**IFSW EUROPE NEW SOCIAL WORKER**



**PROJECT PAPER**

**For discussion at the Delegates Meeting 2022**

In 2020 IFSW Europe established a project to support and involve social workers who are new to the profession. This focused on students in their final year of studies and social workers in the first five years of their employment. Member organisations were invited to appoint a new social worker to the project group which has met together regularly over the last twelve months. The project group quickly identified significant concerns about the transition period when students move into social work employment, and they set out to gather information about peoples’ experiences of this transition period.

The project group has gathered a significant amount of information, through a three-stage process of project group meetings, an online survey, and conversations with new social workers. In total more than 850 new social workers from 31 countries across Europe have provided information about their transition into social work.

The project has identified significant concerns around professional training not preparing students for the social work role; poor quality placements / internships; difficulties with securing employment and a lack of support from employers in the early stages of a social workers’ career. There were also concerns that the social work role can be very fluid which makes moving into the profession potentially difficult.

The group has worked together during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was clear through the information gathering processes that the pandemic has impacted on social workers joining the profession. There were both positives and negatives highlighted from the perspective of new workers. However, the project group felt that most of the difficulties highlighted around the transition into social work did not relate specifically to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The project has also highlighted what new social workers see as helping them through the transition period. Intervision was seen as particularly helpful in supporting new workers to reflect on their practice, their learning and the emotions arising from their work. Peer support; supervision; ongoing training; caseload or workload reduction; formal induction processes; shadowing; mentoring and coaching were also seen as very valuable.

The project group has drawn on all the information gathered to develop guidelines which will support new social workers in their transition into employment. The guidelines provide advice for new social workers, experienced social workers, employers, Universities, and professional associations.

The new social workers project group has gathered and shared a wide range of data about social workers making the transition into the profession. The group hopes this data is helpful for associations to better support new social workers in their country.

**This project comes to an end in the Delegates Meeting 2022, and we will be discussing during our session how we would like to progress the involvement of New Social Workers across all of IFSW.**

**Our session is on Saturday 29th October from 11:00-12:30.**

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# THE PROJECT: PEOPLE AND PROCESS

IFSW Europe has a long-term commitment to supporting students and new social workers. It also recognises that new workers bring a great deal to the profession for example, in terms of new ideas. New workers may also bring a great deal of previous experience to the social work role. In 2020 it started a project to bring new workers together with Federation support – this became the ‘Young Social Workers’ project. IFSW Europe member organisations were asked to nominate a ‘young social worker’ to be part of the project and the initial group was made up of people nominated from Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, and the UK. During the first year of the project, the project group was flexible and due to other responsibilities, the main countries involved in the data gathering process were Armenia, Austria, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, The Netherlands and the UK. Spain joined the project later. This means that young social workers representing more than 16 countries have been involved in the project group.

Early in the project group members expressed concerns about the title of ‘young’ social worker. As the project developed through the different stages, others raised concerns about the use of the word ‘young’. There was concern about whether the word could lead to discrimination and stereotyping and there was a recognition that people of all ages could join the profession. The group therefore decided to use the phrase ‘new social worker’ which is used throughout this document.

*New social worker is defined as a student in the final year of their training, or a social worker in the first five years of their employment.*

The 1st year of the project was co-directed by Omar Mohamed, a final year social work student and Siobhan Maclean who has been a social worker for 32 years and has worked with IFSW Europe on a range of projects. Herbert Paulischin, an experienced social worker who has been involved in IFSW Europe for many years, has also supported the project. Whilst Siobhan and Herbert have acted as mentors for the new social workers, the project activities have been led by the new workers. Omar continued to direct the project for the 2nd year of the project. This discussion paper was brought together by the whole project group.

The project group’s work so far has focused on gathering information from new social workers about their transition into the profession. This has involved three stages:

1. Project group members meeting online regularly to discuss their own experiences.
2. An online survey.
3. Conversations based around the themes which emerged from the survey responses.

Subsequently, the group have worked on the development of guidelines to support new workers in their transition to employment. These guidelines have been written for new workers, experienced workers, employers, universities and professional associations.

This paper covers the stages of information gathering and each of the themes which have emerged from the project so far, leading to clear guidance to support the effective transition into employment for new social workers. The paper concludes with a country overview written by each new social worker in the project group.

# INFORMATION GATHERING

Stage 1: Group meetings

The project group first met at the IFSW Europe Delegates Meeting 2020 which was held online. They subsequently met together online on a very regular basis to progress the initial project work. In these meetings project members shared their own experiences, as they represented practitioners across the definition of ‘new social worker’ as final year students and workers in the first five years of their employment.

The professional associations which nominated the new social worker each worked differently with the new social worker. For example, some countries set up a support group made up of a number of students and new social workers to support the project group member. In this way those associations had a small project group within their own country.

There have been many benefits to the project so far. With new social workers benefiting from linking with peers in other countries and member organisations benefiting from new social workers becoming involved in association activities.

*"Having a support group in our country allowed us to have more conversations and have more capacity to analyze the data and possibly take the project further at the national level. For the colleagues who collaborated, it was an enriching experience, which allowed them to look at professional practice and the challenges that new social workers face at the beginning of their careers, allowing the group to give voice to these issues from the micro to the macro level." (Portugal)*

Stage 2: Online survey



The survey was developed by the group, based on their initial conversations and professional experiences and translated into 10 European languages. It was then distributed via IFSW European member organisations to their members across Europe. The survey had 783 responses from 31 countries in Europe. The full data from the survey is available by using the following link or QR code:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=q7k2rV11G0qSjXOBvsmYB5HXx0nBPoFLvca64YmGmJ xURFBSRkg0TVFPNE83NkJTSjhKVzdOQkVNSSQlQCN0PWcu&AnalyzerToken=SSHSHL0RJdy3v9fYEVoZtFk3TpK JhMhz](https://forms.office.com/Pages/AnalysisPage.aspx?id=q7k2rV11G0qSjXOBvsmYB5HXx0nBPoFLvca64YmGmJxURFBSRkg0TVFPNE83NkJTSjhKVzdOQkVNSSQlQCN0PWcu&AnalyzerToken=SSHSHL0RJdy3v9fYEVoZtFk3TpKJhMhz)

The responses from the online survey were discussed in group meetings with a number of themes emerging, each of which can impact on the transition of new social workers into employment:

* Training and education
* Practice placements / internships
* Job searching
* Support in employment
* Federation support
* National and International guidance
* The impact of Covid-19 on the transition into employment

These themes were taken into the third stage of the project where other cross cutting themes were identified around role fluidity and the need for reflection.

Stage 3: Conversations

Participants were asked in the online survey if they were willing to be involved in a follow up conversation and group members then conducted the conversations in their own countries. Where we had survey respondents wishing to engage in a follow up conversation where there was no group member in the country, project group members volunteered to have the conversations with people with the same first language. Project group members also arranged some conversations with social workers who did not respond to the initial survey.

The conversations focused on the themes which emerged from the survey, but also considered the similarities and differences in different countries. The conversations also included a discussion around what new social workers would like to see included in any policy statement developed as part of the project.

Conversations with new social workers took place in Armenia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK. There were 84 conversations with new social workers in total. Some of the conversations were with individuals and some were with groups. The conversations were semi structured around the themes which emerged from the first two stages of the project. Some conversations lasted 15 minutes and some were more than an hour. These conversations were very flexible and allowed the new social worker to share their experiences honestly with another new social worker.

As a result of these three stages, the project group gathered a rich range of contemporary data which helps us to better understand the transition experiences of new social workers across Europe.

# CORE THEMES

## Initial Training / Education

The survey responses indicate that 54% of people felt that their training had not prepared them for the profession. 16% of people stated that their initial social work training had prepared them for their professional role, while 30% of people were passive in their response. Discussions between project group members and the conversation stage of the project suggests that newly qualified workers feel that their training has not equipped them for their professional role. There were particular concerns that there is a gap between theory and practice and that there is such variety in the curriculum across Europe and indeed across particular programmes in the same country.

*“Respondents pointed out that what they study at the university theoretically does not actually coincide with practical work.” (Georgia)*

*“It feels that the work that we do in internships and once we are employed is very different to the courses and assessments at University” (Italy)*

*“Courses are almost entirely focussed on child protection practice with little room for learning in other areas.” (Ireland)*

## Practice placement / internships

The project group noted a great deal of diversity in requirements for learning in practice during initial training. The language around this differs between countries with some project group members referring to placements and others referring to internships. These were felt to be key learning spaces by everyone involved in project group discussions.

In the survey responses 92% of respondents said they had a practice placement or internship as part of their social work training. Of the 8% of respondents who did not have a placement experience, 68% felt that it should have been part of their education. The survey asked respondents to rate their placement experience in terms of how it prepared them for social work practice. There was an equal balance of new social workers feeling that their professional placement experiences helped them, and those that feel that it did not have a positive impact on preparing them for practice.

Conversations indicated that the quality of placement experiences was varied. Placements where students were well supported by a qualified social worker meant that they were more valuable as learning experiences, but many people discussed difficult experiences on placement. The difficult experiences related mostly to a lack of learning opportunities and a lack of support from a social worker in the placement setting, but the conversations also highlighted significant concerns around discrimination in placement settings.

*“It is important that internship organizations pay more attention to the students’ internships and assess exactly what are students’ needs on the one hand, and on the other hand, how should they motivate supervisors to be involved in teaching process. Managers of these organizations should recognize importance of having students in their organizations as they are in fact potential employees for the future, and they can get benefits by offering quality of supervised internship places for them. Mostly, internship supervisors are busy and do not get any benefits by fulfilling their supervisory roles.” (Georgia)*

*“In some placements interns were just doing photocopying.” (Italy)*

*“A curricular internship should not be seen as adding a fully operational human resource to the organization, the focus in curricular internships should always be on learning and both institution and faculty should have responsibility for this role.” (Portugal)*

*“It is not mandatory to have a social worker as a supervisor for internships. This is a problem in terms of what people are learning. Are they really learning to be a social worker?” (Portugal)*

## Job searching

Whilst some new social workers found getting a job was straightforward, this tended to be in countries where there were extensive placement / internship opportunities. Here, many social workers talked about securing their first employment in their placement setting. There were, however, common difficulties in gaining early career employment in a number of countries.

Difficulties included:

* Organisations which largely offered short term contracts to new social workers which meant there was limited support and access to training
* Employers requiring experience in the role, which is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain
* Discrimination in job finding based on age, disability and gender
* In some countries new workers feel tempted into poorly paid jobs in order to gain experience.

The survey and follow up conversations identified that students in their final year of training wanted more support in job searching and securing employment. There was a general feeling that there was insufficient support within universities in this area.

*“There are maybe 50 people applying for 2 posts in the public competition” (Italy)*

*“To be honest, I imagined finding a job would be easier… I thought I would find a job sooner. I slowly started writing applications in June and finally had a job in November. But until then I wrote about 40-45 applications and went to about 4-5 interviews.” (Austria)*

*“If would not have the personal support of my lecturers, I could not find the job I have today. University do not think that it has any responsibility in this field” (Armenia)*

*“I think the biggest struggle in finding a job for a new graduate is the experience - most employers have this request” (Romania)*

*“New social workers are exhausted by short term contracts which often relate to short term project funding in organisations” (Italy)*

*“There is very little career guidance and no job searching seminar.” (Ireland)*

Everyone involved in the project felt that it would be useful to have more help and support in job searching at the point of making the transition from student to new professional.

## Support in employment

In the conversations between project group members support in employment was a vibrant conversation theme leading to learning about the diversity of experiences in different countries. The thematic conversations also generated a great deal of discussion about support in employment, where differences were highlighted not only between countries but also between different organisations in the same country. There appears to be little or no consistency in the experiences of new social workers when they join the profession.

The following support was commented on in the different stages of the project:

*Intervision* was the support rated as most helpful across all three stages of data collection. Experiences of intervision was discussed in conversations, and suggestions from new social workers were made such as *“reflecting on one's own actions and uncertainties must be able to be addressed in a protected setting for further development.”* Another new social worker stated it is important for new social workers to make mistakes, to be curious and to ask questions, and that intervision provides a platform for new social workers to do this with their peers and colleagues whilst still maintaining their confidence in their own practice. Intervision was much more widely available in some countries than others and some new social workers are not aware of intervision. For example, in the UK new social workers have not heard of intervision as a concept.

*“Intervision is vital. Reflecting on one's own actions and uncertainties must be able to be addressed in a protected setting for further development” (Austria)*

*Peer support* is defined as being supported and in turn, offering support to peers and colleagues, either informally or formally. Many new social workers found that having peer support in practice was helpful in being able to ask questions and be curious, and to continually develop their practice. In countries where social work is a very new profession, many new social workers found themselves working in organisations where they were the only social worker. They missed the opportunity for peer support in the workplace.

*“Where there is a qualified social worker in the workplace then employment support is much better.” (Armenia)*

*Supervision* was described as fundamental in terms of support. Meeting regularly with an experienced social worker who overlooks your practice was seen as essential such that without supervision new social workers felt it would not be healthy to practice. New social workers suggested that being able to share responsibility and thoughts on cases meant that the burden of accountability was lessened. However, there were a number of conversations which highlighted that supervision did not allow a reflective space and it was not emotionally supportive.

*“There is a need for more emotionally supportive supervision” (Italy)*

*“Regarding the supervision or training, each of social workers have to find these programs. Only few services providers contract trainings and professional supervision for social workers; and only a few of them pay for the trainings and programs of supervision that social workers are engaged with.” (Romania)*

*Further training* was seen as helpful by new social workers. They felt that it could help with addressing some of the gaps identified between theory and practice and initial qualifying training. Training was described as being offered further learning opportunities in practice about specific issues and areas for development. This was seen as helpful as it enabled new social workers to solidify their knowledge within a specific practice area, where many new social workers feel that their education and training did not prepare them for specific areas of practice.

*“… not many trainings and webinars are conducted in the field of social work. At this stage, in addition to university education in Georgia, webinars and rarely trainings are offered by the Georgian Association of Social Workers only, which is not enough actually, but there is a real need.” (Georgia)*

*Caseload or workload reduction* is described as new social workers having less cases than an experienced social worker. Many new social workers said that they were not provided with caseload or workload reduction, but they felt it would be helpful in transitioning well to their new area of employment.

*“There are not enough social workers to divide tasks and provide more effective social support.” (Portugal)*

*“Our organisation works hard to reduce the caseload in two ways: less people in your caseload and that some tasks are taken over.”* (Netherlands)

*“Two weeks (or more or less) on boarding, training at the beginning of your work is very important. Do not start with a full caseload at the beginning!! If not, people are leaving after one year.”* (Netherlands)

*“…No it is up to yourself: within a week I had my own case load, only direction was ‘keep a record of clients.’*

*There is an open-door policy to come in and ask questions but no formal guidance or supervision.”* (Ireland)

*A formal induction* is described as when a new social worker is given background information into the service with support in transitioning into their service area. Many new social workers felt that this was helpful in making the transition. However, experiences of induction were varied with many people feeling that they had very little time spent in induction.

*“There should be an integration process inside the institution upon the arrival of the new professional, in order to explain his/her role and functions. If, upon integrating into a new job, the division and clarification of tasks is not done, we run the risk of the new social worker feeling lost in all the complexity of the work.” (Portugal)*

*“Give social workers with “a chance to transition into their role” to reduce burn out: possibly a month timetable which is structured, get familiar with IT system, team, location of files, where things are, how processes work.”* (Ireland)

*Shadowing and mentoring* were also described as helpful, where shadowing is described as learning from an experienced social worker through observation, and mentoring is described as being matched with an experienced social worker who offers guidance and advice for future development and career prospects. New social workers found both of these useful in developing their skills.

*“New social workers should have a compulsory period of time where you observe/shadow: meetings, home visits, network meeting. This is very important to gain confidence.”* (Ireland)

*“In general, I find the principle of a buddy or mentor very helpful and positive. But I think it depends on how it's done, and of course it's also a bit of luck how well they get along.”* (Austria)

*“I had a sort of mentor with my first workplace - that worked very well. I liked how she always was open to all my questions, had time for me, made me feel valued - asked for my opinion. Then also the training was nice. Feeling like I could make mistakes was very important - I felt so pressured to be perfect from the moment that I graduated. It was good to check in and hear that I’m not supposed to be perfect, and mistakes can be made.”* (Netherlands)

*Coaching* is an area that some new social workers felt very helpful, however many new social workers shared that this was not something provided to them. Coaching is where a professional, which is not always a social worker, helps a new social worker in an identified area, such as an area of practice, confidence, selfesteem, dealing with challenging situations.

*“It would be helpful to practice with a job coach to see what kind of qualities someone possesses besides the regular social work diploma. This benefits a future employer as well as the individual to make the right choice. And most important: it leads to social workers speaking up for what they think are good ideas, instead of sticking to the education curriculum or to processes that are actually outdated.”* (Netherlands)

*Opportunities for reflection and reflexivity* was not listed as a separate support in the survey used in stage 2 of the project. However, in stage 3 of the project the conversations highlighted the extent to which new social workers felt the need for ongoing opportunities to reflect on their practice and particularly their transition into the profession. Reflective spaces may be offered in some of the specific support mechanisms already referred to (for example supervision may provide the opportunity for reflection) but conversations and project group discussion indicated the need to consider reflective spaces more widely and as a specific support during the transition into the profession.

*“Opportunities to reflect and getting to know myself as an individual really helped me.” (The Netherlands)*

## Federation support

74% of the survey respondents were members of a professional association which is, in turn, a member of IFSW Europe whilst around half of the conversation participants were members. It was striking how little most respondents knew of the work of the Federation or indeed of member organisations.

Comments were made that the fees for membership of professional associations are high which was offputting and new social workers were not sure what associations did, what benefits they may have from joining the association.

*“I only know the student association, haha. We heard about it during my work now (never during studies), but never felt like it was needed, or I should invest.” (Netherlands)*

*“There is not enough information about the role of the college of social workers, its functions and its ideas for the profession.” (Italy)*

*“Annual fees are high, and you don’t know where the money is spent.” (Anonymous)*

*“I did not make use of anything in this regard, but I did not find out anything either. However, I have also received nothing. I would not have even come to the idea we from the OBDS or other associations to get information.” (Austria)*

## National and International Guidance

Many respondents referred to specific legislation and associated guidelines in their country and how these had shaped their early practice experiences. A number of respondents referred to using the international definition of social work, learning about this during their training, but whilst this was seen as helpful for studies it was not referred to as useful in practice. There was a general consensus shared in project group discussion, that there needs to be more unity in terms of national and international guidance.

*“New social workers value the effort, yet they do not know whether they consider it useful in many situations”. (Portugal)*

*“Adoption of IFSW guidelines would be useful, more influence of IFSW in social work Otherwise a situation arises where each country develops its own "Hans Thiersch" and always refers to it, but in the end other countries have never heard of it." (Austria)*

*“I have no idea how the help is organised in other countries actually, no idea!! Not sure if it would help me in my work, though, but I am quite curious.” (Netherlands)*

## Role fluidity

Throughout the project new social workers talked about lack of clarity about the role of a social worker. This impacted on making the transition from student to professional because new workers felt it could be difficult to understand what was expected of them. Whilst the international definition of social work was largely familiar to the social workers in the project group and those involved in the conversations it appeared that this was not sufficiently specific in terms of providing role clarity. When the project group reflected on the issue of role fluidity, they considered that this may be more of an issue in those countries where social work is not a protected title.

*“It seems that there are no limits to what a social worker can do and what not.” (Armenia)*

*“Finally, on the example of our country, it is often possible to find many non-professionals in a field that has not had any contact with social work before and therefore has no experience, values or knowledge and organizations have social workers who are not properly trained in practice due to lack of competence.”*

*(Georgia)*

*“There is a need for the profession to be regulated and not confused with other professional classes and their functions” (Portugal)*

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| COVID-19 AND THE IMPACT ON TRANSITION INTO THE PROFESSION    The project work discussed in this paper all took place during the Covid-19 Global pandemic. Many of the issues highlighted within the survey and conversations related to experiences prior to the pandemic, but all conversations contained some discussion about the impact of Covid-19 on new workers experiences.    The pandemic and the resulting changes to social work brought both positives and negatives for the new workers.    Positives   * There were more job opportunities in some countries * The increase in online working mean that it has been easier for new workers to engage more with the activities of their associations * There has been more training available through online platforms     *“Covid-19 opened doors to jobs for me.” (Armenia)*    Negatives   * Online working has left new social workers feeling more isolated * There has been a lack of opportunity to learn from what is happening around you in a busy office since people have been mostly working from home or have been socially distanced in workplaces * The current work role is very different to the role learnt about at University * Many students did not have the opportunity to attend a formal graduation ceremony, this gave a lack of sense of ‘transition’     *“There has been no support to help us in learning how to work from home.” (Ireland)*    *“The Covid situation also makes it difficult to "settle in" here. We are a team of 7 people and due to the current situation, we are divided into two teams. That means in one week team A is in the home office and in the other week team B. This makes it very difficult to get to know each other and the mutual exchange/reflection is often lost.” (Austria)*    *“the ‘social’ element of social work is not happening, with much of client interaction being on the phone instead of being in person.” (Ireland)*    It is important to recognise the impact that Covid-19 and the resulting societal and organisational changes have had a significant impact on new social workers and students and recent transitions have been difficult for new social workers. However, the project group recognised that most of the experiences of new social workers highlighted during the project were persistent rather than Covid-19 specific. |

# GUIDELINES

The new social workers involved in the project discussed the survey findings and the conversations at length. They felt that guidelines to support the transition of new workers into the profession were important. The following guidelines have been developed by the group. Guidelines are included for new social workers, experienced social workers, employers, Universities and professional associations.

It is important to recognise that these guidelines have been written to be useful in a wide range of different country contexts. Project group members hope that each country association will look to develop the guidelines further to address specific issues and their own contexts.

## For new social workers

Whilst support for new social workers is vitally important, the new social worker is not a passive recipient of this support. They have responsibility to:

* Ensure that they find out what support is available and make best use of this
* Critically evaluate the support available and ask for what they need
* Ask questions to ensure they understand what is expected of them
* Engage with peer support
* Engage with the activities of their professional association
* Share their new ideas, theories, models etc with more experienced workers in the organisation

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| Advice from project group members for newly qualified social workers     * Be clear about your boundaries and the need for self-care. You can get so excited at your new role that you take on too much work * Remember that you never stop learning. Take every opportunity for professional development. * Engage with every opportunity you can for reflective practice – it can really help you make sense of things in your early career * Be patient with yourself * Don’t be too hard on yourself – no one is perfect * Learn from your mistakes / failures. They will make you a better social worker if you reflect on and learn from the experience. * Social work is a very wide profession, take time to think about what you are really interested in. If you work in one area and do not enjoy it, you can move. * Try to have confidence in yourself and value yourself. You can bring lots to teams – for example, you might share some of the theories and research you have learnt in your training, and this will benefit your colleagues greatly. * Take the time to get to know yourself as a social worker * Remember that you are not alone. * It is normal to experience fear and anxiety. Try to find ways to talk to others about this. * Don’t be afraid to ask questions of your colleagues and your supervisor. Sometimes asking the questions can be helpful to them too. * Enjoy being new to your role – you can ask questions and be bold about making suggestions. * Network as much as possible. * Get involved with your professional association and social work groups in your country – it gives you someone to talk to and that makes things easier. |
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## For experienced social workers

Responsibilities to support transition into employment do not lie only with new social workers and their employers. The project highlighted how much influence existing social workers had on the experiences of those entering the profession. Experienced social workers should therefore:

* Remember when they were a new social worker and reflect on what they needed at that stage of their career
* Remember that their experience is one of the most valuable assets in the training of new social workers
* Make time for new social workers
* Recognise and value how much new social workers bring to the profession
* Recognise that it can be very difficult for new social workers to ask questions, so when questions are asked, make sure they are answered
* Demand that new social workers are supported in their organisation
* Act as a guiding mentor to a new social worker – there is often shared learning where the experienced social worker learns a great deal from the new worker in turn
* Make links with local universities and training providers and offer to deliver a lecture, facilitate discussion with students or provide placements or internships
* Look out for training opportunities which might help to further support students and new social workers and make use of these where possible

For employers Organisations which employ social workers should:

* Recognise that new social workers bring a great deal to an organisation
* Ensure that new social workers are comfortable to ask questions
* Set up buddy systems – these are supportive for all workers not just those who are new to the profession
* Assess each new social worker’s individual needs and ensure that they have appropriate support and opportunities
* Support new social workers in developing skills in areas they are interested in
* Facilitate relationship development between new and experienced social workers – promoting mentoring
* Provide an induction and time for new social workers to settle into the organisation
* Ensure that good quality reflective, emotionally supportive supervision is provided to all social workers within the organisation
* Seek to make links with local universities and training providers to offer placements and internships

## For Universities / training institutions

All those involved in the initial training of social workers should:

* Ensure that the quality of practice placements and internships is carefully monitored to ensure that students are receiving the opportunities and support they require
* Seek feedback from students and organisations
* Carefully consider how they can support students to link theory with practice more clearly
* Provide more practice orientated experiences in the education institution. This might include, for example, practitioners and people who use social work services doing guest lectures; role plays with feedback; the use of simulated practice environments
* Provide reflective spaces for students and enable new graduates to continue to connect with these reflective spaces
* Offer support for soon-to-be graduates and graduates to prepare for job searching and entering employment. There should be a named specialist who can offer careers guidance and support

## For Professional Associations

Professional Associations could draw widely on the findings of this project. Group members feel that professional associations should:

* Seek to get students and new professionals more involved in the association. Student and new worker groups or separate ‘arms’ to the association can be helpful in this. There should be lower membership fees for students.
* Offer support in job searching. Providing advice and guidance to students in this area should be a key part of association activity.
* Act as a link in creating mentoring relationships between experienced social workers and new social workers. Everyone benefits from these relationships.
* Deliver training which will support new social workers in their practice. The increase in online training options makes this easier for associations.
* Consider what they may be able to do to promote and provide intervision spaces for members.

Intervision was rated the most positively in terms of the support that new workers found helpful. Online opportunities mean that associations could facilitate intervision spaces for all members – but this will be specifically helpful for new workers.

* Provide members with reflective spaces and reflective tools that work in practice.
* Engage with new social workers in their own country to discuss and review this policy paper and consider the development of further country specific guidance where appropriate.

### ARMENIA

*Name of New Social Worker*

Tatevik Karapetyan & Mariam Mazmanyan

*Name of Professional Association*

Armenian Association of Social Workers ([*www.aasw.org;*](http://www.aasw.org/) *info@aasw.org*)

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

Under the framework of the of IFSW Europe New Social Workers Project, overall, 18 new social workers from Armenia were involved in individual and group conversation sessions. The participants of conversations were diversified in accordance with their duration of experience (*from final year students to those with up to five years of practice*), field of experience, employing agency status (state/non-state) and education institutions.

*A brief outline of social work in Armenia*

Social work has been a new profession in Armenia since 1991, the year of its independence from the Soviet Union. The Spitak earthquake in 1988, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Artsakh war created a myriad of social problems (forced migration; growing poverty, unemployment; homelessness, high rates of institutionalized children; and the like). At that period, “social work” profession was entered the country through international humanitarian support as a new system of principles and approaches that would be more responsive and flexible to the needs of the people and the first social work services were founded by various international organizations mainly focusing on crisis intervention and meeting social needs of those who lived in the disaster area.

As, there was a lack of trained professionals to organize and support such a response, professionals from various educational backgrounds were pulled together to staff (who passed short-term trainings) these new social services, which at the time focused on administrative functions such as the coordination and distribution of humanitarian and financial aid. Social Work Education in Armenia was founded only in 1996 (BA) and the professional association of social workers was established by the first graduates in 2004[[1]](#footnote-1). For now, approximately 2500 people in Armenia, including 500 in non-governmental organizations, work as some type of social service professional or social workers. For many years the scope of work for these workers did not extend much beyond the distribution of financial support to select citizens. Many of these professionals continue to lack the knowledge and capacity to be effective in their jobs. Most social workers have not attained formal university-level education in social work, instead completing a so called “Special Course on Social Work”[[2]](#footnote-2) on how to perform their job functions. Those working in the educational system and for various NGOs may have received additional social work training, sometimes up to 11 months, but less than 10% of these workers have attained any university-level education in social work. At the same time, graduates from four universities providing “Social Work” education lack opportunities to enter the field as the places are fully occupied.

Regardless of the latest changes, following introduction of Unified Social Services in Armenia, and enrolment of more people with education in state social services, the professionalization still is a substantial challenge in Armenia. The requirements “to work as a social worker” are set in manner, which allows almost anybody to enter the field without education.

*An overview of social work training in Armenia*

There are 4 universities (1 private and 3 state-funded) providing Social Work BA (4 years) and MA

Programmes (2 years) in Armenia. Mainly, these are “Generalist Social Work” courses, except from Yerevan

State University, where the BA course gives possibility of narrow specialization in Child and family social Work and Probation Services, and the MA course is on Social Policy and Administration. Although, there is a state educational standard approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, there still is a need to harmonize the existing education programmes to match them with that standard.

Existing courses are more focused on theory and university classes, than practice placements. As a rule, practice hours have a small share in the overall course. Specifically, during the whole course, the student has an opportunity for practice placement two to three times (starting from 3rd year of education) with an average duration from 3 weeks to a month. The main challenges here are connected to the overloaded practice places, lack of prepared staff in practice places and the lack of adequate supervision.

*Transition from student to social worker in Armenia*

There is not a national scheme to support the transition from a student to social worker. Only few examples of support mechanisms exist implemented by individual organisations.

### AUSTRIA

*Name of New Social Worker*

Anna Lang

*Name of Professional Association*

The Austrian Professional Association of Social Work (Österreichischer Berufsverband der Sozialen Arbeit - OBDS),

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

I was allowed to represent the Austrian Professional Association of Social Work (Österreichischer Berufsverband der Sozialen Arbeit - OBDS), which represents the interests of social workers and social pedagogues throughout Austria. The OBDS represents the professional profiles for social work and, in the future also, social pedagogy, formulates standards for the practice of the profession, sets accents for the positive perception of the profession in public, informs employers and clients about the characteristics of the profession, intervenes where framework conditions for social work are shaped and works with the unions, works councils and staff representatives on fair remuneration and positive framework conditions for employees.

At the beginning, I created a questionnaire and interviewed three of my former colleagues. The focus was on the interviewers' sensitivities, fears, anxieties, positive impressions of their new or first job, and how they perceived the training in terms of job preparation. I transcribed, compared and summarized the results of that survey and presented them to my colleagues at IFSW. After we gathered questions together for the main survey, I promoted the survey on social media (Facebook, Instagram) so that as many people as possible would participate. In Austria a total of 113 people took part in the survey. Afterwards, I spoke in more detail virtually with three people who volunteered about their experiences and ideas. Those conversations also were subsequently transcribed and the answers were compared by myself.

*A brief outline of social work in Austria*

Professional social work has existed in Austria for over 120 years. The first authorities arose in response to the social and health consequences of the 1914-1918 war. By 1938 an active and progressive education and practice of social work developed. Modern social work as it is today began mainly in the 1970s and has been taught at universities of applied sciences since 2001.

Basic social care is regulated by law at a high level and is mainly provided by state institutions. In addition, NGOs have taken on an indispensable role in the areas of advising and supporting clients, in the (specialized) inpatient area and in the development of innovative services.

The Austrian Professional Association of Social Work - OBDS - was founded in 1919 and is the only representation of social workers in professional policy matters in Austria. The OBDS represents the interests of social workers and social pedagogues throughout Austria. With national working groups, specialist groups and initiatives, OBDS is equally committed to professional policy and social policy.

*An overview of social work training in Austria*

In Austria, the three-year bachelor‘s degree program in social work at a university of applied sciences is mandatory in order to work as a social worker. Some universities of applied sciences charge tuition fees, some do not. There is a three-part entrance examination everywhere – a written part, a personal interview and a task together with the other applicants. Each educational institution has its’ own focus, but the basic education has many similarities. An obligatory and particularly important part of the bachelor‘s program is the total of three internships, which every student is expected to complete positively. At the FH Burgenland – which was the university of applied science I attended – there is the longest internship period compared to the other educational institutions: a two-week orientation internship in the first semester, a four-week indepth internship in the third semester and a fourteen-week professional internship in the fourth semester. The internship periods at other educational institutions vary a little, but there is not much difference. The students may choose themselves where they want to do their internships. Along the way, you are professionally supervised in the subjects of supervision and practical reflection in the UASs.

*Transition from student to social worker in Austria*

Labour market: The situation for new colleagues is difficult after completing their training. This is mainly due to the fact that vacancies tend to be offered in less attractive fields of work or in rural regions where long driving to work has to be accepted.

In the urban environment there are more job-seeking social workers than vacancies. What makes it more difficult is that, especially in the private sector, applicants are often expected to have professional experience. The starting salaries are lower than for other academic professions.

Enrolment: There is no legal regulation for the enrolment of young professionals and accordingly this takes place very differently in both the public administration and the private sector. In some institutions there are no transitional regulations and new colleagues are confronted with high case load and insufficient support. In some of these organizations there is high employee turnover and team structures are insufficiently developed. But there are also very positive examples in the area of public administration (a very good example is the child protection department of the municipality of Vienna) and with NGOs. An introductory phase with reduced cases and a gradual transfer of content-related responsibility is practiced here.

Newcomers to the profession also receive special training courses that familiarize them with the specifics of the job.

In principle, a stronger regulation with mandatory support and an appropriate design of entry would be welcomed and demanded.

### GEORGIA

*Name of New Social Worker*

Ketevan Lekishvili

*Name of Professional Association*

Georgian Association of Social Workers

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

16 new social workers who are studying for a master's degree in social work at Ilia State University and are in the final semester have participated in the development of the New Social Workers Policy Document in Georgia and interview thereof.

*A brief outline of social work in Georgia*

The Law about Social Work entered into force in Georgia in 2018, resulting this field become regulated. The law defines the basic principles of social work, Legal status of a social worker, social guarantees, functions, rights and duties and measures to be taken by the social worker.

The law applies to social workers employed in a public institution and a legal entity under private law, as well as to self-employed, also on the Practical social workers and their professional supervisors.

In addition, the basis of this law in all agencies (municipalities, guardianship services (LEPL) State Agency For State Care And Assistance For the (Statutory) Victims of Human trafficking, In an educational institution etc.) and in any direction where social workers are important, have to be employed at the end of 2025 years .

To date, we have not accurate statistics about how many social workers are in Georgia by education and how many of them are employed by profession. As of 2020, the country employs more than 800 social workers. Most social workers (260) are employed in the guardianship service, LEPL Agency For State Care and Assistance For the (Statutory) Victims of Human trafficking. Up to 120 social workers are employed in the penitentiary and probation system (Penitentiary System 78, Probation and Crime Prevention Agency 41). In addition, up to 150 social workers will be employed in schools across Georgia by the end of the year.

*An overview of social work training in Georgia*

Students go through practices on both, bachelor and master programs, in different practice organization, where social workers are employed. The duration of the internship at the master’s level/program is 4 semesters, where students spend 150 hours on the internship place and collected, a total of 600 hours and accumulate 24 credits. And the bachelor level, practice are for 5 semesters, where students must be in the internship organization from 100 to 160 hours per semester.

*Transition from student to social worker in Georgia*

At present, there is no National “scheme” in the country for the transition from student to social worker. In addition, generally there are not any “schemes” in any other different profession in Georgia. But the Georgian Association of Social Workers, in cooperation with state and non-state agencies, has developed standards of practice that will be common to all organizations. it will come into force by the end of 2021. also, in 2021, the Code of Ethics was updated and entered into force.

### IRELAND

*Name of New Social Worker*

Laura Peters

*Name of Professional Association*

Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW)

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

In late 2020, the IASW shared the IFSW project to its members and advertised for the delegate position.

Laura Peters expressed an interest and was ultimately chosen to represent the IASW as the Irish delegate. The IASW have been incredibly supportive of the project, and organised a sub-group of newly qualified social workers to support Laura for the data collection stage. The sub-group were key in the dissemination of the survey amongst newly-qualified social workers, as they each shared it with their previous class group and colleagues in professional practice. The IASW circulated the survey to members and linked it on their website. The IASW invited Laura to present at their Annual Conference, in order to further advertise the project to newly qualified social workers.

There were approximately 80 survey responses from newly qualified social workers in Ireland. The group of delegates from the IFSW project reviewed their own countries responses, to identify the key themes. The Irish sub-group were in regular contact, and also supported Laura with this process. The Irish sub-group met on a number of occasions on Zoom in order to draft questions to ask newly qualified social workers at the interview stage. Invites were sent, including an online consent form and available times to interview, to every Irish social worker who had consented to be contacted for interview at the survey stage, and a member of the Irish sub-group was instrumental in managing this administrative piece. Unfortunately, despite invites, and follow up emails being sent, only 9 interviews were completed. However, these interviews provided great insight and understanding into the experiences of these social workers, particularly into what helped them with their transition, and what hindered.

*A brief outline of social work in Ireland*

In Ireland, “social worker” is a legally protected title.

The Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics is developed by CORU and is specific to each profession. This document was developed following consultation with the general public, members of the profession, their representative bodies and employers. The Code sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics which a member of that profession must adhere to throughout the course of their work.

There are 4,942 social workers in Ireland as of the 25th of August 2021. This figure is in constant flux, as new applicants join and others leave.

Social workers in Ireland are employed across a variety of settings, including and not limited to

* Adoption
* Adolescent Mental Health
* Adult Mental Health Services (both community based teams and in-patient services) - Addiction Services
* Children in Care
* Child Protection
* Fostering
* Disability Services; Children and Adult settings
* Working with Older People
* Medical Social Work; in acute hospitals or rehabilitation settings
* Working with Older people in Nursing Home Care
* Family support
* Working with Children and Families
* Working in Primary Care
* Probation Services (both community based teams and in prisons)
* Refugees and Asylum Seekers
* Tenancy Sustainment with Local Authorities
* Palliative Care; in hospitals or hospices
* Safeguarding Adults who are at risk of abuse

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) is the national professional body for social workers in the Republic of Ireland. The IASW was founded in 1971 and is an active member of IFSW. IASW run a number of events throughout the year for social workers to attend, ranging from continual professional development events to the annual IASW conference. The IASW also have a number of Special Interest Groups (SIG) that are open to members and non-members alike. As per the IASW website (IASW 2021) “the SIGs, Committees & Associate Groups highlight priority issues for social work and for the Association, they identify training needs as well as providing information which is fed back to the Board.” There are a number of SIGs, representing the variety of sectors and specialities that social workers in Ireland are working in. Members adhere to the IASW’s Code of Ethics and Code of Practice.

There are currently 1,500 social workers who are members of the IASW, ranging from social work students to social workers who have retired.

*An overview of social work training in Ireland*

The Social Work Programmes in Ireland contain academic and field work components, and the social work student must complete 1000 hours of practice placement fieldwork in order to pass the course (1000 over two placements, 500 hours per year). There are 14 different social work programmes, all provided at university level, and each of these approved by CORU at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels across Ireland. The undergraduate courses involve 4 years of study, and the postgraduate are two years.

The Social Work Board at CORU require that five Domains are assessed when studying to becoming a social worker:

1. Professional Autonomy and Accountability
2. Communication, Collaborative Practice and Team working
3. Safety and Quality
4. Professional Development
5. Professional Knowledge and Skills

These domains structure the learning that students complete while on their fieldwork placement.

*Transition from student to social worker in Ireland*

At present, there is no national scheme in place in Ireland to support the transition of newly qualified social workers from education to employment. Some sectors may have policies at local level, and may offer induction and signpost to relevant training, but there is no standardised approach at this time.

### ITALY

*Name of New Social Worker*

Marta Cherubin

*Name of Professional Association*

ASSNAS- Associazione nazionale Assistenti Sociali- National association of social workers. There is a particular section that includes students of social service and young social workers (under 30 years old).

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

As association we had 20 interviews with new social workers and final year students. The interviewees are from 19 to 50 years old. Historical members of the association reported new professionals’ contacts from all over Italy to the manager (the writer). As association we have assigned personal appointments in which we presented the association (if they were not members), IFSW and the purpose of the project in order to start the conversation and collect the data we need. Conversations lasted about an hour and were carried out remotely with google meet. Some new social workers (members of Italian Association of social workers) have participated to help collecting data for the research. They are: Marta Faggin, Alice Selmo, Gianvito Lagioia and Alessia Cannone. Also, there is a bigger group that is working and supporting for the project work.

*A brief outline of social work in Italy*

The title of social worker or specialist social worker is linked to passing the State Exam which can be accessed if you have a three-year degree in Social work (class L-39) or a master's degree in Social work and politics (class LM-87), respectively.

Upon graduation of the three-year degree, it is possible to access advanced courses, first level masters and other specialization courses. The achievement of the master's degree also allows access to second level masters and competitions for PhDs.

The privileged job outlet of Social Workers is the public sector, which is entered through a public competition. To check the public competitions active throughout Italy, just consult the Official State Gazette in the competitions and exams section.

The public jobs in which social workers mainly work are the municipalities, hospitals and home care, services related to the ministry of justice (for example in the courts). Social workers can also find work in the private sector (third sector, NGOs and cooperatives) or they can work as a freelance.

At the 30th of September 2020 there was 45,054 social worker all over Italy.

*An overview of social work training in Italy*

In 1987 there was the legal recognition of the title of social worker; there was the qualification of the Diploma of social worker.

The establishment of the degree course was achieved through the Decree of the Ministry of University and Scientific and Technological Research of 3 November 1999 no. 509 (Bologna process). The new system, socalled "3 + 2", provides for a three-year degree course, the achievement of which is subject to enrolment in a two-year (specialist) degree course.

The Enrolment number in the degree in Social Service is not limited by law, but all universities can voluntarily established it. For this reason, to access to the degree course in some universities, it is necessary to pass an entrance test on topics of general culture and logic. An advantage in their study and internship are people who have attended a high school or social institute, or people that have already gained experience in the field of volunteering or those who have already carried out civil service activities. Today the training is certified on two levels: a three-year degree in social work and a master's degree in social work and social policies, which tend to train respectively the Social Worker and the Specialist Social Worker, as defined by Presidential Decree 328/01.

During the three-year degree, students spend between 200 to 600 hours of internship, and these depend on the educational offer of each university. During the master's degree students spend at least 250 hours in internship. Some students have a higher number of hours as they come from a different bachelor’s degree. In these cases, the university considers it necessary to extend the hours of training and integrating some core subjects in the social worker's training.

*Transition from student to social worker in Italy*

There is no National scheme for the transition period.

### THE NETHERLANDS

*Name of New*

Veerle Meijer

*Name of Professional Association*

Beroepsvereniging voor Sociaal Werkers (BPSW)

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

The survey was widely spread and was answered by 41 Dutch New Social workers. Veerle conducted four in-depth, semi-structured interviews to further understand New Social Workers’ experience in their transfer from education to practice.

*A brief outline of social work in the Netherlands*

There are many social workers working in social work in the Netherlands. Most social workers are employed by NGOs. Even though the employment by municipalities is increasing, for example in the defense sector or the council for child protection, the care, youth care and welfare institutions which carry out Social Work in the Netherlands is mostly privatised.

Being a Social Worker is not a protected title in the Netherlands. Even though there are (many) ways to get educated to become a social worker, and it is often listed as a requirement in vacancies, people from different backgrounds can apply to the job, and, depending on the target group and the actual work, might be hired as long no specific Registration is required.

*An overview of social work training in the Netherlands*

Social work education in the Netherlands takes place on the level of University of Applied Sciences. This means that students will study for four years to attain their bachelor. Different bachelors exist, but generally, social work education is moving towards having one general bachelor of social work – rather than different specialisations that existed before: for example some are focused on working in groups, others on working clinically, others on community development, or working as a social ‘legal’ advisor. These used to be different education with different names, however all resulting in a ‘Bachelor of Social Work’. Currently, in most general bachelors of Social Work, students have the option to specialise in different sectors by choosing their practice placements, minors and thesis in that field. The three different sectors are Care, Youth and Wellbeing & Society. Depending on the specialization, additional tests and guidance is required during the bachelor.

Only in the recent years, a few masters in Social Work have got accredited. These are offered by a few Universities of Applied Sciences and take on average 2 years. It seems that mainly professionals with years of work experience are following these masters, to add on their knowledge. Generally, after graduating from their bachelor, most students get to work.

During the four-year bachelor, students will have many practice placements, in which they can ‘apply’ the theory and lessons learned in school. Throughout the entire education, the student is encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour, values, and understand how where they come from has shaped them. The curriculum is based on micro-level education and how to work towards problem solving, while only some part of the curriculum is about understanding society, laws and root causes of possible problems.

Even though differences exist between different universities, most universities require students to do an internship in each year- from year one to year three. The internship in year one consists on average of one day in the week throughout the entire school year, in which the student shadows a professional, or carries out small tasks for or with clients, depending on the placement. In year two, the student does an internship for 2 days a week. In year three, the internship either consists of 3-4 days a week, or a half year full time – at the end of which the student is required to fully participate and work like their colleagues. In year four, there is then time to do the minor and conduct a research – often in a practice placement as well.

*Transition from student to social worker in the Netherlands*

There is not a national scheme to support the transition from a student to social worker.

### PORTUGAL

*Name of New Social Workers*

Debora Silva and Rita Luis

*Name of Professional Association*

APSS – Portuguese Association of Social Workers

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

Rita and Débora joined the group formed by IFSWE in October 2020 and participated in every step of the project since then. They helped to elaborate the survey and to share it at a national level, resulting in 60 Portuguese respondents. At the second phase of the project, 22 Portuguese new social workers were interviewed, helping with important outcomes to this project.

*A brief outline of social work in Portugal*

The profession of Social Work in Portugal is in the process of installing the Professional Order of Social Workers, with a view to regularizing the profession. Social workers are integrated both in the public, private and third sector sectors, most of which are in the public sector and third sector, namely government and non-governmental. It is estimated that there are 22,000 social workers in Portugal.

*An overview of social work training in Portugal*

In Portugal, curricular internships are mandatory during the degree in social work, performing a curricular dimension of observation and another dimension of intervention and research in social work. The duration and number of internships differs between the different educational institutions, there are institutions with a short-term internship for each curricular year and culminating in a long-term internship in the senior year, as well as institutions with only one long-term internship in the last year of graduation.

*Transition from student to social worker in Portugal*

Portuguese new social workers can engage in professional internships when they leave university. This is a nationwide measure for all young people, unemployed and otherwise, and which many feel should be better regulated in the specific field of social work.

### ROMANIA

*Name of New Social Worker*

Gabriela Petre

*Name of Professional Association*

The Romanian Association of Social Workers (ASproAS)

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

A new social worker is the one who is at the beginning of the road in this profession. As a research participant, I became personally and professionally involved. Personally, by meeting online colleagues from the countries involved, forming a network of social workers with whom I can communicate, and professionally combining theory with practice in social work.

The first part of the study was the survey, with a total of 35 responses from social workers. The contact with them was made online. I contacted social workers who had between 1-3 years of practice. The second part included conversations with 6 future social workers.

*A brief outline of social work in Romania*

In Romania, according to the law 466/2004, to hold the title of social worker you must follow bachelor's courses specializing in social work and have an academic degree in social work. The profession of social worker is mentioned in a number of primary and secondary legislation:

Regarding the primary legislation, the profession of social work is mentioned in following specific laws (and all the others that based on them – which I will not mention here):

1. Law 466/2004 on the status of the social worker;
2. Social work law no. 292/2011;

Regarding the secondary legislation, social work profession is mentioned in all the legislation that are approved by government or ministries, as follow:

1. secondary legislation published by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection for approving quality standards for the functioning of social services.

Each social service has approved specific minimum quality standards, and the social worker is mentioned as part of the interdisciplinary team or as a case manager. Social workers are also mentioned as a team of the community social services.

1. Secondary legislation published by the Ministry of Education for the activity of County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance (CJRAE) where social workers are mentioned as working with the children with disability educated in regular schools or are mentioned in relations to special education.
2. Secondary legislation published by the Health for activity of hospitals where social workers are mentioned as part of the team working in hospitals.
3. Secondary legislation published by the Ministry of Interior where social workers are mentioned as part of the team of the Emergency Rooms. Social workers working in the Emergency Rooms have also approved, since 2018, a special implementation legislation for their working procedures.
4. Secondary legislation published by the Ministry of Justice where social workers are mentioned in the team of penitentiaries or probation services.

*An overview of social work training in Romania*

In Romania, the training to become a social worker is a continuous one, to offer quality services. Thus, in order to be able to practice as a social worker, you must have a license specializing in social work.

Because we are talking about the transition from education to practice, a process that is not very easy and that requires training and attention, from the years of study begins both theoretical and practical training. During the study years, students have compact practice (during the semester) and specialized practice (during the summer vacation) that will help them put the theory into practice. At the end of the study years, the final exam consists in writing a bachelor's thesis. Social workers have the opportunity to work in organizations belonging to the public or private sector, or in others belonging to the third sector (Non-Profit Organizations) or other types. This option influences the training of the social worker in the sense that depending on the sector to which the organization belongs, the focus on the training of social workers within it may be at a higher or lower level.

The training of social assistance professionals is continuous even after completing their studies. Therefore, it is recommended for social workers to participate in conferences in the field, in specialized courses, in simulations, to update their knowledge constantly and to keep in touch with international social workers, to offer quality social work services in Romania.

*Transition from student to social worker in Romania*

There is not general practice about introducing in work the newly social workers. Each employee is implementing (or not) specific professional support.

### SPAIN

*Name of New Social Worker*

María Pérez Bandera

*Name of Professional Association*

General Council of Social Work [https://www.cgtrabajosocial.es/;](https://www.cgtrabajosocial.es/) consejo@cgtrabajosocial.es

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project*

45 social workers did the survey, and one new social worker was offered to have a conversation which lasted more than an hour. This social worker is in her first year of employment (9 months concretely) and the themes talked about were social work studies and the lived experience, the transition to the first employment, the impact of COVID-19, mentoring at university and in the job, how to improve the degree at universities, the importance to share information, to connect people –students just as professionals- and the need to make them more involved.

*A brief outline of social work in Spain*

Social Work in Spain was viewed and treated as a charitable and feminine profession and in 1932 was founded in Barcelona the *Social Assistance School for the Woman*, as the *Familiar and Social Formation School* in Madrid in 1939. In the 50’s the first Social Assistance associations took place and in 1967, it was created the *Spanish Federation of Associations of Social Assistants.* In that year too, they were regulated the functions, training and statutes of the profession and in the 1970, this Federation began to being part of the IFSW. 3

Years after, in 1974, *the Law 2/1974, 13th April about Professional Colleges,* made the unionization a mandatory requirement, as a guarantee of seriousness, good making and stronger profession. Thanks to the *Royal Decree 1850/1981*, *20th August*, the studies were settled and taught at University Colleges of Social Work. The *Law 10/1982, of April 13th, creating Official Professional Bodies of Diplomates in Social Work and Social Assistants,* makes the profession to be more and better represented. Nonetheless, there’s another framework depending on the Region that has its origin in the article 148.1.20 from the Spanish Constitution, meaning that the following Autonomies have its own law which puts the social worker as a reference professional. It’s the case of Madrid, Galicia, País Vasco, La Rioja, Castilla La Mancha and Extremadura.4

The 29th of May 1999 it was edited and approved by the General Council of Social Work, the first Deontological Code of Social Work, a text inspired in “The Ethics of Social Work: Principles and Criteria” made in the 1994 General Assembly in Sri Lanka. In 2012, the Deontological Code was reviewed and renewed and this is which we have nowadays in Spain. 5

Today we have 2 Autonomous Councils (Andalucía and Castilla y León) and 36 Professional Bodies of Social

Work -that can be autonomic or provincial-, spared through the Spanish territory with more than 42.000

1. Informe del Consejo de Universidades sobre la correspondencia al Nivel 2 del MECES del Título Diplomado en Trabajo Social según RD 967/2014 de 21 de noviembre. (2015). Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.
2. European Commission (2021). *The EU Single Market. Regulated Professions Data Base. Trabajador Social (Spain).* Available in [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id_regprof=448&id_profession=4030&tab=countries&quid=2&mode=asc&pagenum=4)

[databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id\_regprof=448&id\_profession=4030&tab=countries&quid=2&mode=asc&pagenum=4](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprof&id_regprof=448&id_profession=4030&tab=countries&quid=2&mode=asc&pagenum=4)

1. Informe del Consejo de Universidades sobre la correspondencia al Nivel 2 del MECES del Título Diplomado en Trabajo Social según RD 967/2014 de 21 de noviembre. (2015). Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.

professionals that work in the private sector or in the public one in which they can work in areas such as gender violence, child and older people’s welfare, prison, justice, mediation, mental health, education, hospitals, disabled people, homelessness people, immigration, etc. There’s any state exam for being a social worker, but if you want to work for the public system, you’re ought to do an exam for it. [[3]](#footnote-3)

*An overview of social work training in Spain*

In 1964, it was implemented the Middle Technician in Social Assistance Graduate via the *Royal Decree 143/1964, 30th April for the training of Social Assistants and the Study Plan of the Knowledge.* In 1980, it was recognized and made official, the university degree of Social Work with a 3-year period, with which you were being a Bachelor’s in Social Work and in 1983, a Ministerial Order established the guidelines and the regulation of Social Work studies at University. It’s in 1993, when Social Work is an strengthened and consolidated profession.

In 1999, the Bolonia Declaration wanted to regulate education with a 4-year Degree (240 ECTS); 1 or 2-year

Master (180-240 ECTS) and a PhD. In Spain, this change began in 2005 with the *Royal Decree 55/2005, 21st January*, which was approved in 2007 via the *Organic Law 4/2007, 12th April* and officially established in 2008.

The degree must least 4 years and the subjects have to be divided in 5 types: basic traineeship; mandatory subjects; optative subjects; external traineeship/practicum and final degree project. The main areas that are fundamental in the degree are: *Social Work: concepts, methods, theories and application*; *Institutional context of social work*; *Processes and problems in which acts social work*; *Legal and organizational tools for social work*; *Practicum* and *Final degree project.* [[4]](#footnote-4)

Currently we have 41 Universities in which it’s possible to study Social Work; 35 are public and 6 are private. Each of them has a maximum mark –changeable each year- to enter at University. Apart from that the price of the credit it’s different depending on the type of University and the Region, there are differences in the same degree such as subjects and its content and if they’re mandatory or optional. [[5]](#footnote-5)

In general terms, what we can see is that we need more internship that it would be great if it could be implemented in the last 2 years and connect it with at least 6 months or more time in a first job. In addition, governments should invest more in good qualified, well-viewed and dignified employment to hire young people and give them an opportunity. Universities also should be more interconnected for sharing information about what’s social work and where you can put it in practise, have more abilities and capabilities, how to do a good CV and find a job. To create social workers network and social work employments network[[6]](#footnote-6).

*Transition from student to social worker in Spain*

There is no national scheme or place where you can go for the transition university-social work job. In the universities there’s a student service in which you can look for an assessment. However, a study published in 2000 by the National Agency for Quality and Accreditation’s Evaluation (ANECA) showed that between 40-

80% had a job. It’s necessary to highlight that they were differences between regions. That is, regions like Madrid, Catalunya and País Vasco had more employees in contradiction to Extremadura, Andalucía or Galicia, where they were less employees).

Concretely, 78% of the students found a job, of whom a 58% found its first job sending a job application by their own way to the public and private areas, and the other 28% found a job thanks to their contact network (parents, friends and other people). The estimated time to find a job it’s approximately 9.9 months. Only 8% lasted more than a year to find a job. To conclude, most of the first employments are temporary –in 63% of the cases- with a duration from 3 up to 18 months. Only 30% had a job that lasted more than a year and a half. [[7]](#footnote-7)

You can put it in practise, have more abilities and capabilities, how to do a good CV and find a job. To create social workers network and social work employments network[[8]](#footnote-8).

### United Kingdom (UK)

*Name of New Social Worker*

Nadeen Brown

*Name of Professional Association*

BASW – British Association of Social Workers

*An overview of the work the new social worker has done as part of the project* There were 49 responses to the survey from the UK. The BASW representative had 1 conversation with a new social worker in England which has been analysed thoroughly.

*A brief outline of social work in the UK*

Social work is a protected title in the UK. The United Kingdom comprises four nations (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales). Social work in the UK is devolved, that is, the legislation and policy that relates to the social work task varies between the four countries.

The vast majority of social workers in the UK are employed by local government (in England, Scotland and Wales) and by Health and Social Care Boards in Northern Ireland. Social workers across the UK have legal responsibilities in relation to children and families (family support, child safeguarding, children cared for by the state, adoption and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children), assessment and support of adults with social care needs which may be as a result of disability, ill-health, mental health. Social workers who work in mental health can take additional qualifications which mean that they can hold significant powers around the detention of people with severe mental health problems. The presence of both significant legal powers, and people who may be at their most vulnerable mean that human rights are central to the social work task. Social workers are also active in other non-statutory roles including health, NGOs and criminal justice. A proportion of social workers also work independently of an employer and BASW has a specific membership option for independent social workers.

The UK is a profoundly unequal country in terms of wealth. While there are many exceptions, social workers in the UK are predominantly working with the economic poor. The UK is also a diverse society and most recently greater attention has been given to the effects of racial discrimination and what this might mean for social work, social workers and the individuals who are in receipt of social work services.

*An overview of social work training in the UK*

There are significant and growing differences across the four nations of the United Kingdom in terms of social work education, although there are some basic principles which apply across the UK.

There are over 80 universities across the UK who are accredited to provide social work qualifying training. Student social workers either undertake a Bachelor’s degree or Master’s degree in social work. Placements are an essential part of the course and although the exact number of days differ, students spend a substantial amount of their training in placement settings – for example, between 170 and 230 days in practice-based learning. It is generally expected that one placement will be ‘statutory’ which means that students will be involved in work which has a legislative framework (this largely means local government).

Although the majority of social workers continue to qualify through traditional University routes, in England there are also two government supported ‘fast track’ routes into social work which are made up of short initial training programmes followed by periods of assessed practice of around a year. Social work degree level apprenticeships have also recently started. Apprentices are supported in their workplaces and undertake periods of time (often one day a week) in Universities.

*Transition from student to social worker in the UK*

Each country has a different system to support new works into the profession, but this generally includes support such as additional supervision, workload reduction and mentoring along with planned assessment of the new worker’s abilities.

1. In 2005 the Armenian Association of Social Workers become a member of IFSW Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There still do not exist a standard on this course and how it is compatible with the university courses. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Consejo General de Trabajo Social. (2015). Informe sobre la regulación de la profesión de trabajador/a social. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Torres Alberto, C.; Lima Fernández, A.I.; Rodríguez Martín, V. (2015). Evaluación para determinar la correspondencia de los títulos oficiales de arquitectura, ingeniería, licenciatura, arquitectura técnica y diplomatura a los niveles del marco español de cualificaciones para la educación superior. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Qué Estudiar y Dónde en la Universidad (2021). Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades. Available in [https://www.educacion.gob.es/notasdecorte/busquedaSimple?codTipoEstudio=GRADO&textTitula=&\_\_multiselect\_codigosUniversidades=&nomTi poAcceso=Universidad&tipoUniv=T&chkEspana=C&codigosUniversidades=T&codImpIdiomaExtranjero=&codigosProv=00&method:busquedaSimp le=Buscar&codigosAmbitos=760&codPresencialidad=&\_\_multiselect\_codigosAut=&d-4809369p=5&tipoAcceso=1&notaCorte=&\_\_multiselect\_codigosProv=](https://www.educacion.gob.es/notasdecorte/busquedaSimple?codTipoEstudio=GRADO&textTitula=&__multiselect_codigosUniversidades=&nomTipoAcceso=Universidad&tipoUniv=T&chkEspana=C&codigosUniversidades=T&codImpIdiomaExtranjero=&codigosProv=00&method:busquedaSimple=Buscar&codigosAmbitos=760&codPresencialidad=&__multiselect_codigosAut=&d-4809369-p=5&tipoAcceso=1&notaCorte=&__multiselect_codigosProv). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.Informe del Consejo de Universidades sobre la correspondencia al nivel 2 del MECES del Título Diplomado en Trabajo Social según RD 967/2014 de 21 de noviembre. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Vázquez Aguado, O. (2004). Estudio de inserción laboral de los titulados en el último quinquenio. *Libro Blanco. Título de Grado en Trabajo*

   *Social.* (73-100). Universidad de Huelva [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte.Informe del Consejo de Universidades sobre la correspondencia al nivel 2 del MECES del Título Diplomado en Trabajo Social según RD 967/2014 de 21 de noviembre. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)