

Research Project (MHG Study)

“Sexual abuse of minors by catholic priests, deacons and male members of orders in the domain of the German Bishops’ Conference”

Summary

Attention:

Rough translation of the Secretariat of the German Bishops’ Conference

Translation not authorized by the scientific consortium

Summary

A.1 Methods

- The overarching objective of the research project was to determine the frequency of the sexual abuse of minors by diocesan priests and deacons, as well as by priests within religious orders who are governed by “*Gestellungsverträge*” (a contract conferring a form of stipend), within the sphere for which the German Bishops’ Conference is responsible, as well as to describe the forms of sexual abuse and to identify structures and dynamics within the Church which might favour abuse.
- All 27 dioceses in Germany entered into a contractual commitment to take part in the research project.
- The research project comprises seven sub-projects (SP1 to SP7), each of which explored different questions, chose different methodological approaches and examined different samples. The results of the sub-projects as a whole provide a comprehensive, differentiated and integrated view of the abuse.
- The analysis period that was selected covered the years between 1946 and 2014; cases from previous years were however also included if the accused person in question was still alive in 1946 and was accused of a crime that had been committed prior to that. The research project did not pursue a legal or criminalistic approach, but a retrospective-descriptive and epidemiological one. Individual cases were not assessed from a legal or criminalistic point of view. The terms “accused person” and “person affected” were therefore consistently applied. All cases and persons involved (accused persons and persons affected) remained anonymous vis-à-vis the research project – with the exception of sub-project 2, in which face-to-face interviews were conducted with persons affected, as well as with both accused and non-accused clerics, once the respective individuals had consented, as well as of sub-project 3, in which criminal records were examined.
- The research project did not have access to the Catholic Church’s original files. All archives and computer files of the dioceses were reviewed by staff from the dioceses, or by law firms commissioned by them, in accordance with the stipulations of the research consortium. All information on identified cases of sexual abuse was transferred (in anonymised form) to questionnaires that were provided by the research project and sent to the research consortium for analysis.
- *None* of the data and information regarding cases, persons affected or accused persons collected in the research project were original data or original statements by persons involved. Instead, the data came from secondary sources (e.g. criminal records or the Church’s personnel records), with the exception of the data that were collected from interviews with persons affected or accused persons (SP2), as well as from the anonymised online survey of persons affected (SP7). They therefore reflect the perspective of the respective data owner, and were subject to specified documentation purposes or guidelines.
- This means that no information was available with regard to many of the aspects that were to be covered by the questionnaires used in the research project. This applies in particular to issues and perspectives of individuals who were affected by sexual abuse, which are inadequately and indirectly portrayed in administrative or institutional data sources. The fact that large quantities of data relating to persons affected or to specific subject areas are missing (e.g. “psychological or health consequences of offences”) does not therefore necessarily mean that such facts could not have been true, but merely indicates that no such circumstances were documented in the data sources that were available.
- The prolonged analysis period also meant that a large quantity of data were missing if the event in question had taken place a long time ago, or if persons involved had already died. In addition, it was of necessity not possible to ascertain how many cases of abuse occurred during the period under analysis with regard to which files or information no longer existed. An extensive and informative data collection on many areas and topics in the problem area was compiled despite these limitations.
- The findings of the analyses of personnel or criminal records refer without exception to the known area of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics within the Catholic Church. No knowledge of the unknown area was obtained. All the frequency information therefore underestimates the actual situation.
- All the findings are purely descriptive in nature. Due to the research method that was used, statistical

proof of causal relationships between individual phenomena or variables cannot be provided. At best, hypotheses can be generated on the basis of existing findings.

- The research method chosen in this study, namely to use sources of information that existed independently of one another, and in doing so to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods and include criminological, psychological, sociological and forensic-psychiatric skills, has not been used to this extent in any of the national and international studies that have been published on this topic to date.
- The envisioned integration of the various research approaches and sub-projects proved to be highly beneficial in many respects with regard to the discussion and interpretation of the findings. Despite the different samples, findings from the sub-projects complemented or confirmed one another in many areas. Having said that, the selection mechanisms in the individual samples, as well as the methodological limitations posed by the different data sources, also had a limiting impact in terms of integrative conclusions. The heterogeneity of the data material in the sub-projects, for example, made a standardised evaluation more difficult, and the prolonged periods of time that needed to be covered, which caused correspondingly large gaps in information, had the effect of impeding retrospective analyses. Even so, the multimodal methodological approach that was selected here, which is founded on diverse samples and on sources of data which are as large as possible, provides an indispensable approach to the analysis of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, as well as in other similarly complex institutions.

A.2 Key empirical findings obtained from the research

Preliminary remark: The information in brackets relating to the sub-projects (SP1 to SP7) refers to findings and figures for the respective facts from

SP1: Analysis of structural data from the dioceses,
SP2: Interviews with persons affected and with accused and non-accused clerics,
SP3: Analysis of criminal records,
SP4: Concepts and aspects of prevention,
SP4: Literature research and analysis,
SP6: Analysis of personnel records from the dioceses,
SP7: Internet-assisted anonymised survey among persons affected.

All findings are to be interpreted subject to the methodological constraints listed above. Regardless of the declarative form in which the following results are presented below, the results always refer only to the samples or datasets that were analysed. Generalisations over and above these areas of application are not permitted. Please refer to the respective chapters on the sub-projects for details.

- **The number of clerics accused**

38,156 sets of personnel records and reference files from the 27 dioceses dating from 1946 to 2014 were reviewed as part of the research project (SP6). Information regarding allegations of the sexual abuse of minors was found to exist with regard to 1,670 clerics of the Catholic Church. This represented 4.4 percent of all clerics from 1946 to 2014 whose personnel records and other documents were reviewed in the dioceses. This figure constitutes a conservative estimate, and findings from research into the unknown area suggest that the actual value is higher.

The share among diocesan priests was 5.1 percent (1,429 accused persons). It was 2.1 percent (159 accused persons) among priests within religious orders who are governed by “*Gestellungsverträge*” (a contract conferring a form of stipend), and 1.0 percent (24 accused persons) among full-time deacons. The clerical status of 58 accused persons was unknown.

Where the personnel records of clerics who were accused in the course of the application procedure for “benefits in recognition of the suffering imposed on the victims of sexual abuse” were reviewed, only 50 percent of the personnel records or other church documents relating to clerics with regard to whom the allegations had been classified by the Catholic Church in the applications as being plausible were found to contain a corresponding reference to the accusation or offence. This means that half of all cases would not have been discovered as part of a review of personnel records pure and simple, had the persons affected not actively applied for “benefits in recognition of the suffering imposed on the victims of sexual abuse”. This provides an indication of the extent of the unknown area that can be assumed to exist.

- **The number of children and juveniles affected**

According to the personnel records and reference files, it was possible to attribute a total of 3,677 children and juveniles who fell victim of sexual abuse to the 1,670 clerics who were accused. This averaged out to 2.5 persons affected per accused person (SP6). The figure reported in the analysis of criminal records was 3.9 (SP3).

There was evidence of a single person affected with regard to 54 percent of accused persons, and evidence existed of multiple persons affected with regard to 42.3 percent of them (accused persons with multiple allegations). The corresponding figure was missing for 3.7 percent of them. Accused persons with multiple allegations accounted for an average of 4.7 persons affected. The maximum value was 44 persons affected for one accused person (SP6).

- **The gender of the persons affected**

62.8 percent of those affected by sexual abuse were male, and 34.9 percent were female. Gender data were missing in 2.3 percent of cases (SP6). An accumulation of male persons affected was also found in the analyses that were carried out in sub-project 2 (76.6%), as well as in sub-project 3 (80.2%). The distinct predominance of male persons affected contrasts with the sexual abuse of minors occurring in non-church contexts.

- **The age of the persons affected when they were sexually abused for the first time**
51.6 percent of the persons affected were aged up to a maximum of thirteen years when they first underwent sexual abuse. 25.8 percent were aged fourteen and older; the age of 22.6 percent of them was unknown (SP6). The mean age of persons affected whose age was known was 12.0 years (SP6 and SP3) and 10.6 years, respectively (SP2).
- **The frequency and duration of abuse**
Multiple acts committed against individual persons affected were more common than one-off incidents. With regard to those persons affected for whom it was possible to determine the duration of the individual abuse, the average duration was 22.8 months (SP6), 15.3 months (SP3) and 20.3 months, respectively (SP2).
- **The age of the accused persons at the time of the first offence**
The mean age of the accused persons when committing their first offence was 42.6 (SP6), 40.5 (SP3), 30.2 (SP2: interviews with accused persons) and 31 (SP 2: interviews with persons affected), respectively. Most first offences were committed when the clerics were aged between 30 and 50. The average period between the year of ordination as a priest or deacon and the year of the accused first offence was 14.3 years (SP6). However, there was also a group that was accused of committing the first abusive offence much earlier.
- **The spread over time**
The findings from sub-project 3 and sub-project 6 do not lead to any conclusive indication that the sexual abuse of minors by clerics of the Catholic Church is a topic that has been resolved in the past and can now be considered to have been overcome. It can be assumed that the abuse continued throughout the entire period under investigation, namely from 1946 to 2014.
- **Indications of paedophilia among accused persons**
Information existed regarding at least two persons affected aged 13 or younger in the case of 28.2 percent of accused persons (SP6). Without being able to carry out a valid diagnostic classification as part of the research project, this is an indication of the existence of a possible primary or secondary paedophilic tendency. Similar percentages of accused persons with possible paedophilic preferences were also found in sub-project 2 (28%), as well as in sub-project 3 (28.2%).
- **Indications of homosexuality among accused persons**
Indications of a homosexual orientation were documented among 14.0 percent (SP6), and 19.1 percent (SP3), respectively, of the accused clergy. This was much higher than in the comparison group from other institutional contexts such as schools (6.4 %, SP3). There were indications of a homosexual orientation among 72 percent of the accused clerics interviewed in sub-project 2, and among 12 percent of the non-accused clerics who were interviewed.
- **Indications of psychosocial predispositions and risk behaviour among accused persons**
In the case of accused clerics, the personnel records rarely contained indications that they themselves had undergone sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence (SP6), which could be due to the fact that such information was either unknown or had not been documented. By contrast, indications were found with regard to 36 percent of accused persons in sub-project 2 that they themselves had suffered sexual abuse. Having said that, the personnel records (SP6) of accused persons contained numerous indications of problem areas or behavioural abnormalities that were not directly related to sexual abuse. These are abnormalities that can also occur in other professional contexts. Such indications were related to:
 - a general overburdening with official duties or problems in the exercise of the ministry,
 - isolation,
 - substance abuse (alcohol, medicines, illegal drugs),
 - inadequate social skills (e.g. in dealing with members of the parish or with superiors), lack of maturity or psychological abnormalities,
 - particular stress, significant changes or specific difficulties related to their personal circumstances (financial problems, illness, caring for or death of relatives, etc.).

- **Confiding in third parties**

Some of the persons affected confided in third parties with regard to sexual abuse (SP2: 29.9%, SP6: 36.7%). These were mainly parents or other family members, as well as the Catholic Church's commissioners on abuse. Roughly one-third of those for whom time data were available confided in someone soon after the sexual abuse occurred, whilst approximately 20 percent did not talk about the abuse until much later, i.e. not until ten or more years later. The personnel records gave the impression that the reactions of those around them tended to be positive and supportive (SP6). In contrast to this assessment based on the personnel records, persons affected in sub-project 2 and sub-project 7 also reported negative experiences after they had confided in another person. It was particularly stressed that they were often not believed. The discrepancies show that assessments of these topics depend very much on the respective source used.

- **Type of relationship between accused persons and persons affected, methods of preparation for the offences**

Three-quarters of all persons affected had a church or pastoral relationship with the accused persons (e.g. altar service, religious education, preparation for first communion or confirmation, catechesis or general pastoral care). The accused persons used the following psychological techniques for the preparation of the offences, amongst others (SP2 and SP6):

- use of psychological pressure or physical violence, exploitation of authority (with all persons affected),
- promising or granting advantages (with approx. 35 percent of persons affected),
- abuse of the emotional bond with the accused person (with approx. 23 percent of persons affected),
- threatening or committing physical violence (with approx. 20 percent of persons affected),
- religious, health or sexual-educational glossing over of the offence (with approx. 16 percent of persons affected).

In the vast majority of cases, the offences were prepared in settings that were subject to the service supervision of the Catholic Church (SP2 and SP6). It can be deduced from the analysis of criminal files (SP3) that the overwhelming majority of the offences were based on the planned commission of the offence (83%) and were not spontaneous or one-off "eruptive act". Unplanned acts were also reported more frequently from the perspective of persons affected or of accused persons in sub-project 2.

- **Crime scenes**

Almost half of all acts of sexual abuse were committed in connection with private meetings that took place between accused persons and persons affected. The most frequent crime scene was the private home or official residence of the accused person. A significant number of the offences however also took place on church or school premises or in organised holiday camps or other camps. (SP2 and SP6).

- **The severity of the offences, type of abuse**

The offences displayed a wide range in terms of their frequency and severity. More than 80 percent of the persons affected suffered "hands-on" offences, that is associated with physical contact and going as far as penetration (SP2, SP3 and SP6). The proportion of persons affected undergoing acts of anal, vaginal or oral penetration was 15.8 percent (SP6) and 18.0 percent, respectively (SP3).

- **Behaviour of the accused persons after committing the offence**

The behaviour of the accused persons vis-à-vis the persons affected after the offences ranged from trivialisation, through threats and justifications, to an apology to the person affected, combinations of different types of behaviour also occurring (SP6). Clerics accused of sexual abuse did not differ in this regard from paedosexual offenders from other settings or institutions (SP6 and SP3). Interviews with accused persons also often showed tendencies to externalise or even deny personal responsibility and guilt, whilst feelings of remorse were far and few between (SP2). Persons affected find that both the accused persons and the Church as an institution fail to show a credible acknowledgement of their own guilt or any remorse (SP7).

- Health problems suffered by persons affected as a result of sexual abuse**

A wide range of health problems can be observed among persons affected, and these can be seen as possible consequences of the sexual abuse that they have suffered. In addition to a large proportion of physical complaints, a wide variety of psychological symptoms are reported, such as depression, anxiety, sleep or eating disorders, post-traumatic symptoms (flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance behaviour), suicidal tendencies, self-harming, as well as alcohol and drug consumption. Sub-project 6 does not however enable any valid diagnostic assessments to be made on the basis of the non-standardised data that are available. Individual symptom constellations however suggest that at least 244 persons affected (6.6 % of all persons affected, or 23.7 % of all persons affected where information exists regarding health problems, SP6) may have indications of symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder. 50.9 percent of persons affected in sub-project 2 reported intrusions, whilst 48.6 percent reported avoidance symptoms and 36.4 percent reported symptoms of hyperexcitability with regard to their current life situation.
- Social problems suffered by persons affected as a result of sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse had serious negative social consequences, such as problems in education and at work, problems in relationships and partnerships, or sexual problems that affected the entire life planning and management of the persons affected.

Some of the persons affected also reported a conflict-ridden experience of faith and spirituality as specific consequences of sexual abuse by clerics (SP2, SP6 and SP7).
- Sanctions taken by the Church against accused persons**

It was documented with regard to 33.9 percent of accused persons that proceedings had been initiated under canon law in respect of the sexual abuse of minors, whereas this was not the case with regard to 53.0 percent of them. The corresponding information was missing in 13.1 percent of cases (SP6). The ratio was similar when it came to criminal charges (37.7% with criminal charges as against 60.8% without criminal charges, whereas the information was missing for 1.5% of cases). Criminal charges were mainly filed by the persons affected themselves or by their families (27.5 %). 19.4 percent of criminal charges were brought by representatives of the Catholic Church. 14.0 percent of accused persons were reported to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome (SP6). According to the analysis of the criminal files that was carried out, 10.7% of the accused priests reported themselves, compared with 0.0% (SP3) in the comparison group.

The time that passed between the first act and the initiation of the respective proceedings was very long as a rule, and averaged more than 13 years (criminal charges), 22 years (proceedings under canon law) or 23 years (notification to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), respectively (SP6).

About one-quarter of all proceedings under canon law that were initiated ended with no sanctions being imposed whatsoever. There were only a small number of cases of dismissal from the priesthood or excommunication, which the Church regarded as drastic or irreversible. The majority of the sanctions that were imposed appeared to be minor, and this might cause problems with regard to the risk of a relapse (e.g. transfers, see below).
- Transfers of accused persons due to sexual abuse**

At 91.8 percent, the number of diocesan priests accused of sexual abuse of minors who were transferred within their respective home dioceses was higher in a statistically-significant sense than among diocesan priests who were not accused (86.8 percent). Accused diocesan priests were transferred an average of 4.4 times, whilst this happened 3.6 times to diocesan priests who were not accused. This difference was also statistically significant (SP6). The same picture emerged with regard to transfers of diocesan priests from one diocese to another. It appears to be no coincidence that this took place more frequently in the case of diocesan priests who were accused of sexual abuse of minors (33.2%) than with diocesan priests who were not accused of sexual abuse (29.0%).

The dioceses themselves stated that intra-diocesan transfers of 18.3 percent of accused persons and 25.6 percent of inter-diocesan transfers were related to an allegation of sexual abuse. The corresponding share for accused persons who relocated abroad was 19 percent. There were indications that receiving parishes or dioceses were not informed in the majority of these transfers or changes about the respective allegation, or about the possible risks of repeat offences associated with the change (SP6).

- Keeping of personnel records**

Sub-projects 1 and 6 indicated that personnel records or other documents that were of relevance to previous investigations had been destroyed or manipulated. It was not possible to determine the exact number of files that had been destroyed or altered. The nature and quality of the keeping of personnel records were extremely heterogeneous, and no uniform standards were applied here with regard to allegations of sexual abuse throughout the investigation period and across the dioceses (SP1).
- Prevention**

The Catholic Church has adopted a uniform framework for the prevention of the sexual abuse of minors, and this applies to all 27 dioceses. Progress has been made in implementing it, but in a clearly heterogeneous manner across the dioceses. The number of positions or working hours reserved for the prevention commissioners varied greatly at the time of the study, some individual dioceses not having a fixed number of posts for this activity. The average weekly contingent for prevention work across all dioceses was 26.4 hours (SP1 and SP4).

The specific concepts and target groups of prevention work also differed between the 27 dioceses. The concentration of prevention work on clerics, which is necessary from the perspective of the present research project, was not observed in all the dioceses. Amongst other things, the prevention commissioners referred to “clerical power structures”, as well as to a noticeable reactance among clerics with regard to the problem of abuse. This was said to be making the implementation of effective protection concepts in the pastoral care units more difficult (SP4).
- Contact persons (“commissioners on abuse”) and proceedings concerning “benefits in recognition of the suffering imposed on the victims of sexual abuse”**

Contrary to the independence of the office of the diocesan commissioners on abuse that is stipulated in the relevant regulations and guidelines, this post was occupied in some dioceses by church officials or other employees of the dioceses. The handling of the procedure on “benefits in recognition of the suffering imposed on the victims of sexual abuse” also varied greatly from one diocese to another. Applying, or merely contacting the respective contact person, led almost automatically to the approval of the application and the disbursement of payments in some dioceses. In other dioceses, however, this ratio was only 7 percent in the least favourable case (SP1). The total amount of all benefits that had been disbursed across all the dioceses by the end of 2014 was approximately € 5 million.
- Seminaries: Tackling emotional personality development, eroticism and sexuality**

In response to the allegations of abuse, the majority of dioceses have included sexual education training modules and teaching units dealing with sexual abuse in their priesthood training. The implementation of these modules peaked between 2001 and 2003. The seminars that were held on the subject of sexual abuse varied in terms of the amount of time that these modules took up within the curriculum. In four dioceses the duration was a maximum of one day, whereas it was between one and a maximum of two days in nine dioceses. Six dioceses indicated a module size of more than two days. The maximum stated was a block seminar lasting 47 hours. Four dioceses did not specify the duration.

Teaching units dealing in general terms with the topic of sexuality were offered in seminaries by 15 dioceses, i.e. in 62.5 percent of the dioceses that had seminaries. Eleven dioceses answered in the affirmative to the question of whether these modules addressed questions of personal sexual development and the seminarians’ own sexual needs. Attendance was obligatory in all dioceses where such a feature was included. The time allotted to these modules also differed between seminaries and dioceses. The time and importance that the seminaries allot to the topic of (socio-)emotional personality development, eroticism and sexuality seems to be limited in view of the challenges that celibacy poses to Catholic priests throughout their lives.

A.3 Contextualisation of the findings with regard to specific structures and dynamics of the Catholic Church within the sphere of responsibility of the German Bishops' Conference

- **Frequency of abuse, accused persons and persons affected**

Information on the frequency of sexual abuse must not be considered in isolation. It must always be interpreted against the background of the chosen methodological approach. Epidemiological studies on the topic employ different samples, different case definitions and a variety of inclusion and exclusion criteria. It is therefore impossible to compare data on frequency and quotas from different studies without taking these methodological differences into account. This also needs to be considered when interpreting the 4.4 percent share of accused clerics in a sample of 38,156 personnel records established in this study. The frequencies and quotas that have been determined are to be regarded as lower estimates of actual sexual abuse committed by priests, deacons and male religious in the sphere for which the German Bishops' Conference is responsible. The same applies to the number of persons affected that was established. The percentage of accused clerics that was established in the present study is of a similar order of magnitude to the frequency determined using comparable methods in the US dioceses (4.0 % accused clerics; John Jay College of Criminal Justice 2004). By contrast, and based on another method of counting, the study conducted in Australia by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse arrived at 7.0 percent of accused clerics (Royal Commission 2017). There have been no national or international studies to date that have investigated the proportion of accused employees in comparably large, non-church institutions (e.g. sports associations, schools, etc.).

- **The preponderance of male persons affected**

Monocausal explanations of the marked predominance of male children and juveniles affected by sexual abuse on the part of clerics in the Catholic Church do not go far enough. Several factors can be discussed here. These might include the multifarious and increased opportunities for clerics to make contact with male children or juveniles. For example, only male juveniles were admitted as altar servers prior to the Second Vatican Council. Also, predominantly male juveniles were admitted to Catholic boarding schools or homes in the past.

However, this on its own is not enough to explain the unmistakable predominance of male persons affected. This is why ambivalent statements and attitudes regarding Catholic sexual morals towards homosexuality and the importance of celibacy must also be discussed in this context. The commitment to a celibate life might appear to provide a solution to intrapsychic problems for those candidates for the priesthood who have an immature, suppressed homosexual inclination, which also brings with it the prospect of a close coexistence exclusively with men, at least during training for the priesthood. In this respect, specific structures and rules of the Catholic Church could have a high potential for attracting persons with undeveloped homosexual inclinations. Homosexual relationships or practices are however rejected in the official, outwardly-visible actions of the Church. This leads to the danger that such tendencies are (must be) lived out 'in secret'. The complex interaction between sexual immaturity, suppression and denial, and the fact of possibly latent homosexual tendencies being present at the time when the career choice is made, creates an environment that is sometimes ambivalent and at other times actually openly homophobic, could thus help further explain the predominance of male persons affected by sexual abuse committed by Catholic clerics. Having said that, neither homosexuality nor celibacy are *eo ipso* causes of the sexual abuse of minors.

- **Celibacy**

The relative share of accused deacons is significantly lower than that of accused diocesan priests in all sub-projects. A constitutive distinguishing feature between deacons and diocesan priests is the lack of a commitment to celibacy among deacons. Even though the obligation to observe celibacy certainly cannot explain the sexual abuse of minors by itself, the above findings do suggest that the question should be addressed as to the extent to which celibacy may be a potential risk factor for sexual abuse for specific groups of individuals in specific constellations. The topic is the subject of heated debate in the literature. The positions that are taken up range from recommending the abolition of mandatory celibacy, since it is seen as a risk factor for sexual abuse (Royal Commission 2017), to stating that the linking of the debates on sexual abuse by clerics and celibacy lacked any scholarly foundation (Leygraf

2012). Given that it is aware of the academic literature and of its own findings, the research consortium considers that a nuanced analysis of the subject matter would be advisable.

- **The typology of the accused clerics**

In light of the wide variety of findings obtained from the various sub-projects within the research project (SP2, SP3 and SP6), three basic patterns of accused persons can be characterised that can be attributed to typologies of sexual abusers outside the ecclesial context which have already been published (Berner 2017).

- Accused persons who had committed sexual abuse on several persons affected under the age of 13, who committed such offences over a period of more than six months, and with regard to whom the first accusation was documented not long after their ordination, can be assigned to a “fixed type” in which there are indications of a possible paedophilic preference disorder in the sense of a primary or secondary paedophilic tendency. The life of a priest in the Catholic Church, with its extensive opportunities for contact with children and juveniles, is highly likely to attract this type of individual.
- A “narcissistic-sociopathic type” of accused person can be described as a second characteristic. Such a person exercises his power not only in the sexual abuse of children and juveniles, but also in an inappropriate manner in other settings. Sexual abuse manifests itself here as one among several forms of narcissistic abuse of power in such cases. Indications of a broader spectrum of similarly problematic behavioural or personality characteristics can be found in the personnel records of accused clerics. The power available to an ordained priest by virtue of his office offers this type many different opportunities, including unrestricted access to minors, and this can culminate in sexual abuse.
- A third group of accused persons can be described as a “regressive-immature type”, which refers to accused persons whose personal and sexual development is deficient. These include both heterosexual and homosexual accused persons. Among other things, the large number of male persons affected is an indication that the proportion of homosexual members of this type is probably larger in the clerical context than it is outside the Church. The obligation to remain celibate could offer members of this type a misconceived possibility of not having to adequately confront the formation of their own sexual identity. What is more, the inability of individuals of this type to enter into a mature partnership does not need to be socially justified if they become priests. The first accusation often does not occur in this group until after a prolonged period of latency that occurs subsequent to being ordained as a priest. One reason for this might be that the barrier to sexual abuse offences is not broken down until overburdening, isolation and a lack of support from the Church with regard to such problems have increased over time. This is supported by the findings regarding psychosocial or other stress from the past from which these accused persons were found to be suffering.

- **Clericalism**

Sexual abuse is above all also an abuse of power. The concept of clericalism is cited as a major cause in this context, and as a specific structural feature of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church (Doyle 2003). Clericalism denotes a hierarchical-authoritarian system that can lead the priest to adopt an attitude of dominating non-ordained individuals in interactions because he holds a superior position by virtue of his ministry and ordination. Sexual abuse is an extreme manifestation of such dominance.

An authoritarian-clerical understanding of the ministry can lead to church leaders regarding a priest who has committed sexualised violence more as a threat to their own clerical system than as a menace to other children or juveniles, or to other potential persons affected. Covering events up and protecting the system can then take priority over the relentless disclosure of such offences. A church rationale understood in this way promotes secrecy, covering up and inappropriate reactions such as the transfer or sanctioning practices that were identified in sub-project 6, which do more to protect the institution and the accused person, whilst disregarding the interests of the persons affected.

- **Prevention**

The efforts of the Catholic Church in promoting good prevention work are to be welcomed, and can to some extent serve as a model for other institutions. The initiative for the comprehensive implementation of prevention programmes was a consequence of the widespread detection of cases of abuse committed by clerics in the Catholic Church. Prevention work should therefore be directed primarily at this target group in this regard. Despite the prevention programmes that the Church has been implementing over a period of several years, however, not all clerics in the dioceses had yet received appropriate training by 2016.

This needs to be emphasised because the Catholic Church's prevention commissioners themselves pointed out in the anonymised survey which they carried out in sub-project 4 that, in contrast to other professional groups in the Catholic Church, some clerics are highly reactive when it comes to addressing the issue of the prevention of sexual abuse.

- **Priesthood training: addressing emotional personality development, eroticism and sexuality**

The academic literature stresses that the prerequisites for the emotionally- and sexually-mature personality development of priesthood candidates in the seminaries are inadequate (Keenan 2012). In particular, the appropriate guidance of candidates with regard to the challenges posed by a life of celibacy, which is not necessarily chosen voluntarily, but is compulsory for ordination as a priest, is not considered sufficient. Official attitudes and statements made by the Catholic Church, such as that celibacy is a "gift" to priests, do not take sufficient account of biological and psychosocial needs for commitment. It is possible to have a mature and voluntarily chosen celibate form of life. All candidates for the priesthood do not necessarily satisfy the basic preconditions of voluntariness and mature personal development, however. The findings of the research project suggest that very little time and attention are devoted in the seminaries to addressing the topics of sexuality and sexual identity formation in an intensive, professional and personal way.

A.4 Recommendations

The risk of children being sexually abused within the structures of the Catholic Church is not a phenomenon that has come to an end. The problem persists and requires concrete action in order to avoid risk constellations or to minimise them as far as possible.

The results of the study make it clear that the abuse of minors on the part of clerics belonging to the Catholic Church constitutes not only misconduct committed by individuals, but also that attention must be paid to the risk and structural characteristics that are specific to the Catholic Church and which encourage the sexual abuse of minors or make it more difficult to prevent such abuse.

This calls for special context-related interventions, and these had to be included in the conclusions of the present research project. Against this background, the research consortium has put together recommendations on the following topics:

- **Heterogeneity of attitudes and approaches in the individual dioceses**

The work of the research project has shown that attitudes towards the problems that are associated with the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clerics, and the procedures followed in the 27 dioceses in Germany related to such abuse, are very heterogeneous.

This is a problem, given the significance and severity of the topic, and may be one reason for the poor public image of the Catholic Church's efforts so far to shed light on and resolve the abuse scandal in sections of the public, especially among the persons affected. The research consortium considers there to be a need for a uniform, coordinated, authentic and proactive strategy, and for a long-acting catalogue of measures to be enacted by the Catholic Church in a manner that is suited to the challenges to be faced.

- **The keeping of personnel records**

Allegations of abuse should be documented in future in a manner that is binding, uniform, transparent and standardised for all dioceses. Those responsible for keeping personnel records would have to be trained for this. The personnel record of each accused person should clearly show which allegations were made, how an accusation was dealt with, which processes were initiated for what reasons, and what their outcome was.

If an accused cleric is transferred to another diocese, any available knowledge of the accusation must also be documented in any new personnel record that may be created.

- **Contacts offered for persons affected**

The 27 dioceses in Germany should establish and finance a contact point for persons affected. This contact point should be independent of the Church and interdisciplinary in its composition, as well as enabling a low-threshold consultation which should be confidential vis-à-vis the Catholic Church, and should be anonymous if so desired. The current close connection of the commissioners on abuse to the vicariates general, or to other offices with the Catholic Church, raises the threshold for persons affected when it comes to reporting corresponding crimes. It also calls into question the confidentiality of counselling interviews.

Where appropriate, an independent contact point for persons affected could also take over the tasks of the diocesan commissioners on abuse and replace them in the medium or long term. A significant proportion of accused persons have committed numerous and repeated abuses. Such chains of offences can be broken if charges are brought as early as possible. Conditions must therefore be created that make it easier for persons affected to file complaints. This includes an independent contact point.

- **Establishing further research**

It is a welcome development that the German Bishops' Conference has commissioned the present research project. The presentation of the final report should not however signal the culmination of the academic debate on the subject. The results in fact suggest that the research process must be continued. Many aspects for example require a more intensive, in-depth analysis. The dioceses' prevention concepts must also be evaluated more intensively through academic research.

If the German Bishops' Conference can commit itself to implementing the recommendations that have been formulated here, their effectiveness will have to be examined in prospective studies. To this end,

it is proposed that the research efforts be continued and consolidated. This continuation of the academic debate on the topic could serve as a model for research into sexual abuse in other institutional contexts, for which there is an urgent need, but which has been neglected to date. This could also be understood by the public as a signal that the Catholic Church is tackling the topic in an authentic manner and on a continuous basis, and not merely reactively.

- **Proceedings and sanctions under canon law and criminal law**

The results of the study suggest that the investigation and sanctioning of sexual abuse allegations by means of procedures under canon law need to be improved. The method should be harmonised and accelerated. Procedural steps and decisions taken should be transparent and comprehensible, and they should be communicated to all persons affected and involved. The penalties should be commensurate with the gravity of the respective crime.

The current practice on the part of some dioceses of immediately bringing criminal charges against clerics where allegations of abuse are made, and thus completely delegating the problem to state responsibility, is not good enough. Criminal proceedings and sanctions do not absolve the Catholic Church of Her responsibility to protect the interests of the persons affected and to take prompt action of Her own.

The Church also has a duty of care towards accused clerics. As in general criminal law, sound reintegration concepts are called for.

- **Basic and further training of priests**

The sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clerics must not only be perceived as an individual problem that is related to isolated perpetrators who must be identified early or removed from risk constellations in good time, but it must also be understood as a specific institutional problem affecting the Catholic Church.

Considerable importance therefore attaches to selection and training as well as to the possibility of in-service psychological counselling for clerics. Aspects of sexual identity formation and the high psychological demands posed by the priesthood must be taken into account in doing so. Much higher priority should be allotted to these aspects than was previously the case, not only in the selection of candidates, but also during the basic and further training of priests, manifested not exclusively in a pastoral-spiritual approach, but also on the basis of modern psychology and of the knowledge gleaned from sexual research. The involvement of external experts would additionally contribute towards opening up the largely closed system of training for the priesthood and furthermore immunise it against structural risks which encourage abuse. The criteria and procedures for the selection of prospective priests should be standardised using established psychological methods.

Reflection on and regulation of proximity and distance in relationships between priests and their parishioners, as well as with families and especially children and juveniles, should become a central part of basic and further training for priests. Lifelong, continuous supervision is required. Training and supervision modules should be offered by specially-trained experts.

- **Catholic sexual morals**

Homosexuality does not constitute a risk factor for sexual abuse. The results of the study however reveal that there is a need to consider the importance attaching to the specific ideas of Catholic sexual morals when it comes to homosexuality in the context of the sexual abuse of minors.

There is an urgent need to reconsider the fundamentally negative attitude of the Catholic Church towards the ordination of homosexual men. Idiosyncratic terminologies used by the Church in this context, such as those of a “deeply-rooted homosexual inclination”, have no foundation in scientific fact. An open, tolerance-promoting atmosphere must be created in place of such attitudes. Greater attention needs to be paid to the findings of modern sexual medicine.

Celibacy is not an eo ipso risk factor for sexual abuse. A commitment to a life of celibacy however requires an intensive examination of one’s own emotionality, eroticism and sexuality. A predominantly theological and pastoral approach towards these developmental requirements is not sufficient.

In fact, this debate calls for life-long professional support and assistance to be provided in a manner that is appropriate to the topic. The implementation of time-limited training modules at the seminaries does not meet this need.

- **Aligning established prevention measures and structures to match priests' needs**

The prevention structures that have been established so far are to be welcomed as fundamentally sensible approaches. These should be expanded in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In order to guarantee the sustainability and staying power of the prevention efforts, sufficient staffing of prevention work in the respective dioceses must be ensured. Standardisation of the concepts with a view to aligning them to proven methods, and continuous scientific evaluation of prevention work, is recommended. Prevention work should be developed and intensified in a target group-specific manner, especially with regard to clerics.

The resistance on the part of some among the clergy to becoming involved in prevention training must be addressed and overcome. In the context of the Catholic Church, the prevention of the sexual abuse of minors cannot only be based on principles that are proven in non-church institutions such as schools or sports clubs, but must also tackle specific church-related issues (such as clerical power structures and Catholic sexual morals). External expertise and competent external institutions should be increasingly involved in the prevention work.

- **The sacramental seal**

Accused clerics not infrequently see confession as an opportunity to reveal their own abuse crimes. The protected sphere of the confessional box was even used by accused clerics to prepare or conceal offences in some cases.

The Sacrament of Confession is therefore particularly significant in this context. The responsibility of the confessor for the adequate clarification, processing and prevention of individual sexual abuse offences needs to be emphasised from a scientific point of view.

- **Dealing with clerical power**

Sexual abuse always also constitutes an abuse of power, and this can be facilitated by the authoritarian-clerical structures of the Catholic Church. The Commissioner of the German Bishops' Conference for questions relating to sexual abuse also refers to this problem, and sees a need for action in this regard when he writes: "The targeted, systematic examination of the topic of sexual abuse is therefore not limited to this subject alone, but takes on an exemplary character when it comes to responsibly dealing with power in the Church in general. The debate has the potential to positively change a culture, or rather "anti-culture", existing in the Church" (Ackermann 2017).

A change in clerical power structures requires a fundamental examination of the ordained ministry of the priest and of his understanding of his role vis-à-vis non-ordained persons. This must not be confined to lip service on the part of those with responsibility within the Church. The sanctioning of individual accused persons, public remorse, financial benefits paid to persons affected and the establishment of prevention concepts, as well as a culture of attentive interaction, are necessary but by no means adequate measures. If the reactions of the Catholic Church are limited to such measures, such fundamentally positive approaches are even apt to preserve clerical power structures, since they are only aimed at the symptoms of an undesirable development, and thus prevent a debate taking place on the fundamental problem posed by clerical power.

- **The Church's responsibility vis-à-vis persons affected**

Many persons affected, especially in the context of the anonymous online survey that was carried out by the research project (SP7), stated that, although they have heard regrets expressed by the Catholic Church regarding sexual abuse committed by clerics, they would still like to see signs of real remorse and of an authentic admission of guilt. This observation should be taken seriously. The research consortium cannot make its own recommendations regarding the credible communication of such an authentic attitude.

The following suggestions can however be made on the basis of feedback provided by the persons affected, and of the consortium's own experience with individual dioceses in connection with the implementation of the project:

- The introduction of a church memorial day for persons affected by sexual abuse is brought into the discussion by some persons affected. This could provide an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the injustice that has been committed and – if the persons affected so wish – also of their suffering.

- The level of payments under the procedure on “benefits in recognition of the suffering imposed on the victims of sexual abuse” could be reconsidered. Even though monetary compensation can never counterbalance the suffering that is caused by sexual abuse, and therefore there is no adequate sum of money, the Catholic Church’s previous practice with regard to the level of what She has termed “recognition” must nonetheless be discussed. All 27 dioceses should agree on the same mandatory financial payment amounts. The reasons for the payments, which vary widely in some cases, are perceived as lacking in transparency, and are seen by the persons affected as insulting.
- The personal consequences and sanctions for the offenders, and for persons bearing responsibility who have covered up crimes, should be communicated to the persons affected in a comprehensible manner.
- All 27 dioceses have complied with their contractual undertaking to participate in the study. The extent and the intensity of the cooperation, the human resources provided by the dioceses for working on the project, such as the review of personnel records, the depth of the analyses and, last but not least, the attitude towards the problem, which became clear in personal contact with diocesan staff and those responsible, however varied considerably between the dioceses. Efforts within the Church to establish a uniform and plausible attitude in this regard constitute a prerequisite for the general attitude of the Catholic Church and statements by church leaders on the topic of sexual abuse in public and towards persons affected being perceived as authentic.
- Persons affected should, if they so wish, be more closely involved in the Catholic Church’s prevention work. Such requests have been formulated as part of the research work. Involving persons affected could improve the content and effectiveness of the prevention work, whilst at the same time signalling that the Church really takes the persons affected and their perspective seriously.