

# **Eurodiaconia Network Seminar: "Diaconal Education in Europe" in Brussels October 4-5, 2007**

## **Introduction**

At the Eurodiaconia Annual General Meeting in 2006 it was agreed to set up an educational working group of Eurodiaconia. The aim of the working group is to develop a vision and strategy for networking in Diaconia across Eurodiaconia member organizations as well as to map out already existing cooperation in diaconal education in Europe.

On 4-5 October, 2007 a group of 16 people met in Brussels to commence this work. This CD contains the outcome of this seminar: presentations, overview of networks, links and resources as well as a seminar report that you will find below.

Eurodiaconia plans to follow up the outcome of the seminar in a dedicated working group that will commence their work in 2008. One concrete step is the creation of an on-line group room in the members' section of the website [www.eurodiaconia.org](http://www.eurodiaconia.org) planned for January 2008. Members of Eurodiaconia can obtain a password for the members' section by contacting the office on [martinussen@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:martinussen@eurodiaconia.org).

## **Seminar Report**

### **Core competences and added value**

The Education seminar in Brussels convened people involved in diaconal education and training on all levels in 9 European countries. The following organizations were represented:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
Fédération de L'Entraide Protestante	France
Church of Sweden Central Office	Sweden
Diaconal College Aarhus	Denmark
Evangelical Diaconia of ECAC in Slovakia	Slovakia
VDW -Dutch Association of Diakonal Workers	Netherlands
Diakonova University College	Norway
VEDD	Germany
The Valdensian Diaconia	Italy
Diakon Center of ELCL	Latvia
Diakonhøjskolens Diakonforbund	Denmark
Diakonhjemmet Høgskole	Norway
Diakonisches Werk der EKD	Germany

The seminar was kicked off with an intervention by Irene Waller-Kächele of the Diakonisches Werk addressing the theme "Core competences and added value of a Diaconal education." Waller-Kächele gave an overview of various diaconal professions which range from very specialized to more general and broad areas of

work. In the past it has been difficult to compare different educations across countries and also to compare different levels of education. As a consequence it has been difficult to find a so-called level playing field. Waller-Kächele expressed that this may improve, given the new [European Qualifications Framework](#). Projects on issues such as "e-learning for educators" and different networks can also help make the contents of Diaconal education more transparent and innovative.

Talking more specifically on the added value of a Diaconal education, Waller-Kächele stressed that this added value was linked to

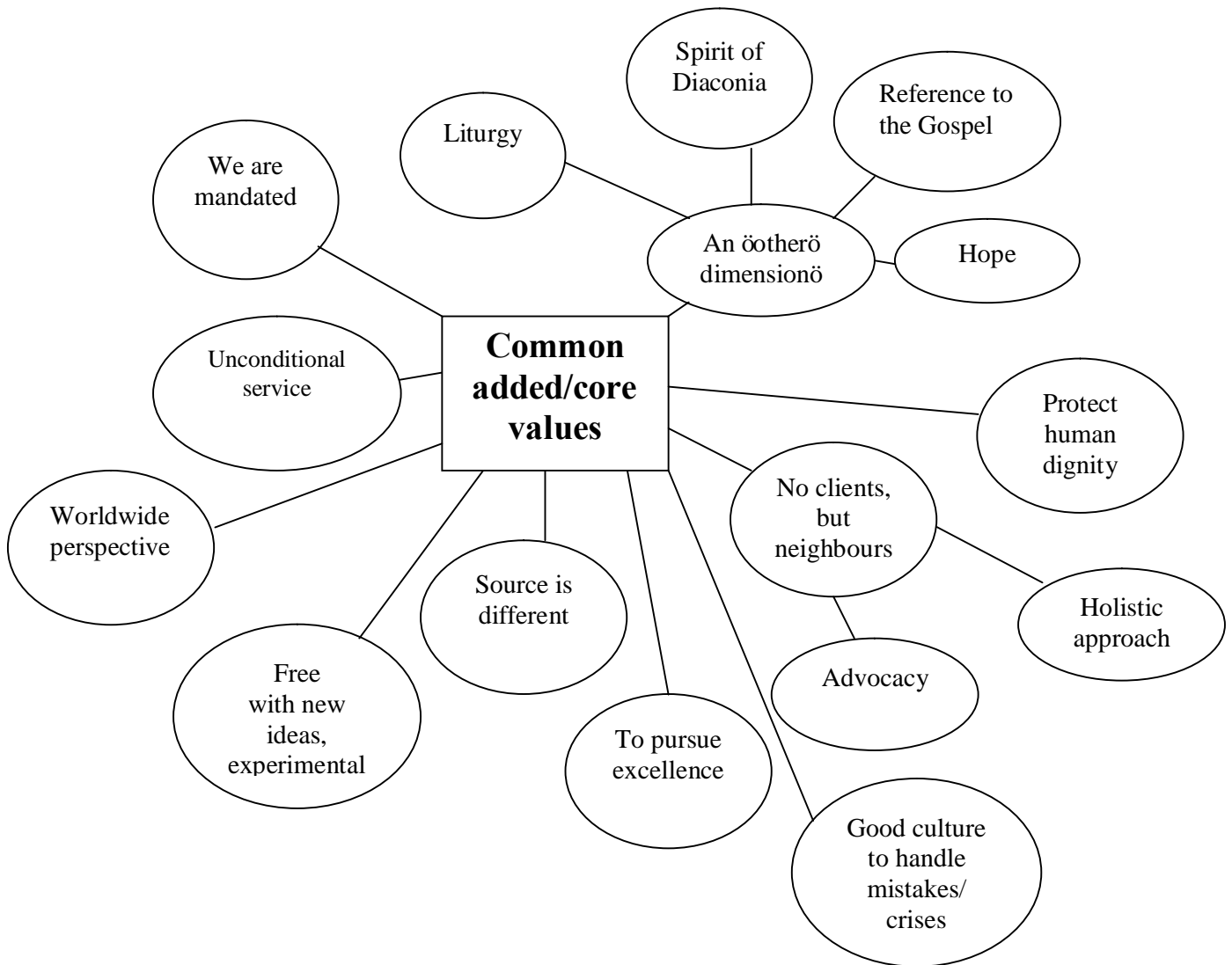
- The realisation of the diaconal mission on the basis of a Christian human image
- The realisation of a societal mission concerning integration and participation
- Additional value as a quality dimension of diaconal action on the market

Waller-Kächele also referred to a Memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany, which states that educational processes include "the connection of learning, knowledge, know-how, consciousness of value and action in the horizon of meaningful life interpretations"<sup>1</sup> which means that knowledge is not only about acquisition but must be seen in context of values and being able to interpret life.

Participants also spent time during the seminar in mapping out what was understood as the common added or core values of a Diaconal education the outcome of which is portrayed below:

---

<sup>1</sup> Ev. Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant Church in Germany), Maße des Menschlichen, 2003: „Bildung meint den Zusammenhang von Lernen, Wissen, Können, Wertbewusstsein und Handeln im Horizont sinnstiftender Lebensdeutungen“ (p. 90)



### Country specific examples

The education seminar saw representation from all regions of Eurodiaconia members, who gave an overview of Diaconal education and cooperation in their respective contexts.

Diaconia in the Southern countries are characterised by being of minority churches and – in France – there is in addition a strong division between church and society which also influences the possibility to allow the church to be involved in diaconal education. In the Latin platform, the cooperation mostly involves sharing an evaluation of values and the basis for Diaconal education as well running smaller courses. The issue of language is a barrier to international cooperation. In Italy there is a vision to work on an MA in Diaconia that is recognised on European level.

In the Nordic countries the general tendency is to have developed BA and MA programmes that can be used both in churches and in public and Diaconal institutions. However, from country to country, it varies to what extent Diaconia is embedded in vocational subjects.

Germany has fully-fledged BA, MA and Phd programmes in Diaconia. For more input on Germany the power point presentation of Irene Waller-Kächele gives insight (see main menu).

The Netherlands is distinct in as much as social work is completely separate from theological and diaconal education and the innovative and diaconal work of

churches are mostly parish based, projects based and based on the work of volunteers.

In the Visegrad countries (Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary) there is a new initiative underway to develop E-learning (in English) and to develop an MA in 2008. Currently diaconal education in many of the new EU member states takes the form of Life Long Learning/further training in the form of shorter courses but there is a need and demand for higher education from workers in Diaconia. Here, language is a challenge in cross-country cooperation.

### **Mapping out networks**

The seminar offered an opportunity to map out existing networks in Diaconal education. The results of this exercise are accessible through the main menu on this CD.

### **Input from the European Commission and the Bologna Secretariat**

**Paul Tzimas** from the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture visited the seminar and gave an intervention on Life Long Learning and the connection to the European Lisbon Strategy as well as more concrete input on the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Paul Tzimas stressed the old Chinese proverb: "when planning for life, educate people" and defined Life Long Learning as all learning and activity undertaken throughout life. He underlined that in Europe we are faced with challenges to adopt to changing labour markets. These issues need to be linked to the overall issue of inclusion in society. In this respect the issue of learning is central, as it helps create equal opportunities.

Paul Tzimas also stressed that there are many other skills to be valued than official qualifications, which is reflected in the Life Long Learning objectives. A challenge is currently to reduce the number of early school leavers in Europe. Another challenge is to foster innovation, which he defines as being inventive and taking an invention, exploring it and using it for the benefit of all. The Leonardo da Vinci programme is geared towards fostering the objectives Paul Tzimas describes – mobility and soft skills being keywords.

More details on the Leonardo da Vinci programme, its priorities and where to access more information, can be found in the main menu of this CD.

**Marlies Leegwater**, head of the Bologna secretariat, intervened with input on the overall Bologna process and more specifically on the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area and on the Dublin Descriptors.


The Dublin Descriptors is the reference point in the Qualifications Framework and were first developed as a tool to describe the BA and MA outcomes comparable across countries. The Dublin Descriptors consist of 5 lines

- knowledge
- application of knowledge
- problem solving.
- communication
- Life Long Learning abilities

The Descriptors encompass education oriented towards both vocational and academic training. The descriptors have since been taken on board and worked with on a national level and tested in quality assurance processes. An outcome of the process has also been the initiative on Joint Quality, which offers a valuable website with a.o. information on the descriptors.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Information on the Joint Quality Initiative can be accessed on <http://www.jointquality.nl/>  
More information on the Dublin Descriptors is also available at this site



Descriptors for Doctorate level were elaborated in 2004 and later the descriptors have fed into the development of the European Qualifications Framework. The Qualifications Framework is designed to offer transparency at higher level education for the benefit of students, employers and movement throughout the system.<sup>3</sup>

Marlies Leegwater also presented the TUNING project, which is a project that attempts to “contribute significantly to the elaboration of a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications in each of the (potential) signatory countries of the Bologna process, which should be described in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile.”<sup>4</sup>

Finally Marlies Leegwater encouraged Eurodiaconia members to elaborate their own descriptors for Diaconal education.

### **Next steps**

The Education Seminar ended with a summary of the input given and expression of interest for further cooperation around a number of themes.

Participants expressed interest in working particularly on supporting networks to share know-how and funding opportunities as well as the sharing of best practice. The idea of sharing outcome of research was also expressed as well as thematic issues that may be addressed in the future such as “the deaconate,” “the professionalism of deacons vis a vis labour market needs” and “the mobility of staff and students.”

Eurodiaconia is going to develop an on-line forum for future cooperation as well as direct a working group on education that will pick up on the outcome of the education seminar. To be informed and get involved please contact Heidi Martinussen at [martinussen@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:martinussen@eurodiaconia.org).

---

<sup>3</sup> More information on the EQF can be found on [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/050218\\_QF\\_EHEA.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf)

On October 24, an EQF on Life Long Learning was adopted by the European Parliament extending the European Qualifications Framework to all levels of learning. For more information please see [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> Read more on the TUNING project on <http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/> . The methodology and language of TUNING refers to the Berlin Communique . please see [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/030919Berlin\\_Communique.PDF](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/030919Berlin_Communique.PDF)