

NEWS FROM SLOVAKIA

2013 was a demanding year for Slovak education generally. On the one hand, new projects, especially those supported by the EU, focused on ICT technology, mobilities etc. On the other hand, there was the frustration of many teachers and school employees with the superficiality of the latest school reforms. There were protests by groups of teachers in the streets; complaints from an increasing number of individual teachers in blogs and on Facebook, fighting for improved status and higher salaries. Then there was news of various pressures associated with new materials on sexual education and gender ideology, coming in with proposals which go against the traditional culture and religion of Slovakia. To top it all, at the end of the year, a PISA report showed a lowering of the achievement of Slovak students.

The Lord has not taken Christian teachers out of the world we live in: quite the opposite (John 17). Only He knows what kind of ministry, "good deeds" He has designed for Slovak schools via faithful Christian teachers. And this is exactly the reason why several initiatives have been taken by Christian leaders for 2014. Their basic aim is to create a welcoming, supportive, facilitating platform for each and every teacher. Here are some of them:



The fourth biennial three-day long conference on everyday professional issues for Christian teachers from the whole of Slovakia took place in a beautiful area of Low Tatras in October 2013. This year it focused on conflicts and problem in relationships of all kinds. It was attended by about 40 teachers from both state and denominational schools. Many of them are quite isolated in the places where they live and work; so, lots of sharing, prayers with joy and tears were part of the conference. Teachers participating in this conference are part of an informal network of teachers, which has no heavy leadership structure, but which functions in a really encouraging Christian way.

Another biennial conference was organized by Christian ministries to youth and children in Slovakia. Though it did not focus primarily on teachers in schools, they were represented among about 260 participants, this time in the East of Slovakia. It was attended also by a lot of Roma children and youth ministers in a deprived areas in Slovakia. It was a lively conference, where several Christian teachers participated as leaders of seminars and workshops. It was a great encouragement to see that the Lord has been taking care of the *whole* child.

Dana Hanesova also had a unique opportunity to speak to teachers in a Slovak minority school in Bacsy Petrovec, Serbia. It was a tremendous opportunity to have an open door to this area.

This report would not be complete without thanking EurECA for its influence on Christian teachers in Slovakia. Thanks to its initiative, people who have attended EurECA conferences (Dana H., Michal V., Lubka B.) are more active and try to influence teachers, not only with information about the organization, but also to encourage the creation of networks throughout the country. It was particularly supported by Thesi Kerneza who, two years ago was with us for a national conference; by the visit of Matt Kaegi and Bee Bee Sng to the Valco's and by their keeping contact with us. Through EurECA we have had more contact with each other and especially with people from other denominations.

A very big gift from the Lord has been a wonderful opportunity to invite our fellow EurECA member, Seppo Saari from Finland, to participate in a two-year long project called Mobilities, supporting science, research and education in Slovakia. He had an amazing opportunity to speak on several occasions, to teach our PhD students and to talk to key educational policy makers. We are very thankful for his and his wife's input to our Slovak school system. His open, sincere, humble and loving approach has been a shining light. Please, pray for him and this project so that he can be a real help in the evaluation of the Slovak university system in 2014.

We thank God for EuRECA and everybody involved in sending prayer needs, news, reports and invitations to various events. We love to learn from you and are praying for the on-going work of the organisation. ☺

Dana Hanesova