



ICEP · Berliner Institut für christliche Ethik und Politik

Idea

In many policy fields, and particularly in healthcare and social services, the need is growing for research-based policy advisory bodies which, in the face of various political options, focus on ethical responsibility. The Berlin Institute for Christian Ethics and Policy (ICEP) examines the underlying normative principles and implications of processes of social change, and develops expertise concerning the ethical dimensions of socio-political questions. As a political think-tank it guides and advises political actors from the fields of policy, the Church and civil society, from the standpoint of an applied vision of Christian ethics.

Christian Ethics and Socio-Politics

A plural democratic polity is dependent on a variety of social groups and actors in civil society participating responsibly in the political decision-making process. The Christian faith promotes moral convictions which both motivate its followers to accept their social obligations and give direction to society's discourse on moral questions. These convictions are based on a critical affirmation of Christian traditions as well as on special advocacy for those to whom basic human rights are denied. Building on this foundation, the ICEP works at developing social-ethical research opinions on and analyses of socio-political questions in order to advise decision-makers and those directly affected.

The ICEP does not understand 'applied ethics' to mean the application of a set of fixed basic moral principles to societal institutions and social circumstances – rather the ICEP

represents Christian ethics, active in an advisory capacity, in the discourse between political actors and the moral convictions and valuations they represent, within the framework of research expertise. The aim is an interdisciplinary analysis of political decisions: the exploration and questioning of their moral dimension and the critical and normative weighing-up of all available options, and the arrival, thus, at concrete, ethically accountable judgements and recommendations. And so, the ground is prepared for the ethical discussion of perspectives relevant to society.

In its capacity of political think-tank the ICEP has the following functions: It processes information, extracting new ideas - within the framework of its research projects and expertise - for central policy fields, in particular those of healthcare and social services; it forms networks with other scientific institutions specialised in social ethics, it carries out targeted PR work and nurtures personal contact between elected politicians, those holding public office and scientists.

Core Areas of Research

The topics dealt with by the ICEP vary according to current political advisory needs, as well as the general socio-political situation. In terms of its core areas of research, the ICEP is equipped to handle specific questions primarily in the field of Social and Health Policy, for example the reform of the welfare state, migration or bio-policy. Moreover, it reflects the positioning of the Church as an actor in civil society in the

fields mentioned. These areas are examined – with particular focus on socio-economic and ecological sustainability - not only in terms of their significance for the Federal Republic of Germany, but also in their European or international context.

Methods of Operation

The ICEP works on clearly outlined research projects in order to produce results and make recommendations within set time-limits. It develops expertise on behalf of those acting in political and civil society. It also comments on issues-of-the-day from an ethical standpoint and publishes position papers with underlying ethical themes respectively. In the selection of topics it is supported by an advisory body made up of personages from politics, science and the Church.

The ICEP communicates relevant political information and ethical reflections to the spheres of politics, civil society and science, it builds contacts and initiates projects thus creating a platform for Christian Ethics in the political arena.

The institute enters into co-operations with research, policy advisory and Church institutions on both a project-based and a continuous basis. Its working methods include decentralised project co-ordination concluding with results-oriented consolidation, and working in close exchange with actors in the political field in order to co-ordinate with their needs.

Previous Initiatives

The founding of the ICEP followed on from various initiatives focussing on research-based socio-ethical expertise in the capital Berlin. Amongst these, the activities of the working group of the Catholic Social Ethicists should, above all, be mentioned, as well as those of the Catholic Academy in Berlin and the KHSB, whose conceptual

deliberations the Archbishopric of Berlin has made its own.

Funding Bodies

The ICEP is a research institution of the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin (KHSB). Its basic requirements are covered by Federal funds and funds of the state of Berlin which are made available for the next 3 years for the promotion of research at Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*). Research projects are financed solely through money raised on an individual project basis through external funding.

Academic Personnel

Currently attached to the institute are Prof. Dr. Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl, Prof. Dr. Andreas Lienkamp, Dr. Christof Mandry, Dr. Axel Bohmeyer and Research Assistants Dipl.-Soz.Arb. Stefan Kurzke-Maasmeier and Dipl.-Soz.Arb. Christiane Schraml.

Co-operations/ Partnerships

As yet, co-operations are being run on a continuous basis with the Catholic Theology Faculty at the University of Bamberg (Prof. Dr. Marianne Heimbach-Steins), the Research Institute for Philosophy in Hannover (Prof. Dr. Gerhard Kruij), the Theology Faculty /Philosophy Faculty at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Prof. Dr. Walter Lesch), the Catholic Theology Faculty at the University of Tübingen (Prof. Dr. Dietmar Mieth) and the Catholic Academy Berlin.

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