



## MARGINALISATION AND EXCLUSION NETWORK MEETING

23-24<sup>th</sup> March 2017, Budapest

### Day 1

The meeting started with an introduction led by Andras Beszterczey, head of the Diaconal Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary, and Balazs Odor, Ecumenical Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary. They reflected on the two days ahead, the new challenges, and signs of light and hope for child well-being and the fight against children poverty. This introduction was followed by a devotion by Victoria Munsey from Diaconia Valdese, which was partly inspired to a well-known quote from Maria Montessori – “*The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind*”, to underline how children represent a precious resource to build fairer societal systems.

After the presentation of the agenda, the participants went through a roundtable presentation to introduce themselves and share their expectations on the meeting. The group of participants was composed by 18 people from different professional backgrounds coming from Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Serbia, Spain and Germany. This introduction was followed by an ice-breaker where they were asked to present some key aspects of their neighbour’s work in the field of child and family poverty.

Later on, Clotilde Clark-Foulquier introduced the EU framework by stressing the relevance of the work carried out by Eurodiaconia at European level and the role played by EU institutions and Member States to tackle child and family poverty in Europe. Michela Morazzini gave a presentation on child and family poverty in the context of the European Union and the social inclusion process, with a focus on the Recommendation “*Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage*” adopted by the European Commission in 2013. The document represented a step forward in terms of the Commission’s commitment to address increasing child and family poverty in Europe, which however needs to be accompanied by a real commitment from Member States to implement the Recommendation at national level. In particular, the presentation highlighted the need for increased political efforts and financial investment to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty. It was stressed how Eurodiaconia is interested to continue work on the topic as it reflects the interest and work of many of its members in this policy area.

### Members’ presentation and Q&A

From 11am participants had the chance to give short presentations of their organisation’s work in the field, which were followed by an open space for questions and debate.

### **Bethesda Children Hospital (Hungary)**

Ms. Zsuzsa Boross, PR Manager of Bethesda Children Hospital in Budapest, presented the main areas of work of the institution, which is the only Christian hospital for children in Eastern Europe. Bethesda Children Hospital and its staff provide medical and mental health care for children between 0-18 ages. The staff is composed by approximately 310 people, of which 150 nurses, 50 doctors, 30-40 local volunteers and other staff including pastors and specialized therapists, who contribute to children’s mental and spiritual healing. The Hospital’s main areas of work include community life, charity, camps for children, a Mother’s House and prevention. Along with day care services, it offers a range of educational and reintegration programs led by





social workers, psychologists, psychiatrics and other specialists, addressing both children and their families after the recovery period.

## **Church of Sweden (Sweden)**

Liselott Andersson and Jan Sjögerud presented the project “*Digniti Omnia – A worthier life for all*” carried out by the Church of Sweden and funded by Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), runs from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2018. The main target group of the initiative are vulnerable EU citizens. This groups is composed mainly by children and families with a migrant background, who mostly emigrated from Romania and Bulgaria, and are often excluded from the social welfare system. The Church of Sweden has conducted many activities for this target group in the past, such as arranging shelters, and provide food and clothing among others. Sweden is one of the countries that has adopted Operational Program II, which means that the program will not be used for food support, but only for social assistance.

The project aims to ensure a life of dignity for everyone and consists of four key action areas to enhance social inclusion and self-empowerment of children and families: health, society information, e-inclusion and language. The main goal is not only to support the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the society, but also to increase the intercultural competence of the Church of Sweden itself. The need to provide the most vulnerable groups with access to adequate resources, from access to basic needs (electricity, clean water, housing, food) to decent living conditions (many children and families live in temporary shelters as tents, caravans or cottages in the forest) was particularly stressed. The main challenges are represented by lack of or limited access to labour market, education, healthcare, social protection, but also discrimination against Roma children and families, disabled children and refugee children. On the other hand, it was highlighted how the lack of public awareness affecting both Swedish citizens and public authorities along with the absence of national guidelines on equal access to education further undermine the effectiveness of social inclusion measures.

## **Kirkens Bymisjon Oslo (Norway)**

Ruth N. Paintsil, Consultant at Church City Mission in Oslo, introduced the work carried out by the Norwegian member and pointed out that most vulnerable children are social assistance recipients, those living with single parents and migrant families or parents with low or no formal education. She supported the idea that the system itself is actually fostering the intergenerational transmission of poverty among poorer children and families in Norway through an increasing number of barriers undermining functioning social protection and social inclusion systems. The mission of Church City Mission in Oslo is based on these main pillars: advocacy, partnership, networking and parents’ empowerment. In every project carried out by the mission, each activity has a strong family focus. As it was explained by Ruth, according to a study by Sindre Bangstad from the Frisch Institute in Oslo, socio-economic inequalities continue to rise in Norway and 4 in 10 immigrant children live in poverty. According to statistics, over 27,000 refugees, mainly from Eritrea, Somalia and Afghanistan, reside in the country.

On the other hand, the Church City Mission, proclaims itself as open to people from different religious backgrounds. Indeed, it provides also an open interreligious service focusing on interfaith dialogue, mainly between Muslims and Christians.

## **Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (Serbia)**

Natasa Markovska Momcilovic and Tijana Vidović presented the project “Children on the Move” implemented by the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO) in Novi Sad, Serbia. The target group of the project is represented by children moving across countries, namely street children living alone or with their family, which includes migrant, refugee and trafficked children. The EHO is also part of the Regional Network for Street Involved Children and at Risk Children (RNSIC), which partly supported the publication of a “*Regional*



*Research on Prevalence of Street Children Phenomenon in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia (2016)*". The Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation is increasingly concerned by the rising discrimination against Roma children, namely as regards access to education and healthcare. In this regard, the EHO is particularly active in providing support to vulnerable children and families through a wide range of social services, including but not limited to legal and administrative counselling and health information programs, addressing persons with disabilities, Roma children and families, street children, as well as elderly and impoverished people.

Participants then discussed family-centred approaches to fight child poverty and good practices to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, while addressing the main challenges faced to achieve this goal. Each group had a rapporteur presenting the key points raised during the group work. The group work was then followed by another round of presentations by Eurodiaconia members.

## **Conclusion of group work on supporting children through families**

The common concerns shared by all group members were the Roma issue on the one hand, and the need for initiatives supporting the integration of the family system on the other (e.g. family centres as open spaces for community development).

### a- Focus on Roma Inclusion

#### Priorities:

- Need for trained teachers and educators
- Need for accompanied access to education and access to early childhood education and care
- Building trust is key to prevent the marginalisation of disadvantaged children and families

#### Challenges:

- Segregation is common to the school system in many European countries
- How to integrate the expertise of marginalised groups themselves into social service systems (e.g. Roma coordinators/consultants)?
- Low-quality jobs may prevent or undermine the access to labour markets
- Lack of trust of institutions and public authorities
- Empowerment of women in patriarchal systems /Influence on men is limited

### b- Building links with families

#### Priorities

- Involve parents: work "holistically" with the whole family
- Provide intercultural training
- Focus on families, not in individual children
- Build trust

#### Challenges

- Families can be suspicious of social workers and their influence
- Families often weary of comments on mental health of children – how to communicate better?



## **Hungarian Interchurch Aid (Hungary)**

Éva Senkár introduced the projects implemented by the Hungarian Interchurch Aid whose main objective is to facilitate the integration of families seeking a way out of poverty. Therefore, the services provided by the organisation are mainly open to any individual or family with financial problems. The main activities and services provided by the organisation include humanitarian assistance in Hungary and abroad, international development, social services and development projects, fundraising, awareness-raising and volunteering. The target groups of the services are families in need, children with poverty-related disadvantages, homeless people, people with addiction problems, victims of domestic violence, unemployed people, victims of natural disasters. In the recent years, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid has developed targeted social institutions and services such as five temporary family shelters, two centres for child early development (“safe start children’s houses”) and afterschool learning centres for children. Éva presented the newly-built Child Centre in Miskolc as one among the most innovative projects recently implemented, which combines a room for development lessons, a community space, a Samsung smart school, a salt room and a football ground for smaller children. Besides, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid offers an innovative Early Child Development program, which offers development and care services for children aged 0-5 and their parents, activities aimed at enhancing parental skills, physiotherapy services, general skills development services, and community-building activities. The staff involved in the program is composed by social workers and pedagogues as well as trained staff from local Roma communities. Finally, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid has contributed to the development of a national program promoting the social reintegration of vulnerable groups based on the so-called „Kastélyosdombó model”. The project focuses on the improvement of labour market skills of parents living in temporary family shelters, the provision of child development services, the purchase of halfway own houses, the empowerment of families to allow them start an independent life, and the use of a coupon system for building motivation.

## **Consejería de Enseñanza Religiosa Evangélica, FEREDE (Spain)**

Ana Calvo, who is employed at Consejería de Enseñanza Religiosa Evangélica in Madrid, gave a presentation about the work carried out by FEREDE in supporting equal access to education in Spain.

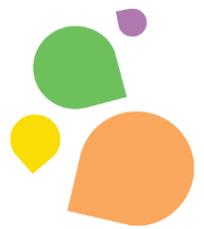
Diaconía España has three main projects to address child and family poverty, aiming to support children from underprivileged backgrounds. Ana stressed how family’s involvement is always crucial and the responsibility for ensuring children’s effective and equal access to education should be shared between the family and the educational system.

The project “Compensacion de desigualdades educativas” operates in four schools in Spain. It is a one year project involving 300 Roma children focusing on the cooperation between the school system, families and the local Church. The project rests on awareness raising strategies on the importance of education. It includes extra-curricular activities to directly support children, as well as the development of intercultural relation to foster integration.

Last but not least, Ana presented the work of the “plataforma de organizaciones de Infancia” which is an advocacy coalition monitoring the implementation of the investing in children recommendation. It includes the Diaconia, Caritas, the Red Cross and other major players of the fight against children poverty.

## **Study Visit at the Refugee Mission (Reformed Church in Hungary)**

In the afternoon, the group visited the Kalunba project of the Refugee Mission of the Reformed Church in Hungary, where Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy, Program Coordinator, gave a short presentation of the projects implemented insofar, along with the main achievements and challenges. In the 20th century following the



collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the Church provided aid to ethnic Hungarians arriving from Romania and the former Yugoslavia. However, since 2000, the refugee ministry took on a new shape as Hungary was then receiving asylum seekers from Africa and Asia. Today, the main purpose of the Refugee Mission is to provide assistance, comfort and fellowship to anyone in need regardless of nationality, race, religion or social position, not only by responding to material needs but also by assisting people with their spiritual, psycho-social needs. Nowadays, its services are addressed to migrants and refugees coming mostly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Syria. The Mission's main areas of activities in assisting refugees include access to housing, access to employment and access to education. Until recently, its programmes were financed by the European Social Fund, the European Integration Fund and the European Refugee Fund. However, 2015 represented a turning point for the country's national legislation on migration and asylum as it assisted to a sharp increase in the number of arrivals. As a result, the Mission found itself to face numerous challenges in ensuring effective reception and integration services. Currently, the number of people regularly attending the centre are approximately 200. Among the main challenges, Dora pointed out that the education system is not ready to deal with foreigners, namely due to untrained staff, lack of intercultural competence, and an overburdened sector.

## Day 2

In the morning, the rapporteurs of each working group presented the main results of the group work in terms of achievements and shortcomings related to existing policies and practices on 1. Access to adequate resources, 2. Access to affordable quality services and Children's participation.

### Access to adequate resources

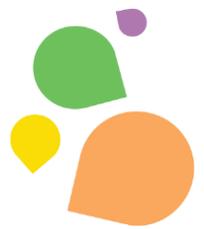
- One challenge to overcome is to improve the access to information for Roma families and children (Sweden is working on empowering them by helping interact with public authorities)
- There is a need to enhance support to families and mothers to access employment and social protection. A better access to child care is a key to access to employment

### Access to services

- Need to facilitate access to education and early childhood education and care
- Need for a more supportive and effective school system (continued individual assistance, e.g. classes on intercultural communication)
- How to foster non-discrimination in health care sector (including in terms of financial support to parents): practical implementation is the main challenge
- Education should be subject to political prioritisation

### Children's participation

- Mentoring programs (kids as volunteers)
- The existence of a supportive and entrusted network is key to child's participation
- Approach focusing on child best interest
- Discrimination of Roma children in participating to decision-making (Sweden)
- Hierarchical parenting system (Czech Republic)
- Children have legally a say from the age of seven (Norway, Sweden)
- Need for child centres to suit children's age
- Norway: youth clinics for family planning and prescriptions open only to young people



- Which mechanisms do encourage participation?
- Norway: International Parent Development Project?
- How to include parents in child protection services?
- Timing: long process towards achieving full participation of children

Then participants took part to a space for open discussion in which they were asked to give a feedback on the group work. Here the main outcomes:

- Often members face difficulties in adapt to the changing political environment in their country, which may represent an obstacle for the practical implementation of their activities
- The diaconal identity continues to play a fundamental role in the members' work with children and families
- Members operate in different European countries: different solutions to different problems?
- Definition of "otherness": questioning our own culture
- Need for enhanced cooperation between Eurodiaconia members (different countries may share similarities in the issues they face)
- Easier to reach youth than parents
- In most Eurodiaconia members, children and families with a migrant background and those from Roma communities represent two of the most vulnerable groups in society
- Destigmatisation of poverty
- Lack of inclusive social protection system addressing marginalized groups (migrant children/families, Roma children/families)
- Integration and inclusion policies are needed in some countries (Sweden), whereas a safety net for children and families to be lifted out of poverty is needed in others (Serbia)

## **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (Foster Parents' Network)**

In the afternoon, the group took part to a study visit to headquarter of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, where they assisted to a presentation on the Church's foster parents' network and the Gödöllő family center.

The foster care network provides support to 55 children through 25 families. In Hungary, about 66 % of fostered children remain in institution rather than in families. These children are taken away from their families often because of the addiction, homelessness or sickness of the parents.

- Institution-based organisation
- Integration service for refugees and migrants
- "Railway Diaconia" project to help people in need on the move (5 cities)
- Volunteering program

### Goals:

- Make congregations and Church members more active
- Start social workers' deacon studies