

2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion

“Churches against poverty”

A project by the Danish Diaconal Council and the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark in connection with the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

EU has dedicated 2010 to the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. In all 27 member states political focus will be dedicated to fighting poverty and social exclusion as will resources for various projects.

The 2010 year puts focus on issues that the church and diaconal organisations in Denmark meet daily. That is the reason why the Danish Diaconal Council and the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCD) have joined hands in the project “churches against poverty” with the aim of putting focus on the social responsibility of the churches.

The aim of the project is to reach parishes, parish councils and Christian organisations with information on poverty and social exclusion seen from a Christian/diaconal perspective and with a special focus on the church as an inclusive fellowship; and to engage churches in responding to challenges in the parish.

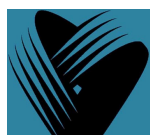
There are a good 2000 parishes in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark with a membership of 4.6 million people. Some parishes work to create social networks and inclusion through visiting services, children and youth work and much more.

Many churches experience that there is an increasing demand for concrete help and counselling on issues such as for example debt relief. At the same time churches are centrally placed in society – not least outside the bigger cities – and are close to the people who are in need and are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This is not only a Danish trend but also experienced in other parts of Europe.

Diaconia in Denmark:

“Instead of mending gaps in the public system, we would much rather be a supplement and make sure that citizens at risk of poverty and exclusion experience as much quality of life as possible. We can contribute to this aim offering dialogue, time together and fellowships where volunteers and citizens together create room for care and empowerment to act. We can contribute to the good life based on the “existability” of each citizen and the sustainability of the fellowship. But a pre-requisite for this to happen is that the economic and legal framework are in place and that is the job of the regional and national authorities.”

Johs. Bertelsen, The Christian Student Settlement



The Danish 2010 project will focus on themes such as “the heritage of poverty,” “child poverty” and “the church as a an inclusive place of employment.”

Throughout the year there will be events and publication of material for inspiration, discussion and action in the dioceses and the parishes. A Danish website with details of events, theological reflections on poverty, materials for thematic church services, list of speakers to use for own parish evenings etc. can be found at www.kirkermodfattigdom.dk (website in Danish). Here one can also find links to other Danish initiatives as well as the EU Commission website.

Tentative list of main events for the 2010 year:

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| 1 February | The website www.kirkermodfattigdom.dk is launched. |
| 13 – 15 May | Photo exhibition at the Danish Church Days, a national church conference with 3000 participants. The exhibition will portray “the open and the hidden poverty in Denmark.” |
| 1 June | Check list for churches: ”Is your church social?” is launched. The check list will help identify if the ELCD is an inclusive and socially responsible place of employment. |
| November 22 | Conference on poverty and the church with the theme: ”What is the Christian challenge in relation to poverty and social exclusion?”

Dissemination of the joint study that the Conference of European Churches, Eurodiaconia, Caritas and COMECE have published with theological reflections on poverty in Europe. |

