

UPF-Germany holds its biannual gathering at Stuttgart

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During the first Saturday in July UPF-Germany held its biannual gathering in Stuttgart. Some 30 members participated, among them 6 Ambassadors for Peace. The programme included reports from the board and the affiliated cities, the election of a new board and setting goals and objectives for the coming two years.

Karl Christian Hausmann, president of UPF Germany, started with giving an overview of the past two years.

November 2012 saw the last national and European-wide conference in Berlin with title "What kind of Europe do we envision for the future?". The conference was a great success and all papers delivered were collected and published in book form. However this type of conference also incurs a great deal of expenses. UPF Germany is solely financed by membership fees and donations. The organisation did not yet succeed in soliciting public funding opportunities for its projects. Therefore it might be appropriate to organise only one-day conferences in the future, even if on a national



level. Other German-speaking countries could be included as well.

Membership doubled over the past two years. UPF-Germany now has 224 registered and paying members. Hopefully this membership increase will continue over the coming years.

Other topics discussed included:

1. The challenged posed by an increased secularisation of society

The increasing secularisation of society combined with a progressive loss of values is one of the biggest challenges faced by society today. Even though Communism was largely dismantled as a state organisation after the end of the Cold War, its ideas and concepts live on, subtly inducing an

anti-religious sentiment within society. It is hard to talk about God, not only in public but privately as well. Judging from the mass media it is suggested that religion is more of a problem than a solution to societal challenges.

The “Five Principles of Peace” postulated by the UPF start with putting God at the center. However this needs much more elaboration. Certainly the UPF does not advocate any form of “Gottesstaat”, like e.g. fundamentalist Muslims would do. The teachings of CAUSA in the past could possibly help in formulating a concept of governance which is based on the belief in God.

2. The challenge of Integration

There is a much echoed demand for the integration of foreigners into the German society. “Unity in diversity” is a much cited slogan. However what is the meaning of “German culture”? Is there a unifying basis for diversity to come together and harmonize? We have plenty of diversity, but where is the basis for unity? Without a common base, integration is hardly possible at all.

3. The role of the family for society

In Germany (as in other industrialized countries) the role of the family as supply and support unit has largely ceased to exist. Marital partners remain financially independent of each other and can easily split without having to suffer material consequences. This, of course, does not hold true in regard of children. For children, especially in young age, the splitting up of parents will always be a traumatic experience, likely to negatively affect the growth and development of the minors. Furthermore the family as basic unit of society contributes in numerous ways to the peaceful coexistence and well being of society at large. These contributions need to be analysed and specified and thus the family unit be upgraded in importance and value to society.

The next point on the agenda was the re-election of the board. All members agreed to serve for another 2-year term in their respective capacities:

Karl-Christian Hausmann – President

Dieter Schmidt and Fritz Piepenburg - Vice Presidents

Jürgen Kirchberger - Treasurer

Furthermore the advising council, consisting of AfP Mohammed Herzog, AfP Eng. Carmine Onembo and MA Francisco Connidi was expanded with Hildegard Piepenburg, who will take especial care of family related issues. She also presented a talk with power point to the audience with title “What will come if family disappears?”

Finally a number of tasks were identified at the end of the meeting:

1. Improving communication among the cities. There has to be a better exchange of news among the cities on activities. Reports need to be written and exchanged. At the end of the month those reports could be combined and passed on to members and friends alike in the form of a newsletter.
2. Events organized across local borders are being encouraged. Spokespersons from other cities can be invited to address specific topics.
3. UPF Germany will work on the question of funding from national and EU sources. Christian Hausmann will attend an “Information Day on EU Funding 2013” in September in Hannover.
4. Besides the ongoing activities in the communities/cities, a national conference is envisioned for spring 2014 on the topic “The art and science of happiness”, somewhere in the South of Germany to facilitated attendance by UPF Austria and UPF Switzerland.

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