

UPF Munich, Germany participated in interfaith workshop: Houses of Religions

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Munich, Germany -- UPF participated in a special interfaith workshop on Houses of Religions titled "Vision / Format / Experiences."

The special conference, held on October 23 and 24, 2019, in Munich's Old Town Hall and the Protestant City Academy, was about the interreligious institutions that house rooms of worship for different faiths.

Six founders or representatives of established Houses of Religion responded to the invitation from Dr. Martin Rötting, a professor of religious studies at the University of Salzburg (Austria) and a committee member of the Institute for Interreligious and Intercultural Encounter (OCCURSO) and the House of Cultures and Religions-Munich.



The purpose of the event was, on the one hand, to glean inspiration for the founding of such a house in Munich and, on the other, to encourage exchange with a broad public about the vision, concepts and

content of such houses.

Information stands demonstrating the work of the different Houses of Religion were set up, and at the opening event in the dignified Old Town Hall each House of Religion gave a presentation about its work in front of an audience of about 100. An official representative welcomed all the participants on behalf of the city of Munich.

The next morning, the conference continued in the Protestant City Academy.

Dr. Rötting gave a talk about the history of interreligious houses and about their general concept. Following this, each house presented its plans, experiences and activities in more precise detail. In terms of actual buildings, only two of the houses own such -- in Bern, Switzerland, and Taipei, Taiwan (two levels in a high-rise complex). In Berlin, ground has been broken for a "House of One"; construction will start in April 2020, with completion planned for 2023.

The houses in London, New York and Stuttgart are active associations with various religious communities as members, many interreligious activities and a "virtual house." It was not clear whether actual buildings were also planned.



Of special note was the report by the representative from Bern about their success and the full integration of the house in the city. It even has had a positive effect on tourism and the economy.

A special feature was that Hubert Arnoldi, the leader of UPF in the city of Stuttgart, was able to speak in great detail about the House of Religion in his city. He introduced the book *World Scripture* and spoke about programs and activities and how diverse religious communities feel at home there, have lively exchanges and cooperate well.

The morning program ended with a plenary session at which the speakers answered questions from the audience.

The program continued after lunch with workshops and an exchange of ideas in smaller groups.

At the end, the Bavarian radio station *Bayrische Rundfunk* interviewed the speakers.

This was an excellent event that hopefully will bear good fruit. We are surely moving forward to "one family under God"!

(Translated from German by Catriona Valenta.)