



International Federation of Social Workers **Fédération Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux **Federación Internacional de Trabajadores sociales****

Human Rights Commission Regional Report

Name: Marcin Boryczko Region: EUROPE Date: 01.06.2020

HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS (A BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF CONCERNS/VIOLATIONS AND SOCIAL WORK RESPONSE)

As a Regional Human Rights Commissioner, it is important for me to inform/engage and mobilize social workers regarding human rights concerns and violations. I need your assistance to monitor Human Rights in your area. Also, it is important for me to know if social workers are experiencing denial or violation of their human rights. IFSW will respond accordingly and issue a statement and/or lobby on behalf of the social worker.

Two important and urgent human rights concerns identified for the Europe region are:

- While Covid-19 pandemic advances social workers are on the frontlines of prevention and treatment of persons affected or being at-risk. In every country, social workers help people with providing remote counseling, managing services needed, and creating conditions for bearable isolation. In many cases social workers decided to work in isolation in day & night care centers, others decided to engage in direct help for people in isolation or advocating for increased support for most vulnerable affected by Covid-19. They all need our support and being empowered and protected to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic.
- Covid-19 pandemic has profound implications for human rights issues for social workers and people with whom they work. It includes the right to live in health and dignity, the right to education, and decent work. School closures affected young people worldwide that create a disproportion effect on at-risk children with disabilities, low-income families. Responses to Coronavirus affect mostly vulnerable and at-risk people including the elderly, people with disabilities, and refugees. Governments should ensure that those categories of people are supported right now.
- Millions of refugees and migrating persons live in very close proximity and overcrowded refugee camps or detention centers without access to means of preventing the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Also, the lockdown and borders closures have created the situation in which asylum seekers have been rejected entry and forced to come back to places where their lives are threatened. Lockdown and other measures to protect public health should not stay in conflict with the rights of people seeking asylum. In this context, there is a need for international assistance and cooperation in order to facilitate the fulfillment of human rights since Europe seems to be a safe and desired destination for migrations.



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ACTIVITIES/ ACHIEVEMENTS

In respect of human rights, I have accomplished certain activities:

- the organization of Social Workers Forum in Poland (The National Assembly of Social workers) devoted to human rights in social work in 2020. It is agreed by the steering committee that the main theme of the meeting will be Human Rights in Social Work Practice. It is an annual meeting of practitioners from all over the country gathering approx. 150-200 persons. There are planned certain activities such as lectures, workshops, and symposia. The event will be held at the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk/Poland. Due to Covid-19 pandemic the exact date was not agreed on
- organization of series of seminars on Human Rights in Social Work with practitioners, Ph.D. students, and academics (lecturers and researchers) working in the field of social work. The series will be organized at the University of Gdańsk/Poland in 2020. Two events took place at the University of Gdansk. The organization of planned events was postponed by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- strengthening collaboration in the field of human right based social work by preparing/joining research projects:
 - based on a conceptual framework for social workers when service users (and marginalized people in general) protest/organize against social welfare and public health regimes (in cooperation with University of Oslo/Norway and Rutgers University School of Social Work/USA);
 - consequences of coronavirus pandemic for human rights denials among social workers and social work receivers (University of Bucharest/Romania and The Protestant University of Ludwigsburg/Germany);
 - preliminary research on human rights abuses and violations committed against social work practitioners and academics at a global level, from the 1960s to present time (University of Windsor/Canada and University of Essex/UK)
- developing and strengthening human rights-based social work as an academic field in Poland/Europe e.g. by conducting research concerning Human Rights in social education:
 - I wrote and submitted an article summarising my investigation on the application of a human rights approach to social work education in Poland;
 - As a member of the Council of Social Work Education at the University of Gdańsk, I managed to include a Human Rights-based social work course into the curriculum of Master course in social work.
- creating survey research on measuring the attitudes and engagement in Human Rights among social workers. There has been used two scales Human Rights Engagement in Social Work and Human Rights Exposure in Social Work on a purposive sample of participants of member



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organizations of IFSW and Polish social workers. The overall sampling was 379 participants. It allows for creating and validating the Polish version of those scales and finding substantial correlations

- HR Commission is also engaged in Fundamental Rights Agency contribution to a training workshop of a new IFSW network for young professionals and students of social work planned to be established in 2020.

CHALLENGES

One of the most urgent human rights concerns in Europe region is related to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. We need vigilant monitoring of whether governments put human rights at the center of their responses with the emphasis on women's rights that are at high risk. These responses cannot perpetuate gender inequity Women's rights are threatened as they make up the majority of healthcare and social service being the frontline of the war with the spread of Sars Cov2 as healing Covid-19.

In the European region the most severe HR violations concern:

- Censorship as suppression of information and discrimination against persons publishing the information about the discrepancies of health systems and intervention of governments against transparency of information throughout Europe;
- Discrimination and xenophobia against Asians;
- Violating universal right to access healthcare on the basis of social status, age, etc.;
- Mass surveillance of citizens to strengthen protective measure against the spread of Coronavirus
- Restrictions against civil rights The anti-coronavirus restrictions can be used as significant punishments for breaking the regulations and introducing unconstitutional laws serving governments to strengthen their power
- Stigmatization of healthcare workers and social workers caring for individuals with COVID-19, and people recovered from Covid-19.