

Press release 30/06/2016

## Oppose the Centrifugal Forces of Fear with Togetherness in Hope

### Grassroots of European Churches discuss Ecumenism and Europe in Munich

Christian communities and Movements can bring together a Europe that is increasingly polarised. This was the message of Evangelical-Lutheran Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm during the first morning of the Congress of Collaborators in the Ecumenical network “Together for Europe” in Munich. Seventeen hundred participants from two hundred Christian communities and Movements from forty countries are meeting until tomorrow (Friday) in Circus Krone.

“Unless we clarify the urgent questions of Europe, they will overrun us”, Gerhard Pross of the international Steering Committee declared at the beginning. “Europe has to learn to share!” Fifteen years of experience by Christian communities and Movements in a “profound process of reconciliation to form a community in diversity has been experienced as an enrichment” that has enabled the communities to oppose the centrifugal forces in Europe with a path towards a new togetherness.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx and Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm gave a convincing example of their friendship and their way together. „The ecumenism of the heart promises far more for the future of the churches than we imagine“, the chairman of the Evangelical Churches in Germany stated. „We only reach the goal of unity if we are completely and utterly reconciled“, Cardinal Marx emphasised. The strength to achieve it arises from encounter, “The other person strengthens us and helps us along the way to reconciliation”.

In the afternoon nineteen very different forums gave the participants an opportunity to enter into dialogue with one another. These included reports on projects and the initiatives of individual communities, as well as personal testimonies of faith. A well-attended forum discussed the “stumbling blocks” in Ecumenism, to which Cardinal Kasper, former President of the Catholic Ecumenical Secretariat, made a contribution. “In experiences of learning and forgiving you are important outposts!” the expert in ecumenism stated, and held out the prospect that in the foreseeable future a declaration could be made on a consensus of doctrines between Evangelical-Lutheran and the Catholic Churches on the subject of the Church, office and an understanding of the Eucharist.

Another forum shed light on the often tense relationship between the institutional Churches and the Movements and communities. Franz Zeeb, council of the evangelical church pointed out strongly that “they could undertake translating services in the church communities, because they know the language of the world and the church’s language of faith”.

The events take place under the auspices of:



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