EURODIACONIA

TO BE AND TO DO

Diakonia and the Churches

We link our members to serve for solidarity and justice

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Report by the Theological Working Group of Eurodiaconia:

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Introduction: background and methodology

If this report is correct then diakonia first needs to be. Diakonia belongs to the essence of the church. So before we *do* anything, it *is*. The church responds to the surrounding world's call and needs by fulfilling its diaconal responsibility. The fulfillment, or doing, is contextual and takes on fresh form according to time and situation. This means to us that diakonia can only be interpreted as a part of the church and so has to be developed in a real-life context.

This is what this report is about. It contains the common ground, and the "doing" that has taken at least hundred different forms. And that is how it should be.

The report was produced by a working group for theology and social ethics set up by Eurodiakonia. The group started work at the beginning of 2002 and formulated its objective as: "**To engage in reflection concerning diakonia with a particular view to the context in which members of Eurodiaconia live and do diakonia".** We inquired: how can we reflect more deeply on diakonia? What do we need to achieve this? What kind of methodology should we use?

The first step was to ask members of Eurodiakonia to send in material containing views on diakonia and also descriptions of real-life activities. We also used ecumenical documents. The list of reports the working group received and used can be found in the appendix. The material contains descriptions of diaconal work and a selection has been included here as case studies. We have tried to respond to this material throughout our work on this report. We hope it will give insights into what diakonia and diaconal activity all around Europe is about.

In the first part, we deal with the elements of relevance for the development of perspectives on diakonia, namely: biblical approaches (chapter 1), ecclesiology (chapter 2), and context (chapter 3). After that, we focus more specifically on the people who do diakonia (the agents) (chapter 4), the principles which should guide their action (chapter 5) the issues they deal with and the resources they have to fulfil their tasks (chapter 6). In the last chapter we will take up some challenges that arise from the study of the documents we were sent (chapter 7). Throughout the text the reader will find case studies and quotations from the reports. We have not given a summary of all the reports we used.

The second step was to invite members to two consultations. Several experts in the diaconal field were invited to the first one. The working group produced a preliminary draft. We would like to thank Prof. Anders Bäckström (Diakonivetenskapliga Institutet, Uppsala), Alexander Belobowsky (WCC and with an Orthodox perspective), Dr. Eva Sibylle Mfato Vogel (CEC, Geneva) and Prof. Theodor Strohm (Diakoniewissenschaftliches Institut, Heidelberg) for their contributions. A larger group of experts were invited to the second consultation, i.e. all Eurodiaconia members who had sent in material or case studies. This time also the Orthodox tradition was represented through the CCME (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe) as well as the ECG (European Contact Group). (For a list of participants, see the appendix 2.) Together we once again worked through the whole material and developed the report. We also thank this group for its contributions.

As a third step the report was introduced and discussed at the Annual General Meeting of Eurodiaconia 2004. The report will now be publicised and will hopefully serve as a useful resource, at all levels, as we reflect on our common understanding of *diakonia.*

Members of the working group:

Marco Jourdan	chairman of the board of the Commission for Diaconia of the Waldensian Church in Italy
Dr. Lennart Molin	Associate General Secretary of the Christian Council of Sweden, especially responsible for the council's work on ecumenical diaconia
Dr. Herman Noordegraaf	Lecturer in the field of diaconia at the Theological Faculty of Leiden on behalf of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands
Rev Dr. Karl Dieterich Pfisterer	Director of theological, legal and economic, strategic studies and of public relations for the Diakonisches Werk (social services agency) of the Evangelical Church in Germany (DW EKD)
Dominic Verhoeven	Spiritual advisor of Caritas Vlaanderen (Belgium) and member of the Social Policy Commission of Caritas Europa
Ninni Smedberg	Chairperson, and strategist for diaconal work in the Church of Sweden; vice-president of Eurodiaconia

We are glad that it was possible to involve Caritas Europa in our working group through the participation of Dominic Verhoeven.

1. Some theological perspectives

There are a variety of theological perspectives relevant for diakonia: creation theology; the social laws and motive for the Exodus; prophetic criticism; the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; eschatology and the work of the Spirit. We think that these approaches do not exclude on another and should be connected. They can be included in a Trinitarian approach emphasising the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The following is our proposal in this regard, including some quotations from several reports. We also take up a case study from Caritas Europa.

1.1. God's creation

In the beginning, there was God. To know this God is not just to understand the substance or personality of the concept of God. The God of the Christian creed is God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the God of the Trinity is fellowship and love. Trinity is understood here in terms of relations and life in society, rather than as hierarchical and person-oriented. In diaconal thinking, the community aspect of the Trinity comes from understanding it as an internal and external sharing of love and freedom.

Consequently, to know God is to be a part of this loving fellowship. When Christians refer to their faith in God one must realise that faith is acquired more by God´s experience of us than our experience of God. Therefore, in Christian tradition, faith is considered to be a gift – given out of grace and love.

According to the creation narrative of Genesis 1, God created human beings in the image of God. The creation of human beings is an emanation of the love of the triune God. Through the love of God human beings are given a dignity that is not endowed on any other part of God´s creation. Human beings, and no other created species, are made in the likeness of God.

Moreover, God´s love to human beings prevails through the history of humankind. In all the changes of life, human beings remain in the sphere of God. It does not matter whether they believe in God or not, human beings can never reach a location or find a situation where God is not present. This special relationship between God and human beings even transcends death. Human beings have a limited lifespan in their earthly life. When they die they do not cross borders to a land of godlessness. God is God, also after death, and the promise is that human beings continue to be subject to God's love through eternal life.

God, who is an eternal loving presence, has made human beings responsible for each other and during their time on earth they are given the ability and the option to love each other and to face up to their responsibility for Creation. God has given us human beings the role of protecting, preserving and prolonging God´s creation. As human beings we are stewards of Creation. The Creation belongs to God and we cannot claim ownership of what belongs to God, but are called upon to be responsible for what God has created as if it were our most precious possession.

In terms of motivation for diaconal work, this means that we are servants of God, equipped by God our Creator to love others and preserve God´s Creation. As God´s servants, we ourselves are encompassed in the love of God and, as we are subject to that love, we regard every human being as having full human dignity and not as an object deserving of diaconal assistance or serving diaconal purposes. Anyone who benefits from diaconal ministry is a subject or a goal in themselves, never an object or means for the fulfilment of diaconal goals or purposes. Servanthood is a call by God; it is empowerment to enable people to live in God´s strength and love. God calls us to extend love and care to everybody in God´s creation.

To live in relationship with God means to accept, support, comfort, equip and encourage others so that they use their own gifts and fulfil their potential in life and service.

However, what we see around us shows that God´s creation is not well looked after. There is much violence among human beings, natural resources are over-exploited and the meaning of life is distorted in many ways. Desolation does not come as a result of bad luck or of random and aimless behaviour. Destroyed environments and wars are, rather, the consequences of human planning. Instead of using their rational, constructive abilities, and their unique capacity for loving one another, human beings manufacture deadly weapons and act against each other out of jealousy and selfishness.

"God loves all humanity. Because God loved us first, we ourselves are able to love and to respect the dignity of any person. Diaconal thinking and acting focus in particular on those whose dignity has been offended. This presupposes a spiritual basis, rooted in God's work and in the service of Christ. Therefore, the Church has the mandate to testify for all mankind to God's love for the world in Jesus Christ. Diaconal activity is one form of this testimony."

Source: DIAKONIA CHARTER of The European Federation for Diakonia – EURODIACONIA par. 1, received as a discussion document.

"Based on the belief in God as the Creator, diaconal work is a manifestation of the responsibility for fellow human beings which God has given to all people in the commandment to Love Thy Neighbour (Lev 19.18, Mt 22.39, Gal 5.14). Man was created in God's image and therefore has a worth, which can neither be graduated nor violated (Gen 1.27, Ps 139.16). This view of human life includes the firm belief that God's will is for an equal right to a life with purpose and meaning for all people, irrespective of sex, race, religion or political opinion. It also means that everybody has an equal right to care. The Christian view on human life also means that the human being has a responsibility of stewardship towards God for one's own life and for the creation. Aspects such as brotherhood, mutuality and responsibility are therefore central aspects of the first article of faith.

Based on the belief in God as the Saviour, diaconal work is a testimony to God's servant love for all people in Jesus Christ (Phil 2.5-9, Jn 13.34-35, Mt 20.20-28). Through his suffering, death and resurrection he atoned for all our sins, and restored our relationship with God. The liberating work of Christ includes everything which represses people and poses a threat to a human life of full value. (…) Based on the belief in God as the Redeemer, diaconal work is a fruit of the new life created by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5.6, Jn 15.1-17). (…).

Source: Comprehensive Diaconal Programme for the Church of Norway, pp. 9-10

1.2. Jesus Christ

Therefore the eternally present God came into history not to judge people for their deeds but to bring them forgiveness, liberation and new options for life. God sent Jesus Christ into the world to present the love of God and with a mission to heal and raise people up in that love. Through his way of living he proclaimed the Kingdom of God. The mission of Jesus took a radical turn when he was killed by the ones he was sent to. They did not understand love when it came to them through Jesus' life and they did not recognise the truth when it was told them. But that did not hinder God´s mission. Jesus went all the way, died and was resurrected. Hence human beings have life.

Jesus had a prophetic mission similar to what is seen in the Old Testament. In times of injustice and oppression prophets came and told unjust leaders and oppressors to repent and to change. These prophets had a political message directed towards the ones at the top of the community who had power and used it to "grind the destitute and plunder the humble" (Amos 8:4). This we could call an example of "prophetic diakonia". The social laws of the Covenant clearly spoke against such misuse of power and asked everyone to be concerned about those with the greatest needs and whose lot was so often forgotten: the orphans, the widows, the poor. The prophets spoke about the need to remember what happened during the time of Exodus and urged people to be faithful to the God who had liberated them from slavery. Belief in such a God means a continuing struggle against all forms of oppression.

For the prophets it was important to do good deeds to those in need. However, it was just as important to change personal attitudes, social behaviours and political structures for the sake of those who were marginalised and humiliated. Jesus belonged to that same prophetic tradition and his mission did not only have political undertones - by its very nature, it was both prophetic and political diakonia. He was sent to fulfil the old message of repentance and salvation. What that means is best described in the gospel stories about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus himself. He is what he proclaimed: "I am the way, I am the truth and I am life" (John 14:6).

The truth Jesus talks about can be referred to as love. Jesus reveals that God is love and offers human beings grace instead of punishment for sins, redemption instead of retaliation and justification instead of judgment. In the end that means life instead of death. In other words, God does not make his love depend on what human beings can do to deserve it. God loves since God is love and because of God´s eternal affection for human beings. God loves us as we are, and not for what we do.

Yet the mission of Jesus had many different purposes. With his life Jesus gave us examples of what it really means to be human. It is to be like he was. In his loving fellowship, life in its fullness is given to everyone who believes. Through love Jesus Christ brings the world back to God and Jesus gives us an example of passion and care. We can see the greatness of love because we all have the need for it and, many times in our imperfect world, we have seen its fulfilment through the work of caring, passionate people.

What Jesus did to people brought changes in their personal lives as well as in their communities. In his life Jesus comforted and delivered people from burdens. When he was dying on the cross he did not condemn his executioners and he showed affection and deep concern to the criminals hanging on crosses next to him.

At the same time, Jesus is relevant to us not only because he sets an example. Most important in what he did during his earthly mission might be the tearing down of walls between God and human beings, and between different people. His death and resurrection were both cosmic and very contextual acts of reconciliation. They were cosmic because they changed relationships between God and humankind. In being cosmic they have consequences for all enmity between people on earth. Jesus has torn down the wall between Jews and Gentiles, and now the two groups are one (Eph 2).

Reconciliation and unity were obtained through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and are thereby expressed in the liturgy of the church. The sacramental character of the church is first of all based on baptism and the eucharist. "The general baptism" of Jesus is his death and resurrection. This opens the way for the church to baptise in his name. The eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus Christ shared by the people of God. Baptism and the eucharist are emanations of God's love poured out onto the world.

The Greek words *leitourgia* and *diakonia* both mean service. Through baptism and the eucharist Christ serves us and equips us to serve him and each other. As is often said, diaconal service cannot be without diaconal liturgy and vice versa. Liturgy and diakonia describe the mediating character of service in the church well: it is positioned between ritualism and activism. Diaconal work is sometimes at risk of becoming merely "brisk and boost" The alternative to that is not withdrawal into spiritual life with rituals and symbols replacing deeds and actions. The mediating character of service equips the church to avoid a false dichotomy between *leitourgia* and *diakonia*.

In chapter 2 we will further develop the use of the two concepts of *leitourgia* and *diakonia,* together with *martyria*.

"The Christ diakonos, the serving Christ, is the theological foundation of the action of the followers of Christ and of their church (Mk 10:42-45)". In the reality of our days, in a highly organised society, this acting embraces the direct service to the neighbour, but also political action in state and society.
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Source: Schweizer Evangelischer Kirchenbund-Fédération des Eglises Protestantes de Suisse, Diakonie / Zukunft unserer Kirche-La diaconie/L'avenir de notre Eglise, pp. 7-8

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the lens through which the church perceives Jesus' own mission and ministry, and retells the story. The historical mission of Jesus was to announce the good news of the reign of God in proclamation and parables, to embody the reign of God in signs and actions, and to be the historical fulfilment of the promised final victory of the reign of God through his death and resurrection (Mk 1:14-15; Lk 17:21-22; Mt 11:2-6; Lk 11:20). In a slave's death (Phil 2:6-8) on the cross he endured the consequences of his own diaconal ministry. For Jesus was crucified because his messianic mission was to be God's saving embrace of all Israel and of the entire world. On the cross Jesus was obedient to the sending and mission of the Father (Mk 14:32-37) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:9-11), Jesus was sent by the Father to reconcile the whole creation to God (2 Cor 5:17-19).
(…)
Thus the outcome of the mission and ministry of Christ is nothing less than a new creation. The entire universe is encompassed by the love and care, the redeeming commitment and creative salvation of the Holy Trinity."

Source: The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity. The Hanover Report of The Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, par. 9/12

Case study I – Reconciliation and peacebuilding (Caritas)

As has been clearly shown in this section, peace and reconciliation are cornerstones of Christian diakonia. The greatest sign of reconciliation indeed is the cross on which Christ was crucified. His death on the cross reconciled the world to God. As well, St. Paul tells us that Christ's ministry of reconciliation has been given to the Church (2 Cor 5:18). Reconciliation hence is also an explicit key element in the Mission Statement of the international Caritas confederation. In line with this, Caritas Internationalis published two documents: "Working for Reconciliation: a Caritas Handbook" (1999), with a number of best practices; and "Peacebuilding: a Caritas Training Manual" (2002), that elaborates further on the skills needed in concrete peacebuilding activities.

At the 15th General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis in 1995 in Rome, with the horrors of Rwanda and Bosnia still in their minds, the members decided to make work on reconciliation a priority for the next four years of the confederation. This resulted in a major document for presentation at the next General Assembly in 1999, *Working for Reconciliation: a Caritas Handbook.*

The purpose of the handbook was to encourage members to integrate good models of reconciliation into their programmes, as a kind of general policy. Basic questions were: Does what we are about to do bring people together, or does it perpetuate division? Does it promote peace with justice? As agencies in the past had moved from strict relief work to development, it was hoped that this handbook could point the way to a new approach seeking integral human development.

The handbook gives background information on different kinds of conflicts and deals with the theory of conflict resolution. Since internal wars, whether between communities or within communities, can be extremely complex, equally complex responses are needed, including the involvement of many actors. Therefore, the handbook also contains 24 practical ideas or best practices, which brings the document right down to earth. We will borrow one example here, dealing with reconstruction work in Croatia.

Reconciliation through reconstruction work in Croatia

The Anti-War Campaign of Croatia, an indigenous NGO, implemented a project which involved people from warring parties coming from another community and international volunteers in locally initiated projects to rebuild the physical infrastructure of a specific community. This led to reconciliation between previously hostile groups.

Project participants found that the existence of the project cast a new light on the conflict. International volunteers living in groups challenged the view that diverse groups of people cannot live together peacefully. So outsiders can play creative roles in post-war reconciliation while solutions remain locally initiated and owned (which indeed is crucial: hence the failures of so many top-down brokered reconciliation efforts).

Yet on the other hand, some people felt betrayed and expressed considerable anger that the NGO worked with both sides. It becomes clear that reconciliation and social reconstruction are extremely slow processes, and it is more realistic to look at normalising life first, rather than reconciling relationships (p.91, slightly adapted).

In 1999, the General Assembly received the handbook very well, and decided on a follow-up phase, focusing on peacebuilding. In 2002, *Peacebuilding: a Caritas Training Manual* was published.
The manual aims to provide people involved in peacebuilding with flexible training suggestions and materials to support and enhance their efforts in fostering peace and reconciliation. These materials include a lot of practical ideas and resources, such as role-play models, texts for reflexion, and fictitious – but very real – cases of conflicts. Apart from that, the manual provides training modules that identify and enhance skills needed for peacebuilding and reconciliation work, but in such a way that it can be tailored to fit participants' needs and their local context.

Sources:
Caritas Internationalis, *Working for Reconciliation: a Caritas Handbook*, Rome, 1999, 128pp.
Caritas Internationalis, *Peacebuilding: a Caritas Training Manual*, Rome, 2002, 256pp.

1.3. The Holy Spirit

After his death Jesus "returned to his Father" but secured his support and presence among us through the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus called the "Advocate" (John 15:26ff). The Spirit will, according to Jesus, guide the disciples and make "the things that are coming" known to them. It is not just a matter of cheap comfort; it is a continuing divine presence through which believers will be enabled to serve God.

There is a special economy related to this service according to which the giver is enriched through giving. Spiritual economy represents the reversal of a value scale we normally subscribe to, saying that you should only help others when you get something out of it. The Holy Spirit teaches us a lesson, learned directly from the Holy Trinity, that there is love and freedom in the Trinity. As a part of the loving Trinity the Holy Spirit knows that love is poured out without asking for any reward, because the goal of love is reached when love is given. Our love and care follow the same kind of logic. The one who loves receives a sense of great significance and joy.

To avoid the risk of interpreting such an outpouring of love in a sentimental or romantic way we can remind ourselves that love does not start as a human enterprise but in the fellowship and freedom of the Trinity. As our advocate, the Spirit communicates to us that we love because God first loved us.

There is a deep unity between Jesus and the Father and the Spirit. The Trinity is here referred to as "a divine fellowship". This fellowship is also the beginning of the church. Trinitarian fellowship is open to the future and eschatological in character. This means that it belongs to the future. We are invited into a fellowship that will find its final form in the coming of God's Kingdom. This mystical fellowship is present in our time through the church but it has not yet come in its fullness. That we still await.

Trinitarian fellowship is not only open in time to the future. It is also open in space to all humanity. The ecumenical vision of unity does not stop when there is unity achieved within a church or when two churches merge into one. To be ecumenical is to strive for the unity of all humankind. The term "ecumenical" comes from the Greek word oikomene (οἰκουμηνη) referring to all humankind and not just to the believers. The ecumenical vision is therefore healing and reconciling the brokenness of humanity, including the Church.

When the Church is called to do the work of diakonia it is invited to keep the wholeness of the whole of humanity in view. Being called to diaconal work means the same. The Spirit calls the Church to serve those in need, materially and spiritually, and the Church responds by caring for people and by taking responsibility for what happens, especially to those who cannot raise their own voice politically, socially and personally. The Spirit equips and calls the Church to be brave and faithful in service. It is a service both of lifting immediate burdens from people and of altering the conditions that caused the burdens in the first place. An example of the first case could be giving food and clothing to the poor; an example of the second case is political work for change and towards a more just and inclusive society.

Nothing of this can be achieved in the short run. Diaconal work in both these examples requires patience and endurance. However, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, sustains us and gives us hope of a change to come, a final victory for all good powers. Until we reach this end, life on earth appears ambiguous to us. It is both for better and for worse, and we do not have the ultimate tools to distinguish the one from the other. What we do have, though, is a promise of total victory and the Holy Spirit to give us power and hope, and to guide us until the end has come. What we also have is the fellowship of all believers, the Church. In all its different forms it is one, holy and universal.

> *"Diakonia is central to what it means to be the Church. As a core component of the gospel, diakonia is not an option but an essential part of discipleship. Diakonia reaches out to all persons, who are created in God's image."*
>
> *Source: An Epistle from the LWF Global Consultation on Diakonia, 7 November 2002, p. 1*

2. Ecclesiology and positions on diakonia within churches

In the documents we analysed that there was a common opinion, namely:

that diakonia belongs to the heart of the Gospel and so ought to be a central notion in our views of the church,
that, consequently, diakonia is not given its true value, both in principle and in church practice, and
that diakonia should be connected with the whole mission of the church and with other functions (liturgy, pastorate, education and so on).

In our considerations, for which we take full responsibility, we try to do justice to these points of view. We also take up new views on diakonia which were inspired by the Australian New Testament scholar John N. Collins, who sees the deacon as a go-between, a messenger, who brings back into the church the knowledge and experience gained in working with people. In the case study we can read how, in practice, diaconal work takes shape in the work of the parish and in connection with the whole ministry of the Church and the other functions.

Church and diakonia – some reflections

The Church is the body of Christ. As such, the Church is a part of the life and history of Christ, his crucifixion, death and resurrection. The victory of Christ is the future of the Church. In Christ the members of the body of Christ, that is, the Church, have life in its fullness, even unto everlasting life.

As a sign and an instrument of Christ, the Church bears witness in word (*martyria*), in prayer and in sacramental life (*leitourgia*), and in giving expression to God´s love in Christ, now called *diakonia*.

As the body of Christ, the Church is also a part of Christ's ministry to the world. Christ came to the world not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Some important theologians have reflected on this statement of Jesus and have shown that diakonia (in this statement) embraces the whole mission of the Son of Man. The diakonia of Jesus here is his mission under God to lay down his life as a ransom. This determines the nature of the servanthood of Jesus.

As the body of Christ, the Church should also be a servant under God like the Son of Man. Its mission will include its responsibility to extend the love it has received to those who have not yet been included in that love as experienced within the Church**.** Through its presence in the world the Church represents Christ's continuing ministry revealing God´s love for all people in the world. In this total ministry the Church is a sign of the Kingdom of God.

An essential part of the total ministry is to meet the needs of those who are closed to the love of God. The Church confesses its responsibility not only for the community of the Church but also for the society of which the Church is a part.

Elements of this understanding of the ministry of the deacon are contained in the *Hanover Report* of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (1996):

> *"(§56) As a specific and focal form of task to which all Christians are called, the service of one´s neighbour, diaconal ministry should foster and bring to wider recognition the ministry of others, rather than making their ministry redundant or superfluous. The diaconal minister should lead and inspire the wider church in its service. Here the interpretive role of diaconal ministry plays a special role. Diaconal ministries will have their own specific tasks which are their own responsibility. As a ministry of the whole church, however, this ministry should have a multiplying effect, leading others to their own specific task of service."*

This potential of the diaconate to be an enlivening factor within the ministry of the church applies not only to a local congregation or to a particular denomination. The Hanover Report sees the potential extending also across the denominations as an "ecumenical opportunity", to quote the title:

> *"(§75) The diaconate offers a theme for ecumenical exploration which can result in a more effective co-ordination of efforts to renew mission and liturgy both within and among these different traditions. It is an exploration which pushes churches to rethink existing assumptions, and reach greater clarity in their theological and functional understanding of the offices of presbyter and bishop. Such clarity can only help to enhance liturgical practices and the way in which they shape the intentional daily ministry of all baptised Christians."*

The body of Christ becomes visible in the church in three different perspectives: when it witnesses to the mystery of God's love, when it gives thanksgiving to God in worship for the love made manifest in Christ, and when it extends the love it has experienced to those beyond that network. These three perspectives are in fact different aspects of the church's mission. The church is sent to the world with a message that Christ is Lord, to be expressed in words and deeds**.** The church proclaims that Christ died for us and that in him there is fullness of life. Proclaiming, celebrating and making love real in people's lives is the whole ministry that is given to the church.

God is continually at work, and the *agape* of God that is manifested in these ways is not something theoretical or merely theological. On the contrary, it is the experience of the person of Jesus Christ at work. It is in action that the human person, and particularly the believer, corresponds with God, is the correspondent of God.

So there must always be a relationship between preaching and action, between our being in Christ and our being in history. The essential thing to understand is that we are all part of the stream that has had the binomial *ora et labora* as a motto for centuries. This experience reminds the church that it breaks the connection between *ora* and *labora* at its own risk. *Labora*, too, is fundamental in the transforming vision of reality depending on the Christian message.

Christ came into the world so all may have life in its fullness, eternal life (John 10:10). As a human being Jesus proclaimed the message of God´s love to all. One way in which Jesus proclaimed the Gospel was by acting out that love in healing the sick, giving bread to the hungry and restoring the dignity of social outcasts. He witnessed to the love of God by serving the sick and the poor, in particular. As the body of Christ, this is also what the Church should do as one body.

We can say, then, that in its outreach to those in need, the ministry of the church needs to have a recognisable ecclesiological character. That is, the ministry of the church must come from the whole body of the church, where ministry is not only the responsibility of the ordained leadership but is a response of the whole community expressed through the ordained or commissioned ministry. Thus ministry becomes a *communio* of witness, worship and love.

Through ordination or commission the church has in recent decades increasingly given expression to its outreach in a particular form of its ordered life. This is known as the diaconate, but if the responsibility and works of the diaconate are to be truly ecclesial, i.e., of the church, the deacons must enjoy the confidence of the congregations in whose name they work**.** Deacons must be in a dynamic relationship with their own congregations.

On the deacons' side this relationship will require a clear connection back to the church. The deacon is not merely someone who is sent. The deacon is also meant to return. This is a return full of knowledge, experience and theological insights from encounters and endeavours among people, very often among those on the margins of normal church life. The deacon returns to meet again with the church in liturgy, to introduce it to the call of those in need, and to take from the liturgy the word of further mission and support. Diaconal work is meant to be connected with the altar and the sharing of bread and wine. In the sharing itself there are two demands, to be part of and to share, i.e. to be sent out.

In the eucharist, *koinonia* is transcended, revealing that people depend on each other in the past, present and future. This liberating experience is the point of departure for our mission to bring the good news to the whole world. To show this wholeness in diaconal work there is an urgent need to keep outreach activity (such as social responsibility) intimately linked with the liturgy of the whole congregation. They are inseparable when it comes to the responsibility and role of the Church as such.

Case study II: Working with the new church order in Sweden (FIN - Församlingsinstruktion)

This case study illustrates how the ecclesiological dimension of diaconia can effect the organisation of church structures. The example of the new "Instruction" of the Church of Sweden shows how a structural tool reflects a vision that aims at encouraging congregations to involve more members in defining and putting into practice what it means to be a local congregation today. A short introduction to the Swedish context is given first.

Changes in the Church of Sweden
From 1862, when local communities were formed in Sweden, schools and social services that had for many years been under church responsibility were handed over to the municipalities. During those years, the church remained an authority (e.g. handling weddings and funerals on behalf of the

government), but it also developed a preaching structure with a focus on spirituality. The diaconal movement, on the other hand, was developing structures outside the church (diakonia institutions, mainly inspired by the German model). However, it was founded within congregations as well, and has always remained one of their responsibilities (e.g. the first deaconesses were assigned to a congregation in Stockholm in 1866).

During the last few years, the Church of Sweden has again faced major changes, some of them connected with the rapid shift in its welfare system. First of all, in 2000 the Church of Sweden changed from being a state church into a free church. This structural change also meant that a new Church Order had to be introduced.

Every congregation is a legal entity in its own right, and is run by a local church board (elected both from political parties and from church-based groups). The vicar is employed by the congregation and is in charge of the staff and work. Responsibility lies with both the vicar and the church board though. So there has to be co-operation between the political and spiritual "powers".

THE INSTRUCTION BY THE CONGREGATION: THE CASE OF KISTA

The new Church Order poses a challenge for the congregations. It is called the "instruction by the congregation" and it is supposed to provide guidance for the congregation and assist the board of the diocese in conducting supervision. One informal aim can be to encourage the development work of the congregation, with the purpose of involving as many people as possible (staff, voluntary workers, politicians, members etc) in the process. Since it has to be developed by the local congregation, it may differ considerably from one congregation to the other.

The Church of Sweden is organised territorially, with most congregations having 75-85% of the local inhabitants as members, though only very few are active. From this perspective, the "Instruction" is sometimes also looked upon as a tool to actively involve more people in a reflection process.

It must contain five parts:

Regulations for the congregation and its work, to be decided by the board
A pastoral program concerning the main tasks of the congregation, i.e. conducting worship, offering education, doing diaconal and missionary work
Regulations concerning the work of the congregation on sign-language (for deaf people), Finnish, Sami and other languages
Regulations regarding the ongoing education of staff members involved in planning worship, education, and diaconal and missionary work
Regulations on co-operation with other congregations in sharing staff

Let us now look at the actual example of the congregation of Kista (outside Stockholm). Approximately 35 000 people live in Kista, with an additional 25 000 who come to work there. Unusually, the Church of Sweden holds a minority position in Kista.

HOW THE CONGREGATION CAME TO FORMULATE ITS INSTRUCTION

When the reflection process started in April 2002, it was the aim of the Kista congregation to involve as many people as possible in the process, notably the Parochial Church Council, the Fellowship of the Akalla Church, members of staff and parishioners.

The Instruction should be seen as an overall policy document for the parish, clearly laying out the basic theological attitude of the congregation. The analysis of the surrounding community together with the basic theological insights are to be expressed in the pastoral programme, in worship, teaching, diaconal ministry and mission. The Instruction is supposed to lay the foundation for future goal-related activities of the parish, without losing the link with previous policy documents with which the parish has been working. It should also be reflected in the budget of the congregation.

WHICH PRIORITIES DO WE NEED TO SET?

Priorities have to be set, given the financial situation for a minority congregation relying on only 40% of the residents (every church fee payer covers another five people in the working area of the parish). So the priorities chosen for the Kista congregation focused on children and young people, on creating meeting places within this multicultural and multifaith local community, and on ministering to work issues.

The main mission of the congregation was defined as follows:

To receive God's unconditional love, so that it may have consequences for our own way of life, our understanding of ourselves, our meetings with other people and our responsibility for the whole Creation;
To bear witness to the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ and in our lives;
To bear witness to the love of God, in order that existing boundaries might be transcended and the community built up. The congregation wants to prevent the marginalisation of any group and offer space to people's testimony to life and to God, on condition that their testimony does not marginalise anyone else;
To be faithful to one's own faith and church while not erecting boundaries for God's meeting places with people. The congregation fosters an open attitude towards views of life and religions.

In meeting with the divine and with one another, the congregation wants to provide a space for unconditional love. Therefore the parish should be characterised by

PARTICIPATION

PLURALITY

OPENNESS

This is made visible at the congregation's

MEETING PLACES

RESTING PLACES

GROWTH PLACES

3. Views of society

It is almost a commonplace: being a church is always being a church in context. The general context is that of late modernity and globalisation, which we will briefly describe. Then we will pay specific attention to the European context, because its influence on the diaconate is growing at the national level as well. Eurodiaconia itself is an expression of this development. Of course the European Union is of particular interest in this field. For that reason, most of this chapter has to do with Europe, the opportunities offered by European integration, and the options and responsibilities of the churches.

Another question of special interest is which socio-economic model is to take shape within the European Union itself and in the former communist countries in which a centralised economy has been replaced by a market system. Western European and Nordic countries saw the development of the welfare state. However, not least because of globalisation, this type of society is now under pressure to adjust to a more competitive economy. This development impacts hugely on social policy and welfare systems and hence needs attention from diakonia.

Finally, the debate about civil society will get a mention, since it also concerns the diaconate.

3.1. Late modernity and globalisation

Western societies are characterised by modernisation. They are societies in which science and technology have an enormous influence and there is a growing division of labour and other human activities into specialised social segments. In these societies people tend to see themselves more as autonomous individuals striving for self-realisation, and to free themselves from traditional social and religious groups and ideologies.
The process of modernisation included the replacement of agricultural society by an industrial society. This meant that relationships between people moved from a local relationship close to the land to more distant, production-based relationships, where capital gave the opportunity for economic growth and an improvement of living standards. This development was strongly connected with the rise of the nation state.
In this stage of modernity – sometimes called "late" modernity – we are seeing a move towards both global and local relationships. These relationships build on increased opportunities for global communication, which gives rise to the need for a greater localisation of identity, i.e. the ability to see local occurrences in a global perspective and vice versa. Globalisation and the very rapid changes following from the economic and technological change make the question of identity an urgent one, at the individual and collective level. Beliefs, values and life orientations are being "disembedded", taken out of their traditional social surroundings.

All this has consequences for the position of churches and religion, because persons are looking for identity, but are "choosing" from a range of options. Even if they choose a "traditional" one, it is what they have chosen and not a matter of course. So, there is a tendency to exalt natural and cultural values along with "spiritual" values at the expense of institutional values. These values are more fragmentary and selective. Guidance does not come from churches or ideologies, but rather from places which contribute to personal rejuvenation and act as a source of strength. There is a demand for new worldviews which can explain the meaning of life, but in another way than in the past.

But this does not address the minority of the population living in the midst of the society with less access to the services of the modern day. People who are semi- or unskilled, ethnic minorities, or people with a disability are particularly likely to be socially excluded; they no longer benefit from paid labour or they work in the informal economy under poor conditions. This process of social exclusion and new poverty can be seen in all welfare states, though the number of people may differ depending on social and labour market policies.

What was mentioned above is especially true of the welfare states in western and northern Europe, but it can be said that the developments of late modernity and globalisation affect every society in the world and every country has to try to link up with the economic powers (for instance the European Union) to prevent, or counter, social exclusion.

3.2. Europe

European integration as an opportunity

The states within the European Union are enjoying one of the longest, if not *the* longest period of peace in their history. Yet they still have to face growing regional conflicts both inside and outside Europe.

Since 1945, people in Europe, in general, and those in its western, northern and southern parts, in particular, have been living under peaceful conditions. Even wars like those in Bosnia and Kosovo have changed little with regard to that. As bloody as the beginning of the 20th century may have been and as catastrophic and cataclysmic as it may have continued through its middle period, even during the ensuing period of the Cold War, this century came to a peaceful conclusion. Half a century of peace, possibilities of working for peace as well as the increase in the number of democratic societies, including within western Europe, are significant achievements.

To be sure, the modern era, whose beneficiaries we still are, was born of one of the bloodiest wars in European history. One of the outcomes of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, marking the end of the Thirty Years War, was the emergence of the modern state as an increasingly effective model for organising society and averting or neutralising bloody religious strife and civil war. We need to be aware of this particular heritage when we look back to the 20th century. None of the nationalist, socialist and racist ideologies that beguiled and corrupted all aspects of European society could have been so successful had they not been able to take control of the state and effective economic organisations to pursue their goals.

Some historical glimpses of the EU as a peace project

The bitter and bloody history of enmity between France and Germany is a case in point. Within a period of less than three quarters of a century, these two countries went to war against each other three times (the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71; the First World War 1914-18; the Second World War 1939-45). Yet after the cataclysmic end in 1945, these two countries also became the nucleus of an alliance for peace for the second half of the 20th century and beyond. This alliance had at least two centers:

The Council of Europe in Strasbourg which even attracts non-European members, and what is now the European Union, both of them projects of, instruments for and results of peace. A major step to turn swords into ploughshares, and at the same time a prophetic move, was the formation in 1951 of the *European Coal and Steel Community*. In its founding charter, the members of this community made explicit reference to the bloodshed of the Second World War and – as it turned out – kept their promise to unite those European industries for peace and prosperity which had formerly been instruments for war and destruction. Coal and steel used for the common good rather than for the ruin of all!

Even before that, but very much in this emergent spirit of reconciliation was the *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt* in 1945. Although for years afterwards this

declaration remained controversial within German Protestantism, it was also a major step towards reconciliation and outside assistance, both of which were sorely needed for Germany to find its way mentally and materially into the Western world of Europe. It was the churches within the ecumenical movement who helped to turn this confession of guilt into a process of reconciliation, through their gifts supporting the diaconal work of the newly founded *Hilfswerk* before even the Marshall Plan was launched. The peace project gained momentum and even provided a unifying force – in material, social, legal and spiritual terms.

The next step after the European Coal and Steel Community came in 1957, when France, Western Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg signed the Treaty of Rome and pulled ahead with the *European Economic Community*. The abolition of customs and tariffs between member states and the common agricultural policy became part of a successful co-operation. It was not until 1992 that the free movement of goods and services, capital and personnel became possible in a European Union which had far outgrown its original six members.

In 1965 a treaty was signed to merge the bodies of the three original European communities into one Council and Commission. The Treaty on European Union (Maastricht, 1994, Amsterdam, 1999) continued the integration process. The Union was enlarged by Sweden, Finland and Austria and, in 2004, by Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia. The treaties have raised the process of European integration onto a new level, with numerous problems of detail being tackled in a more uniform way. The European Union is now finally more than an "intergovernmental institution".

With the Treaty of Amsterdam the social responsibility of Europe became the centre of attention. The preamble evokes the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights. Article 2 names a high level of employment, sustainable development, social protection, gender equality as well as competitiveness and convergence of economic performance, economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the member states. Article 3 speaks of social inclusion.
Social inclusion, employment policy and competition policy are the three core elements of the Lisbon Strategy. This is a commitment to bring about economic, social and environmental renewal in the European Union. In March 2000, the European Council in Lisbon set out a ten-year strategy to "make the EU the world's most dynamic and competitive economy". According to this strategy, a stronger economy is expected "to drive job creation alongside social and environmental policies that ensure sustainable development and social inclusion".
In face of this optimistic vision, questions arise:
"Can a Social Union be created in struggling with liberalisation of markets, with commercialisation of originally public domains and competition rules also affecting social services?
Can this be achieved when the budget restrictions and economic procedures are "hard rules" whereas social procedures and consultation mechanisms are "soft rules", very often under national governance?
It is still a fact that economic policy and especially competition policy is the dominant part. Here the social cohesion and the social policy part of the triangle have to be enforced." (Annual Report of Eurodiaconia 2003).

In Europe, people both inside and outside the Union often feel powerless towards the system. Overcoming this feeling of powerlessness is the big challenge in all the efforts to bring about a European Constitution. The ongoing debates highlight solidarity, social inclusion and human rights. In future, churches and civil society will have to monitor the implementation of these values in policies that truly respect the vision of a social Europe providing quality of life for all people living there.

Europe needs the churches

The identity of Europe is too complex for simple messages. There are European traditions which derive from Roman Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish and even Islamic models. However, there is also a European history that transcends confessional and national boundaries. The Renaissance, the Reformation, industrialisation and secularisation are for churches in Europe not just periods of European history but also processes which run through its history as a whole, raising challenges as much as answers. The Enlightenment, pietism and the Evangelical Revival were European phenomena. The history of home missions (*Innere Mission*) and that of diakonia in the 19th century are both in their roots and ramifications anything but merely national phenomena. It will be necessary to strengthen this collective cultural memory, if we are not to repeat the mistakes and calamities of the past.

Against this movement towards European unification, interwoven as it is with impulses toward reconciliation, we need to see the story that has unfolded since 1989. The public in general and the Council of Europe in particular acknowledged the role of the churches in bringing about a "peaceful revolution" in East Germany. At the first European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in May 1989, only a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, representatives of the major church traditions in Europe – Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican – met to articulate the vision of churches in Europe. They made a strong plea in favour of a "European home" remaining open and hospitable to the people in eastern Europe and the countries of the South.

Dialogue, participation and the strengthening of civil society were the key words of Basel. Whereas the Basel Assembly arose from a conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of Creation (JPIC), the main theme of the Second Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997 was designing a common European home focusing more on reconciliation and in which divisions along social, economic, cultural and ethnic lines were to be overcome. This Europe was not to become a fortress, however, set against the rest of the world. The assembly realised how sharply reality differed from this and what it meant for the responsibility of the churches.

In between the Basel and the Graz Ecumenical Assemblies, a much less publicised event took place in 1994, resulting in a declaration of widespread influence, particulary in eastern Europe. CEC organised a consultation at Bratislava in which representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican traditions articulated a common vision of diakonia in Europe and steps towards realising it (published in: Theodor Strohm (ed.), *Diakonie in Europa. Ein internationaler und ökumenischer Forschungsaustausch*, Heidelberg 1997, 510-515). The resultant Bratislava Declaration is no less ecumenical in substance than either Basel or Graz in terms of bringing together so many church traditions in a common quest for shared perspectives, and as a description of a common platform.

According to the Bratislava Declaration, the big challenges for churches and diaconal organisations in Europe are how to work and to live with people in need. Those who signed the Bratislava Declaration agreed that diakonia is a continuation of the service/liturgy into daily life, including the whole people of God. Diakonia acts actively and creatively to have the human community respect the image of God in every human being and thus emphasise human dignity. Diakonia and the Church work for the liberation of the oppressed and act in the belief that poverty, unemployment and isolation are not inevitable.

In line with the challenges described, the Bratislava Declaration sets forth the practical idea to *monitor* human rights developments, the fight against poverty and the relationship between Europe and the South.

An important part of this is co-operation with experts and networks at the local, national and European levels. The ecumenical movements offer a good basis for facilitating or joining the networks of civil society, thereby empowering individuals and increasing participation.

The year 2001 saw another landmark in the series of efforts to arrive at a common understanding of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant traditions in Europe. The occasion was the signing by the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) of the *Charta Oecumenica - Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe*. For Christian traditions which have contributed their share of division, death and misery to the European past and present, pooling their resources for the sake of building Europe is, in itself, a promising new departure. The Charta Oecumenica not only describes a vision, it also lists a number of commitments.

"On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail. We likewise insist on the reverence for life, the value of marriage and the family, the preferential option for the poor, the readiness to forgive, and in all things compassion.
As churches and as international communities we have to counteract the danger of Europe developing into an integrated West and a disintegrated East, and also take account of the North-South divide within Europe. At the same time we must avoid Eurocentricity and heighten Europe's sense of responsibility for the whole of humanity, particularly for the poor all over the world."

From this vision follow three commitments by churches in Europe:
"to seek agreement with one another on the substance and goals of our social responsibility, and to represent in concert, as far as possible, the concerns and visions of the churches vis-à-vis the secular European institutions;
to defend basic values against infringements of every kind;
to resist any attempt to misuse religion and the Church for ethnic or nationalist purposes."

3.3. Welfare states and diakonia – some reflections

For the following section, extensive use is made of: Uppsala Institute for Diaconal and Social Studies, Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective*, Uppsala 2003. This report contains the project description of a research project which addresses the role of the majority churches as agents of welfare within a changing social economy.*

The welfare state was set up in most western European and Nordic countries as a response to the problems of poverty, the fear of poverty and insecure livelihoods in modern capitalistic societies. The state was to intervene in the market economy and pass laws with regard to social security and welfare. However, the welfare state takes various forms, which have to do with the role of the state, the relationship between the state and actors in society (including churches) and the role of the family.

> *According to a well-known typology (of the Danish scholar G. Esping-Andersen,* The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Cambridge 1990 and reprints), we can distinguish between:*
>
> *The* liberal welfare state*, which is typical of most Anglo-Saxon countries. Here responsibility is taken by the state for basic social welfare issues, which involves mostly modest social insurance payments and means-tested assistance. Independent agencies are given considerable freedom;*
>
> *The* social democratic model*, typical of the Nordic countries (and to some extent the Netherlands), which gives the state overall responsibility for general social welfare, while voluntary organisations provide complementary services;*
>
> *The* corporative model*, found mainly in continental Europe. Within this model, too, the state has responsibility for the social welfare framework, while bodies of various kinds (even including professionals) play a defining role in providing social welfare services;*
>
> *The* conservative model*, with a weaker role for the state compared to that of the family. This model can be found in southern Europe.*

Within different church traditions (Roman Catholic, Protestant (both Lutheran and Calvinist), Anglican and Orthodox) we can find different positions and theological opinions with regard to the welfare state. This can also vary within one tradition depending on history, the position of the church in society and so on. These developments clearly pose a challenge to churches and diakonia.

- In societies which have a welfare state, the influence of globalisation, technological and socio-economic developments (knowledge economy, service economy), cultural changes ("individualisation"), demographic developments (the changing position of women, ending the traditional breadwinning roles, ageing, migration) are driving welfare state reform. The result is economic and social deregulation, privatisation and so on. Linked to all this is the problem of poverty, even in very rich countries.
- Some countries have hardly had a welfare state up until now, especially the former communistic countries.
- All European societies are facing the challenges by global megatrends and the interdependence of markets, communication and distribution of knowledge. The demographic changes – ageing of societies, individualisation and differentiation of life-styles are linked with the new (old) threats of impoverishment. The figures speak for themselves - 18 million unemployed people and approximately 60 million people (in the European Union alone) who are at risk of poverty.

Churches and diakonia are challenged to reflect on their function in society, taking theological and ecclesiological considerations into account. We think that churches should participate in welfare provision and be a public voice for social justice, which means that a good system of social security and social welfare should be either introduced or maintained. The Union's current debate about the continuation of the Lisbon Strategy over-stresses the importance of competition and market forces, whereas the social inclusion aspect has become very weak. A social vision of a Europe in which quality of life for all is possible is the strength of diakonia, both in terms of political participation and of practical work for reconciliation, social welfare and internal security in Europe.

3.4 Civil Society

In current discussions about both the changing role of the state and citizens' participation in European processes (Art. I-46 of the draft Constitution) the concept of civil society is becoming more and more important. This concept focuses on social organisations which do not belong to the state, and whose core also lies outside the personal sphere of life and the formal economy. Internationally it has become a standard political and academic term for discussing a broad range of social developments and underlying assumptions within the context of their mutual relationships: the decrease in the voluntary commitment of citizens to the public interest (or at least the shifting of commitment towards a more individualised attitude), the bureaucratisation and commercialisation of public life, the withdrawal from politics and democratisation and self-regulation outside politics.

In terms of these discussions, churches and diakonia are also civil society actors, although many churches do not regard themselves as "civil society" in the exact sense.

Another term which is used in this type of discussions is "social capital". Although the church sees itself as a specific kind of actor in civil society, which has to do with its biblical roots, it is useful to define it in these terms as well. Besides the input from diaconal activity, this work can be a space in which people learn how to take responsibility, in which values and norms are passed on, in which people can get a sense of belonging and have a meaningful life, and in which they can learn civic skills and participate in society. These dimensions of diakonia should be kept in mind as we shape and organise its activities.

Case study III - Care for the Elderly in Slovakia

Churches are important actors in civil society. Diaconal work provides an input from which people learn to take responsibility, in which values and norms are transmitted, in which people get a sense of belonging and a meaningful life; they learn civic skills and participate in society. They help to build society. This is particularly true in the case of Slovakia where churches take up their responsibilities in organising care for the elderly in a political context where this policy area has very low priority compared to the attention paid to meeting the EU accession requirements.

The situation of the elderly

Men and women in Slovakia - as in the rest of Europe - can increasingly expect to live longer. This demographic tendency will also increase the need for a range of high quality services for senior citizens. Following the International Year of Old People (1999), the Slovak Republic has worked out a Program for the Protection of Elderly People. In post-communist countries health care for elderly people tended to be good, while questions of mental and spiritual health received no more than a formal passing mention in statistics.

Even though, on a European scale, Slovakia still belongs to those countries where young people constitute the majority in society, in 2000 18.1% of the population of 5.4 million inhabitants were over 65, two thirds of them women. On average they live on a very modest pension that amounts to €135. The majority of senior citizens live in their own homes. When they need help, they quite often have to rely on relatives. Over the last few years outpatient care at home has increased by 60% (but prices by 700%). In 2000, there were over 25 000 old people enjoying nursing care, about 16 000 of them living in homes for the elderly. Nearly 9000 men and women were employed to care for old people. At the same time, however, more than 8000 applications were rejected. Compared to 1989, the number of applications has risen by 200 percent. Places are needed at a speed at which they cannot be provided.

The 1998 *Social Health Act No. 195 (*of 1998) of the Slovak government provides the framework for social work and nursing care. It is one of the pillars that ensure that old people get what they need. Provisions in the Act specify the ways and forms, and also the conditions and content for securing health. Nevertheless, there are also services that do not fall under the provisions of the Act. Experts in the social field deem the provisions of the Act insufficient to meet the social and personal needs that have arisen from the social changes of recent years.

All legally enacted services for senior citizens are in the process of being transferred from the state to local communities. Funds to cover the cost of such services are provided by the budget of the state, financial contributions by the clients themselves, and other public (regional and local) subsidies.

At the moment, 80% of all institutions are run by public bodies. In total, there are about 250 private (non-state) organisations in the area of health and social welfare that are responsible for 11 500 clients (3000 of whom are severely disabled and old people in nursing homes).

Qualification of Employees and Quality of Service

There is no reliable information in Slovakia about the professional qualifications of personnel in the care of the elderly. At present there are no

lists of required standards and activities. Some of those employed are registered nurses; others – by far the largest number – have graduated from the courses in "requalification for nursing", organised by the Red Cross in cooperation with the national labour offices. Many workers either have no training as clinical nurses or are not familiar with the care of the elderly. We take it that only a small fraction of personnel in homes can at present take care of both the health and the social needs of the elderly.

Securing Standards of Quality
The Social Health Act also covers the topic of provisions for guaranteeing standards of quality in social services. So far legislation only delineates a framework for such standards. The government and some non-profit organisations cooperate in an attempt to develop additional standards as a means to safeguard quality. To do this, they need a consensus on a profile valid for all professionals committed to working fulltime with elderly people. And Slovak society also needs to change its view of old people.

The churches' response
Amidst this difficult situation, many social service organisations from the churches are trying to set up initiatives to tackle the problems in the field of elderly care. Tabita runs a number of homes, but is also active in promoting quality training for students preparing to work with elderly people. In September 2004, they will start a new school, bringing together a network of committed institutions that are all willing to cooperate to provide higher quality service for old people.

The ultimate aim is broader, though. Not only do they want a good school that trains the responsible staff in elderly care for the future. By means of this school, and by creating a "Quality Institute" connected to it, they will definitely be able to influence the policy concerning care for the elderly in Slovakia more strongly – hence illustrating the broad role of social institutions in civil society.

Case study IV – Austrian Diakonie as co-organiser of EAPN

The Evangelical Church in Austria is a minority church. Around 90% of the population are Catholic, and 4% profess to be members of the Evangelical Church. The Evangelical Church shows a disproportionately high amount of diaconal commitment. The Catholic organisation, Caritas Austria, has 8000 coworkers and the Protestant Diakonia has 4000. The work of these diaconal initiatives and institutions includes work with the homeless, refugees, addicts, disadvantaged youth and disabled people.

Diakonie is a co-founder of the Austrian Poverty Conference, a network of 25 social organisations. The first Austria-wide poverty conference took place in 2001. This conference brought together a wide spectrum of civil society bodies - charitable associations, umbrella organisations of social initiatives, church and trade union organisations, educational and research institutes and advocacy groups of single parents and unemployed people at risk of poverty.

Since then they have been acting under the name of Poverty Conference to analyse the widely hushed-up problem of poverty and social exclusion in Austria and to improve the lives of people affected by it. Regional networks and platforms have been set up in numerous states. A nation-wide Austrian

Action Week against poverty and exclusion has already taken place four times.

Diakonia and the church finance the work of the coordination team of the Poverty Conference and take part in common activities. The Poverty Conference sees itself as a lobby for those who have no lobby, and has a policy of standing up for certain concerns. With its civil society initiative, the church does not only supply ethical orientation here, but actually intervenes in favour of disadvantaged people.

In the eight years since its foundation the Poverty Conference has worked on concepts for subsistence protection, reform proposals for social benefits, and campaigns for the improvement of health care for the poor. Further, it has analysed the effects of government budgets on the lowest income group and directed attention to negative socio-political developments by means of public campaigns. One main focus in the last few years has been the monitoring of the European-wide initiative National Action Plans against Poverty.

In order to get this comprehensive work into perspective, two conferences on wealth have dealt with questions of distribution of opportunities and the almost non-existent wealth data.

From:
Martin Schenk, Poverty and Social Exclusion in Austria, in: Herman Noordegraaf and Rainer Volz (eds.), Churches and Diaconal Institutions in Europe Against Poverty: Social Exclusion and Social Actions, Bochum: SWI Press 2004

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4. Agents of diakonia

In this chapter we shall deal with the question of who actually does the diaconal work (the agents). Of course this is closely connected with ecclesiology: the tasks of the church and the responsibilities of believers, people who have a diaconal ministry, and their relationships to other responsibilities of the church and other ministries. We want to deal with this point more extensively, however, and so will devote a separate chapter to it. First, we give a short overview based on the analysis of the reports. Then we take up some topical discussions about the position of diakonia in relationship to the ministry of the church as a whole and to developments such as professionalisation. Further, we ask how diakonia should relate to the developments which have to do with the changing role of the state and with other changes raised in chapter 3. After that, we give some examples and, finally, we present a case study that illustrates how diaconal work can be performed in a close cooperation between professionals and volunteers by a church working in a new political situation.

Agents of diakonia – some remarks

In the reports that were sent in (see appendix) we can find a lot of different diaconal actors varying with the different confessional traditions and the specific circumstances in which they took shape. Some reports state that diakonia is the task of every Christian. It is, so to say, a ministry of all believers. Sometimes diakonia is connected with the local church, congregation or parish. In this approach diakonia is the task of the local church community. There may be people who are especially mandated to perform a diaconal ministry, but the local community bears the responsibility. Another possibility is that diaconal work is carried out by religious orders, either in their own communities or in diaconal communities under their supervision. We can also observe diaconal institutions functioning mostly in a big city, region or at the national level, or individuals doing diaconal work in non-diaconal institutions. The reports show the deacon to be an important person in this whole field of activity.

Further, the agents of diakonia may be professionals or volunteers. We can also distinguish between ordained and lay people. The work of professionals and volunteers is, in all countries, an important contribution to civil society.
In several countries there are many associations, organisations and institutions active in the field of social welfare and care. Most of them have their origins in the nineteenth century, when the church itself was not involved in these types of work and active Christians had to take initiatives outside the churches. These organisations may still have an independent position and be inspired by Christian faith, they may be more connected with the churches (but outside the structures of the local congregation), or they may have been integrated into the churches. Another possibility is that they are highly secularised and have become professional organisations, mainly financed by the state and now largely unrelated to churches and Christian faith. An important question is the identity of diaconal work with regard to state legislation, but now also more and more with regard to the market. This raises the issue of the necessity and influence of management and output criteria on work, on attitudes and on the whole way of thinking about care and other types of diaconal activity. A specific point of attention is the influence of (de)regulation in the European Union: will it continue to influence the market and how will this impact on the functioning of diaconal institutions?

Concerning diakonia within the churches, we see many volunteers at work. Most of them are not doing this as deacons. We think that this type of work can be connected with the vision of the local church as a "diaconal community": in principle diakonia is the responsibility and task of the whole church and not only of specialists. This also means that if people are doing diaconal work on behalf of the community – whether paid or unpaid - the church should feel responsible for their work and express this responsibility in communication, by supporting it and making room for it in governing bodies, in the liturgy and in the running of the church. This should also be the case in the local congregation. It is striking that many reports refer to

diakonia being "forgotten". Individuals and groups are doing their work in a kind of "diaconal diaspora"!

Concerning the deacon we see different church traditions:
Deacons with mainly liturgical functions and regarded as in transit to other church positions;
Deacons working in the social field within the church, involved in educational ministries, community-building, pastoral care and so on;
Deacons sent out by the church into institutions for care-giving and/or social welfare outside the church;
Deacons who are volunteers and have their own diaconal institution within the church and who are represented on church governing bodies (see the example of the Netherlands Reformed Church below).

If it is true that diakonia belongs to the essence of the church as part of the "serving church" – and we believe that this is so – then the ministry of deacon ought to be one of full value within the church, with its own colour and character thanks to the connection between liturgy and social service. It would then be more than a way-station for those in transit to other church positions. The vision that diakonia is at the heart of the church should also become visible in church structures and church policy-making. For that reason we think that it is necessary to do further research into the position of the deacon and also into ordination in relation to the status of the "laity".
Although it is well-known, we would like to draw attention to the fact that a lot of diaconal work is carried out by women, especially in the practical field, while the work in the governing bodies is mostly done by men. For that reason, diaconal and church governing bodies ought to put this situation on their agendas – and seek to change it.

Church of Scotland

Deacons of the Gospel. A Vision for Today: A Ministry for Tomorrow (Church of Scotland) (2001)

"2.3.1. The model for diaconal ministry is Jesus Christ, one who serves". Servanthood is the key to understanding the 'call' to diaconal ministry. Servanthood ministry is a call and empowerment by God to enable people to experience God's gracious power and love. This is based on an understanding of God whose love and care extend to all people. It is a call to be in relationship with God, God's Word and God's world, to accept, support, comfort, equip and encourage others to use their own gifts to fulfill their potential in service and in life.

2.3.2. In the Church the people of God gather as a community to worship and are sent out to serve. God calls us to worship and be nurtured. God sends us out to nurture others. It is a constant movement of gathering and dispersing. The sending out or diaconal nature of the Church expresses its life and purpose. The ministry of the Diaconate involves the two aspects of the Church – the people of God gathered as a community and the Church acting in the world as Christ's servant.

2.3.3. Within the life and worship of our Church, the distinctive role of diaconal ministry is to see needs in the world and to call the Church to respond. In practice this has meant that deacons have been involved in pastoral care, social service, evangelism and mission, wherever their particular gifts and service can be used to encourage and enable the whole people of God.
(...)

2.4. Vocational profile of deacons
2.4.1. Introduction
2.4.1.1. Deacons are called to serve Christ through the worship and witness of the Church. In the Church of Scotland deacons typically practise ministry in a team situation and most are currently employed in a parish setting. There are exceptions to this, however, and some deacons are to be found working in industrial or hospital chaplaincy, in the armed forces or in other forms of ministry approved by the Church.

2.4.2. Collaborative approach
2.4.2.1 Deacons work in team situations alongside other ministers and with members of a local congregation, of church groups and of the community. Team working is not an optional exercise for the Diaconate, it is a core skill, critical to the distinctive ministry of the Diaconate. These collaborative skills embrace such diverse qualities as planning, organising, supporting, encouraging, enabling, resourcing and motivating and they are typically practised across the whole age range.

2.4.3. Pastoral skills
2.4.3.1. The Diaconate is an office of the Church which involves a wide range of pastoral skills and responsibilities, not just for the community of the faithful, but for others outside the Church, from all walks of life. In their care of the elderly and pastoral support of the bereaved, deacons often work alongside those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Deacons are also employed in encouraging others to fulfil these pastoral tasks and here the role of the deacon becomes one of instructor and enabler, sharing skills and equipping other people for the task of pastoral ministry.

2.4.4. Ecumenical dimension
2.4.4.1. Although an integral part of the Church of Scotland's tradition and practice of ministry, there is an ecumenical and international dimension to the ministry of the Diaconate. In common with their colleagues in the ministry of Word and Sacrament, deacons require a breadth of outlook that will seek to engage with those in other churches and traditions. Ecumenical awareness and engagement is one of the important features of the Diaconate.

2.4.5 Worship skills
2.4.5.1. It is generally expected that deacons will be able to lead worship and offer prayer in a variety of contexts such as a nursing home, hospital ward, private home, school assemblies and services. Preaching is also an activity in which a number of deacons are actively engaged, although few deacons would see preaching as one of their core activities.

2.4.6. Christian education
2.4.6.1. It is often the case that deacons are involved in the provision of Christian education to various groups within the Church and in school settings. An understanding of education principles in relation to the Christian faith is necessary.

2.4.7. Social and cultural awareness
2.4.7.1. Many deacons are engaged in working with the local community and this demands an awareness of the social context in which the particular congregation is operating and of the prevailing culture in which the Church exists. The meeting place of Church and world is often the daily task of deacons and their work can involve them in collaboration with social and community workers, district nurses and health visitors, community education officers, credit unions and youth and pensioner groups outside the life of the local congregation.

2.4.9. Conclusion
2.4.9.1. As part of the ministry of the Church, the deacon has a historic role to fulfil. Deacons bring to the practice of ministry a variety of skills and interests that complement the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The focal point of diaconal ministry is service and, through this service, to encourage the Church to fulfil its calling to serve. As such, diaconal ministry contributes to the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ in the world."

Source: Deacons of the Gospel. A Vision for Today: A Ministry for Tomorrow (Church of Scotland)

Verband Evangelischer Diakonen- und Diakoninnengemeinschaften in Deutschland e.V (VEDD) - Association of Protestant diaconal communities in Germany

Diakonia
Diakonia is founded in the mission of the church and is one of its essential characteristics. The ministry of helpful love is inseparably linked with the ministry of the Word. The church cannot give up one in favour of the other. That is why the church has, from its beginnings, understood the ministry of love as a continued form of serving God and also even as worshipping God in everyday life.

Diaconate
The Evangelical (Protestant) Church fulfils its mandate to bear witness in a responsible and orderly way through the diaconate.
It calls and commissions women and men with different qualifications who have undergone further training in diaconal studies and theology.
Together with others, they respond to their diaconal calling in teaching, care and therapy, social and educational activities, management and administration, not to mention in proclamation, pastoral care and counselling. We call such women and men co-workers in the diaconate.
The diaconate is also carried out in support for people in asserting their interests, or in advocacy for those who cannot defend their concerns themselves.
The diaconate is designed to bring out the interaction of worship and service in the world. Diaconal workers are conscious that their work is the mission of the congregation/church founded on the Gospel.

The diaconate is carried out in local congregations, regional settings and in diaconal institutions.

Job definition
The term "deacon" designates a certain vocational profile. Deacons work in the context of the diaconate of the Evangelical Church and its social service agencies (Diakonische Werke) and understand their ministry as supplementing that of preaching and preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation.
Training to become a deacon thus always relates to the diaconal activity of the church.

Ministry
As the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ and feel committed to him, the church understands its mission as passing on the message of reconciliation in diverse ways to others. In order to ensure that this mission is carried out in an ongoing and effective manner there are different "complementary" ministries: preaching, diaconate, catechumenate.
No single ministry fulfils the mission wholly by itself; each one contributes in its own specific way to performing the service of reconciliation of God with humankind.
In these differing ministries / missions there are people working with differing vocational profiles and duties; they too supplement one another by analogy with the "complementary ministries".
Like other church ministries the diaconate is autonomous and not a kind of derivation from the preaching ministry.

Communities
Diaconal communities share responsibility for the diaconate of the church. They support their members in their service and are in this sense a form of diakonia themselves. Hence the diaconal communities see themselves as crystallisation points in diaconate and sources of inspiration for diaconal spirituality.

Deacon
The church appoints and ordains co-workers who have trained to become deacons as part of the diaconate.

Deaconesses
The calling and acceptance into the community of faith, life and service of a sisterhood is the basis for life as a deaconess; this is one form of church life.

Source: Diakonat – wie wir ihn verstehen (VEDD) (Verband Evangelischer Diakonen- und Diakoninnengemeinschaften in Deutschland e.V.)

Case study V - The diaconate and the deacon in the Dutch Reformed Church

Within the Dutch Reformed Church the deacon has a very specific position, which we find in only a few churches outside the Netherlands. The deacon is a volunteer, an office-bearer and a member of the church governing bodies at the local, regional and national level. This stems from the specific Calvinist background of the church.

Since 1 May 2004 the Dutch Reformed Church, the smaller Reformed Church in the Netherlands and the Lutheran Church in the Netherlands are together in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. It had its origin at the time of the Reformation in the 16th century and became a kind of state church, i.e. it held a privileged position (which did not mean that other churches were actively persecuted). This position changed at the end of the 18th century, when under French occupation the ideas of the French revolution led to a separation of church and state, and other churches (Roman Catholics, Mennonites and others, and also Jews) got the same rights as the Netherlands Reformed Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church has always been a Calvinist type of church, although it has many wings (from very orthodox to liberal). The influence of Calvin can be found in the ordering of the church: Calvin distinguished between the offices of ministers (who proclaim the word of God), the elders (who take care of the pastorate), the lecturers (who do the educational work) and the deacons. Calvin founded the office of deacon on Acts 6:1-6, 1 Timothy 3 and Romans 12:8. Calvin's exegesis of Acts 6, in particular, has been disputed: were the seven male deacons? In his opinion it was the task of the deacons to take care of the poor, the sick and so on and to manage the administration of money and goods that were destined for the poor. The office of deacon could be fulfilled by lay people, who were (unpaid) volunteers.

These opinions of Calvin meant that he broke with the Roman Catholic tradition in which the deacon was an assistant of the priest and had a purely liturgical function. That didn't mean that Calvin did not connect the deacon with worship and liturgy. He explicitly saw a connection between the deacon and the eucharist. Thus the deacon had to assist the minister in the eucharist and the money which was collected during the eucharist had to be used for people who were in need.

Another important point was that Calvin broke with the hierarchical ordering of the church: all offices – in the Netherlands: minister, elder, deacon – were in principle on the same level and had to participate in the church board. One office should not reign over another! This was theory, because in practice, up until now, the office of deacon has often been seen as an office with less status than that of the minister and of the elders. This had partly to with the fact that, until the renewal of the Church Order in 1951, not all deacons of local church communities participated in the church board, nor did they take part in the governing bodies of the church at the regional and the national levels (the Synod).

Besides the local church board there was (and still is) a separate college of deacons, responsible for the activities for the poor. This college had its own judicial position and incorporation, so that money, goods, houses and estates, which this college had acquired over time, could not be used for other ends. This incorporation has existed until now, although there have been discussions about it, since sometimes a local church cannot pay a minister

any longer, while at the same time there is a rich college of deacons! But the concept is clear and is in itself fairly uncontroversial: money for the poor belongs to them (in a deeper theological sense we can say: it is money of the poor!).

In 1854 the first national Poor Law was introduced. It stated that poor relief was primarily the task of the churches. They had to take care of their poor members. The diaconate became an institute that bestowed alms on the poor. It was poverty relief in an unfavourable sense of the word: it was a subject-object relationship, in which the persons who gave assistance determined the conditions under which the help was given. It was combined with inspection, and with restrictions on the way of behaving and attending church services. It was not a glorious period of church diaconate. Many poor people and labourers experienced it as a humiliation. With the development of the system of social security this work of the diaconate became less relevant, though the principle of the Poor Act was officially maintained until 1965.

Within and outside the churches there was a zealous demand for reform. And so we could see that the diaconate was doing more voluntary work in the field of the ill, disabled and old people, neglected young people and so on. After the Second World War the diaconate was involved in building up all kinds of welfare institutions. In the 1960s and '70s most of these institutions dropped away from the churches because of the growing influence of professionals, the fact that government was financing this work more and more, and the declining church involvement of people. This kind of voluntary work was recognised in the new Church Order of 1951. It was also stated that it was the task of the diaconate to assist the church in reminding the government and society to strive for justice.

The new church order also recognised the position of the diaconate and of the college of deacons in the church. It is also important to mention that it was stated that the diaconate was the responsibility of the local parish as a whole. So the deacons had to be people involving church members in diaconal activities. It was only in the 1960s, with the "democratisation" of society, that this vision was put into practice. Consequently church members who are not deacons can be involved in all types of voluntary work in the diaconal field. Raising awareness of societal needs, and of their causes, is also seen as a concern of the diaconate.

Today we can distinguish between different types of colleges of deacons, ranging from passive to active ones. The passive ones manage their goods and money and collect money on Sunday to donate to good causes. The more active ones work e.g. in the field of refugees, people with disabilities, old people, and the victims of "new poverty". In nearly all local parishes attention is paid to what is called "world diaconate": international aid and assistance to diaconal work beyond national borders.

Case Study VI – The diaconate in the Waldensian Church

The image of the Christ / deacon

Talking to his disciples, Jesus says "*I am amongst you as the one who serves*" (Luke 22:27). Seeing himself as a deacon, this identity constitutes a fundamental part of his ministry. Therefore, what we call diakonia is not a consequence but a part of the Gospel; it is the translation of the Word into action. Yet, the image of Christ as a deacon that characterised the very first centuries of Christianity underwent a gradual change in the course of history.

The Christ/deacon of the Gospel and the good shepherd of the *didakè* disappeared and were replaced by the image of the Lord, the triumphant victor. Diakonia became just one of the many tasks of a church that was more engaged in the administration of its earthly wealth than in serving the needy.

The rediscovery of the value of the poor Christ, of the servant/deacon, is due to the heretical movements at the beginning of the second millennium and later to the Reformation. An inquisitor of the medieval Waldensians said that "*they follow naked a naked Christ*". But also the rediscovery of this value of the Gospel remains a gradual and slow process. At the time of the industrial revolution that upset many elements of the social balance, it was the movement of *Revival* (*Erweckung – Réveil - Risveglio*) that paved the way to present day diakonia throughout Protestant Europe.

The history of diakonia in Italy is surely unique: first a fruit of the ghetto and a reaction to maltreatment and abuse, it became a strong tool of evangelisation in the second half of the 19th century. But it was only after the Second World War that it developed fully, rethinking its own place in theology, opening its horizon to the service of the needy in all circumstances, taking initiatives in the social and political context and engaging in dialogue with civil society.

The Waldensians in Italy

The Waldensian movement, initially called *the movement of the poor of Lyon* was founded in about 1170 in the aftermath of the choice of life and preaching of Valdes from Lyon. It spread widely all over Europe. In Italy, the Waldensian movement, which was active in several regions from Piemonte to Sicily, decided to join the Reformation in 1532 and changed from a movement into a reformed church on the Genevan model. From that time on, the Waldensians were fiercely persecuted by the Counter-Reformation, like the Jews, the Orthodox and Muslims that were still present in Southern Italy. They were exterminated in Calabria, Sicily and other Italian regions but were able to survive in some valleys of the Western Alps, near the French border, in spite of many vicissitudes. In 1685 they were defeated and decimated; the few survivors were deported to Switzerland and came back after three years in a military expedition that re-conquered their valleys. Until 1848 they lived there without any civil rights, in a ghetto where they had more contacts with Switzerland and with the rest of Protestant Europe than with the other regions of Italy.

The year 1848 saw the revolution in Paris, the liberal and bourgeois constitutions, the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx: a series of events showing the growth of a social question concerning the whole of Europe and giving birth to the ideas of socialism and constitutional liberty. In Piedmont, civil rights were granted to the Jews and the Waldensians. In the following years, national unity was achieved and the Waldensians were strongly involved in the improvement of the level of education as well as in evangelism all over the country. This engagement was carried on without interruption until 1915, when it was partly stopped during the First World War; it faced many obstacles during the whole period of the fascist regime, and was finally relaunched with new methods after the Second World War.

Only in 1984 did the Roman Catholic religion lose its status of state religion in Italy and the other confessions came to be no longer merely “tolerated”. The Italian State recognises by law the full rights and autonomy of the Waldensian church, which is now united with the Methodist church.

Waldensian Diakonia

In the time of the ghetto, there was a kind of diakonia mainly addressing the Waldensian population, in a situation in which the lack of resources heavily limited their initiatives. In spite of this, there were many contacts with the rest of Europe, since the Waldensian pastors studied in Swiss, German or Dutch schools of theology. Thanks to these contacts, the themes of the Evangelical Revival, similar to a modern version of pietism, also reached the Waldensian valleys. The influence of the pietism of the Moravian Brethren, the thoughts of Schleiermacher, Fliedner, the *Innere Mission* of Wichern and the presbyteries of Kaiserswerth encouraged the organisation of a network of solidarity and education inside the congregations. After 1682, every Waldensian parish had its own small school. Then the network was gradually consolidated to include facilities for disabled people, small hospitals and secondary schools.

From 1848 the small Waldensian community was allowed to express itself freely, which gave rise to a rapid succession of effective and brave initiatives under the influence of the Revival. That included lay believers in the evangelical action of faith and work to an extent unknown before. Women took on a new role in the witnessing of the church and in its initiatives; diaconal work developed in different fields of the life of the community (preaching, Sunday schools etc) and in helping the needy, also through the foundation of new diaconal centres.

At the end of the 19th century the Waldensian Church had about 170 primary schools and twenty vocational schools, some orphanages and four secondary schools for the pre-university training of teachers and pastors, spread all over Italy. This whole educational system, impressive for a church with just over 30 000 members, was progressively and strongly reduced after 1911, when the Italian government introduced compulsory primary school. A couple of vocational and secondary schools were maintained and a few new hospitals were opened, together with various smaller centres for children, disabled and old people. Apart from the recent passing of three hospitals to the state, the situation has remained more or less the same up to now, although, particularly after 1984, the church assumed a subsidiary task in the context of public and private neighbourhood services.

From the beginning, all Waldensian centres, be they large or small, have held to the cultural and theological values of Protestantism. They did not only suggest new models of service, they also witnessed diversity in their own internal organisation, where they facilitated experiments and research in consistency with the principle of mutuality and the value of difference. The awareness that God's action happens independently of our will and does not require the acquisition of personal merits allows us to express ourselves dynamically and to remove the obstacles preventing the full affirmation of personalities. New social models allow for the development of different kinds of awareness and personhood. This concept leads the Waldensians nearly automatically to base the management of their centres on the principles of lay involvement and pluralism.

Following these principles allows for all those working inside the Waldensian centres to share their goals without limiting those who have a different theological approach or work on the basis of different ethical principles. For many people our centres are places where they can express their calling linked to their professional skills and to a different relationship with their neighbours. Their appreciation becomes visible in the allocation of the 0.8% of personal income tax for humanitarian purposes, from which the Waldensian Church gets a share equalling 10 times the proportion of its members.

In the situation of a small minority in diaspora, Waldensian diakonia has to promote sustainable forms of intervention, compatible with the organisation of society. This is as important as promoting caring facilities that are bound to remain just happy islands, unless they develop the ability to dialogue with civil society. This means taking part in discussions and confrontations with the social context in which they work. In this way, diakonia can also be a very strong ecumenical tool. In fact it continually challenges those who work in it, and every time they achieve a goal, it makes them doubt again. It takes us back to the heart of Christianity. For the believer, it is a way of thinking and a condition of life that is more than just a job. So it is not the place of diakonia that must be defined but our own place as believing men and women inside diakonia, and the whole church should be conceived of in this sense.

Case Study VII - Deacons in the Catholic Church: the Diocese of Antwerp

The diaconate played an important role in the early times of Christianity, but more or less vanished during the Middle Ages. The liturgical functions were largely taken over by several assistants (such as lectors or acolytes). Many charitable tasks were also taken over by religious orders and church foundations. The diaconate only survived in the Catholic Church as a final preparatory phase in the formation of candidates for the priesthood.

It was only with the Second Vatican Council that the diaconate was restored in the Catholic tradition. But it was not an easy decision. The main issue of this discussion was not whether it should be restored, but whether it should be open to married men. This was finally accepted by a large majority, but unmarried men that were ordained deacon were not granted permission to marry. The actual decision to ordain permanent deacons was, however, left to the bishops' conferences.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council depict various motivations. There was a clear wish from the side of the eastern Catholic Churches to reinstall the permanent diaconate, whereas other documents refer to the need for the Church to fulfil its duties, or still the wish to link the diaconate more closely to the Eucharist. In many cases, though, the practical incentive of a lack of priests proved to be quite a strong argument.

The role model par excellence for the permanent deacon of course remains Christ himself. In the reflection on the diaconate by the Diocesan Commission for the Permanent Diaconate of the Antwerp Diocese, the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus (John) is used to stress the link between the Glorified Lord of the Eucharist (cf. the Last Supper that we read about with the Synoptici) and the humble servant, who shows his solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

Of course, the whole community, and every Christian, is called upon to take part in this service. Yet diakonia is so closely related to the mandate of Jesus that it was deemed necessary to make it into a *ministerium* (as it was in its beginnings), and hence to ordain the permanent deacons, albeit for service "and not for priesthood". Officially, both report to the bishop, but in hierarchical terms, the deacon comes after the priest. This is underscored by the fact that many deacons are assigned to a parish or a federation of parishes and take up quite a lot of liturgical tasks (in the absence of a sufficient number of priests).

In the Diocese of Antwerp, deacons are as active in territorial pastorate. In both cases, the Diocesan Commission for the Permanent Diaconate stresses the need for direct contact with the poor and the suffering. The message of hope of the Church can only be credible if it is mediated by real people. In this regard, the deacon is the face and the hands of the Church reaching out to those in need.

Quite a lot of deacons are active in Catholic schools or Catholic social welfare and health-care services, as pastoral workers or otherwise. Apart from their pastoral approach, they also play a role in strengthening the diaconal identity of these institutions. For those deacons that are assigned to parishes or federations of parishes (the great majority), the diocesan commission stresses that their main focus should be on the local church initiatives that deal with the sick and the needy, with solidarity worldwide and next door. Their participation in the liturgy must make it clear that diaconal work is not something separate from faith, but that it intimately and essentially belongs to the life of the Church.

Case study VIII - Floods in the Czech Republic and the response of Diakonia ECCB

The flooding in August 2002 in the Czech Republic caused the biggest damage of the last 150 years. One hundred towns and villages with almost 300 000 inhabitants were completely flooded, seven hundred towns and villages with more than 1.6 million inhabitants were partially flooded; 230 000 people had to be evacuated. Ten percent of the towns and villages and one fifth of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic were affected directly or indirectly by the flooding. Twenty people lost their lives. Estimates of financial damage total 100 billion Czech crowns (3 billion euros).

In dealing with the consequences of this natural disaster, Diakonia ECCB (Diakonia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren) succeeded in mobilising numerous volunteers around its regional centres. Thus it illustrated that the whole congregation is called to diaconal action. It likewise showed that the added value of diaconal structures can also lie in structuring and guiding the involvement of church members, and not only in its own professional involvement.

In hope above events

Under the motto "In hope above events" (cf. Apostle Paul's idea of hope in the midst of hopelessness), Diakonia ECCB began organising help for people hit by the catastrophic floods. The result of this endeavour was an organised operation of more than one thousand volunteers and dozens of employees of Diakonia ECCB. The activities ranged from co-ordination of manual work in the field to psycho-social assistance and monitoring of damage that would lead to financial assistance for families in affected regions.

Diakonia ECCB started to help in Southern Bohemia and was in contact with crisis centres in the region from the very beginning. It mobilised its own head office in Prague, established the Floods Co-ordination Centre and started to send its volunteers to the aid organisation ADRA, which had dealt with the first phase of the damage.

Volunteers come to the rescue

Students and young people were asked for help via the internet, telephone and media. They were recruited in co-operation with the ECCB Youth

Department. Groups of volunteers were composed of teams and individuals from the church, the church youth groups and others. Before starting to work, they were taught all the necessary hygiene and safety rules, and most of those who helped in high-risk areas were vaccinated. Subsequently, these volunteers were sent to help in Diakonia ECCB centres as well as in other organisations. A lot of volunteers joined groups organised by Diakonia ECCB directly at the established bases.

Bases for teams
Diakonia ECCB issued an appeal for help among its centres and ECCB congregations located in flooded regions. Ten of them were transformed into bases where the help was organised. Accommodation for evacuated people was provided in these bases as well (one centre of Diakonia ECCB in Pisek had to be evacuated itself). Volunteers mainly participated in removing mud, damaged furniture and other remains of the floods, in cleaning and purifying houses and flooded objects, in chipping away plaster, in drying the air, and so on.

Groups of volunteers were led by pastors with organisational skills, experienced in working with Christian youth. They worked for four to five days. Pastors often led several brigades one after another. The maximum number of volunteers in the same place was 70. Workers, their equipment and technical support were moved from one base to another and used according to the needs of the particular place. Diakonia ECCB provided the complete logistic support of the teams (work and protection tools, hygiene, food and accommodation), which was highly appreciated.

Material help
The collecting and transportation of material help for affected people, e.g. water and food supply, was especially focused on by the Czech Red Cross and Caritas Czech Republic. Diakonia ECCB concentrated its work on satisfying infrastructural requirements of volunteers and on buying, then lending out, 100 dryers. The flood victims got the use of them for free. Three members of the Church were responsible for this type of relief. Even though it looks rather technical, it entailed a strong dimension of social assistance. The technicians very often went into situations in which listening and talking to people helped to heal wounded souls.

Psycho-social assistance
Diakonia ECCB, together with specialists from other organisations, organised several teams to provide psycho-social assistance for both flood victims and volunteers. The Diakonia centre in Litomerice and Krabcice became a stable base for psychologists working in the neighbouring villages, visiting people who needed continuing psycho-social care. The group of students from the Evangelical theological faculty who were working in Terezin have continued their activities in the form of pastoral care among the people concerned, under the supervision of their pastor, who has a qualification in clinical pastoral care.

Financial assistance
Based on the experience of some of its members from previous floods, Diakonia ECCB started to monitor damage to households. They always followed the same scheme: approaching residents concerned, surveying damaged households, co-ordinating consultation with local authorities (checking the social and economic situation of homes affected for this purpose). The number of households suffering flood damage in the Czech Republic is estimated at 12 000. Thanks to an intensive co-operation between Caritas Czech Republic, the People in Need Foundation, ADRA and Diakonia ECCB the villages were split among the mentioned NGOs and the work was

done very efficiently. Volunteers from Diakonia ECCB visited more then 1000 families in 20 villages in the regions hardest hit. They evaluated the damage to private property according to five categories. This part of the relief action also created close contacts with the people, and workers very often discovered the need to send a pastoral worker or someone who could offer psycho-social assistance to the respective family.

The meaning of involvement in flood-related operations for the church
It was the first time in the ECCB's (modern) history that there had been such a huge involvement of its members in disaster-related operations - hundreds of young people from local youth groups, numerous pastors experienced in organising regular youth activities and summer camps, many adults taking their holidays and offering their help to the organisers. Many others who stayed at home started to organise collections of materials or financial help. After years and decades of isolation from society church people discovered how sweet it is to be of service to those who are the most needy. It helped to form a new motivation for diaconal work. A new spirit of diaconal voluntary service was born which has proved to be effective if people are confronted with concrete challenges and given proper guidance. Diaconal themes are now being discussed at different levels in the church constituency. The whole complex of activities and reactions to them pushed the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren towards a better understanding of what a diaconal church is about.

5. Different Ethical Principles for Diaconal Action

In our first chapter we formulated some theological perspectives which are in our opinion of relevance for the reflection on diakonia. These perspectives are the foundation for points of view which can function as presuppositions and ethical guidelines for diaconal action and which have to be applied in the specific context in which the action takes place. We share some reflections on this. After that, we present two case studies illustrating the guideline of 'option for the poor and others in need'.

Principles for diaconal action – an ethical basis

Above we outlined some theological perspectives for diaconal thinking. In a trinitarian perspective we looked at the relation of life to God, in creation, in salvation and in the presence of the Spirit. As Christians we confess that human beings are created by God. Out of that we look upon ourselves as gifted but imperfect stewards in God's whole creation, called to serve our Creator by doing good to each other. God is love and pours out that love on human beings, according to the Epistle of John (John 4:7ff). In other words this means that life is based on the love of God. As a consequence we are invited to love one another. In this paragraph we will explore more in depth what it means to love and how this love can be achieved and promoted in our relations to each other.

Let us start with the assumption that human beings are *moral agents*. The moral dimension of human life is a result of interdependency and mutuality. Human lives are intertwined. We can observe that every one of us is constantly related to other human beings and that we need each other.

In family circles and among colleagues we can see how we are all mutually affected by what is done or not done. In relation to others in the wider society and to people in other parts of the world it might not be as obvious how our deeds have an effect on the lives of unknown and

even unseen people. In the "global world" we are constantly reminded of the fact that we are getting closer and closer to each other. Through effective media we have immediate communication of what is happening anywhere on the globe as it happens. People can have pals through internet with whom they share more about themselves than they do with their immediate neighbours in the building where they live.

We are more and more aware of a mutual dependency. In a global context we realise that polluted air and water in one country may cause bad breathing conditions and stomach diseases to people in other countries. We are, in other words, interdependent.

Interdependency and *mutuality* are central themes in the understanding of ourselves as moral agents. Our lives as human beings are connected. There is no private isolation available for us where we can live our lives in solitude without having to think of anyone but ourselves. In fact we are individuals because we interact with others. We should be aware of the fact that we need each other. Personal identity is formed in relationship with others. We are who we are because we are parts of human fellowships. We are interdependent.

In Christian teaching we are often taught that we are equipped and prepared for such a life as moral agents in mutuality with others by the Creator. Human beings have the ability to be what is called *altruistic*, which means that we can put the needs of others before our own personal needs and wishes. In other words human beings can set aside their self-interest in order to serve others. Let us not be too simplistic and naive on this matter, however. The unique freedom of human beings can lead in many directions. The precious ability to make personal choices is in itself not a guarantee for altruistic attitudes. At the same time freedom is a precondition for autonomy and personal integrity when it is not based on egoism but open to acts of love to one's neighbour.

Together with this ability to be altruistic we are also, as human beings, equipped with the capacity for *empathy*. We have a *personal conscience* that guides us in our actions as moral agents. This inner force that governs our actions can direct us to do what is good and right. Conscience is related to an ability to be sensitive to the needs of others, and that sensitivity can be fostered, nurtured and matured just as it can be kept back, repressed or distorted.

A third capability in our equipment as human moral agents is the capacity for *rational thinking*. Rational thinking is a means by which human beings can organise impulses and govern emotions into deliberate and considered actions. Rational thinking or *reason* is of importance when we mature as moral agents and grow in personal integrity. Through reasonable thinking we share ability with other human beings to elaborate expressions of certain basic ethical values, create principles together, educate the young and support each other in moral life.

In diaconal action it is important to find means of *working together*. The church is the main moral agent in diaconal work, but since the church is its people, they are the ones who are carrying out the moral responsibility of the church. For the sake of that responsibility it is important to find ways of working with other moral agents in the social arena striving for similar goals. Therefore the church should look for "others of good will" together with whom caring and prophetic work can be done.

There will always be different opinions on what is morally right and wrong. The churches have not achieved unity on ethics, which means that churches can speak with different opinions on ethical matters. Many would see such a pluralism of values and ethical considerations as a strength rather than a weakness, at least as long as these differences do not create open conflicts and competition. When it comes to moral actions diversity easily becomes more problematic. In a discourse of ethical theory one can argue about what is right and wrong in meeting certain needs of people, but when you are standing in front of a person in real need of immediate assistance the time of arguing is over and action is what is wanted.

Despite the disunity in the churches on ethical questions it is still an advantage that Christian ethics is community-based. If churches had seen ethics as a strict personal and individual enterprise, ethical teaching of the church would have been very different, without connections

to baptismal teaching, liturgical experience and congregational responsibility. Being community-based and rooted in the love of God through Jesus Christ, we are all dependent on each other. It is like in a family.

This community aspect of Christian ethical teaching has its corresponding theme in a personal and individual perspective on ethics. It is in accordance with Christian teaching to accept *the dignity of every human being*. This dignity cannot be dependent on our ability to help others or any other moral feats that we are able to perform. Neither is this human dignity based on feelings we have to needy and helpless people. Whether it is accepted or not, every human being has personal human dignity. It can be denied but not taken away. No one is of a greater or lesser dignity than anybody else. An active and efficient person does not have a different dignity than the one who is slow and idle. Wealth, education, fame and power do not give anyone more dignity than others.

Recognition of human dignity has far-reaching consequences. It implies that every human being has a right to life regardless of his or her utility, achievements and social capability. Society ought to function in a way that all people can realise this right and have the resources for this (money, work, access to housing, care, welfare and so on). As the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales stated in their letter *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching* (1996): "We believe each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status. Therefore the test for every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human dignity and indeed human life itself."

This implies that care should be given in such a way that this dignity is recognised and respected, that is to say that a person can be a subject and not an object of help, and that care and justice are done to his or her uniqueness as a human being. Respect and solidarity are important attitudes for recognising and accepting human dignity. We must restrain ourselves from looking down on people or from adopting a helping posture that diminishes human pride and intrudes on human dignity. Diaconal work at its best is built on solidarity and respect for everybody. Therefore diakonia is "work with the people on behalf of the people".

As a consequence of this we must accept the equal worth of every human being. Everybody has full human dignity and therefore we are all of equal worth. This means that we cannot only care for the ones who can pay for themselves or who deserve help. Diaconal work must be directed first of all to meeting basic human needs and to caring for the neediest. In fact a guiding principle to diaconal work is "*the preferential option for the poor*". That means, in other words, that diaconal work gives priority to those in special need, in exposed life situations or in situations of social exclusion.

We find it more adequate to say that diakonia is about *serving* people rather than helping them. In Christian thinking service refers above all to the mission of Christ. He came into this world as a servant and he called people to relate to others in the same attitude of humility and servanthood as he did. This is especially important to consider for the one on whom others are dependent. In the example of Jesus we see how a servant can be a leader, and yet a good leader must always be a servant of God and human beings. In such a way a diaconal worker carries out very important leadership in the Church.

When this is stated as such one has to remember that the majority of diaconal workers are women having been told to be satisfied with helping and assisting roles as "humble servants". Instead of being equal partners in community affairs they have been held back in positions where they only have been given subordinate and minor tasks with, if any, only passive participation in decision-making and execution of power.

Case study IX - One body (disabled people – Sweden)

"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body" (1 Cor 11:17). We use these words in our tradition almost every time we celebrate Holy Communion. Which claims do they make? Are these claims that we as a church can meet? In this text we are going to put some questions out of our experiences as members of congregations with disabilities. Questions about our longing for participation but also about disappointment, exclusion and pain. We can see how persons with disabilities do not get the inclusion in the life of the churches they need. This raises ethical questions that deal with the whole faith and the life of the churches. Let us illustrate this with an example that touches the very centre of faith.

A congregation that builds a house and plans its room for devotion starts from an idea about the future use of the facilities. They visualise the people that will come to this room, what they will do there and how they are going to move around in the room. The shape of the room is an implicit statement about how the people who have designed it look upon church fellowship and faith.

In the front of many churches there are some steps to the altar, the pulpit and the place where the choir stands - but mostly there is no ramp. Those steps constitute a theological statement, although made unconsciously: this is how far people sitting in wheelchairs or having difficulties climbing steps can come. At least without being lifted or assisted in some other way that causes them to be more dependent on others…

When the congregation climbs the steps to take Holy Communion, those who cannot reach the table get the bread and wine carried down to them, to a place outside the fellowship. Exclusion becomes obvious in such a service. A room for worship with steps and without a ramp is a statement of an excluding theology.

We are all welcome in the church. No parish says clearly that their community cannot include people with disabilities. But if such a generous welcome is not supported by accessibility, it loses credibility. The steps are only one example of how the parishes can make people feel excluded, but it is not our purpose here to give an exhaustive list of all things that make a community exclusive towards people with disabilities.

We should be able to meet in the church regardless of the fact that different factors separate us, such as social background or age. We meet there because our faith reaches beyond boundaries. But does our way of living that faith reach beyond those boundaries? Even if the church tells us that everybody is welcome it is possible for people to feel shut out. This exclusion can make us interpret its message as excluding or even hypocritical.

The problem is not how to include people whose ways of being, thinking and feeling are the same in a community. The challenge is to go beyond the changes that are needed. It is more comfortable to choose not to understand.

Not to make a difference is not an alternative for a congregation that has the vocation to make God's love and care known among its fellow human beings. The love of Christ controls us (2 Cor 5:14). But with the vocation God always gives a promise. If our community opens up we will get to know the richness of plurality and the truth in the words of the apostle: "When you come together each one has a contribution (1 Cor 14:26)."

Such a change will lead to a new and deeper way of understanding what we are as human beings. We will get a new understanding of what it can be to live as a human being in God's world. This will definitely have consequences for our faith and for our way of understanding God, since our understanding of humanity and our understanding of God are always connected. God's church needs to listen to experiences from persons that see life from different perspectives. It is only when all who belong to Christ come together that we have the power to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:18-19).

The vision of the church becoming one body is part of the church's life that we may not lose. This vision is both a reality - it has been given to us in Christ by grace - and an ideal that we should try to reach. We need to work towards the goal that our way of being together is a manifestation of the love of the gospel.

When you feel excluded, when your knowledge and experiences are not respected and you are not given a real chance, you may experience pain. It hurts, even if it was not done on purpose. And after many times, you finally lose patience and scream. It is no longer possible to smile and say that it does not matter. It hurts so much that you have to express what you feel. When we are causing pain to someone in our congregations, we are causing pain to the whole body. If we are one body, that means that we are also causing pain to ourselves. To care for every member of the congregation is to care for the whole community.

In order to get a better knowledge of its own body, a congregation has to see which factors work towards exclusion for different persons. We have to be open and see our own prejudices. That means that it is not enough to make small, superficial changes but that we have to go into a deeper consideration of our way of looking at each other. It is an act of love to include your fellow human beings in the community.

This challenges us to make a difference. A process of changing is both exciting and promising, but it is also painful. It should sadden us to become aware that this is lacking in our own community. So there is a risk that the challenge to change may arouse a defence mechanism that stops us from seeing things clearly.

Casestudy X - The churches and the poor side of the Netherlands

From the second half of the 1970s, the churches in the Netherlands were confronted with the problems of "new poverty" through their diaconal work and the activities of urban and industrial mission. The poverty meant here, it was repeatedly stressed, was not the kind of poverty encountered in the Third World, where physical survival is at stake, but rather poverty in the context of the situation in the Netherlands. The keyword in this kind of poverty is exclusion, which translates into isolation, the development of financial survival strategies", one-sided dependencies (on both welfare institutions and political decision-making) and limited prospects for the future.

When it became clear that new poverty was here to stay, and the position of the poor was worsening, the Council of Churches in the Netherlands and the

national Organization for Industrial Mission took the initiative of holding a national conference on "The poor side of the Netherlands" in 1987. The aim was to send a clear signal to the churches' own congregations, church boards, institutions and church members, as well as to politicians and society at large, that the problem of pauperisation in society should be taken seriously. They also wanted to give a sign of hope to those immediately concerned. The term "poor side" was deliberately chosen in order to point to the situation of those who live at, or under, the social minimum over long periods of time, and to formulate an indictment against society in its process of growing increasingly wealthy, a society which seems to tolerate the exclusion of some of its members from full social participation. Theologically a link was made with the growing consensus, both in the ecumenical movement and Roman-Catholic social teaching, regarding the interpretation of the biblical concept of justice (*tsedaka*), which implies a preferential option for the poor.

The conference was followed up by a campaign rooted in regional and local "poor side groups" and in a national working group, which operated by order of the Council of Churches and the Organisation for Industrial Mission. The guiding principle was that activities were to involve the people directly concerned by poverty. The point of departure was to be "together with" rather than "doing for". These groups often included church officers in the fields of church and society, church volunteers and people who are benefit entitled (to work in nonprofit activities).
A second guiding principle was that churches must not turn into institutions of philanthropy and favours. Therefore the formula "helping under protest" was coined. If they had to give financial assistance to people in crisis situations the local churches informed politicians and society that they had had to step in where this had otherwise not been judged necessary. Some diaconal workers wrote to the government, to parliament and to the city council about their provision of financial assistance. Nevertheless – this is the experience – the temptation to regress to philanthropy is ever present.
The campaign yielded a whole array of activities, in which a pattern can nevertheless be discerned. It can be outlined as follows:
stimulating encounters
forging strategic alliances
promoting policy changes through socio-political discussion
supporting organisations established by those concerned

Stimulating encounters
The stimulating of encounters means the encouraging intensive communication between church people and those belonging to the poor side of the Netherlands. A commonly used model in this regard is the model where poor people are given the opportunity to tell their stories as the starting point of an intensive process of communication. These efforts to give visibility to the world of the poor is very important, because the stories of poor people are seldom heard in the church, society and politics. The non-poor must know the lifeworld of the poor to be motivated to give priority to the improving of their position in the church, politics and society.

Forging strategic alliances
The next phase is often the forging of an alliance between churches and poor people, to organise activities aimed at improving the latter's position. This has taken place at a regional and local level, but also at the national level. An "Alliance for Social Justice" was formed, in which churches, trade unions, organisations of people on benefit, organisations of disabled people and organisations of migrants participated.

Promoting policy changes through socio-political discussions

The important thing here is to put an end to the hidden character of poverty. The first precondition for solving a problem is recognising that it exists. This recognition is not a matter of course, so there were some heated debates between the churches and the government. In the nineties the government did recognise the existence of poverty in the Netherlands, however. It started paying more attention to their position, especially at the local level. Measures were taken which led to improvement in the position of some groups of poor people. The main aim was to provide paid work for people. However, the problem is that not all of them can be absorbed into the labour process, because of disability, low skills, age, and so on.

The campaign is still going on though it is difficult to motivate people within and outside churches after so many years of activities. It has not yet proved possible to bring about a change of direction in politics and society of the kind that would realise an effective anti-poverty policy. The campaign has, however, contributed to the process by which poverty has to some extent lost its taboo status as a topic on the political and social agenda. Besides the action taken, there is now more attention and awareness of the problems within churches, politics and society.

Case study XI - Portrait of a refugee woman in Romania

Born in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mbela Nzuzi has lived in Romania with her husband since May 1997. They were both granted the status of refugee. Mbela considers herself an ordinary African woman with no higher educational qualifications. She only finished secondary school and never considered going to university as she did not think that was necessary. She thought what was best for her was to have a household to look after, a child, and a husband as the bread-winner. In Romania, Mbela's conception of a woman's role within the family and society has greatly changed. She has learnt that her contribution to the development of society should not be limited to the responsibilities related to her household.

In 1999, she was employed at the NGO Arca-Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants as a community worker under a programme funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with the aim of encouraging refugee participation in community services and refugee women's empowerment. Mrs Nzuzi delivered community services within the programme called "The Refugee Women's Club" and developed skills and abilities in refugee assistance.

In the year 2000, together with other refugee women, Mrs Nzuzi founded a refugee NGO called "The Refugee Women's Organisation in Romania (OFRR)", with the support of Arca and funding from UNHCR. The Refugee Women's Organization in Romania (OFRR) was legally recognised as an association in June 2000. OFRR has been striving (a) to develop an integrated system of services and assistance addressing the needs of refugee / migrant women and children; (b) to promote tolerance and fight xenophobia and discrimination and (c) to provide services such as counselling, humanitarian assistance and advice to persons with special needs.

Since 2001, OFRR has been developing activities aimed at facilitating cultural and experience exchanges between refugee women and Romanians. To achieve these objectives, OFRR has been organising special events, has been liaising with Romanian women's associations and has initiated and facilitated

group activities involving refugees and Romanians, especially women and children, under a project implemented in partnership with a Roman Catholic Church in Bucharest.

In 2002, OFRR initiated a program called "The Refugee Club" aimed at providing refugees with an open forum in order to discuss the problems faced during their integration and identify solutions through concrete activities. The Refugee Club activities were designed to ensure support to refugees' initiatives through their active implication in their integration process. They included weekly peer counselling groups, home visits, food and non-food packages distribution and a handicraft workshop.

At the end of 2002, OFRR initiated a cross-border project with a similar association in Bulgaria (The Council of Refugee Women – Bulgaria). Funded by UNHCR, the project included the following activities: (a) a study visit in Romania and Bulgaria; (b) the production of a joint website; the production of a training manual on relevant aspects of refugee assistance, and (d) the production of promotional leaflets.

In 2003, OFRR initiated a series of intercultural women's discussion groups aimed at training refugee and Romanian women on issues of interest for their respective communities. Providing them with a burden-sharing space was also targeted under the project. Subjects such as women's role in the family, the importance of formal and/or informal education in the integration process, the access to employment, conflict management were debated with the support of experts from governmental and non-governmental institutions. Refugee women's capacity-building were also addressed through this project and training on general management issues was organised for OFRR volunteers and staff.
OFRR's main focus is to enhance and support the active contribution of its members, the refugee women, to the organisation's activities and to enter into closer partnership with the relevant organisations.
Mbela has been coordinating the above mentioned programmes.
What follows is a report of how she feels about her involvement in refugee assistance in Romania: "In Romania, I have learnt that I have a lot to offer to people in need and this is what I have been trying to do so far. If I can say today that I feel all right, it is not because my life is rosy, but because I feel like a person who has a lot to offer. I know I can offer even more. I have had to work hard for myself, for refugee children, refugee women and all beneficiaries who approach us.
As to my country of origin, if the situation has become safe and more stable, I would like to return one day and contribute to our own people in Africa and participate in rebuilding our own nation. However, for the time being, I have to remain here for my personal safety. I feel safe in Romania and also feel good. Here I own something; spiritually speaking, my roots are now growing in this country. I have friends and feel that I can make a valuable contribution to the refugee cause. I have started to do many things and I want to see them progress; I want to be a witness, or at least to know there are other people who can take things further."
Mbela is married without children. She says she would not have the time to raise a child. She has a simple but extremely busy life. One might say she is working 25 hours a day including her part time job as a lead singer in an African refugee music band called "GLORIA". But one might also say she enthusiastically cares for a lot of children as well.

Contact:
ARCA is the Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants. Founded in 1998, it operates as an ecumenical non-governmental organisation in assisting refugees, migrants, returnees, repatriates and other categories of migrants. It

has a special focus on integration and reintegration programmes for refugees and migrants as well as on advocacy for migrants' rights. It cooperates actively with Romanian authorities as well as international organisations. ARCA is a member of the Churches´ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

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6. Input of the churches: issues, activities and resources

In this chapter we look at the areas of diaconal action and outline an overview so that we can reflect on it more systematically. Again, we give some case studies to make the more abstract points of view more real.

6.1. Issues

The reports we have read make it clear that diakonia is involved in a wide range of fields and issues. That is not surprising, because the diaconate is concerned with needs, and there are many. Here is a random selection of the topics mentioned.
Poverty (national and global, and also: how to deal with affluence and wealth), unemployment, social exclusion, people with a physical and/or mental disability, sick people, elderly people, young people at risk, playgroups with children, housing policies, changes in sparsely populated areas, loneliness, crime, prisoners, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, discrimination and racism, extreme nationalism, human rights, addiction to drugs, alcohol and/or gambling, violence, HIV/AIDS, homeless people, ethnic minorities, disaster relief etc.
Of course the question arising is how to set priorities. It is not easy to answer. In every context diakonia should focus on the needs to be found in that specific setting. But the priorities should come from siding with the most needy and "difficult" people.

6.2. Types

In the documents we can find a lot of activities within the fields just mentioned. These activities are not just instrumental, but have to do with the concept of being a serving church, characterised by partnership with those who are in need, mutuality, care, solidarity, mercy, quality of life. They also have to do with liturgy and *martyria*. All of this influences our way of acting and its quality. We should be attentive to these qualities and to the dangers of bureaucracy and commodification.
There are a whole range of activities and both the starting point and sequence can differ according to the situation. The activities are of course connected with the fact of being with, and for, people, but have also with creating awareness and influencing politics and society.
"Being for people" centres on the theological notion of "presence". This notion has to do with being a church for and with others. It is connected with communication and with the breaking down of cultural, social, religious and other barriers between people. This being for and with others is an act which is valuable in itself, even if it does not solve any problems in the first instance. It implies building up attentionful relationships, having time for others, going deeply into the lifeworld of people, learning from them, and making room in communication for questions of identity, sense and absurdity, joy and grief in one's life. The presence of diakonia can take the form of offering hospitality to people and/or going to see them. Of course this raises the question of the extent to which the church itself functions as an inclusive community in which people who are "other" can feel at home One can think to the metaphor Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12 about the body of Christ. He writes: "…those organs which seem to be frailer

than others are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we regard as less honourable are treated with special honour. To our unseemly parts is given a more than ordinary seemliness, whereas our seemly parts need no adorning."(1 Corinthians 12: 22-23). This "being for" can shape the basis for *direct help and assistance* to people who are in need and/or support them in getting the help and assistance they need. But it is important for people not to feel too dependent. Therefore we should help in *enabling people to develop a good life themselves*, for instance by creating ways to do paid work, to participate in voluntary work, and to engage in meaningful activities.
Besides these activities connected with individuals, diakonia can support collective actions for instance by *building up alliances with people in need and their organisations* with the aim of achieving an improvement in their position. This also implies *assistance to activities of grassroots organisations of people in need*, for instance financial support, providing accommodation, computers, knowledge, networks and so on.
It is important to make full use of the experience acquired in being with people, helping and taking collective action to *create awareness of problems within and outside the churches*, i.e. influencing public opinion. That is of importance when it comes to getting a need acknowledged (many needs are not seen, so we need to learn how to see), breaking down prejudices and gaining support for programmes in political, social and business life. These *more fundamental critical questions, which have to do with anthropology*, should include the following: what does it mean to be human? What is of value in human life? Can we develop a critical attitude towards the dominant aims of more consumption for people who have already wealth? Or again, do we have an inclusive anthropology in which people with a disability are seen as fully human? If so, are they really able to participate in society?
The experience acquired should also be used to *influence political and social actors* and as arguments to improve the position of people in need (advocacy). In a more general sense; diakonia can *participate in the public debate*. Diakonia is in a position to make its own contribution by drawing on biblical traditions, the points of view we find there, and the knowledge of different walks of life obtained by diaconal involvement in all types of small-scale activities with people.
Last but not least, we mention the service of *reconciliation*: building bridges between people who are in conflict by organising encounters, communication and co-operation in practical activities and projects.

Most of these activities are executed at a local or regional level, but the whole church, at the national and international level too, should "own" them. What aim is pursued, and at what level, is linked to the context and opportunities. For instance, direct assistance takes place at the local level, but to make it possible you need an organisation at the national level to find the money, promote awareness of the needs in churches and society, and so on. If diakonia wants to influence national policy-making, the national church or diaconal organisation is probably the most suitable body. But they should use the experience gained in working directly with people. If churches/diakonia wish to be involved in the European debate they will have to organise at this level. It is this interplay between different levels which will strengthen the input of diakonia.

6.3. Resources

The reports also make it clear that churches have a lot of "resources" to offer. Summing these up seems very utilitarian, but we should be aware that the question of resources has to do with a fundamental position: that if a church is a diaconal church it should use all its resources to work with and for people in need. Again and again, churches and church leaders should ask whether they are in fact doing this.
People participate in diakonia – volunteers, deacons and professionals – who are important "human resources" for this work. They give their *time*, have *knowledge, inspiration, experience* and *relations* (for instance with people on key positions in political and public life), which can be used to support diaconal work. Another resource is, of course, *money and other possessions*: are these used in a diaconal way? This question does not only apply to diaconal funding and possessions, but to those of the whole church: for instance church housing and administrative resources such as computers can also be used for diaconal purposes.

It is important to see whether the church functions as a *community* in which people can feel home and can experience dignity and mutuality. The church can also use its *position* in society to speak for those in need.

So, once again: there are a multitude of resources (we have not tried to give an exhaustive overview!). It is important to be aware of this wealth of resources and to avail ourselves of them as we endeavour to meet needs in society.

Case study XII – Drug and alcohol addicts: the Sanna Programme for Women in Abuse (Sweden)

Being a mother and an alcoholic is for many a very shameful thing. This is especially true for the mothers themselves. "It is an awful experience to get off drugs, to be forced to become reconciled with yourself and to realise what the children have gone through," says Gunilla Berglund. She works at Sanna, which is the name of a rehabilitation programme for addicted women with children.

"Taking drugs is a way of mastering sexual aggression, bodily harm and different pains. It works as a kind of medication and when it stops it leads to agony and depression (with deep-seated causes)," Gunilla continues.

Gunilla is part of a team. The Sanna programme lasts two years. When women meet each other during the Sanna programme there is a lot of activity. Each woman has her own room where she can withdraw to rest in peace and solitude.

"We want them to be safe here because these single mothers have no space for safety," Gunilla says. "We assist them in making specific plans for the future and that means activity in getting food, clothes and bus tickets for the children. The rent must be paid. First we have to monitor these women. Eventually they open up and start talking about their situation."

Life without drugs can be very hard and Gunilla and her team try to be with the women. In helping them they also assist the children. One important part of the programme is to "reveal family securities". Too heavy burdens are often put on the children because of the addiction of the mother.

The Sanna programme started in 1993 and now 10 women are involved. All of them now have a better life. Half of them have liberated themselves from drugs.

"After one year in the programme the women develop a new identity that is not related to drugs. Then there is room for volunteers to join in the programme. They could come just to be friends with the women. When these women get off drugs they often experience a vacant space inside themselves. Then I wish we could have 'extra aunts and uncles' to offer them," says Gunilla.

She finds the reward for her work when a woman who has been on the programme proudly comes up showing her grandchild.

Case Study XIII – Street children (Russia)

The great number of young people in the Russian Federation who are excluded from community life, or who are at risk of being excluded from its daily life, has reached alarming proportions. In 2002, the Russian government installed a high-level task force bringing together those in charge of different government departments in order to find a policy to come to terms with the rising number of street children in Russia. Even though the designation "street children" is controversial in Russia as it is elsewhere, this much can be said: street children are minors at risk. They are totally on their own, sometimes because they have no home, sometimes because they have one, but their parents are either unable or unwilling to assume or exercise the responsibility which is theirs. According to the information available to the Russian government, in 2002 there were one million street children who still lived at home, but whose participation in a home and family life had become quite precarious. Intelligent estimates rather than factual statistics project that there will be a sharp increase in the number of street children and the number of those children and young people at risk of becoming street children. In 2002, there were about 32.8 million minors in the Russian Federation. Of these, about 3% were, according to UNICEF, "children at risk". Reports about street children in St. Petersberg and Moscow made the headlines in Germany as soon as the Iron Curtain fell. Travellers observe street children in almost all cities in the Russian Federation. They are also to be found in institutions which have started coping with this problem. These institutions, which are mainly correctional facilities (strict hierarchical structures, military discipline, adequate food and a minimum of personal belongings) have so far made a significant contribution to survival, but not necessarily made life in community seem very inviting.

Street children are a global phenomenon. Today, they exist in every region of the world and their numbers are everywhere on the increase. For a long time, opinion leaders in the civil societies of Europe and the US repressed mounting evidence that street children were not only a characteristic of development countries in South America, Africa, and Asia. They can no longer be ignored in our midst. They are found in every capital in Europe. Street children may be in the streets for long or short periods of time. The point is that they do not receive any kind of protection. They move from place to place. Their fixed address is that of their family or of a state institution such as an orphanage or a hospital. Since they have little or no contact to persons who are ultimately responsible for them, these children create their own gangs in the streets in order to substitute for the lack of a family.

What are the prospects of such minors – children and young people – if they do not die from hunger, criminal violence, war, AIDS or other illnesses? In Nairobi, for instance, youth gangs who were in the streets between the age of five and eight have ten years later become professional criminal gangs.

Living conditions in which the children grow up are characterised by rejection, indifference, abuse, violence, and exclusion. This causes them to seek desperate escape routes of just running away, prostitution, dealing drugs, violence and theft. Even if they stay at home, children have to put up with badly paid, hard work in order to support their families. This is the reason why children associate street life with relief and after a while even with "normality". The streets are a peculiar, sub-cultural space which provides stimulation and excitement for young people. It is also a place for learning about good and bad. For example, it requires tremendous amounts of knowledge to know where to find drugs, how to use a syringe and what to do in case of an overdose. This kind of information is usually taught by the older members of the gang. That drugs help to escape the unbearably miserable

reality is a lesson quickly learned. The most common stimulants are glue, paint thinner and shoe polish due to their low cost. The consumption of harder drugs such as cocaine, marihuana, and synthetic drugs are usually linked to children who act as couriers. This is one of the three main ways, along with prostitution and theft, to make good money on the street. Especially in the area of drug usage it is essential for informal education to offer attractive alternatives in order to avoid younger ones getting involved in drugs. This is a difficult task as the street workers must first catch the children's attention and make it possible for them to regain their trust in adults. Then it is important for the children to "un-learn" the knowledge they have already picked up during their time spent with older members of the gang. Street children are deprived of their most fundamental rights such as food, accommodation, education, health and freedom, all at the same time. Therefore, we believe that governments should provide protection for these children by fighting the causes of this phenomenon. What is needed is international solidarity, a good legal system, understanding, compassion and – practical solutions.

When it comes to efforts to deal with the problem of street children, European initiatives and European co-operation play a significant role. In this respect there is no stopping Maartje van Putten, a Dutch member of the European Parliament. Ten years ago, she started a European Network for Street Children Worldwide (ENSCW). At the time, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg even contributed a workable and lasting definition of street children. The International Society for Mobile Youth Work (ISMO) and the ENSCW agreed back in 1990 on a plan of action for the benefit of street children in Russia.

In addition to the successful programmes "Hope for Eastern Europe" and "Churches Helping Churches", Russians and Germans, along with EURODIACONIA, established connections and agreed on ways of co-operation at several levels such as politics, the churches, and social work. Partners were, on the one hand, the Diakonisches Werk, EURODIACONIA, ISMO and, on the other, governmental and non-governmental social organisations in Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church. Approaches and experience which had been successfully applied, tested, refined, and revised over a long time in helping socially disadvantaged children and young people in Germany and in other countries were introduced and explained in numerous workshops. The idea was to qualify participants in a way that they found most helpful in their own specific Russian situation. These workshops and courses were to help participants to set up projects for endangered children and youth by focusing on the circumstances and worlds they live in. The idea is to mobilise, socially and politically, those parts of a city in which children and adolescents struggle to survive. The approach is both remedial and preventive. Such mobilisation projects are launched in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It relies, above all, on developing, strengthening, energising the potential of civil society. Such appeal to a creative potential and to resources of solidarity is intended to bring forth a sustainable development for children and young people. The main thrust of this social pedagogy is the individual street child as a person, their well-being and also interest in their group, be it the family they still belong to or the street or youth gang they have already become part of. The main interest of this approach is to foster and develop the strength of individuals along with positive energies, like providing protection, belonging, and solidarity of the kind found in gangs. The idea is that focusing on such a thing will make deviant behavior superfluous. For the sake of those youngsters at risk, their daily life and environment, the milieu in which they grow up has to be influenced for the better.

This approach was largely new to our Russian partners and of great interest to those who enrolled in these courses to obtain a qualification. In Russia the

emphasis had traditionally been to send delinquents to correctional institutions and homes. These summer courses in 2001 were also attended for the first time by social workers and people already working in social pedagogy. Both of these occupations were totally unknown in the Soviet Union, but they are on the way to being recognised in present-day Russia. That is a sign of hope for all those youngsters who are - or who are on the verge of becoming - street children. After one and a half years of workshops in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Smolensk, 75 people graduated from the Philharmony of Smolensk as social administrators, social workers, social pegagogues, street workers and other experts.

The interest in such co-operation partnership is immense. The Russian Orthodox Church is a particularly important partner in co-operation and as a spearhead of social improvement. By the same token, as many men and women acquire and improve their expertise in such professional fields as youth work, care for the elderly and work with people with disabilities, governmental authorities at all levels will become partners. At present, the economic plight of most Russians is a particular challenge for the churches in Western Europe and of diakonia. Many families, because of the prevailing economic situation, suffer from unemployment, alcoholism, and poverty. Both as Christians and as citizens we cannot proclaim and maintain our responsibility for the building of a socially concerned and just Europe without including the vast Russian empire in our considerations. For Europe to live in enduring peace and social justice, western countries need to invest much more - politically, economically and socially.

7. Concluding challenges

Working through and reflecting on papers, articles, mission statements and documents which churches and diaconal institutions throughout Europe have made available we have become aware of several conclusions and of major challenges. We do not intend to give a summary of our report here. Rather we want to formulate some conclusions and challenges that appear important.

Diakonia, service and mission

Diakonia belongs to the essence of the church. This is a fundamental thought that came out of the material and emerged in the discussions of the project group. It was articulated in the two consultations. Being an indispensable dimension of the being of the Church proved to be a real challenge to diakonia to change its structures, its policies, its educational style and the seriousness with which it thinks about the diaconate. *To meet the challenges in these areas there is a need for thoroughly theological reflection and research*.

The theological concept of diakonia is radically based on mutual service. *For that reason the relationship between diakonia and people in need should be a subject-subject relationship.* It includes passion, love and care. It should not be based on lust for power, a bullying tone, and not even on attitudes of charity. In the preparation of this material the working group has been clear on avoiding the term "helping". We had long discussions on such words as service and care. It seems as though they spark off different interpretations and reactions depending on the background and context. We have found that both words can be used, but only if we are aware of how they can differ in meaning compared with the original signification of the two Greek terms *diakonia* or *leitourgia*, which are both properly translated as "service".

The vision that diakonia belongs to the essence of the Church should also become visible in church structures and church politics. *For that reason we think it necessary to make further research on the position of the deacon and also on the point of ordination in relationship with the status of the "laity".*

Gender

It is an obvious fact that women are overrepresented in practical work on diakonia. At the same time, the leading roles in diaconal work are mainly played by men. It should be recognised that there is a long history in the churches of holding back women from influential and governing positions by giving them servant roles. At the same time men often avoid these kinds of practical activites. It is in our conviction that the service dimension of diakonia can remain but *we have to interpret service in its full mutuality; gender aspects are important* when it comes to developing the servant or caring aspects of diakonia.

It should also be stressed that service does not have to presuppose subordination. We want to emphasise that serving in a church context is built on the example of Jesus who was the servant of the world. In the likeness of Jesus Christ, the church is called to mutual service based on love. "Love one and another," Jesus said. In this service *men and women are equal* and any tendencies to subordinate woman by giving them serving roles are totally wrong.

Education and research

One important conclusion of this study is the recognition of *the need for an education for diakonia*. All education has to be evaluated and renewed over and over again, since it is so dependent on changes of contexts. Education and training must always be related to the situation in which people are. There is a conviction growing out of this material that education is challenged by the reality that deacons face in their work. Consequently *deacons have an important role to play in developing forms of diaconal learning*. Their *experience* of meeting people and their insights about the socio-political arena can greatly contribute to the creation of new curricula. Deacons also represent a *spirituality* that is indispensable when a church wants to point out directions to spiritual maturity.

Diaconal education is not just a matter of interest to professional deacons and social workers. It should be *a matter of concern to the whole church*. Any professional training of pastors and other parish workers would gain in importance if more of it dealt with diaconal issues. Even more so, continuing education in the life of any congregation is enriched by prominent educational elements of diaconal thinking and practice.

Diakonia should be more a part of the broad theological discourse. As it is now, it tends to play just a minor role in general theological reflection and research. Any changes to improve the presence of diaconal perspectives in the theological discourse would enrich theological education and research.

Ecumenical challenges

Unity is a spiritual matter and it concerns the whole church. Ecumenical progress comes through theological dialogue but also through common worship and shared responsibility in social and diaconal work. In all this the church recognises that *plurality must be accepted* and the kind of unity the church aspires to is not to level out all differences. Unity in any church and among churches must be found in plurality. In the Kingdom of God there are many rooms and the church should not see things too narrowly. Different opinions and dissimilarities in behaviour are not necessarily causes of division.

In the ecumenical vision there must be a basic trust in the fact that people are different and that we are obliged to respect human dignity. For diaconal work this means that there must be *a profound respect for every human being* and the church is called to listen and respond, in particular, to the need of the neediest.

It is often easier to create a fellowship based on shared work than on doctrinal agreements, therefore *diakonia can be a highway to convergence* of churches and to ecumenical progress.

Community

The church as a community has a lot of spiritual and material resources. It should be aware of this wealth and of the way *these resources should be used if the church is to be diaconal*. We have pointed out that there are different kinds of resources: people (professionals and volunteers), financial resources, buildings, facilities, spiritual inspiration, ethical values etc.

Diaconal work is sometimes done without clear organisational ties to church institutions in a kind of "diaspora" situation. This happens e.g. in urban mission with regard to poverty, unemployment and other socially problematic areas. *The official church should be more aware and supportive of this kind of work.* After all, it is diaconal and therefore part of the church.

Sustainability

Now we will turn to the question of sustainability although we are aware of the lack of attention given to it in our report. It is often pointed out that sustainability is dependent on three dimensions: ecological, social and economic. Together these three dimensions form the very basis of sustainability. Diakonia also refers to these. It has to relate to all three perspectives because *diakonia has to be related to sustainability*.

One conclusion we draw from our material is that sustainable diakonia cannot rely on a "helping" attitude. That is why we see the importance of a diakonia which is based on service, and carried out not only in personal relations but also in social and political life. *Reconciliation and peace are necessary parts of diaconal action* in the context of sustainability. For all concerned to be agents of reconciliation, theological reflection is indispensable.

We consider institutional and political arrangements (agreements) in parishes and beyond to be of lasting value since diaconal action does not stand and fall only with personal involvement.

Advocacy

Diaconal action entails the direct relationship with people in need. However, it should also be connected to political and social action with the aim of improving living conditions for those without jobs, or living in poverty, for persons with a disability, for migrants, and sick people, to name but a few. This means dedication to people with such needs as well as providing support, so that they can commit themselves to improving their living conditions. *Diakonia –to be political diakonia - should therefore be both personal and concerned with social structures.*

Europe

Europe is larger than the European Union. Some of the European countries are inside and others outside the EU. The churches of Europe want to see an open and united Europe. First of all, their ambition is to avoid tendencies towards Eurocentricity, recognising that they have a particular *responsibility for the poor of the world inside and outside Europe*. The churches also

seek a Europe of peace, acknowledging that unity must be found in plurality and not in political, cultural and religious regimentation. While recognising this, the churches must lobby for greater access and more freedom for people to cross national borders. *Migration and integration are important and unavoidable areas of diaconal activity.*

The churches commit themselves to such basic values as human rights, justice, peace, freedom, tolerance and solidarity. In their spiritual heritage they find inspiration and empowerment to fight human rights violations, injustices, wars and intolerance. Their vision is of a European society in which *every human being is given full dignity and respect* and where fellowship is built on solidarity and care.

It is the role of diakonia to promote such a vision and to do so in acts of love and mutual service as well as in political activities at every level. There is a need for a prophetic dimension in diakonia. This means that the churches should be *sensitive to any development in society that repudiates human dignity and counteracts to solidarity*. Early warnings through prophetic voices aim at disclosing and uncovering greed and selfishness, especially when it comes in packages involving social marketing and changes in the structure of the welfare state.

We can see deep-reaching changes in society which influence the functioning of the welfare state. In countries with and without a welfare state *the diaconal community should be aware of which type of welfare state they should strive for*.

We can also see a general need for reflection on the role of the churches in the social market. In what way should the churches and their diaconal institutions operate as welfare actors? How should they consider the risks of out-sourcing their specific diaconal calling by being commercially competitive and successful? What risks are there in having financial ties to the structure of national insurance or to budgets dependent on political governance? Are there advantages or disadvantages in choosing to find financial arrangements through sponsoring instead of establishing a social welfare system? More reflection is needed on these issues.

Appendix 1– Reports and declarations being used

Bratislava Declaration (1994)

Diakonisches Werk der EKD: *Der evangelische Diakonat als geordnetes Amt der Kirche* (1996)

The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity. The Hanover Report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (1996)

Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales: *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching* (1996)

Comprehensive Diaconal Programme for the Church of Norway (1997)

Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund: *"Diakonie – Zukunft unserer Kirche?" Eine Grundsatzdiskussion im Anschluss an die "Bratislava-Erklärung"* (April 1997)

Diaconal Ministry. The Church of Sweden and the Task (2000)

Church of Scotland: *Deacons of the Gospel. A Vision for Today, A Ministry for Tomorrow* (2001)

For such a time as this. A renewed deaconate in the Church of England. A Report of the General Synod of the Church of England of a Working Party of the House of Bishops (2001)

Protestant Churches in Austria: "*Diakonie – Standortbestimmung und Herausforderung* (1997)

Diakonia – an integrated dimension in the life of the Danish National Church (2001)

Protestant Churches in the Netherlands: *"Omzien naar elkaar"* (2002)

Verband Evangelischer Diakonen- und Diakonengemeinschaften in Deutschland e.V.: *Arbeitsergebnisse* (2002)

Short note from the Czech Republic: *Meaning of diakonia for the Church* (2002)

An epistle from the LWF Global Consultation 7 November 2002

Diakonia Charter (Eurodiaconia, 2000)

Appendix 2: Participants at the consultation in Prague, 2003

Tony Addy	Ecg – European Contact Group on Urban and Rural Mission
Albert Brandstätter	Eurodiaconia
Stephanie Dietrich	Church of Norway National Council
Kristin Fehn	Church of Norway National Council
Marco Jourdan	Commissione Sinodale per la Diaconia (Italy)
Rev. Alistair Malcolm	Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility
Rachel Medema	World Council of Churches
Dr. Lennart Molin	Christian Council of Sweden
Dr. Hermann Noordegraf	Protestant Church of the Netherlands
Christian Popescu	CCME – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Ninni Smedberg	Church of Sweden, Eurodiaconia
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