

## interdiac Research Platform

The partner organisations of **interdiac** have recognised the need for a platform to support the development of research on diaconia in Central and Eastern Europe. The region faces profound issues of change and interdiac members represent all the main confessional streams. Churches are developing new responses to the urgent needs of people but there is a need for more collaborative knowledge development.

13 practitioners, academics and students in diaconia and Christian social service from 10 countries gathered in Prague from the 30<sup>th</sup> May till the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 to share their understanding of the needs for research and the ways in which it could be supported in the future.

The interactive process of the workshop created a space for gathering and reflecting on the personal & organisational interests in research and research needs. The common process identified the key issues and clarified ideas for research on the theological understanding of diaconia, how diaconal action is organised and the approaches and working methods suited to diaconal work.

In light of the discussions, five topics for further research were prioritized and the participants agreed to continue to work on these initiatives and to search for other partners. Three themes were selected for immediate follow up action:

- ✓ **People on Move** – Diaconia with refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants
- ✓ **Youth on the Margins** - addressing especially the context and needs of young people facing a jobless future.
- ✓ **Ecclesiology & the theological understanding of diaconia**, addressing ecumenical and interfaith diversity and the need for a deeper dialogue about different traditions and contemporary applications.

By the use of research methods relevant to the specifics of these research initiatives, the research initiatives aim to deepen knowledge that will improve the local confessional and ecumenical practice. The research will support the defining of new professional approaches and new understanding of congregational and church engagement. The specific thematic issues will contribute to the addressing of urgent problems. Overall the research programme will support advocacy for diaconal practice and the recognition of diaconia in context where faith based actions are insufficiently acknowledged.

The mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise will be facilitated by the use of tools such as interdiac 'Talking Points', an on-line learning platform, and the interdiac Newsletter.

The international and multidisciplinary gathering laid the foundation stone for the establishment of the interdiac research platform.

The platform will support the creation of a more comprehensive understanding of diaconia in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (both institutionally and congregationally based) and facilitate and support further developments of diaconal initiatives and practice in more reflective, creative and effective way.

More information: <https://www.interdiac.eu/home/research-platform>