The tour on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation will open our eyes to Reformation changes in many places in Europe. And not only then: Reformation is not a closed process that happened 500 years ago, it has left traces in many contexts since then.

These will be reflected in the European Roadmap at 68 way-stations in 19 countries – from November 2016 to May 2017. The stories and experiences collected in very diverse and distant regions will be brought to Wittenberg for the World Reformation Exhibition.

From Geneva to Rome to Wittenberg

The European Roadmap will start on 3 November 2016 from Geneva, where e.g. the World Council of Churches is based. Starting from the ‘capital’ of the ecumenical movement is symbolic: unlike earlier Reformation centuries, the quincentenary will be celebrated ecumenically. In January 2017 the show truck will reach Rome, where the worldwide Roman Catholic Church operates from its sovereign territory of Vatican City. The events in the Italian capital will be hosted by its Lutheran congregation. The final city on the European Roadmap is Wittenberg. It will be reached on 20 May 2017 in time for the opening of the World Reformation Exhibition ‘Gates of Freedom’.

Wildhaus – Zurich – Geneva: Reformation in Switzerland

The Reformation in Switzerland is connected with the names Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564). Born in Wildhaus in Obertoggenburg, Zwingli served as a priest at Zurich cathedral in 1519. John Calvin, born in France, came to Geneva via Basel, after many vicissitudes. In 1541, the Geneva council adopted the Ecclesiastical Ordinances and a year later Calvin published the Catechism of the Church of Geneva. Today there are Protestants all over the country, organised in the individual cantons and represented by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, and also in Lutheran and Methodist churches. Besides the places mentioned above, the show truck will visit Lausanne, Neuchâtel, Chur and Bern in Switzerland as well as Strasbourg in France, where Calvin stopped to visit Reformer Martin Bucer on his way to Basel.

Ireland, the UK, the Nordic countries, the Baltic and the Netherlands

The show truck will cross the Scandinavian countries, that are still traditionally Lutheran, to reach Turku in Finland, the northernmost way-station. In the first few weeks of March 2017 it will visit Viborg (Denmark), Bergen (Norway), Malmö and Västerås (both in Sweden). Then, after these Nordic countries, the tour will cross the Baltic region and reach Riga, the northernmost way-station. In the first few weeks of March 2017 it will visit Viborg (Denmark), Bergen (Norway), Malmö and Västerås (both in Sweden). Then, after these Nordic countries, the tour will cross the Baltic region and reach Riga, the capital of Latvia. Prior to that, in February 2017, the show truck will stop at four cities in Ireland and Britain: Dublin, Liverpool and London – in each case in partnership with the local Lutheran congregations. Then it will move on to the university city of Cambridge, cooperating there with the Church of England. In the Netherlands the show truck will encounter more strongly Reformed traditions. Events are planned for April 2017 in Deventer or Dordrecht.

Way-stations of the Reformation in Germany

The regional Protestant churches proposed the way-stations in Germany. Many historical sites will receive a visit: Bremen, home to Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560); Worms, famous for its Diet of 1521, Augsburg (Diet of 1530) and Coburg, where Luther stayed during the latter. Another stop-over will be the university city that gave its name in 1563 to the Heidelberg Catechism, still widely used by Reformed churches. In Northern Germany, further destinations are Emden, known for the ministry of Johannes a Lasco and Menso Alting, Bremen and Wilhelmshaven, ports from which many Protestants set out for the “New World”. A notable way-station is Osnabrück, a city in Westphalia where peace treaties were negotiated after the wars of religion (1618-48). Some venues were not of outstanding importance in the Reformation period or did not exist, e.g. Wuppertal, where Confessing Church adopted the Barmen Declaration in 1934.

The heart of Germany: where so much happened in those times

The heart of Germany is rich in Reformation history: with Torgau, the home town of Katharina von Bora (1499-1552); Schmalkalden, where the alliance of Protestant princes was forged; Eisenach – known for Wartburg Castle, where Luther translated the New Testament; Marburg, the scene of the disputation on the Eucharist and, finally, Zwickau, the city of Thomas Müntzer. After stop-overs at these places the show truck will then arrive in Wittenberg on 20 May 2017. All the 68 way-stations will have shed light on Reformation history: things long forgotten and of present-day relevance, quite personal matters or issues of great social significance. Gathered up in the storymobile, these contributions will then be integrated into the World Reformation Exhibition. The Berlin-Wittenberg Kirchentag will begin on 24 May, accompanied by the ‘Kirchentag on the way’ in Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, Jena/Weimar, Dessau-Roßlau and Halle/Erzgeb. On Sunday 28 May 2017 all these Kirchentag events will culminate in a festive closing service on the meadows near the Elbe River, outside the gates of Wittenberg.

Prague and other way-stations in central and eastern Europe

Even before Luther’s time, ideas about reforming the church had been raised in Prague by Jan Hus (1369-1415) and others. The Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church will be the hosts in Prague.

Reformers in the tradition of Luther and Calvin founded Protestant churches in many regions of eastern Europe – consequently our show truck will stop at Ljubljana, Pucconi, Sibiu, Debrecen, Sâróvar, Sopron, Cieszyn, Bardejov and Wroclaw.

The roadmap also includes the cities of Graz and Villach in Austria. After its journey through this region the show truck will have visited all three host cities of the European Ecumenical Assemblies promoting the conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation: Basel (1989), Graz (1997) and Sibiu (2007).