



LOVINGLY TO LIFE

Project supported in the program Visegrad Fund

Duration: 18. 1. 2021 – 30. 6. 2021

Focus: Social development, improved regional policy and policy on demographic and social activities

Main topic: Care for women in the antenatal and postpartum period within the V4 countries

Summary

Mother centers work with mothers, children and families with small children from 0 to 6 years. They offer the first contact for women during pregnancy, for whom they organize antenatal preparation courses for motherhood and support groups for breastfeeding and childcare. However there is a lack of lecturers who lead these courses. Health care staff call for a medical expertise when conducting antenatal course. In our experience medical staff fail to run courses because there are few midwives and they do not yet have the capacity to work with pregnant women in their free time. Another problem is in postpartum care within about 6 months after childbirth, which, apart from regular inspections of six-week care, no one pays attention to. In the postpartum period, the body of the woman and the psyche are more susceptible to various pathogens that can be prevented by conversation in safe environment, with the help of a self-help group led by a trained mother center leader. And here are two main obstacles: 1. The lack of these resources does not allow us to lead these groups in sufficient numbers. 2. The views of healthcare staff on this assistance vary widely, often calling for expertise, but they are unable to provide it themselves. We have only modest information about the activities of our colleagues in Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland, and we want to know more about how they work with pregnant women, what their education is, how they gain resources (time, people, space), what problems they are dealing with.

Our goal is to create a network, get to know partner organizations, open a dialogue on the topic of pre-natal preparation for motherhood and post-natal care. During 5 months we will organize for online meetings linked with partial topics and we will ask our partners to provide information packages related to current situation mapping - what services are offered by government and non-profit organizations. **Gain knowledge about partners, their activities, courses, content and methods of work.** How do they cover activities, where are their resources, what education do their lecturers have, what is the attitude of health care institutions to their activities? By exchanging experiences, examples of good practice and opening discussions on childbirth, mother care in maternity hospitals, postpartum mother and child care, we will gain new perspectives and opportunities to train our lecturers better and, of course, our experience will help colleagues from other V4 organizations. **Our next goal during last month of this project is to organize a round table discussion between partners organizations and specialist in the field** so they can compare their work and start long-term cooperation between medical and healthcare government bodies and non-profit organizations such like mother and family centres. At the same time we would like to try to set the vision and standards what course called "Preparation for Motherhood" should contain - to set the basic pillars that realistically will be put into practice and thus bring changes into society so that children come into life lovingly.

Our partners are: Sít' pro rodinu (Czech republic), Mamy Czas (Poland) and Mother Nature Association (Hungary).

In 2018, Union of Mother Centers (UMC), together with Žilina regional office, organized a conference Lovingly into Life, which was intended primarily for midwives, nurses, doctors and NGOs. The representative of UMC Slovakia, a member of MINE network from Hungary, as well as colleagues from the Czech Republic spoke at the conference and presented experiences and views of mothers-birth-givers. The aim of the conference was to point out at the status of obstetrics, the presentation of competencies and experiences of midwives. The conference was a stepping stone for us to restart campaign Lovingly into life. This campaign is a long-term activity of the UMC, which combines the

practical and time-verified experience of mothers with medical knowledge. We try to hold a constructive dialogue by inviting experts. We involved many active women who care about this topic and therefore their commitment and motivation remain high and not financially stipulated. We also connect different generations of women. Besides, our countries are close geographically and culturally. We intend to repeat the round table talks every year or every 2 years. We want to work on its growth and quality and create standards of care for women during pregnancy, childbirth and after childbirth in our countries. We will build on the realistic foundations and capabilities of our citizens and the healthcare system. We have a program available and we actively cooperate in the development of parental education and child development for children 0 - 6 y. We offer follow-up courses to ensure sustainability.

The V4 countries work closely together in several sectors, and our intention is to examine, identify and subsequently process the results of a survey on the quality and status of the care for mothers in pre-natal preparation but also post-natal care (and thus prepare the basis for an ongoing project). Thanks to a common culture, we are very close to each other and therefore we assume that the information obtained will help us to start cooperation and especially support between countries in the field of motherhood, childbirth, quality pre-natal preparation and post-natal care. In all V4 countries, it is necessary to open a wider discourse not only among the public, but also among professionals about the condition of obstetrics, care for women during pregnancy and hospitalization, and the quality of births. It is important to talk about women's rights, about deriving and accepting responsibility for the sequence of events during childbirth.

We certainly want to establish a long-term cooperation, following this international V4 round table. **We will continue with the analysis of problems and the creation of methodological material that will form the basis for the education of people working with pregnant women.** We plan to organize a round table once a year and compare the problems, solutions and results of our common work. We are very interested to see how other partners work with women in V4 partner countries. We are interested in opening a dialogue with medical staff based on the proposals for cooperation, training opportunities, mutual cooperation and acceptance of non-medical staff when working with pregnant women. We aim to invite more organization, NGOs, medical staff, politicians, health insurance officers to the round tables, thus opening a discourse on setting realistic goals, which we could work on together and gradually put them into practice and bring the change. Our future plans are of a long-term character because together with our partners we plan to implement other projects, to closely work on finding and preparing solutions. We would like to establish conditions for all mothers in the region so that they would receive relevant and true answers, do not fear giving births, neither medical staff and to ensure that their rights are respected. **All these actions will lead us to the ultimate goal that our children would come lovingly into life.**