Online session of annual working meeting of Churches in Europe group of Russian-German forum ‘St. Petersburg Dialogue’

On October 22, 2020, the Churches in Europe group of the Russian-German forum of civic societies ‘St. Petersburg Dialogue’ held an annual working meeting in online format.

Participating in the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR); Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the affairs of the far-abroad diaspora; and Hierodeacon Yaroslav (Ochkanov), DECR secretariat for the affairs of the far-abroad diaspora.

From the German side, there were Dr Johannes Eldemann, director of the Institute of Ecumenical Theology, leader of the German part of the group; Joachim Liebig, president of the Evangelical Church of Anhalt; and Prof Dr Martin Illert, Department for Orthodoxy, Ecumenism and Scholarship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany.

They discussed 2021 plans of the working group. A number of events of dialogue nature is to be held in 2021, with some of them to be conducted online. The meeting also discussed a project ‘Youth theological meetings’ planned to be held next autumn. Students of several higher education theological schools in Germany will be able to visit theological schools and educational centers in Russia and to be introduced to the experience of training teachers for religious disciplines in schools and to establish academic contacts.

Among particular topics was the influence made by the COVID-10 pandemic on the functioning of the Petersburg Dialogue forum and the work of the Churches in Europe group. The participants agreed on the need to use the instrument of online conferences, which will become in the nearest future an effective means of holding international meetings.

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