasing contextualisation of theologies presents, however, a challenge, too: namely, not to forget the universal nature of the Christian faith (cf. [Dahling-Sander 1998](#)). Contextuality and catholicity are interrelated and should not exclude but mutually enrich each other. In this context, it is also important to perceive the subtle differences within each confessional identity and to use these findings to open one’s own theology towards a respectful openness towards a variety of faith expressions.

Breaking down denominational stereotypes is a second challenge for ecumenical formation. They are particularly prevalent in countries where one church is the dominant one (as state or folk church) and where theological education takes place at theological faculties that are associated with a particular denomination. If personal encounters with other Christians are lacking and there is no experience in interacting with them, prejudices about “the others” are handed down from generation to generation and the associated thought patterns can become entrenched. Thus, an indispensable part of ecumenical formation is getting to know and become familiar with different churches and their identities. Studying the self-understanding of churches is, therefore, an essential part of ecumenical theology. In Germany, there is a separate subject for this called “Konfessionskunde”—denominational studies (cf. [Oeldemann 2015](#); [Lasogga and Roth 2021](#)). It tries to describe the faith and practice of the different Christian churches, to perceive the existing diversity—also within a particular church—and thus to help overcome widespread pre-judices.

A third challenge for ecumenical formation is the training of teachers for religious education in schools. Religious education in church-affiliated or public schools aims to contribute to the formation of pupils’ Christian identities and is usually organised in classes with pupils belonging to the same church or denomination. In a mono-denominational setting, religious education runs the risk—consciously or unconsciously—of perpetuating the above-mentioned denominational stereotypes. In Germany, where the number of pupils attending religious education classes has steadily declined in recent years, those responsible in the churches’ school departments are now advocating “denominational cooperative” religious education in public schools. According to this model, Catholic and Protestant teachers take turns teaching the classes whose pupils are mixed denominationally (cf. [Schröder and Woppowa 2021](#)). This takes into account the fact that most teachers of religion in Germany today hardly ever have to deal with pupils who have grown up in a distinct faith milieu and are familiar with corresponding faith practices and forms (the situation in other countries might be different, cf. [Kostorz 2019](#)). An evaluation of this form of ecumenical religious education in public schools in some regions of Germany has shown that the old rule that a clear denominational identity could only be developed through mono-denominational religious education is obviously falsified by practice. However, the more widespread use of “denominational cooperative”, i.e., ecumenical religious education requires a stronger implementation of ecumenism in theological studies and the training of future teachers of religion. They should know not only the faith and practice of their own church, but must also be familiar with the faith and practice of the other churches. This presupposes dealing with questions of ecumenism and denominational studies in the course of one’s own studies.

A fundamental question regarding ecumenical formation in theological education, discussed at length for decades, is whether ecumenism is needed as a special subject in the study of theology or should it be treated as a cross-sectional topic in all theological subjects. There are many arguments in favour of treating ecumenism as a cross-cutting issue in all theological subjects. But does this mean that ecumenism is dispensable as a separate disci-

pline in the canon of theological subjects? No, because then all other theological disciplines would lack the tools to deal with the ecumenical dimension of their subject, be it biblical or historical, be it systematic or practical theology (cf. [Amirtham and Moon 1987](#)). Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that every theological discipline should be grounded in Holy Scriptures and biblical studies. However, it is also recognised that exegesis, as a distinct subject within theology, is essential because each area of theological studies should incorporate a “biblical dimension”. The same principle should be applied to ecumenical theology. We need a specialised subject that explores the history of the ecumenical movement, analyses the outcomes of ecumenical dialogues, and reflects on the methodology of ecumenism. This is important because every theological subject should include an “ecumenical dimension”.

As ecumenism is often not part of regular theology studies, project-based learning in the field of ecumenism is one of the new approaches to ecumenical formation in recent times. A good example of this is the “Global Ecumenical Theological Institute” (GETI). GETI is a global ecumenical formation programme offered alongside major ecumenical events. It was organised for the first time on the occasion of the 10th General Assembly of the WCC in Busan in 2013 (cf. [Chinna 2014](#)) and has been offered twice since then, including the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha in 2018 and the 11th General Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe in 2022. GETI gathered about 200 students of theology from all continents and a broad spectrum of Christian traditions (cf. [GETI 2023](#)). In 2022, an online phase of about four weeks prepared the participants for the residential phase in Karlsruhe that offered not only the possibility of personal encounters but also of participating in the thematic plenaries of the General Assembly. Another example of project-based learning are joint training weeks for Catholic chaplains and Protestant vicars, as, for example, offered by the Diocese of Muenster and the Protestant Church in Westphalia. Common seminars by lecturers from Protestant and Catholic faculties or joint trips to Taizé can be further occasions for project-based ecumenical learning. Today, we live in an “age of authenticity” (Charles Taylor). Thus, “individual faith practices and individual responsibility for faith, together with the necessity of a personal appropriation, are at the starting point and centre of every religious conviction” ([Link-Wieczorek and Rahner 2020](#), p. 36). This trend towards the individualisation of religious practice enhances the search for authentic role models of lived faith. Project-based ecumenical learning meets this trend and picks up on the needs of the younger generation.

A new challenge for ecumenical formation is the increasing emergence of trans-denominational identities. They are difficult to grasp because here, non-theological factors often dominate the theological ones. People and communities with a trans-denominational identity sometimes pretend to be particularly ecumenical, but often, it is a superficial ecumenism based on a patchwork religiosity. To be distinguished from this are post-denominational identities that define their positions primarily through exclusion. When it is no longer the commonalities but the differences that are marked as decisive, ecumenism becomes difficult or even impossible. Following these modern trends, one can find ecumenical enthusiasm, but also ecumenical scepticism in all churches. The question is how to deal with intra-church tensions and what impact they have on a church’s attitude towards ecumenism. Ecumenical theology “is a highly demanding form of dealing with the complexity of church doctrines, not merely doing positional theology, but taking seriously the perspective of one’s own knowledge of truth and recognising other perspectives as possible, admittedly only if the common truth can be recognised in the difference of perspectives” ([Dieter 2020](#), p. 51). Ecumenical formation has the task of opening eyes to different perspectives, formulations, and ways of living the common Christian faith.

A remarkable new approach to accomplish this task is the method of “Receptive Ecumenism”. The concept of “Receptive Ecumenism” was developed at the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University and is primarily associated with the name Paul Murray. Murray is a Professor of Systematic Theology at Durham University and, as a member of ARCIC III, the International Anglican-Catholic Dialogue Commission, is himself involved in ecumenical dialogue processes. Paul Murray, referring to the statement in Pope

John Paul II's encyclical "Ut unum sint" that ecumenism is about an "exchange of gifts" (Ut unum sint, No. 28), reflected on how such an exchange can work: What conditions must be in place and what contributes to opening the eyes of partners in ecumenical dialogue to each other's gifts? The corresponding research project led to a conference in Durham in January 2006, which was dedicated to the question of what and above all how the Catholic Church could learn from other churches (cf. [Murray 2008](#)). Three years later, in January 2009, there was a second international conference—again in Durham—which looked beyond the Catholic tradition and reflected on how the concept of Receptive Ecumenism could be implemented in other church traditions. The last ten years have seen a remarkable reception of this concept through further international conferences: 2014 in the USA (cf. [Fairfield 2014](#)), 2017 in Australia, and 2022 in Sweden (cf. [Sigtuna 2022](#)).

The concept of Receptive Ecumenism assumes that the goal of ecumenism, the unity of the church, cannot be achieved through theological dialogues alone, but only if the dialogue partners are willing to let themselves be changed by it. The direction of asking must change from "What do the others have to learn from us?" to "What do we have to and can learn from the others?" The concept of Receptive Ecumenism is thus characterised by the fact that it places the self-critical question of what one's own tradition can learn from other traditions in the foreground. It is about the willingness to take the first step—not to wait for others to change, but to start doing so oneself. Receptive Ecumenism was quite well received in the academic world as well as in various commissions for ecumenical dialogue (cf. [Ryan 2021](#)). The great merit of this new approach is that it moves ecumenical conversations away from either the unreflective sharing of life and action or dwelling on official doctrine only. Instead, it leads people to reflect on the actual lived reality of particular traditions stemming from a certain denominational background and, thus, offers new approaches to ecumenical learning (cf. [Murray et al. 2022](#)). Receptive Ecumenism "places special emphasis on the faith of the other denomination, because it perceives the denominational differences as enriching. The different development is also recognised as legitimate, corresponding to the origin and can thus serve as a model for, as well as a critical enquiry into one's own understanding" ([Link-Wieczorek and Rahner 2020](#), p. 45). Ecumenical dialogue, according to this concept, is not about dismantling one's own tradition, but leads one to rediscover hidden roots or elements of it. The challenge of ecumenical theology is "whether it can engage in an understanding of the perspectivity of truth, according to which one can legitimately grasp the matter of theology from different points of view and with different approaches" ([Dieter 2020](#), p. 55). Ecumenical formation should enable students of theology to open their eyes for the gifts of other traditions and to integrate them into one's own faith and the life of one's own church. The concept of Receptive Ecumenism has developed the tools for such a method of ecumenical learning.

4. Conclusions

Theological education is vital for the future of ecumenism (cf. [Werner et al. 2010](#)). This brief overview has reminded us of the consistent call to integrate ecumenism into theological education and has highlighted some recent approaches that seek to respond to this call with regard to new challenges. A good 20 years ago, the churches in Europe committed themselves in the "Charta Oecumenica" (2001) "to promote ecumenical openness and co-operation in Christian education, and in theological training, continuing education and research". This self-commitment is not yet fulfilled. The younger generation of theologians needs to be empowered by ecumenical education and formation (cf. [Larentzakis 2006](#)). There is a need for more interdenominational teaching in university studies, the organisation of interdenominational encounter experiences, as well as the mutual recognition of study achievements in denominationally different teaching institutions. In addition, ecumenism should also be given greater consideration in the examination requirements so that it becomes a compulsory subject rather than just an elective. In the context of today's society and in view of denominational plurality, ecumenical theology must perceive and consider the plurality of denominations and churches in Christianity as a whole as

well as their internal plurality (cf. Großhans 2020). Academic reflection must always be accompanied, supported, and motivated by personal encounters with believers from other churches. There can be no mutual understanding without an elementary empathy, from which sympathy arises (cf. Koch 2004). During the 11th General Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe, one of the “Ecumenical Conversation” groups discussed the topic “Theological Education—Why its Ecumenicity is Essential”. In its conclusions, the group formulated a number of “affirmations”, summarising the results of the discussion during the assembly in Karlsruhe. One of them should be quoted as a summary of this paper: “Ecumenical formation within theological education is essential in preparing an inclusive church leadership and the younger generation by embodying ecumenicity through exchange, mutual learning, and spiritual enrichment. Ecumenical formation happens by means of personal encounters between Christians from different traditions, by sharing their faith stories, building trust, and facilitating friendships” (Theological Education 2023, p. 110). Therefore, ecumenical formation is a precondition for ecumenical encounter and a tool for the reception of the results of ecumenical dialogues by the whole people of God.

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