

Successful science workshop on church caritas

May 3, 2022

More than 130 participants took part in the discussion

On April 29, 2022 Péter Pázmány Catholic University hosted an international conference that aimed to examine the conditions and possibilities of scientific cooperation to establish a data base of church social service providers in Central Europe. Below, you may find our report on the conference organised by the Saint John Paul II Research Centre of Péter Pázmány University in co-operation with the Research Institute for Religion and Society of the University of Public Service, Budapest:

For our brothers-in-love:

'Helpful churches- a scientific cooperation for the establishment of a data base of churches' social service providers 2022-2024' was the title of an outstandingly successful conference held on April 29, 2022 with the active participation of researchers coming from four Hungarian and four foreign universities from Central Europe. More than 130 participants took part in the academic discussions, many more attended it via online connection. The significant interest shown in the conference demonstrated the importance of coordinating the charity work procedures and help for those in need for the sake of all the churches and states involved in charity framework processes.

The fundamental question was the following: how can the church-related charity services be synchronized in Central Europe? To answer this question three other part-queries had to be addressed as well: which states belong to Central Europe; which church services can be taken into account; and, ideally which charity operations should be synchronized ?

The conference has laid the foundation of a 3-year long program. During this period of time those questions raised above will be meticulously examined, furthermore an easily accessible 'data base,' a sort of 'record file' will be established about the specific church services and service providers in Central Europe.

The scale of this task is well illustrated by the fact that this issues has not been properly settled on national level, either, not to mention its complex international implications. All the same, we must aim at establishing tighter cooperation, since – as the case of the conflict in Ukraine demonstrates – there is great need for cross-border common work and services.

At the event the University of Public Service was represented by Mr. Bernát Török, director of research center, who highlighted the importance of inevitable need for cooperation between state and church in boosting the efficiency of charity services. Mr. Árpád Homicskó, vice-dean on behalf of Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary pinpointed at the significance of certain aid programs besides the necessity of regulation of the social services. From the part of Péter Pázmány Catholic University, the Saint John Paul II Research Center takes part in the implementation phase of the program, while the speaker of Ferenc Gál University presented their initial fundamental research project related to the program of the conference.

Along the lectures the participants of the conference had the chance to familiarize with the main gravity centers of the 3-year long program. Mr. Lóránd Újházi, lecturer of the Catholic university, outlined the importance of state and church cooperation with special concern on its

aspects on national defense. The practical side of the cooperation was presented by Mr. Richard Zagyva, deputy director of Hungarian Catholic Caritas.

Along the conference the presenters emphasized the recognition that church charity, caritas organizations provide versatile essential services, such as caring for the homeless, for aging people as well as for those living with handicaps. Nevertheless, the churches entities cannot neglect the duties and services stemming from their religious mission. These include various aid programs, collection of donations and crisis management. The lecturers presented the relevant national data bases. Mr. Rainer B. Gehrig presented the Holy See's, professor Klaus Baumann and Ms. Daniela Blank the German, professors Tadeus Kaminsky and Mr. Woichech Sadlon, director of Catholic Statistical Institute the Polish, while Mr. Michal Opatrny did the same with the Czech data base and their accessibility. Mr Márk Birinyi shared that the Reformed Church had already initiated the establishment of a data base of the Carpathian basin.

At the end of the conference, two books of outstanding importance were also presented for the public. The book entitled *Spirituality, Ethics and Social Work* edited by Rainer B. Gehrig, Michal Opatrny, Nándor Birher and Klaus Baumann published in 5 languages describes the issue of social work and spirituality. The book is available at : <https://spiritualsocialwork.net/>

The other work, a recently launched study book a compilation of various papers discusses a topic of ardent importance with the title *Budapest Report on the persecution of Christians*, which was presented by Mr. András Kóré.

The conference constitutes a new, initial step towards a Central European cooperation of great significance. According to the wishes of the participants it provides not only a scientific but a practical cooperation, too, for the benefit our brothers-in-love in need of help.

Budapest, May 3, 2022.