



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

Press release

A Signal against Poverty and Social Exclusion

CPCE President Thomas Wipf welcomes the EU Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion and hopes for concrete results. A survey in the CPCE churches shows the significance of the theme throughout Europe.

The President of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, CPCE, the Revd Thomas Wipf, welcomes the European Year 2010 against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which will be opened officially in Madrid tomorrow. The aim of the European Year is to encourage all sections of society to become involved politically in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion.

“The protestant churches welcome the fact that the EU and its member states have declared the struggle against poverty as their central theme for 2010. From the beginning the churches have committed themselves to this European Year against poverty and social exclusion”, explained Wipf. “The social impact of the financial crisis is affecting ever more people in Europe. We hope that this year will be more than just a publicity campaign. The churches expect the EU and its member states to set themselves very concrete goals to be reached in the coming years for the overcoming of poverty in Europe and in the world.” In the next few days the EU is holding discussions on the reformulation of its economic, social and ecological targets for the coming decade.

“In the protestant view the struggle against poverty is not limited to situations of material need”, Wipf said further. “Poverty and social exclusion can be felt everywhere where people are deprived of the chance to take part in social life, when a school system systematically disadvantages children from poor or migrant families or when after their training young people find no access to the work market.”

In summer 2008 a survey among the 105 CPCE member churches in 29 countries had already emphasised social exclusion as the greatest social challenge for the protestant churches in Europe. The results of the questionnaire were included in the CPCE study “Stand up for justice” which at the moment is being circulated among the member churches for their reactions. The study is intended to work out criteria for the development of ethical judgments on social challenges. The results should help the churches to coordinate their action on the European level and so far as possible to speak with a common voice.

Note: At www.leuenberg.eu there is an interview on this theme with the CPCE's representative for ethical issues, Revd Dr. Dieter Heidtmann. He represents the protestant churches in the Conference of European Churches in Brussels as well as in the expert commission of the EU for the Year against Poverty.

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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.