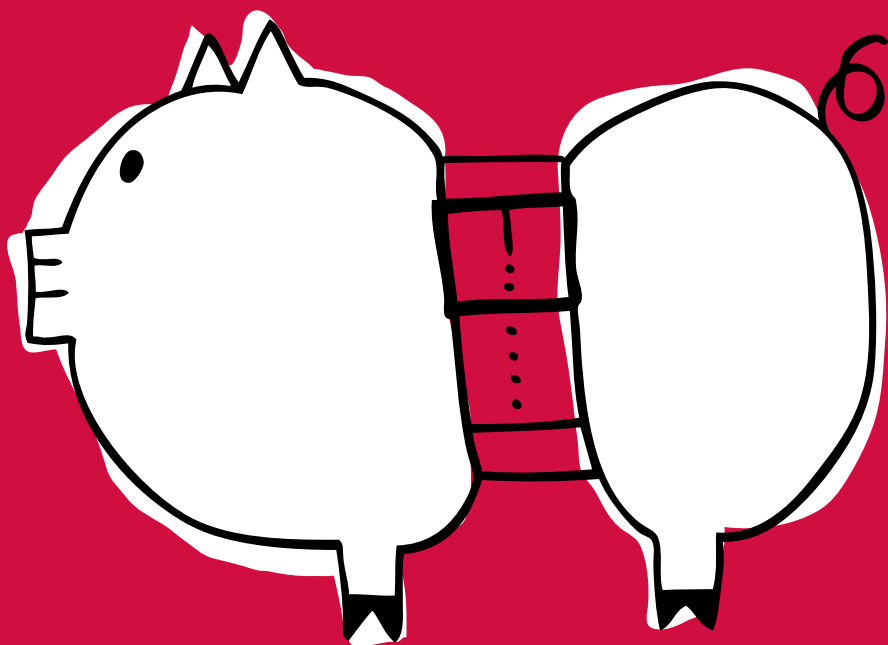


ECONOMIC CRISIS in EUROPE

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE OF
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION




STAGE II PROJECT REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

In 2010 IFSW-EUROPE decided to launch the project about the impact of the financial crisis on social services and social work since the start of the crisis in 2007/08. In 2011 IFSW Europe voiced concern that some politicians and the popular media are fueling a blame culture of scapegoats minority and disadvantaged groups. People facing redundancy are encouraged to attribute this to economic migrants and asylum seekers. Rather than facing up to the pressing need to tackle inequality, all too often the focus is on the small number of people who abuse welfare benefit systems, with the result that hate crime is on the increase. We have pointed out to our partner organizations that short-term savings measures, that deny vulnerable individuals support and protection at times of crisis, represent false economy.

The first Stage Report in 2012 stated that the consequences of austerity measures included increases in poverty, particularly child poverty; income disparity and inequality; increases in children being taken into state care and social problems such as drug and alcohol addiction; more homelessness; exploitation; disparities in health and wellbeing creating more health inequalities, mental illness and distress.

Stage II of the project included sending out a follow-up questionnaire in August 2013 and the outcomes were presented at a workshop in Lisbon on the 6th and 7th of December 2013. The questionnaire and workshop also looked at the challenges and responses of social work associations to the European economic crisis, the impact of the crisis on social

workers and asked about the role of IFSW Europe and what it could do to support Associations.

Data was collected from the 12 countries that returned questionnaires and 12 countries attended the workshop.

FINDINGS

This Stage II research reinforced that the situation had worsened with the ongoing austerity measures imposed on national budgets particularly affecting welfare and social care budgets. People are seeking more support from social welfare and social work services. However, the support available is decreasing. Financial welfare support is decreasing (in terms of both the amount available and the length of time the support can be claimed); fewer services are available – both in terms of state services and those provided by NGOs. Often preventive services are cut which leads to more crisis situations. Many of those remaining services are levying charges or requiring financial contributions from service users. Financial support, which has been available to support the development of services in poorer countries, has been cut. The findings indicate that socio-economic indicators are still alarming in different corners of Europe.

Social workers specifically have been affected by cuts and decreases in services. For example, our dialogue identified that social workers have experienced significant cuts in pay, very significant rises in workload, deterioration in working conditions, an increase in stress and burnout and when workers leave they are not being replaced and

periods of maternity leave and prolonged sickness absence are not being covered.

Member associations of IFSW Europe have been engaged in a great variety of activities challenging austerity as a way of dealing with the economic crisis and identifying the impact on people's well-being:

- > 90% have done statements on social policy
- > 80% have organized meetings with politicians and been involved in demonstrations
- > Almost 80% of the associations also did support social work programs, but they mostly did not specify which kind and to what extent and how much they had been involved
- > 70% gave support and expertise to their members to develop social programs
- > 60% of the members reported, they have been asked for "know how" by government organizations, but most of them have not been asked to actively participate
- > 50% have elaborated concepts for social programs
- > 40% gave support to their member social workers and another 40% also to service users and affected groups
- > 30% engaged in NGO projects for relief programs
- > 20% have been asked to engage in national programs

However, it is significant that despite this wide range of activities in relation to social policy, governments do not (in the majority) use the expertise and experi-

ence of the social work profession to help with solutions to the problems. They mostly believe in austerity measures, budget-cuts and reducing services for people in order to tackle the pressure imposed by the rating agencies and the profit oriented lobbies of the international financial markets.

FUTURE ACTIONS FOR IFSW EUROPE

The majority of members (80%) consider the information gathered and work produced by IFSW-EUROPE useful for Social Work Associations and social workers. Regarding future expectations on IFSW Europe, members would like more opportunities for exchanging experiences and accessing best practice examples from across the countries. There could be opportunities for a chat room for members and Skype discussions, although 50% would prefer face to face meetings /workshops. 70% would like to be able to access expertise to assess the situation in their countries.

There were also plenty of areas identified for IFSW Europe to consider when developing their work plan including more frequent face to face meetings, providing motivation, support and ideas; more work on Roles and Identity; work on caseloads as all countries and social workers are suffering; joint campaigns organized by IFSW Europe to support the development of different models of social development and social innovations as opposed to austerity; support for alliances and develop partnerships with other European and international organizations such as Social Platform and ILO; develop a European view for certain topics and support less well-off associations to participate.

INTRODUCTION



IFSW-EUROPE has worked for many years to collect data and illustrate how social work is established among European members and has intensified its efforts since the beginning of the recent crisis.

The team of IFSW Europe Executive Committee working on this project was: Hakan Acar, Gabriele Stark-Angermeier, Salome Namicheisvili and Maria Moritz¹. Fran McDonnell and Joana Malheiro (Honorary Secretary of IFSW Europe) made valuable contribution to the project report.

The data has been provided by 12 members of IFSW-EUROPE that filled in the questionnaire sent out in August 2013. There were 2 questionnaires from Northern Europe, 3 from Central Europe, 2 from Southern Europe, 1 from Western Europe and 4 from Eastern Europe. This distribution covered all areas of Europe including 5 Non-European-Union countries.

The data was collected by the members of the associations of social workers in the various countries. They are all national organisations of social workers and IFSW Europe members and worked on a completely voluntary basis. This might have influenced the comparability of the data and the high diversity of information and interpretation about what kind of data should be delivered.

Nonetheless the information gives a very comprehensive picture of the social situation in Europe, 5 years after the beginning of the financial and economic crisis in Europe.

The data underpins the opinion IFSW Europe had already expressed that the financial and economic crisis has

produced a massive social crisis for the people, forced huge cuts and changes for all kinds of social services throughout Europe. Social work is also under a massive threat with social workers experiencing great increases in workload and a massive loss or shrinking of resources for supporting people, families, children, unemployed and especially marginalized and discriminated groups.

But the most disappointing fact is that governments do not (in the majority) use the expertise and experience of the social work profession to help with solutions to the problems. They mostly believe in austerity measures, budget-cuts and reducing services for people in order to tackle the pressure imposed by the rating agencies and the profit oriented lobbies of the international financial markets.

However the research has given IFSW Europe very useful information to develop future work plans.

¹ Currently, not only this project is managed by the IFSW-EUROPE Executive, but there is also still going on a very important work on the project: Role and Identity of Social Work in Europe". We hope our members will provide us with more substantial data about social work in the member countries than ever before. Many thanks on this to Salome Namicheisvili from the Executive Committee of IFSW Europe and Fran McDonnell from BASW.

HISTORY OF IFSW EUROPE PROJECTS

THE MAIN PROJECTS OF IFSW EUROPE have been on *Social Exclusion and Social Work in Europe – Facilitating Social Inclusion, Social Work Promoting Social Cohesion in Europe, Standards in Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights, The Social Impact of the Financial Crisis (I), The Social Work Role and Identity Project and Economic Crisis in Europe - Challenge and Response of Social Work Profession (II)*.

IN 2010 IFSW EUROPE decided to launch the project about the impact of the financial crisis on social services and social work since the start of the crisis in 2007/08. In 2011 workshops were organized in Zagreb and Dublin. In 2012, at the Delegates Meeting, the draft report was presented on the outcomes of the project. Finally, in 2013, it has been decided to launch part II of the project on the challenge and response of social work profession on the ongoing crisis that took a dangerous shift from a mere economic crisis to a substantial social crisis because of the impacts of austerity programs most of the governments chose to impose on citizens.

In 2011 IFSW Europe voiced concern that some politicians and the popular media are fueling a blame culture of scapegoats minority and disadvantaged groups. People facing redundancy are encouraged to attribute this to economic migrants and asylum seekers. Rather than facing up to the pressing need to tackle inequality all too often the focus is on the small number of people who abuse welfare benefit systems with the result that hate crime is on the increase. We have pointed out to our partner organizations that short-term savings measures that deny vulnerable individuals support and protection at times of crisis represent false economy.

THE 2012 REPORT STATED the impact on European societies and the consequences including increases in:

- > Poverty, particularly child poverty
- > Income disparity and inequality
- > Children being taken into state care
- > Social problems such as drug and alcohol addiction
- > Homelessness and more people living in poor quality, transient accommodation
- > Criminal behavior, particularly youth crime
- > Begging – particularly the number of children begging – and this appears to be becoming more organized by criminal gangs
- > Labor exploitation (people working with few rights and low wages)
- > Child exploitation (particularly in relation to children working)
- > Disparities in health and wellbeing creating more health inequalities
- > Mental illness and distress

THE STAGE II PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE was sent out in August 2013 and the outcomes were presented at a workshop in Lisbon on the 6th and 7th of December 2013, hosted by the Portuguese Association of Social Workers. The meeting provided personal exchange and detailed information by the delegates.

Stage II of the project also investigated, with the help of our members, the challenges and responses of social work associations and social workers on the impacts of the current social crisis in Europe and also asked what IFSW Europe could do to support Associations.

RESULTS OF COUNTRY REPORTS

TABLE 1
Unemployment and Poverty Rates

COUNTRIES	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE %	YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE %	POVERTY RATE %
ARMENIA	32	39	37
AUSTRIA	10,2	8,4	10,5
CROATIA	19,1	51,8 (Under 25)	21,1
GEORGIA	15	32,2 (youth between 20-24)	22,4
GERMANY	2,8 million unemployed	4,1	10
ICELAND	5,8	13,6	13,6
ISRAEL	7	No data provided	20
PORTUGAL	18	40	24,4
SPAIN	27	57,2	26,7
SWEDEN	8,3	26,6 (Swedish Statistics includes students looking for holiday works)	14
TURKEY	8,8	17,5	---
UNITED KINGDOM	7,6	21	22

TABLE 1

GNP: 60% report about slight increase of the GNP during the years 2012/13 (by 0, 80 – 1, 20 %), Only Iceland can rely on a higher increase of GNP of 9 % in 2013.

UNEMPLOYMENT: 50% report that unemployment has still rising during the 5 years of the crisis. The official figures of the average unemployment rate goes from 3,9% in Iceland, up to 27% in Spain and 32% in Armenia. Even in countries that are better off, such as Austria the unemployment rate is 10, 2 % and still slightly rising.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: Youth unemployment has risen in 60% of the member-countries, which means that it is still rising on a catastrophic high level in Armenia, Spain, Croatia, Portugal and Georgia between 36% to 57%.

POVERTY RATE: The poverty rates are high and highest in those countries where the unemployment rate is also the highest. Unemployment is the major cause of poverty and the groups most affected by poverty are single-parent families and families with three or more-. The reports show that even in countries like Austria, households of unemployed are under threat to fall under the poverty line by 53%.

In the UK it is interesting because although the unemployment rate is lower than many countries, the poverty rate is very high. One explanation that is offered by BASW colleagues which is underpinned by statistics is the trend over a longer period of low paid jobs and zero hours contracts leading to an increase in working-poor. This is the same in Israel and Georgia. Even if unemployment has been lowered and a record number of people are in work, the number of working poor is increasing and people have to fight hard to feed

their families and avoid homelessness and foreclosure of their homes. There has also been a huge rise in the use of food banks.

Except from the Table 1, collected data also revealed important data on budget cuts, budget cuts in social services and education systems, homelessness, health sector and violence.

BUDGET CUTS: 60% of the governments have made cuts of the budgets for social services. Some of the countries made cuts that did not discern how much especially vulnerable groups are affected by this and the worst of all is Spain with cuts of 40% of the social budgets on all kinds of services.

CUTS IN SOCIAL SERVICES: 80% of the members report about cuts in the national social services. The Swedish Association refers to the fact that the changes in their country are caused by general neoliberal influences and reform attempts, not by the economic and financial crisis. For Europe, this means that parallel to the austerity measures there is a very heavy influence of neoliberal reforms, which are being implemented at the same time, using crisis as an argument. The fact that governments have asked professional social workers to cooperate in relief programs was very low, only three countries affirmed this, gives a hint that the main focus is not on the well-being of people but on satisfying the strong lobbies of rating agencies and financial business interests.

CUTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: Cuts in the education systems have been reported least and governments have made commitments to not reduce education budgets. This does not mean that they have not been affected at all. There seems to be an understanding that this would endanger the future chances of a whole generation of children.

HOMELESSNESS: 80% of all countries report an increase of homelessness. Only Turkey, Israel and Sweden speak of no increase seen by the official statistics. Unofficially, there is also a change to be recognized for certain groups. Looking at the data, there can be seen a tight correlations between the increase of private debts and the rise of poverty. This would seem to be a logical outcome and needs to be taken into consideration in all programs to fight poverty and homelessness.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH: 60% of the countries say that this sector is affected by the crisis and austerity programs. The amount varies considerably. Portugal and Spain report heavy impacts, whilst other countries, where the situation is better, report an increase in mental health problems. This suggests that the stress and fear caused by the problems of less money, rising debts and becoming unemployed leads to more mental health problems. This needs to be taken into consideration and included into all health programs and social reforms.

DOMESTIC AND PUBLIC VIOLENCE: There is a worsening situation for marginalized groups. Disadvantaged groups become victims of abuse, racism and hate crimes. Roma, asylum seekers and other migrants are suffering numerous human rights violations. The findings show a substantial rise of 60%. This matches the reports of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (FRA, <http://fra.europa.eu/en>).

TABLE 2

Only 60% of the governments have implemented special programs to tackle this severe problem. In the most affected countries governments have reacted, with little effect yet. The Croatian government has not started special programs to fight youth unemployment. The question if social workers are involved in these programs does not give a comprehensive picture, as only 4 countries provided information, but this shows the trend to a negative development – social workers are not involved or are replaced by less-educated and low cost personnel.

TABLE 2
Unemployment and Poverty Rates

COUNTRIES	SPECIAL PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED BY GOVERNMENTS	SOCIAL WORKERS' ENGAGEMENT TO SPECIAL PROGRAMS
ARMENIA	Yes	Social workers not involved decision making process
AUSTRIA	Yes	Social workers are less involved, this for lowering costs
CROATIA	No	N/A
GEORGIA	Yes	Social workers are not involved in the implementation of these programs; however, they have been informed about the programs and their role is to refer their clients to these programs and/or advocate for their clients in order for them to receive the benefits they are entitled to.
GERMANY	No – the government shut down special programs	---
ICELAND	Yes	Yes, social workers are the key persons to implement these programs.
ISRAEL	Yes	No data provided
PORTUGAL	Yes, however very limited and precarious kind of initiatives	No data provided
SPAIN	Yes	No data provided
SWEDEN	No	New professions are emerging. For example "Job coaches"
TURKEY	Yes	Social workers did not take a direct role during the process.
UNITED KINGDOM	Yes	No data provided

TABLE 3
Employment Policies

TABLE 3 shows that most of the countries have common issues concerning engagement of non-social workers or para-professionals to the social service programs.

COUNTRIES	EMPLOYMENT OF NON-SOCIAL-WORKERS IN PROGRAMS
ARMENIA	Yes
AUSTRIA	Yes, mainly in programs for unemployed, but also within the child protection system
CROATIA	No information
GEORGIA	Yes / only in NGO sector
GERMANY	Yes
ICELAND	Yes
ISRAEL	No, but there are government initiatives that also use para-professionals
PORTUGAL	Yes. Due to the lack of professional regulation there are significant problems, confusion and conflicts with several other professionals.
SPAIN	No
SWEDEN	No information
TURKEY	Yes, this is the main challenge for Turkish social work right now. Other professionals such as teachers, sociologists are allowed to work under title of “social work officer”. Moreover, university graduates from various disciplines are being hired in the social assistance system.
UNITED KINGDOM	Scotland is looking at the scope of membership and whether this should open up to other non-social workers in social services

TABLE 4
Response of Social Work towards
Economic Crisis

VARIABLES	ARMENIA	AUSTRIA	CROATIA	GEORGIA	GERMANY	ICELAND	ISRAEL	PORTUGAL	SPAIN	TURKEY	UNITED KINGDOM
ENGAGED IN NATIONAL PROGRAMS				X		X			X		
MADE STATEMENTS ON SOCIAL POLITICS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ELABORATED CONCEPTS FOR SOCIAL PROGRAMS	X			X		X		X	X	X	X
ORGANIZED MEETINGS, PARTICIPATION IN DEMONSTRATIONS	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MEETINGS AND TALKS TO POLITICIANS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SUPPORTED MEMBERS-SOCIAL WORKERS TO INSTALL PROJECTS	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
SUPPORTED NGOS WITH KNOW HOW		X		X	X			X		X	X
ENGAGED IN SELF-ORGANIZED NGO-PROJECTS	X		X	X						X	
ORGANIZED EMERGENCY AND RELIEF-PROGRAMS FOR > Social Workers (members)							X	X	X		X
> People (clients and public)									X		

TABLE 5
 Participation and Contribution
 to Government / Social Work
 Based Programs

COUNTRIES	HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED BY GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO PARTICIPATE OR CONTRIBUTE WITH KNOW-HOW ETC?	HAS YOUR ASSOCIATION SUPPORTED SOCIAL WORK BASED PROGRAMS, IN WHICH WAY MAINLY?
ARMENIA	Yes	Designing innovative social services
AUSTRIA	No	No
CROATIA	Yes, but they didn't accept our proposals and recommendation	Yes
GEORGIA	Yes	Yes
GERMANY	No data provided	Yes
ICELAND	Yes	Yes
ISRAEL	No data provided	No data provided
PORTUGAL	Yes	Yes
SPAIN	Yes	Yes
SWEDEN	No data provided	No data provided
TURKEY	Yes	Yes
UNITED KINGDOM	Yes	Yes

TABLE 4 and **TABLE 5** indicates that member associations have been engaged in a great variety of activities:

> 90% have done statements on social policy.

> 80% have organized meetings with politicians and been involved in demonstrations.

> Almost 80% of the associations also did support social work programs, but they mostly did not specify which kind and to what extent, how much they had been involved.

> 70% gave support and expertise to their members to develop social programs.

> 60% of the members reported they have been asked for knowhow by government organizations, but mostly have not been asked to actively participate.

> 50% have elaborated concepts for social programs.

> 40% gave support to their member social workers and another 40% also to service users and affected groups.

> 30% engaged in NGO projects for relief programs.

> 20% have been asked to engage in national programs.

The data supports the view that social workers are not being asked how things should be done and what is essential for developing social policy and programs that promote well-being, reduce poverty and prevent abuse and exploitation. Social work is (still) not asked to actively participate in the realization of social service concepts on the whole.

TABLE 6

Foundation of new NGOs and networks

Foundation of new NGOs and networks
 Results: 60% of associations report founding of new NGOs, but it is not specified what they are and 70% report that new networks have been established.

COUNTRIES	HAVE NEW NGOS BEEN FOUNDED OR ESTABLISHED IN YOUR COUNTRY PROVIDING AID TO PEOPLE?	HAVE NEW NETWORKS BEEN ESTABLISHED TO CONCENTRATE PROFESSION'S KNOW HOW AND INFORMATION?
ARMENIA	Yes	Yes
AUSTRIA	No information	Yes
CROATIA	Yes	No
GEORGIA	Yes	Yes
GERMANY	Yes	No information
ICELAND	No	Yes
ISRAEL	Yes	Yes
PORTUGAL	Yes	Yes
SPAIN	No information	Yes
SWEDEN	No information	No information
TURKEY	Yes	Yes
UNITED KINGDOM	Yes	Yes

TABLE 7
Connection to IFSW

80% of the members stated information by IFSW Europe is useful, specifying some information such as basic documents of IFSW, international standards regarding quality, working conditions case load management. Members have asked for more opportunities to exchange experiences and best practice examples.

COUNTRIES	HAS INFORMATION BY IFSW EUROPE BEEN USEFUL?
ARMENIA	Yes
AUSTRIA	Yes, informing about quality standards internationally
CROATIA	Yes, generally
GEORGIA	Yes, it has been useful
GERMANY	Yes
ICELAND	Yes
ISRAEL	---
PORTUGAL	Yes, for the international references from basic documents and international experiences exchange according the most challenging tasks to SW nowadays
SPAIN	Yes
SWEDEN	---
TURKEY	Yes. Although challenges and social work's state during and after the crises in Turkey and in Europe differs, it was useful.
UNITED KINGDOM	IFSW Europe provides up to date information that social workers can access. This is communicated widely to members of BASW so that individuals can observe the many advantages of using the site. The challenge is getting this marketed to a non-member, which is on-going work in NIASW.

TABLE 8

Expectations from IFSW Europe to provide support (1)

> 100 % would like to be able to download good practice examples from other countries.

> 90% favor installing a discussion room on the website, a chat room for members.

> 60% would like opportunities for Skype discussions among members.

> 50% favor personal meetings among members.

EXPECTATIONS	ARMENIA	AUSTRIA	CROATIA	GEORGIA	GERMANY	ICELAND	ISRAEL	PORTUGAL	SPAIN	SWEDEN	TURKEY	UNITED KINGDOM
ON THE WEBPAGE – DISCUSSION FORUM / CHAT		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	-	X	X
PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH OTHER MEMBERS	X	X	X					X	X	-	X	
SKYPE-DISCUSSIONS ORGANIZED BY IFSW	X	X	X		X			X	X	-	X	
DOWNLOAD-AREA FOR GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X

TABLE 9

Expectation from IFSW Europe to provide support (2)

90% are intensifying contacts about international politics, 70% want to have a task-force installed to assess the situation in member countries. This result is in contradiction to the comments about the situation of social services, where many more associations expressed there is no necessity to put up a task force.

The reports for the Global Agenda Observatory would have been a good opportunity to provide these kind of reports, but there are only very few from the European region. However a new European Observatory is being set up.

90% of countries would appreciate to have more reports about the impact on peoples' lives by the austerity measures.

EXPECTATIONS	ARMENIA	AUSTRIA	CROATIA	GEORGIA	GERMANY	ICELAND	ISRAEL	PORTUGAL	SPAIN	SWEDEN	TURKEY	UNITED KINGDOM
SHOULD IFSW EUROPE INTENSIFY THE CONTACTS TO INTERNATIONAL POLITICS?	Yes	Only if social work is affected	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
SHOULD IFSW EUROPE BUILD A TASK-FORCE TO VISIT AND ASSESS YOUR NATIONAL SITUATION	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Not necessary yet	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
SHOULD IFSW EUROPE PROVIDE REPORTS (WITH YOUR SUPPORT) ABOUT THE EFFECTS ON PEOPLES LIVES	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Sometimes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes

TABLE 10
Developing Role of IFSW-Europe

Results indicate that there is a need to develop tools to increase communication and knowledge/experience transfer among associations. Member stated that there is need to develop exchanges, reporting and joint research activities.

<p>WHAT COULD/SHOULD IFSW EUROPE DO ADDITIONALLY FOR SUPPORT OF YOUR NATIONAL SITUATION?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Strong statements and recommendation for national government > More exchange opportunities among the member countries increase professional networks; sharing successful policies and good practices > More opportunities for professional growth and capacity development > Frequent reports about situation in other countries > Increase efforts to protect the professionalization of social work > Develop social action programs around Europe > Planning and implementing resilience research
<p>WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION HAVE YOU BEEN MISSING?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Good practice program or actions > Best practices, human right issues, working conditions... > Specific program information from other organisations > Situation of social work in other countries > More information on supporting staff to avoid burnout

CONCLUSION

IFSW Europe's Project titled "Economic Crisis in Europe: Challenge and Response of Social Work Profession" has been successfully implemented in two stages as it was planned. The first stage involved gathering project data from respective national members of IFSW Europe using a questionnaire.

The second stage of the project, IFSW Europe sent another questionnaire, organized a workshop and the Portuguese Association of Social Workers hosted the workshop in Lisbon. The workshop has provided an opportunity to share common problems and experiences among participants and gave the IFSW Europe Executive Committee important information for developing their work plan.

This second questionnaire and workshop reinforced that the situation had worsened with the ongoing austerity measures imposed on national budgets, particularly affecting welfare and social care budgets. People are seeking more support from social welfare and social work services. However, the support available is decreasing. Financial welfare support is decreasing (in terms of both the amount available and the length of time the support can be claimed); fewer services are available – both in terms of state services and those provided by NGOs. Often preventive services are cut which leads to more crisis situations. Many of those remaining services are levying charges or requiring financial contributions from service users. Financial support, which has been available to support the development of services in poorer countries, has been cut.

Data collected from the 12 countries that returned questionnaires indicate that

socio-economic indicators are still alarming in different corners of Europe:

> 50% of members reported unemployment has still risen during year 5 of the crisis. The official figures of the average unemployment-rate goes from 3,9% in Iceland up to 27% in Spain. The poverty rates are high and highest in those countries where the unemployment rate is also higher. In the UK poverty rates are higher even though unemployment has increased.

> Only 60% of the governments have implemented special programs to tackle with this severe problem.

> 60% of the governments have made cuts of the budgets for social services.

> Except for Turkey, Israel and Sweden, 80% of all countries report an increase of homelessness.

> 60% say that health and mental health sector was affected by the crisis and austerity programs.

> Domestic and public violence, abuse, racism, hate crimes, have worsened the situation for marginalized groups and refugees, Roma and other migrants, legal or illegal, and numerous human rights violations even initiated by governments have risen substantially as stated in 60% of the reports. This matches very much with the reports of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (FRA, <http://fra.europa.eu/en>).

Social workers, specifically, have been affected by cuts and decreasing services. They have experienced:

> Significant cuts in pay

> Very significant rises in workload

> Deterioration in working conditions

- > An increase in stress and burnout
- > When workers leave they are not being replaced and periods of maternity leave and prolonged sickness absence are not being covered.

The questionnaires and discussions at the Lisbon Workshop provided data that helped to learn about responses of social workers to challenge the economic crisis throughout Europe. Clearly, member associations of IFSW Europe have been engaged in a great variety of activities challenging austerity as a way of dealing with the economic crisis and identifying the impact on people's well-being:

- > 90% have done statements on social policy.
- > 80% have organized meetings with politicians and been involved in demonstrations.
- > Almost 80% of the associations also did support social work programs, but they mostly did not specify which kind and to what extent, how much they had been involved.
- > 70% gave support and expertise to their members to develop social programs.
- > 60% of the members report, they have been asked for knowhow by government organizations, but mostly they have not been asked to actively participate.
- > 50% have elaborated concepts for social programs.
- > 40% gave support to their member social workers and another 40% also to service users and affected groups.
- > 30% engaged in NGO projects for relief programs.

- > 20% have been asked to engage in national programs.

Collected data from participant countries via questionnaire and the Lisbon Workshop indicated that information by IFSW Europe has been considered useful for 80% of the members.

Regarding the expectations from IFSW Europe, member associations stated that there is a need for exchange of experiences and best practice examples among member associations. Additionally, 90% are favoring to install a discussion room on the website, a chat room for members, 100% would want a download area for good practice examples, 60% emphasize Skype discussions among members and 50% are favoring personal meetings among members. 90% are in favor to further intensify contacts to international politics, 70% want to have a task-force installed to assess the situation in member countries. This result is in contradiction to the comments about the situation of social services, where many more associations express there is no necessity to put up a task force.

There were also plenty areas identified for IFSW Europe to consider when developing their work plan including more frequent face to face meetings, providing motivation, support and ideas; more work on Role and Identity; work on caseloads as in all countries social workers are struggling; joint campaigns organized by IFSW Europe to support the development of different models of social development and social innovations; support for alliances and develop partnerships with other European and international organizations such as Social Platform and ILO; develop a European view for certain topics and support less well-off associations to participate.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE LISBON WORKSHOP

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**PROJECT:
“ECONOMIC CRISIS
IN EUROPE
-CHALLENGE AND
RESPONSE OF SOCIAL
WORK PROFESSION”**



IFSW Europe is working on the Project “Economic Crisis in Europe- Challenge and Response of Social Work Profession”

The main aims of the project are:

- a) To gather data about the “response” of social workers/social work to the crisis at national levels;
- b) To discuss the possible role of European and international social work networks - advocacy, empowerment and lobbying;
- c) To discuss and develop a working plan to tackle the effects of the crisis on social work services and those requiring our support

In the first part of the Project, a questionnaire has been distributed by IFSW Europe in order to collect data from our member organisations.

For the second part of the Project there will be a workshop in Lisbon.

Venue and dates for the workshop

The Portuguese Association of Social Workers (APSS) will host the workshop on December, 6-7 in Lisbon at Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portuguese Catholic University of Lisbon)- Faculdade de Ciências Humanas / Departamento de Serviço Social (Human Sciences Faculty / Social Work School), LISBON, Portugal
www.ucp.pt

DRAFT AGENDA FOR DECEMBER WORKSHOP IN LISBON/PORTUGAL

**Friday, 6 December
10.00- 17.00**

- 1) Welcome and formalities by the Portuguese Association of Social Workers and IFSW Europe e.V.
- 2) Formalities- Roll call of participants– name, national organisation and professional role
- 3) Introduction to the project idea - trends and themes that identified the project “Economic Crisis in Europe- Challenge and Response of Social Work Profession”

Coffee Break: 11.00-11.30

- 4) Highlights from each country present (Brief introduction – 10 minutes from each country focusing on the existing national situation regarding socio-economic effects on crisis)

Lunch: 12.30-14.00

- 5) Horizontal thematic trends and recommendations (The following themes are discussed, involving all participants and national perspectives. Approximately 35 minutes for each theme. Evidence presented on each theme should be summarised and recommended action highlighted)

- a) Have you experienced cuts in health and social care funding

and social protection benefits as a result of economic crisis? (Increasing poverty and unemployment, cuts in social services budgets etc...)

- b) Has your government implemented special programs and are social workers engaged in these? Please give examples from your country.

c) Have you recognized any negative effects of economic crisis on human rights situation in your countries?

- d) Please describe the responses of social work to the crisis in your country and the stance and any action your association has taken.

Saturday, 7 December

10.00 – 13:00

- e) Combating the effects of the crisis – work plan for IFSW-Europe. What are the roles of IFSW Europe in order to combat the effects of economic crisis?

Coffee Break: 11.00-11.30

- f) What could / should IFSW-Europe do additionally to support your national situation?

Closing session

IFSW Europe is looking forward to promote an intense debate with our members in Lisbon, Portugal.

Hakan Acar

Executive member of IFSW Europe e.V.

**ECONOMIC CRISIS
in EUROPE
CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE OF
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION**

STAGE II PROJECT REPORT
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS - EUROPEAN REGION e.V

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS
FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSISTANTS SOCIAUX
FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE TRABAJADORES SOCIALES

2015