Updates on the situation in the Czech Republic
Diaconia ECCB response to COVID-19
Prague 20/03/2020

Nationwide – there are 590 infected people today

Closed borders, closed schools, quarantine, restricted movement (people are allowed to commute to work, shopping for food, medicine, walking in nature and parks, volunteering work). There is mandatory personal protection (drapes-veil over nose and mouth for everybody),

Libraries, swimming pools, cinemas, restaurants, shops, etc. are closed except pharmacies, groceries, and drug stores, medical facilities, Garbage Collection

Those who can are on home office, working hours are being reduced (post office, municipality)

Most vulnerable groups: Seniors are taken for the most endangered not only because of the health thread but also the restricted movement (there is a reserved shopping for seniors in storehouses over the whole country from 10 to 12: for +60), municipalities are mapping the senior residents in their regions.

News from Diaconia ECCB:

All the mentioned restrictions affect our work.

Special schools of Diaconia are at the closure (first wave of restrictions affected school institutions). Originally it triggered panic among the parents of the clients, they planned self-help support groups to be able to attend their jobs. This plan fell with the arrival of quarantine for everybody.

Residential services are being closed. So far the virus has not been identified in Diaconia centers. Yet there is a concern that it could be brought in by the carers.

Social entrepreneurship (restaurants, cafes) are being closed,

Nursing home field service is running - centers has transferred canceled day service centers to nursing home field service régime
Employees at Diaconia: Those who do not work at the moment due to the closed services are: transferred to running services / many are on home office/vacation + caring for children. Employees are not being dismissed, Diaconia is looking for an alternative option for their involvement in work.

Social entrepreneurship (restaurants, cafes) – restriction leads to the parallelization of services, clients are unemployed. We assume that this activity is not threatened by closure even if effected for a quarter of a year or so. We assume that it will be possible to start it again.

Volunteering in/of Diaconia:

Declaration of Government says that health, social and volunteer work (registration is required) are taken as an exception from the restrictions.

Food delivery to seniors and needy is complicated by the quarantine status (movement of people is restricted). The government forced to deploy students to help in social services - an online needs system of needs of Diaconia has been created. It is assumed now, that this government regulation will be minimally used – one of the practical obstacles is that students cannot come and go back easily to quarantine. The public transport has been reduced.

Everybody in the country sews drapes for their use and also to supply the hospitals as there is a lack of protective equipment and material everywhere. The drapes are compulsory for everybody to wear. Yet, the homemade drapes are of questionable protective quality, especially in this life-threatening situation. Even seniors in our lockdown residential centers are sewing drapes.

Center of humanitarian and development aid in cooperation with Center of Help in Crisis and SOS center - offers the help of volunteers: shopping, records of requests, the toll-free line for clients + facebook portal „Support of Diaconia“.

Similarly, the state administration and municipalities do: they map the places where seniors live and they record their needs. While Diaconia is a supra-regional organization, the help of municipalities is more accessible for the residents.

At this moment there is a high activation of all the society. The assistance of Diaconia will be relevant especially when the greatest attack of need will be over. The state institutions will begin to return to their work and there will be time to také care of
remaining residual needs, similarly what has been experienced with after the flood situation.

**Finances:**

It is expected that there will be a lack of work nationwide after the restrictions are over – the income insufficiency will affect many businesses. We assume that this does not affect social services because Diaconia is financed from grants. Currently, the direct subsidy of money for personnel resources will be even saved, because people are on quarantine in the form of holidays, etc.

A part of Diaconia is Deacon Academy that is providing compulsory training for social workers. The work of the Academy has been interrupted by the restriction. They will end up in a loss. For diaconia is important to maintain this educational activity of Academy and therefore we will try to revitalize and support Academy from our resources.

Organizations supporting social institutions like Deacon Academy are endangered (in the social institutions there will be no discomfort of funding, in the case of educational institutions yes, because they depend only on contributions from payers).

**Information flow:**

Association of Social Service Provides sends out updated information on what orders the law and government regulations. They provide good quality information and watch over the rapid changes in detail. Awareness and clarity of information in social services work well. The onset was a bit slow which reflects the governments´ relationship with the society (speed and continuity). The requirements are hardening, hard to say whether unnecessarily.

All centers of Diaconia has updated the emergency plans by elaborating potentiality if the virus appeared in the facilities. The decree stipulates that there must be a contingency plan in case of an epidemic. Diaconia ECCB has now updated to the current situation and provided the employees with the instructions.

For the needs of management there was established a „communication platform for service managers“ in case they doubt what to do.