

1st Day

The First interdiac Workshops on Social Inclusion, Participation and Diaconia started in a week 36 in the premises of International Academy for diaconia and social action, Central and Eastern Europe, o.p.s in Český Těšín (Silesia, Czech Republic).

We were pleased to welcome the participants across the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Some participants came from the countries of Western Europe as well. The Workshop units were led by the lecturers from Czech Republic, Latvia, Georgia, Hungary and Finland who were supervised by responsible lecturers Aiva Rozenberga and Tony Addy.

The **welcoming and the introduction** with “a ball game plus some actions” started breaking the barriers among the participants themselves and the Workshops organizer.

The activity **“Personal Foundation”** focused on what cultures are presented on the team. The participants acknowledged very well that culture includes ethnic, racial, religious, age, gender and regional influences. Due to the diversity of a group in terms of backgrounds, a variety of viewpoints on the questions of cultural heritage and its symbol, cultural holiday and 3 things that they are most proud of their culture came up. The Personal Foundation of each participant was presented in a plenary and followed by a short reflexion. The Power Point **Presentation on interdiac**, particularly on its vision, main aims, and structure and innovation aspects enabled to the participants to get more familiar with interdiac as whole. The participants will then have the opportunity to experience the learning approach of interdiac first in next days of training.

The three questions on expectations and fears (Why are you here; what/ who did you leave behind; what are your worries of interdiac training) were firstly discussed in 2 groups and then presented in a plenum. You can read now some responses of the participants:

Why am I here? : To share experiences; To get new resources; To know more about social work practicalities in other countries; To bring something new in my own content; To make a difference at home; To improve all our talents; To meet new people, to make new friends; To meet different cultures; To open more my mind and heart; To have fun.

Who / what did I leave behind? : Family; Friends; Boyfriend; Home; Colleagues; Work and Clients; Studies; Church; Personal comfort; Computer; Own problems and life matters; Own language.

What are my worries of interdiac training? : Language barriers (English understanding); Misunderstanding / miscommunication due to the other cultures; Foreign learning expectations; No previous experience; Possible problems with the team; Doubts about own competencies.

Logistics and practical details were introduced and the participants could find them for the whole training period stuck on the easy flip wall. Here they could also find news and updates.

The Session on the **Intercultural Learning** was focused on the introduction of interculture, culture, learning, interpretation and observation. The short scenes from the movie Chocolate stimulated the group work. At the end the Iceberg model of culture was presented.

In order to get know more about the venue of the Workshops, **a walk through Tesin town on the Czech and Polish sides** was organized. The already experienced presence in multicultural town with quite complicated history brought so much for the understanding of intercultural theory that was a topic of morning sessions. Some basic Czech language was also learnt, mainly social phrases.

The Welcoming Dinner was then followed the by watching of the Czech movie “Most” (Bridge) talking about the decisions that will turn the life ways of some people. The emotional movie provoked the deeper self reflexions that were closed by a brief sharing of the feelings in a circle.

2nd Day

The Morning session of the Second Day was devoted to the presentation of different **Learning Styles**.

Firstly, the participants were asked to fill out the Honey and Mumford questionnaire what enabled them to identify the preferences of their learning styles. The 4 step process of Learning and 4 learning styles, methods of receiving and processing information and mind mapping were introduced and practiced in the small groups.

The English Clinic aimed to improve the language skills in terms of vocabulary and the styles that will be used during the Workshops and this was followed by the individual work in the placements. The common standards of academic English were established.

3rd Day

The third day of Workshops was focused on the Reflex ions and Discussions around **the Motivation and Expectation in Diaconal and Social Work**. The participants were asked to discuss in small groups on “what were the main turning points in their life that influenced their decision becoming a social worker”. Family, traditions, faith, desire for helping to others, personal experience as a volunteer, bad life experiences, change of life style were mainly considered to be the most influential aspects for making a decision on the future orientation.

Not just motivations and expectations of the professional social workers but also those one **whom the services are addressed** and also **the expectations and motivations of the employees** were pointed out. The discussions on these 2 themes led to the activity on defining the **Learner’s own service model**. Each of 3 groups was asked to prepare and perform the theatre that shows how the service models are understood. The influences of their own motivations and expectations and previous experience have been mirrored in the theatre performances.

The afternoon session of the Third Day started with the lecture on **community development and exposure**. The themes like what is community, what is community development, position of a social worker were highlighted. The themes were then discussed in the small groups and pairs and the discussion outcomes were presented in a plenary.

4th Day

The method of Active Learning was chosen for the **Exposure session**, whereby the participants were asked to visit the neighborhoods in Český and Polish Těšín, Karviná and Třinec. The main task for them was just to observe the neighborhood and be concentrated on the questions like: “what do I see and what I smell”.

After lunch time the participants took a half hour for **self-reflexion** on what they have been already experienced in different neighborhoods of different towns, even in different countries (Czech Republic and Poland). Then they were asked to **summarize their observations in a symbolic drawing**. The feelings should be expressed just in a word. Different pictures on their observation can be seen in the Photo Library on the web page www.interdiac.eu. The questions raised up from such a session are how can we cope with our personal observations in our professional life, what can be done with a contradictory reality we face in our everyday life.

Finding the ambivalence between those contradictions will be a point of reflexion for following Workshop sessions during next days. These reflexions have linked back to task on biography, motivation and expectation.

5th Day

The fifth day of the Workshops started with the input on **the role of social worker**. The promotion of social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being was stressed in the definition of the social work.

While talking about Identity, Motivation and Expectations of social worker, three dimensions were pointed out: 1. Expectations, values and norms of the system world (employer...); 2. Expectations, values and norms of the people we work with; 3. Expectations, values and norms based on socialization and study.

The second part of the input focused on **the position of social worker, approaches to the practice of the social work and on the social worker roles from different perspectives** (e.g. enabler, mediator, manager, etc.), whereby the holistic approach of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity was significantly pointed out.

The theoretical input was followed by the group work with 2 exercises. The Learners were asked to make a **list of personal characteristics** which they consider to be **crucial for the social worker**.

The second exercise combined the creative and the reflective aspects. **The different planets of social work environment** (e.g. client, social worker, etc.) should be placed appropriately in the galaxy.

The reflections on both exercises closed the Workshop unit on the role of the social worker.

The second input of Morning Workshop sessions started with the **Introduction on the Ethical Awareness** as a fundamental part of the professional practice of social workers.

The documents relevant to social work practice and action (e.g. Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) were listed out and are understood as the common standards of achievement and recognition of rights that are accepted by the global community.

The 5 five basic values (Human dignity and worth, Social justice, Service to humanity, Integrity and Competence) were presented and deeply discussed.

The outcomes of the group work on defining some ethical problems facing in the organizational environment of the Learners and the tasks on defining the conflict of interests and the measures for preventing them, and the rights of social worker were presented in the plenary.

The Afternoon was devoted to the topic of **Communication in social work**. The issues such as understanding communication in social work, the paradigm of communication, 4 aspects of communication, basic communication skills of social worker, identification of skills of good listener, empathic communication, identifying surface and underlying feelings of clients were in detail presented and discussed. Methodologically, the 2 session's exercises in peers, small groups, discussions and brain storming were used. Also recorded drama scenes were used as demonstration material in order to discuss the different perspectives on communication skills.

6th – 7th Day

The Two days of following workshops week (37th) were devoted to the **issues** (e.g. elderly people, minorities, etc.), which **significantly reflect social exclusion**. The participants were asked to bring the materials of different kind (printing material, photos, video, etc.) that talk about different dimensions of social exclusion in their national contexts.

Theoretical input **“Social Exclusion”** started with a question “What’s in a word?, whereby the words poverty, deprivation, marginalization, social exclusion were listed out and analyzed.

The meaning of the term social exclusion was reflected; then the dimensions of the social exclusion were presented.

The Exclusion as such is considered to be a phenomenon that may be viewed from different perspectives. The focus was put on the sociological view that say that “the social exclusion is the accumulation of processes which converge on the individual and the community and which result from continuing disruptions in the main processes of the economy, politics and culture/ society. These processes gradually place persons, groups, communities into a position of inferiority in relation to centers of power, recourses and prevailing values.”

After the introduction of European Union Definition of Exclusion, **the small groups reflected questions:** if we think diaconal social work should combat social exclusion we also think more deeply about our goals – **what does social inclusion mean?** ; Does it mean there is one mainstream society and economy into which everyone can be integrated? Should this be our goal?; What concepts of social inclusion inform our work with excluded people in our workplaces? Where do these people come from?. The findings of small groups were presented in the plenum.

Following, the role of social workers as the agents of integration was introduced into the relation of social work as a means of control.

After the general presentation on social exclusion, the inputs on **different dimensions of social exclusion** were introduced (e.g Responses to Employment, Old age and Social Exclusion, Exclusion and Race).

The small groups discussions were followed after each theoretical input, whereby the participants were asked to come up with the **ideas for practice in their contexts**.

Additionally to the input on Exclusion and Race, the particular attention was drawn on the **“Culture, identity, exclusion “**. The theoretical models of race, ethnicity, and culture were briefly introduced.

The Social Exclusion Workshops days were designed to include inputs, small group discussions and reflection on learning in connection with participant’s own context and experience.

In order to bring context of social exclusion in Moravian Silesian region closer to the participants and to make link between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, **different life stories of socially excluded people** were read and reflected on.

The 2 Workshop days on the social exclusion were quite full of a lot of learning and findings.

The learning benefits were significant on both personal and professional levels. Some of the participant’s **feedbacks on learning** from those 2 days of Workshops include: better identification of those who are in need, the impact of the illnesses on social exclusion, tools and individual approaches to combat the social exclusion, how to behave appropriately towards the excluded people, more knowledge how to do the analysis, openness towards “the others”, the acceptance towards them and empathy for excluded people.

8th Day

The 8th Day of the Workshops started with the lecture on the **Biblical understanding of self, neighbors and need**. The key Biblical concepts of human dignity, creation, sin and new creation in the context of diaconal ministry were introduced and lately reflected. Lectio divina as a tool of intimate communication with God was practiced.

The afternoon Workshop units of **Diaconia in the context of Biblical understanding** were mainly devoted to the historical development of social actions in the churches.

The Learners were asked to name the persons of their church tradition who were actively involved in diaconia actions in history. The names like Mueller and Fliedner were mentioned. Both of them formed the diaconia tradition in the German context. It was quite difficult for the learners to identify the diaconia active people in the churches of Eastern and Middle Europe. Mostly the Saints were named.

The reason of the importance of the workshop unit **“history of diaconia”** was clearly pointed out: the history shows us the sources of inspiration, widens knowledge and shares the vision that diaconia and spirituality are linked together. The terms deacons and diaconia were clarified before the presentation on history of diaconia from the 4th century till the present time in the worldwide context.

The idea of renewing the Tradition of the Mother Houses in some countries of region after the political changes in the 90- ties of 20th century (e.g. Hungary and Slovakia) was brought up into the discussion. The reason of the failure of those efforts in many countries were almost the same and from the perspective of participant’s reflections also understandable.

Since spirituality goes hand by hand with diaconia, the learners were encouraged to write their **spiritual diary** during the whole learning process. Particularly in this workshop unit, the questions related to the ways of getting the spiritual nourishment, motivation and freedom by service and identification of the missing parts of spiritual life should be reflected and written down confidential. They were also asked to continue with deeper reflections after the workshops finish while recording them in to the Spiritual Journal.

9th Day

Since the Learning process after the Workshops days will continue, the Thursday, 10th September was devoted to the Introduction of the package of the **“in between period” in the placements** and to the **methodology of research**.

In general, the process, assignments and tasks of 3 placements periods were presented. The documentation of the learning process and the supervision were highlighted in order to make the learning the most productive as possible.

The **Observation Task** in pairs (without discussing) in different places of Czech and Polish Tesin (e.g. Post office, Bank, Tesco, Bank, Billa, Vietnamese Market) was explained. While observing, the Learners were asked to reflect the questions like: who is there, who is not there, what is the environment about, what about the relationships between people, symbols, what staff wearing).

After 2 hours of observation, the learners were asked to prepare the Presentation on How do I analyze what I saw. The presentations were presented in the plenary. For example; the different attitudes to customers at the places, role and habitués of staff and visitors.

The observation task made a bridge to the next workshop unit on the placement context. The learners were asked to discuss in pairs how that observation will work in our placement and how to analyze my placement place.

The Pairs findings were shared again in the plenary.

The theoretical input on the **phenomenon and basic research questions** was followed by the personal work related to the placement: what are the phenomena, why do they want to research it, and how do you want to research it).

The intercultural evening made a contribution to get know more about the countries of learner’s origins, their culture, habits, and except of that to smell and taste food and drinks.

The learners were asked to prepare the programme of the intercultural evening by themselves. Before starting each country presentation, they cooked the traditional meals and set up the tables with various things and shared the stories about their cultural traditions.

The programme of evening integrated own presentations and the presentations on “you tube”, singing and dancing together, quizzes, telling the history stories, and especially the companionships between the participants were built up.

10th Day

The last of the Workshops intended to be for the **group building** work and it was also the **evaluation day**.

The evaluation was divided in different parts according to the logistic matters, learning process, group dynamic, whereby to each of the evaluating aspects the most suitable methods were chosen (e.g. animal and colour that express the stages of learning after the workshops, questionnaires, etc.)

The written evaluation sheets are documented in a printed version.

“Bye – bye ritual” by singing the song and hugging each other expressed the belonging to the interdiac group, quite strong friendships between the participants and commitment to continue in learning both virtually and face to face.

Some general information points related to the each Workshops Day:

Each Workshop Day started with **Morning Worship**. The worship style was chosen to connect with the aims of the Workshop units. Materials were drawn from the Iona community, Taize, the Irish Jesuit online devotional and Celtic prayers all of which accentuate issues of peace, inclusion, justice and fellowship and are connected to 'everyday life. The style of worship was also complementary to the aims and methods of the learning. This approach maximized the participation of all. The structure allowed a place for a personal reflection, shared prayer, Bible reading and singing. Students took an active part in the service and they will be able to use the service material for personal reflection and incorporate it in the learning process.

The evaluation was done after each daily workshop sessions by using different methods of non- formal education (e.g. the participants had to say what animal they were and why; 3 stickers of different colors stood for the questions – what did I like/ learn personally; what did I learn professionally; How did I like the process). The evaluations feedback contributed much to steering the learning process and manages the further actions.

The learners were asked to record the learning process each day in **learning diary**.

The learning diary is a systemic method of collecting of information concerning the learning and self-analysis (working on one’s self). Keeping the learning diary is an important training tool for learners learning the profession of social worker.

The diary encourages the development of critical and analytical thinking as well as development of self-analysis, which in the long run contributes to learner’s professional and personal growth. A learning diary is not really formal. By recording the concrete experiences and feelings, the learner observes his/her own experience then integrates it with abstract notions and theories and then based on this solves each concrete problem and/or makes decisions. Each learner is also encouraged to keep a **spiritual journal** for their own use.