



## 28th Russian-German forum of civic societies 'St. Petersburg Dialogue' took place in Bonn



On July 18-19, 2019, the 28<sup>th</sup> Russian-German Forum of Civic Societies 'St. Petersburg Dialogue' met at the Petersburg borough near Bonn. The topic was 'Cooperation as Leitmotif in Europe: Contribution of the Civic Societies in Russia and Germany'. The civic discussion forum brought together about 300 specialists from all spheres of society in both countries.

Among the attendees were representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, including Archimandrite Philaret (Bilekov), vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) and co-chair of the Churches in Europe working group; Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad; Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeikin), pro-rector of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI); Rev. Ilya Kosykh, head of the DECR communication service; Hierodeacon Yaroslav (Ochkanov), DECR secretariat for the far abroad; V. Kipshidze, deputy head of the Department for Church-Society Relations; Ms. M. Nelyubova, DECR secretariat for inter-Christian relations; O. Yegorova, leader of the St. Dimitry Sisterhood resource center for palliative aid; and Ms. Ms. Ye.

Lebedeva, a lecturer at the St. Dimitry Sisterhood and visiting nurse of the St. Alexis Hospital.

Messages of greeting to the opening ceremony on July 18 were brought by the heads of foreign ministries of Russia and Germany, Mrs. Sergey Lavrov and Mr. Heiko Maas. Among the speakers were also the forum co-chairs from the both sides – Ronald Pofalla and V. Zubkov as well as Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia Armin Laschet and the Kaliningrad Regional Governor A. Alikhanov.

On July 19, the forum worked in ten working groups for discussions and exchange of experience on their own agendas. The meeting of the Churches in Europe Working Group was devoted to the theme 'Church hospital service in Russian and German societies'. A broad discussion took place on professional training for pastoral service in hospitals in the two countries. Great attention was given to ethical issues. There was an exchange of opinions on the Churches' experience in the work to give palliative aid as carried out by the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church of Germany.

The event traditionally concluded with a solemn ceremony in which co-chairs of the forum from the Russian and German sides summed up the work and the Peter Boenisch Prizes were presented.

*DECR Communication Service*

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