



Communique of the consultation of the
Conference of European Churches, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe,
Diocese of Zagreb and Ljubljana of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the
European Parliament Antiracism and Diversity Intergroup on
Religious Minorities as Part of Culturally Diverse Societies

The freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. It includes the right to believe and not to believe, and the right to manifest one's faith in worship, teaching, practice and observance, alone and together with others. This right belongs to everyone. In order to manifest their faith, religious persons join together in religious communities and associations.

In the Gospel the Church is called "the little flock" to whom God will give the Kingdom. According to this original self-understanding the Church is itself a minority, journeying in the world but receiving its identity from the realm of God as the ultimate destination of its journey. Even where an entire nation has become Christian, and the Church identifies with its destinies and tragedies, the spiritual attitude remains one of the little flock, with hope anchored beyond this world with its dominions and dominations.

Minorities can often be subject to unequal treatment in European states and societies. This applies particularly to minorities of an ethnic, national, linguistic or religious character, being in a non-dominant position in society and state.

The Consultation notes with burning unease how crimes against minorities are increasing throughout Europe. Incitement to and perpetration of hate crime and aggressive bias are incompatible with the core values of Europe, cherishing unity in diversity. As was underlined in various processes of international and European Institutions, respect and understanding of different narratives, identities, cultures, and religions are constituent to European societies.

International, European and national legislation regulates the relationship between the state and religious and ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, this question is complex as states do not all share the same definition as to who should be recognised as a minority. It is important to guarantee recognition, respect, equal treatment and protection for all minorities. The essence of minority protection is to provide the space and conditions allowing all to live peacefully without fear of discrimination or pressure of assimilation and to develop with specific as well as multiple identities.

Aware of the part religion has played and still plays in situations of conflict, and conscious of our responsibility as churches towards peaceful coexistence of different communities in our societies, this consultation of the Conference of European Churches and partners asks the European Institutions and their member/participating states to assume, in accordance with their obligations under law, the responsibility for:

- preventing and punishing hate crimes and breaking the cycle of violence, also seeking cooperation with civil society, churches, and religious communities
- producing a report about the state of rights of minorities
- implementing all pertinent legislation protecting the status and rights of minorities
- ensuring conditions that enable individuals and groups to co-exist in diversity, and creating a positive climate for the expression of pluralism, tolerance, and respect as corner stones of democratic societies
- promoting ongoing dialogue between majorities and minorities, so as to form a common basis of ideals and values for convivance in our pluralistic and diverse societies.