Social workers for transformational and sustainable social protection in Europe

Update
John Brennan
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My thanks to Fran McDonnell and Ian Johnston for permission to use some slides from the project workshop in Copenhagen
Outline of Presentation

Project Team Members Phase 2

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John Brennan (also ESP Rep).

• Members of the IFSW-E Project group
• Background to Project
• What is the EU Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)?
• Implementation of EPSR
• Social Work Voice: Whart next for IFSW Europe?
Background to Project

• Phase 1: 2017-2018
• Phase 2: 2018-2019 included Workshop in Copenhagen

• Social workers engage on a daily basis with those who are vulnerable
• Social workers implement social policies
= The wealth of knowledge, experience + expertise of social work puts it in a strong position to influence policies

• IFSW Europe welcomes the EPSR with its call to respect the dignity of people through its support and protection measures
What is the Pillar of Social Rights?

A framework of rights and principles

“Essential for a fair and well-functioning labour market and welfare systems in 21st Century Europe;

Key elements of the European Pillar of Social Rights include:

• 20 policy principles in different social policy areas
• Underpinned by a EU Social Scoreboard of 14 indicators, to monitor the implementation of the principles
• 3 Key legislative proposals - Work-life balance; Written statement on Transparent and Predictable working conditions; Working-time directive
• Non-legislative initiatives to deliver on principles, notably on access to social protection, access to information on employment rights
20 Policy Domains

I Equal Opportunities and access to the labour market
   e.g., 1. Education, training and lifelong learning

II Fair Working Conditions
   e.g., 9. Work-life balance

III Social Protection and Inclusion
   e.g., 19. Housing and assistance for homeless
       20. Access to essential services

EPSR link - ec.europa.eu
Implementation

• Stronger rhetoric in key EU documents, but lacks mainstreaming of all principles in Semester
• EU work life balance Directive 2019
• Stronger focus e.g. minimum income/social protection but weak on services e.g. housing, homeless, social services.
• Positive scoreboard focus on inequality/ inadequate funding for social protection, but insufficient impact.
• Stability and Growth remains dominant approach - undermining investment in social rights/ infrastructure
• Low profile for Civil Society, but new Employment Guidelines give new legal base.
• Social Fairness Package (13 March 2018)
Implementation

Delivered mainly through:

- EU Funds - Social Fairness Package: proposals for initiatives on access to social protection for all workers

- The European Semester Annual process - monitors progress and ensures the active involvement of Member States:

- Via EU Commission + mainly national governments
What next for IFSW Europe + Voice of Social Work?
IFSW –E Project Workshop, Copenhagen 2019

• IFSW-E supports all 20 EPSR principles

• Give priority to:-
  • Active support to employment (Principle 4)
  • Employment conditions (P7)
  • Work life balance (P9)
  • Child care and support to children (P11)
  • Social protection(P12)
  • Minimum income (P14)
  • Inclusion of people with disabilities (P17)
  • Long term care (P18)
  • Access to essential services and seeking to expand the definition to include social services (P20)
• Social protection is a human right

• Social protection systems should be instruments for social transformation, democracy + creating social just societies

• IFSW calls on SWs to include social protection in all activity towards achievement of SDGs 2016-2030

• Guaranteeing universal access to health care, services + providing basic income security for all

• To include sustainable social development in curriculum + prepare students in theory + practice to work with social protection systems

• IFSW urges its member organisations...to forge alliances with civil society organisations, unions, + people who use services to promote sustainable social protection

• This policy is embodied in the concept of community capacity building.
IFSW-Europe Project + EPSR Implementation

• IFSW Europe calls for a clear focus on most vulnerable in societies in allocation of resources + for the priority on Prevention, Collective responsibility + Respect for diversity

• Principle 20, Access to essential services: expand to contain access to appropriate social services, including professional social work services. ‘This represents an effective element for and an essential element of cohesion and resilient societies” (European Social Platform, 2014:5)

• In designing services, the people who use these services must be at centre + have their voices heard.
IFSW-Europe Project + EPSR Implementation

• Pillar’s principles are appropriate to all countries in Europe
  • IFSW Europe will seek to support its non-EU member organisations in advocating for similar outcomes.

• Specific Recommendations for Action:
  • For our discussion Now

• Next Steps
  • IFSW Conference Vienna
  • Joint IFSW-E, EAPN, ESP ‘public helaring with MEPs, Brussels, Oct 2019
Potential Specific Recommendations for Action... 1

National:

- Advocacy: e.g., lobbying, media campaign, community action, research
- Mediation: IFSW E member orgs engage in formulation + development of social policy at nat level to influence outcomes
- Explore ambiguity in ‘care’ versus ‘control’ aspects of social work role: SW supports vulnerable people + supports established order by contributing to integration + adaptation of service users into estb society = dilemma. SW must question where practice complying with HRs principles + whether actions necessary + proportionate
- IFSW E member orgs to review EU Country-Specific Recommendations in A) deciding priorities at nat level re. implementation of Pillar + B) what is being achieved in implementation
- IFSW E member orgs develop partnerships/ forge alliances with service users (Jim Ife - ‘practice from below’), nat civil society orgs + unions to promote sustainable social protection systems
Potential Specific Recommendations for Action... 2

• IFSW E will work with member orgs not in EU to prepare IFSW Statement on need to implement type of recommendations in Pillar
• IFSW will develop info packs for member orgs on EU + other relevant European agencies
• IFSW member orgs will have access to relevant info to enable them to understand impact of poverty in their country + how to apply rights-based approach to their work
• IFSW E will develop template for member orgs to write to MEPs/ EU Commission, etc, about implementation of EPSR.
• IFSW member orgs will advocate for value of social investment + early prevention, addressed within national contexts, culturally + financially. Social investment projects can include municipalities, state +/-non-governmental representatives, bringing together different experiences in developing resource- + cultural-efficient solutions for early preventive approaches, documented to reduce public budgets + private funding for education, health, housing + labour market.

• Develop the specific ‘voice’ of social work
Potential Specific Recommendations for Action... 3

EU Level:

• Advocacy: e.g., lobbying, media campaign, community action, research

• Mediation: IFSW E will work with Eur orgs – ESP, EAPN, FRA, CoE INGO, Eurordis, UN, etc – to influence EU policy formulation + development that redresses current imbalance between econ + social dimensions

• IFSW E will monitor progress being made at EU level to implement Pillar joint public hearing with other like-minded orgs to discuss implementation of Pillar

• IFSW E will work with IFSW Global about human rights, social justice + sustainable development

• IFSW will encourage EASSW to incorporate social policy engagement in social work education curricula.
Potential Specific Recommendations for Action...  

- IFSW E will explore ‘care’ versus ‘control’ aspects of SW role. A very important issue which shall be put into a policy question whether social policy shall built on a wish to include (to care for) vulnerable groups or to control vulnerable people, e.g., criminalization of homelessness.

- IFSW E will encourage sub-regional exchange of conditions + experiences on social policy and welfare models, mirroring *The European Pillar of Social Rights* and potential EU legislation linked to Pillar. Sub-regional exchange can be valuable within a group of countries where legislation as well as cultural + financial contexts are similar/comparable, + such exchange can include common reviews of EU Commission's annual country-specific recommendations for countries within a given sub-region.