



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

Press release

Putting Basic Rights into Practice in the EU

The coming into force of the new EU Treaty is an historic chance according to CPCE President Thomas Wipf. The protestant churches are called to constructive and critical accompaniment.

“The European Union is now capable of acting. That is an historic chance.” This was the comment of the President of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), Revd Thomas Wipf, on the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1st December.

“Like every community the EU needs a common foundation to support it. It now has that”, Wipf said further. The treaty gives the community of states goals and tasks. The chance of further advancing the process of European unification must now “be speedily grasped”.

“For more than thirty years the churches of CPCE have been living and working together according to the principle of unity in reconciled diversity”, Wipf added. This cooperation functions between different churches, nations and contexts in 29 countries. “So the protestant churches have something to give Europe, and they are ready to do so”, Wipf emphasised. The President of the CPCE Council called on the member churches to ensure “by constructive, critical accompaniment” that the basic rights anchored by their own charter in the EU Treaty “are also really put into effect in practice”. It is also important for the protestant churches that the EU develops further into a community of shared values.

The EU still labours under a deficit of democracy, said Wipf. “It is about people, and so they must be also heard and involved.” The EU Treaty now offers more possibilities for political involvement. This comes to expression in open, transparent and regular dialogue with the churches and religious communities as is prescribed in the new treaty. The EU must, however, “draw even closer to the people and convey to them that Europe is important for them.”

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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.