**62nd Annual Meeting of SIESC at Vichy**

by Wolfgang Rank

About 70 participants from 12 European countries met at Vichy in France from July 24th to 30th, 2017. The colleagues of CdEP (Chrétiens dans l’Enseignement Public) had chosen **“Fraternity – a challenge to our time”** as a topic, both because it is a fundamental topic for our existence and because it is getting more and more topical every year. Already at the beginning the hosts awakened the universal longing for fraternity by songs and gestures. On the first day the educational philosopher **Béatrice Moulin** gave in **“Educating to fraternity“** a survey on the conditions, the possibilities and the chances of contributing to strengthening the fraternal living together at school. From the very start the various conditions from the French laicist public school to the Catholic private school in many countries caused a lot of discussions. On the second day the power point presentation prepared by the sociologist **Jérôme Lagoutte** (who could not come at short notice) presented **“Fraternity in the French legal system”**. It became obvious how difficult it is to bring to fruition the originally religious idea in a secular respectively laicist social system. Finally the theologian **Bertrand Dumas** introduced us by means of **“Brotherhood – a divine promise in little human steps”** in a very realistic and close to life way to aims and possibilities of realizing this attitude relying on a religious conviction.

In four groups of different languages, consciously composed out of several countries, the quite different experiences and expectations were shared. One evening groups came together for lace-making, painting mandalas, singing, and philosophizing in workshops.

And we got to know the department of Allier: by an evening of traditional songs and dances, a guided tour of Vichy, a visit to the Castle of Lapalisse, to the abbey of Chantelle, to the opera house of Vichy and finally during the excursion by a visit to the capital Moulins and the singular national museum of theatre costumes as well as to the former Cluniac monastery of Souvigny, where we were surprised by an organ concert and a Medieval festivity.

The personnel at the Centre omnisports at Vichy accommodated and fed us well. But first of all a rather large number of colleagues of CdEP cared for us excellently and prepared and organised the meeting by intensive activities. Without intending to lessen the contributions of the other colleagues, SIESC would like to thank especially Gabrielle Gaspard, Christine Antoine, and “our lady on the spot” Sylvie Paquet.

The colleagues in France know how to create days that stimulate thoughts, are festive and entertaining.