

SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL COHESION IN EUROPE

A project of the international federation of social workers – European region

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Based on reports and regional seminars developed by Social Worker Organisations of: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and UK



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1. Introduction

In a global and in particular European context characterised by a heightened consciousness of change and rate of change, the capacity to respond to such demographic, economic, societal and environmental changes becomes key to continue moving towards the development of our societies.

It has often been observed that the basis of any development strategy is people; their resourcefulness, their skills, their capacity to respond to new demands, their resilience and their ability to contribute positively to their families, communities and society.

The importance of this dimension of European progress is evident in the wealth of knowledge, research, actions and recommendations of the Council of Europe with regards to Social Cohesion as well as in the process and extensive debates of the European Union in developing a strategic framework for promoting a more socially cohesive European environment.

Several ongoing projects in the European Union are highlighting the need for more depth and knowledge regarding the *raison d'être*, the policies and the process on which services that support people are based. One such study refers to the social and health services of general interest in the European Union. The remit of this particular study is in fact to explore the situation of these services.

Social cohesion, by referring to social trends, underlying values and principles of a society and the relationships between the various actors and systems of that society, goes far beyond a tactical level of service provision targeted at isolated indicators.

The International Federation of Social Workers-European region (IFSW-E), social cohesion project has aimed to explore social cohesion at a holistic level through the critical eye of social work professionals who have both the knowledge base as well as practical field experience. Further the project has also aimed to pinpoint the role of social workers as professionals who respond in practical and real ways to the changing demands and situations of people, communities and society in general. This role, as will be discussed later stems from social work's key position lying at the various interfaces between the individual and society, between service provision and service development, between social care and social control, between interpersonal and national politics and many more!

Throughout the course of the project, important differences were noted that highlight the validity of approaching the subject of social cohesion from a broad perspective taking into consideration underlying general principles that may be common to various contexts.

The 19 organisations representing social workers from all over Europe who participated in the project, did not only "imagine" what social cohesion is on a conceptual level but through the various national reports that were compiled and based on professional, field experience, they noted the actual social trends that are challenging social cohesion in different countries.

Among the various points highlighted throughout the process, where the needs for social workers in different countries to get to know each other's work and context, problems and successes, to be able to have the space to focus and develop on the emerging concept of social cohesion. Key questions emerging from the



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discussions around the notion of “social cohesion” mainly referred to the relationship with “social inclusion”; how the concept of social cohesion is related to the dynamics between social work and society in general; how the concept of social cohesion relates to the profession, service provision and to professional organisations; how social cohesion is used, defined and pursued in various political fora.

1.1. Approach

The approach of this project is, through the member organisations of IFSW-e, to provide a focus on the knowledge, practical experiences and reflections on the relationship between social work and social cohesion in Europe. This report is intended to serve as a tool to further identify the training and research needs of the social work profession to continue to effectively promote social cohesion.

Participant organisations emphasised the value of the actual process by which the project was developed. The project, they said “served as a forum where we were able to share local experiences and knowledge and therefore enrich what would usually be abstract analyses based on literature”.

The set outcomes for the project were:

- i. contributing to the development of the concept of social cohesion;
- ii. to raise questions on current definitions, approaches, strategies related to social cohesion;
- iii. identifying national and international trends related to the social cohesiveness of our communities;
- iv. analysing the social and professional contexts and experiences across European countries that are related to social cohesion;
- v. identifying good practices in various countries that promote social cohesion;
- vi. formulating recommendations for the way forward for social cohesion in Europe;
- vii. taking the outcomes of the exercise forward to the European network;
- viii. to acknowledge and highlight the work that social work is doing in promoting social cohesion in their local contexts and to support social workers’ role in promoting social cohesion;
- ix. to guide the federation and local social work associations on the best way to support social workers and social work practice in promoting social cohesion in society.

As the different approaches, different levels of knowledge, traditions, political/legal/structural frameworks and expertise emerged; the participants of the project set themselves the task of

synergising rather than differentiating or fragmenting the various approaches, experiences, efforts, skills and resources.

The role of the IFSW as a forum of international cooperation, for professional debate and policy



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development was central.

1.2. Remit

In 1996, the European region of the IFSW carried out a project to examine different ways in which social workers in Europe were working against social exclusion and promoting social inclusion. Although the notion of social cohesion goes a step beyond the aspects of exclusion and inclusion, these are undoubtedly personal and social realities that are central to the issue of cohesion. The project clearly demonstrated that through various professional interventions based on prevention expertise, active outreach, individual care-plans, user participation and unique holistic methodologies, social work is really at the forefront in the battle against social exclusion.

A new paradigm of 'process knowledge' has emerged in recent years, distinct from the dominant 'product knowledge' paradigm in social work. While the latter refers to existent knowledge, which may be applied, the former refers to the development of knowledge about the 'methodology of practice decision making', focusing on the processes by which judgements are made. At its heart is the emerging idea of a reflexivity for practice (Sheppard and Ryan). Social work practice methodology is characterised by a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. By developing hypotheses to assess, define, and respond to, people's situations, social workers' role as social analysts emerges to attention.

Through the international scenario of the IFSW, this project is to offer social workers an international space in which to critically reflect on social cohesion in the different countries of Europe in which they operate. This activity is held within the objectives of the IFSW to promote social work as a profession through international co-operation, especially regarding professional values, standards, ethics, human rights, recognition, training and working conditions; and to support Social Work Organisations in promoting the participation of social workers in social planning and the formulation of social policies, nationally and internationally, the recognition of social work, the enhancement of social work training and the values and professional standards of social work. (IFSW constitution)

The project, in order to achieve these aims sought to encourage co-operation between social workers of all countries; provide means for discussion and the exchange of ideas and experience through a series of workshops and other methods of communication; establish and maintain relationships with, and present and promote the views of Social Work Organisations and their members to international organisations relevant to social development and welfare.

Further, being at the heart of European social work culture and identity, both factors which generate much motivation and participation, IFSW-Europe, through projects such as this, plays a key role as a medium for Social Work to make its contribution towards a European organised civil society.

2. The developing notion of social cohesion in Europe

The project explored some very interesting aspects of the concept of social cohesion. All those present felt the need for more awareness about social cohesion. However before awareness can be raised, those present felt that it would be helpful to own a more clear understanding of this concept.



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2.1. The ideas presented and explored with regards to “social cohesion” included the following:

Social cohesion specifically moves away from the tendencies of categorizing people as welfare recipients

Social cohesion emphasises the element of the feeling of belonging to community values

Social cohesion moves away from the classical concept of giving and receiving to that of sharing and reciprocating

Social cohesion is related to addressing the threat of exclusion, division, disparities and polarizing issue in societies

Social cohesion refines and improves strategies for integration because it replaces the simplistic inclusion/exclusion approach with one of interdependence in a cohesive environment

Social cohesion goes beyond the idea of welfare service provision or responses to isolated social indicators

It was generally agreed that there is a disparity between the concept of social cohesion and the way it is perceived and put into practice. Such disparity is perpetuated by lack of knowledge, inconsistent policy approaches, lack of information and the portrayal of stereotypes, categorization and certain traditional models of welfare provision. It was pointed out that in this sense; social workers have a central role in the implementation of strategies towards social cohesion. The key role that social workers have in this regard stems from their direct contact with different sectors in society, as well as from their position at the interface between individuals and systems; this putting social workers in a position to be responsive to a constantly changing context.

Therefore it emerged that in various countries although realities and tendencies are different, social cohesion is threatened by the following:

Categorisation of people and services

Over specificity in criteria for eligibility to assistance

Bureaucratisation leading to inefficient and depersonalisation of services

Lack of integrated policies and coordinated approaches

The lack of coordination in the administration and provision of services (including social work and inter-professional practice)

Inflexible structures that prevent professionals and services to continuously respond and adjust to the needs of the people and communities they function in

A series of interesting observations on the philosophical and ethical implications of social cohesion



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were explored. Some of these included the idea that while with social inclusion theoretically, there existed the option of being or not being part of a community, social cohesion does not perceive this option. Therefore, social cohesion requires the basic premises of:

Desire of association and belonging

The necessity of inter-sectoral coordination (holistic approach)

Reciprocity, interdependence and participation as opposed to simple service delivery (example service user rights and involvement)

2.2. Social Cohesion in Europe

There are a number of processes regarding the development of the notion of social cohesion in Europe. The Concerted development of social cohesion indicators - Methodological guide of The Council of Europe, 2005, was found particularly useful in providing a conceptual framework on which to develop discussions around the notion of social cohesion and its relation to social work.

The above mentioned publication by the council of Europe identifies key questions regarding the issue of social cohesion concerning: completing the full cycle linking knowledge and action; ensuring the participation of the players concerned; linking the different geographical levels. This project has been a preliminary exercise in offering practical suggestions and examples of how social workers can contribute to these processes. Along this line of thought, the revised strategy of the council of Europe for social cohesion, identified social services as a key factor in assuring access to fundamental social rights which was in turn identified as a main priority for the future strategy for social cohesion.

As understood by the Council of Europe, social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means.

Economic and Social Cohesion, being one of the principal aims of European Union, requires more than a clear political dimension. The lack of a unique definition that permits a technical definition and assessment was strongly felt by the participants of this project. Such clarity and definition is necessary for the observing and gauging of any increase/decrease of Economic and Social Cohesion over the decades in relation to the implemented political measures being proposed. Such definition inevitably must take account of an acceptable degree of regional inequalities and the variables or indexes to measure it properly (not for instance only GDP per capita)

3. RESULTS - HORIZONTAL TRENDS



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3.1. Frequent themes

Learning process for all;

The need for familiarisation with definition of social cohesion and going beyond this towards a working definition that is directly linked to practical considerations was clearly pointed out and acknowledged by all participants. Particularly in EU countries, social policy is often related and influenced heavily by EU Regional and Cohesion policy even though these latter policies do not specifically refer to a clear strategy for social cohesion or social policy. References to social cohesion are mainly present in the form of strategies for growth and jobs. The effect being observed by the participants of the project on this approach is that although education and employment are important aspects of any social policy or strategy, they do not constitute a sound basis for an authoritative policy that commands scientific and popular support. Another effect that is being observed is that certain horizontal strategies that social workers also incorporate in their interventions, for instance the lifecycle approach, cannot be applied consistently along the sole target of employment. The typical scenario that was quoted was that of the unemployed person whose personal and social reality is hindering her/his degree of receptivity to skills re/training.

Interdependence and interrelatedness;

Two characteristics that featured strongly in the various observations of the professionals participating in the project were interdependence and interrelatedness. Particular attention was placed on the potential of community work and other directions that social work is taking to enhance interdependence, reciprocity, citizenship, and social justice. (see Lena Dominelli, *Social Work: Theory and Practice for a Changing Profession*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004)

A responsive profession to a changing international context;

Most social workers were reported as practicing within a locally based service delivery structure. Their work, whether directly with individuals and families or at a community level, is mainly focused on local systems. Although much of social work is heavily influenced by its national environment, social workers relate experiencing that the funding and focus of social welfare policies and programmes, jobs, pension programmes and social services available in local communities are directly affected by international developments. Global challenges require action on many levels by many actors. Nevertheless, these are problems that are directly related to social work commitment and expertise. Social workers at the local level are directly involved with the implications of international realities by working with refugees or helping displaced workers. At the national level in many countries, the profession is active in promoting economic and social justice policy. Internationally, social work organizations are increasingly active in combating human rights violations. (see; *Issues for International Social Work - Global Challenges for a New Century* Edited by M.C. Hokenstad and James Midgley, 1997, NASW Press, Washington, D.C.)

The variety yet many commonalities

Sadly one of the discussions that cropped up recurrently in the various discussion and in the reports was the difficult situations that social workers must often work in. Although social workers are clearly



key professionals in the propagation of social justice, they are still forced to do this at what is often considerable personal risk and sometimes even political oppression. Also, government policies and services delivery structures often limit rather than enhance social work roles. All these factors hinder the profession in its effective response to pervasive problems locally, nationally, and certainly internationally. Further such conditions are stifling the process of development of the social work profession.

3.2. causes and trends observed impacting on social cohesion

Social trends

Fast changing economic environments e.g. the impact on employment, family caring roles and responsibilities

Emerging forms of poverty e.g. the working poor, new forms of addiction

Changing demographics in particular an ageing population

Immigration processes

Relationship between the person and society

Lack of civic participation, aspects of individualisation, apathy, alienation and de-motivation

Lack of empowerment resulting in helplessness or violence

Basic needs and services

Social support services, laws and policies that are characterised by too many criteria tend to further discriminate and stigmatise

Lack of adequate resources results in reactive rather than proactive practice

Lack of inter-professional and inter-sectoral collaboration

Vulnerable groups

Lack of knowledge, awareness and misconceptions on the continuously new emerging forms of poverty and how to respond with effective policy instruments and services

Lack of ethical codes of practice and guidance for the media often result in further discriminating and stigmatising the most vulnerable. The media needs to be left free to express itself however it also needs to be educated regarding social issues that are constantly evolving



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3.3. underlying values and principles that promote social cohesion identified by the workshops

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are dis-advantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. Social work values are embodied in the profession's national and international codes of ethics.

In the above context, during the course of the workshop discussions the following values and principles were identified;

Sense of solidarity, belonging and identity, sharing values, feeling of belonging to a community

Inclusion and universality of support, access to social rights through services and information on laws and policies

Integration and coordination of policies, service provision, laws, professional practice and approach to development in general – a sense of consistency and cohesiveness as opposed to fragmentation

Activeness and responsibility of all to notify, to respond, to speak out, to carry responsibility stemming from a sense of ownership and belonging

Participation at all levels including management of public affairs, in partnerships and in the third sector, in contrast with political disillusionment, alienation, violence and apathy

Recognition of pluralism, not only as action but as virtue, i.e. an attitude of tolerance and of valuing differences and combating stigma and discrimination

Rights based approach this includes maintaining public and private institutions responsible to uphold and defend the rights of the person

4. RESULTS - SOCIAL WORK'S ROLE IN PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

4.1. definition¹

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the

¹ This section is based mainly on the international definition of the social work profession of the IFSW which replaces that adopted in 1982. It is understood that social work in the 21st century is dynamic and evolving, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive.



empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

Social work in its various forms addresses the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environments. Its mission is to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. Professional social work is focused on problem solving and change. As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice.

Social work bases its methodology on a systematic body of evidence-based knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context. It recognises the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including bio-psychosocial factors. The social work profession draws on theories of human development and behaviour and social systems to analyse complex situations and to facilitate individual, organisational, social and cultural changes.

During the workshop several activities of Social workers throughout Europe were identified. The functions of following roles as directly promoting social cohesion can be seen clearly, especially when considered alongside the values, indicators and main social trends relating to social cohesion identified above:

Education – social workers are constantly educating adults, children and families about their rights and responsibilities; social workers when in a permissive context also educate society in general on the nature of emerging social phenomena/stigma/human rights/discrimination etc through the media, through the organisation of community activities, through the organisation of seminars and conferences; through their contact with other professionals social workers are in a position of raising the awareness and sensitivity of other professionals towards the nature of the problems being experienced by the service user; the teaching of skills or the brokering of such training for people to be able to cope/respond/manage their constantly changing environment that might be problematic in for instance finding employment or coping with loss or marital separation and many more is a key role of social work being carried out by social workers in all of the countries present

Advocacy – taking responsibility for the vulnerable persons in society and being a voice to those who are not in a position to advocate for their own rights and needs is a key feature of social work that can be seen in the various actions being undertaken by social workers such action also includes close collaboration or representation on National Commissions that safeguard citizens rights

Empowerment – in order to foster a sense of healthy participation, advocacy in social work is coupled with empowerment. Empowerment must not be mistaken for instigation to violence but as the enabling of a person to clearly and effectively communicate and voice their opinions and their needs

Coordinating – the social worker is often located at the interface of several systems – the person/ the organisation providing the service/the law/the community/the other professionals and others. This



location although complex has resulted in social workers in many countries to naturally take on the role of coordination and integration of approach



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Reflective and critical practice – through the culture of supervision, ongoing professional development, recording and group processes, social workers are constantly reflecting on their practice and the trends emerging in the field. This allows them to be in a position to critically analyse situations they are faced with and creatively respond to a constantly evolving social context and emerging social problems being presented to them by people seeking various forms of support. This valuable information has much to offer in informing practice, service provision, service development, policy development and the development of laws.

Community based social work practice is particularly important in promoting Social Cohesion through its direct contact with the reality of communities.

Networks – Social Workers across Europe collaborate with, operate within, are associated and affiliated with various NGO's, services, community centres, groups and associations on regional, national and international levels. This networking is used to broker services, support and opportunities to clients.

One can argue that cohesion starts at those paths that link actors are the relational glue holding them together. An important consideration in the social cohesion discussion is that the cohesiveness of a society is an inherent feature of the systems of that society (*see; Structural Cohesion and Embeddedness: A hierarchical conception of social groups. James Moody & Douglas R. White University of California-Irvine, 2001*)

Beyond attributing a simply physical dimension to social cohesion, Social work operates both with and within social systems, developing professional methods, a focus on the processes and the services, it and those offers paths for encounter, mobility, opportunity and resources to the people it serves.

Social work addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems. Social work utilises a variety of skills, techniques, and activities consistent with its holistic focus on persons and their environments. Social work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development. These include counselling, clinical social work, group work, social pedagogical work, and family treatment and therapy as well as efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community. Interventions also include agency administration, community organisation and engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development. The holistic focus of social work is universal, but the priorities of social work practice will vary from country to country and from time to time depending on cultural, historical, and socio-economic conditions.

4.1.1. delivering service

A positive presence in the community:

The Portuguese experience; social workers promoting and enacting the principle of solidarity in social cohesion.

Social workers in Portugal are always present and have key roles



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in special emergency teams in hospitals in the event of National disasters, emergencies and rescue where they offer coordination and communication skills, crisis intervention, timely brokering of resources and other social work interventions. This role is well received by Portuguese society and media. This also reflects the positive involvement of the social workers in the health sector and therefore is an area of good practice with regards to integrated and inter-professional approaches.

4.1.2. rights-based approach – for individuals, for service users and members of society

Empowerment and protection;

“In Scotland, children were asked what kind of help they were getting. Among the responses of the children included: (percentage of responses is shown in brackets) Help with personal problems (49%) Being listened to (38%) Help in staying safe (32%) Getting ready to leave care (31%) Someone speaking on my behalf (30%) Information following a review (29%) Getting the right placement to live in (28%) Contacting family (25%) Help to keep out of trouble (21%) Getting access to personal file (21%) Help to cope with bullying (20%) Getting a passport (19%) Help with clothing allowances (18%) Getting a bank account (18%) Making a complaint (17%) Help about pocket money (16%)” *British Association of Social Workers*

4.1.3.vulnerable groups

The Danish Association of Social Pedagogues, for many years alongside the users and their organisations have fought to reach the goal of integrating people with mental health problems in society. It has involved a change in both policies which has gradually been achieved, a reconstruction of the old and big institutional system which earlier provided the help for these people to much smaller and decentralized units, and profound changes in the professional paradigm and in the thinking about mentally retarded in the public. The result is a completely changed situation for these people in society and in the services they receive.

4.1.4.professional field experience and observations to develop policy and services

The ongoing relationships that social workers build with people, systems and services, supported



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by practices of group and individual supervision and critical practice contribute significantly to social worker's being key social analysts. This role is further supported by the eclectic academic background, characteristic of social work education:

One of the current problems related to the cohesiveness of welfare support in Spain is the discrimination in accessibility to services stemming for the differences in regional administration and resources. This is also related to the problem of people seeking support and falling through the gaps. (Spanish National Association of Social Workers)

In Finland, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is currently conducting a national social welfare development programme. The "Social Work 2015 Action Programme" that defines social work development guidelines long into the future has been implemented as part of the development programme. In connection with this action programme (Karjalainen & Sarvimäki 2005) key goals which have been identified include:

Changing the structures and organisation of social work so as to correspond to the needs of clients and social work know-how.

Focusing social work training and research on basic research and directing them so as to respond to rapidly evolving social changes. (Union of Professional Social Workers - Finland)

To improve the system of social security,, to favour social integration people who live to the margins of the society, to contribute to the creation of social fibre and cohesion, represent an unavoidable point of departure for whichever model of development. In the meantime it's opportune to make a signal to the new forms of poverty: it's necessary to think with concern to Juvenile poverty, female poverty, to ensure attention to the so-called "immaterial poverty", typical of the city contexts that has lived in silence and solitude. There are those "nearly elderly" excluded from the productive system and yet not protected by pension's system; ... the working poor ... and the increasing new forms of addiction (Internet, shopping, etc). Associazione Nazionale Assistenti Sociali (Italy)



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4.2. the position of the social work profession in meeting the needs of people and communities

The evolution of the social work profession throughout history, was very much based on the principles of interdependence and solidarity. This implies that by its very nature social work is not of a self-seeking character and cannot develop in isolation from the broader systems and the society in which it provides its services. The interrelatedness of the social work profession and the societal, organisational, political and legislative environments in which it operates was clearly emphasised throughout the course of the project.

Social workers work within a system. Social workers are carrying out various responsibilities together with and on behalf of society. To do this work in a professional and responsible manner, Social workers need:

a professional framework including legislative and political support;

knowledge of various methods, academic background, field experiences and continuous training;

supervision for critical and reflective practice;

personal and emotional support;

an organisational and legislative context that enables a creative and effective response to people, families, communities and society.

Unfortunately the lack of the above conditions, considered as basic and essential for social workers to offer their services, was a constant feedback received and discussed throughout the various reports, workshops and meetings regarding the project.

A reflection of the quotes below, taken from a services users and carers panel and a social work association respectively the inconsistency between the type of organisational and legislative environment social workers often operate in and the expectations of people and society can be seen clearly.

“We want to have trusting relationships with workers whom we can be confident have our interests at heart and can help us find our way through the ‘system’. Social services workers should communicate well and know how to build and maintain a long term relationship.” *Users and Carers Panel- Report of the 21st Social work review, Scottish Executive, 2006*

The efforts made to catch up with the legislation for providing more and more social services, leads to the fact that the limited resource of social workers who apply this legislation, is trying to respond to the increasing requirements both by the state policy and by the users. This turns them into a buffer between the policy



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and the users, and professional burn out and the turnover in the departments is big. *Bulgarian Association of Social Workers*

Although the above have been taken from two different countries in Europe, they are highly representative of the nature of the many situations presented throughout the workshops. The Scottish executive report goes on to highlight a number of recommendations for ensuring that social workers are enabled and supported to practise accountably and exercise their professional autonomy.

5. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATIONS IN PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

In relation to the promotion of Social Cohesion, Social Work Associations in the various countries are in a position of independence that enables them to complement certain functions of social work that professionals in the field may not always be formally or informally enabled to. These functions include:

Being a voice to people's social and human rights at all levels

In Spain, like in France and Norway, social workers and social work associations have a recognised role in activism and advocacy and have for instance been involved in the discussions in congress regarding the new law against gender violence in Spain.

Being a united voice to social workers' and forwarding their feedback to policy makers and society in general

Due to the harsh realities being faced by social workers in Russia, in particular those responding to tragedies, the association's work over the past year were focused on lobbying for the provision of psychological support to social workers who have been involved with particularly traumatic circumstances such as widespread mortality, severe abuse and criminality.

Providing training to social workers in order for the profession to remain dynamic and responsive to emerging needs based on the feedback that professionals identify from the field rather than based on agency needs

The Croatian Association of Social Workers, with the unanimous consent of its members, has adopted the Social Workers' Ethical Codex and has founded an Honor Tribunal in case of not abiding by the codex. A close cooperation with all county associations has been established for the analyses of the specific quality and difference in the social problems of each region.

Professional symposiums organised by the Croatian Association of Social Workers include: Non-institutional Aspects of Care and



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the Social Work for Social Croatia Conference; a conference is planned for the end of the year on the subject of Violence in Society – a Challenge for Contemporary Social Work through which we are trying to educate social workers and trying to share professional

Developing standards and quality practice and education

Promoting and developing legislation related to the profession that promotes Social Cohesion

Establishing working relationships with National bodies, Commissions, Councils and Ombudsmen to foster the consistent adoption of the principles and values underlying Social Cohesion

Networking with other associations, organisations and entities at national and international levels for the exchange and sharing of knowledge, information, policies and practice methods across a territory. Thus fostering cohesiveness and consistency and updating processes across the territory.

Educating and working with the media regarding issues of discrimination, injustice, stigma and emerging social phenomena

6. RECCOMENDATIONS

a. European Policies

Recognition and adoption of the values and principles of Social Cohesion in – National policies and strategies, EU policies and strategies, service policies, social work codes of ethics

For a common definition on social cohesion to be adopted and to form the basis of a coordinated strategy

In order to address feelings of insecurity and lack of tolerance/solidarity, governments must clearly show commitment towards its social responsibilities and clearly embrace the values and principles of Social Cohesion

Promotion of the *values and principles* of Social Cohesion

Fostering civic participation and sense of belonging through community-based services and fora for public discussion - Social worker's organisations have to influence the development of social cohesion because of their accumulated knowledge about people individually and in groups

b. Social work role

Recognising the role of social workers in analysing systems and working with systems through critical practice and social action



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Social worker should be enabled to practice not only their roles as case workers and service providers but be given the space, time, resources and autonomy required for them to work with systems, society and social action

that reserved functions of social workers to be set out in regulations;

practitioners to be equipped to exercise professional autonomy and accountability;

the implications of personalisation to be considered and reflected in social worker education programmes;

new career pathways in practice and professional leadership linked to an agreed competence framework;

the continued development of a national recognition and reward framework for social workers, reflecting career pathways and competence.

c. Social work education

Associations and schools of social work should become more active in training social workers in human rights, empowerment and social action

Develop a range of approaches in promoting social cohesion

Need to have a broad education not too early specialism

d. services

Better coordination of service provision involving the various helping professions and sectors

Clearly giving people the right to coordinate or chose someone to coordinate the services and support they receive

Actively involving service users, and field professionals in policy making at all levels in order to respond to emerging needs

Prevention and promotion

- i. Educating society and individuals about their human rights and service user rights
- ii. Educating and working with the media regarding issues of discrimination, injustice, stigma and emerging social phenomena



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6.1. possibilities for follow up actions

Identify possible training needs for social workers specifically related to social cohesion in particular in the fields of human rights, social action and critical practice – one example is the proposed seminar on lobbying

Focus/clarify/define; to develop a front sheet based on this report once all feedback is received and it is finalised

Identify fora for further discussion with partner organisations and the possibility of further research

Promote cohesion among social workers and among social workers and other professions

Support service users to find their own voice throughout follow-up seminars, meetings etc.

Half day's seminar in Parma focusing on exchanging experiences on lobbying in different countries

Encourage students to carry out research regarding social cohesion.

7. CONCLUSION

This workshop started out by analysing various issues and social conditions reflecting a lack of social cohesion in the various countries. However the issues were very diverse and it was felt that recommendations of any validity would require a full report for each issue! Although at face value some issues may appear to be the same such as unemployment in different countries (notwithstanding the geographic and cultural proximity of the group) different countries still featured significant practical and administrative realities.

The underlying principles identified in this report are horizontal trends that were generally observed in all the countries represented in the workshop. They may be seen as:

- i. The framework of the developing meaning of social cohesion
- ii. The spirit, values and ethical basis of Social Cohesion the Europe
- iii. The underlying trends that impact on the development of Social Cohesion in Europe
- iv. Recommendations that will guide the services, the professionals, and the policies and laws to effectively and consistently promote Social Cohesion

As seen through the eyes of professionals in direct contact with various sectors of society



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