

## Church law as an instrument for ecumenism – the Christian law initiative

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In an initiative carried out 2013-2019, professor Norman Doe, Cardiff University, invited twelve church lawyers/canon lawyers representing eight church families, in order to try the thought that church law can be a useful instrument for ecumenism. WCC had presented that idea in 1974, but only little had been done in the field since. The group found a working method to identify Church law principles that all of the church families have in common, explicitly or implicitly. Doe presented a wide range of principles that he had identified after having studied the laws of a wide range of churches. Each member of the panel then compared the principles with the church law of the proper church and shared the outcome with each other. While meeting, the group examines what principles were and were not fully agreed on. When a principle was not such that all could agree that it could be found in the proper church law, the members of the group together tried to find a way of formulating it in a different way. Often there were solutions not thought of on beforehand, springing from the meeting and from listening to each other. Most of the presented principles were accepted, some after modification, and a few were cut out. The method was a dialogue with the scope to put light on how Christian Churches share laws and regulations to such a great extent and find a pattern of what can be said to be "Christian law".

The project is also mirrored in the book *Church Laws and Ecumenism - A New Path for Christian Unity*, edited by Norman Doe, published in 2020.