

## 10. Confirmation Work in the United Methodist Church in Germany

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### 10.1 Introduction

The Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche (EmK) in Germany is the only free church to participate in the European study on confirmation work (cf. [www.ku-studie.de](http://www.ku-studie.de)). Given the fact that this is the first-ever research project of this kind in the EmK, this chapter will slightly differ in length and structure from the other country reports.

The term »free church« refers to churches that have always been independent from the state. This explains their specific structure which is not based on a certain region like in the case of the German regional Churches that originated as state churches.

#### *Basic Information about the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche*

The Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche – known worldwide as the United Methodist Church – has its historical origin in 18th century England (Schuler 2011). John Wesley, a minister in the Church of England, together with his brother Charles started an evangelistic-missionary movement with an emphasis on social-welfare work. Due to their rigorous daily schedule they were called names such as »Holy Club«, and since 1732 »Methodists«. The movement spread across Britain and to the colonies in North America, then back to continental Europe and even to other continents across the world (Klaiber 2011). Due to differences concerning questions of church organisation or ethical perceptions, other Methodist Churches grew out of the British and American Methodism. Almost all of them are members of the World Methodist Council (WMC; Yrigoyen 2010). Today, the WMC has more than 80 million members and unites one of the world's largest families of Christian churches. The United Methodist Church (UMC) with 12 million members is the largest of WMC's 76 member churches (UM Handbook 2014). It was established in 1968 as an international association of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Theologically, Methodism stands firmly on the legacy of the Reformation. It emphasises the extensive ministry of God's prevenient grace in the world from which a Christian way of life (»Living Grace«) is derived, focusing on individual and social sanctification (Klaiber/Marquardt 2001). A significant feature of the UMC is its ecumenical attitude and commitment to a fruitful cooperation of the churches in mission and social-welfare work.

In the German speaking parts of Europe, the UMC is called Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche ([www.emk.de](http://www.emk.de)). The EmK in Germany in 2014 had 53 500 members and affiliates. As a Free Church, the EmK emphasises voluntary membership and the church's independence from the state. A pulpit and altar fellowship exists between the EmK and all member churches of the EKD.

### *Theology and Terminology*

The educational work with children and youth has its indispensable position in Methodism since the beginning (Härtner 2010). The Kirchliche Unterricht (KU) has a long tradition in German-speaking Methodism as a fruitful form of work in youth ministry. In form and content, the KU is comparable to the confirmation work being practiced within the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), as well as to the equivalent forms of Christian education in other Free Churches.

The KU is a deliberate offer of the congregations, attended by most of their youth. It usually encompasses close to two years of time and is aimed at young people aged between 12 and 14 years. Participation in the KU »is open to all adolescents, whether they are baptised or not, and whether they belong to the EmK or not« (VLO 2012, 231).

Once KU is completed, a ceremonial service is conducted (Agende 2014, 177). Since the adolescents receive an individual blessing for their future life, the service is also referred to as Einsegnung (benediction). The teenagers are not expected to make a confession of faith or affirm a religious obligation. Nonetheless, Einsegnung has a high relevance for them, their families and for the congregation as a whole. The »Agende« for the Einsegnung service summarizes the theological connection between baptism, KU and church membership: »The service indicates that this is not a confirmation. The actual confirmation is rather given in connection with a personal creed when one becomes a [professing] member of the church. Thus the EmK is convinced, that the personal affirmative response of faith cannot be demanded at a certain point in time. That is why a confirmation cannot be expected according to age groups. The highlight of the service is the blessing of the youth. They do not make a confession, rather the community asks God's blessing for their further way through life.« (ibid.)

Theologically, KU is closely related to baptism. For the adolescents who have been baptised as children, KU is regarded as a kind of »refresher« instruction on baptism that aims at encouraging and enabling them to make an independent confession of faith. Baptised children continue to be regarded as church affiliates even after the Einsegnung (baptised members).

Only after being admitted into full membership, they become professing members in the Church. Unbaptised adolescents may still remain so after the

completion of the KU if they wish to, keeping the status of an affiliate. Thus, the KU functions as instruction before baptism, while baptism itself may actually be postponed.

### *Kirchlicher Unterricht in Transition*

In the post-1945 period of German-speaking Methodism, the usual teaching practice was mainly based on passing on knowledge about the faith, e.g., by using catechisms (Härtner 2014). From the 1960s, one asked how the issues of faith could be best adapted to the lives of the adolescents and the changing societal conditions. In the mid-1990s a nation-wide work group party started to develop a unified KU curriculum for the EmK in the reunited Germany. At the turn of the millennium a revised Order for KU was introduced. Compared to earlier editions, it manifested a new emphasis: KU was to consistently start from the angle of the young people and always keep this in view. Alongside with the new order, a new nation-wide curriculum was initiated, followed by the comprehensive KU handbook »Unterwegs ins Leben« (Härtner 2006).

Unlike the term Konfirmandenarbeit (confirmation work) used in the EKD (Schröder 2012, 481), the EmK retained the more traditional term Kirchlicher Unterricht (Church instruction). This term declares that KU is given permission to be educational. That manifests an interest in passing on content that also includes such topics as do not necessarily come up directly in the daily life of young people. KU hereby does not seek a premature acceptance of »ready-made« content; the teenagers are meant to personally grapple with central themes of Christian theology and faith in practice, involving participation in enjoyable projects along with learning, playing and celebrating. The goal is to stimulate and encourage development processes significant for life along the lines of »doing theology with young people« (Härtner 2012, 42), accordingly to John Wesley's dictum »think and let think« (Wesley 1742, 34).

## 10.2 Description of the Study: Procedures

In 2014 the EmK consisted of 520 local congregations, grouped in 245 circuits; it is obviously one of the minority Churches in Germany. Because of the small total sample, the study was carried out as a nationwide full-scale survey. The questionnaires follow the general scheme of the German EKD-study (cf. p. 182 ff.). However, some wordings had to be modified because of the different Methodist terminology described above. Additional questionnaires for workers and confirmands ( $t_1$ ,  $t_2$ ) investigate the special situation of KU in the EmK. Since the EmK has a two-year curriculum, the  $t_2$  questionnaires were filled in at two points in time (Einsegnung in 2013:  $t_{2a}$  and 2014:  $t_{2b}$ ), as is shown in

Table 80. Using the international wording »confirmands« refers to the adolescents taking part in KU.

Table 80: Questionnaires in the Methodist study

	Date	Questionnaires for ...
t <sub>0</sub>	Spring/summer 2012	Leaders
t <sub>1</sub>	Autumn 2012	Workers & all confirmands
t <sub>2a</sub>	Spring/summer 2013	Workers & confirmands: <i>Einsegnung</i> 2013
t <sub>2b</sub>	Spring/summer 2014	Confirmands: <i>Einsegnung</i> 2014

Table 81: Number of questionnaires (Germany, EmK) in 2012/2013

Overview of data	t <sub>0</sub>	t <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>2a</sub>	t <sub>2b</sub>	Percentage matched
units	128	99	89	62*	98 %
confirmands	1048	761	346	282	84 %
workers	–	138	114	–	88 %

\* In t<sub>2a</sub> only those units with *Einsegnung* in 2014 were involved.

### Setting of KU

In t<sub>0</sub> 226 circuits (92 %) nationwide responded, 166 (73 %) stated that they conduct KU, some in regional cooperation. In t<sub>0</sub> the leaders reported a total of 1048 confirmands in two KU cohorts. This amounts to an average number of 8 adolescents per group. But there is a large spectrum in this concern: the largest group has 20 members, while the smallest has just one. Most frequently there are fortnightly meetings of 90 minutes each. However, about a quarter of the groups have block-seminars of at least 180 minutes once a month. Weekend camps, excursions and »KU days« are typical in many circuits. On the average, a confirmand attends KU for 22 months. He or she attends 32 meetings, participates in 5 special days plus a one-day trip with the group and spends 3 or 4 nights at overnight events. But these average data offer only an approximate picture of a confirmand's pathway.

## 10.3 Major Results

### Confirmands

#### General Characteristics and Background Information

Among the confirmands, 47 % are male and 53 % are female. 12 % have a migration background. In comparing the two cohorts, one can say that at the

beginning of the KU course approximately two thirds of the confirmands are 12 years old and 20-25 % are 13. So Einsegnung, with few exceptions, takes place during the year in which the adolescents turn 14, which corresponds with the EKD findings.

77 % of the Methodist adolescents say that their parents are quite or very interested in religion (CJ01). 81 % remember that their parents said an evening prayer sometimes or almost every night (CJ02). 24 % of the confirmands are not baptised (international average 6 %). This is likely to be related to the fact that, in the EmK, a considerable number of parents decide to postpone having their children baptised in order to allow them time for an individual decision and have a personal experience on the day of their baptism. The study clearly shows that not being baptised does not have to be interpreted as an indicator for turning away from the church or the Christian faith. 27 % of the unbaptised confirmands say that their parents are »very interested« in religion (baptised: 17 %; CJ01, CM05) and 25 % of the unbaptised confirmands read the Bible by themselves at least once a week (baptised 13 %; CH04, CM05).

Concerning their goals in secondary education (CM07), 56 % of the confirmands indicate that they want to finish school with a qualification for university admission (Abitur), 34 % aim at the general certificate of secondary education (Realschulabschluss) and only 6 % see the certificate of compulsory basic secondary schooling (Hauptschulabschluss) as their goal of formal education. Attending different types of secondary schools shows no significant influence on the adolescents' satisfaction with KU time.

### Motivation for Participation

Asked for the reason why they joined KU, 73 % of the young people replied »because I wanted it myself« (CA11). Asking what motivated them to want it themselves, one can find a surprisingly high intrinsic, religious impulse. In  $t_1$  73 % want »to learn more about God and faith« (CB01). 65 % said they want »to come to my own decision about my faith in God« (CB03) and 71 % want »to be strengthened in my faith« (CB08). These results show that most of the Methodist adolescents put high hopes on KU. They are really willing to learn something significant for themselves. It is also noteworthy that the family celebration linked to Einsegnung as well as the fact that the young people get gifts only plays a small role for their initial motivation. In  $t_1$  only 36 % ( $t_2$ : 80 %) said »I take part in confirmation time because I want to have a beautiful celebration« (CB09, KB09), and a remarkably low 24 % ( $t_2$ : 49 %) took part because they want to »get money or presents at the end« (CB10, KB10). That shows that the assertion that young people attend KU only for the presents they expect is not true.

### Attitudes towards Religion and Church

The Methodist confirmands mainly come from highly religious families and show an outspoken religious attitude. 90% agreed with the statement »I believe in God« (CE09). 90% affirmed the belief that »God loves all humans and cares about each one of us« (CE03), and 85% agreed that »Jesus has risen from the dead« (CE04). Being asked »How would you describe your current attitude towards our church in general?« in  $t_1$  a vast majority of 87% ticked the boxes »rather positive« or »very positive« and only 1% said that their attitude is »very« or »rather negative« (CF02).

### Expectation and Experiences

As indicated above, young people in the EmK set high hopes on KU. At the same time, 93% of the youth in  $t_1$  affirmed the expectation »to have a lot of fun« (CK05). Perhaps it is a mistake frequently made by adults to separate learning from having fun.

46% of the Methodist confirmands wanted »to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands« (CK04), and for 68% it was important that their »questions concerning faith will play a role« (CK11). The  $t_2$  data suggest that not all of these expectations were met. Only 31% of the teenagers stated that they »could influence the decision about the topics« (KK04), and only 52% felt that their »questions concerning faith were addressed« (KK11).

73% stated that they had a lot of fun during KU (KK05). This may be a fairly good figure, but it still means that the expectations of almost a quarter of the confirmands were not met. Nevertheless one can legitimately say that KU in the EmK is much better than its reputation. 84% of the young people were satisfied with the person who was primarily responsible for KU (KN07). 81% were satisfied with »the whole confirmation time« (KN10) and 78% liked the camps they attended (KN11). All these results show that confirmation work is a model for success. But there is still some improvement to be made.

### *Leaders, Workers and Volunteers*

#### Background Data

Among the workers the average age is 46 years and 32% are women. Although there are no clear guidelines regarding this concern, KU in the EmK is typically the minister's task. The leaders rank KU third among their work priorities (VR28). 109 out of 138 workers in KU are ministers, 9 workers in KU are employed as deacons or as youth workers. A noteworthy result of the EmK study is the extremely low rate of voluntary workers. In  $t_1$  only 15 volunteers filled in a questionnaire. This indicates that as to date, KU in the EmK is rarely carried out as teamwork.

Table 82: Satisfaction with confirmation time ( $t_2$ ) in Germany (EmK)

To what extent are you satisfied with ...	M	SD	Yes	We didn't have that
KN01: the whole KU time	5.49	1.30	81 %	–
KN03: content/topics of lessons in KU	5.12	1.26	72 %	–
KN07: minister/person primarily responsible for KU	5.89	1.43	84 %	–
KN08: other teachers/workers	5.57	1.53	80 %	18 %
KN10: church services	5.14	1.42	74 %	2 %
KN11: camp(s)	5.60	1.63	78 %	4 %
KN14: music, songs and singing	5.11	1.68	67 %	5 %
KN20: working methods (for example, working with biblical texts, group work, etc.)	5.04	1.38	67 %	–

N = 364-619; scale: 1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = totally satisfied; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; Yes = Positive response (5, 6, 7).

### Expectations and Goals

100 % of all leaders, workers and volunteers said they wanted the confirmands to »experience that their questions concerning faith play a role« (WC15). 93 % underlined the objective that the young people should »develop a personal point of view concerning their own life« (WC01). This shows that those who teach do not – at least in principle – simply want to impose matters of faith on others, but that they want to listen to the adolescents' questions and take them seriously. At the same time, though, it is striking that only 62 % of those questioned in  $t_1$  wanted the young people to »be allowed to decide about the topics together with their fellow confirmands« (WB09). This suggests a discrepancy between intention and reality, which has to be kept in mind.

All those who were leading KU groups considered it important that the young people are »strengthened in their faith« (WC02: 96 %). For that reason they wanted them to meet people »to whom faith is important« (WB10: 95 %), »to experience the presence of God« during this time together (WB20: 94 %) and »to learn to live their everyday life in relationship to God« (WC11: 91 %). Moreover, 93 % said that the adolescents should »be supported in their personal and social development« during KU time (WC04).

Another essential objective for all those leading KU groups was to help adolescents to become more familiar with the Bible. The Bible is the KU topic, which was considered the most important (WA22: 99 %). Another vital aim of those teaching was that they wanted the young people to experience a sense of community (WD03: 99 %). In this context, however, it is striking that in  $t_1$  »only« 66 % of the workers wanted to »have at least one personal conversation

with each confirmand during confirmation time« (WD05). Taking into consideration the high number of small KU-groups and the importance attached to the high aspiration mentioned above, one could have expected here an even higher value.

### Experiences

86% of the leaders, workers and volunteers in the EmK »like doing confirmation work« (VM02), 69% were »satisfied with the confirmation work« in their parish (VM01). 98% of those interviewed were of the opinion that the leader has a strong or very strong influence on the topics and activities of KU (VJ01). Thus it can be stated that those who conduct KU are consciously aware of their influence and consider themselves to be in a position to carry out KU independently.

However, there are factors, which prevent them from doing KU in the way they would like to. What the workers regretted most is that the adolescents »could hardly concentrate on contents« of KU after a long school day. This was often the case in 18% of the groups and sometimes in 48% of them (VN12). Another disrupting component for those who conduct KU groups is the fact that »the time for the preparation of the meetings was too short for me« (VN01: »sometimes« - 42%, »often« - 9%). These values prove that in day-to-day life it is not always easy to follow through on the priorities set theoretically.

If one compares the intentions of the workers with their experiences, it can be noticed that their own expectations are surpassed at two points: Firstly, the percentage of those who make the adolescents learn central texts by heart is markedly higher in  $t_2$  (VC03: 69%) than the share of those who intended that in  $t_1$  (WC03: 56%). Secondly, in  $t_2$  79% were of the opinion that they »had at least one personal conversation with each confirmand« (VD05), whereas only 66% had aimed for this in the beginning. Focusing on which intentions could not be put into practice, one figure stands out remarkably: Only 20% of the workers were of the opinion in  $t_2$  that the adolescents »had a say in the choice of topics« for KU (VB09). This is a drastic drop, compared with 62% in WB09.

A further area with a wide gap between wish and reality is that of getting »to know what programs of youth work the church offers to them« (VC06). Only a good half (53%) of the adult interviewees at the end of KU time think that the young people have experienced youth programs run by church youth departments, although 85% had aimed for it in the beginning (WC06).

The fact that 69% of all EmK workers are satisfied with KU, is a relatively low percentage compared with the international figures. This might indicate that there should be more reflection in the future on what can help those who conduct KU to do what they would like to do (VM01). One key factor might be teamwork; the Methodist study shows that those ministers working in a team



tend to be more satisfied with KU (76 %) than those who are leading KU by themselves (67 %; VM01).

### *Didactics and Methodology*

#### Materials and Methods

It appears that the teaching material of the EmK, »Unterwegs ins Leben« (see above), has been very well received. 75 % of the workers stated that they use it »sometimes« (20 %), »often« (17 %) or »very often« (58 %), (XZF43). 72 % used it as their prevalent or exclusive teaching material (XZF44). In general, the more conventional teaching measures still seem to prevail as today's KU's methodology. 69 % of the leaders stated that they »often« use the method »presentation by the main responsible person« (VH01). 68 % »often« used »discussion« (VH02) and 69 % »working with biblical texts« (VH10). At the same time, however, 13 different other methods (e.g., role play, painting, meeting people from the parish) were used by a good quarter of those asked at least »sometimes« or »often«. Frequently creative and activating forms of teaching such as play-acting or means of performance were practiced. Two thirds of the leaders state that experience-oriented programs (excursions, projects, etc.) took place in their KU groups (VH28). Regarding the involvement of digital media, leaders stated that they work »never« (55 %), »seldom« (35 %), »sometimes« (9 %) or often (1 %) use the internet (VH32). In view of the high significance of electronic media and social networks for young people today, more attention should be paid to this area.

#### Topics

Table 83 compares the importance attached to topics by workers and confirmands respectively in  $t_1$ .

The dark grey shading indicates two topics that are emphasised considerably more (30 % and more) by workers than by the confirmands. The light grey shading marks two topics, which the confirmands consider more important than the workers.

The picture this table paints is very similar to the results of the first study in the EKD (Schweitzer et al. 2010, 69). Those who lead KU groups should be aware of the gaps indicated above and, together with the confirmands, should consider reasons why it is important to approach especially those topics that may not play a key role in the adolescents' everyday lives. As a result of the first study on confirmation work, a considerable amount of newly developed teaching material has appeared, for example, on friendship which the adolescents highlighted as one of their top interests (Ilg et al. 2009, 105). Hopefully, the topic of friendship will become a standard in KU.

Table 83: Comparison of importance of topics in  $t_1$  (sorted by difference between workers and confirmands) in Germany (EmK) (%)

Importance of topic	workers	confirmands
<b>Course and meaning of Sunday services (WA05, CL03)</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>The Lord's Supper (WA04, CL02)</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>63</b>
God (WA23, CL22)	98	88
Justice and responsibility for others (WA15, CL08)	86	70
The meaning of life (WA14, CL11)	91	75
Friendship (WA16, CL09)	67	87
Other religions (WA11, CL07)	38	52

N = 136-138 (workers); N = 747-750 (confirmands); the share of those with a positive response (5, 6, 7), on a scale 1 to 7.

### *Effects of KU*

In the following section three different aspects are examined: What kind of atmosphere did the confirmands perceive? What did they learn, in their opinion? And what was conveyed informally?

The adolescents saw KU time as a positive experience: 85 % confirm a good sense of community in their group (KB02), and 66 % (KK56) »made new friends within the group«. 69 % say that they »came into good personal contact with the leaders and workers« (KK03) and a very high 82 % »feel welcome and accepted in their parish« (KK37).

It is hardly surprising that at the end of KU time the vast majority of confirmands said they »have learned more about God and faith« (KB01: 80 %). But it is interesting to note that 74 % agreed with the statement »I have been enabled to come to my own decision about my faith« (KB03). This clearly indicates that KU does help young people on the way to develop their own faith. But there is still more work to do. As previously mentioned, only 52 % of the adolescents said that their questions about faith were addressed (KK11). KU is more than conveying theoretical or dogmatic knowledge. This is supported by the fact that 74 % said that they were strengthened in their faith (KB08), and 71 % found that their commitment to other people is important (KK44).

On the other hand, 34 % of the young people said that what they learned during KU has little to do with their everyday life (KK35). One could assume that this value would drop, given that the confirmands were able to decide about the topics. Interestingly, there is no correlation between this item and KK04 »we could influence the decisions about the topics« ( $r_{KK04/KK35} = 0,07$ ).

This might suggest that in the eyes of these adolescents, the Christian faith as such seems to bear little connection with their everyday life.

A lot could be said about informal learning during KU time. For example, in  $t_2$  a gratifying 82% of the adolescents stated that they felt welcomed and acknowledged in their parish (KK37). In contrast, only 33% stated they had the opportunity to contribute their own ideas to worship services (KS02), and 33% declared they had the chance to try out voluntary work within programs of the church (KK26). Findings like these indicate the need of further considerations and reflections concerning the image of the church conveyed to the adolescents.

#### 10.4 Challenges and Questions for the Future

It is to be underscored that the first full-scale study in the EmK in Germany draws a generally positive picture of KU, both for adolescents and workers. Yet, there are challenges and questions that should be kept in mind for the future, as the following examples sketch out briefly.

##### *Participatory Church*

After the first review of the findings, the question arises if the young people get to know their Church during KU primarily as a place in which they are received kindly, but where their own ideas are only desired to a limited degree. This should be a starting point for further reforms for a church, which sees special priorities »in emphasising ›practical piety‹ [and] realising ›true Christianity‹ in the life of the believers« (VLO 2012, 31). How can KU help to enable the young people to experience the church as a space in which – more than before – they can contribute their own ideas and bring about change?

##### *Relevant Worship Services*

It is no surprise that another difficult area is worship. The number of those who find church services »usually boring« in  $t_1$  may look comparatively low (CG04: 33%) but in  $t_2$  the figure also rises within the EmK (KG04: 36%). Table 84 displays more detailed findings:

One surprising finding is the high regard for the sermons in correlation with KG04 »Church services are usually boring« ( $r_{KG04/KS05} = -0.45$ ). The adolescents felt that they »listened to interesting sermons« if they had the impression that »the services usually dealt with things that concern me and my life« ( $r_{KS14/KS05} = 0.52$ ). How can worship leaders and preachers respond to this encouraging signal?

Table 84: Worship services (confirmands, t<sub>2</sub>) in Germany (EmK)

What do you think about the church services during your confirmation time?	M	SD	Yes
KS01: I experienced forms of worship adequate for young people (e. g., youth services).	4.93	1.80	60 %
KS02: I had the opportunity to contribute my own ideas to the services.	3.67	1.88	33 %
KS03: I had tasks in the services (for example, do a reading).	4.23	2.22	49 %
KS04: I met nice people.	5.75	1.47	80 %
KS05: I listened to interesting sermons.	4.72	1.72	57 %
KS12: Singing old church hymns was nice for me.	3.56	1.96	33 %
KS13: Singing modern church songs was nice for me.	5.86	1.57	82 %
KS14: The services usually dealt with things that concern me and my life.	4.35	1.59	47 %
KS15: I felt secure in the group.	5.38	1.52	71 %
KS16: I liked being part of the worship community.	5.17	1.51	69 %
KS17: I felt uncomfortable.	2.14	1.62	11 %

N = 522-619; scale: 1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; Yes = Positive response (5, 6, 7).

### *KU as Teamwork*

In the EmK, KU groups are predominantly lead by one clergy person. The data indicate that the »minister/person primarily responsible for confirmation work« (KN07) is the most influential factor for the satisfaction of the youth with their KU experience in general (regression analysis:  $\beta = 0.24$ ). In KU groups with team leadership, the study shows, on the average, higher satisfaction rates on the part of the adolescents (KN01: M – with team = 5.65; without team = 5.36). Findings like these suggest that the EmK should reconsider its traditional leadership structure for KU. How can more pastoral leaders be disposed towards a team approach? How can youthful team members, in particular, be attracted to contribute to KU?

### *Receiving Members*

Although the confirmands have a positive attitude towards religion and church and 96 % of the leaders regard the topic of »meaning of baptism and professing membership« (HZF32) as important, the number of adolescents who say they want to become professing members of the EmK at their Einsegnung or shortly afterwards decreases from 15 % in t<sub>1</sub> (CZF35) to only 8 % in t<sub>2</sub> (KZF35). The

EmK should reconsider the criteria being used regarding professing membership. Many, especially young people, perceive the current practice of linking full membership with a number of claims and obligations as a high threshold.

#### *KU in a Church that is Growing Smaller*

In the last two decades, the EmK has grown smaller; the declining membership has an effect on KU. A remarkable 26% of the KU groups nationwide have four or fewer members. Surprisingly, most confirmands depict a positive rating of their KU group, no matter what size it is. Regardless of this fact, there are good reasons to give smaller groups the opportunity to experience larger gatherings, be it in cooperation with other KU groups or in attending a regional or national youth event. The experiences of an initial KU Camp indicate a high potential that should be developed further (Beißwenger 2014).

#### *Outlook*

Even if there is still a need for reform at some points and so further potential is in view, the EmK study shows that KU may, with good reason, be regarded as an auspicious field of congregational educational work within the EmK nationwide. The finding that a noteworthy 81% of the adolescents surveyed are generally satisfied with their KU time (KN01) is an incentive for further commitment to this successful model of Free Church youth work.