

Report of Croatian Chamber of midwives

This year, some changes in our country, had influence on the Croatian midwifery.

Last year, in early October for the first time, the Croatian Parliament declared the Midwifery Act. According to the Act, within six months, we had to establish a Croatian Chamber of midwifs. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Croatian Association of midwives established Croatian Chamber of midwives on 2nd March 2009. Croatian Chamber of midwives is an independent professional organization with the status of legal person and public authorities. The Chamber promotes, represents and coordinates the interests of midwives in Croatia and abroad. All midwives working in Croatia are obligated to enter the Chamber of midwives.

Until a few months back in our country, midwives were voluntary members of the Croatian Association of midwives. Nine years ago our association became a member of ICM, and because of that fact our midwives were very proud! Unfortunately, due to poor financial opportunities Croatian Association of midwives could not pay the membership in ICM no longer. Because of this problem, agreement was reached between the Association and the Chamber that due to financial problems of the association, now the Chamber will be representing our midwives. Croatian Chamber of midwives has sent a request to ICM to be accepted as its member, and we hope that ICM will accept our request .

Most midwives are members of the Chamber and members of the Association at the same time. Both organizations, together invested great efforts to improve midwifery in Croatia.

I would now like to tell you something about our chamber and its tasks that it performs.

In early summer 2009. we made a five-year strategic plan of the Croatian Chamber of midwives.

We have our vision and that is independent midwifery in Republic of Croatia.

Our mission is: Croatian Chamber of midwives protects rights and interests of midwives, promotes the identity and dignity of the profession and improvement through developing midwifery education and legislation.

We also set our strategic objectives:

- ❖ Systematically informing, educating, empowering and connecting midwives
- ❖ Strengthening of Croatian Chamber of midwives as well, as relevant stakeholders through the promotion of its work, rights and interests of midwives
- ❖ Encouraging high quality and transparent adaptation to EU standards
- ❖ Encouraging the systematic education of midwives
- ❖ Developing institutional mechanisms for the recognition of the current status

❖ Strengthening the institutional and financial capacity of the Chamber

The fact is that in our country there are significant problems that have an impact on midwifery. One of the major problems is the education of midwives.

We agree that a midwife can not be someone who only finished secondary school education for midwives. Until recently in our country has been present only such form of training for midwives.

Furthermore, the first generation of midwives are now attending the third year of the first Study for midwives in our country. But the curriculum of study for midwives also does not fully satisfy the EU directive.

In accordance with the unsatisfactory education of midwives in our country, in July 2009, the TAIEX Commission, in cooperation with Croatian Chamber of midwives organized workshops in Zagreb for Croatian midwives, aiming to “establish the strategy necessary to bring Croatian midwifery education and practice into conformity with the EU.”

Let me point up some of the key signals of experts' final reports.

COMMENTS BY MR. TOM KEIGHLEY

Croatia is in the process of acceding to the European Union and its Midwifery Education is lagging far behind the Directive 2005/36/EC. The Midwives are very much aware of that but the government seems not to take it that seriously. There is a need to develop, continue and expand international contacts on this matter as it not is an issue only for the midwives and midwifery education in Croatia, but also an issue of free movement within the EU and, most importantly, an issue of patient safety for women within EU.

COMMENTS BY MRS. MARIAN VAN HUIS

In Croatia it seems midwives are very well aware of the impact of joining EU (2005/36/EC). They work very hard to achieve the directives and other issues. I am afraid there is a lack of sense of urgency and support by the other stakeholders and most important the Ministries of Health Care and Education. Due to the system where midwives are so dependent on legislation and support and clear choices by both of these Ministries. Up to now, no actions are shown. One thing that is implemented is the Chamber of Midwives. It is remarkable what midwives involved in this institute are producing. Despite the promise of the Government to support these Chamber in resources and finances: up till now nothing appeared.

Also the Act on Midwifery is not adopted and not ready according to EU law.

A clear definition of midwifery education, competencies with requirement for proper job descriptions are not there (following internationally agreed definitions (ICM, WHO)).

Despite all problems we have, we continue to invest great efforts to strengthen midwifery in our country. Biggest task for us is a professional and continuing education of midwives. To hold - at least to some extent - step with modern midwifery, we organize a variety of professional educations. We invite speakers from foreign countries, whose profession and work are closely related to midwifery.

Furthermore, every year around the International day of midwives, we organize a symposium in our country. The next symposium will be held from 6th to 8th May in Vodice near Sibenik on the Adriatic coast. Croatian midwifery XXXIV symposium with International participation, has a theme Midwifery care focused on woman and family. At this symposium lecturers will be midwives from Croatia, other speakers and recognized guests from abroad. Same as every year we look forward to new knowledges in midwifery, that we are about to learn in Vodice.

As you probably know, despite the problems, we walk slowly forward, hoping to achieve our objective, independent midwifery in Croatia. Our road is thorny, but midwives in Croatia are optimistic. Our midwives are pleased and happy about any change that leads to improvement of our midwifery.

The fact is, any change that leads to modern midwifery is of great importance, both for midwives, and for our clients.

Because, in the future when we reach our objectives - independent midwifery in Croatia - our clients will finally have right and oportunity to choose.

We sincerely hope that we will not wait very long time.

On behalf of Croatian Chamber of Midwives

Barbara Finderle

and Suzana Haramina