

English

PEK aktuell

PRESSEDIENST DES ERZBISTUMS KÖLN

Erzbistum Köln | Newsdesk

Kardinal-Frings-Str. 1-3
50668 Köln

Telefon 0221 1642 3909
Telefax 0221 1642 3990

newsdesk@erzbistum-koeln.de
www.erzbistum-koeln.de

Press release | 26 March 2021

Considerable international response to independent investigation

Independent investigation into the handling of sexualised violence in the Archdiocese of Cologne to be translated

Cologne. There has been a considerable international response to the "Independent investigation into the handling of sexualised violence in the Archdiocese of Cologne".

For this reason, the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, has decided to have the report translated: "Sexualised violence and the covering up of such violence is a crime that is committed not only in Germany but elsewhere too. Inquiring into and responding to such crimes is a high priority for the Church in Germany and worldwide, even though progress in German dioceses and in countries across the world has not been uniform. If we can, with this report on the situation in Cologne, make a small contribution to the Church's progress in this respect, I will be very pleased."

Notice is being taken of the "Gercke report" far beyond the borders of Germany and Europe. The law firm Gercke & Wollschläger itself has received several enquiries from victims and organisations that represent them in a number of countries (Brazil, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia).

In the USA, a number of newspapers including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Washington Times* reported on what has become known as the "Gercke report". Reputable media outlets in other countries also showed considerable interest in the publication of the report on the independent investigation, e.g. in the UK and Ireland (including among others *The Independent*, *Daily Mail*, and *The Irish Times*), France (including *Le Figaro*, *La Croix*, *Libération*, and *Le Parisien*), Italy (including *la Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera*), Canada (*National Post*), and Spain (including *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, and *Público*). In addition to international Catholic media such as *Vatican News* and *Catholic World Report*, individual newspapers in South America, Asia, and Africa also reported on the publication.

The Cologne-based criminal law experts Prof Björn Gercke and Dr Kerstin Stirner presented the report commissioned by the archbishop of Cologne at a press conference on 18 March 2021.

The Archdiocese of Cologne is part of the Catholic Church and the largest diocese in Germany in terms of number of members. About two million Catholics live in 180 groups of parishes on both banks of the River Rhine. Over 2,000 people work in the pastoral ministry. Together with a host of unpaid volunteers, they shape life in the diocese's parishes and approximately 800 churches. The seat of the archbishop is in Cologne, which is almost exactly in the middle of the archdiocese, which stretches from Bonn in the south to Düsseldorf and Wuppertal in the north. The archdiocese is led by the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki.

On 23 March, Cardinal Woelki and his vicar-general, Dr Markus Hofmann, announced the first concrete measures the Archdiocese of Cologne intends to take in response to the report's findings.

One of these measures is the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry in line with the agreement reached by the German Bishops' Conference and the German Government's Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues Johannes Wilhelm Rörig. Other reforms will include improved record-keeping, the strengthening of staff and organisational structures in the field of intervention, the assessment and development of prevention measures, the regular monitoring of clerics and lay people who have been charged with offences, and changes to the formation of priests. Furthermore, additional funds will be provided for increased recognition payments to victims.

For more information on the independent investigation, please visit: https://www.erzbistum-koeln.de/rat_und_hilfe/sexualisierte-gewalt/studien/unabhaengige-untersuchung/

For more information in English, French, Spanish, and Italian, please visit: <https://www.erzbistum-koeln.de/independent-investigation>

Redaktion: Dr. Oliver Schillings (verantw.), Reinhild Bues, Nele Harbeke, Thomas Klimmek, Sarah Meisenberg, Lavinia Michel

Erzbistum Köln | Generalvikariat
Hauptabteilung Medien und Kommunikation
Newsdesk

Kardinal-Frings-Straße 1-3 | 50668 Köln
Postanschrift:
Erzbistum Köln | 50606 Köln

Telefon 0221 1642 3909
Telefax 0221 1642 3990

newsdesk@erzbistum-koeln.de
www.erzbistum-koeln.de