



Invitation to the ICCJ Conference in Vienna, Austria, 2-5 July 2006

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"Encounter with History - Learning for the Future"

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INVITATION

to participate in the 2006 ICCJ conference in Vienna

2- 5 July 2006

ENCOUNTER WITH HISTORY

LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

and Annual General Meeting on 6 July

Jointly with the Austrian Coordinating Committee of Christian-Jewish Cooperation, the ICCJ this year will hold a small participatory conference to explore the many sites in the City of Vienna which, like so many in the Central European region, give witness of historic and contemporary Jewish life. They point to a vivid and strong community – once the third largest in Europe – but they are also a symbol of a vanished life, destroyed within a short period by a cruel regime in 20th

century. That however was not the only horror Jewish communities had to undergo in the course of history: Three times before since the Middle Ages Jewish life in Vienna had already been extinguished (1196/ 1420/ 1670).

These historic sites and artworks have significance for Jewish-Christian relations. They are often inconspicuous and their significance is in no way as well recognized as for instance a Nazi concentration-camp. But they are all proof of how a certain way of thinking had consequences on mutual relations.

- How can these sites be given greater prominence?
- How can their significance be made clear?
- How can they be used to teach the present and future generation the meaning of these sites?
- How do they impact on people of this generation – either those who wish to create new attitudes or on those who wish to perpetuate prejudice and hatred ?
- How can modern works of art and memorial sites improve Christian-Jewish relations
- How can we keep alive the memory linked to these places?

Set in Central Europe, the conference programme will discuss these questions starting from concrete examples based on a unique opportunity to visit cultural and historic sites in Vienna, a city which was and is the centre of a fascinating region including Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, a region that is endeavouring to break down the political boundaries of the past.

But the history of Central Europe also offers access to Abrahamic dialogue, an issue that has recently grown in relevance as well as in urgency, and where the decades long experience of the Jewish-Christian encounter can serve as a useful model: The unsuccessful Turkish siege of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 is one of the popular stories that helped to establish Austria's national identity. It is a trauma as well as a story of victory – as defenders of the Christian Occident – , which has implications for today's political discussions on migration from Turkey, the attitude towards Islam or Turkey's joining to the European Union. Opinion polls in 2005 show Austria with the lowest level of only 10% supporters of Turkish EU-membership as compared with all other EU-member states. On the other hand, however, as a consequence of a strong Muslim minority in Bosnia at the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the legal status of the Islamic community in Austria is unique in Western Europe, as the Islamic community was legally recognized in 1874 and since 1912 has the same legal status and rights as the Churches or the Jewish community.

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[Programme](#)

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[Registration form](#)

Places for this year's small conference are limited and we therefore urge you to fill in and return the attached registration form as soon as possible and not later than by 15 May 2006.

We look forward to welcoming you in Vienna,

Sincerely

Prof John T Pawlikowski
President
International Council
of Christians and Jews

Revd Helmut Nausner
President
Austrian Coordinating Committee
Christian-Jewish Cooperation