



International Federation of Social Workers
Fédération Internationale des Assistants Sociaux
Federación Internacional de Trabajadores Sociales

IFSW Europe e.V.

THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

“We don’t pay for your crisis”

The financial crisis is a result of financial systems disregarding social responsibilities and social investments.

The financial crisis has had serious social consequences in Europe and becomes even more important with pronounced aggravation of the crisis in the latest year. The accelerating problems of debt in Greece and Ireland together with common developments in other countries can create a new and dangerous situation which can worsen the social problems because of stern social cuts.

1. People who are marginalised are disproportionately affected by the economic crisis – for example, older people, women, young people and working poor (stories can be used to illustrate this). We want Governments to look at the impact of all cuts to ensure that the impact is not disproportionate. Decisions must be openly discussed in society and the decisions made must be sustainable.
2. The impact of the financial crisis is different in the different regional areas of Europe. National organisations need to strengthen their position in cooperation with other progressive organisations and institutions. Social workers at a National level must work effectively within their country in the current economic climate. National organisations should also work together to strengthen our voice across Europe and the world.
3. The workload of social workers has increased as a direct result of the impact of the financial crisis. This is not sustainable and will lead to unsafe practice. Governments need to ensure that the International standards for social work (see the standards) are implemented to ensure high quality and safe practice.
4. One of the responses to the financial crisis is to cut down on preventative and early intervention services in social care. Preventative services have a long term impact which is usually outside of the life of a Government. A focus on services which provide short term outcomes is politically driven rather than driven by the needs

of society. A lack of sustained investment in social care has detrimental long term consequences for society. Cuts and a lack of investment now will lead to greater expenditure later. Society needs Governments to take a long term view to funding social care. We need to invest now.

5. The financial crisis has led to Governments introducing indicators and measures based on financial concerns rather than social cohesion, social justice and social wellbeing. Social workers need to strengthen their voice based on evidence and information. As an organisation the International Federation of Social Workers provides a forum for the sharing of information and evidence. This should be used by National organisations to develop indicators and measurements. Governments must take in account the experience of service users and social workers. Social policy makers must focus on the needs of people and society.
6. Marginalised people are often not able or allowed to vote. They have therefor no or very little political power. Marginalised people need to develop a collective voice which will be heard by politicians. Social workers should seek to support people to develop more political power.
7. The countries of Europe do have sufficient money to meet the needs of their citizens. The issue is about Governments choosing how the money is spent. Social workers need to work together to develop a clear argument for investment in social care and welfare services.
8. In modern times people focus on individuals (themselves) more. The financial crisis has exaggerated this trend in society. There is a loss of interest in community and common good. We have lost a sense of social solidarity. Social work which focuses on individuals and not society is exaggerating this problem. Social work should be proactive in reclaiming group and community work as effective social work models.
9. Social workers serve the most vulnerable people who need the greatest priority at the time of economic crisis. Social workers pay and conditions should be protected from cuts with the social work profession rewarded at a similar level to other valued professions.

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