



international federation of social workers european region



*Statement on **Social Work**
promoting **Social Cohesion**
in **Europe***



What does social cohesion mean?

Social Workers from 19 European countries said that Social Cohesion:



- refines and improves strategies for integration because it is more than simply inclusion vs exclusion
- emphasises the element of the desire of association and feeling of belonging to community values
- goes beyond the idea of welfare service provision or responses to isolated social indicators
- moves away from the concept of giving and receiving towards the principles of reciprocity, interdependence, involvement and participation
- is promoted by an environment of interdependence
- is promoted by inter-agency collaboration and a holistic approach
- **social cohesion is being challenged all over Europe**

Social cohesion is threatened by:

- Limiting resources available to people through over bureaucratisation
- This leads to inefficient and depersonalised services
- Lack of integration and coordination in policies and strategies
- Exclusion, division, disparities and polarized issues in societies
- Lack of collaboration in the administration and provision of services (including interagency collaboration)
- Inflexible structures that prevent professionals and services responding and adjusting to the needs of the people and communities



What is IFSW Europe?

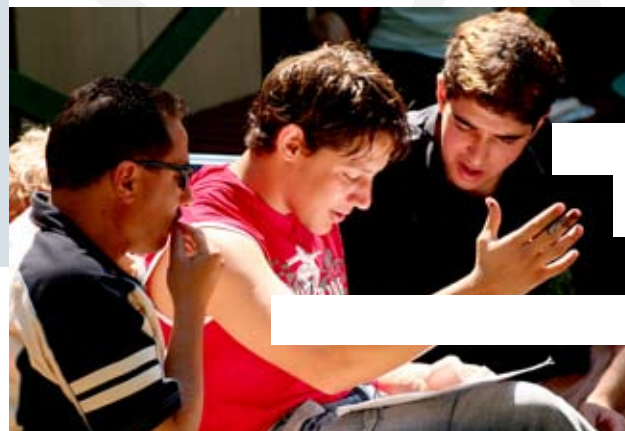
The IFSW Europe is committed to:

- promoting social and human rights at all levels.
- promoting the knowledge and expertise of social workers to policy makers and society in general
- providing training in order for the profession to remain dynamic and responsive to emerging needs
- developing standards, quality practice and education
- promoting social work legislation that advances social cohesion
- working with national and international bodies, commissions, councils and ombudspersons to foster the adoption of the principles and values underpinning social cohesion
- informing the public of discrimination, injustice, stigma and stigmaemerging in society



Social Workers in Europe:

- Social Workers help people achieve positive change individually, in their communities and society.
- Social Workers use their expertise, knowledge, and experience to critically assess and analyse with a person or groups of people their situation in the context of an ever changing society.
- Social workers are the catalyst to change through social relationships.
- Being with social work is a profession responsive to a changing international context
- Social workers actively promote economic and social justice which can sometimes be at considerable personal risk or political oppression.





Social workers promote Social cohesion by:

Delivering services and being a positive presence for the entire community:

“Social workers in Portugal are always present and have key roles in special emergency teams in hospitals in the event of National disasters, emergencies and rescue where they offer coordination and communication skills, crisis intervention, timely brokering of resources and other social work interventions.”

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

“Help with personal problems (49%) Being listened to (38%) Help in staying safe (32%) Getting ready to leave care (31%) Someone speaking on my behalf (30%) Information following a review (29%) Getting the right placement to live in (28%) Contacting family (25%) Help to keep out of trouble (21%) Getting access to personal file (21%) Help to cope with bullying (20%) Getting a passport (19%) Help with clothing allowances (18%) Getting a bank account (18%) Making a complaint” - children service users’ feedback from the UK

Working with vulnerable groups

“Integrating people with mental health problems in Danish society has involved a change in both policies. This has gradually been achieved through a reconstruction of the old and big institutional system which earlier provided the help for these people into much smaller and decentralized units, together with profound changes in the professional paradigm and in the thinking about people with intellectual or learning disabilities in the public”
– The Danish Association of Social Pedagogues

Drawing on professional field experience and knowledge to develop policy and services

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

Responding to the changing

national and international contexts in professional and practical ways

Using their expertise, knowledge and experience

to critically assess and analyse social cohesion at a holistic level.

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...

Actively promoting economic and social justice

which can sometimes be at considerable personal risk or political oppression

Recommendations



European Policies

- Should redress the balance in favour of social objectives and clearly put them on an equal footing with economic objectives as stated in the EU treaties
- Should involve service users and civil society in general through consultation and participation
- Should acknowledge the interdependence and importance of coordination of various sectors in particular the social, health and education sectors
- Should promote social work as a positive contribution to social cohesion

Services in Europe need

- Better coordination of service provision involving the various helping professions and sectors
- The right for service users to coordinate or chose someone to coordinate the services and support they receive
- The active involvement of service users, and field professionals in policy making at all levels in order to respond to emerging needs
- Prevention of harm and abuse and promotion of a caring society
- Education on human rights and service user rights individuals and society
- Information for the public about issues of discrimination, injustice, stigma and emerging social abuse.



Social Workers in Europe Need



- Legislative and political support to allow social work to make a positive contribution to social cohesion
- Professional support and mentoring leading to critical and reflective practice
- Personal support for the challenging work undertaken on behalf of society
- A flexible organisational context that allows a creative and proactive response to people, families, communities and society

- Recognition of their role as analysts and experts in working with systems through critical practice and social action
- Empowerment to practice: including the space, time, resources and autonomy to work with systems, society and social action
- Regulation to ensure that only qualified and registered social workers undertake tasks on behalf of society that may affect people's rights to liberty and freedom in family life in accordance with their code of ethics
- To be equipped to exercise professional autonomy and accountability
- New career pathways in practice and professional leadership linked to an agreed competence framework
- Recognition and reward framework for social workers, reflecting career pathways and competence



Social Work Education

Associations and schools of social work promote continuous professional:

- Train social workers in human rights, empowerment, advocacy and social action
- Develop a range of approaches in promoting social cohesion
- Offer social workers a core generic education before specialising
- Should promote continuous professional development and training

Ethical development of the *Social Work* profession

- *Promotion of human dignity*
- *Principles of service user involvement and empowerment*
- *Principles of association and belonging in relation to the socio-political ethical dimension of social work practice*
- *Inter-professional collaboration*
- *Holistic approach towards social justice*
- *Principles of reciprocity, interdependence and participation*



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