

Press Release

General Secretaries of NCCs meet, discuss church-state relations, Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace, and the future of conciliar ecumenism

Brussels, 1 June 2015

From 26 to 28 May, the general secretaries of many of Europe's National Councils of Churches (NCCs) gathered in Berlin for their annual meeting. The time together included sharing of experiences from local contexts, presentations on state-church relationships in Germany, and meaningful discussions on freedom of religion and the future of conciliar ecumenism in Europe.

An important part of the meetings is opportunity to share and learn from the work of other national ecumenical councils. Participants very much enjoy the opportunity to hear from one another about the different experiences of conciliar ecumenism across Europe. They also devoted some time to discussing future scenarios for such councils as the ecumenical movement undergoes change.

Representatives from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) briefed the group on global and European work on the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace. Associate General Secretary of the WCC Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters introduced new websites and resources for the pilgrimage and the CEC's Rev. Dr Peter Pavlovic oriented the group to various responses coming from European churches in advance of the December 2015 climate talks in Paris (COP 21).

Local host Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland (ACK, Council of Churches in Germany) arranged for time with their chair, Bishop Dr Karl-Heinz Wiesemann.

The group was invited to the offices of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD, Evangelical Church in Germany) for in-depth presentations on church-state relationships from religious and political perspectives. OKR Joachim Ochel, theological advisor at the EKD, carefully outlined denominational relationships to the state and clarified common misperceptions. Member of Parliament Volker Beck of the Green Party also reflected on church-state relationships and how these may work in an increasing secular and pluralistic Germany.

The nearly twenty general secretaries enjoyed warm hospitality by the Ecumenical Council of Berlin-Brandenburg and learned of vibrant ecumenical activity in the heart of one of the world's most secular cities.

On the closing day of their meeting, participants turned their attention to the serious issue of global faith-based persecution. Through a presentation from the office of Member of Parliament (Germany) Prof. Dr Heribert Hirte participants learned more about current areas of very high persecution and global trends in this area.

Contact:

Erin Green
Communication Coordinator
Conference of European Churches
Rue Joseph II, 174
B-1000 Bruxelles
Tel. +32 2 234 68 42
Fax +32 2 231 14 13
E-mail : eeg@cec-kek.be

Der 1948 gegründeten **Arbeitsgemeinschaft christlicher Kirchen (ACK)** in Deutschland gehören 17 Kirchen an. Sechs Kirchen sind Gastmitglieder, vier ökumenische Organisationen haben Beobachterstatus. Die ACK repräsentiert ca. 50 Mio. Christen in Deutschland. Die Mitglieder, Gastmitglieder und Beobachter entsenden Delegierte in die ACK, die zweimal im Jahr zur Mitgliederversammlung zusammenkommen. Alle drei Jahre wählt die Mitgliederversammlung den Vorstand der ACK. Derzeit ist der Speyerer Bischof Dr. Karl-Heinz Wiesemann Vorsitzender. Die Geschäftsstelle der ACK in Deutschland, genannt „Ökumenische Centrale“, hat ihren Sitz in Frankfurt am Main. Schwerpunkte der Arbeit der ACK in Deutschland sind das gemeinsame Gebet, die theologische Reflexion, das Engagement für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und die Bewahrung der Schöpfung sowie der Kontakt zu anderen ökumenischen Einrichtungen.