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IFSWE project 2007-2009

**STANDARDS IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
MEETING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

TEMPLATE FOR DISCUSSION DURING THE REGIONAL SEMINARS

BACKGROUND AND GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED DURING THE SEMINARS

Why do we need a framework for standards?

To identify, focus on and promote internationally recognised good social work practice

To inform European services users about what they should expect of social work;

To inform about the contribution, role and tasks of social work towards the wellbeing of the community within the broad European policy context;

To support maintain a good standard of social work education, training and regulation across European social work;

To inform organisational settings on how to maintain good standards in social work raise practice;

To promote the status of social workers and enable scarce professional resources to be better used;

To promote the links between social work and human/social/economic rights;

To highlight human rights thinking and promote it in the language of social workers;

The Discussion on Standards Should Focus on Social Work Practice

General Questions to be asked:

- What range of roles and tasks does European social work encompass?
- What is unique or distinctive about social work roles and tasks compared with those of other disciplines?
- What roles and tasks require the levels of knowledge and skill possessed by social workers, as distinct from other social care staff?
- What roles and tasks should be performed only by social workers?

Following the delegate's meeting in Porto the following Areas have been raised for discussion:

Social work as a profession within a framework of education, legislation and government policy



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Social work as a partnership

Social work as a set of core values and principles

Social Work as a knowledge base

Social work as a combination

Social work as a profession that deals with high levels of complexity, uncertainty, stress, conflicts of interest, and risk

Social Work as a positive element with a preventative role in society

Social work has a wide range of tasks broker; enhancing skills; supporting the physical, intellectual and emotional; helping disadvantaged people; arranging good-quality alternative care; informing people about their entitlements and opportunities and benefits

Social Work in inter-disciplinary teams and multi-agency settings

Social Workers as employees - conditions for good practice; supervision; realistic

Workloads; access to learning support and continuing development; enabling management systems; working environment

The above areas and general questions have been organised into a proposed framework for common standards. The following is being proposed for you to discuss and develop into a common framework for standards in social work practice. This framework will be the main outcome of the project.

A FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN EUROPE

Remit and Process

Who is using the services?

Children

Adults

Families

Communities

Mental health

Immigrants

Homeless

Elderly ...

And many more ...

The Stakeholders

Users' experience

Policy documents

Social workers

Employers in all sectors

Research literature

Other stakeholders in social care ...



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Policy Context

Internationally recognised documentation referring to human, social and economic rights in Europe

National policy context

European policy context

International context

Organisational context

Other influences ...

The Social Work Context

Social work is practised in a variety of settings

Children's and adults' services

Health Care

Specialist agencies

Independent practices

Voluntary and not-for-profit bodies

User-led organizations

Private sector companies

Private practice

Emerging cultures of practice ...

The Accountability of Social Workers

Social Workers aim to work in partnership with the people they help

Social Workers are accountable to good practice through peer supervision

Registration

Codes of Practice

Codes of Ethics

Legislation

Regulatory entities – boards, councils etc

Organisational policies and procedures

Standards of practice

Other models of accountability ...



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Areas for discussion

The tensions caused by this multiple accountability and multiple roles

Is there a model of accountability which is preferred over others?

How are standards ensured in private practice and specifically in the different contexts?

To what extent should the profession be autonomous?

What support and conditions are required from government, employers, the public and others to maintain good, accountable practice?

Defining Social Work

Social work is practised world-wide. The internationally recognised definition is:

“The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work”

Social Work Methods and Professional Skills and Areas of Expertise

In general, social work helps children, adults, families and communities in a wide variety of circumstances.

Identify the various areas of expertise together with examples of best practice – the following list is up for discussion:

In many situations, Social workers characteristically find themselves in lead roles:

Crisis intervention

Intervening where others fail or are unwilling or unable to intervene

Analysis of complex individual, family and social situations

Assessments of high levels of risk and uncertainty

Assessment and facilitation of conflicting interests

Problem solving for difficult choices, judgements and action planning

Skilled professional judgement of unpredictable situations

Social exclusion

Building trusting relationships

Situations of clear risks to a child or adult with uncertainty and serious consequences

Situations with unpredictable factors like family conflict or emotional stress

Bereavement, loss or other major changes which need help and support to manage



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Disaster or emergency incidents requiring broad support
And more ...

Identify the tasks and methods used by Social Workers – the following list is up for discussion:

Carrying decisions (in conjunction with their agency) regarding emergency protection procedures
Decisions to remove a child from their parents or carers, or an adult from their home for safety reasons
Assessing risk, safety, alternative approaches
Preventing the need for compulsory action on individuals
Carrying responsibility on behalf of the authorities to ensure the health, wellbeing and educational progress of those individuals in its care
Working with children and families involved in court proceedings, both civil and criminal
Joint assessments of social and health needs
Cooperating with other disciplines
Coordinating core assessments
Investigations and action to protect children or vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, or exploitation
Assessing risks and responses in cases of significant harm to self or others
Advocating for, finding support, resources or care for individuals who are unable to exercise mental capacity or provide informed consent
Assessments of foster parents or adopters
Dealing with hostile and aggressive responses to social work intervention
Enabling people to exercise choice, be involved in decisions affecting them
Skills in communication
Negotiating and coordinating services and networks
Inter-agency collaboration and multi-disciplinary teamwork, and understanding of the roles and functions of other professions and agencies
Record-keeping and use of records to review progress and learn from practice
And more ...

Areas for discussion

Are these all areas of skill expertise?

Are there more?

Do these vary in different countries?

Which is a common set of skills?

Are these unique to social workers?

Who should be involved or not involved at various stages?



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The Knowledge-Base for Practice

International experience

People using services and front-line practitioners

Learning cultures in organizations

Research awareness among practitioners and managers as well as people using and providing services

Shared knowledge

Areas for discussion

Should a basic level of education be included in standards?

Should ongoing training be included in the standards?

Identify the common outcomes of Social Work – the following list is up for discussion:

Social work aims to enable people to overcome problems and achieve the outcomes they want

Empowerment, autonomy and decision-making;

Wellbeing and quality of life

Human, social, economic and civil rights and active citizenship

Family wellbeing

Protection for children and young people

Antidiscrimination

Access and equal opportunities

Access to support and care

And more ...

Values

Please refer to the IFSW Statement of ethical Principles

Area for discussion

Should this document be included or referred to in the standards?

Organisational contexts that enable the application of Good Standards of Practice

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 have a responsibility for ensuring resources are sufficient to meet needs and maintain standards of good practice.



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Areas for discussion

Employers must provide good quality supervision, learning support, IT and management systems, and working conditions.

Should some conditions of work be included in standards?

Should we have standards for employers?

The role of the media to help understand the high levels of responsibility that social workers carry;

Are Social workers proud of their profession and willing to speak out?

Are partnerships between social workers and service users effective and strong enough?