

Press Release

European Forum of National Laity Committees 2008 Study Assembly, 1-6 July, Bratislava

Eighty delegates from fifteen countries met for the 2008 Study Assembly of the European Forum of National Laity Committees (ELF) in Bratislava from 1-6 July. The theme was Diversity - social, political, cultural and religious. Delegates listened to addresses given by various speakers including among others Prof Michał Seweryński (Poland), Prof Léonce Bekemans (Belgium), Christina Wallimann (Switzerland), Sister Lutgardis Craeynest (Belgium) and Ján Figel', the EU Commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth. Testimonies from different countries completed the speeches.

There is a need for inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. We live in a world that is rich with different cultures, traditions and beliefs. There is a treasure in what we possess and it should be shared. United in faith, we must be a people who respect each other's different traditions and cultures.

During the gathering, the Statutory Assembly of the ELF took place and an amended constitution was agreed in order to increase the visibility of the European Catholic Laity. The constitution provides for a Forum President and a Steering Committee of seven members drawn from National Laity Councils (or their equivalent) across Europe.

Drs Maria Draaijers (Netherlands) was elected to serve a second term as President. Sigrid Schraml (Germany) was elected as Secretary and Jan Degadt (Belgium) as Treasurer. Joining them is Katarina Hulmanova (Slovakia), Peter Annegarn (Belgium), Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz (Poland) and Seán O'Donnell (England and Wales).

The EUROPEAN FORUM OF NATIONAL LAITY COMMITTEES is an organisation the purpose of which is to promote regular contacts in Europe between the National Committees and Councils of the Laity. In order to achieve this purpose the Forum aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences and information between the members on questions of European importance, especially in relation to problems concerning the Church's mission in the world and pastoral work, to maintain contacts with other European and International Church Organisations including CCEE, CCPE, UCESM, COMECE, EZA, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, CICO as well as Churches and Organisations of other Christian traditions and ecumenical movements with structures on a European level.

More information on the European Forum of Laity Committees as well as the speeches of the Bratislava Study Assembly is available at www.europ-forum.org

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