



Abstract:

The concept of the mixed economy Church is associated with the question of traditional churches and denominations as to how unity and diversity can be shaped on the level of congregations. It takes into account the observation that traditional churches - especially majority churches - are losing contact areas and their missional potential. The approaches to faith, the forms of communion, the approaches to missionary endeavors are pluralizing. Traditional reference points (church buildings, congregational districts, pastors), which have shaped church structures for centuries, are becoming increasingly relative. At the same time, there is a growing willingness to try out forms of congregation that go beyond these traditional reference points. This raises the question for churches of the relationship between unity and diversity and how diversity can be understood as a constructive moment and missionary opportunity.

The idea of a “mixed economy” of church emerged within the Anglican Church facing a challenging question: How can unity be understood in a church with very different strands of church traditions and expressions, typically distinguished in high, low and broad church, lately complemented by missional initiatives subsumed under the term “fresh expressions of church”? And what is the churches’ contribution to society’s needs? The “mixed economy” idea, introduced by former Archbishop Rowan Williams, has since proven to be a reliable and very fruitful approach to understand, sustain and develop a vivid diversity of churches within the Anglican Church. Michael Moynagh is credited for its widely accepted definition: “The phrase ‘mixed economy’ [...] refers to fresh expressions and ‘inherited’ churches existing alongside each other, within the same denomination, in relationships of mutual respect and support.” (Moynagh 2008, 177) “Economy” in this context is meant to resonate with the biblical concept of the “oikonomia” of God (Müller 2015, 94). The term implies that the church’s mandate and mission cannot be fulfilled by a single shape and form of church (Moynagh 2012). While “mixed economy” started out as a means to describe unity in diversity within a single denomination, recent development has led to a wider, ecumenically accentuated understanding. Hence it provides a promising approach to face the present religious and societal transformation processes in Europe. The term implies that the church’s mandate and mission cannot be fulfilled by a single shape and form of church.

In response to a study on church reform and renewal (“Ecclesia semper reformanda”), the 2012 General Assembly of the CPCE in Florence suggested a further study process on this subject. This spawned the research group on the “Mixed economy of church”.

The CPCE has decided to deal with the topic of the Mixed Economy of the Church (currently increasingly described as Mixed Ecology). The following objectives were formulated by the preparatory working group in dealing with the topic in an upcoming conference 5th to 7th of October 2022 in Budapest.

At the conference (and the further process), the following goals and benefits have been crystallized that need to be worked on:

- Mixed Economy can help to understand the specific national/regional church development dynamics. The term and concept can help to analyze and reframe different CPCE dynamics.
- There is the need for a growing differentiation on the provided theological preconditions coming with the term and the concept of mixed economy.
- There needs to be a discussion of the active players in a mixed economy of church. How do the specific leadership roles shape the term and its potential?



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
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Sprouting seeds: forming, reforming, & transforming the mixed economy of Church

- Finally, there is the need to show the different motifs of the CPCE churches for the mixed economy of the church and their specific contribution to this term.

Main questions:

- How can the concept help us to contribute to a good interaction and relationship between traditional and fresh expressions of church work? (Potential points of friction on various levels - institutional-organizational level, sensitivities)
- How can the concept help us to rethink and reshape/transform the church was given the changes ahead (Church: what for, why, how, what, who, where and when)?
- How can the concept help us to rethink and reshape/transform membership in times of mobility and flexibility (like questions of guest-membership, double-membership, membership not bound to a specific territory, no membership at all [Orthodox church no membership])?
- What kind of different “fresh expressions” are already being lived in member churches, without being recognized as such? In what sense are “fresh” and contributing and developing an inherited form of church?
- How can mixed economy help majority and minority churches in their claim to church for the world?

Gains and benefits for the church community:

- Bringing together different perspectives of how the term mixed economy can be understood and enriched by the national religious dynamics.
- Addressing the ecclesial quality of ecclesial communions may also have implications for the understanding of membership within churches or of churches in the church fellowship. Some insights will also be transferable to the relationship with migration churches.

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