

## **interdiac Study Programme**

### **Participation, Social Inclusion and Diaconia**

The first interdiac study programme started Monday this week with 12 learners from the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. The group is ecumenically rich and diverse and the learners come from a wide variety of backgrounds. All are involved in social services and diaconia as professionals or volunteers.

The study programme is led by two responsible teachers, Tony Addy who is Head of Education for interdiac and Dr Aiva Rozenberga who is the Pastoral Counsellor at the Diaconia of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Dr Rozenberga commented that the team work, with teachers drawn from many countries provides a rich and exciting interdisciplinary experience for students and teachers alike.

The first week of the programme focussed on the personal identity of the students and the way this is integrated into a model for professional work. The basics of the profession and the ethical competences have been emphasised and communication skills for social and community development work were practiced. The next steps will be to develop social analytic approaches and to explore the meaning of diaconia.

The workshop process demands that the learners have the courage to be open to the personal challenges of dialogical and experiential learning as well as for theoretical studies. The result, according to the feedback, was surprise at how the process could enable the learners to develop their insights into personal and professional development. One participant commented that she had never been encouraged to explore her identity and relate it to professional work even in several years of academic study of social work! Another remarked that the process 'opened up her self-defending doors'!

The Study Programme is accredited by the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences and it is the first step in creating a new international degree programme in Diaconal Social Service using contact teaching, practice and e-learning.

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