Standards in Social Work Practice meeting Human Rights
The Project was carried out by the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe and approved by the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe Delegates meeting 2010, that is responsible for its conclusion and opinions.
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Standards in Social Work Practice meeting Human Rights

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Foreword

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Chairman of Social Work
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In the later years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, across many countries of Europe, the early pioneers of social work strove to improve the lives of the ‘abandoned and forsaked’. Women such as Octavia Hill in the United Kingdom, Manon Lüttichau in Denmark, Alice Masaryk in Czechoslovakia, Alice Salomon in Germany, Helena Radlinska in Poland - to mention a few - worked tirelessly driven by commitment to improve the welfare of those society excluded. Subsequent generations of social workers, throughout Europe, stand on the shoulders of these giants - continuing the work that they began as they strive to realize the aspirations embedded at the heart of the social work profession to promote human rights. Working to achieve these aspirations is no easy matter; social workers need help. IFSW (Europe) has provided just such help in this volume by assisting social workers to understand what is required to promote Human Rights. The European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers are to be congratulated in having taken an important step forward to promote Human Rights across European Social Work and beyond. The publication of a set of standards for meeting Human Rights makes clear, perhaps for the first time what is expected of social workers and their employers to meet their obligations that arise from the various international conventions on Human Rights. It behoves all those associated with the profession across Europe to engage with these standards, to work actively towards their attainment in day-to-day professional practice and to ensure that all new recruits to the profession know of these standards and the obligations to society that are required. Those that have worked tirelessly to produce this statement deserve our gratitude and thanks.
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International Federation of Social Workers, Europe - [www.ifsw.org](http://www.ifsw.org) - europe@ifsw.org
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STANDARDS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE MEETING HUMAN RIGHTS

1 Background

1.1 A project of the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe

In 2007 the delegates meeting of the European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers held in Parma, Italy, launched a project to gain an international overview of the various instruments, frameworks and definitions around the topic of Standards in the Social Work profession in Europe.

1.1.1 Within the historical context of Social Work and the Social Work role, definition, values and principles as well as within the International Social Work Context, the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe’s (IFSWE) Delegates Meeting of 2007 stated that the topic of Standards in Social Work practice needed to take place in the context of the role of Social Work in the promotion and realisation of Human Rights.

1.2 A Framework for Standards in Social Work Practice

The ongoing development of Standards in Social Work Practice takes place in the context of Social Work as a profession committed to the promotion and realisation of Human Rights.

The International Federation of Social Workers recognises that Social Work originates variously from humanitarian, religious and democratic ideals and philosophies; and that it has universal application to meet human needs arising from personal-societal interactions, and to develop human potential.
Professional social workers are dedicated to service for the welfare and self-fulfilment of human beings; to the development and disciplined use of scientific knowledge regarding human behaviour and society; to the development of resources to meet individual, group, national and international needs and aspirations; to the enhancement and improvement of the quality of life of people; and to the achievement of social justice.

IFSW is divided in five geographical regions: Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean and North America.

Each region elects representatives to the IFSW Global Human Rights Network and Permanent Committee on Ethical Issues.

The International Federation of Social Workers European Region has 40 member associations in 35 countries, with a total of 165,600 Social Workers - the membership is representative as it covers all corners of Europe. IFSW Europe cooperates with other organisations in Europe. It has a long-standing tradition of working closely together with the “European Association of Schools of Social Work” and the “European Region of the International Council of Social Welfare”. This cooperation is now brought into a formal frame called the European Network for Social Action, including three other member organisations in the social field. Co-operation with other European organisations includes the European Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Social Platform and European Federation of Public Service Unions.

1.3 Human Rights

For 60 years the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948 have defined the field of human rights. Three ‘generations’ of rights were delineated in this landmark treaty (Wronka, 1995). These are:

i. First-generation rights consisting of civil and political rights;

ii. Second-generation rights, including economic, social and cultural rights;

and
iii. Third-generation rights, those rights that belong to and require the cooperation of people across the globe, including the right to peace, to a clean environment, to a system of fair trade, etc.

These rights have been elaborated in subsequent covenants detailing the first- and second-generation rights and in conventions addressing the special human rights claims of particularly oppressed groups. Among the most important treaties are:

- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (1953)
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966);
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966);
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989);
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006);
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

1 The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines certain political, social, and economic rights for European Union citizens and residents, into European Union law. It was drafted and officially proclaimed in 2000, but its legal status was then uncertain and it did not have full legal effect until the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009.
While many aspects of the treaties – including those that deal with large macro issues of peace, self-determination and freedom – apply to Social Work, Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are particularly relevant as these spell out important social and economic rights to basic needs and services2 (Healy, 2008). Healy, 2008 points out that although the extensive rights spelled out in the UDHR are claimed to be interdependent and indivisible, more attention has been given to first-generation rights by world leaders – especially those in the West – and by groups such as Amnesty International.

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2 Article 22 reads: ‘Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality’ (UN, 1948). Article 25 expands on this in areas important to Social Work: ‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control’ (UN, 1948).
1.4 Social Work is a human rights profession

Gore of India (1969) linked Social Work to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in his speech to the International Conference on Social Welfare in 1968:

‘the relevance of the Declaration for Social Work lies mainly in the fact that it unequivocally recognizes the worth and dignity of the person ... Social Work proceeds from the same basic assumption that every human individual is worthy in himself, independent of his material or social condition’.

Over twenty years ago the International Federation of Social Workers declared that Social Work was and always has been a human rights profession (International Federation of Social Workers, 1988). Healy (2008) traces the historical involvement of the profession of Social Work in international human rights and the validity of its claim to be a human rights profession.

1.4.1 The introduction to the International Federation of Social Workers policy paper states: ‘Social Work has, from its conception, been a human rights profession, having as its basic tenet the intrinsic value of every human being and as one of its main aims the promotion of equitable social structures, which can offer people security and development while upholding their dignity’.

The publication of this document launched a series of human rights initiatives by International Federation of Social Workers and, to a lesser but still significant extent, the International Association of the Schools of Social Work (Healy, 2008).

More recently, professional involvement in human rights action and scholarship has intensified, and has resulted in the publication of a number of books on human rights and Social Work (Ife, 2001; Reichert, 2003, 2007; Wronka, 2008).

1.4.2 The manual, *Human Rights and Social Work*, states: ‘More than many professions, Social Work educators and practitioners are conscious that their concerns are closely linked to respect for human rights. They accept the premise that human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, and that the full realization of civil and political rights is impossible without enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights’ (United Nations, 1994: 5).

The document continues:

1.4.3 ‘Human rights are inseparable from Social Work theory, values and ethics, and practice ... Advocacy of such rights must therefore be an integral part of Social Work, even if in countries living under authoritarian regimes such advocacy can have serious consequences for Social Work professionals’ (United Nations, 1994: 5). The International Federation of Social Workers has also issued a manual on children’s rights (2002).

The above publications have been reflected in all recent documents issued by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and are continuously being renewed and revisited.
The International Definition of Social Work adopted in 2000, and the Statement of Ethical Principles adopted in 2004 are of core relevance to the identity of the profession.


1.4.4.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
1.4.4.2 The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
1.4.4.3 The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights;
1.4.4.4 The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination;
1.4.4.5 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
1.4.4.6 The Convention on the Rights of the Child;
1.4.4.7 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO convention 169);

IFSW also formed a Human Rights Commission in 1988 to advocate on behalf of persecuted Social Workers. The commission also issues statements to governments on other human rights violations. The location of the headquarters of the IFSW in Geneva from 1975 to 1992 enhanced its participation in human rights issues through the United Nations (UN). National organizations have their own records of human rights initiatives and some have issued human rights policy statements.

1.4.5 The IFSW’s Policy on human rights states amongst other things, that ‘the social work profession accepts its share of responsibility for working to oppose and eliminate all violations of human rights.'
Social workers must exercise this responsibility in their practice with individuals, groups and communities, in their roles as agency or organisational representatives and as citizens of a nation and the world’ (IFSW 1996). The IFSWE’s Project Standards in Social Work Practice meeting Human Rights aims to address human rights by focussing on the various elements constituting the term ‘human rights’. This brief introduction reviews the way social work practitioners and educators engage with human rights issues in their daily work.

The contested nature of social work can be seen when one realises that the concept of social work has been shared between those who believe it is an activity that seeks to change the social structures that oppress certain individuals or groups of people and those who believe social work must assist individuals to adapt to their life conditions if those people are unwilling or unable to adapt to social norms and standards of behaviour. This concept spans the dichotomies between structure and action as well as conflict and order. The dichotomy is characterised by Dominelli (2002) as the divide between those social workers who argue for ‘liberation’ and those who argue for the ‘status quo’. This position was also identified by participants as true across Europe and must be consequently be considered when addressing the issue of human rights and social work.

Ife (2001) suggests that human rights are constantly constructed, contested and reconstructed. He reiterates the IFSW Policy on Human Rights when he suggests that responding to human rights is the responsibility of the social work practitioner and social work educator. This responsibility requires linking theory and practice in the responses that are made. Ife refers to the Freire’s idea of ‘praxis’ to argue for the joining together of theory and practice that also ‘means that there can be no clear separation between social work education and social work practice’ (2001:141). Praxis requires an on-going commitment on the path from undergraduate/postgraduate training to continuing professional development as a practitioner or educator.
When we speak of social work and human rights, the interpretation of social work will influence how the practitioner or teacher addresses it in practice. Dominelli (2002) suggests that that the discourse around social work ethics could be the basis for bringing the various strands of social work thought together. Realising human rights is fundamental to anti-oppressive practice. To achieve human rights, action must be taken at both the individual and the collective levels. In this scenario, the social worker must draw upon what Payne describes as the necessary attributes of social work, that is, ‘the personal, professional and the political’ (1996). At the same time, the social worker must be aware of the need to avoid practices that may themselves contribute to breaches of rights.

This IFSWE Project can be viewed as an attempt to join theory to practice and to explore the profession in today’s reality. Social work is under increasing pressure on several fronts. Many social workers feel disempowered and marginalised by the increasing managerialism, discriminatory legislative and policy developments. The rights of social workers are also stressed and often breached in these circumstances. Social workers must therefore also strive to work effectively with the users of their services to challenge the personal and structural inequalities that diminish Civil, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Europe.
1.5 Standards in Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights

Social Workers are key to building Europe’s capacity for responding to the realities threatening Social Cohesion in Europe by:

i. Delivering services and being a positive presence for the entire community;
ii. Offering empowerment and protection to individuals and the community through a rights-based approach;
iii. Working with vulnerable groups;
iv. Responding to the changing national and international contexts in professional and practical ways;
v. Using their expertise, knowledge and experience to critically assess and analyse social cohesion at a holistic level;
vi. Skillfully maintaining the balance in their key position between the individual and society, between service provision and service development, between social care and social control, between interpersonal and national politics and more;
vii. Actively promoting economic and social justice that can sometimes be at considerable personal risk or political oppression.

In recognition of the global changes affecting Social Work, in 2001 the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work initiated the dialogue on Global Standards in the Social Work profession. This work, identified the core purposes of Social Work in the global context to include the following:

i. Facilitate the inclusion of marginalised, socially excluded, dispossessed, vulnerable and at-risk groups of people.
ii. Address and challenge barriers, inequalities and injustices that exist in society.
iii. Form short and longer-term working relationships with and mobilise individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their wellbeing and their problem-solving capacities.
iv. Assist and educate people to obtain services and resources in their communities.

v. Formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhance people’s wellbeing, promote development and human rights, and promote collective social harmony and social stability, insofar as such stability does not violate human rights.

vi. Encourage people to engage in advocacy with regard to pertinent local, national, regional and/or international concerns.

vii. Act with and/or for people to advocate the formulation and targeted implementation of policies that are consistent with the ethical principles of the profession.

viii. Act with and/or for people to advocate changes in those policies and structural conditions that maintain people in marginalised, dispossessed and vulnerable positions, and those that infringe the collective social harmony and stability of various ethnic groups, insofar as such stability does not violate human rights.

ix. Work towards the protection of people who are not in a position to do so themselves, for example children and youth in need of care and persons experiencing mental illness or mental retardation, within the parameters of accepted and ethically sound legislation.

x. Engage in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development, and to effect change by critiquing and eliminating inequalities.

xi. Enhance stable, harmonious and mutually respectful societies that do not violate people’s human rights.

xii. Promote respect for traditions, cultures, ideologies, beliefs and religions amongst different ethnic groups and societies, insofar as these do not conflict with the fundamental human rights of people.

xiii. Plan, organise, administer and manage programmes and organisations dedicated to any of the purposes delineated above.
Alphonse, George & Moffatt (2008) argue the case that standards also need to redefine the role and scope of Social Work practice so that it is responsive to the local context and can also transcend the local order to accommodate globalisation. Such changes, they argue could rejuvenate the progressive orientation of Social Work and re-establish its relevance today. In line with the above rationale, the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe project meetings emphasized that standards need to be understood in terms of the dialectic between the local conditions and global forces.

During the last decade there has been an increasing demand of evidence in the practice of Social Work and documentation of this work. It has therefore been a challenge for the general Social Worker to find ways of practice in which they could satisfy this demand.

1.5.1 There has been a great emphasis upon making the Social Work more knowledge based, preferably on a scientific basis. This has resulted in increased demand for evidence based work and greater interest in research of the outcome.

The financial crisis in Europe increases the demand from the local governments towards the cost benefit analysis of Social Work and pressingly raises the issue of “most value for money”. Together with an increased focus on New Public Management it raises the question of how the Social Workers can perform their social services.

When local government has an increased focus on the financial side of Social Work, Social Workers must have an increased focus on the evidence of the work they do. This evidence can be collected in many ways of research.

1.5.2 By using evidence-based practice; the Social Workers are able to use their knowledge of Social Work practice in the research they perform. Through this they can develop methods for future Social Work practice.

1.5.3 The changing demands for evidence must be mirrored in the demands for quality and standards in Social Work practice.
Further, in discussions between member countries, the extreme complexity of the world that Social Workers are practicing in comes to the fore. As also noted by Hare (2004), Social Workers need to understand the forces of globalization – economic, ecological and social – to connect with their international colleagues, and to represent themselves in an informed fashion in international circles. This applies whether they are delivering direct services to immigrants, refugees (Mupedziswa, 1997) or those displaced and traumatized by famine, war, terrorism or natural disasters, or whether they are participating in international policy-making or planning organizations (Ife, 2000: 62–3). In the words of Malcolm Payne (1996: 172): ‘We need a changed conception of Social Work which represents effectively the whole range of its knowledge and skills throughout the world . . . [This will facilitate shared discourse derived] from a shared conception that organized social action and intervention are worthwhile for related social purposes.’ Hence, Hare (2004) portrays the definition of Social Work in the following diagram that depicts the profession in a framework of goals, services, competencies and positions in a context of cultural factors.

**Figure 1 Definition of Social Work, Hare (2004)**
1.5.4 The International Federation of Social Workers, Europe project asserts the fact that all the above factors and in particular the organizational context of Social Work cannot be ignored for the influence they bear on the profession’s activities.

2 The Project

In the Delegate's Meeting of 2007 held in Parma, Italy the European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers, launched a project to gain an international overview of the various instruments, frameworks and definitions around the topic of Standards in the Social Work profession in Europe. Within the above historical context, The International Federation of Social Workers, Europe’s (IFSWE) Delegates Meeting of 2007 stated that the topic of Standards in Social Work practice needed to take place in the context of the role of Social Work in the promotion and realisation of Human Rights.

During the Delegates Meeting held in Dubrovnik 2009, it was acknowledged that the IFSWE project “Standards in Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights” is an opportunity for Social Work in Europe to look to the future and assert its identity and its human rights focus more clearly.

Following a presentation of a Draft Report, it was agreed that this project contributes to raising awareness regarding the profile of the profession and the conditions required by Social Workers across Europe to continue to fulfill their mission.

Consequently the final outcome of the project should also be a tool for Social Workers across Europe to influence their organizational contexts and bring about necessary policy changes.

2.1 Aims

The 2007-2009 project of the IFSWE aims to:

i. Highlight human rights thinking;
ii. Promote human rights thinking it in the language of Social Workers;

iii. Approach the topic of standards and regulation with a focus on practice-experience perspectives;

iv. Promote good standards of practice in Social Work and Social Work related processes, rather than define/prescribe the one good standard;

v. Gain insight through an analysis of the topic by bringing the professional forum together– to exchange, to develop, to empower;

vi. Share and promote good and accountable Social Work practice;

vii. Raise awareness about the conditions in which Social Workers practice;

viii. Promote the status of Social Workers across Europe.

The following subthemes identified for development included:

• Organisational conditions in Social Work which support and promote standards;
• Regulatory frameworks of the profession which compliment/implement standards;
• Use and misuse of information;
• Training and professional development;
• User perspectives.

The meeting also agreed to implement the project in liaison with the International Federation of Social Workers Human Rights representatives and to create relevance to European perspectives closely related to social change and development issues in some countries and which are being challenged in others.

2.2 Methodology

Questionnaires were sent out to all member organisations as a template for developing the project. Information was gathered regarding:

1. National Social Work organisations 2. Psychological support available

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<tr>
<td>3. Country Population</td>
<td>4. Other support</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Population of Social Workers</td>
<td>6. Type of regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Role of the association/organisation</td>
<td>8. Regulator name and contact details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Level of Social Work education</td>
<td>10. Whether the profession has its own standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Definition of Social Work</td>
<td>12. Whether Social Work services have standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Code of Ethics</td>
<td>14. If yes, are these the same as the Social Work standards?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Typical salary</td>
<td>16. Whether standards are a shared responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Typical caseload</td>
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Member Associations from the following 21 Countries Participated:

1. Austria  
2. Ireland  
3. Romania  
4. Bulgaria  
5. Israel  
6. Russia  
7. Croatia  
8. Italy  
9. Serbia  
10. Denmark  
11. Lithuania  
12. Spain  
13. Finland  
14. Malta  
15. Sweden  
16. France  
17. Norway  
18. Switzerland  
19. Germany  
20. Portugal  
21. United Kingdom

Following the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, regional seminars were organized in Sofia/Bulgaria, Berlin/Germany, Vienna/Austria and Madrid/Spain between the 17th October and 30th November 2008. The regional Seminars were attended by one or more delegates from participating member organisations and held two day discussions and covered the following Agenda:

2.2.1 Demographic and organisation information
2.2.2 Discussion and sharing of Legislation and Regulatory Frameworks that support good standards of Social Work practice
2.2.3 Discussion on Conditions of Work in the various countries that support good standards of Social Work practice
2.2.4 Creating a framework which could be the basis for good Social Work practice - standards for practice
2.2.5 Focused discussion on key issues (each workshop focused on ONE of the subthemes)

A Working Group to finalise the Report met in Paris in October 2009. The meeting was kindly and enthusiastically hosted by the French Association, ANAS.

The working group discussed the following items were discussed at length and each developed by the working group members for inclusion into the final report:

2.2.6 Bringing ownership of the framework on standards.
o Empowering Social Workers through the Framework – realising professional leadership including performance with professional knowledge.

o Empowering Service Users

o Making the link between employers and professionals.

o Some minimum ethical standards should not be resource influenced.

o Implementation of the Framework on Social Work Standards

o New public management and evidence based science vs practice based knowledge and ethical considerations.

2.2.7 Further elaboration on the Education, Training, Development and Supervision of Social Workers

o Qualifications, including CPD, Induction and Supervision.

o Considerations on the Bologna process

o Social Workers crossing borders and mutual recognition.

o Education – including human rights in the curriculum.

2.2.8 Elaboration and more emphasis on work conditions of Social Workers

o Work conditions of Social Workers in Europe

o Caseload and workload management

o Main organisational problems faced by Social Workers

2.3 Findings

The detailed findings, reports and background papers may be consulted by members of the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe. A summary of some of the main findings is found in the figures below.
2.3.1 Comparative Analysis

Figure 2 No of Inhabitants per Social Worker in different countries in Europe

Figures calculated through country population and estimated number of practicing Social Workers in each country as provided by participants

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4 Figures calculated through country population and estimated number of practicing Social Workers in each country as provided by participants
This chart divided the type of Social Work education in each country. A Bachelor Degree of 3 or more years is available and is considered the minimum level of education with the exception of Finland where the Title of Social Worker requires a Master of Science Degree. This minimum level also includes other paths towards obtaining an equivalent e.g. on the job training and qualification.

Due to the variety of caseloads that exist in a country, not all organisations were able to provide figures for this question. Although organisations were asked for typical caseload, some provided minimum and maximum figures as shown in the above chart.
**Figure 5 Range of Typical Gross Monthly Earnings**

**Figure 6 Areas of Social Work practice that Social Work Standards cover according to the understanding/situation in the different countries**

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7 Each circle represents a country. The Average according to this data is 1958 Euro per month. EU averages (far right) taken from Eurostat [www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu](http://www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu), 15/04/2009 by tertiary level of education/ Education; Health and Social Work; Other community, social, personal service activities/ total males and females/2006
2.4 Current Examples of good and common practice ... Social Work is human rights work across Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Equal professional relationship and treatment for all clients. Engagement of Social Workers in the improvement of the quality of life for Croatian Roma community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>In the discussion and understanding of care and use of force in the work with mentally disabled adults, and in the discussion about child welfare and involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>The municipality social services ombudsman provides such a local service, ensuring that legal security is respected. The Promising Good Practice Prize was awarded to the Sörkka Unbeatable project which seeks new ways to prevent domestic and intimate partner violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Child protection: connections are maintained between children and their families, contracts made with parents, family mediation, social prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>IASW’s work with older person’s advocacy group to campaign against cutbacks in services that enabled older persons live with dignity at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Cooperation with UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Many Social Workers from municipalities try to defend and fulfill the rights of children, the elderly and women those who are abused, or neglected and to organize supporting/meeting needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>The Richmond Foundation - working with persons with mental health difficulties; Social Workers actively involve service users in service provision through user-led support groups, interviewing panels, management committees as well as other decision making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>“Rosaprojektet”, The ROSA project gives various forms of help and protection to female victims of trafficking in Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>The Social Workers intervention at multidisciplinary teams at Comissões de Protecção de Crianças e Jovens CPCJ (Local Community Commissions to the Children protection that are at risk or in danger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Mediation and procuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>International Amnesty Spanish Section is a good example of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Promotion of a common base of dignity and awareness of ethical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>User’s participatory management in the home care services and institutional services are, from 2008, a legal condition for different residential services with public financial participation on a national level</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K</td>
<td>Campaign for ensuring all children have equal access to services regardless of citizenship, MHO role in Scotland</td>
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</table>
3 The Basis for a Common Framework of Standards in Social Work Practice in Europe

3.1 This document is intended to consolidate the basic parameters within which Social Work in Europe operates into a common framework for Social Work in Europe. This framework is considered a key step in contributing towards the ongoing development of Standards for Social Work Practice in Europe.

As a number of authors have pointed out, action orientation is a great strength in Social Work that can make a real difference in peoples lives and in the context of their situations. Social Workers take action; they engage in securing human rights for individuals and communities. The global Social Work human rights agenda, as witnessed by this project, shows no signs of diminishing. However this work holds the fundamental realisation that Social Work does not exist in a vacuum. Social Workers exercise this responsibility in practice with individuals, groups and communities, in their roles as agency or organisational representatives and as citizens of a nation and the world’ (IFSW 1996). The International Federation of Social Workers, Europe asserts the fact that the organizational contexts of Social Work cannot be ignored for the influence they bear on the profession’s activities.

3.1.1 Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training’ and a new ‘Ethical Document’ are documents jointly worked out discussed and finally agreed by both the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work in 2004.
Together with the ‘Joint Definition of Social Work’, these documents have been and are of key important to the development of Social Work education curricula and professional development internationally. The adoption, application and observance of the principles and guidelines in these documents are the basis of common standards for the Social Work Profession in each country. These documents are appended to this report.

3.1.2 Although the Standards are largely based on qualification and education of the profession, the nature of the Social Work profession makes it particularly sensitive to the larger political, economic and organisational realities.

This project of the European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers, arose from a felt need for a structure and process of professional accountability on which to continue building a European identity of Social Work that respects the history, development and culture of the profession. There was an agreement that a framework for standards would support member organisations in demanding these standards from the Social Workers, the governments and the employers.

Participant countries further noted that the purpose of the IFSWe project 2007-2009 is part of a process of building and strengthening trust in the profession by clarifying the role of Social Workers and society’s expectations of the profession. In line with this stance, Strauss (2008) in her analysis of the new public management in Nordic Countries identifies an interesting ‘new position’ for the profession where Social Workers may actually be integrating new values of efficiency and democracy into professional work.

3.1.3 Such a framework places Social Work as a key profession in balancing service user needs and rights and contextual tensions; as contrasting with professions traditionally based on values of knowledge and elitism. In character with such role this framework seeks to:

3.1.3.1 To inform services users about what they should expect of Social Work;
3.1.3.2 Acknowledge the tensions between service user needs and rights, professionalism, management, political, economic and societal factors;
3.1.3.3 To inform about the contribution, role and tasks of Social Work towards the wellbeing of the community within the broad European policy context;

3.1.3.4 To support and maintain a good standard and quality of Social Work practice, education, training and regulation across Europe which inevitably depends on the relationship between the Social Worker and service user and the value base of the Social Work profession;

3.1.3.5 To inform organisational settings on how to maintain good standards in Social Work raise practice so that organisational structures provide the environment and tools toward meeting service user rights and needs;

3.1.3.6 To ensure that Social Workers in Europe abide by and in turn are not put in a position which conflicts with their professional code of ethics;

3.1.3.7 To promote the status of Social Workers and enable scarce professional resources to be better used;

3.1.3.8 To promote the links between Social Work and human rights.

3.2 Definition, Roles and Professional Title

The international definition of the Social Work profession adopted jointly by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work replaces the IFSW definition 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. In July 2001, both the IASSW and the IFSW reached agreement on adopting the following international definition of Social Work:

The Definition document proceeds to elaborate that 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; and is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice. It further notes that:

3.2.2 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.

The document also emphasises that 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.

3.2.3 Emerging clearly from the European debate is that Professional Social Work:

3.2.3.1 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; Addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society;

3.2.3.2 Responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems;

3.2.3.3 Works in partnership with services users;

3.2.3.4 Has an important role in the implementation of social strategies, negotiation and interdisciplinary practice;

3.2.3.5 Promotes prevention, integration and cohesion;

3.2.3.6 Is a dynamic profession with a definition that is alive and renews itself according to the needs of people and society.

Social Work utilises a variety of skills, techniques, and activities consistent with its holistic focus on persons and their environments. The definition document identifies the following interventions:
3.2.4 Social Work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes involvement in social policy, planning and development. These include:

3.2.4.1 Counselling;
3.2.4.2 Clinical Social Work;
3.2.4.3 Group work;
3.2.4.4 Social pedagogical work;
3.2.4.5 Family treatment and therapy as well as;
3.2.4.6 Efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community;
3.2.4.7 Agency administration;
3.2.4.8 Community organisation and
3.2.4.9 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 (International Federation of Social Workers, 2000).

Kendall (2000) suggests that Social Workers have much to offer to contemporary debates on welfare reform, but regrets that not enough has been heard from them on the value and risks of contemporary legislative reforms. She calls for a reappraisal of the dual goals of Social Work to help individuals and families and re-affirms the capacity of Social Workers to contribute to social policy through the formulation of policies to deal with social change. This view resonated in the discussions held by participant practitioners from the different countries that went on to challenge the efficacy of currently available models of emancipatory, radical or other “change models” in today’s political and organisational realities.
Sharing this view, Tew (2006) points out that current frameworks, such as anti-oppressive practice, may be insufficient in being able to identify the range and complexity of power relations that may be enacted within a social situation. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding, Tew presents a discussion of the application of a framework for analysing the operation of different forms of power – one that acknowledges the potential of power to be both damaging and productive. The discussion presented by Tew suggests that Social Work should focus on how power relations are organized around social differences; suggesting incremental rather than revolutionary processes of change.

3.2.5 The participants noted that Social Work works reflectively, critically and creatively from existing identities in order to change the way that social differences are constructed.

3.2.6 Social Workers are key to building Europe’s capacity for responding to the realities threatening Social cohesion in Europe by:

3.2.6.1 Delivering services and being a positive presence for the entire community;

3.2.6.2 Offering empowerment and protection to individuals and the community through a rights-based approach;

3.2.6.3 Working with vulnerable groups;

3.2.6.4 Responding to the changing national and international contexts in professional and practical ways;

3.2.6.5 Using their expertise, knowledge and experience to critically assess and analyse social cohesion at a holistic level;

3.2.6.6 Skilfully maintaining the balance in their key position between the individual and society, between service provision and service development, between social care and social control, between interpersonal and national politics and more;

3.2.6.7 Actively promoting economic and social justice that can sometimes be at considerable personal risk or political oppression.
While human rights conventions bring frameworks for justice and fulfilment of basic needs, a rights-based approach is not as straightforward as it may seem.

3.2.7 Practitioners involved in the project pointed out that the issue of how these rights can be realised with respect for the rights of all those concerned requires professional skill for creating a space for dialogue, the creation of meaning and correct interpretation.

A clear example is the application and interpretation of the Convention for the Rights of the Child where fulfilling the right to protection may be seen either as a question of legal status or as a question of leverage for commitment with different consequences on the children, parents and family.

3.2.8 Payne (2007) points out that the uniqueness of Social Work is that it seeks to achieve social improvement, that is, positive social change, through interpersonal work while also seeking to work with the personal consequences of social change.

This particular combination of objectives is unique among professions. Many professions that work with individuals through interpersonal work aim to benefit that person, their client, their patient, their pupil, their student, Social Workers however are unique in making it part of their professional role to achieve positive social change as part of their interpersonal work. Again, many occupations and professions aim to achieve positive social change, including journalists, policy analysts, civil servants, politicians; but they do not seek to deal interpersonally with the people affected by the changes they create.

3.3 Codes and Ethical thinking

8 The document “Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles” was approved at the General Meetings of the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work in Adelaide, Australia, October 2004
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 disadvantaged, 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.

3.3.1 The purpose of the work of IASSW and IFSW on ethics is to promote ethical debate and reflection in the member organisations, among the providers of Social Work in member countries, as well as in the schools of Social Work and among Social Work students.

Some ethical challenges and problems facing Social Workers are specific to particular countries; others are common. By staying at the level of general principles, the joint IFSW and IASSW statement aims to encourage Social Workers across the world to reflect on the challenges and dilemmas that face them and make ethically informed decisions about how to act in each particular case.

The Joint Statement on Ethics states that Social Work is based on the principles of Human Rights, Human Dignity and Social Justice. These principles clearly promote and testify the purpose of Social Work to set itself standards that marry the promotion and realisation of Human Rights.

3.3.2 It is the responsibility of the national organisations in membership of IFSW and IASSW to develop and regularly update their own codes of ethics or ethical guidelines, to be consistent with the IFSW/IASSW statement/s;

3.3.3 All Social Workers and service users should have the possibility to refer to a body with the legally recognised remit of safeguarding of professional ethics and providing redress;
3.3.4 It is the responsibility of Social Workers to raise breaches in Ethics and Human Rights;

3.3.5 It is also the responsibility of national organisations to inform Social Workers and schools of Social Work about these codes or guidelines;

3.3.6 Social Workers should act in accordance with the ethical code or guidelines current in their country. These will generally include more detailed guidance in ethical practice specific to the national context.

Payne (2008) identifies complexity in Social Work as a further development of critical reflection and coins the term “complexity thinking”.

3.3.7 The significance of the concept of complexity thinking in Social Work is that standards and codes of practice should not seek to oversimplify the complexity of the situations that Social Workers and their clients face.

Thus Social Work codes of conduct and of ethics risk offering fairly simple prescriptions for professional action. As concluded by Banks (2003), it is important not to take codes of ethics too literally but rather to consider them as guides to practice for professionals facing ethical dilemmas. Further, although the human rights approach is rooted in the value base and definition of the profession, what happens, when these values are in conflict with state and/or organisational policy? For example the Social Worker employed to work in a pre-asylum detention centre?

3.3.8 Ethical codes need to be set in a regulatory structure and should focus more on ethical dilemmas;

3.3.9 Codes of Ethics should be accompanied by a code for employers of Social Workers.

3.4 The Knowledge-Base for Practice
3.4.1 “The Global Standards for Education and Training of the Social Work Profession” Jointly adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work in 2004 is the basis for standards in social work education internationally. These standards elaborate guidelines for:

3.4.1.1 The Social Work school’s core purpose or mission statement
3.4.1.2 Programme objectives and outcomes
3.4.1.3 Programme curricula, including fieldwork
3.4.1.4 Core curricula

The definition document states that 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.

3.4.2 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.

Through this project the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe has posed itself the question of what is the knowledge base from a human rights perspective such a dynamic Social Work profession as Social Work in today's global realities? In a new model of society – a society of civil citizenship, Social Work must contribute towards supporting society in values such as equality, participation, social responsibility and social diversity. In a European context characterised by:

- A worldwide economic crises and an emerging debate about capitalist systems;
- Persons and goods circulation reserved within the European region (2010);
- Social European model in debate and
• Ethnic and cultural diversity improvement, from globalization processes, bringing questions about global citizenship on common (and not common) economic interests.

3.4.3 In response to these challenges and their consequences, Social Workers must be aware about users’ needs in looking for sustainable answers. This means Human Rights realisation; respecting each person; asserting the basic values and principles of Social Work of Human Rights and Social Justice, as stated in “Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles” (IFSW/ IASSW, 2004).

3.4.4 Social Workers must therefore be aware about the following perspectives:

3.4.4.1 Humanist and sustainable perspective (focus on the dignity and needs of human beings in present and future generations and to their ecological life conditions);

3.4.4.2 Democratic perspective (looking for adequate development conditions—economic, social, cultural—facilitating users participation at social and civil level in society);

3.4.4.3 Political and economic perspective (promoting the subsidiary principle, equality of opportunities and political / social / cultural rights);

3.4.4.4 Educational perspective (to be aware about their scientific knowledge, professional skills, and research competences that as student has reached from his / her academic education or as professional at life-long learning individual process.

With regard to requirements of academic curricula of Social Work education we can refer to Jim Ife (2001). To this author a practice based in Human Rights requires Social Workers to hold specific competence that he calls “Foundations”.

3.4.5 These Foundations includes

3.4.5.1 “Praxis” a theoretical reflection that develops into action;
3.4.5.2 “Morality” or “ethical sensibility” means to know the values and manage moral or ethical dilemmas;

3.4.5.3 “Passion” a strong desire to change oppressed situations;

3.4.5.4 “Ideology” an understanding of Human Rights not as an individual issue but as a collective issue;

3.4.5.5 “History” a contextualized understanding of Human Rights over the time;

3.4.5.6 “Structural disadvantage” to understand the failure of realization of Human Rights due to structural oppression or disadvantage;

3.4.5.7 “Holism” to see Human Rights over western civilization, rejecting a restricted linear thinking accompanied by a critical understanding of “Postmodernism and post-structuralism” and its challenges and implications to Social Work intervention.

3.4.6 “Empowerment” as a second major theme is the capacity of Social Workers to enable people to define their rights and to act in order to have them realised.

Participants were well aware of the several issues about power that Social Workers manage. With reference to these issues Ife (2001) talks about the usefulness of knowledge and understanding of the following:

3.4.6.1 “Dialogical Praxis” a “dialogue” linking the personal and political;

3.4.6.2 a process of “conscientisation” in the view of Paulo Freire;

3.4.6.3 “Participatory democracy” another dimension of “Empowerment” that means to create specific conditions to all people for the maximum participation. “Feminism” or better, sensitivity in view to justice in gender-relationships and “Anti-Colonialist” practice as a way to fight against oppressive or dominate strategies of groups, individuals or states”;

9 In the scientific language is often used the term ‘ethic’ for scientific value-orientation, while the term ‘moral’ is used for the traditional or cultural or religious-influenced attitudes and behaviour of people, which is not seen or reflected in the perspective a scientific based ethic.
3.4.6.4 Non violence” another dimension of “empowerment” that is adopted according to the Social Work principles;

3.4.6.5 “Needs” because citizens must be “allowed” to express their needs\(^{10}\). As a central component of Human Rights based Social Work needs are identified through the professionals;

3.4.6.6 “Research “methodologies that must be addressed towards empowerment and Human Rights and cannot therefore be neutral, positivist, value free research, but rather research with clearly articulated value positions” (2001: 159);

3.4.7 “Contextual /universal issues” - “Confronting such universal /context dualism is a major challenge for human rights- based Social Work” (Ife, 2001:160). Dualisms are referred to as:

3.4.7.1 “The personal and political”;

3.4.7.2 “Private and public”;

3.4.7.3 “Cultural relativism”;

3.4.7.4 “Macro and micro practice”;

3.4.7.5 “The global and the local”.

Finally a Human Rights basis for Social Work, where Human Rights are by their very nature universal, requires a creative global / local practice (Ife 2001: 166).

3.5 Qualification

According to “The Global Standards for Education and Training of the Social Work Profession”, the document identifies certain universals and may be used as a guideline to develop national standards with regard to Social Work education and training. The document reflects consensus around key issues, roles and purposes of Social Work. However, given the profession's historically fragmented strands; the contemporary debates around Social Work's intra-professional identity; its identity vis-à-vis other categories of personnel in the welfare sector such as development workers, child care workers, probation officers, community workers and youth workers (where such categories of personnel are differentiated from Social Work); and the enormous diversities across nations and regions, there was some scepticism about the possibility of identifying any such ‘universal’ levels of qualification. The suggestion was that such a document must be sufficiently flexible to be applicable to any context. Such flexibility should allow for interpretations of locally specific Social Work education and practice, and take into account each country’s or region’s socio-political, cultural, economic and historical contexts while adhering to international standards. Notwithstanding, within the European context, the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe has developed this framework for Standards to include more practical guidelines.

One suggestion was that these practical guidelines should include: a multi-tiered classification for the basic qualification and the identification of core competencies, knowledge and skills as applied to context-specific realities. This preference was also widely expressed by the participants of the IFSWE project 2007-2009.
Education in the various participant countries is largely speaking, oriented towards the Bologna Process supporting transfer of academic knowledge into professional practice knowledge. Yet participants emphasized the importance of such transfer of knowledge to take place in a context of ongoing practice and professional development. The importance of education and practice based on research and academic knowledge is evident in the increasing number of master course opportunities and emerging PhD opportunities in Social Work. However ...

3.5.1 ... the most common and available education level for Social Workers in all of the participant countries remains the undergraduate bachelor degree level at a minimum of 3 years study (or equivalent through continuous professional development) awarded by a recognised University.

The Bologna Process is having an impact on courses in Social Work in European Union Countries. The 1999 report from the Ministers of Education in the EU laid the foundation for the creation of a European Higher Education Area, facilitating mobility through the uniform credit, quality and recognition systems centred on the 3+2 principle (a three-year under-graduate bachelor's degree followed by a two-year post graduate master's degree). Even though not all participant countries are members of the EU, the majority of countries have been adjusting their education system to meet the standards of the Bologna Process.

In view of the Bologna Guidelines, it was noted that Social Work must be aware of the opportunities and challenges of European Social Education in Europe. In particular the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe project working group has emphasised the importance of the following learning content and process:

3.5.2 The structure and remit of competences and role of Social Work to be more clearly defined and appraisable:
3.5.2.1 As the exigency for the profile of Social Workers becomes more and more felt, preparing the students to know themselves as persons, citizens and future members of a specific professional body (the questions of professional identity, according each, culture, historical and political context and region) becomes even more important;

3.5.2.2 It is equally important to prepare students concerning the “market” exigencies (and services objectives) as well as meeting service users’ needs and Human Rights (following historical and cultural Social Work paradigms, according new challenges);

3.5.3 The balance between theoretical proficiency and practice experience:

3.5.3.1 This balance is very pertinent to the professional development of the practitioner. It is important for students to be able to relate both practice to theory to develop their practice experience as well as relate theory to practice to develop their critical thinking towards theory;

3.5.4 The role of practitioners in the formation of students:

3.5.4.1 This method results in a positive experience of mutual learning for both students and practitioners involving the experience of professionals teaching the students; the student’s questions challenging reflection and continuous learning by the professionals.

3.5.5 Interdisciplinary practice; bringing the contribution of other disciplines’ knowledge into operation in line with the objectives of social work;

3.5.5.1 It is important to provide students with an open view about academic and professional knowledge sharing. This also goes for knowledge shared between students, practitioners and experts from different fields of knowledge. It is important for Social Workers to know the fundamental theories of other social sciences and be aware (be critical) about underlying philosophical contradictions concerning Social Work values and principles and must consequently learn to manage these.
Some authors\textsuperscript{11} draw our attention to the fundamental knowledge from other disciplines that may bring for instance some “determinist” concepts into our work with service users. Social Workers need to be aware that certain strategies inspired in specific therapeutic skills may reduce the service user’s power and autonomy in contradiction to Social Work principles.

3.5.6 The integration and operationalisation of knowledge:

3.5.6.1 This topic was identified as one of the most important objectives of all educational processes of Social Workers’ formation: students must be able to apply, in the context of their academic practices: theoretical knowledge; methodologies; skills and ethical behaviour.

3.5.6.2 This aspect requires the teachers to possess specific competences in order to integrate pedagogical methodologies that focus on essential subjects selected according to the students’ experiences and personal options as future professionals.

3.5.6.3 Attention was drawn to the fact that in several curricula and in particular those following the Bologna Process, the courses had a tendency to become shorter and with less time assigned to reflective learning praxis.\textsuperscript{12}

With a view to the guidelines of the Bologna process it has been noted that this is a process targeted towards a reform for creating an improved tertiary European learning and teaching space, established in Bologna in 1999.

Today, tertiary teaching systems in European countries will need to organise themselves in such a way so as to:

i Facilitate the readability and comparability of qualifications;

ii Introduce a system based on two main cycles;

iii Establish a system of credits such as ECTS;


iv  Develop measures for the mobility of students, teachers and researchers;
v  Promote European cooperation in the field of quality assessment;
vi  Promote the European dimension in higher education (in curriculum development and cooperation between institutions).

In this way it will be possible to engage in more processes of interchanging and collaboration with other European countries. In addition, the increased circulation, the sharing of knowledge, scientific experiences and research findings, will bring a higher level of learning and stimulation to new and innovative steps. Because the statements and documents adopted by the Ministers of Higher Education of the participant European countries do not constitute intergovernmental treaties or legally enforceable documentation, each country has the responsibility to develop its educational process according to their local context: political, economic, social and cultural.

3.5.7  In view of the above considerations and in view of the new emerging social model of society, the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe recommends that to support students’ education as future Social Workers, Schools should move towards:

3.5.7.1  **Guaranteeing a Bachelor of**  (as a minimum qualification) 6 semesters (1st level) with a University credit and the availability of a Master degree of 4 semesters (2nd level);

3.5.7.2  **Introducing in the curricula disciplines on topics such as**  (optional disciplines or not) gender subject; sexual minorities; multiculturalism, environment/sustainability; incertitude and risk; terrorism/counterterrorism;

3.5.7.3  **Supporting the students with tutorial attendance by teachers that must possess the specific relevant competences**;

3.5.7.4  **Using specific methodologies where the learning process can be guided (steps development) by the student and not only by the teacher (a learning process rather than a teaching process)**;

3.5.8  Another issue of key significance is that of further education. That means a life-long learning opportunity and challenge to develop one’s skills.
The debate about Specialist-Generalist education fostered less agreement and different contexts for different types of education were identified. It was recommended that this debate should be pursued further in future.

3.6 Accountability and Organisational contexts to enable Good Standards of Practice

3.6.1 All Social Workers and service users should have the possibility to refer to a body with the legally recognised remit of safeguarding of professional standards;

3.6.2 Social Work is practised in a variety of settings including State services, Health Care, Specialist agencies, Independent practices, Voluntary and not-for-profit bodies, User-led organizations, Private sector companies and Private practice.

3.6.3 Many Social Work roles help implement European and National policies. Among others they are essential in enabling local government, schools, healthcare and justice services to carry out their roles. In safeguarding human, social and economic rights, governments and organisations that employ Social Workers have a responsibility for ensuring resources are sufficient to meet needs and maintain standards of good practice.

It was largely agreed that guidelines on the responsibilities of employers of Social Workers should be included. The purpose of such guidelines is to protect and promote the rights and interests of service users as complimentary to the other sections of this document that strive to continue to support the development of the Social Work profession in promoting quality, professional, services and promote public trust and confidence in Social Work services.

3.6.4 These guidelines are being proposed in the context that the main organizational problems faced by social workers are found to be:

3.6.4.1 Ethical issues

3.6.4.2 Stress and Burnout

3.6.4.3 Lack of Workload and caseload management
3.6.4.4 Fragmentation of care

3.6.5 Social Worker’s responsibilities

3.6.5.1 It is the responsibility of the Social Worker to exercise their professional duties towards their service users in accordance with the relevant national and international codes of practice (local codes, legislation, IFSW statements etc).

3.6.5.2 The Social Worker has a duty to keep their knowledge and skills up to date and they must follow practice based on best evidence and current knowledge.

3.6.5.3 The Social Worker is accountable for their work, and they must not delegate work unless they are confident that the person(s) to whom the work is delegated is competent to carry out the work in an appropriately safe and competent manner. They must not accept delegated work themselves unless they are confident they can undertake it in a safe and skilled manner.

3.6.5.4 At the International Level Social Workers are accountable to the International Federation of Social Workers by means of:

- The Guidelines and statements of International Federation of Social Workers and Global and Regional level;
- Professional membership;
- The Definition of Social Work;
- The Joint Statement on Ethics;
- The Global Standards for Education and Training in Social Work;
- Regional Standards and Guidelines;

3.6.5.5 At the National level, various models of accountability have been identified, however the following are considered of basic importance for the good and accountable practice of Social Work:

- National Social Work Codes of Ethics;
- National Standards of Social Work Education;
• Frameworks for professional accountability – e.g. regulatory entities, professional boards, professional councils, by self regulation or state legislation involving service user perspectives;
• Organisational policies and procedures regarding Social Work in an organisational setting;
• Standards of Social Work practice and services;

3.6.6 Employer responsibilities

3.6.6.1 The employer must ensure that they have the appropriate professional Social Work management and leadership in place to ensure that Social Work values of human rights and social justice are upheld throughout the agency and Social Work services;

3.6.6.2 Ensure that people engaged as Social Workers must hold the necessary recognised qualifications and must be legally recognised to practice as Social Workers;

3.6.6.3 The employer is responsible for ensuring that they comply with legislation and relevant codes of practice, and that they do not ask their employees to breach these; Have policies and procedures in place to enable Social Workers to meet the Standards and Guidelines set out by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work as well as those in the National Legislation/regulatory frameworks;

3.6.6.4 It is the responsibility of the employer to create the right working conditions and structures that support the Social Worker to deliver safe, effective and accountable practice;

3.6.6.5 The employer must meet their legal obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of all workers - a significant aspect of which relates to the identification, prevention and management of work-related stress;

3.6.6.6 Having clear policies and procedures for minimising the risk of violence and managing violent incidents; Supporting Social Workers who experience trauma or violence in their work;
3.6.6.7 Have and regularly review written policies on: confidentiality; equal opportunities; risk;

3.6.6.8 To support good practice, the employer must provide good quality induction (orientation) to new entrants and those moving jobs, good supervision, realistic workloads, access to continuous learning and professional development, enabling a suitable working environment;

3.6.6.9 Provide professional remuneration to Social Workers that is comparable to that of other professions\(^\text{13}\);\n
3.6.6.10 Having systems in place to enable Social Workers to report inadequate resources or operational difficulties which might impede the delivery of safe and effective working with service users and address these issues to the relevant authorities;

3.6.6.11 Making service users aware of relevant policies, standards and codes of Social Work practice;

3.7 An Organisational framework supporting good practice

3.7.1 A framework for supporting good practice should be largely focused on practices of induction, supervision, workload management and continuing professional development.

Social work is situated in the arena of confusion, uncertainty and doubt (Parton & O’Byrne, 2000). It is full of tensions that will not go away so, at best, they have to be managed on a daily basis. Social workers at all levels need support in negotiating these minefields, if they are to survive and prosper as professional workers and give of their best to the users of their services (Payne, 1996).

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\(^{13}\) According to Eurostat [www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu], 15/04/2009 the average salary by tertiary level of education/ Education; Health and Social Work; Other community, social, personal service activities/ total males and females/2006 is 3087.19 Euro per month.
Social workers also operate in an environment of high risk to service users, to the employer and to themselves as professionals. They make decisions based on complex information, often under pressure, and sometimes in emergencies balancing the needs, risks and rights of individuals, their families and communities. It is imperative that they are well prepared for their duties and able to practice in a competent and safe manner.

3.7.2 Such a framework has as its principle objective better outcomes for service users by helping the worker to deliver the best service they can at all times. In order to achieve this objective, along with ensuring safe practice, the social worker and the employer must be willing to engage jointly in these processes. The framework is based on the premise that both the employer and the social worker have responsibilities for supporting good practice.

3.7.3 A well planned and executed induction, supervision, workload management and continuing professional development (CPD) framework:

3.7.3.1 Provides a system of structured support for good practice, and enables the Social Worker to meet their responsibilities;

3.7.3.2 Helps to address and combat the problem of work-related stress;

3.7.3.3 Supports the recruitment and retention of staff by fostering the commitment of the employer/agency, and the employee, to their joint enterprise of providing a Social Work service. Hence, both the employer and the Social Worker benefit.

3.7.4 The following core values and principles should underpin the framework for induction, supervision, workload management and CPD (Adapted from Green and Myers, 2008).

3.7.4.1 All staff working in Social Work settings, irrespective of their role, have the right to effective induction to their job role, high quality supervision, manageable caseloads and continuing professional development opportunities;

3.7.4.2 Supervision must ensure the effective management of practice, develop and support staff and promote their engagement with the organisation;
3.7.4.3 A review of workloads and caseloads must be an important part of the supervision process;

3.7.4.4 The quality of induction, supervision and CPD and the workload have a direct bearing on the quality of service delivery and outcomes for service users;

3.7.4.5 Social Workers and social care staff bear a responsibility for their own work and, to this end, should prepare for and make a positive contribution to the supervisory process, and their own professional development;

3.7.4.6 Induction, supervision, workload management and CPD must promote anti-discriminatory practice;

3.7.4.7 All practice must be consistent with local and International Federation of Social Workers codes and statements referring to Social Work practice.

3.7.5 Induction (Orientation)

3.7.5.1 On arriving at an agency for the first time as a new employee, a Social Worker, whether he/she is newly qualified or with long experience, should have a structured introduction to that agency to ensure that the worker is familiarised with the agency’s methods of working and the context in which the work takes place.

3.7.5.2 For newly qualified Social Workers, a period of more intensive planned support should be offered following arrival.

The shift from student to fully-fledged practitioner can be daunting for the worker and there should be recognition given of the fact that the worker’s knowledge and skills are at a basic level. Successfully bridging the period between student and practitioner requires that there are structures in place to support confidence building. In this regard, the nursing concept of ‘Preceptor’ is worth considering as a model (NHS Trust, Ashford Hospital, 2007). A Preceptor offers the new worker a defined period of more intensive support.

3.7.5.3 Similarly, Social Workers moving across borders to practice in another legislative and cultural context need a more extensive induction programme to ensure that they are competent to practice in that country (Skills for Care, 2007).
3.7.5.4 As a minimum, the agency should have policies or guidelines that set out the content of an induction programme and the method by which it is offered.

There should be a clear understanding of who gives information on the larger organisational issues and what the Social Work team will offer to help orientate the new worker.

Initially, the Social Work manager should spend time with the new worker and this should be followed by a longer set period of time with a Social Work colleague who will offer support for a designated period. If the new worker is to be supervised by someone other that the Social Work manager, then this person should engage in the induction process. Induction should not be seen as a ‘one-off’ event (Coulshed & Mullender, et al, 2006).

3.7.5.5 The content of the formal induction process should include:

i. History and philosophy of the Social Work team/service
ii. The aims and objectives of the team/service
iii. Key staff within the team/service and the agency
iv. The organisational and environmental contexts in which the team/service operates.

v. Key staff in partner agencies and services provided
vi. Workload, including caseload and working methods (for example, use of computerised information systems)

vii. All policies and procedures followed by the Social Work team/service
viii. A clear understanding of human rights legislation and the requirements of such legislation as it is set out in each country.

Examples of induction standards, tools and programmes can be found in the reference section of the detailed paper, “Supporting good practice - Induction, supervision, workload management and continuous professional development” found in appendix to this report.

3.7.5.6 IFSWE Member organizations should support Social Workers by:
i. Engaging in the development of codes of practice for appropriate preparation and induction programmes for Social Workers entering the profession, or moving to new roles, including Social Workers who have obtained their qualifications outside the country;

ii. Advocating with employers to ensure that they have written policies and procedures for providing induction to Social Workers, including internationally qualified workers, to prepare for new or changing roles and responsibilities;

iii. The policies and procedures, and induction programmes should cover all levels of staff, including managers, temporary and agency staff, students and volunteers on placement, and those moving jobs within the agency;

iv. Advocating for the support of induction processes within statutory professional registration frameworks, where these are in place.

3.7.6 Supervision

For the purposes of this framework, the emphasis will be on the professional development and support aspects of supervision since these aspects of supervision underlie all good practice. Good practice will help ensure that the Social Worker takes appropriate responsibility for his or her decision-making and positive outcomes for the service user will be enhanced. Accountability, where there is good practice, will be more likely to be present also.

Supervision can be offered on an individual or a group basis. The focus in this framework will be on formal individual supervision.
3.7.6.1 *Supervision is a vital component of support for Social Workers for the reasons mentioned above. The tension must be managed between the use of supervision for the purpose’s of accountability on the one hand and professional development on the other. Supervision is a tool to allow the Social Worker to reflect on his/her use of their professional knowledge and skills alongside the need to ensure that the service user is receiving an appropriate service.*

3.7.6.2 *In this regard, supervision should also be used to examine the wider context of Social Work and service delivery and the role of Social Work and agency in this. Supervision should be used to develop the worker’s critical thinking about issues such as anti-discriminatory practice and anti-oppressive practice to help evaluate how well these practices are upheld.*

3.7.6.3 *Supervision, then, serves to:*  
   i. *meet the worker’s support and developmental needs*  
   ii. *help the worker exercise good professional judgement, and*  
   iii. *meet the needs of the agency in offering a service.*  

   *(Coulshed & Mullender et al, 2006)*

To achieve these outcomes, supervision should be structured and offered on a regular basis (for example, once a month) for a set period of time (for example, 90 minutes) to allow the supervisee to reflect on his or her work and professional developmental needs.

The supervision sessions should be built on agreed criteria, aims and objectives with a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of the supervisor and supervisee.

There should be a written record kept of the subjects discussed, agreements reached and follow-up actions to be undertaken and by whom. The professional development and training needs of supervisees should be noted.
3.7.6.4 Agencies should have written standards regarding supervision. These could include the following:

i. Supervision takes place regularly (frequency to be stated)

ii. Supervision is arranged and conducted in such a way as to permit proper reflection and discussion.

iii. There is a written supervision agreement

iv. Supervision is planned and purposeful activity

v. Supervision sessions are recorded promptly, competently and stores confidentially

vi. Supervisors and supervisees are trained to carry out their role

vii. Supervisor ensure that that the management and administrative functions are met (accountability)

viii. Each supervision session considers the employee’s/Social Worker’s workload, and adjustments are made accordingly

ix. An objective and transparent means is applied to measure workloads example by using set tools and criteria

x. Supervisor ensures that the CPD function is met

xi. Supervisor ensure that the support function is met

xii. Supervisor ensures that the engagement function is met (two way commitment and engagement with the agency)

xiii. Supervision promotes a commitment to Human Rights and diversity in all aspects of work.

xiv. Managers assure the quality of supervision (Adapted from Green and Myers (2008)).

3.7.6.5 IFSWE Member organizations should support Social Workers by:

i. Engaging in the development of codes of practice for supervision, in partnership with employers and other stakeholders.
ii. Advocating with employers to ensure that they have written policies and procedures for providing supervision to enable Social Workers and social care staff to practice safely and achieve positive outcomes for service users.

iii. Supervision policies and procedures should cover all levels of staff, including managers, temporary and agency staff, and students and volunteers on placement.

iv. Advocating for the support of supervision within statutory professional registration frameworks.

3.7.7 Workload management

Workloads are continually too high in Social Work.

There is no time left over for the preparation and evaluation of client work, nor work planning and development. At the same time, there is not enough scope for flexibility to deal with unforeseen circumstances and client situations that may be complex.

3.7.7.1 High workloads can lead to poor service quality for the user and stress and burnout for the worker. Three factors are identified as creating a current need to manage workload effectively and transparently. High workload levels:

i. Have been connected with negative impacts on practice and outcomes;

ii. Have been associated with increased stress in a profession that already suffers higher than average levels, and

iii. Carry implications for the workforce in terms of the interaction between stress, burnout and turnover (Stevens, 2008).
In the context of this framework, high workloads negate the effectiveness of induction, supervision and CPD policies in the workplace. Therefore, Social Workers and employers should work towards developing realistic workload levels, and means to measure and monitor these.

3.7.7.2 Implications for implementing workload management systems are drawn from a number of workload measurement and management studies. Three issues are identified.

i. First, workload management systems need to be informed by good quality, up-to-date workload measurement.

ii. Second, involving practitioners and other stakeholders in the whole process will be the key to its success.

iii. Finally, changing patterns of demand and different models of practice carry implications for workload management systems, suggesting the importance of their regular review (Stevens, 2008).

3.7.7.3 Agencies should have written standards regarding workload management. These should include measures to meet the following purposes:

i. To offer guidance on what a reasonable caseload for a social worker should be in line with contemporary and researched best practice;

ii. To enable managers to identify and prevent overload of the individual social worker or teams and to inform workforce planning;

iii. To provide an avenue whereby social workers can have clear expectations about the acceptable workload which they can carry;

iv. To inform case allocation by social work managers;

v. To establish a coherent system of priorities for individual social workers, the social work team, the family & individual / child care programmes;

vi. To contribute to supervision process in terms of discussion about organisational, professional and personal objectives;

vii. To provide an overall measurement of the workload;

viii. To enhance the quality of service provided to service users; and
ix. To highlight unmet need.

3.7.7.4 Caseload and workload management tools should be based on the following principles:

i. A recognition that individual social worker’s capabilities will vary depending on experience, skills, and knowledge;

ii. Personal circumstances will also influence an individual social worker’s capacity at times and must be given consideration by the manager when assigning points e.g. assessed year/induction phase.

iii. Caseload weighting is not just a question of numbers. It has to be part of a framework to assist effective monitoring, evaluation, supervision, support and accountability.

There are various models for measuring the volume/amount of Social Work activity against the number staff, and caseloads of individual workers. In some countries there are minimum requirements for the number of Social Workers that are required per a set number of inhabitants. Although this indicator is useful in informing about the different practices, it should be used with caution since the figures a direct reflection of the current state of affairs in most countries where caseloads are consistently too high.

A recent paper by Talentia, professional association in Finland, proposed a well considered model for ‘staff dimensioning’ by using indicators based on the distribution of working time and number of clients (Talentia, 2009).

A model for caseload management has also been developed, and applied in Northern Ireland. This model is based on three major elements identified by the Social Care Institute for Excellence [SCIE] (risk, complexity and travel) which make up Social Worker’ efforts. A point system is used to give a weighting to each case by considering these three main elements (DHSS and PS, 2008).

3.7.7.5 This Framework recommends the consideration of indicators although not prescriptively for the implementation of good practices for workload and caseload management tool.
3.7.7.6 These include, however not exclusively indicators based on:

i. The distribution of working time

ii. The number of clients

iii. Risk

iv. Complexity

v. Travel

3.7.7.7 The following are considered reliable examples of how the above indicators may be used:

i. Normal working time is typically divided between direct and indirect client work with 70% of working time devoted to direct client work which includes preparation for a certain client or client group, planning, decision-making, documentation, reporting, cooperation, consultation etc.

ii. While at least 30% of working time is devoted to indirect client work including cooperation, development, advocacy, continuing education, work counselling, familiarisation, mentoring and training, consultation etc.

3.7.7.8 Social Work Caseloads should therefore typically range between 10-30 clients per social worker allowing a minimum of 4-12 hours work devoted to direct client work for each client per month.

i. The heavier and more intense the working process, the more demanding the service needs of the clients and their objectives, the more urgent their rehabilitation needs and their condition, and the more limited the available consultation or other support services, the closer to the minimum the maximum number of clients should be.

ii. The demands that legislation poses on the working process, e.g. the social guarantee with its time limits or the obligatory service plan, should be taken into account in staff dimensioning.

iii. Risk factors also need to be taken into account. These may include, but not only the following examples:
   • Vulnerability
• Lack of information
• Likelihood of significant harm
• Lack of access to support services

i. Complexity may include the following examples:

• Multiple problems
• Child protection issues
• Legal status and other issues
• Care Placement
• Multi-agency involvement
• Travel issue may include the following examples:
  • Siblings placed in different placements
  • High level of contact
  • Placement outside Trust area
  • Location of court

3.7.7.9 IFSWE Member organizations should support Social Workers by:

i. Engaging in the development of policies and processes for appropriate workload management systems.

ii. Advocating with employers to ensure that they have policies and processes in place to measure and monitor Social Workers’ workloads in a transparent and an equitable way.

3.7.8 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

3.7.8.1 Continuous professional development provides for the ongoing development of the Social Worker’s knowledge and skills base and increase on their competence in the changing context of Social Work practice.

3.7.8.2 The aim is to continuously improve the quality of outcomes for people who use Social Work services by supporting the people who are delivering these services to be the best they can be.

This requires a shared commitment from both the Social Worker and their employer to develop competencies in Social Work. It is important that each individual Social Worker takes responsibility for their own learning and development throughout their career and that employers provide opportunities for continuous learning and improvements in practice.
3.7.8.3 CPD includes the activities that develop professional knowledge, skills and competencies for Social Work practice in relation to work with individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities. It also includes knowledge and skills required for areas such as policy development, management, research, education and the promotion of the Social Work profession. Therefore, it should include the following:

i. Post-qualifying training;

ii. Participation in conferences/seminars and skills development programmes;

iii. Reading professional journals;

iv. Providing practice placements for Social Work students;

v. Providing and receiving professional supervision;

vi. Academic study;

vii. Writing and presenting professional papers;

viii. Participation in research activities;

ix. Active membership of professional associations/other relevant bodies or committees;

x. Participation in the education of Social Workers and other health/social care professionals;

The Social Worker should actively engage in the process of continuous professional development and take responsibility for their learning. In this way, both the agency and the worker collaborate to successfully achieve it.

3.7.9 IFSW- E Member organizations should support Social Workers by:

i. Engaging in the development of standards for culturally appropriate CPD.

ii. Developing mechanisms for the provision of CPD and access to such CPD programmes.

iii. Advocating with employers to provide opportunities and adequate resources for CPD.
iv. Advocating for the support of CPD within statutory professional registration frameworks.

3.7.10 Work Related Stress and Burnout

3.7.10.1 Among the main Health and Safety hazards for Social Workers are stress, burnout and vicarious traumatisation.

Today, many social workers have to deal with the problem of stress. The context of their work is changing. There are larger caseloads and workloads, development of bureaucracy, new types of management and new policies. Social workers are dealing with new forms of poverty. Social workers who get little or no recognition of their contribution and have less possibilities to help service users. Social workers have to manage increased internal pressures making them more vulnerable to stress.

3.7.10.2 The issue of the stress has been identified at a general level in 2004 by the European Social Partners: European Employers and Workers who agreed on a document called “Framework agreement on work related stress” whose aims are to identify, prevent and manage the problem of work-related stress.

The definition in this Agreement that is closely related to the European Directive 89/391 is:

‘Stress is a state, which is accompanied by physical, psychological or social complaints or dysfunctions and which results from individuals feeling unable to bridge a gap with the requirements or expectations placed on them.’

‘Stress is not a disease, but prolonged exposure to it may reduce effectiveness at work and may cause ill health.’

3.7.10.3 The European Directive 89/391 states:

‘the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work’.
3.7.10.4  ‘Under framework directive 89/391, all employers have a legal obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of workers. This duty also applies to problems of work-related stress in so far as they entail a risk to health and safety. All workers have a general duty to comply with protective measures determined by the employer. Addressing problems of work-related stress may be carried out within an overall process of risk assessment, through a separate stress policy and/or by specific measures targeted at identified stress factors.’

3.7.10.5 To prevent, eliminate, or reduce work-related stress, the Agreement proposes some measures such as:

i. Management and communication measures such as clarifying the company’s objectives and the role of individual workers, ensuring adequate management support for individuals and teams, matching responsibility and control over work, improving work organisation and processes, working conditions and environment,

ii. Training managers and workers to raise awareness and understanding of stress, its possible causes and how to deal with it, and/or to adapt to change,

iii. Provision of information to and consultation with workers and/or their representatives in accordance with EU and national legislation, collective agreements and practices.
4 Conclusion

This document is intended to consolidate the basic parameters within which Social Work in Europe operates into a common framework for Social Work in Europe. This framework is considered a key step in contributing towards the ongoing development of Standards for Social Work Practice in Europe.

4.1.1 More awareness needs to be raised regarding the activities of Social Work as human rights practice and of ways to build on individual case solutions to influence policy change. This project aims to contribute to raising this awareness and securing further the profile of the profession and the conditions required by Social Workers across Europe to continue to fulfil this mission.

As a number of authors have pointed out, action orientation is a great strength in Social Work that can make a real difference in peoples lives and in the context of their situations. Social Workers take action; they engage in securing human rights for individuals and communities. The global Social Work human rights agenda, as witnessed by this project, shows no signs of diminishing.

4.1.2 It will be important for the realisation of this work to actively and further engage the IASSW, ICSW and service user representative organisations such as the Social Platform.

Such a network will increase the Social Work impact on those conditions and awareness required to fulfil the historic and current mission of the Social Work and associated social welfare professions.

As Social Work looks to the future, the profession has an opportunity to assert its human rights focus more clearly. The strong compatibility of the profession’s mission and values with human rights suggests a natural linkage. Human rights provide the profession with a clear direction for a presence at the international level, while also bridging local and national issues with global concerns.
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