

**XIIIth Academic Consultation of Societas Oecumenica**  
**Sibiu 2004**  
**On the Way to Koinonia: Church Communion in Transition**

**Summary of the results**

The main contribution of the consultation was twofold, it consisted of the discussion on the impact of the Charta Oecumenica on different churches and their theologies both in the East and in the West; and in learning more in detail about the recent history of the churches in Romania, how the coming out of a communist regime influenced ecumenical relationships, which theological themes it has given preference to, and which remained at the background. The fact that there were also participants from Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, former East Germany, enabled comparison of the situation with other ex-communist countries.

Within the first theme: “Uniting Europe as a challenge to the churches” there were three presentations from the Romanian context, by an Orthodox theologian Prof. Dimitru Popescu, by the Lutheran bishop of Sibiu Dr. Christoph Klein, and by the Greek Catholic bishop Virgil Bercea. The presentation and the following discussion introduced us to the conflicts concerning the interpretation of the past (especially between the Greek Catholic and Orthodox point of view) and raised questions concerning how these can be overcome.

The second theme: “Significance of “Charter Oecumenica” Today” started with a detailed introduction to the process of formulating the Charter given by Prof. Viorel Ionita, who himself took an active part in it, and was followed by two presentations given by Prof. Peter De Mey from Leuven and Dr. Kajsa Alhstrand from Uppsala, concerning the theological and practical appropriation of the Charter in Roman Catholic and Lutheran setting, and concerning the critical issues which this process has opened. Here we looked in particular at the conflicts arising from the needs of the individuals and those of the ecclesial bodies.

Presentations on third theme: “On the way to visible unity: the living communion of the churches today” dealt partly with the reception of the dialogues in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches. Prof. Dorin Oancea, Dr. Johannes Oeldemann and Dr. Oliver Schuegraf also pointed out areas, where the results dialogues are complemented (and sometimes also challenged) by the ecumenical experience at the grassroots level, or the lack of it (like the issues concerning sacramental hospitality).

The final theme: “The concept of sacramentality - potential for church unity?” was introduced by

presentations of Dr. Ivana Noble and Prof. Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer (whose lecture was read in her absence). They dealt with the process of broadening the concept of sacramentality and understanding of its roots in contemporary Orthodox and Roman Catholic understanding. The following discussion brought up issues concerning sacramental revival and the need not to see this as an alternative to the engagement of the churches and Christians in the society.

An important part of the programme happened in small discussion groups and in workshops, where specific themes addressed by the presentations and plenary discussion were dealt with in a more detail. The workshops addressed the following areas: (a) Critical Responses to Negotiating of Intercommunio; (b) Rebaptising, Reordaining and other Critical Ecumenical Issues; (c) The notion of Catholicity in churches today; and (d) The national identity of the churches in the context of a uniting Europe.

Ivana Noble