



Annual Report 2005/2006

EURODICONIA

We link our members to serve for solidarity and justice

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A year of reflection

The European dream is not only about growth but about sustainability. There is no positive correlation between cutting social welfare and obtaining a dynamic economy. These were the words of American historian Jeremy Rifkin in October 2005 at a conference on the Sustainability of the European Social Model.

After the rejection of the treaty in France and the Netherlands in spring 2005 the surprise was almost tangible in the Brussels air. In June the European Council called for a "period of reflection" and Commissioner Margot Wallström introduced her Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate to support member states in undertaking a broad dialogue on EU issues with and among citizens. In effect – searching for our common vision – our European dream.

While we are searching for the European dream and reflecting on its future politicians and civil servants alike realise that there is a need to increasingly involve civil society actors in the process.

The Qu/A/Si project – which has been led by Eurodiaconia over the past 3 years – concurs with this judgement. One of the main findings of the Qu/A/Si project is that social service providers – and diaconia – is a bridge builder between individual and society, which enables the individual to live a full life in society.

But what is the society we want to build for ourselves and future generations? And what role should and does diaconia play in shaping the future of a social Europe? We ask ourselves these questions in view of the recent identity crisis of Europe – but we also ask ourselves these question in view of the demographic challenges, the revised focus on growth and jobs of the Lisbon strategy and the heavy debate on the Service Directive.

The Eurodiaconia aim: "To link members to serve for solidarity and justice" was central through 2005 with these questions ringing in our ears. Through cooperation, dialogue and exchange of experiences we are trying to tackle together the challenges we face across national boundaries by learning from each other. The Eurodiaconia working groups, seminars and conferences over the past year are a means to this end. But we also want to make the voice of diaconia heard in Europe; we want to provide answers to the questions on the future of Europe – its visions and values. Through our important social policy work of the past year Eurodiaconia has provided input alone and together with ecumenical and social partners in this process.

So while we are searching for the European dream let us use the time to continue building bridges through our work on national and European level. Building bridges between people and between peoples – across nationalities, culture, social strata and generations. After all – isn't this an important part of what diaconia is really about – to BE present with people in all life situations and to help each individual despite his or her life situation to blossom with a God given value and potential step by step – across the bridge – from darkness to light – from past to future – from dream to reality?



Heidi Paakjær Martinussen
Secretary General
Brussels, May 2006

1.0 Statement of values and strategic aims

Eurodiaconia is a federation of 34 members – churches, non-statutory welfare organisations and NGOs in Europe rooted in the Christian faith within the traditions of the Reformation as well as in the Anglican and Orthodox traditions.

Eurodiaconia's aim is to link its members to serve for solidarity and justice.

Our common vision is

a social Europe, rooted in Jewish-Christian understanding, in whose societies quality of life, human dignity, and social rights for all are ensured, where a Europe wide culture of solidarity, equality and justice is attained, an ecumenical understanding of diaconia with a renewed thinking, learning and acting together of diaconal work, social initiatives and churches across national and confessional borders.

Eurodiaconia seeks to reach this vision through its strategic aims:

- *To ensure quality of life for all in a social Europe*
working for human dignity and social rights
building up a European culture of solidarity and justice
joining the combat against poverty and for social inclusion on European national and local level
influencing decision-making processes in the European institutions
- *To link institutions of diaconia, social initiatives and churches in Europe*
strengthening co-operation and joint work across national borders
learning from our different concepts of social work, volunteering, theology and church life
thinking and practicing in a renewed way about diaconia across national and confessional boundaries
building partnerships with and to facilitate networks of civil society.
- *To be and to enhance networks of competence*
strengthening sustainable and responsible societies
promoting mutual exchange about our work with people in need
enabling empowerment to self-responsible life-style
learning from best practices in diaconal work, training and ethical thinking
qualifying social services and the innovation of concepts
developing of common work and projects.

2.0 Policy Areas

An important part of Eurodiaconia's work is lobbying for a social Europe for the future where solidarity between and among generations and social stratas in society are recognized and where European policies recognize the social dimension as an integrated part of developing a sustainable society for the future.

During 2005/2006 Eurodiaconia main areas of social policy work developed around

- the debate on the European Social Model
- the challenges of Demographic change
- European inclusion strategies closely linked to the Lisbon agenda
- the debate on social services of general interest and the decisions on the Services Directive.

2.1 A strong social commitment of EU policies

"In order to achieve substantive progress with the Lisbon agenda, a renewed effort has to be made on the basis of the same values on which the agenda has been developed."

Eurodiaconia / CEC letter to the President of the European Council, Luxembourg Prime Minister Claude Juncker, March 2005

"We are concerned at the quality of EU agenda where quality of life, sense of identity and active social inclusion are not mentioned."

Eurodiaconia letter to the President of the European Council, Austrian Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, March 2006

Europe is at a crossroad. Not least because of the results of the referenda in France and the Netherlands and the following debate that have illustrated big uncertainties on the future development of the European Union among its people, but also among those who carry political responsibility. The debate about and decisions taken for the EU's future need to be re-balanced in the spirit of the Lisbon Strategy for a sustainable development truly integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions. In 2005, the European Union evaluated on the process towards the 'Lisbon Strategy' goals, in order to set a new direction for the strategy that had become a political reference point for the European Union.

For civil society actors it was important during the review of the Lisbon Strategy to underline that economic growth should not be an end in itself but should serve wider interests. Modernising social protection, fighting poverty and social exclusion as well as promoting sustainable development all contribute to creating a social framework of stability, which is a decisive factor for sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs in Europe and more investment in people.

Highlights:

Ahead of the Spring Summit in March 2005, the annual meeting of Member State leaders where the Lisbon Strategy was at the heart of the debate, a joint letter of Eurodiaconia and the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches was mailed to the Presidency of the European Council asking for overall coherence of EU policies with particular attention to the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy.

In order to get our message across, Eurodiaconia took part in an NGO campaign organised by Social Platform to influence the Spring Summit and signed the on-line petition: "Save Our Social Europe (SOS)", which gathered signatures of 700 organisations from around Europe.

One year later, before the Spring Summit 2006, Eurodiaconia drafted a letter to the Austrian Presidency asking for more operational integration of the social dimension of the revised Lisbon Strategy. We also highlighted the importance of the social inclusion process as a corner stone of the revised Strategy.

2.2 Strengthening the European Union's Social Policy

"The European social model was not born in the heads of professors but is the result of political fights, conflicting interests, differing views, and adjustment to new conditions and "new challenges"."

The Quasi report, June 2005

Issues such as social protection, pensions, long-term care and the fight against poverty and exclusion fall within the remit of the national governments. However the EU is increasingly playing a role in setting common objectives, coordinating exchange of experience and highlighting key challenges and solutions also on these areas.

In 2005 and early 2006, Eurodiaconia continued its work to be present on these debates and provide input to formal and informal policy processes.

Highlights:

"There seems to be a sense that social cohesion is an added cost not an added value in developing Europe... This is a grave mistake. We must realise that no matter how many jobs and how much growth we create this will not eradicate spiritual nor physical poverty. Social cohesion should not be seen as an appendix but as a part of creating a dynamic society with quality of life for all"

Heidi Martinussen; opening remark at the Eurodiaconia/Conference of European Churches conference on the European Social Model in November 2005

"Social policies, when appropriately designed, cannot be regarded as a cost but, instead, as a factor capable of positively influencing the EU's economic

growth, not only by increasing productivity and competitiveness, but also by generating social cohesion..."

European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in their "draft report on a European Social Model for the future", March 2006

The question of the further development of the European social model – or the diverse European social models – is at the heart of the debate. One major impression of this political debate is the lack of a common vision for a social Europe: How do we want to live together as a socially responsible society – let's say in the year 2030? This is not only a question for the member states of the European Union, but affects the whole political development in Europe.

In October 2005, the UK Presidency held a special summit of EU leaders to discuss the future social models in Europe – especially how to organise social protection and labour markets.

Right after the UK Presidency special summit, Eurodiaconia and Church & Society Commission of CEC organised together a conference on a common vision for a social Europe, titled "Towards quality of life for all". From November 22-24, 2005 sixty representatives from European churches and diaconal organisations met in Brussels to learn and discuss about the future of a social Europe. The participants came from more than 30 European countries, not only within the European Union, but also from countries like Romania, Ukraine and Armenia.

During the end session of the conference all participants had a possibility to comment a drafted conference message. The Message aimed to summarise inputs given during the conference.

In November 2006, the Finnish Presidency will organise a meeting on national social models and on the future model for a social Europe. Eurodiaconia is planning to meet in the Nordic Platform as a run-up to the conference and discuss the theme (please see progress under section 4.3 on the "Nordic Platform")

In March 2006 The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament published a draft report on a European Social Model for the future. It is positive to read in this report conclusions in line with the standpoint of Eurodiaconia over the past year both in connection with the approach to the Lisbon agenda and to the future of the European Social Models.

The Eurodiaconia office shall follow the debate and development of these issues closely in the coming year.

2.3 New solidarity between generations

As the population in Europe ages, life-expectancy rises and birth-rates drop the common challenges on a European level to demographic changes are debated. In early autumn 2005 the European Commission published a Green

Paper entitled: "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations?"

In relation to the Green Paper, members of the joint Social Policy Working Group exchanged information and views during working group meetings and via Internet. Eurodiaconia staff participated in July in a European Commission conference to learn more about how the Commission understand the phenomenon and what kind of solutions are offered. We also invited a representative from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions to the joint working group to enrich our understanding on the issue. The Brussels offices of Eurodiaconia, Church & Society Commission of CEC, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe joint forces and finalised a contribution to the EU Green Paper on demographic change.

In our contribution we underlined

- The need for sustainable political measures to safeguard quality of life and social protection for present and future generations and social cohesion.
- The need for more cohesion in EU policies facing demographic changes.
- The strong need for a family friendly approach in EU policies.
- The need to find solutions in a new quality of relations between generations, between family life and work and in the integration of migrants.
- The need to strengthen a mutual responsibility in European societies.

2.4 Confronting poverty and tackling exclusion

A zeal for diaconia is always to advocate for the weakest in society and to empower those who are dis-empowered and do not have a strong voice in society. Turning society's eyes to the reality of the sixty-eight million people suffering under poverty and those experiencing social exclusion and calling for strong action is at the core of this zeal.

The EU policy to combat social exclusion is a part of the objectives set in the Lisbon Strategy¹. Now half way to the year 2010 (where the Lisbon goals are supposed to be fulfilled), the revised Lisbon Strategy needs in particular a better balance and interlinking between economic and social policies to meet the needs and aspirations of people living in the EU. It also needs better tools to operate the EU poverty policy. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was established in 2001 as a means for Member States to learn from each other's policies also in the area of social inclusion. In 2005 the EU set out to assess what can be learned from the first years of the process.

Eurodiaconia involvement in the OMC since the outset at the Lisbon European Council of March 2002 has been at both national and European level.

¹ Member states and the European Commission agreed to take steps to "make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010" and fixed the Union's ten year strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Fighting poverty and social exclusion is a key element in ensuring that the EU meets this commitment.

Eurodiaconia contributed to the European Anti Poverty Network and the Social Platform's campaigning to improve the OMC for social inclusion, pensions and health and long-term care and to improve the process of providing a genuine impetus to national governments to strengthen their policy on these areas.

The Qu/A/Si project (please see section 3.1) has also been a great tool of generating topical information and translating strategy to the practical work in line with the principles of the OMC.

The experience to date shows that the OMC has mainly provided a positive opportunity for member states to align their policies along commonly agreed, EU-wide objectives, giving prominence to the issue of poverty and exclusion in the European agenda.

Highlights:

Eurodiaconia was invited to a meeting with the European Commission and the UK Presidency to discuss the organisation of the 4th European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion, and, in October 2005, we participated in the event itself. Eurodiaconia's concern is to highlight even more the importance of social services contribution to an inclusive society. Social services are an integral part of the European Social Model and of society. This means that they are serving not only individuals in need but as well the society at large. At the round table Eurodiaconia voiced its concern and asked particularly for maintaining and strengthening the key priority area 'improving access to quality services' set out in the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion from the European Commission (a report normally published every two years).

In June 2005 Eurodiaconia and the Church & Society Commission of CEC organised a book presentation of the publication 'European Churches confronting Poverty – Social Actions against social exclusion' in the European Parliament. "In times of globalisation and individualisation, we need a social anchor, an island of stability, a light-house for human rights, peace, freedom and social state," said Vice-President Dr Ingo Friedrich of the European Parliament who hosted the event. He concluded by saying "We need a commitment to social justice and the fight against poverty and all forms of exclusion as a priority."

2.5 Social Services and the Service Directive

"Churches, Caritas and Diaconia are major providers of services in many Member States. In the field of person-related services, such as social and healthcare services, the close relationship between the service provider and the beneficiary is vital. It should be taken into account that the recipients of these services are often in a weaker position than other consumers. We take the view that the special characteristics of social and healthcare services should be clearly recognised in Community debate and where appropriate in European Community legislation."

Paper presenting a common view of Eurodiaconia, Caritas, CEC, COMECE: "Call for an exemption of social and healthcare services from the scope of the directive" January 25, 2006

One of the main ambitions of the revised Lisbon Strategy is to complete the internal market in the area of Services, which provides 75% of EU jobs and 65% of GDP in the EU. This means enabling the Service Sector to operate across member state boundaries by opening up the market. However the Commission has recognized that many services are of important public or "general interest", and require specific safeguards in this process.

Early in the process the Commission launched a Green Paper (May 2003) followed by a White Paper (May 2004) on services of general interest.

The Service Directive which was to complete the internal market in the service sector was set to be adopted by Parliament and Council in 2005 and operational by 2007. However, the process has been considerably slowed down due to the heavy debate among stakeholders and the proposal of over 1500 amendments by Parliament to the original text. A broad range of NGOs have lobbied intensely on the exclusion of social and health services from the Directive. Among these voices has been Eurodiaconia who published a common view with Ecumenical partners in January 2006 calling for an exemption of social and healthcare services from the directive.

On February 16, 2006 Parliament adopted a re-vised service directive. It was clear from the re-vised text that the many critical voices – among which Eurodiaconia was an active part – had been effective. However, as the Council and Parliament are co-legislators on the directive the process is still not at an end but has to go through a second reading in Parliament. The expectation is not that major parts will be changed, though, and Liberals say that the directive has been much watered down in its present edition whereas others – among these NGOs in the social service sector and Eurodiaconia with them – are still concerned of the impact the service directive will have on social services even though a list of social services are mentioned in the directive as excluded areas.

One of the issues at stake has been the lack of legal clarity and definitions of the specificities of social services of general interest (SSGI). Therefore NGOs have been looking forward to the European Commission's publication on Social and Health Services which finally came out on April 26, 2006. One of the expectations of the Communication was that it would shed more light on the definitions of the specificities of the SSGI as well as where Community Law applies in relation to the provision of SSGI. The Communication (which does not comprise health services due to the fact that Parliament is currently in the process of working with this subject) does recognise the specificities of SSGI. The Communication also clearly states that the principle of subsidiarity is key in the provision of social services. Given the cross-border nature of some of the services at hand, however, some EU provisions and principles do apply such as public procurement law, the principle of non-discrimination etc.

One of the problematic issues from Eurodiaconia's perspective in this debate is the fact that community law does apply in some instances but on the other hand the Commission has currently no competence to call for for example quality standards of social services. The legal uncertainty in the field of social services is a worry and Eurodiaconia will therefore actively follow the debate and seek to go into debate and voice our concerns with policy makers.

Eurodiaconia will also follow a newly launched study by the Commission on the specificities of social services. The study is supposed to be undertaken during 2006/2007 and a report will be published in June 2007.

Highlights:

The issue of social services in the European Union has been on the Eurodiaconia work plan for more years and was also core to the Qu/A/Si project which Eurodiaconia has been managing for the past 3 years (please see report on the Qu/A/Si project section 3.1).

Among the activities in the area of social services was a seminar in April 2005 on "Social services, Quality services and the Service Directive: What option for revising the draft?" in the European Parliament. Albert Brandstätter was invited as a speaker to the seminar and called for an exemption of social, health and education services from the scope of the Service Directive and the maintaining of high standards of quality and protection (in social, ecological and consumer protection matters) in the interest of fair competition. Moreover, he underlined the special nature of person related and long-term services that are provided by diaconal institutions.

In July, 2005 Eurodiaconia wrote a letter in cooperation with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) to the European Commission concerning the preparation of the Communication on Social Services of General Interest.

We asked the Commission to consider with special care the autonomy of non-state providers of social services such as diaconal institutions and clarify state authorisation for services of general interest according to EU Competition Law.

Eurodiaconia has participated in the Social Platform² campaign on both the Service Directive and lobbying for a Communication on Social Services of General Interest. This has included participation in a questionnaire to stakeholders on services, in EU conferences and in various lobbying actions aimed at the Commission, the Council of Ministers and MEPs.

The main position of the Social Platform has been to get Social Services excluded from the Services Directive and to press for a separate legal framework for social services in Europe. The belief is that such a framework will ensure recognition of the specific characteristics and requirements of social services and the need to safeguard them from any move that would jeopardise accessibility and quality of social services to persons in need. Eurodiaconia has contributed to the work of the Platform to develop a Social

² Social Platform is a European umbrella organization for around 40 European wide NGOs dealing with social policy issues. The Platform is a platform for lobbying and is also works as a sounding board for developing strategies on social policies. The platform hosts more working groups on various social issues and gives access to bi-annual meetings with the European Commission. Eurodiaconia is a member of Social Platform.

NGO contribution to the current Communication on social services (that came out in April, 2006).

In January 2006 Eurodiaconia, Caritas, CEC and COMECE drafted a 'Common view regarding the first reading of the Proposal for a Directive on Services in the Internal Market in the plenary session of the European Parliament'.

This 'Call for an exemption of social and health services from the scope of the Directive' was aimed to provide national member organisations of Eurodiaconia and the other signing organisations with material that would be of assistance in national campaigning. A common view became a useful lobby tool also in Brussels where the 'view' was handed, among others, to MEP from the Socialist Group Evelyne Gebhardt, the main rapporteur on the Service Directive.

3.0 Projects

During the past year Eurodiaconia has been in charge of two EU-funded projects. The Qu/A/Si project (Quality and Accesibility of Social Services for Social Inclusion) which has been running over the past 3 years and the smaller project "Solidarity and Compassion".

3.1 The Qu/A/Si Project

"Members of society have a right to participate fully in society – supportive social services must be obligatory and are neither a luxury nor a matter of charity"

From the Qu/A/Si PR folder

The Qu/A/Si project brought together 16 social service providers from different political levels and with different roles and values. The partners came together to work under the project title: "Quality and Accessibility of Social Services for Social Inclusion". The project fell under the Trans-European Exchange Programme of the European Commission and Eurodiaconia was the lead organisation with project manager Annegret Kröger administering the number of joint field visits, working groups and conferences that enabled participants to fulfil the purpose of the project: To analyse and propose how to bridge the gap between

- EU level Social Inclusion policies and tools
- The action of social service providers on the ground and
- The beneficiaries themselves

The Qu/A/Si partners' mission was to build bridges between different interests and actors. The starting point was the belief that all people in society have the right to participate fully in society. The ability of social service providers to enable individuals to find an appropriate and suitable place in society, and to create cohesion between different public service-providing institutions was therefore an aim of the project.

The project found that social service providers functioned as bridge builders in enabling individuals to participate fully in society. The findings of the Qu/A/Si project also made participants call for the European policy makers to

realize that providers need to be reflected in the European streamlining process and mainstreaming policies. The Qu/A/Si partners therefore called for European and national policy makers to realize the specificities of social services and social service provider's role in fighting social exclusion and in building cohesive societies as well as the importance of including social goals as central to the debates on the Lisbon strategy and on long-term political goals in the EU. The project pointed out that social services must be person-oriented and that any approach to social service provision must be based on the human right to inclusion and participation. The Qu/A/Si project finds that social services are a genuine element of a European Social Model.

The Qu/A/Si project defines social services as any activity that is undertaken:

- To enhance individuals' well-being, and is person-oriented
- That is based on human and social rights
- That contributes to the cohesion of the community and wider social relationships
- That enables and empowers the individuals concerned

The work of the project was carried out in three priority areas:

- Related to Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion
- Related to the specific characteristics of social service providers
- Related to indicators for measuring needs and effects for social inclusion

The results of the Qu/A/Si project including the final report and reports from the various field visits, working groups and case-studies are available on the Eurodiaconia website as well as on the Qu/A/Si final report CD obtainable from the office. A folder with the main findings of the Qu/A/Si findings is also available in hard-copy.

On the Eurodiaconia website one can also find the Qu/A/Si tool-kit on social services and social inclusion policies in English and German.

On November 10, 2005 the Qu/A/Si results were released in Parliament at a press event hosted by MEPs Ms. Marianne Thyssen and Ms. Anneli Jäätteenmäki. To speak at the event was also Mr Walter Wolf from the European Commission DG Employment and Social Affairs as well as researcher on the project Dr Peter Herman. The event also saw participation from a number of the Qu/A/Si partners who shared with MEP Thyssen and Mr Walter Wolf their experiences and outcome from the Qu/A/Si project at the lunch meeting that followed the press event.

The results of the Qu/A/Si is followed up by the participating partners as well as by Eurodiaconia who is promoting the results as well as using them in the continuing work on the debate on social services in Europe.

3.2 Solidarity and Compassion

The project "Solidarity and Compassion" is a smaller EU financed project that runs from fall 2005 – fall 2006.

The project is meant to help church-organizations and diaconia-institutions to scan the elements of the various forms of social models and to reflect the changes of the political and economic situation in Europe.

The "Solidarity and Compassion" project has the aims to exchange experience; to reflect the specifics of diaconia in the framework of common European values and their concrete implementation on national and local level; to network different actors and to provide tools for networking learning and communication.

The project has entailed:

November 2005 Joint conference with the CSC of CEC: "A Common Vision for a Social Europe: 'Towards Quality of Life for All'".
Venue: Brussels.

Expected outcome and follow up:

- *Project report and small publication with key-note speeches and conference message*

March 2006 Seminar: "Act Now – Pray Later. Branding Diaconia in Europe". Venue: Brussels

Expected outcome and follow up:

- *Mini tool-kit on communication and branding.*
- *Diaconia day 2007.*
- *On-line working group on communication.*

March 2006 Seminar: "Volunteering in Diaconia". Venue: Bratislava

Expected outcome and follow up:

- *CD with materials from volunteering experiences in the Eurodiaconia constituency.*
- *Publication (on the CD) of a survey of volunteering in diaconia in Europe.*
- *On-line working group on volunteering.*

The final phase of the project will be the

June 2006 Final Conference: "Solidarity and Compassion – Challenging, learning and communicating the European Social Model". Venue: Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Expected outcome and follow up:

- *Publication: "Solidarity and Compassion – diakonia challenging the European Social model"*

4.0 Regional Platforms

The regional platforms of Eurodiaconia are networks between member organizations in the Mid/Eastern part of Europe, the Nordic countries and the Southern part of Europe respectively. Eurodiaconia has currently three platforms: The Nordic, the Visegrad and the Latin.

The aim of the platforms are to tackle challenges in diaconia particular to the region, to exchange experiences and to co-operate on region specific issues.

4.1 The Visegrad Platform

“The diaconal challenge must always be discovered. The diaconal challenge can always surprise us. The diaconal challenge will always move – and be a movement.”

Presentation on diaconal identity at the Visegrad conference in November 25-27, 2005 (Anne Mette Grønberg)

In November 2005 the Visegrad Platform gathered in Wisła, Poland for the second annual conference. Since the last conference in 2004 a number of working groups had been conducted furthering cooperation and networking between members. Each working group session had been hosted by different organizations which was part of the enriching experience of participating in the platform. The Visegrad Platform includes diaconal organisations from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic and also invites organisations from neighbouring countries. At the November conference Heidi Martinussen also participated from the Eurodiaconia office. The Platform came into being as part of the Eurodiaconia project “Quality of Life” (running 2004/2005) to strengthen cooperation between the Visegrad countries.

At the November conference there was broad agreement of the fruitfulness of the cooperation between the Visegrad partners. Some of the common challenges that emerged from participant reports at the conference was the continuing strive to train and recruit competent workers for diaconal work as well as a the strive for acknowledgement and rights of the faith-based social service providers with the authorities.

Based on the success of the previous year the outcome of the Visegrad conference was a decision to continue the cooperation in the coming year and focus the work on the following themes:

- 1) Social exclusion: Quality in social services and strategic planning in social service provision.
- 2) Social management and personal policy: Education of the staff and development of activities in life-long learning as a motivational factor; Participation in solving common problems in the area of NGO management within the Visegrad countries.
- 3) Humanitarian aid: Cooperation of the Visegrad organizations in preparing, creating and distributing Christmas boxes for children and families in areas threatened by humanitarian disaster (Romania) and poor countries (Ukraine, Yugoslavia).

It was also decided that the next Visegrad conference will take place in Slovakia in 2007.

The full report from the Visegrad platform conference in November can be found in on the Eurodiaconia website www.eurodiaconia.org

4.2 The Latin Platform

The work of the Latin Platform has been relatively quiet for the past year. However, members of the platform organizations continue to participate in conferences and meetings held by brother- and sister organisations for the benefit of cooperation and networking.

4.3 The Nordic Platform

The Nordic Platform has not been active in the past year. On the European level, however, the Nordic welfare systems and particularly the Danish flexicurity system is highly debated. The flexicurity system combines a high degree of flexibility in the labour market with a high degree of social security. This means that it is relatively easy to hire and fire workers (job security is not guaranteed) but the individual worker is embraced by an effective security scheme that is not linked to the labour market but based on high income taxes coupled with the principles of solidarity and universality in redistribution of society's wealth. The applicability of this system to non-Nordic countries has been debated. The questions whether a Nordic system can be exported to countries with a much higher population and with a different social heritage have been raised?

It is expected that the Finnish EU presidency (which will commence on July 1) will discuss this among other issues at their conference in Helsinki on November 8-11 under the title: "EU's Evolving Social Policy and National Models – Seeking a New Balance". In that connection Eurodiaconia is planning to hold a Nordic Platform meeting prior to the conference and debate the input of Nordic diaconia to the Nordic welfare model as well as how we can face the challenges of the future – and hence how cooperation in the Nordic platform may contribute to this process.

5.0 Working Groups

The Eurodiaconia working groups including topical seminars and conferences have the two-fold function of linking members to network and exchange experiences and to foster renewed thinking and action within diaconia in Europe. The output from the working groups is also a valuable source for the lobby work of the General Secretariat in Brussels. The composition and further work and aims of each working group is set down at the Annual General Meeting.

5.1 PR & Communication

The PR and Communication working group has been active in the past year completing the PR and Communication strategic plan for Eurodiaconia as well as contemplating on how Eurodiaconia members may share good ideas

and materials with each other so as to further branding, communication and PR of diaconia in Europe.

On March 2-3 the seminar: "Act Now – Pray Later, Branding Diaconia in Europe" was held in Brussels as part of the "Solidarity and Compassion" project and organised by the PR and Communication working group.

8 people (plus ED staff) involved in one way or the other in communication or public relations in Eurodiaconia member organisations met in Brussels to gain a better understanding of the concept and importance of branding diaconia in Europe as part of the European social model. Participants spent ample time on learning from recent campaigns, processes and materials developed in participating organisations. The two days were characterised by a mix of input from the planning group and speaker Peter Gunzenhauser and group work based on the issues that seminar participants identified as key issues. Among these was a thorough discussion on the identity of diaconia and the key values of diaconia. The group also discussed how Eurodiaconia can help develop and promote these factors among and between member organisations.

The previous work of the PR and Communication group (including the strategy for PR and Communication in Eurodiaconia) was the backdrop for the seminar and some of the issues already touched on in the Prague meeting in April 2005 were picked up (for example the plan for a Europe wide diaconia day).

There was agreement at the seminar to continue the work on PR and Communication within the Eurodiaconia constituency by

- attempting to make a mini tool-kit about branding
- setting up a virtual group room for the core group (a number of people signed up to be members of the group at the seminar and the list is not exclusive)
- to link up with virtual group rooms of other Eurodiaconia working groups to see where the PR and Communications group can support and communicate the outcome of other working groups to the constituency of Eurodiaconia and beyond
- to continue the planning of a diaconia day beginning in 2007 and a diaconia innovation prize.

Task force to follow up on the process: Kimmo Saares (board), Betina Klinger (Diakonie Austria), Andreas Wagner (Diakonisches Werk), Heidi Martinussen (Eurodiaconia).

5.2 Volunteering in diaconia

As part of the project: "Solidarity and Compassion" the volunteer working group held a seminar on volunteering in Bratislava on March 21-22, 2006. A group of 11 people who were all involved (mainly as co-ordinators) in volunteering in diaconia met.

Prior to the seminar Jana Adameova (Silesian Diaconia) had developed a questionnaire on how volunteers were selected, used, supported and educated in diaconal organisations. This questionnaire was used as a

starting point for discussion and the results are in the process of being developed for the benefit of Eurodiaconia members as a whole.

Volunteering is an important element in diaconia as well as in the development of the European social model as a whole. The main aim of the seminar was networking and to discover how volunteering was used and developed in the organisations represented and the seminar spent much time on group-work on issues defined by the participants. Some of the main points for discussion was the relationship between volunteers and professionals as well as recruitment criteria, motivation and the faith-based identity of volunteers.

Another important output of the seminar was the realisation that volunteering and the background and role of volunteers differ among countries and organisations. In more organisations there are professionals offering their time as volunteers because the organisations do not have the financial means to engage them otherwise.

On this background the importance of having or building up a framework of support and supervision as well as create recognition of the value of the work done is vital to avoid burn-out and to ensure quality and sustainability of the diaconal work.

- A common agreement was therefore reached at the seminar to continue the cooperation initiated in Bratislava in an on-line group room focusing on the theme: "The development and exchange of experiences/models and standards in working with volunteers with special focus on training and monitoring of - and interaction between- staff and volunteers."
- Planners of the seminar will in addition follow up on the process and prepare a CD with the output of the questionnaire (see above) and with material from participating organisations on their work with volunteers.

The planning group responsible for the seminar and follow up consists of: Dick Bouman (board), Jana Adameova (Silesian Diaconia) and Heidi Martinussen (Eurodiaconia).

5.3 The Social Policy Working Group

The Social Policy Working Group is a cooperation between the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC of CEC).

The Social Policy Working Group function as a network among members and an advisory board whose work feeds into the ongoing work of the social policy officer at Eurodiaconia and her respective counterpart at CSC.

The working group is a good basis for reflecting the specificities of diakonia in the framework of common European values and their concrete implementation on national and local level. The group also seeks to identify common issues of interest that are shared by diaconia and churches. The group drafts policy papers with the support of the Brussels offices that takes all members' views into account. The working group is also a venue to debate issues in depth, as well as monitor developments in particular policy areas

The working group currently consists of the following members:

Eurodiaconia:

The Social Policy Officer of Eurodiaconia
Ole Meldgaard – Kofoed’s School, Denmark
Jac Franken – Kerkinactie, Holland
Stephanie Scholz – Diakonisches Werk der EKD, Germany

Church and Society Commission:

Dieter Heidtman (CSC)
Rita Bruvers – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, Latvia
David Sinclair – The Scottish Church, Scotland
Martin Schenk – Diakonia Österreich, Austria
Christina Vayas – Greece

In addition the group have invited the two observers
Lena Kumlin – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Finland
Göran Larsson – the Salvation Army, Sweden

The Social Policy Working Group sadly lost its member Ian Manson from CrossReach, Scotland in 2005. Ian Manson passed away suddenly in September and his work with the group was highly appreciated and he will be sadly missed.

Highlights:

During the past year of action (2005-2006) the group had three meetings; one in November 2005 that was linked together with a Joint conference with the CSC of CEC: “A Common Vision for a Social Europe: ‘Towards Quality of Life for All’, and one in February and in May 2006.

In the year past the group has worked on issues such as the Service Directive and social services of general interest. The Lisbon strategy and the Social Inclusion Action Plans as well as the issues of Demographic change and Mental Health.

Outcome of the meetings and discussions can (a.o.) be seen in:

- The “Social Europe” conference of November 2005 and the developed conference message
- Contribution to the Green Paper on Demographic Change
- Letter to the European Council, March 2006

A contribution to the Green Paper on Mental Health is in its preparatory stages.

Planned actions in the coming half year include

- Participation at the Round Table of Social Inclusion in Finland in October. The group will prepare a joint message.
- Further work on the social service discussion: Our task is to clarify our own understanding of social services; especially church provided and church related services have to define and describe clearly their special

characteristic – both as service with and for others in need and as intermediary actors between individuals and the state/community. Social services providers in civil society and the churches have to find a clearer understanding of the European Social model and the role that social services have on that to be able to act and to communicate on a European level.

6.0 Networks

In all the above-mentioned policy areas networking with civil society groups is an ongoing process.

6.1 Caritas Europa

Caritas Europa has been an important partner in reflection, advocacy and common action and Caritas Europa is also one of the partners of the Qu/A/Si-Project.

An important step was Caritas Europe's' initiative to form the joint EU policy task force, first with Eurodiaconia, then from October 2004 and, through Eurodiaconia initiative, involving also CEC and COMECE. At the beginning of 2006, the Task force changed its name to Christian group on social policy issues in order to highlight its Christian nature among the other social NGOs in Brussels and to identify better its nature as a forum for discussion and networking.

6.2 Social Platform

The Social Platform is a European umbrella organization for federations, networks and non-governmental organizations active in the social sector. The membership at the Social Platform is useful in means of getting information, as a platform for exchange of thoughts and as a channel to make Eurodiaconia and its objectives well known in Brussels and elsewhere in Europe.

Eurodiaconia staff has attended the meetings of the Social Platform steering group, social policy working group, working party on services of general interests and the General Assembly. In addition, Eurodiaconia has attended thematic seminars, bilateral meetings with the Commission and Parliament as well as co-signed various position papers and letters of the Platform. As a member of the Social Platform Eurodiaconia has lobbied for example for a Social Europe, for recognition of social services of general interest and for an enhanced role of organized civil society vis-à-vis the EU institutions.

6.3 European Anti Poverty Network - EAPN

EAPN and the Social Platform are the two main networking platforms of Social NGOs. Where as the Social Platform functions particularly at the EU level and tackles a large variety of social policy issues, the EAPN concentrates more in-depth into one of the main policy issues of Eurodiaconia, to the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Eurodiaconia

benefits from the membership of EAPN by receiving useful information, which is further delivered to Eurodiaconia members.

6.4 Ecumenical Networking

The shared working group on social policy issues with the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches is one output of the cooperation at the Ecumenical Centre. The network with and among other church-based organizations in Brussels is fruitful in terms of exchange of knowledge but also important in creating a fruitful discussion on how faith-based organizations can and should influence the processes on EU level in areas of the fight against poverty, ethical issues, immigration, the future of the European Social Model, the value basis of Europe etc.

In addition to the more structured work of the social policy working group the Secretary Generals of CSC, APRODEV, CCME, EAALCE (Academies) and Eurodiaconia meet on regular basis for informal networking, consultation and policy debates.

7.0 Organisation

Eurodiaconia has three governing bodies and a general secretariat based in Brussels

7.1 The Annual General Assembly

Convenes once a year hosted by one of the member organizations in their respective country.

The AGM adopts new members, the report of the organisation and the annual accounts as well as the budget. The AGM also sets the membership fee for the coming year and is responsible for rules of procedure and amendment of statutes.

The AGM elects the Board as well as the President and vice-presidents of the association taking into account a diverse representation across regions and member organizations.

7.2 The Board of Management

Consists of 8 board members including a President and two vice-presidents. Board members are elected for a 4 year period.

The Board meets twice a year and is responsible for overseeing the General Secretariat, putting down working groups, deciding on and overseeing the running of the financial and strategic plan as well as overseeing the good running of the association in general.

In the past year the board convened

June 9, 2005 in Aarhus, Denmark

October 21-22, 2005 in Brussels

April 7-8, 2006 in Brussels

Board of Management

Dr. h.c. Jürgen GOHDE (President)
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e.V.
(Germany)

Marco JOURDAN
Commissione Sinodale per la
Diaconia (Italy)

Ninni SMEDBERG (Vice-President)
Svenska Kyrkan Avdelningen för
Kyrkolivets utveckling (Sweden)

Kimmo SAARES
Kirkkopalvelut (Finland)

Dick BOUMAN (Vice-President)
Kerkinactie (Netherlands)

Iveta BERKOLDE ELCL
Diaconia Center (Latvia)

Hubert PFISTER
Fédération de l'Entraide
Protestante (France)

Zuzana FILIPKOVÁ
Slezská Diakonie (Czech Republic)

7.3 The Management Committee

The Management Committee comprises of the President and two vice-presidents of the Board. The Committee carries out tasks entrusted to it by the Board and convenes generally 2-3 times a year.

In the past year the Management Committee convened

July 30-31, 2005 in Brussels

October 1, 2005 in Brussels

February 3-4, 2006 in Brussels

March 17, 2006 (phone conference)

7.4 The General Secretariat

is based in Brussels close to the European institutions and close to the offices of some of our ecumenical partners.

For the past year the office staff has included

General Secretary

Albert Brandstätter (till 31/8 – 2005)

Heidi Paakjær Martinussen (from 1/9- 2005)

Social Policy Officer

Susanna Heinäsmäki (ends her contract with Eurodiaconia 31/5/2006)

Office Assistant

Ute Bakker (until ultimo July 2005)

Project Manager

Annegret Kröger (until ultimo November 2005)

8.0 Members

8.1 National Members Organizations

Diakonie Österreich

Trautsong, 8, A- 1080 WIEN, AUSTRIA

Tel: +43 (1) 409 80 01

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www.diakonie.at

Diakonia in the Czech Republic

Belgicka 22, CZ- 12000 PRAHA 2, CZECH REPUBLIC

Tel: +420 (242) 487 812/ 813

Fax: +420 (242) 487 834

vychopen@diakonieecce.cz

www.diakonie.cz

Silesian Diacony (Silesian Diacony at Silesian Evangelical Church of A.C.)

Na nivách 7, CZ- 73701 Český Tešín, CZECH REPUBLIC

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Fax: +420 558 713 124

ustredi@slezskadiakonie.cz

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Dansk Diakoniråd

Den Danske Diakonissestiftelse

Peter Bangs Vej 1

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Fax: +45 (3887) 1493

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www.danskdiaconi.dk

Kirkkopalvelut

(Church Resources Agency)

P.O.B. 4, Töölönkatu 55, FIN- 00251 HELSINKI, FINLAND

Tel: +358 9 4155 2095

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kirkkopalvelut@kirkkopalvelut.fi

www.kirkkopalvelut.fi

Kirkkohallitus - Diakonia Ja Yhteiskuntatyö

(Church Council, Diaconia and Society)

PB 185, Satamakatu 11 A, FIN- 00161 HELSINKI, FINLAND

Tel: +358 (9) 1802 304

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heikki.hiilamo@evl.fi

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Suomen Kaupunkilähetysten Liitto

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kimmo.sainio@turkucitymission.fi

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Fédération de l'entraide protestante

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entraideprotestante@free.fr

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Lutherische Kirche in Ungarn Nord-Diözese

Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor 24, H- 1125 BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

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north.district@lutheran.hu

Magyarországi Református Egyház

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bolcskeig@pushiv.drk.hu

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**Vilniaus Evangeliku Liuteronu Baznycios
Diakonija**
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d.bouman@kerkinactie.nl
www.kerkinactie.org

**Asociatia Ecumenica A Bisericilor Din Romania -
Aidrom**
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**Reformierte Kirche in Rumänien -
Nebenkönigsteinlicher Bischofsdistrikt**
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partium@rdsor.ro

Episcopia Reformata Din Ardeal
Str. Ion I.C. Bratianu Nr? 51 – 53 400079 CLUJ-
NAPOCA, ROMANIA
Tel: +40 264 597 472
Fax: +40 264 595 104
diakonia@reformatus.ro

Russisch Orthodoxe Kirche
Danilovsky Val 306-22 , GUS- MOSKAU 113191,
RUSSIA
Tel: +7 (095) 95 232 60
Fax: +7 (095) 230 26 19
Rondtb@dol.ru
www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru

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Evangelická Diakonia ECAV na Slovensku
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diakonia@diakonia.sk
www.ecav.sk

Comité Español de Cooperación entre las Iglesias
Calle Noviciado 5, E- 28015 MADRID, SPAIN
Tel: +34 (915) 313 947
Fax: +34 (915) 234 137
jvm1115@teleline.es

Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal
Calle Beneficencia 18, E- 28004 MADRID, SPAIN
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eclesiae@arrakis.es
www.netministries.org/see/churches.exe/ch10650

Svenska kyrkan
Syslomansgatan 4, S- 75170 UPPSALA, SWEDEN
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ninni.smedberg@svenskakyrkan.se
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Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund
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Diocese of Llandaff Church in Wales's Division for Social Responsibility

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Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization

Cara Dušana 31, YU-21000 NOVI SAD, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

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ADIF

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Finland

Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia

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hovorkova@ekumena.sk

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8.2 International Member Organisations

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Fax: +49 (561) 31 29 55

kaisersw.gkon@kaiserswerther-verband.de

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Europäischer Verband Freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke

Sellhopsweg 18 – 22, D – 22459 HAMBURG, GERMANY

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Fax: +49 (40) 550 07 161

harold.eisenblaetter@t-online.de

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Internationale Konferenz theologischer Mitarbeiter in der Diakonie

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Internationaler Bund des Blauen Kreuzes

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<http://www.eurocare.org/bluecross>

Johanniter International (JOIN)

Enterprises of the Orders of St. John

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Verband Evangelischer Diakonen- und Diakoninnengemeinschaften in Deutschland (VEDD)

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9.0 Highlights of Eurodiaconia meetings and activities in 2005/2006

2005

March

- Eurodiaconia in cooperation with the Conference of European Churches (CEC) send a letter to President of the European Council, Luxembourg Prime Minister Claude Juncker
- Eurodiaconia office representation in the bi-annual meeting between Social Platform and the European Commission including a meeting with new Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla.
- Participation in the Act for Europe conference "NGO Space for Debate: ratifying the Constitution and developing participatory democracy"
- Qu/A/Si project: joint field visit to Caritas Slovakia and the Diocesan Charity Nitra, Slovakia

April

- Secretary General participated as an invited speaker in seminar organised by the Social Platform and the Green Group in the European Parliament entitled "Social Services, Quality in Services and the Service Directive".
- Meeting with the Director for Social Protection and Social Integration, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities about the specific role of church-related organizations in providing social services of general interest.

May

- Qu/A/Si project: Third joint field visit to the Welfare Department of Riga City Council, Ireland

June

- Eurodiaconia and CEC meet Dr. Ingo Friedrich, Vice-President of the European Parliament for a book presentation "European Churches Confronting Poverty".
- Conference: "Quality of Life for All" and the Annual General Meeting of Eurodiaconia in Aarhus, Denmark.
- Qu/A/Si project: Final seminar in Bruges, Belgium: "Working for Social Inclusion in Europe; Joint approaches for Social Services". 48 participants attended including: project partners, local and regional politicians and representatives from the EU institutions.

July

- Participation in the European Commission conference "Confronting Demographic change: a new solidarity between generations".

September

- Heidi Martinussen takes over as Secretary General of Eurodiaconia

October

- Eurodiaconia sends to the Commission a response on the Green Paper on demographic change in cooperation with the Church and Society Commission (CSC), The Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the European Ecumenical Youth Council (EYCE)
- Eurodiaconia office participation in the conference: "Sustainability of the European Social Model" hosted in Brussels by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce
- Participation in Social Platform, European Conference on "Building social policies on fundamental rights"
- Participation in the EU Poverty Round Table conference in Glasgow

November

- Eurodiaconia office representation in the bi-annual meeting between Social Platform and the European Commission
- Eurodiaconia office participation in the European and Economic Social Committee conference: "Bridging the gap: How to bring Europe and its citizens closer together" in Brussels
- Eurodiaconia office participation in a hearing with Civil Society: "The Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy" at the European Economic and Social Committee
- Publication of the Qu/A/Si result. MEPs Ms. Marianne Thyssen and Ms. Anneli Jäätteenmäki co-host the press release event of the Qu/A/Si results which takes place in the European Parliament. Mr Walter Wolf from the European Commission DG Employment also attends the event as speaker
- A joint Conference of Church & Society Commission of CEC and Eurodiaconia: A common vision for a social Europe: "Towards quality of life for all"
- Joint CSC/Eurodiaconia Social Policy Working Group meets in Brussels
- Conference of the Visegrad Platform of Eurodiaconia in Wisła, Poland.

2006

January

- Eurodiaconia office participation at the preparatory meeting in Rome on the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu 2007.
- Eurodiaconia, Caritas, CEC and COMECE 'Call for an exemption of social and health services from the scope of the Directive' and drafted 'Common view regarding the first reading of the Proposal for a Directive on Services in the Internal Market in the plenary session of the European Parliament'.

February

- Following the vote on the Services Directive in the European Parliament Eurodiaconia sends out a release to its members on the outcome
- Eurodiaconia office representation in the bi-annual meeting between Social Platform and the European Commission including a meeting with Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla.
- Joint CSC/Eurodiaconia Social Policy Working Group meets in Vienna

March

- Eurodiaconia seminar "Act Now – Pray Later; Branding Diaconia in Europe" held in Brussels with participants from 8 member organizations
- Eurodiaconia seminar "Volunteering in Diaconia" held in Bratislava with participants from 9 member organizations
- Eurodiaconia sends a letter to the Austrian Chancellor Schröder prior to the meeting of the European Council Spring meeting calling for the Council to "show strong commitment to identify people's real priorities and to foster social cohesion as an equally important priority of the revised Lisbon strategy"

April

- Participation from the Eurodiaconia office in the conference on Social Services of General Interest in Vienna hosted by the Austrian Presidency

May

- Joint CSC/Eurodiaconia Social Policy Working Group meets in Brussels
- Eurodiaconia and CSC send a response (drafted by the joint social policy working group) to the Green Paper on Mental Health