



## **Human Rights Commission Regional Report**

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

Human rights concerns identified for the Europe region are:

- In recent months, the number of illegal migrants (primarily from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan) at Belarus' borders with EU member states has increased sharply. On the Eastern border of the European Union refugees and forced migrants are blocked by Polish authorities who deny the entry of most persons seeking international protection at the railroad border crossing point Brest-Terespol and force them to return the same day to Belarus. However, Belarus does not have a functioning asylum system and there is a serious risk that refugees from Chechnya and other Central Asian countries may be returned to their countries of origin, putting them at risk of being subjected to torture or other inhumane treatment. The same situation is in Latvia and Lithuania. The authorities of these countries have so far consistently refused to help the people who have been camping in the border strip for two weeks, and have even prevented others from delivering aid including NGO's and the press;
- COVID-19 has worsened the already precarious situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in many countries. Many are stranded, left to fend for themselves as border controls are strengthened for security reasons;

### **ACTIVITIES/ ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- Strengthening cooperation between regional commissioners through regular meetings of the global Human Rights Commission;
- strengthening collaboration in the field of human right based social work by preparing/joining ongoing research projects:
  - participation in the European project *Resilience through education for democratic citizenship* (Joint Programme of EU Council: Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation [DISCO]) based on introducing human rights-based social work. I prepared the lecture and the discussion on the perspective of social work focused on human rights.
  - 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);



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- 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:
  - publication of the article *Critical thinking in social work education. A case study of knowledge practices in students' reflective writings using semantic gravity profiling* summarising my investigation on the application of a human rights approach to social work education in Poland. The article is published in *Social Work Education. International Journal*;
  - Preparation of a workshop during Summer Schooll (Human Services between solidarity, mission and the market) organized by Evangelische Hochschule Nurnberg. The workshop was focused on human rights-based social work.

### CHALLENGES

One of the most urgent human rights concerns in the Europe region is related to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. One of the challenges is the need for adaptation of new technologies that are an opportunity to ensure rights and access to:

- remote social work
- telemedicine;
- remote teaching at school and university level,
- contacts with the family of persons deprived of their liberty,
- new methods of cooperation, technological development of information exchange.

One of the challenges in the context of growing populist nationalism in Europe is the need is to strengthen the National Human Rights Institutions that are an essential part of the human rights protection system at the national level. By raising awareness, providing advice, monitoring and holding authorities to responsibility, they play a central role in addressing the great human rights challenges of the modern world - tackling both persistent problems such as discrimination and inequality, and ever-emerging new problems such as the human rights impacts of social inequalities and the COVID-19 pandemic.