

Education of Diaconal Staff in The Visegrad countries

My name is Marta Lipovská, I am a leader of Humanitarian aid and Development Cooperation Department in Evangelical diaconia of Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession in Slovakia.

Mrs. Dr. Zuzanou Filipková, a member of supervisory Board of Eurodiaconia, entrusted me to report about a support of education in Visegrad countries. Besides the common education activities of diaconal organizations in The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, I am going to inform you about the independent education diaconal work in The Czech Republic and in Slovakia, as well as about a legislative setting of education in these two countries.

1. Support of education in V4 countries

Within the framework of Eurodiaconia The Visegrad Platform was established. This platform is composed by four member states . The **Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia**. The aim of the Platform is **the support of education in Visegrad countries**.

The cooperation has begun in November 2004, when *the first conference* took place in **Třinec**, in The Czech Republic. At this conference the activities of work groups compounded of Visegrad Platform members began. It was organized through the project named **“Support of competency in The Visegrad countries”**.

After the meetings of work groups followed **the second conference** of The Visegrad countries, which was realized on November 24 to 27, 2005 in **Jawornik/Wisla in Poland**. Its results were a **valuation of the cooperation and reached outputs** of each work groups, an estimation of plans and priorities for the next year.

The third meeting of the Visegrad countries was on November 22 to 24, 2006 in Mikulov, The Czech Republic. The theme of this conference was **“ With ethic and quality to empowering of equal opportunities”**. It was discussed **social economics, personal management, social inclusion and quality of services**.

Nowadays, Evangelical diaconia in Slovakia submitted a new project, which will be hopefully a resource of support for the fourth conference that will take place on April 15 to 17, 2008 in Svätý Jur in Slovakia. The topic of gathering will be **“To live independently in communities of V4 countries”**.

2. Support of education in the Czech and the Slovak Republic before and after 1989

during the communist period, in these countries did not exist any specialized university education of social workers. It was missed an integrated system of education in the field of social politics and social work.

One of the first priorities after the political overturn in 1989 was a renewal of education in social work on the university level and the reform of education on the level of secondary schools.

According to the high need of university qualified social workers, it was relatively quickly managed a reinstatement and development of university training of social workers on the majority of universities with focus of humanities.

We could say, that at the present time there are in the both countries the relatively wide nets of education institutions (state, private, church), which provide sufficient education for a capacity of social work in practice.

3. Support of competency of diaconal staff

a) Support of competency of diaconal staff in Slovakia

Education of staff in Diakonie in the Slovak Republic is realized through formal and informal education.

After the re-institution of Evangelical diaconia in 1991, in the field of education a providing of lectures and courses began with the aim to increase diaconal awareness, to motivate people to service to neighbors and to ground of diaconal centers. Step by step diaconal education became more profiled, especially in these institutions:

- **Bible school in Martin** - is church-related organizations and in the cooperation with Evangelical diaconia established *Diaconal study* - a basic diaconal education. It is assigned to them who want to work or want to be volunteers in diaconal and social institutions.
- **Evangelical theological faculty of Komensky University in Bratislava** - provides one field of study named *Evangelical social diaconia* (a bachelor study, in an accreditation process is master continuation).
- **Department of Evangelical theology and mission, Pedagogical faculty of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica** - gives an opportunity of education for future preachers, catechists and diaconal workers.

Now, **Evangelical diaconia** is in the phase of formation of a new coherent system of diaconal education in Slovakia.

b) Support of competency of diaconal staff in The Czech Republic

The Czech Republic offers the possibility to obtain education for diaconal staff for instance these establishments:

- Evangelical theological faculty of Charles' University in Prague** - provides bachelor education called *Pastoral and social work* in the field of study - social work.
- Evangelical academy** . is church institution, which associates two higher special schools specialized in social work:

a) **Evangelical academy Prague** - school educates and prepares for practice? social workers and the other specialized workers of social care who attach mostly in social services that provide church and non-state organizations and in offices of state administration and in self-government. Evangelical academy associates higher special school and secondary special school.

b) **Evangelical academy, Higher special social-juristic school in Brno** - Evangelical academy Brno is church school, is oriented ecumenically. A founder of school is eskobratrská církev evangelická. Trainings and life of school are Christian motivated.

c. **Diaconal Institute** . is an educational institution grounded by Silesian diaconia. Silesian diaconia was established by Silesian evangelical church of Augsburg Confession. The activity of Diaconal Institute has begun in September 2006 and is aimed at long-life learning. Among the main activities belongs the organization of educational courses (social-health, manager - communication, etc.), educational actions for organizations according to their requests, cooperation with other NGOs in Moravian-Silesian region, consultancy in the field of projects and grants, and so on.

Evangelical diaconia, as well as Silesian diaconia does not dispose of educational institution such as secondary or higher special school, eventually university by now.

At the present time, **Silesian diaconia** prepares background papers for the origin of new **secondary special school and higher special school** of social work. In the case of acceptation of an application the school would provide high - class education in social work and social care based on Christian values.

4. **Statutory regulations of education in social work in The Czech & The Slovak Republic**

Since January 1, 2007, the **Law on social services in ČR has been valid**. An approval of this law is a turning point because it brings news for all providers of services, which they have to adopt and practice. **In education field** new legislation strictly divides staff on - social workers, workers in social services, health workers and pedagogical workers. **It determines requirements for workers' education and imposes duty of further training**. Many of workers in all above named categories have to complete their education at the time provided by law and at higher special school or university, or they have to absolve an accredited course in the range of 180 lessons (it is related to workers in social services).

In **Slovakia**, two laws **School law** and **Law of further education** regulate education, and in the preparatory phase is *Law on long-life learning* and *Law on social services* like in Czech Republic. Nowadays, internal regulations coordinate the required education of staff of state, non-state or church- established organizations.