

DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022–2026 OF THE INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY OF THE EELC

1. INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Theology of the EELC (hereinafter referred to as Institute) is an establishment of professional higher education that belongs to the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC).

Since its foundation the Institute as an establishment of ecclesiastical higher education and training centre has been working for accomplishing the task of ensuring the future generation of pastors and church workers for the EELC as well as continuity of higher theological education and research in Estonia. The Institute has had a remarkable role in maintaining and developing the Estonian theological thought. At the same time, the Institute has been open to the society and has focused both on individual theological questions and disciplines bordering theology, therefore contributing in introducing Christian values and message to the Estonian society.

According to the Statutes the main activities of the Institute are:

- 1) to organise studies based on professional higher education and master's study programs in the Theology *curriculum* group;
- 2) to organise professional training and continuing education;
- 3) to promote study and research in the field of Theology and Theology-related specialties;
- 4) to conduct target financed research, R&D services on a contract basis;
- 5) to develop publishing activities and publish study literature and other publications;
- 6) to develop library, particularly with regard to needs of the students, professors and researchers working for the Institute but also serving for other readers;
- 7) to development external relations, cooperation and conclusion of agreements with other research and educational institutions and organisations both in Estonia and abroad.

The objectives of the Institute are supported by the following structural units: Faculty of Theology, Pastoral Seminary, Continuing Education Department, Church Music Department and library. The Faculty of Theology provides degree study programs, being closely connected with work of Pastoral Seminary, Church Music Department and Continuing Education Department, that are responsible for professional training and continuing education courses.

The strategic plan is accompanied by an action plan – a list of activities in order to meet the objectives and their precise time limits, expectable results and planned sources of funding. The action plan is reviewed annually.

2. MISSION

The mission of the Institute is to promote theological competence in Estonia and internationally and to prepare clergy, church musicians and other church workers for the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Orthodox Church of Estonia and other Churches.

3. VISION

The Institute is a Christian educational and research centre fully recognised by church and state, as well as internationally, and has positive impact on the development of society.

4. VALUES

- Missionary awareness and motivation – we value the Lutheran academical theology and other theological traditions and contribute to their further development.
- Academic approach – we emphasize the importance of scientific research in studies and church life.
- Willingness to cooperate and openness – we are Church Institute for education and research that enjoys ecumenical collaboration with different churches, partners and other target groups.
- Individual approach and attentiveness – the learning environment of the Institute is characterised by person-to-person education, i.e. student-centeredness and flexibility.
- Spirituality – we support everyone’s personal relationship with God and appreciate its development.
- Professionalism and dedication – the people working in the Institute are church members and experts in their speciality.
- Estonian language and internationality – we develop theological thinking and written word in Estonian and participate actively in international cooperation networks.

5. KEY RESULTS

- Studies and research: the *curricula* and learning methods are updated. The Institute is a recognised research centre with international contacts.
- Economic sustainability: economic sustainability of the Institute as an education and research centre is guaranteed.
- Institutional reform and recognition: the structure of the Institute has been put in order and the Institute is recognised by state. The future generation of teaching staff is ensured.
- The Institute as a Church training centre: the *curricula* for continuing education have been updated and assembled onto a single platform.
- Institute in society: in society the Institute is a visible education and research centre.

6. ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE KEY RESULTS

6.1. Studies and research

- For better development of degree studies, an internal evaluation of the *curricula* is performed and based on its results the *curricula* are updated.
- Finding a possibility for developing doctoral studies in cooperation with an international cooperation partner (joint *curriculum*).

- The digital competence of the teaching staff will be enhanced, for in addition to classroom learning there will be a possibility to offer high-quality e-learning, if necessary. The e-learning environment is under development, and digital infrastructure is being developed.
- Learning opportunities for people with special needs are analysed.
- Students are offered opportunities for participating in learning mobility both internationally and in their home country.
- Faculty mobility is encouraged and supported, so that faculty members could stay up to one semester within five years in an international research centre for professional development and updating study materials.
- In the field of research and development the cooperation with EELC sub-institutions and other churches will be extended to provide scientific support to conduct basic and applied research.
- Research projects are initiated in cooperation with other research centres and international church and ecumenical organisations.
- Proceedings of the Institute and educational literature are published.

6.2. Economic sustainability

- Based on the possibilities of the Institute, the priority is set to consistently increase the salary of the Institute employees.
- An agreement will be concluded to state commissioned education (operating grant).
- The financial resources of the Institute will be increased. For this purpose, the Institute building will be renovated, accommodation income will be increased, possibilities for long-term land leasing or sale of the Institute's lot are being explored.
- New donators for the Institution's scholarship funds will be found.
- Income from continuing education and organised educational and research events, including rental income will be increased.
- Possibilities will be found to establish parish scholarships to provide targeted support to both students and faculty members.

6.3. Institutional Reform and Recognition

- The Institute operates as a foundation and new statutes of the Institute have been adopted.
- The structural reform of the academic units of the Institute has been completed: (a) each chair of the Faculty of Theology has a responsible head (professor) and teaching staff (lecturers); (b) structural reform of other units has been carried out.
- The Institute will successfully have passed institutional accreditation and will be a professional higher education institution recognised by state.
- In order to meet the standards of educational and research work, teaching staff will be trained, provided feedback and attested.
- Opportunities will be created to involve young teaching staff in education and research work, in order to elaborate a career model and ensure the future generation of teaching staff.
- The library of the Institute will have been developing keeping in mind the needs of students, teaching staff and researchers. The number of available digital publications will be increased.

6.4. Institute as a Church Training Centre

- The Institute develops purposefully continuing education. In order to meet the needs of the Church, cooperation with the sub-institutions of the Church will be increased, additional resources will be given to this field. Continuing education plans will be updated.
- All continuing education that Church offers, will be assembled onto a single platform, including marketing, composition of academical calendar and implementation of a needs-based approach.
- Contacts with alumni (including EELC and EAOC clergy) will be deepened and interest groups mapped to offer them continuing education courses. In this regard, cooperation with other establishments of higher theological education in Estonia is deepened.

6.5. Institute in the Society

- The popularization of science is increased by speeches, articles and trainings/courses of the employees of the Institute.
- An information coordinator/communication specialist will be employed, who will deal with the development of the homepage and internal and external communication, for the information about the Institute's *curricula*, trainings as well as statements by the teaching staff would be meaningfully and attractively presented, being available via various information channels and reaches the interested target group.
- The number of courses in the fields of theology and pastoral care and counselling as well as continuing education courses of Christian Folk University will be increased. Courses are being marketed. The training of pastoral counsellors by the Institute helps to mitigate the tensions that might arise in the society and contributes significantly to fostering a sense of security in the society.