

Institutions that endure

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Several of the institutions created or reorganised at the time of the Reformation have survived the centuries in renewed forms. Their longevity bears witness to the soundness of the choices made in the sixteenth century and to the attachment of the Genevan community to its institutions.

Institution	Origin	Development
Hôpital général	1535	the Republic's welfare institution, from which the present-day Hospice général claims descent
Consistory	1541	disciplinary body of the Church, whose social role declined from the eighteenth century onwards
Compagnie des pasteurs	1541	pastoral body of the Reformed Church of Geneva
Bourse française	1540s	mutual aid institution for refugees, active for several centuries
Collège	1559	today the Collège Calvin
Académie	1559	became the University of Geneva
Chambre des blés	seventeenth century	public grain office, abolished with the end of the Ancien Régime

The dates and lines of descent given in this table follow the current historiography and should be verified, in particular for the Bourse française, the Chambre des blés and the link between the Hôpital général and the Hospice général.¹

The continuity of these institutions has an economic significance. It ensured the stability of welfare, education and moral supervision for centuries, in spite of wars, crises and changes of regime. It sustained a

culture of prudent management of collective assets, administered by notables who were required to render accounts. And it offered Genevan society stable points of reference, which eased the integration of refugees and the transmission of values from one generation to the next.

For a financial centre, institutional stability is a major asset. Clients who entrust their wealth to a financial centre for several generations expect predictable rules, solid institutions and legal continuity. The long life of Geneva's institutions nourishes, rightly or wrongly, the image of a centre capable of weathering crises. This image, which forms part of Geneva's reputational capital, presupposes that the contemporary institutions remain worthy of that heritage.

Key point. The longevity of the institutions of Reformed Geneva — welfare, education, discipline, mutual aid — created a culture of continuity and of prudent management of collective assets, which contributes to the image of stability that the financial centre still enjoys.

1 Notes

1. Musée international de la Réforme, “La Genève réformée” (musee-reforme.ch): Hôpital général founded in November 1535 by the merger of the medieval hospitals; Bourse française created towards the end of the 1540s thanks to the gift of a wealthy refugee, active for more than three centuries for the benefit of the refugees of the first and second Refuge; Hospice général, page “Notre histoire” (hospicegeneral.ch): Discipline created in 1631, Hospice général established in 1869; Encyclopédie de Genève: Chambre des blés instituted on 8 August 1628.



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