

Innovative services promoting Youth Inclusion

with personal testimonies

December 2014



Eurodiaconia is a **dynamic**, Europe wide **community** of organisations founded in the **Christian faith** and working in the tradition of Diaconia, who are committed to a Europe of **solidarity, equality** and **justice**. As the **leading network of Diaconia in Europe**, we connect organisations, institutions and churches providing **social and health services and education** on a Christian value base in over 30 European countries.

We bring members together to **share practices, impact social policy** and **reflect on Diaconia in Europe today**.

Editor: Heather Roy

Design: Jérémie Malengreaux

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Eurodiaconia

Rue Joseph II 166

1000 Bruxelles

Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 234 38 60

Fax: +32 (0)2 234 38 65

E-mail: office@eurodiaconia.org

www.eurodiaconia.org



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Eurodiaconia is a federation of organisations, institutions and churches providing social and health services and education on a Christian value base throughout Europe. Eurodiaconia is registered as an AISBL in Belgium.

INTRODUCTION

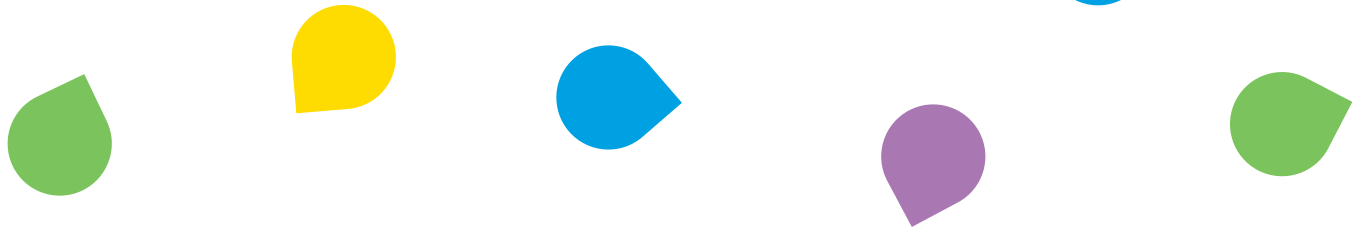
This brochure features personal testimonies and projects promoting youth inclusion that Eurodiaconia collected in 2014 in the framework of its annual award programme. The Eurodiaconia Award aims to raise awareness of diaconal work, facilitate mutual learning among members of Eurodiaconia and highlight an issue in Eurodiaconia's area of work. In 2014, the focus was on innovative projects and services that support young people in gaining access to education, employment and training and that enable their active participation in their community and in society.

Young people have been affected particularly hard by the financial and economic crisis throughout Europe and are considered to be one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. Since 2007, there has been an increasing number of young people from all social backgrounds living in deprivation. Furthermore, the economic crisis affected the active participation of young people in the labour market even more than that of older age groups. Since the beginning of the financial crisis, the level of youth unemployment has risen from 15% to 21%, leaving young people without opportunities and often without hope for a better future. The aim of this brochure is to recognise the importance and quality of the social services that diaconal organisations provide throughout our network to young people experiencing social exclusion as well as to inspire actors all over the EU with innovative ideas for promoting the inclusion of young people within society.



Youth inclusion should be at the top of the social agenda at EU and MS level to prevent today's youth from becoming the lost generation of tomorrow. Looking at what diaconal organisations can do to prepare young people to be fully active citizens and empowering them to reach their full potential in life, EU social policies need to go beyond labour market integration. In fact, the projects featured in this brochure support young people in a number of different ways: through the provision of counselling, organisation of cultural and creative activities, vocational training and peer-support. With this brochure, we promote a holistic approach to youth work in order to truly integrate young people in society and provide them with the opportunities to live a happy and fulfilled life.

We would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to all those who have contributed to this brochure with personal testimonies and photos. Every story is unique, and we are truly grateful for your openness and trust. We hope that these life stories will paint an accurate picture of some of the challenges young people face today and inspire readers by showing that it is possible to make a difference in a young person's life by listening, caring and empowering them to find their path through life.



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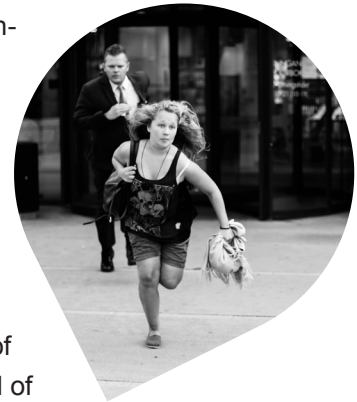
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13-20 PROJECT, CHURCH OF NORWAY, NORWAY

www.baerumkirken.no

13-20 is a diaconal counselling service for youth between 13 – 20 years old, who live in Baerum, an urban community with 120.000 inhabitants close to Oslo. The project's aim is to be a support for youth and their caretakers in a period of life that may seem difficult or confusing to many. Overall, the project is fighting for the recognition, acceptance and positive regard of young people. 13-20 works in four main areas. The first one is individual counseling, where 13-20 staff talk to youth in one-on-one sessions. These sessions may occur in an available conversation room, in schools, in the 13-20 car while driving, while taking a walk or at a café. The second focus of the 13-20 project is on courses to prevent sexual assault, which are held in youth clubs, church congregations and in schools. Thirdly, 13-20 implements a 'snatch project' in cooperation with a local shopping mall and the police with the aim to make young people reflect on their actions and reconcile with the manager of the store where they stole items. The fourth area is to coach the youth worker in the church congregation.

13-20 is innovative in a way that churches/diaconal organisations have been given a more concrete place within the society. The community sees that the church is more than just words and preaching, but also compassion in practice. The close cooperation the church obtained with other actors in the community who work for youth, is something new and exciting. Through 13-20, Diaconia has become a clearer bridge between church and society, and the church is more a part of a whole community, instead of standing outside the municipal service provision.



Personal story of a 13-20 service user

13-20 helped a boy with a migrant background who comes from a turbulent family situation. His childhood was characterised by domestic violence, an absent father and a physically unstable mother. As the boy grew older, he started using drugs, dropped out of school and became a violent and aggressive teenager. Before meeting 13-20, he had been in contact with different kinds of social services: child welfare, youth psychiatry, family counseling. None of these services were able to provide the help he needed.



He came in touch with 13-20 when one of 13-20s deacons agreed to follow him to his therapy sessions because he wasn't able to go there on his own. Through long term contact with 13-20, he has found a relational method with the deacon that is more flexible and cooperative, and which he calls "not as A4" as the rest of the social system. Today he lives in his own apartment, has a permanent job, has restarted education and has learned ways to control his anger that enable him to be a healthy, social adult functioning in society.

TIMOTEI BRUNTÁL, SLEZSKÁ DIAKONIE, CZECH REPUBLIC

slezskadiakonie.cz, fb.com/timotei.bruntal

The half-way home “TIMOTHY” is based in Bruntál and provides counselling and accommodation to young people who are between the ages of 18 and 26. The service users come mostly from the Bruntál region, Moravian-Silesian region, from Ostrava or occasionally from other parts of the Czech Republic. Many of these young people were previously in foster homes, juvenile correctional facilities or were living within dysfunctional families. Support for service users is based on individual needs and includes budget planning, shopping plans, debt counselling, job counselling, employment training as well as assistance with improving their living conditions.



This project is innovative in a way that it uses a stage system to slowly accompany the youth living at TIMOTEI towards independence. All the service users must pass the first stage, during which they are obliged to take part in 15 activity hours per week. These can be morning sessions, therapeutic sessions, work activities, leisure or educational activities, cooking sessions or other individual activities based on their individual plan. In the second stage, the number of obligatory activity hours is reduced to 10, and the residents are allowed to leave the facility overnight. Also, the rules concerning visitors become more relaxed during this stage. In the third stage, the service users move into training flats, where they share the household with other users. If stage 3 has been successful for the users, they have the chance to apply for a rental flat managed by Slezska Diakonie in the “Social housing” programme.



Personal story of Dominika

“My name is Dominika. A month ago, I lived with my mother in a small apartment. I have a brother Rudy and older sister Erika. I have never known my father. Rudy is now in a juvenile institution and Erika has started her own family. My mother is an alcoholic. She brings home new friends every day. We had nothing to eat, nowhere to do our homework, and she often beat me as well. I cannot go to live with my sister. Her boyfriend hates gypsies, and I was told my father was a gypsy. One day, I decided to run away from home. I’ve packed my bags and went to the department for child protection in our city hall and met with a social worker. She sent me to TIMOTEI Bruntál. Here I have my own room, enough food and also found love. In three months, I will give birth to a baby boy and finally I will have my own family.”



VAMOS, HELSINKI DEACONESS INSTITUTE, FINLAND

www.hdl.fi

Vamos Youth Services support youths under the age of 30 in Helsinki and Espoo by guiding them towards a meaningful life. Every youth receives support by a personal Vamos worker whose job is centered on getting to know the young person he or she is working with. After the mutual trust has been built, the Vamos worker and the youth set goals, which are defined by the needs and wants of the youth. Vamos can be seen as a platform for youth services as they have integrated many services produced by public and third sector organisations into Vamos.

Personal story of Sami

Sami found Vamos in the fall of 2012 when he made the decision to try it out. He had a long history at the psychiatric polyclinic because of social anxiety issues. He had difficulties even with leaving his home. He had been bullied at school since the age of seven. He started with two days a week at the action centre because he determined that was all he was able to manage at the time. At first, the action centre felt a bit boring and caused him anxiety. The people there didn't talk much. However, because of the silence, Sami decided to start talking.

“At the action centre, I promised myself, I would start to do things. The best (thing) for me there was that I had to get up in the morning and that I found new social contacts. There were many interesting things to do and to experience. For example, the circus led by an Australian instructor. I never thought I would do that, but I did.”

Sami stayed at the action centre for a year and then he was “gently pushed” to the ‘start workshop’. There everything became “the best it could be” for him. The group at the start workshop was more active and energetic, and Sami found good friends through this group. “I don’t know how much they cared about me, but I certainly cared about them!”

At the time of starting ‘start workshop’, Sami also started little by little to work with a career coach, with whom he mapped out his skills and interests. “Career coaching made me feel like a whole person, not just a person rehabilitating.”

Sami was interested in using his voice, and finally, he actually got the chance to apply for a job as the voice for an entire audio book.. He got the job. “It felt good, because I got the job myself. I wasn’t a guy who turned up because the employer got financial support for hiring me. I applied, and I got it because of the skills I had. It was a real job. That made me worth more as a human being in my own eyes.”

After that experience, Sami decided he wanted to try customer service because he had always feared it, and was not sure if he could do it or not. He applied for a traineeship at a library, and got the job again. After the traineeship, he was recommended for a paid job by his boss and that’s where he’s heading now.

Sami has a dream. He wants to be able to take care of himself. With the help of his career coach, this dream is quite close to be fulfilled.



CASCINA SOCIALE CARLO ALBERTO, DIACONIA VALDESE, ITALY

www.cascinasocialecarloalberto.it, www.diaconiavaldeese.org

The project 'Cascina Sociale Carlo Alberto' is a start-up for a social farm, aimed to improve both employment opportunities and social inclusion of young people through the practice of multifunctional agriculture. Social farming is a practice that mixes, in a new and unexplored combination, agriculture and people's needs (in particular youth with fewer opportunities, disabled or disadvantaged people). It has the potential to offer solutions to public service provision needs in rural areas and to re-connect farmers with their communities.

Through encouraging young people, installing a spirit of entrepreneurship, initiative, confidence and creativity, many participants in this program develop their full potential and learn to successfully manage work, family and life in general. The activities provided by 'Cascina Sociale' are all oriented towards healthy living as well as reflected and ethical consumerism.



Personal Story of Pierluigi

“I’m Pierluigi, I’m 24 years old, and I have a disability. I began my internship at ‘Cascina Sociale’ in June. My responsibilities are planting and clearing the ground, selling vegetables and talking to clients. I like the variety of my tasks very much; this helps me growing professionally and in social life. I like learning new things and talking with different people involved in social farming activities. I’m very proud of what I’m doing. It’s a way to understand that nothing can stop me from growing even if I’m a person living with disabilities. Through this program, my willpower and abilities are stronger now. I’m very grateful to be part of this project and to those who help me here. I hope that my internship could go on for more months”



SHELTER, ECUMENICAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATION, NOVI SAD, SERBIA

www.ehons.org

The primary target group of the project 'Shelter' are young people and children, between 4 and 18 years of age, who live and/or work on the streets of Novi Sad. The Shelter is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day (including weekends and holidays) and provides the following services: showers, food distribution, second-hand clothes and shoe distribution, basic medical care, and support from a doctor and a psychologist. One of the most important activities conducted in the Shelter is connecting children to the healthcare system.

The project started in February 2010, and since then, it is the only place in Novi Sad which offers social services tailored to the needs of children and young people who live and/or work on the streets. In other words, the Shelter is the only place



where they can access services regardless of whether they have legal documents, whether or not they are accompanied by their parents, or if they attend school. The activities carried out in the Shelter are supported by the methodology of outreach work, which enables volunteers to accompany the children to a health centre, to represent the interests of children in public institutions, to locate children in need on the streets and direct them to the Shelter or to contact their parents if at all possible.

In 2013, the Shelter was visited by 403 children and young people. 11,335 meals were provided, 9,638 second hand clothes distributed, 652 basic medical interventions were carried out, as well as 792 interventions with purpose to connect children with state institutions.



Personal story of S.C.

"I am 17 years old. I have been coming to the Shelter since it opened. I was 13 years old then. I used to beg at the city centre with my younger brothers and sisters. My obligation was to take care of them, except during the summer, when our mother took them abroad to beg. All the money I earned I had to give to my grandma and mother. The Shelter helped me a lot; I always had something to eat, an opportunity to take a shower, and I got clean clothes to wear. I learned a lot of things at the workshops in the Shelter. When I had problems with my leg, they brought me to the doctor and helped me to go to the hospital where I was treated. The first time when I visited a gynaecologist was when personnel in the Shelter helped me. They explained to me my medical issue and after that, they bought me the correct medicines and educated me on how to use them. When I had problems, the people at the Shelter were always there to help me.



Now, I have a 1, 5 years old son. I didn't get married to his father. My son is with him. We often argue and because of that, sometimes we live together and sometimes we don't. Teachers in the Shelter explained to me what domestic violence is and who to contact if I wanted to report it. Also, they helped me to sign up for the National Employment Service. Now, I have a valid health card and can take better care of myself. I have some chronic health problems, and the teachers at Shelter remind me not to forget to use my medicine and to regularly see a doctor.

Photographer: Sonja Ardan

SOUND OF NACKSTA, CHURCH OF SWEDEN, SWEDEN

www.svenskakyrkan.se/sundsvall

The Sounds of Nacksta project aims to promote social integration and give the participating youths, the majority of which are Roma, a feeling of inclusion and participation in Swedish society. The youths meet roughly once per month and get to collaborate with professional song, music and dance teachers. They play a wide range of music – from modern pop tunes to traditional Swedish folk songs to music from their home countries. They work on creating a show together and present their art to the public. They also learn hip hop and break dancing routines



While learning new songs, dances and practicing for performances, young people participating are also given an opportunity to discuss life issues with volunteers from the Church of Sweden. These discussions strengthen their self-esteem and help them with many major problems they are facing. Integration matters are also brought up to try to help those who find it hard to become a part of Swedish society.



DIAKONIE YOUTH CENTER - MITROVICA, DIAKONIE KOSOVA, KOSOVA

www.diakoniekosova.com

Diakonie Youth Center (DYC) provides a recreational and educational space for all young people of South and North Mitrovica regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender. Through diverse activities, DYC has positive effects for the socialization of young people from different communities, creating a community of tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and intercultural interethnic reconciliation.



Street workers are promoting the activities of DYC in schools, on the street, in coffee bars and in other places where youths regularly spend their time. Many young people spend time in the rural areas of both parts of Mitrovica, and in the part of town that is populated mainly by people of Serbian ethnicity. The DYC also has a youth forum with members from the different ethnic groups that monitors and evaluates the Center and decide which activities will be implemented.







Eurodiaconia

Rue Joseph II, 166 Tel.: +32 0(2) 234 38 60
1000 Brussels Fax : +32 0(2) 234 38 65
Belgium E-mail : office@eurodiaconia.org

www.eurodiaconia.org