

DIALOGUE OF THE CULTURES AND RELIGIONS

MAY 19th, 2006

HOFBURG - VIENNA

DOCUMENTATION

BM.I



**REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Guiding Ideas on the four Panels	6
Summary of the four Panels	10

FOREWORD

The dialogue of the cultures and religions is in the interplay with the internal security of each state – not only in Austria, inside of the EU, but in the whole world. Therefore the promotion of this dialogue supports significantly the internal security. For this purpose the involvement of the states and the international communities and organisations, on the other hand the involvements of the civilian society as well as the respect for human rights are necessary.

The Austrian EU presidency concentrated on a clear main focus in the field of dialogue. In the light of this important theme the Federal Minister Liese Prokop arranged an event on the interrelated topics **“Dialogue of Cultures and Religions”**. The goal of the conference was to analyze the patterns of dialogue and the integration on all levels and to compare them with each other. In this way a contribution has been made for the realisation of the strategy of the European Union against radicalisation and recruitment for terrorism. High-ranked representatives from the fields religion, politics, science and culture attended this conference.

CONFERENCE “DIALOGUE OF CULTURES“ ON MAY 19TH, 2006

GUIDING IDEAS ON THE 1ST PANEL

“The cultural and religious dialogue in everyday life”

In the course of the discussion on the advantages and the weak points of the Austrian integration model from the point of view of persons directly concerned it became clear that the cultural diversity brings advantages about for the society as well as for the individual citizen. Immigrants, who are routed in different cultures, enrich the respective society with their cultural and inter-cultural competences and are endowed with access possibilities to spheres, which remain often inaccessible to “natives”.

As the multi-cultural aspect of this pluralism has to be recognized and positively noticed, the official dialogue of the cultures should not take place only within the frame of the Austrian EU presidency. It should rather be continued and not only carried on in the Hofburg but at all social levels.

GUIDING IDEA ON THE 2ND PANEL

“Models of the cultural and religious dialogue from the safety policy point of view”

In the course of the discussion dialogue patterns of the cultures and religions inside and outside of the European Union have been disputed.

The combat of intolerance and the importance of dialogue on local level have been pointed out as pre-condition for a functioning and effective dialogue. Respect and two-way understanding can originate only in this way to make arise the dialogue.

The dialogue of the cultures and religions in connection with the global security situation is of great importance. The worldwide dialogue should be promoted and intensified. The form of the HOW remains still the greatest challenge for policy and society.

GUIDING IDEAS ON THE 3RD PANEL

“Europe – a community of values?”

Europe – a community of values? Although the discussion about this item is as old as the history of the European Union self, this panel highlighted recently this question in a top-class group and gave important incentives for possible further ways in Europe.

The consensus was that the European Union is also a community of values, which has not only been founded for the promotion of the economic development.

Since we European share also certain values like dignity of man and freedom, it is important to protect and implement these basic standards. Therefore the combat against discrimination, racialism and xenophobia is especially urgent. Further on a policy on integration is needed to avoid radicalism and terrorism in the end.

Despite many encouraging indications and also actions the path to common values in a European community will still be long.

GUIDING IDEAS ON THE 4TH PANEL

“Religion as bridge builder of the inter-cultural dialogue?”

In the course of the bridge builder function and the role of the churches and religious communities it became clear that the reciprocal understanding and the respect for the others of a different faith exist on the level of theological scholars and the dialogue has made great improvements during the last decades.

But it looks different on the basis, where the fear of the stranger still prevails the knowledge on the enrichment of a society by cultural diversity.

The Austrian pattern of secularism and the handling with cultural and religious minorities has been praised by all panel members.

The result of the 4th panel was that it ranks among the most important challenges of the religious communities to work in general on the existing problems and the phobia of the stranger and to build bridges between men. On the one hand this happens on the way that reservations should be taken serious on both parts; and on the other hand by educational advertising on both parts about that a person of different faith primarily doesn't pose a threat to the own culture and is not so different as it is demonstrated apparently. The already existing initiatives of the several religious communities must be publicized to gain a domino effect and show a positive path to the future.

CONFERENCE “DIALOGUE OF THE CULTURES” ON MAY 19TH, 2006 IN VIENNA

SUMMARY OF THE 1ST PANEL

“The cultural and religious dialogue in every day life”

Target of the first panel

The first panel set the goal to high light the Austrian integration model from the point of view of persons who are directly concerned; that means persons who themselves or their families immigrated to Austria deriving from most different countries.

The multi-cultural aspect of this pluralism should be recognized and also positively noticed (citation from Viola Raheb)

The discussion was headed by university docent Dr. Gerhard Schwarz, philosopher, group dynamics expert and conflict manager; he is known as moderator of the “ORF-Philosophicum”.

All the five participants of the first panel dispose of a well-founded education, excellent knowledge of the German language as well as a secure professional position and can for instance be indicated as success stories of Austrian integration efforts.

Sueli Menezes, born in Brasilia, in the meantime Austrian citizen, lives since 1988 in Austria. She acts as independent artist and author.

Deniz Karabulut was born in Austria. His father emigrated 1975 from Eastern Anatolia. As a member of the Alleviate community Karabulut seems to be obligated compared to a tolerant position towards other religions as well as to an open and liberal ideology.

Viola Raheb, born in Bethlehem, derives originally from Palestine. Now she is four years in Austria and before she lived and studied six years in Germany.

Hüseyin Özcelik was born in Vienna. His family derives from Turkey. As first foreign

student Mr. Özcelik graduated sub auspiciis last year.

Rita Cherradi visits the International School in Vienna at present. Her parents live already since twenty years in Austria.

Situation of the Immigrants in Austria

Although all of the five participants see themselves as integrated part of the Austrian society – during the discussion becomes apparent that there exist absolutely differences between the self-perception and that of a stranger. By this means according to the experience of the panel members immigrants are considered foreigners only due to their names and their origin despite of all integration efforts. At the same time they result strangers or “Deutschländer” in their respective countries of origin.

By way of contrast during the discussion appears that the diversity of the society can also implicate advantages. Immigrants, which are rooted in different cultures, enrich the respective society with their cultural and inter-cultural competences and dispose of access possibility to fields, which often remain closed to “natives”.

... Because for me homeland was always the place where I am at home and where my home is. That means Austria. Because here I was born, I grew up and here I am living ... But today Turkey is still the country of my fathers, which means my father land.

Citation from Hüseyin Özcelik

Critical annotations to the Austrian integration system

From the point of view of a panel member the active integration policy started too late in Austria. For example has been critically annotated that some years ago foreign workers have still been accepted without resolving in the run-up the matter of the succeeding families and the integration of these families in the Austrian society in satisfying manner. Therefore it is wrong to believe that somebody, who is living already forty years in a country, is already integrated without any effort on his part or on the part of the state.

But it has been positively annotated that the efforts within the field of integration has been strengthened explicitly during the last years, whereupon the efforts on the field of education have to be especially pointed out. By this means education and the acquirement

of the language spoken by the majoritarian society have been unanimously regarded as key of a general positive integration.

Integration is like a form of marriage. Efforts and concessions have to be undertaken by both parts. If both parts make efforts and there is the intention to do so than, it will work. (Citation from Sueli Menezes)

Tips for a successful integration for immigrants by immigrants

On basis of experiences of the five participants the following counsels for people in similar situations came out:

- Oneself should feel diversity and define it positively for oneself. The positive attitude passes to others and effects that just this diversity is not only more a dividing aspect, which leads to the selection of people.
- Remain true to yourself; find a niche in the society from, where you find access to several culture groups.
- Make the own children familiar to both worlds.
- Take advantage of the language and educational possibilities. They are the keys to a track record and a satisfying development in the new home country.
- Get rid of the victim hood piece by piece to discover the own power newly and to go into the new discourse self-confidently

I think we should get rid of the victim hood piece by piece. For the purpose to discover our own power newly and consequently go into the discourse in a quite other manner and more self-confidently. (Citation according to Viola Raheb)

Requests for the Austrian EU Presidency

The possibility for official dialogues of the cultures should not only take place in the framework of the Austrian EU presidency. It should rather be continued – and this not only in the Hofburg but on all society levels, for instance also in Favoriten.

I wish that all possibilities of the dialogue won't only take place in the framework of the EU presidency but should also be continued. Not only in the Hofburg, but for instance in Favoriten. (Citation according to Viola Raheb)

SUMMARY OF THE 2ND PANEL

“MODELS OF THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FROM THE SAFETY POLICY POINT OF VIEW”

Purpose of the second panel

The 2nd panel sets itself the target to compare models of the inter-cultural dialogue in different states inside and outside the European Union and to work out best-practise models. In addition should be disputed, which contribution the dialogue of the cultures and religions could make to the protection of the intern and external security.

The discussion has been guided by university professor Dr. Mathias Rohe, professor for justice at the university Erlangen – Nürnberg and judge at the Higher Regional Court in Nürnberg. Rohe is engaged with the Islamic culture group since many years. He is author of numerous publications on the Islamic legislation and co-author of the study *“Perspectives and challenges at the integration of Muslim fellow citizen in Austria”*, which was presented by him and the Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior Liese Prokop on the conference day. Furthermore Rohe is joint founder and since October 2001 president of the Society for Arabic and Islamic right.

The five panel participants were composed by political experts:

Rikke Hvilshoj, since 1990 active in politics, since February 2005 minister for refugees, immigrants and integration in Denmark.

The attendance of minister Hvilshoj was particularly topical, because at the time of the conference Denmark was just world-wide medially present because of the so called *“caricature conflict”*.

Nourredine Ayadi works as special advisor of the Algerian state president since 2005. Before Ayadi was Algerian ambassador in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

Daniel Weygandt is governor for the German speaking countries in the US State Department since September 2006. From 2001 till 2004 Weygandt acted as deputy ambassador in Vienna.

Gijs de Vries carries out the activity of the EU anti-terrorism coordinator since 2004. The post has been brought into being as reaction by the EU to the terrorist assaults in the United States and Europe.

Patricia Baba guides the office for the domestic affairs at the Italian Ministry of the Interior.

Models of the inter-cultural and religious dialogue inside and outside of Europe

We must respect the particular religions, cultural diversities etc. and it is important that we understand each others and this situation we can only achieve by an open discussion. (Hvilshoj)

Denmark

Minister Hvilshoj admitted that it has been started too late with active integration policy in Denmark. In fact the problems have been seen, but they have not been dealt actively. They failed to explain to the immigrants on which social values the Danish society is built.

We must discuss about it, why we have societies – also in Denmark – which live parallel, which do not know each other, which do not understand each other, which speak about each other, but don't understand the mutual actions and it is important to keep this in mind and to make efforts that this trend won't advance. (Hvilshoj)

Today Denmark stands in front of many challenges. From the point of view of the minister the common specification of basic values is among the most important integration measures. So emphasized Hvilshoj the necessity of acquiring the national language and the securing of access to education and the labour market for immigrants.

USA

Daniel Weygandt pointed out special experiences of the USA concerning immigration. Immigration has a much longer tradition in the USA than in Europe; in fact there exists a permanent migration wave. The first Muslim group has been already founded at the beginning of the 20th century. In the USA is no national immigration and integration policy.

Italy

Baba referred to the intense immigration in Italy since 15 years. On initiative of the Minister of the Interior at time, Giuseppe Pisanu, it has been started to conduct a structured dialogue in 2003. The formation of two inter-ministerial committees (inter-ministerial committee for the combat against discrimination and anti-Semitism, inter-ministerial committee against discrimination of every kind of religion, faith or way of thinking) have been carried out. Structural dialogues started on local levels to discuss concrete issues. Furthermore has been founded the Council for the Italian Islam.

Austria

University professor Dr. Rohe reported on his experiences as co-author of the study "Perspectives and challenges in the integration of Muslim fellow citizens in Austria" In Austria the situation shows a successful integration and prevention of extremist behaviour. But there exists an abstract fear of other cultural and faith communities, which media are also picked out as a central theme.

It has been found out that the majority on both parts is ready and open for integration. Nevertheless the distance between the different groups is definitely noticeable. With his statement Rohe affirmed also the experiences of minister Hvilshoj in Denmark.

The life of these two worlds is always conducted separately; there exist only poor contacts at levels of neighbourhood, family and friendship. (Rohe)

We must convince the population of the measure of the diversity. (Rohe)

Is it possible to institutionalize the dialogue?

We need the institutionalisation, but we also need that the people start the dialogue. (Hvilshoj)

The discussion participants agreed about that in Europe exist all the necessary requirements for the dialogue of the cultures and religions at political as well as at intellectual level.

But it appears that the theoretical existence of these pre-conditions for the dialogue is not

sufficient. The initiative and the disposition to the dialog and to the official contention of the groups in fact must come without saying.

In this context minister Hvilshoj pointed out that in Denmark, though there is a council for ethnic minorities, there is no council for Muslim communities. Naturally the foundation of such a community is allowed and preferable, but this could not be realized for lack of mutual consent of the Muslim group. Therefore it is often difficult to find out relevant contact places and contact persons. The minister pointed out that the initiative for the foundation of such a council should come from the community and can not be initiated politically.

Patricia Baba supported this point of view and stressed the importance of assemblies to share at the dialogue.

We don't want to impose any dialogue, but the Council of the Italian Islam is a good way to share at it. (Baba)

Pre-condition for an effective dialogue

We must respect the particular religions, cultural diversities etc. and it is important that we understand each other and this we only can obtain by an open discussion. (Hvilshoj)

Tolerance is very important, it is a challenging item. (de Vries)

De Vries pointed out that European as well as Muslim societies combat the existing intolerance and they must share at the local dialogue.

We must try to understand the diversity of our society and this can only work, if the people exercise this dialogue on local levels. The governments and also private organisations cannot do this (de Vries)

The local dialogue takes place in the communities, in the villages, in the neighbourhood, in the sports clubs, the official organisations and the religious communities.

Some panel members pointed out the influence of events outside of Europe upon the

mindset and prejudices of Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe.

I think, if the USA discuss the situation in Europe, they should also discuss the answers to their own policy. (de Vries)

Weygandt answered, that the USA are very well aware that the mindset of people in many parts of the world is influenced by the American policy.

Especially de Vries pointed out that in many countries the readiness to build bridges is still missed.

We must try to invest in tolerance and contrasts, but we must work on global security issues, which play a very important role in this confrontation. (de Vries)

Inter-cultural and religious dialogue in connection with issues about the internal and foreign security

The panel members agreed in that, that the victims of terrorist acts of violence have been very often Muslims. The combat has to be conducted against extremists, whose goals are civilians – Christians, Jews and Muslims.

De Vries pointed out the common interests concerning the combat against terrorism and the importance of the dialogue.

We all have common bases, but we have different traditions and we must discuss these traditions. (de Vries)

He referred to numerous projects and meetings of the EU with third countries on the combat against terrorism and invites all EU member states – not only those, who have the presidency – to continue these initiatives.

If we fall back on the possibilities of the dialogue, we don't need a dialogue only inside Europe, but a dialogue with all our partners from the whole world. (de Vries)

Weygandt also pointed out the importance of a transatlantic dialogue and an intensification of the transatlantic relations in this connection.

But the difference between the American and the European perception on the question of the Muslim radicalisation is that, that the events of September 11th didn't mean the destruction in one fell swoop for the USA, but a provocation for a conflict between America and the Muslim world.

And I think that the radical groups take advantage of the clash between the civilizations for the reinforcement of this while persuading the people to different reactions to place a wedge between the enormous majority of the Muslim population in the world. (Weygandt)

According to the opinion of Mr. Weygandt we should have a discussion about how we could react against provocations best.

In reality integration is a political problem and must be dealt at politic level. (Ayadi)

At the same time Ayadi pointed out, that terrorism is also a political problem and does not have anything to do with religion. He said that his home country Algeria was very much affected by terrorist acts of violence. Terrorist groups used the religion often as pretext to fight against the Muslim religion self.

He pointed out that Algeria vanquished the terrorism and cultivates the dialogue of reconciliation as impulse for its political activity. According to his opinion the dialogue should be structured and especially at the political level should be taken care that especially young or jobless people would not permit to be recruited by terrorist associations. He suggested concrete measures like pedagogic programmes for schools, the exchange or establishment of an international award as appreciation for the input in the dialogue of the cultures and religions.

In line with the discussion the member of the 4th panel Imam Mustafa Ceric, the Grand-Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, piped up:

Ceric pointed out his support to the Austrian approach on conducting the dialogue and appreciated the numerous Austrian activities on this topic. Furthermore he encouraged Austria to share the festivity concerning the foundation of the first studies in Islamic law in

Europe 120 years ago in 2007.

Ceric prefers instead of the term “integration”, which has very much to do with assimilation, the term “participation of Muslims”.

Summarized we can say, that the intercultural dialogue on the constitution of understanding, the reduction of intolerance and as basis on the protection of the worldwide safety situation is indispensable.

But the presentation of the way, how the dialogues of cultures and religions should take place, remains a crucial challenge for policy and society.

SUMMARY OF THE 3RD PANEL

“EUROPE – A COMMUNITY OF VALUES?”

Is Europe a community of values? The discussion on this item is as old as the history of the European Union self.

Panel 3 of this dialogue event has highlighted the above question in depth and has put impulses for further common ways in Europe.

Therefore the topic has been structured in three main questions:

- 1. Does the European Union need common values? If so, do we have these? Which values belong to this canon; what constitutes the European identity?**
- 2. What can and what must we expect from those, who are native-born European? What can we expect from those, who as immigrants want to be integrated in our society and who have already been integrated? What can we demand from European citizen in order that the living together is functioning?**
- 3. How do we deal with those, who don't want to stand to the European values, which they partly reject?**

Already at the beginning Dr. Leon Zelman points out, that Europe as peace community had a nature of reply to the crimes of the National Socialism. According to his opinion it is therefore clear that the European Union is also a community of values, which has not been only founded for the purpose of economic development.

This opinion shares also Dr. Alain Bruin of the EU Commission. He considers human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and justice as common European values.

It is important to him how the EU can protect and implement these values. From his point of view the combat against discrimination, racism and xenophobia is important. Furthermore a policy of integration and the promotion of cultural diversity are necessary, because according to Bruin racism aliments radicalism and finally also terrorism.

Imam Mustafa Ceric, Grand-Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, mentions values like life, freedom, religion, property and human dignity as basic programme, which unifies us. He mentions the Danube Monarchy as historic example of a successful integration of Muslims.

The president of the Islamic religious community in Austria, Prof. Anas Schakfeh, sees the Austrian model of separation between state and religion as exemplary concept in Europe, which promotes a constructive relation between religions and state.

Prof. Bassam Tibi explains his concept of Euro Islam and the European defining culture. According to him the Islam is very flexible and the concept "Europe" is characterized by this "inclusivity". A European Islam seems him practicable. The concept of an Euro Islam corresponds with Tibi's idea of a European defining culture, which involves the separation between religion and policy, democracy, human rights (freedom of religion included), civil society and pluralism.

According to Tibi the Europeans should change themselves and be in the condition to accept their Muslim co-citizens as Europeans. On the other hand the Muslims, which remained strangers so far should become better integrated and represent the above mentioned five values in order that they can also become European. According to Tibi there is no problem on the integration of the Islam in USA, because the Muslims there consider themselves Americans.

Contrary to Tibi Schakfeh points out that for instance for Muslim Bosnians, Albanians and Macedonians it is not necessary to become Europeans, because they are Europeans since generations.

Schakfeh also doesn't accept the term Euro Islam. From his point of view there is no European Islam as there is no Arabic, African, Turkish or Indonesian Islam. Nevertheless there exist local and regional imprints of the Islam. If there would be different regional varieties of the Islam according to his opinion the universality of the religion would be put into question.

The director of the Austrian St. George Course of Lecture in Istanbul, Mag. Franz Kangler, goes into laicism in Turkey and states, that this majoritarian Muslim country has accepted just these west regulations in its state system.

Tibi is afraid of a conflict of the religions, if we won't succeed to Europeanize the Islam. Kangler argues against this, that the religions could very well find a common way. According to Kangler exist narrow and reserved perceptions in all religions, but we should

not build a new Iron Curtain against the Islam.

Europe should be again aware of its peace role and continue to develop the old peace project and also extend it in direction Islam, in the same way as it began once between Germany and France.

SUMMARY OF THE 4TH PANEL

“RELIGIONS AS BRIDGE CONSTRUCTORS OF THE INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE?”

Objective target of the forth panel

The forth panel aimed to discuss, which influence and which responsibility do religions have for the inter-cultural dialogue.

The school of the dialogue is the personal meeting. (Sturm)

The discussion has been conducted by Professor Alfred Worm, editor-in-chief, publisher and author of books.

The five participants were prominent representatives of religions, who can look back on a long-time professional experience also on the field of the religious dialogue.

Dr. Eleonore Lappin was born in Vienna, acts as historian, author of numerous publications and amongst others as lecturer for contemporary history at the Karl Franzens University Graz. She is vice-president of the Jewish-liberal community in Vienna “OR CHADASCH”.

Suffragan DDr Helmut Krätzl was born in Vienna and is Episcopal vicar for the concerns of the ecumenism and the catholic adult education in the domain of the archdiocese Vienna. Within the bishops’ conference he is responsible for the adult education, the Austrian Bible work, the seminar for ecclesiastic professions and the ecumenism together with Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. He also is author of numerous respective publications.

Dr. Michael Staikos was born in Athens and lives in Vienna since 1964. Since 1991 he heads the Greek-Oriental Metropolitanate of Austria. Metropolitan bishop Staikos is also Exach of Hungary and Central Europe.

Professor Anas Schakfeh was born in Syria, lives since 1965 in Austria and is Austrian citizen since 1980. Amongst others he worked as sworn interpreter for the Arabic language, is author of numerous publications and since 1980 spokesperson with own

lecture of the programme “The Voice of Islam” at ORF. Since January 2000 he is president of the Islamic Denomination in Austria.

Mag. Herwig Sturm was born in Lilienfeld, NÖ; he is bishop of the Protestant Church A.B. and chairman of the Protestant High Consistory A. u. H. B. in Austria. Since 2006 he is chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Austria.

SITUATION OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CHURCH COMMUNITIES IN THE PLURALIST SOCIETY AND THE EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS ON THE SOCIETY:

All the five panel members agreed about the item that religion plays an important role for the foundation of peace and it ranks among its primary duties to build bridges to each other. In this regard have been also brought up by Dr. Lappin the problems of the religious communities to bring the people in the churches and so she addressed the necessity that the religious community have to open up on their own behalf. In Austria have been annotated certain tendencies for openness.

One of the biggest problems of the Jewish denomination today is: how can I bring the people in the synagogues? This I heard also from members of the Christian community. (Dr. Lappin)

The religious communities are requested on their own behalf to open up and I see certain openness here in Austria. (Dr. Lappin)

According to the opinion of Suffragan Krätzl and in main parts also of the other panel members the anxieties and the existing distrust of the population towards the stranger in general is due to the nature of the people and on the other hand this would be intensified by the quick change of the society during the last decades.

Today many people are afraid of the other culture, the other language, the other people, who immigrate and take away the jobs. To build a bridge here –here the religions are irretrievable. (Krätzl)

The borders are down and we can not more live alone amongst ourselves, but we have to live together with millions of fellow human beings, who think, act and live different from us and a dialogue is necessary therefore. (Staikos)

According to Staikos during the last decades the importance of the religion of a person has not been taken seriously; only since the events of September 11th this topic became a subject-matter for discussions. Especially bishop Sturm spoke thereof that religion has a dual face – on the one hand as peace founder and on the other hand religious opinion

could be abused for hatred.

And now it has to be determined all at once that at once in the European Union the role of the religion is beheld in another form since the events in the United States. (Staikos)

... We have to take serious the dual face of the religion. Religion is something of highest profoundness, which can move a person and in the sense of our common view of god this can quasi lead to peace. But it can also be misused for hatred and violence ... (Sturm)

Situation of the dialogue in Austria – the Austrian model

All of the five panel members agreed that building bridges is one of the most important challenges of the religion and during the last decades have been already made great progresses on the theological scholar level. It has also been pointed out that religion self is an upholder of civilization, which differs people from themselves and even sometimes separates them of each other. A topic namely the Christian character, which has been discussed especially in connection with the constitution of the EU has not been criticized by president Schakfeh; but it has been stated as matter of fact, whereas has been admitted by all panel members that minorities namely religious and ethnic ones must obtain equalization. In Austria, which is traditionally a country of ethnic diversity, is this functioning well.

Religions are upholders of civilization first and foremost ... and I always say again that Europe is formed by the Christian sense of Alpine regions ... We, the Muslims, don't want to call this into question ... We are a minority and this minority only wants to make a claim on the rights, which are possible within the scope of the constitutional state – not privileged but also not discriminated. (Schakfeh)

The panel members agreed also that neither the policy should make religion nor the religion policy.

Religion should not make policy. (Suffragan Krätzl)

There was also an agreement that only in a secular state, as it is Austria, freedom of religion is guaranteed and only under these basic conditions a dialogue amongst the

religions and cultures is possible.

I accept the secular state (...) as it is represented in Austria; therefore I am for the Austrian model ... (Schakfeh)

Freedom of religion exists only in the neutral secular state. The state, which wants to keep out of the discussion on right or erroneous, on good or bad and concedes every citizen the same right, makes freedom of religion possible. (Sturm)

In the course of the discussion has been attested, that a religious dialogue and also "getting to know each other" will only work, if everybody is aware of his cultural and / or religious roots and partly the people miss this knowledge. Schakfeh pointed out that the dialogue must be also conducted with non-believers.

... The greatest hindrance for the dialogue is that one is not certain of his own culture and partly of his own religion. The dialogue, the inter-religious, makes only sense, if two persons speak with each other, if everyone has an opinion and believes in something. Only then it makes sense, otherwise it will be only babble. (Krätzl)

I think one will be able to conduct a real dialogue not until if one will know each other... (Staikos)

In the society do not exist only religions and churches. There also agnostics and atheists and we conduct the dialogue with all ... (Schakfeh)

The fundament and the pre-condition are that, what we should know - and what and who I am. And not until I stay on this fundament, I can make an excursion towards the other one... (Staikos)

In this regard Staikos also addressed the problems of the Christians in the Arabic world and pointed out that the dialogue should not be led one-sided.

The dialogue is a necessity,y but it has certain principles and pre-conditions, in order that it would not become a monolog respectively it would not be a dialogue, which

happens because of necessity (...) If the two fundamentals – respectfulness and sincerity – are missed, in fact we will speak together, but we still remain side by side (...) There can not only be rights, there also must be responsibilities – we can not divide and say today we discuss here on the role of the Islam in Europe and I cannot say, it does not regard me, how are the Christians in the Islamic world (...) Tolerance means that I allow to the other to breathe, because I can not forbid it to him and I think this is not enough today ... (Staikos)

The inter-religious dialogue on all levels?

There was agreement that the ecumenism as well as the whole inter-religious dialogue on philosophical – theological level did not make only progresses, but has been continuously cultivated and meliorated. But there exist great problems and reservations concerning the dialogue and the mutual understanding of the people, the believers and non-believers among themselves.

During the last decades doubtlessly we made enormous progresses. But this happened mostly at theological level and was very, very aloof. That means that the religions became close theologically and at the level of religious studies. But how it appears at the basis, this is quite another story (...) the relation between Muslims and Christians is also taut – just at the basis ... (Lappin)

It seems to me, when the children grow up, they will be at once infected by a bacillus, which is present in the society. This bacillus then expresses: take care, these are the others. (Krätzl)

We can only counter this, if on the one hand we already do awareness training during the education in school and religious instruction is therefore indispensable; on the other hand should be reported via media on existing positive projects of international understanding and the understanding between the different cultures and religions. According to the opinion of the panel members fears of contact and reservations could then be surmounted.

I think that fears of contact can be diminished not until in the media will be spoken more about positive projects, which are running. (Lappin)

The dialogue of the religions in the schools would not be possible without religious instruction. (...) We celebrate feasts together and sometimes also worship but not divine services, masses or a Muslim prayesr, but worship, where we recite together the Holy Books and where will be also mediated. (...) We have the dialogue in Austria. (Schakfeh)

During the education in school happens very much, in both directions, from Christianity to Islam and towards Judaism. (...) I think this should be made public. This should be supported and I believe in the youth; I believe that here grows up a generation, which stands in the same manner for non-violence and for the peace amongst the cultures and religions. (Krätzl)

Prospects:

The Austrian model has been praised considerably and in comparison to other European countries the inter-religious dialogue is functioning very well in Austria.

The ecumenism does not function in any other European country as well as here in Austria. (Staikos)

Summarizing can be said that it has been drawn an absolutely positive picture of the near future by all representatives of the religious communities. On the one hand this happens because the problems of religious and cultural differences are in the heads of the people not later since the event of September 11th and therefore they were brought up. Only by bringing up these items can be effectuated a solution of the problem and the misuse of religions generally condemned – across all borders and opinions.

I think it will come the day, especially in this country, where the living together of many ethnic and religious minorities has the longest tradition in Central Europe, where the other one from the ethnic or religious minority will not be considered as burden but as enrichment. (Staikos)