

**Issues raised by the Austrian delegation of the Catholic Women's Movement Austria during consultations with curia representatives in Rom on May 3, 2022**

**Mag.a Angelika Ritter-Grepl, President of the Austrian Catholic Women's Movement**

**Mag.a Lucia Greiner, Head of the Pastoral Office of the Archdiocese of Salzburg**

**Sr. Mag.a Christine Rod MC, Secretary General of the Austrian Conference of Major Religious Superiors**

**Mag.a Gabriele Eder-Cakl, Head of the Pastoral Office of the Diocese of Linz**

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**In 2021, the Pastoral Commission of Austria (PKÖ) mandated a research study titled: "Equality between men and women in the organizational development of the Austrian Catholic Church."** This study was set up by the International Research Center for Social and Ethical Issues in Salzburg and focused on the Laity in the Church. It was presented to the Austrian Bishop's Conference in November 2021.

Core of the study was the evaluation of 18 guide-based Interviews with experts from within and outside the church, who readily provided their long-standing experience concerning the promotion of equality within dioceses, organizations, and companies.

The key recommendation of the study, to embrace gender equality as a core task for bishops, opens up the possibility of taking further steps. Comparability is possible by collecting data and through continuous monitoring. A gender equality promoting environment in the workplace, in which men and women, employees and employers are included, can promote even more advancement. A stronger female presence in the media is also of great importance to increase women's visibility. Finally continuous further education as well as supporting efforts by equality promoting clerical institutions was also endorsed by the Pastoral Commission of Austria.

The analysis of the diocesan mission statements on the topic of gender equality as well as the statutes of the diocesan women's commissions clearly showed that their pioneering role will only be effective if it is more closely linked to leadership and can act on behalf of the bishop or the diocesan leadership.

**In its deliberations in November 2021, the Austrian Bishops' Conference, in accordance with the proposal of the Pastoral Commission of Austria (PKÖ), took up two essential elements of the study.**

"The bishops have committed themselves to measures to increase the proportion of women with leadership responsibility in departments, committees and working groups of the dioceses to at least one third in seven years," Archbishop Dr. Franz Lackner, Episcopate chairman, explained. In future, the empowerment of women is to be a "fixed topic in further training courses for church leadership personnel". In concrete terms, a sensitive approach between the sexes is to be made an obligatory topic of discussion, explained the

Archbishop of Salzburg. Each diocese must now clarify independently how these requirements can be implemented, and the Pastoral Commission will continue to guide this process.

**In all pre-synodal consultations of all Austrian dioceses, the position of women in the church was of central importance.** The topics of women's ordination and participation of lay women in leadership were distinguished. In the discussion on women's priesthood, it is especially recommended that the general priesthood received from baptism be given a greater role in the theological discussion, especially concerning Christ's-representation. Concerning women in leadership positions, it is necessary to implement the decision of the Bishops' Conference.

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**Lucia Greiner, Head of the Pastoral Office of the Archdiocese of Salzburg**

Member of the Board of the Pastoral Commission Austria and of the Working Group on Gender Equality  
Member of the Austrian Catholic Women's Movement

Archdiocese of Salzburg, Episcopal Office for Pastoral Care, Kapitelplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg, Austria  
0043/662/8047-2060 [lucia.greiner@eds.at](mailto:lucia.greiner@eds.at)