



**Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
- Leuenberg Church Fellowship -**

Press release

Bünker: Minorities characterise Europe

The Dealing of European Countries with Minorities is a Measure of their Constitutionality, said the General Secretary of the Community of Protestant Churches CPCE, Bishop Michael Bünker, during Celebrations in Zilina, Slovakia

“The state has a duty to protect and advance religious liberty and to recognize the inalienable rights of all churches and religious communities.” This was emphasised by the General Secretary of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE, Bishop Michael Bünker, on the occasion of the celebrations for “400 Years of the Synod in Zilina” on 3rd July 2010 in Zilina, Slovakia, under the patronage of the Slovakian State President Ivan Gasparovic.

In 1606 the Lutheran and Reformed Evangelical Churches were given recognition in what was then Hungary. The Lutheran Church celebrated this in 1610 with the first Synod in today’s Slovakia. Since then, these events in Hungary and Slovakia have been remembered as an example of the peaceful overcoming of religious and political differences. “The churches became the initiators of reconciliation because they subordinated their national identities to their common faith”, stressed the host Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Slovakia, Milos Klatik, and Tamás Fabimy, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Hungary.

In today’s Europe the challenge of different forms of belief, of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity, is presenting itself anew, said Bünker. Several hundred minorities characterise Europe. “How the European countries deal with their minorities is a measure of their constitutionality.” Around 15% of the European population is protestant, so the protestant churches in Europe feel themselves committed to raising their voice for the minorities.

For this reason the protestant churches in Europe explicitly welcomed the EU Treaty of Lisbon, Bünker emphasised. There the EU committed itself to a transparent, open and regular dialogue with the religions and world-views. Bünker: “The protestant churches make a contribution to life together in pluralistic societies; they teach attention and respect for the faith convictions of others and stand up for human rights.”

Bünker described the celebrations in Zilina as a successful example of unity in reconciled diversity among the European protestant churches. The Lutheran Churches from Hungary and Slovakia had set up a clear sign over against the political tension between their countries: “Protestants build bridges where others want to erect walls.

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At present 105 Protestant churches in Europe (including five South-American churches originating from Europe) belong to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). Lutheran, Reformed, United and Methodist along with pre-Reformation churches such as Hussites and Czech Brethren grant each other pulpit and table fellowship on the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973. The Secretariat is housed in the Severin-Schreiber-Gasse 3, A-1180 Vienna, office@leuenberg.eu, tel. +43.1.4791523.900, fax .110 The CPCE press officer is Dipl.theol. Thomas Flügge (Bern), tel. +41.31.3702502, t.fluegge@leuenberg.eu.