

## Narrative on Honorary Council meeting

October 17-19, 2011



International Academy for Diaconia and Social Action,  
Central and Eastern Europe, o.p.s

Mezinárodní akademie pro diakonii a sociální činnost,  
střední a východní Evropa, o.p.s

The meeting of honorary council in October 17-19 created a space for the sharing about new challenges in the participant's home organisations, developing the council's contribution to the development on curriculum and drawing up ideas for the further use of the document 'Bratislava Declaration'.

The first day of meeting was dedicated to sharing updated information on the developmental streams of the participant's home organisations. These were expressed graphically by trees which stood for their organisations and clearly showed that there have been new developments inside the organisations as the programmes have been launched since last year. With regard to cooperation with the governmental local and regional sectors, there has been a marked improvement in case of the partners from Ukraine and Hungary. To handle the issues of social exclusion in each respective partner organisation, there is still a need to build up healthy relations between the non-governmental and governmental representatives.

New models of community work with the participatory approaches and more involvement of the users seem to be the most effective tools to respond to social needs, especially in the time of very limited resources. The impacts of the world financial crisis have had clear effects on the national policies as budget cuts in the public sector have been already introduced for year 2012. Those partner organisations which do not get any support from the state budget and depend on the funding of the development agencies, also struggle from these developments because as a consequence, many donors has reshaped their funding strategy.

The partners raised up the issue of the voluntary action. There are couples of examples showing that the volunteerism in the post-communist countries is under the way and there is a need to implement models that will support a good cooperation between the professionals and the volunteers. To do it, training for the new coordination and management skills needed were requested.

The Christian profile of diaconal organizations has been questioned, as many diaconal institutions have gone through the transformation processes which also lead them to take over the staff members who identify themselves as Christians.

The second day of the meeting was devoted to the discussions on the curriculum work. The elaboration of the curriculum continues the working process that started last year and is continuing with the consultations with the honorary council representatives as the experts of partner countries of CEE region as well as with Diak University in Helsinki and the Protestant Faculty in Prague. The operational plan for year 1 was finished and the operational plan on the year 3 has been drafted.

The missing teaching and learning units of the year 2 and the year 4 will be elaborated and according to the operational plans, the application for the accreditation committee will be finalised and submitted to Scientific Board of the Faculty later this year. The crucial point of this working process is

to involve the experts from the region into the design of the document as to involve them in the teaching units.

The next Honorary Council is planned to be devoted to launching the operational plans and dividing the roles and responsibilities among the partner organizations.

The working unit on Bratislava Declaration started with sharing information as to whom the Bratislava Declaration has been disseminated and what the first reactions are on this document. The main target group of recipients were leaders of diaconia institutions (in many cases they are pastors by profession) and university students. As the praxis shows so far, first of all, the document motivates people to think of the theological reflection on the burning issues of today's societies. Unfortunately, not so much input was gained from the pastors of diaconal institutions. There is the assumption, that there is a mixture of lack of interest and lack of time to make the contributions to the 'policy documents'. Thus the communication strategy should be changed.

Since the year 2008, when the Bratislava Declaration was published, the global political environment for social developments has rapidly changed and new challenges came up. Thus the document needs to be updated.

Due to the comprehensive picture on the situation of the churches and role of the diaconia in the respective countries of CEE region, the document should be more integrated in the interdiac events and the events of the partner organizations, so that different church teachings and understanding of interpretation of the Christian values could be developed and included. To go on with strategising of the document, it is suggested to interdiac to organise a separate meeting that will deal just with this document.

Thanks to the strong motivation and commitment of the representatives of the honorary council, the interdiac programme of activities for 2012 could be achieved.