

PIONEERING CHANGE: EURODIACONIA MEMBERS LEADING A JUST AND GREEN TRANSITION



16 December 2024

Eurodiaconia is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

ORGANISATION VALUES



OUR MISSION AND VISION

Inspired by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where social injustice is eradicated and each person is valued, included, and empowered to realize their fullest potential, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe.

WHO WE ARE

Eurodiaconia is a growing European network of churches and Christian NGOs with 61 national and regional organisations providing social and healthcare services, as well as advocating for social justice.

Eurodiaconia members provide diverse services to persons in need, working to see everyone live in dignity and their human rights are respected and protected. Services offered range from health care, childcare, elderly care, hospice and palliative care, youth inclusion programmes, employment and inclusion services to vulnerable groups such as migrants and Roma, housing services for persons experiencing homelessness and services to persons with disabilities. Eurodiaconia represents over 33000 service centres, with approximately 1000000 staff and over a million volunteers are involved in providing diaconal services. For example one of our members Diakonie Deutschland is one of the largest providers of facilities for the care, support and persons in need in Germany. It offers 33.374 services and has a capacity of 1.18 million beds/spaces, it employs approximately 627.349 qualified staff and has over 700.000 volunteers. Similarly, one of our members in Czechia, Slezska Diakonie, is one of the largest non-profit organisations providing quality social services in Český Těšín region. It offers more than 100 social services in more than 60 centres and has over 1200 employees. In France, our member Fédération de l'Entraide Protestante (FEP) represents approximately 370 member associations and foundations and provides more than 1000 services, with 24.000 employees and over 15.000 volunteers. These three organisations are just examples of the breadth of the delivery of the mission and vision of Eurodiaconia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL RIGHTS.....	1
THE CONCEPT OF JUST TRANSITION.....	1
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDER.....	1-2
THE ROLE OF EURODIACONIA.....	2
A GREEN AND JUST TRANSITION: WHY START TODAY?.....	3
2. EURODIACONIA MEMBER'S POSITIVE PRACTICES	4
2.1. MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE.....	4
2.1.1. ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.....	4-15
2.1.2. PROMOTION OF GREEN PRACTICES IN THE COMMUNITY.....	16-19
2.1.3. SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE.....	20
2.1.4. CLIMATE RELIEF AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS.....	20-21
2.1.5. SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE OUTSIDE CLIMATE EMERGENCY.....	21-24
3. CONCLUSION	25



1. INTRODUCTION

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The undeniable and unprecedented changes in climate have profound interconnected implications for multiple social rights, including **health** (e.g. air quality), **housing** (e.g. impacted by natural disaster, price increase due to energy efficiency standards), **access to food** (e.g. crops impacted by natural disasters), and **employment** (e.g. changing economy for coal regions). Moreover, according to the European Commission and academic research, individuals in vulnerable conditions are more susceptible to the impacts of climate change and possess a diminished capacity to cope with changes, thereby being disproportionately affected by the rapidly evolving environment.

To face climate alterations, over the past decades, the European Union has formulated policies aimed at reducing its environmental footprint and achieving a low-carbon economy. Despite the success of some of these policies, the journey to carbon neutrality is far from over¹. Additionally, it is crucial to emphasize that environmentally driven measures can, if not carefully crafted, often adversely affect social rights. Therefore, integrating the concept of Just Transition is essential in the process of transitioning to a low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economy within the EU².

THE CONCEPT OF JUST TRANSITION

According to the United Nations, Just Transition is defined as a transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies in which no one is left behind³. Consequently, just transition implies that environmental measures go hand-in-hand with social considerations and ensure no one is disproportionately affected by the process. To achieve this, social equity should be prioritised to protect vulnerable people, often already disproportionately affected by climate change.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

In the current political and legal context, Eurodiaconia members, are increasingly recognizing the importance of being a strong voice to fight back climate change contestation and the urgent need for a just environmental transition.

This transition involves not only mitigating the effects of climate change but also ensuring that vulnerable communities, often those served by diaconal organizations, are not disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. Despite not being the core of social service providers' work, by prioritizing environmental sustainability, Diaconal organizations fulfil their mission to serve the most marginalized populations. Therefore, environmental sustainability is not merely an optional add-on but a fundamental aspect of diaconal service delivery.

1 According to the Eurobarometer 2024, 81% citizens agree that implementing a climate neutrality target will contribute to Europe's fight against climate change and to the protection of the environment: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3229>

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3 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-excerpt-2023-1.pdf> Just Transition concept

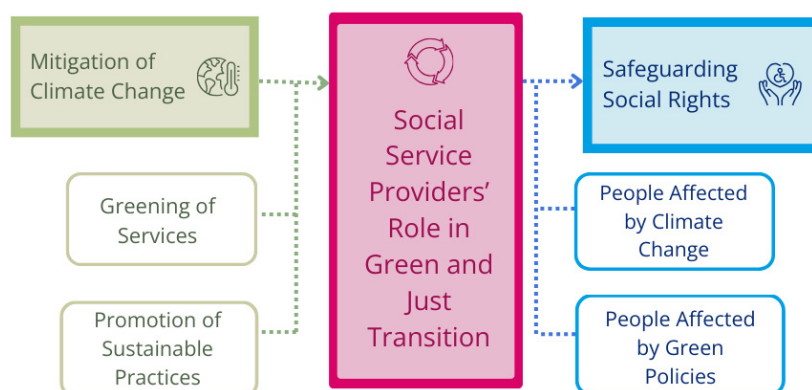
In this context, social service providers have a **dual role** to ensure a green and just transition:

The first part of social service providers' role is the **mitigation of climate change** that encompasses two specific dimensions:

- **Greening of Services:** Firstly, social service providers play a crucial role in the mitigation of climate change by minimizing their environmental footprint and ensuring the delivery of services in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- **Promotion of sustainable practices:** Towards the mitigation of climate change, social service providers can also have major impact by promoting sustainable practices within the communities they serve.

Secondly, social service providers are fundamental in safeguarding the social rights of vulnerable communities. When it comes to ensuring a just transition, they have a crucial **supportive role** towards:

- People disproportionately affected by climate change
- People disproportionately affected by green policies.



THE ROLE OF EURODIACONIA

As a Network of Christian non-profit organizations and social service providers, Eurodiaconia reaffirms the crucial role of its members in pursuing a just transition grounded in the God-given dignity of all individuals. This dignity serves as the foundation for our commitment to ensuring that low-income groups are not disproportionately impacted by climate change, and that social service providers are empowered to embrace this transition.

Eurodiaconia's role is to assist its members in their efforts to achieve sustainable service delivery and support their mission to ensure no one is left behind. Through various tools, such as advocacy at the European level and support for national initiatives, Eurodiaconia aims to establish an enabling framework that will empower social service providers to fulfil this crucial aspect of their mission.

A GREEN AND JUST TRANSITION: WHY START TODAY?

Eurodiaconia's initiatives to integrate and establish a conducive framework for a Just Transition have never been more pertinent:

From an **environmental standpoint**, Europe has recently encountered unprecedented climate disasters, including wildfires and severe floods, underscoring the urgent necessity for a swift transition to a low-carbon economy.

From a **policy perspective**, numerous environmentally driven policies have been instituted, and their implementation is poised to have a profound and unpredictable impact on social rights, affecting not only vulnerable populations but the entire societal spectrum, including social and health services delivery. Consequently, this is a critical period for advocating further incorporation of social considerations in the execution of climate policies and mitigating potential adverse social impact.

From a **political viewpoint**, social cohesion is increasingly under pressure across the EU, particularly as low-income groups can feel disconnected from or negatively impacted by environmental policies⁴, leading to feelings of exclusion and frustration. To foster a more inclusive society, a just transition is crucial. By ensuring that the benefits of environmental policies are equitably distributed and that these communities are actively engaged in the transition process, we can strengthen social cohesion and create a more unified response to the challenges of climate change.

At European level, there is significant momentum to embed social considerations within green policies. The President of the Commission, in the political guidelines that will direct the Union's activities for the next five years (2024-2029), emphasizes the imperative of ensuring a just transition for all and promises a substantial increase in funding for a just transition in the forthcoming long-term budget. Additionally, in the European Commission's mandate for 2024-2029, there will be a commissioner dedicated to overseeing clean and just transition efforts.

4 <https://academic.oup.com/cjres/article/17/2/339/7427086?login=false>

2. EURODIACONIA MEMBERS' POSITIVE PRACTICES

2.1. MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Embracing their role in the rapidly changing environment, Eurodiaconia members have engaged on a variety of practices towards the mitigation of climate change and reduction of their environmental footprint. These practices encompass measures and projects towards the greening of the services but also implementation of sustainable projects towards promotion of sustainability within the served communities.

2.1.1. ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

TEXTILE PROJECTS

The Textile sector has an expressive tole on the environment. According to the European Environmental Agency, textile purchases in the EU in 2020 generated about 270 kg of CO2 emissions per person.⁵

Eurodiaconia members have multiple textile-based projects that promote sustainable fashion by giving clothes a second life. In addition, the projects reveal that environmental concerns can go hand-in-hand with diverse social goals. For instance, profits generated by second-hand sales, often go to support social and environmental initiatives, such as creating jobs for people who face barriers to employment.

Socially Sustainable Locker Room by Le Diafrat (FEP, France)

Twelve years ago, Diafrat identified a need for clothing among refugee families that the association could not afford to meet. In response, Diafrat established a partnership with the local school principal. Since then, a clothing and household linen collection has been organized at the school three times a year. Additionally, neighbourhood residents can drop off their clothes during monthly receptions organized for families.

After the collection, migrants are invited to visit the locker room and share a coffee with the association's volunteers. Parents exchange clothes that are too small for their children with items from the Diafrat locker room. The sorting of clothing is conducted by beneficiaries, volunteers, and neighbourhood residents. Clothes that are not used are given to the relay, which sells those in good condition in their "Ding Fring Shops". Items that can no longer be worn are recycled into rags or used for sound or thermal insulation. Non-valued materials represent 3% of the total volumes collected.

The Diafrat Locker Room provides high-quality clothing to over three hundred children annually and is part of a circular economy approach benefiting the planet. It also fosters community engagement among district residents and exiled families.

[Click here for more >](#)

5 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/about/contact-us/faqs/what-are-the-environmental-impacts-of-textiles>

Project “Sustainable Textiles” by Caritas and Diakonie Germany

The joint project “Sustainable Textiles” in Caritas and Diakonie Germany with the support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports welfare institutions in switching to sustainable textiles by offering advice, information and exchange formats.

Caritas and Diakonie Germany have great potential to influence the textile market and its production methods in a positive manner considering that in-patient facilities need large quantities of corporate clothing, bed linen and towels. Applying sustainability criteria when purchasing these textiles can promote fair and safe working conditions as well as an eco-friendly production. The social criteria include, for example, the exclusion of child and forced labour as well as compliance with occupational safety regulations and the promotion of living wages. The ecological criteria include the ban on certain chemicals or the limitation of their usage to preserve biodiversity and livelihood in and around growing areas and production sites. To protect the climate, the pollutant emissions generated during transport and processing must be reduced as far as possible or compensated for.

Social Enterprise for textiles by the Kirkens Bymisjon (Kirkens Bymisjon Miljø), Norway

The Church City Mission (Norwegian: Kirkens Bymisjon) is a diaconal foundation in Norway doing social work, through a very wide range of activities such as addiction recovery, elderly care, child welfare, mental health care, outreach support programs and more.

Kirkens Bymisjon knows that environmental destruction often hits socially marginalized and poor groups the hardest. That is why they constantly strength the environmental work in their service provision.

A specific project is the Kirkens Bymisjon Miljø, a social enterprise that collects pre-loved clothes and textiles in collection boxes. In 2023, through 1,200 collection boxes in Southern and Eastern Norway, 3000 tonnes of textiles were collected.⁶ Of the textiles collected, 80% go as clothing reuse, 14% go to material recycling and 6% go to energy recovery.⁷ In addition, the initiative operates in different Norwegian municipalities and employ people who, for various reasons, have faced long-term unemployment.⁸

[Click here for more >](#)

Textile Recycling Partnership for labour inclusion, Diaconía España, Spain

Diaconía España has entered into a strategic partnership with Insertega, a textile recycling company, to bolster employability and promote sustainability. This collaboration is particularly focused on supporting individuals with disabilities (33% or higher) and those at risk of social exclusion by advancing socio-labor inclusion programs. Therefore, this initiative not only addresses social inequalities but also contributes to environmental sustainability through textile recycling.⁹

Moreover, the agreement underscores the importance of creating inclusive job opportunities while fostering a circular economy. By combining their efforts, Diaconía España and Insertega are

6 <https://kirkensbymisjon.no/arbeidsfelt/baerekraft/>

7 <https://kirkensbymisjon.no/arbeidsfelt/baerekraft/slik-jobber-vi-med-baerekraftsmalene/>

8 Kirkens Bymisjon, “Om Kirkens Bymisjon Miljø AS”, [Om oss - Kirkens Bymisjon](#)

9 <https://diaconia.es/insertega-y-diaconia-espana-un-en-fuerzas-para-apoyar-la-empleabilidad-de-las-personas-y-fomentar-la-sostenibilidad/>

committed to building a more equitable and sustainable society. This partnership exemplifies how collaborative actions can lead to significant social and environmental benefits, thereby reinforcing the values of solidarity and responsible consumption.

[Click here for more >](#)

Solidarity Wardrobe, Diaconía España, Spain

Diaconía España has established a collaboration with Micolet, an online second-hand clothing retailer, to promote solidarity and responsible consumption. This partnership includes the creation of the “Solidarity Wardrobe” by Micolet, where donated clothes can be purchased, with a portion of the sales proceeds benefiting Diaconía España. Notable, the earnings will support various initiatives, including those focused on migration, international protection, women’s rights, and social emergencies.¹⁰

Consequently, this initiative not only aids those in need but also fosters environmental sustainability by reducing textile waste. Finally, this effort highlights the significance of the circular economy and demonstrates how second-hand clothing can have a substantial social and environmental impact.

[Click here for more >](#)

Recycling shops by Kirkens Korshær’s, Denmark

Kirkens Korshær, established in 1912, is a renowned aid organization in Denmark, deeply rooted in the values of the folk church. For over a century, it has been dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable segments of society, including the homeless, addicts, the mentally ill, the lonely, and the impoverished. The organization’s mission is dynamic, continually adapting to meet the evolving needs of society.

In their environmental efforts and social efforts, Kirkens Korshær runs over 230 thrift recycling stores spread across the country, with the help of voluntary labour. People can hand in their discarded clothes, furniture and other items in the various shops for the benefit of those who want to buy affordable items while also benefiting the social aid work in the Church.¹¹ The environmental impact of the recycling shops is visible by the numbers: in 2023, with the support of more than 8000 volunteers, 7.7 million recycled goods were sold.¹²

[Click here for more >](#)

“Berris” clothing brand, by Asociación Nueva Vida, Spain

Asociación Nueva Vida clothing brand ‘Berris,’ is a social enterprise dedicated to incorporating sustainable practices across all its operations. Berris is committed to producing high-quality, durable products using materials that are both sustainable and ethically certified, such as organic cotton and recycled materials. The brand collaborates with suppliers accredited by organizations like the Fair Wear Foundation, the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), ensuring a responsible approach towards people, the environment, and animals.

10 <https://diaconia.es/diaconia-espana-y-micolet-firman-un-acuerdo-de-colaboracion-para-impulsar-la-solidaridad/>

11 <https://kirkenskorshaer.dk/nyheder/ikke-blot-modedille>

12 https://kirkenskorshaer.dk/files/media/document/A%CC%8Arsberetning2023%20210x297_WEB.pdf

Berris implements comprehensive waste management strategies, including recycling programs, waste reduction, and material reuse initiatives, to minimize its environmental impact. The brand also prioritizes eco-friendly products by using biodegradable, recyclable, and responsibly sourced materials. Additionally, Berris works with suppliers who share its values of sustainability, ethics, and environmental responsibility, demonstrating best practices in these areas.

Berris also employs sustainable graphic design, or 'eco-design' to minimize the environmental impact of its graphic products from creation to disposal. This includes responsible material selection, design for durability and multifunctionality, printing optimization, and design for recycling. Through these efforts, Berris aligns its brand image with sustainability values and promotes responsible practices.

Finally, the brand has a very strong component of social integration since the project provides employment to people that are in vulnerable situations, including migrants and victims of exploitation.

[Click here for more >](#)

REDUCTION OF FOOD WASTE PROJECTS

While food production is responsible for a substantial percentage of the emissions produced, food-waste is still very present in Europe. According to Eurostat, 132 kg of food were wasted per inhabitant in the EU in 2022.¹³

This section highlights various Eurodiaconia members initiatives aimed at reducing food waste through innovative projects. These projects focus on redistributing surplus food to support disadvantaged communities, thereby enhancing food security and promoting environmental sustainability. By partnering with food banks, charitable organizations, and community programs, these initiatives not only prevent food waste but also provide valuable social and economic benefits, including job training and community engagement.

Network of foodbanks to avoid waste by Kirkens Bymisjon, Norway

Kirkens Bymisjon is a key partner of Matsentralen, a network of food banks dedicated to redistributing surplus food from the food industry to non-profit organisations, supporting disadvantaged people in Norway. In 2022 alone, Norwegian food banks saved more than 5508 tons of food from going to waste and redistributed it to more than 500 non-profit organisations that help people in vulnerable situations.¹⁴

By redistributing surplus food to charitable organisations, the organisation contributes to food security, reduces food waste and promotes a shift towards more resource-efficient production patterns.

[Click here for more >](#)

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Food_waste_and_food_waste_prevention_-_estimates

¹⁴ Matsentralen, "Vi gir mat, mennesker og miljø en ny sjanse", [Matsentralen Norge - Food Banks Norway](#)

Prikka Food Rescue Project by Deaconess Foundation (Diakonissalaitos), Finland

The Prikka Food Rescue Project connects surplus food donors with food aid distributors. Implemented in the city of Oulu and its surrounding municipalities, this initiative significantly contributes to the reduction of food waste, thereby aiding in the mitigation of climate change.¹⁵

By centralizing the collection of surpluses for food aid, the project not only enhances accessibility to food assistance but also fosters a platform for inclusive community activities. These activities are supported through diverse volunteering and employment opportunities.

Das Häferl, Diakonie Austria

Founded in 1989, the Häferl began as a facility in Vienna for those released from prison and has since evolved into a hostel for the poor and homeless, welcoming up to 400 people daily without requiring identification or registration. It serves a free, freshly cooked, 3-course meal every day, distinguishing itself from other inns by not charging guests. It provides warm meals to people in financial need using rescued food. Approximately 40,000 meals are served annually, utilizing around 20 tons of food that would otherwise go to waste. This initiative not only addresses food insecurity but also promotes environmental sustainability by reducing food.¹⁶

In collaboration with the Vienna Food Bank and private initiatives, its operation relies on volunteers and donations, and it offers additional services such as low-threshold social work, clothing and hygiene item distribution, and medical care. Discussion groups are also held for the families of incarcerated individuals and released prisoners.

Sveriges Stadsmissioner food centres and Restaurang Svinn, Sweden

To address food poverty, support employment, and reduce food waste, Sveriges Stadsmissioner operates food centres in multiple locations in Sweden. The centres function as a logistics and distribution centre, receiving surplus from the food industry, such as products with short shelf lives, damaged packaging, or incorrect labelling. These items, which would otherwise become food waste, are redistributed to individuals experiencing food insecurity.

By providing job training opportunities for people who are unemployed or at risk of social exclusion, participants gain valuable work experience in a warehouse environment, preparing them for the job market. Therefore, the initiative not only helps alleviate hunger but also promotes social inclusion and environmental sustainability.¹⁷

Every week, Göteborgs Stadsmission rescues ten tons of food from manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers. About 80 percent of this food is distributed to people experiencing poverty in the city, with nearly 500 food bags given out weekly to children, adults, and the elderly who cannot afford sufficient food.

Some of this rescued food is also sent to Restaurang Svinn, an innovative restaurant that prepares climate-smart lunches using food that would otherwise be thrown away. By transforming surplus ingredients into delicious meals, Restaurang Svinn addresses food waste while also offering job training opportunities and supporting individuals on their journey to employment or further education.

15 <https://www.hdl.fi/en/prikka-kiertoon/>

16 <https://www.diakonie.at/ueber-uns/was-uns-bewegt/klimaschutz>

17 <https://sverigesstadsmissioner.se/fattigdom/matcentralen/>

Energy saving projects

Transforming the energy sector remains a key element for environmental transition as it remains the sector with the biggest climate footprint. Notably, the energy sector was the source of more than 75% of greenhouse emissions in the EU in 2021.¹⁸

Acknowledging the environmental impact of energy consumption, Eurodiaconia members demonstrate various energy-saving initiatives aimed at promoting sustainability. These projects focus on enhancing energy efficiency, utilizing renewable energy sources, and fostering innovative solutions to minimize energy consumption. By implementing these strategies, the initiatives contribute to a more sustainable future, while also addressing economic and social challenges.

Villeméjane: Pellet Boilers (FEP, France)

The Villeméjane house in the Cévennes has transitioned from fuel to wood pellets for heating, with the boiler replacement partially funded by the Occitanie region. Previously, the shelter operated with two large boilers, one of which had become worn out, presenting an opportunity to adopt a more environmentally friendly solution.

The proximity of a pellet supplier and the region's abundant wood resources provided a significant advantage through a short supply chain. Les Amis de Villeméjane have submitted a proposal to replace the second boiler under similar conditions. The organisation is deeply concerned about reducing indiscriminate energy consumption, noting that the most cost-effective energy is the energy that is not consumed.

Solar Panels at La Frat' La Belle de Mai (FEP, France)

La Frat' La Belle de Mai in Marseille partnered with Massilia Sun System, a citizen company for photovoltaic energy production in Marseille and its surroundings, to install photovoltaic panels. The organization was undergoing major renovations, including a complete roof overhaul and the Fraternity aimed to make an environmentally friendly choice without committing to a long-term investment.

Massilia Sun System, dedicated to combating climate change, focuses on localizing energy production and increasing the share of renewable energy in the public grid. They also raise awareness about energy issues and empower citizens to take ownership of energy production.

Since June 2023, 200 square meters of photovoltaic panels have been installed on the roof of La Frat'. The 36-kW power plant, financed, installed, and operated by Massilia Sun System in exchange for a roof lease, produces 40 MWh/year, equivalent to the average electricity consumption of about nine households. The electricity generated is sold back to the public grid. However, other installations, such as a recently equipped nursing home by the Marseille collective, benefit from self-consumption.

¹⁸ [https://www.statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/edition-numerique/chiffres-cles-du-climat-2023/en/7-european-overview-of-ghg-emissions#:~:text=In%20the%20European%20Union%2C%20energy,2%25\).](https://www.statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/edition-numerique/chiffres-cles-du-climat-2023/en/7-european-overview-of-ghg-emissions#:~:text=In%20the%20European%20Union%2C%20energy,2%25).)

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Eurodiaconia members have also engaged in a variety of sustainable operations that contribute to environmental and social well-being by integrating sustainability into everyday activities. These projects focus on enhancing biodiversity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting community engagement through innovative and eco-friendly practices

Restoration of peatlands by the Church of Sweden, Sweden

The Växjö diocese of the Church of Sweden is actively working to restore peatlands as a significant climate action. This initiative aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance biodiversity by rewetting suitable areas.¹⁹ This effort is a crucial part of the diocese's climate work, highlighting the environmental benefits of peatlands, which include water purification, flood mitigation, and providing habitats for various species.

Moreover, the diocese is conducting an inventory to identify further church properties suitable for rewetting. This project not only supports the green transition but also emphasizes the role of church lands in promoting ecological sustainability.

Sustainable activities in day-care centres by Diaconia Centre of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

The Diaconia Centre of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia has creatively woven green activities into the daily routines of their day-care centres, enriching the lives of seniors and individuals with disabilities. By engaging in nature-related tasks such as crafting with recycled materials, planting small gardens, and sorting waste, these centres are fostering both environmental sustainability and community spirit. This initiative has not only been a triumph for the environment but also a social success, as participants have expressed great joy in being part of these activities. Looking ahead, the organization plans to use handmade items to generate additional funds for future green and social projects.

Skattkammeret Project by the Church City Mission, Norway

Skattkammeret (The Treasury) is a project that promotes sustainability by providing free loans of equipment for outdoor and sports activities to people, kindergartens, schools, clubs and organisations, with the main target group being young children and young people. The project aims to increase physical activity, social inclusion and the enjoyment of an active lifestyle while ensuring that the use of materials is reduced.²⁰

STRUCTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES

Developing comprehensive strategies for environmental and sustainability can be an excellent path to mainstream environmental concerns into everyday service provision. Notably, several Eurodiaconia members showcase diverse structural initiatives that allow them to reduce their carbon footprints, enhance biodiversity, and foster community engagement with environmental practices.

¹⁹ Rewetting, the process of restoring water levels in degraded peatlands, is a vital strategy for peatland restoration. This technique not only halts the release of greenhouse gases but also revitalizes native flora and fauna, enhances water quality, and stabilizes the landscape against erosion. Peatlands, when drained, release significant amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Therefore, rewetting helps to mitigate climate change by preventing these emissions.

²⁰ Kirkens Bymisjon, "Skattkammeret Ålesund", [Skattkammeret Ålesund - Kirkens Bymisjon](#)

“Das Grüne Segel“ by Evangelische Heimstiftung, Germany

The Evangelische Heimstiftung is actively pursuing a comprehensive sustainability policy (Das Grüne Segel) across several key areas:

In terms of procurement, the organization prioritizes organically certified food, local suppliers, and regional products, ensuring adherence to stringent sustainability standards. Efforts are made to prioritize bundle deliveries, and optimize on-site storage, thereby reducing the frequency of small orders. Additionally, the EHS avoids individually packaged products, utilizes sustainable packaging materials, and employs fabric instead of plastic wrapping in its laundries.

Regarding food services, EHS privileges regional, seasonal, and sustainable food options. Since 2023, a vegetarian day, known as Green Wednesday, has been implemented, with chefs receiving appropriate training. To combat food waste, EHS collaborates with United Against Waste, focusing on storage, production, serving, and plate returns. Moreover, single-use plastics have been eliminated in favour of glass bottles and large containers.

Measures to cool residential groups during summer have been tested and are being implemented, including window films and heating control. To reduce CO2 emissions, energy consulting reports are prepared for each facility, guiding the implementation of necessary measures. The organization also invests in renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic systems, biogas plants, and heat pumps, and is transitioning to electric vehicles, with 45 electric cars and over 40 charging points already in use.

Environmental Sustainability Strategy by Diakonie Austria, Austria

Diakonie Austria is deeply committed to climate protection and environmental sustainability, integrating these principles into various aspects of its operations. The organization recognizes the urgent need for collective action to combat climate change and has implemented several measures to reduce its environmental impact.

- **Photovoltaic Systems:** The senior citizens' home in Salzburg Aigen is equipped with 900 photovoltaic panels, generating 260,000 kWh of electricity annually. This system covers over half of the facility's energy needs, significantly reducing its carbon footprint. Additionally, three more service infrastructures have seen the installation of photovoltaic systems.²¹
- **Biomass Heating:** The Diakonie de La Tour in Carinthia operates a biomass heating plant. This plant uses locally sourced wood chips to provide heating to various facilities, including a hospital, nursing homes, and residential buildings. The biomass heating system saves approximately 740 tons of CO2 annually, demonstrating a sustainable approach to energy consumption.
- **Energy-saving LEDs:** Energy-Intensive lighting in the Diakonissen Clinic and the Senior Citizens' Home in Linz was replaced with energy-saving LEDs. This measure is expected to result in energy savings of around 88,000 kWh per year.
- **Wood chip heating system:** Some infrastructures, including housing for people with disabilities and a kindergarten have operated with an oil-fired heating system has been replaced with a wood chip heating system resulting in energy saving and less CO2 production.

21 <https://www.diakonie.at/ueber-uns/was-uns-bewegt/klimaschutz>

• **Plastic-free packaging:** In one of the projects, (“Delicious by Diakoniewerk”) has transitioned to environmentally friendly packaging has been adopted. This initiative reduces plastic waste and supports sustainable consumption practices.

Diakonhjemmet Hospital Green Policy, Diakonhjemmet, Norway

Diakonhjemmet Hospital is committed to the sustainability goals through a comprehensive environmental policy. The hospital integrates environmental and climate considerations by setting specific targets to reduce waste, increase source sorting, and enhance the use of environmentally labelled cleaning products.²²

To improve water quality and reduce pollution, the hospital adheres to strict guidelines for managing chemical and medicinal waste, conducting regular internal audits. Regarding energy management, the hospital collaborates with the Diakonhjemmet foundation to utilize sustainable energy sources, including geothermal heating and recycling residual heat, significantly reducing its climate footprint.

Efforts to promote responsible consumption focus on reducing energy use, broad-spectrum antibiotics, and disposable items. The hospital also aims to mitigate the impact of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly from transportation. To achieve that, some initiatives include an accessible bicycle workshop and electrifying the car fleet.

Finally, the hospital holds an annual Green Congress on rheumatology, where important knowledge from international conferences is disseminated locally reducing the needs for business travel. The event is carried out with a minimal climate footprint and puts the environment and climate on the agenda through the dissemination of research in the area.

Environmental Sustainability strategy by Diakonisches Werk in the Recklinghausen, Germany

In response to the ongoing energy crisis, the Diakonisches Werk in the Recklinghausen church district has committed to significant energy-saving and climate protection measures. Their goals include reducing energy consumption by 15-20% and decreasing dependence on fluctuating electricity prices. To achieve these objectives, they have implemented several concrete actions. Notably, the organisation installed 24 new photovoltaic systems and appointed energy monitors to identify and implement energy-saving measures.²³

In addition, the Diakonisches Werk in the Recklinghausen has invested in e-mobility by introducing electric vehicles and installing necessary charging stations at their facilities. Employees can also lease bicycles or e-bikes for both personal and professional use, promoting flexibility and reducing stress from traffic and parking.²⁴

Regarding food, the organisation adopts sustainable practices by sourcing meat from local butchers and offering vegetarian and vegan options. Moreover, they grow seasonal vegetables on their own fields, supporting healthy eating, environmental protection, and social inclusion through partnerships and educational programs.²⁵

22 <https://www.diakonhjemmethage.no/felles-prosjekter/baerekraft-vern-om-skaperverket>

23 <https://www.diakonie-kreis-re.de/service/unsere-werk/nachhaltigkeit>

24 <https://www.diakonie-kreis-re.de/service/unsere-werk/nachhaltigkeit/e-mobilitaet/>

25 <https://www.diakonie-kreis-re.de/service/unsere-werk/nachhaltigkeit/nachhaltige-lebensmittel/>

Additionally, the organisation adopted a sustainable central purchasing system, including the selection selecting cleaning EU-labeled products and transitioning to fair-trade, organic cotton workwear for their employees.

Edith Seltzer Foundation work on environmental sustainability (FEP)

The Édith Seltzer Foundation in Briançon has engaged in a Corporate Social Responsibility approach for over ten years, particularly in its environmental aspect, delivering on several measures:

- More than 20 hectares of the foundation park became a refuge for the protection of birds and biodiversity.
- Two facilities welcomed a wood boiler which made it possible to recover biomass and reduce the use of other energy sources, particularly fossil fuels.
- An electromechanical composter, with the capacity to recover three hundred and fifty kilograms of biowaste per day was put into service. It transforms bio-waste from meals served in establishments into compost, used in green spaces and made available to employees.
- The central kitchen provides meals to school, health and social establishments and uses sustainable and quality products, particularly from organic farming.

PEER-TO-PEER CAPACITY-BUILDING

Eurodiaconia members have also engaged in cooperation and peer-to-peer capacity building initiatives towards promoting organizational capabilities and encouraging community engagement. By creating networks and supporting local initiatives, these efforts projects emphasize the importance of sharing best practices, fostering collaboration, and strengthening commitments to enhance sustainability.

Diakonie Deutschland Sustainability network - NABU Project - Germany

Diakonie Deutschland has created a sustainability network to encourage collaboration among Diaconal organizations in Germany. This network includes both experienced organizations and those new to sustainability efforts. It covers topics like corporate social responsibility, management systems, and renewable energy. The main goal is to share best practices, exchange information, and strengthen their commitment to sustainability. Additionally, the network gathers valuable insights for national lobbying efforts.

A notable project from this network is “1000 Gardens,” which started in Baden-Württemberg and has expanded nationwide. In partnership with NABU, the project aims to increase biodiversity by using native plants and improving insect habitats around diaconal facilities. Diaconal institutions identify suitable areas and work with local NABU groups to plan and maintain these projects sustainably.²⁶

“Green Churches Project” by the Protestant Church of the Netherlands

The “Green Churches” project is run by the Protestant Church of the Netherlands and supports churches in becoming more sustainable.²⁷ The biggest impact of the project will be to make information about sustainability accessible and user-friendly for local churches. This includes guidance on energy conservation, waste reduction, and promoting biodiversity.

²⁶ NABU and Diakonie Deutschland, Projekt 1000 Gärten, [NABUxDiakonie Leitfaden \(diakonie-wissen.de\)](https://www.nabuxdiakonie.de/leitfaden)

²⁷ Groene Kerken, “Groenekerken: Samen me tandere kerken op weg naar een duurzame samenleving”, [Homepage - Groene Kerken](https://www.groenekerken.nl/)

Several initiatives by local churches have yielded significant positive impacts. For example, one church established a subsidy program for farmers to encourage nature-inclusive practices. This initiative not only enhanced biodiversity but also significantly engaged the local community. Additionally, other churches have formed small work groups to improve the sustainability of homes in their neighbourhoods and have initiated swap-stores where people can exchange clothes and toys.²⁸

ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

Mitigation of climate change can also encompass a strand of accountability. By promoting environmental responsibility some Eurodiaconia members demonstrate their commitment to reducing their environmental impact. Notably, through adopting certifications, developing strategic roadmaps and standards, and engaging in partnerships, these organizations foster a culture of sustainability and facilitate achieving significant climate goals.

Environment Diploma by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Finland

Since 2001, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has implemented a bespoke Environment Diploma tailored to the unique needs of its parishes. This diploma, which has been regularly updated, is now widely adopted across numerous parishes. It plays a crucial role in achieving the church's energy and climate strategy goals, serving as both a target and a refinement tool for many of the strategy's outlined objectives.²⁹

To date, the Environment Diploma has been awarded to over 100 parishes, providing practical guidelines for adopting more eco-friendly practices. It encourages a comprehensive evaluation of various aspects such as waste management, cleaning, and the maintenance of camp centres, offices, cemeteries, and forests. Additionally, it promotes raising awareness about environmental issues within the community.³⁰

Lighthouse certification, Norway

Miljøfyrtårn is a Norwegian certificate that documents that businesses take environmental and social responsibility. This certification, comparable to ISO 14001, guides Norwegian organizations in making sustainable and profitable environmental choices.³¹ The process evaluates the environmental impacts of waste, energy usage, transportation, procurements, and work environment. The results are compiled into an annual climate and environment report, accompanied by an action plan for the following year. In a significant step towards environmental responsibility, Kirkens Bymisjon's, Stiftelsen Diakonova Haraldsplass foundation, Diakonhjemmet Foundation and Signo foundation have their operations certified as Environmental lighthouses.

Certification under the EFQM Model by Asociación Nueva Vida, Spain

Asociación Nueva Vida is accredited under the EFQM model, which prioritizes environmental respect and sustainability as fundamental principles. To achieve and uphold this quality and sustainability certification, the association implements a range of initiatives across various domains, with a particular emphasis on emission control and sustainable consumption.

28 <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/new-report-funding-overview-of-sustainability-opportunities-for-social-services/>

29 https://evl.fi/documents/1327140/25840624/Ilmastoteksti_engl_2019.pdf/3ff35917-6bd7-6e86-2754-cb5885cf8ea8?t=1591868102539

30 <https://evl.fi/en/our-work/our-policies/environment/>

31 <https://eco-lighthouse.org/>

Annually, the organization meticulously calculates and analyses the progression of its carbon footprint. This process facilitates the identification of centers with elevated emission levels and the subsequent implementation of mitigation measures. Such measures include enhancing door and window insulation, replacing outdated equipment with energy-efficient alternatives, and installing motion sensors for lighting control.

Furthermore, the staff undergo comprehensive environmental training, ensuring that these practices are effectively communicated to users. This training underscores the importance of responsible consumption and proper waste segregation.

Climate Partnership with Municipality by Lahti Diakonialaitos, Finland

In 2024 Lahti Diakonialaitos signed the climate partnership agreement at Lahti City Hall.³² Towards steering their activities to promote the first carbon-neutral city and also to increase their own responsible work for the environment, the Institute linked the partnership with the organization's responsibility program that will focus on:

- Development of Dilakorttel's Free Shop as an ecological employment service platform.
- Reducing food waste and increasing vegetarian options in our hospitality offerings.
- Making work-related trips on electric bikes.
- Calculating the carbon footprint and carbon handprint of our company.

Church of Sweden's Climate Roadmap and Support Climate Tool, Sweden

The Växjö diocese of the Church of Sweden has developed a comprehensive Climate Roadmap to integrate environmental sustainability into all aspects of parish life. This roadmap outlines 32 specific actions aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of church activities, promoting renewable energy, and fostering environmental awareness among parishioners. Therefore, it serves as a strategic guide for parishes to systematically address climate change and enhance their ecological stewardship.

Moreover, the Climate Roadmap emphasizes the importance of community involvement and education in achieving its goals. The primary objectives of the roadmap are to achieve climate neutrality by 2030, promote value changes towards sustainability, and contribute to climate justice.³³

In addition, the Växjö diocese of the Church of Sweden has developed "Support Klimat," a practical digital tool designed to help parishes integrate climate and environmental considerations into their activities. This tool provides tailored recommendations for climate actions, ranging from energy efficiency improvements to pastoral care, based on simple questions answered by the parishes. "Support Klimat" is available free of charge to all parishes within the Church of Sweden, encouraging widespread adoption and collective action towards sustainability.³⁴

32 <https://dila.fi/lahden-diakonialaitos-kaupungin-ilmastokumppaniksi/>

33 <https://www.svenskkyrkan.se/vaxjostift/fardplan-for-klimatet>

34 <https://www.svenskkyrkan.se/vaxjostift/support-klimat>

2.1.2 PROMOTION OF GREEN PRACTICES IN THE COMMUNITY

In addition to mitigating climate impact, social service providers play a crucial role in fostering sustainability within the communities they serve. By raising awareness, offering training and courses, and integrating sustainable practices into their daily operations, these organizations can significantly influence positive environmental change. Through their unique position and trusted relationships, social service providers can educate and empower individuals to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, thereby contributing to broader environmental goals and creating a more resilient and eco-conscious society.

AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGNS

Community Garbage Collection for Integration: Diakonie Michaelshoven, Germany:

Students from the Rodenkirchen Comprehensive School, residents of the Diakonie Michaelshoven disability assistance center, the GWK (Gemeinnützige Werkstätten Köln) and citizens from the neighbourhood joined forces to collect garbage lying around in the neighbourhood. The initiative gathered the attention of the district mayor of Rodenkirchen, Manfred Giese, that stopped by accompanied the group and thanked the participants for their commitment.³⁵

Wood for WELLNESS and the Community Center - Sleska Diakonie, Czechia:

Sleska Diakonie organized an event for child clients from the Silesian Diakonie Pohoda Karviná, a low-threshold center, to actively participate in the planting of 12 new tree species. The children participating were also educated on the importance of trees for the environment and how to preserve the trees planted.³⁶

Unidos contra la Basurala, Diaconía España, Spain

Diaconía España has partnered with SEO/BirdLife through the LIBERA project to combat litter in natural environments. This initiative aims to preserve natural spaces by organizing large-scale clean-up events across Spain. These efforts not only help remove waste from beaches, forests, and rivers but also raise public awareness about the environmental impact of littering. The project emphasizes the importance of community involvement in maintaining clean and healthy ecosystems.³⁷

Participatory campaign Hope and Actions by Deaconess Foundation (Diakonissalaitos), Finland

The "Hope and Actions" campaign (Toivoa ja Tekoja in Finnish) is an integral part of the Deaconess Foundation's sustainability program. This initiative aims to enhance awareness, foster community spirit, and develop environmental skills among both staff and clients. The campaign's foundation lies in a comprehensive survey conducted among the staff and eight Foresight studios held with clients. During these studios, clients reflected on the significance of the environment and nature in leading a good life and shared their future aspirations concerning the environment. These invaluable insights culminated in the publication of a report (in Finnish) titled "The Environment as Part of a Good Life and Desired Future."³⁸

35 <https://www.diakonie-michaelshoven.de/aktuelles/presse/meldung/tag-der-nachhaltigkeit>

36 <https://www.slezkadiakonie.cz/aktuality/dreviny-pro-pohodu-a-komunitni-centrum-268/>

37 <https://diaconia.es/unidos-contra-la-basurala/>

38 <https://www.hdl.fi/en/blog/right-to-nature-belongs-to-everyone/>

The participatory nature of the "Hope and Actions" campaign underscores the principle that "Small actions matter" – emphasizing the impact of individual contributions towards the environment and nature. Running from September to December 2024, the campaign features monthly themes such as local nature, energy consumption, recycling, and food. These themes encourage employees and clients to engage in small, responsible actions that benefit the environment and nature.

TRAININGS AND COURSES

Terre de Femmes Integration Project (FEP, France)

Terre de Femmes is a programme carried out since 2018 by the Palais de la Femme, a historic establishment of the Salvation Army Foundation dedicated to the reception of women in vulnerable conditions. The Terre de Femmes integration workshop supports each year 24 refugee women (and/or far from employment) in learning the eco-responsible professions of raw earth plasterer and ecological painter. Most of the people supported are in their twenties and face the challenge of being single mothers.

Various training sessions have been added to the curriculum in French, mathematics, and computer science to offer more autonomy to the women. They are supported by an insertion counsellor who organizes collective workshops throughout the year - creating a CV, preparing for an interview, understanding socio-professional codes in companies and individual interviews focused on their professional projects. The skills acquired are used, with the support of two technical supervisors, during internal and external projects.

The women supported have theoretical and technical formation that allows them to get the ECVET certificate. But the benefit is not only professional, since spending an entire year in a remunerated contributes to leaving the posterior precarious conditions of leaving and access better lifestyle. This training consists of an innovative way to promote sustainable practices while contributing greatly to the introduction of refugee women in the labour market.

Eco-Actions for the Planet in Service Entraide Protestante (FEP, France)

At the SEP's housing resource centre in La Grand-Combe (Gard), known as Éco'loge Toit, visitors are educated on eco-friendly practices that benefit both the planet and their health. Each door in the large model apartment features a poster detailing endocrine disruptors that could pollute each room. Practical tips are provided throughout the centre on topics such as selecting light bulbs or power strips, conserving water, and unclogging sinks.

In the "Do it yourself" workshop, neighbourhood residents collaborate with those welcomed by the SEP to improve their homes, fostering social diversity. The workshop's attendance has tripled over the past year. Moreover, the centre raises awareness among individuals whose primary motivation may not be ecology: Sharing tools, materials, and spaces limits the ecological impact of overconsumption and generates savings. Therefore, for an annual fee of five euros, participants can borrow tools such as drills, saws, or stepladders from the tool library.

Additionally, the centre offers workshops on making cosmetics, household products, and paints using natural and organic ingredients that have no negative impact on the environment.

Eco-Initiative by Philanthropy Federation, Romania and Moldova

The Romanian Orthodox Church, through the Philanthropy Federation and the Diaconia Social Mission, launched the pilot project “Eco-initiative in the parishes of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Romania and the Republic of Moldova.” This project, in partnership with the “Caritas Ambrosiana” Foundation from Milan, aimed to foster environmental education and enhance ecological responsibility within the Church.

The initiative seeks to raise awareness among priests about ecological issues, integrating environmental protection into pastoral work. It involved 16 local teams (8 in Romania and 8 in the Republic of Moldova), comprised of 160 young parish members that received education in ecology and implementation of local projects.

Key activities included promoting ecological messages through media campaigns, organizing events like Earth Hour and Earth Day, and developing a pastoral guide on responsible attitudes towards nature.³⁹

Academy of Eco-Initiative Leaders, Romania

The Academy of Young Eco-Initiative Leaders is a training camp organized by the Philanthropy Federation and the Diaconia Social Mission of the Metropolis of Bessarabia. With the duration of 4 days, (4-8 July 2022), the Academy involved over 30 young participants aged 11 to 23. The project aimed to develop leadership skills and ecological initiatives within their communities.⁴⁰

Participants were selected by their parishes to learn techniques and strategies for environmental projects. The training focused on connecting with nature, leadership development, and project management. The activities developed included practical exercises and discussions on how to implement ecological initiatives effectively.

The program emphasized the importance of taking care of the environment as part of spiritual and community life, encouraging young leaders to promote sustainable practices and address climate change challenges in their local areas.

The Workshop on Environmental Responsibility, Serbia

In a heartwarming initiative to celebrate International Earth Day, the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) organized a special workshop at the Reception Center Šid - Station.

The workshop, held in the children’s corner, aimed to instill a sense of environmental responsibility among the young residents of the camp. Children were introduced to the significance of Earth Day, learning about its origins and the pressing environmental issues that prompted its establishment. Through engaging activities and interactive discussions, the educators highlighted the impact of industrial development, increased energy consumption, global warming, and climate change on our planet. The workshop emphasized practical steps that children could take to reduce their environmental footprint. Activities included crafting with recycled materials, planting seeds, and creating posters that depicted ways to protect nature. These hands-on experiences not only made the learning process enjoyable but also reinforced the importance of individual actions in

³⁹ <https://federatia-filantropia.ro/proiecte/proiecte-curente/eco-initiative-in-parohiile-bisericii-ortodoxe-romane-din-romania-si-republica-moldova>

⁴⁰ https://federatia-filantropia.ro/stiri/academia-tinerilor-lideri-de-eco-initiative-a-debutat-luni-la-manastirea-caraiman_2686.html

preserving the environment.

By the end of the session, the children had not only gained valuable knowledge but also a sense of empowerment. They left with a deeper understanding of their role in safeguarding the planet and a commitment to making positive changes in their daily lives.⁴¹

41 <https://ehons.org/en/news/55/1548/international-earth-day-celebrated-with-children-from-the-reception-center-sid---station.html>

2.1.3. SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The severe impact of climate change is manifested clearly in natural catastrophes and Europe as seen an increase of these disasters in the past years. However, the effects of climate change in the rights of people in Europe is present every day. Moreover, vulnerable people are often disproportionately affected, directly or indirectly, by the impacts of climate policies.

2.1.4. CLIMATE RELIEF AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS

Diaconal organisations are central to civil protection and crisis response, with services deeply embedded across these regions. They work closely with vulnerable populations, ensuring that support reaches those most in need during these critical moments. Their frontline role in identifying, assisting, and channelling aid to those impacted by disasters like this is crucial.⁴² During climate related disasters, it is pivotal to remember that diaconal organizations provide essential psychological and spiritual support to communities during and after crises, an often-overlooked aspect of emergency response. Their presence helps maintain a sense of community, offering comfort, guidance, and mental health support that aids in recovery and resilience.

Europe has been facing in last few years catastrophic climate related events in last few years and Eurodiaconia members have been pivotal in reacting to those to ensure the rights of the affected populations:

FUND-RAISING AND CHANNEL SUPPORT

Eurodiaconia members most common practice is fund-raising to support the victims of natural disasters. In the recent central Europe floods, the **Romanian Philanthropy Federation** not only mobilized its resources but also gather other dioceses and organizations for financial and material aid. Responding to the same event, **Diakonie Österreich** and **Diakonie Germany** supported the work of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe by fundraising to help people affected by the flooding in Austria, Poland, Czech Republic and Romania.

Further fundraising efforts were observed in Poland, by **Diakonia of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church**.

Responding to the Valencia extreme flooding, **Diaconía España**, **Diaconía Madrid** and **Asociación Nueva Vida** are directing supporters who wish to help to donate to a relief account set up by Evangelical Council of the Valencian Community.

BRIDGING GAP IN INFORMATION

A significant challenge in many countries is ensuring that information reaches all segments of the population in preparedness and response to crisis such as natural disasters. Governments often struggle to communicate effectively with communities, especially with complex technical instructions during emergencies. Diaconal organizations, given their grassroots connections, are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap. They can translate warnings, simplify instructions, and use their established networks to disseminate critical information, ensuring that even the most isolated or vulnerable individuals are prepared.

42 https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Eurodiaconia-Brief_The-Role-of-Diaconal-Orgs-in-Enhancing-Europes-Crisis-Preparedness-and-Response.pdf

SUPPORT ON THE TERRAIN

In Czech Republic, besides the fund-raising for victims of the flooding, **Diaconia ECCB** humanitarian team followed by the first group of volunteers went to Jeseník area to monitor the extent of damage and needs in the affected households. Additionally, the organisation provided psychosocial assistance and lent equipment such as dryers, power generators, pumps and small appliances.

In Hungary, the **Hungarian Interchurch Aid**, launched an extraordinary fundraiser, toured the towns in critical condition with staff and consulted with local leaders to assess in where and what support can be provided.

They helped several settlements with high performance pumps for example, and over 25 of their volunteers connected with the soldiers, civilians and students in Kismaros. In the Magyar Ökumenikus Segélyszervezet tent, the organisation provided food, drinking water, coffee and tea to the workers on the dams and took part in the logistical tasks needed on the spot.

The **Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA)** also coordinated a response to the floods. Volunteers packed and placed sandbags at designated sites in cities along the Danube, while the HRCA Search and Rescue Team assisted in flood protection by contributing with rescue equipment and expertise at the most vulnerable sites.⁴³

In Spain, responding to the Valencia floods, **Iglesia Evangélica Española (IEE) – Spanish Evangelical Church** mobilised immediately in Valencia and surrounding areas and opened their churches for use as emergency accommodation.

There are many ways Diaconal organisations demonstrate their essential role in crisis response and preparedness. To know more, read Eurodiaconia's brief on the role of diaconal organisations in enhancing Europe crisis' preparedness and response.

2.1.5. SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE OUTSIDE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Even though the most visible impact of climate change are natural disasters, the rapidly changing environment provides several challenges to social rights such as education, housing, employment, or access to energy.

Notably, one of the most impactful effects from the combination between climate change and green policies is the risk energy poverty. On one hand, climate change increases the need for heating and cooling, while green policies prioritize sustainable energy sources and lead to the increase prices of fossil fuels, traditionally used in low-income households and low-efficiency buildings. This price increase is due to worsen with the upcoming carbon tax on road transport and buildings ("ETS II").

Therefore, in their mission to support vulnerable people and ensure a just transition, social service providers have a crucial role in tackling energy poverty. Eurodiaconia members provide some positive practices to ensure that this essential service is in place for the most affected people.

⁴³ <https://www.reformatus.hu/english/news/the-hungarian-reformed-church-aid-responds-in-flood-affected-areas/>

Diakonie Austria- Energy with Spirit

Diakonie Austria's project **"Energy WITH Spirit"** is a remarkable example of a solidarity-based project that aims to overcome the challenges of the energy crisis by involving vulnerable population groups in the green transition.⁴⁴

The project creates an energy community with 11 partners from business, science and research as well as the Protestant-diaconal sector to produce energy jointly.⁴⁵ This energy is not only for personal use but also made available in a spirit of solidarity to socially disadvantaged people and to the common good. Around 10 percent of the energy produced, or the profit generated is to be passed on in this way. The target group is socially disadvantaged and/or poverty-stricken households, people in primary care (particularly beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) and the "working poor" without government subsidies.⁴⁶

Energy WITH Spirit, has multiple advantages not only in the greening of the services, but also benefit communities in a social and economic perspective.

From an ecological perspective, the local generation of energy eliminates long transmission routes and allows energy to be used directly in the local area and in service provision. Additionally, by using renewable energy sources such as solar power, energy communities help reduce the dependence of fossil fuels while creating awareness and interest in clean energy production.

From a social-economic viewpoint, despite the production of energy targeting vulnerable groups and aiming to reduce energy poverty, selling electricity from energy communities also leads to a reduction in electricity charges for consumers, as fewer fossil fuels need to be imported. By being based on clean energy, also avoid fluctuation of the fossil fuel market due to external factors (such as the "ETS 2" introduction).

SchuldHulpMaatje project by Kerk in Actie, Netherlands

The SchuldHulpMaatje project, co-initiated by Kerk in Actie, is a well-established initiative developed by a coalition of grassroots civil society organizations, community centers, and churches. For over twelve years, it has provided debt assistance to vulnerable individuals in 151 municipalities across the Netherlands through a network of trained volunteers.⁴⁷

In 2022, 600,000 households in the Netherlands experienced energy poverty. In response, the Dutch government provided cash transfers for energy bills and established a price cap, preventing an additional 400,000 households from falling into energy poverty. However, targeted support for vulnerable households was insufficient due to the difficulty in identifying those at risk.

SchuldHulpMaatje addressed this need by proposing a government partnership to identify, reach out to, and support individuals at high risk of energy poverty. The project assists those in financial difficulties by detecting at-risk households and helping them access state allowances and benefits. SchuldHulpMaatje developed software that utilizes public databases to identify neighbourhoods with a high concentration of at-risk individuals. Trained volunteers then provide these households with information and assistance to access financial aid. This data-driven approach has demonstrated

44 <https://energywithspirit.at/> <https://www.diakonie.at/news-stories/news/energy-with-spirit-diakonie-eine-welt-startet-mit-partner-innen-die-erste-solidarische-energiegemeinschaft-in-oesterreich>

45 The project is anchored in the Renewable Energy Expansion Act Package, approved by the Austrian National Council in 2021. This legislative amendment enables people across property boundaries to join forces and produce, store, consume and sell energy together.

46 Energy with Spirit, "Solidarische Energiegemeinschaften", [Solidarische Energiegemeinschaften - energywithspirit](https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Energy-poverty-final-MB-review.pdf)

47 <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Energy-poverty-final-MB-review.pdf>

significant success and has the potential to be scaled up in other countries.

Diakonie Österreich Energy Poverty Aid Initiatives:

To respond to the growing challenge of energy poverty, Diakonie Österreich set-up a financial aid programme, to support people's unpaid energy and utility bills to prevent energy disconnections and evictions. Another project was recently started in collaboration with the private sector to replace old, inefficient major electrical appliances of selected households with new and more efficient ones. As a result, energy bills of beneficiaries are reduced.⁴⁸

Diakonie Munich and Upper Bavaria- Warm Home Project

Diakonie Munich and Upper Bavaria has launched a fund-raising campaign to support vulnerable people (Low-income families, single parents, students, pensioners at risk of poverty and unemployed people) struggling with high additional demands on their energy costs that they cannot cover on their own. People can access this support by reaching to Diakonie's staff through an energy advice hotline. Since the launch of the project, direct support has been provided in 170 cases.⁴⁹

The Dweller Driven Settlement Upgrading Model by the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation, Serbia

According to the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO), Serbia faces a widespread issue of low energy performance in buildings. Coupled with rising energy prices in recent years, partially due to the impact of green policies, this exacerbated housing and energy affordability challenges, particularly for the most vulnerable communities residing in settlements. In 2021, it was estimated that there were approximately 250,000 to 350,000 energy-vulnerable households. Additionally, 74% of individuals living in Roma settlements are in a state of absolute poverty.

The Dweller Driven Settlement Upgrading Model, implemented by EHO, aims to support vulnerable individuals living in inadequate housing and experiencing energy poverty. This project is grounded in human rights principles and employs a multi-stakeholder, participatory approach.

Specifically, EHO undertakes renovations to enhance housing adequacy, energy efficiency, and access to services, with a focus on Roma settlements that typically lack proper infrastructure and essential services such as energy and water. These improvements significantly impact the quality of life for beneficiaries, leading to better health outcomes and increased social inclusion.

Furthermore, the project includes information campaigns to assist low-income households in obtaining the status of "protected energy consumer" under Serbian law, which entitles them to a 50% reduction on their electricity bills. This benefit is often unknown to families, and EHO addresses this information gap to ensure that more households can take advantage of this support.⁵⁰

Energy Sponsorship Programme by Diakonie Dusseldorf, Germany

Diakonie Dusseldorf has implemented an innovative energy sponsorship programme designed to provide financial assistance to individuals struggling with energy bills. This programme operates on a sponsorship model, where generous donors voluntarily contribute funds that are directly allocated to those experiencing energy poverty. The initiative aims to offer immediate relief to individuals and families facing the burden of high energy costs, especially during the ongoing cost-

48 <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Energy-poverty-final-MB-review.pdf>

49 <https://www.diakonie-muc-obb.de/dmo-spenden/projekt-warmes-zuhause>

50 <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Energy-poverty-final-MB-review.pdf>

of-living crisis.⁵¹

The energy sponsorship programme is part of Diakonie Dusseldorf's comprehensive debt counselling services. These services include financial literacy education, which helps individuals understand and manage their finances more effectively. Additionally, the programme offers personalized financial advice to help reduce overall expenses, including energy costs. Participants are also guided on how to access social security benefits, ensuring they receive all the support available to them.

While the energy sponsorship programme provides crucial emergency assistance, it is recognized that this is not a long-term structural solution to energy poverty. However, it plays a vital role in alleviating immediate financial pressures and preventing further debt accumulation. By addressing urgent needs, the programme helps stabilize the financial situation of vulnerable individuals, allowing them to focus on longer-term financial planning and stability.

51 <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Energy-poverty-final-MB-review.pdf>



3. CONCLUSION

Eurodiaconia members have demonstrated that integrating sustainability into social services is both a strategic necessity and a moral imperative. By adopting practices that reduce environmental footprints and promote sustainability, diaconal organizations are not only contributing to climate change mitigation but also ensuring that the most marginalized communities are supported in navigating the challenges of environmental degradation.

These best practices exemplify how social service providers can effectively blend their core mission of social justice with the urgent demands of environmental sustainability. The examples shared in this report underline the transformative power of social service providers in leading the charge for a just and green transition, showing that environmental responsibility is not a secondary concern but central to fulfilling the broader social mandate to protect and uplift vulnerable populations.

Finally, as these practices continue to evolve, they offer a roadmap for other organizations and sectors looking to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future. While the path ahead requires collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to both people and creation care, Eurodiaconia members remain hopeful about the prospects of a just environmental transition. By working collaboratively with governments, civil society, and other stakeholders, these organizations believe in the possibility of creating a future where environmental sustainability and social justice can go hand in hand.