Standards in Social Work Practice meeting Human Rights

Executive Summary

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Foreword

In the later years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, across many countries of Europe, the early pioneers of social work strove to improve the lives of the 'abandoned and forsaked'. Women such as Octavia Hill in the United Kingdom, Manon *Lüttichau in* Denmark, Alice Masaryk in Czechoslovakia , Alice Salomon in Germany , Helena Radlinska in Poland - to mention a few - worked tirelessly driven by commitment to improve the welfare of those society excluded. Subsequent generations of social workers, throughout Europe, stand on the shoulders of these giants - continuing the work that they began as they strive to realize the aspirations embedded at the heart of the social work profession to promote human rights.

Working to achieve these aspirations is no easy matter; social workers need help. IFSW (Europe) has provided just such help in this volume by assisting social workers to understand what is required to promote Human Rights.

The European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers are to be congratulated in having taken an important step forward to promote Human Rights across European Social Work and beyond. The publication of a set of standards for meeting Human Rights makes clear, perhaps for the first time what is expected of social workers and their employers to meet their obligations that arise from the various international conventions on Human Rights. It behoves all those associated with the profession across Europe to engage with these standards, to work actively towards their attainment in day-to-day professional practice and to ensure that all new recruits to the profession know of these standards and the obligations to society that are required. Those that have worked tirelessly to produce this statement deserve our gratitude and thanks.

Background

A Framework for Standards in Social Work

The ongoing development of Standards in Social Work Practice takes place in the context of Social Work as a profession committed to the promotion and realisation of Human Rights.

The International Federation of Social Workers recognises that Social Work originates variously from humanitarian, religious and democratic ideals and philosophies; and that it has universal application to meet human needs arising from personal-societal interactions, and to develop human potential.

Professional social workers are dedicated to service for the welfare and self-fulfilment of human beings; to the development and disciplined use of scientific knowledge regarding human behaviour and society; to the development of resources to meet individual, group, national and international needs and aspirations; to the enhancement and improvement of the quality of life of people; and to the achievement of social justice.

IFSW is divided in five geographical regions:

- Africa
- Asia and Pacific
- Europe
- Latin America and Caribbean and
- North America.

Each region elects representatives to the IFSW Global Human Rights Network and Permanent Committee on Ethical Issues.

The International Federation of Social Workers European Region has 40 member associations in 35 countries, with a total of 165,600 Social Workers - the membership is representative as it covers all corners of Europe.

IFSW Europe co-operates with other organisations in Europe. It has a long standing tradition of working closely together with the "European Association of Schools of Social Work" and the "European Region of the International Council of Social Welfare". This cooperation is now brought into a formal frame called the European Network for Social Action, including three other member organisations in the social field. Co-operation with other European organisations includes the European Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Social Platform and European Federation of Public Service Unions.

Social Work is a Human Rights profession

The International Definition of Social Work states: 'Principles of Human Rights and social justice are fundamental to Social Work' (IFSW/IASSW, 2000). The 2004 ethics document is based on the definition and lists Human Rights treaties 'particularly relevant to Social Work practice and action'. Among the most important are:

- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (1953)
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966);
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966);
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989);
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006);

- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[1]

The IFSW's Policy on Human Rights states amongst other things, that 'the Social Work profession accepts its share of responsibility for working to oppose and eliminate all violations of Human Rights.

This IFSW International Policy (1988) states: 'Social Work has, from its conception, been a Human Rights profession, having as its basic tenet the intrinsic value of every human being and as one of its main aims the promotion of equitable social structures, which can offer people security and development while upholding their dignity'.

The Manual for Schools of Social Work and the Social Work Profession (originally published in 1992 and revised in 1994) by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work was developed in acknowledgement of the centrality of Social Workers as professionals in the protection and realisation of Human Rights. Further to this Manual, The IFSW and IASSW have in 2010 created a Human Rights website (2010) as a global resource for social service workers.

The Manual states: 'More than many professions, Social Work practitioners are conscious that their concerns are closely linked to respect for Human Rights. They accept the premise that Human Rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, and that the full realization of civil and political rights is impossible without enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights' (United Nations, 1994: 5).

'Human Rights are inseparable from Social Work theory, values and ethics, and practice ... Advocacy of such rights must therefore be an integral part of Social Work, even if in countries living under authoritarian regimes such advocacy can have serious consequences for Social Work professionals' (United Nations, 1994: 5).

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1 The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines certain political, social, and economic rights for European Union citizens and residents, into European Union law. It was drafted and officially proclaimed in 2000, but its legal status was then uncertain and it did not have full legal effect[1] until the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009.

In 2002, IFSW has also published Social Work and the Rights of the Child, a professional training manual on the UN Convention.

Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights

The Global Standards in the Social Work profession identify the core purposes of Social Work in the global context. These clearly show how Social Workers promote the realisation of Human Rights by:

a. Facilitating the inclusion of marginalised, socially excluded, dispossessed, vulnerable and at-risk groups of people;

b. Addressing and challenging barriers, inequalities and injustices that exist in society;

c. Forming short and longer-term working relationships with and mobilising individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their wellbeing and their problem-solving capacities;

d. Assisting and educating people to obtain services and resources in their communities;

e. Formulating and implementing policies and programmes that enhance people's wellbeing, promoting development and Human Rights and collective social harmony and social stability, insofar as such stability does not violate Human Rights;

f. Encouraging people to engage in advocacy with regard to pertinent local, national, regional and/or international concerns;

g. Acting with and/or for people to advocate the formulation and targeted implementation of policies that are consistent with the ethical principles of the profession;

h. Acting with and/or for people to advocate changes in those policies and structural conditions that maintain people in marginalised, dispossessed and vulnerable positions, and those that infringe the collective social harmony and stability of various ethnic groups, insofar as such stability does not violate Human Rights;

i. Working towards the protection of people who are not in a position to do so themselves, for example children and youth in need of care and persons experiencing mental illness or mental retardation, within the parameters of accepted and ethically sound legislation;

j. Engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development, and to effect change by critiquing and eliminating inequalities;

k. Enhancing stable, harmonious and mutually respectful societies that do not violate people's Human Rights;

l. Promoting respect for traditions, cultures, ideologies, beliefs and religions amongst different ethnic groups and societies, insofar as these do not conflict with the fundamental Human Rights of people.

m. Planning, organising, administering and manage programmes and organisations dedicated to any of the purposes delineated above.

A Europe-wide study on the role of Social Work in promoting Social Cohesion conducted by IFSW Europe e.V. found that Social Workers promote Social Cohesion by:

n. Delivering services and being a positive presence for the entire community;

o. Offering empowerment and protection to individuals and the community through a rights-based approach;

p. Working with vulnerable groups;

q. Responding to the changing national and international contexts in professional and practical ways;

r. Using their expertise, knowledge and experience to critically assess and analyse social cohesion at a holistic level;

s. Skilfully maintaining the balance in their key position between the individual and society, between service provision and service development, between social care and social control, between interpersonal and national politics and more;

t. Actively promoting economic and social justice that can sometimes be at considerable personal risk or political oppression.

The Basis for a Common Framework of Standards in Social Work Practice in Europe

1.1   This document, is intended to consolidate the basic parameters within which Social Work in Europe operates into a common framework for Social Work in Europe. This framework is considered a key step in contributing towards the ongoing development of Standards for Social Work Practice in Europe.

1.2   As a number of authors have pointed out, action orientation is a great strength in Social Work that can make a real difference in peoples lives and in the context of their situations. Social Workers take action; they engage in securing human rights for individuals and communities. The global Social Work human rights agenda, as witnessed by this project, shows no signs of diminishing. However this work holds the fundamental realisation that Social Work does not exist in a vacuum. Social Workers exercise this responsibility in practice with individuals, groups and communities, in their roles as agency or organisational representatives and as citizens of a nation and the world' (IFSW 1996).

The contested nature of social work can be seen when one realises that the concept of social work has been shared between those who believe it is an activity that seeks to change the social structures that oppress certain individuals or groups of people and those who believe social work must assist individuals to adapt to their life conditions if those people are unwilling or unable to adapt to social norms and standards of behaviour. This concept spans the dichotomy between a) Structure and Action and b) Conflict and Order. The dichotomy is characterised by Dominelli (2002) as the divide between those social workers who argue for 'liberation' and those who argue for the 'status

quo'. This position is true across Europe and must be considered when addressing the issue of human rights and social work.

The International Federation of Social Workers, Europe asserts the fact that the organizational contexts of Social Work cannot be ignored for the influence they bear on the profession's activities.

1.3   The 'Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training' and a new 'Ethical Document' are key reference policy documents jointly worked out discussed and finally agreed by both the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work in 2004.

1.4   Social Work is a key profession in balancing service user needs and rights and contextual tensions. In character with such a role this framework seeks:

1.4.1   To inform services users about what they should expect of Social Work;

1.4.2   Acknowledge the tensions between service user needs and rights, professionalism, management, political, economic and societal factors;

1.4.3   To inform about the contribution, role and tasks of Social Work towards the wellbeing of the community within the broad European policy context;

1.4.4   To support and maintain a good standard and quality of Social Work practice, education, training and regulation across Europe which inevitably depends on the relationship between the Social Worker and service user and the value base of the Social Work profession;

1.4.5   To inform organisational settings on how to maintain good standards in Social Work raise practice so that organisational structures provide the environment and tools toward meeting service user rights and needs;

1.4.6   To ensure that Social Workers in Europe abide by and in turn are not put in a position which conflicts with their professional code of ethics;

1.4.7   To promote the status of Social Workers and enable scarce professional resources to be better used;

1.4.8   To promote the links between Social Work and Human Rights.

2.   Definition, Roles and Professional Title[1]

2.1   "The Social Work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, Social Work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of Human Rights and social justice are fundamental to Social Work."

2.2   Social Work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes involvement in social policy, planning and development. These carry various job titles that may include the following:

     2.2.1   Clinical Social Work;

     2.2.2   Social pedagogical work;

     2.2.3   Counselling;

     2.2.4   Family treatment and therapy as well as;

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1   This international definition of the social work profession replaces the IFSW definition adopted in 1982. It is understood that social work in the 21st century is dynamic and evolving, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive, International Federation of Social Workers, 2000.

2.2.5   Group work;

2.2.6   Efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community;

2.2.7   Agency administration;

2.2.8   Community work and organisation and

2.2.9   Engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development.

2.3   Social Workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve.

2.4   Emerging clearly from the European debate is that Professional Social Work:

2.4.1   Is focused on problem solving and change addressing the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society;

2.4.2   Responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems;

2.4.3   Works in partnership with services users;

2.4.4   Has an important role in the implementation of social strategies, negotiation and interdisciplinary practice;

2.4.5   Promotes prevention, integration and cohesion;

2.4.6   Is a dynamic profession with a definition that is alive and renews itself according to the needs of people and society.

2.4.7   Social Work works reflectively, critically and creatively from existing identities in order to change the way that social differences are constructed.

2.4.8   The realisation of Human Rights requires the respect for the rights of all those concerned and requires professional skill for creating a space for dialogue, the creation of meaning and correct interpretation.

2.4.9   Social Work is unique in that it seeks to achieve social improvement, that is, positive social change, through interpersonal work while also seeking to work with the personal consequences of social change Payne, 2007.

3.   Codes and Ethical thinking[2]

3.1   The purpose of the work of IFSW and IASSW on ethics is to promote ethical debate and reflection in the member organisations, among the providers of Social Work in member countries, as well as in the schools of Social Work and among Social Work students.

3.2   It is the responsibility of the national organisations in membership of IFSW and IASSW to develop and regularly update their own codes of ethics or ethical guidelines, to be consistent with the IFSW/ IASSW statement/s;

3.3   All Social Workers and service users should have the possibility to refer to a body with the legally recognised remit of safeguarding of professional ethics and providing redress;

3.4   It is the responsibility of Social Workers to raise breaches in Ethics and Human Rights;

3.5   It is also the responsibility of national organisations to inform Social Workers and schools of Social Work about these codes or guidelines;

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2 The document "Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles" was approved at the General Meetings of the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work in Adelaide, Australia, October 2004

3.6   Social Workers should act in accordance with the ethical code or guidelines current in their country. These will generally include more detailed guidance in ethical practice specific to the national context;

3.7   The significance of the concept of complexity thinking in Social Work is that standards and codes of practice should not seek to oversimplify the complexity of the situations that Social Workers and their clients face;

3.8   Ethical codes need to be set in a regulatory structure and should focus more on ethical dilemmas;

3.9   Codes of Ethics should be accompanied by a code for employers of Social Workers.

4.   The Knowledge-Base for Practice

4.1   "The Global Standards for Education and Training of the Social Work Profession" jointly adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work in 2004 is the basis for standards in social wok education internationally. These standards elaborate guidelines for:

   4.1.1   The Social Work school's core purpose or mission statement

   4.1.2   Programme objectives and outcomes

   4.1.3   Programme curricula, including fieldwork

   4.1.4   Core curricula

4.2   The Social Work profession draws on theories of human development and behaviour and social systems to analyse complex situations and to facilitate individual, organisational, social and cultural changes.

4.3   In response to these challenges and their consequences, Social Workers must be aware about users' needs in looking for sustainable answers. This means Human Rights realisation; respecting each person; asserting the basic values and principles of Social Work of Human Rights and Social Justice, as stated in "Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles" (IFSW/ IASSW , 2004).

4.4   Social Workers must therefore be aware about the following perspectives:

    4.4.1   Humanist and sustainable perspective (focus on the dignity and needs of human beings in present and future generations and to their ecological life conditions);

    4.4.2   Democratic perspective (looking for adequate development conditions– economic, social, cultural- facilitating users participation at social and civil level in society);

    4.4.3   Political and economic perspective (promoting the subsidiary principle, equality of opportunities and political / social / cultural rights);

    4.4.4   Educational perspective (to be aware about their scientific knowledge, professional skills, and research competences that as student has reached from his / her academic education or as professional at life-long learning individual process.

4.5   These Foundations includes

    4.5.1   With regard to requirements of academic curricula of Social Work education we can refer to Jim Ife (2001). According to this author a practice based in Human Rights requires Social Workers to hold specific competence that he calls 'Foundations'

4.5.2 "Praxis"[3] a theoretical reflection that develops into action;

4.5.3 "Morality" or "ethical sensibility"[4] means to know the values and manage moral or ethical dilemmas;

4.5.4 "Passion" a strong desire to change oppressed situations;

4.5.5 "Ideology" an understanding of Human Rights not as an individual issue but as a collective issue;

4.5.6 "History" a contextualized understanding of Human Rights over the time;

4.5.7 "Structural disadvantage" to understand the failure of realization of Human Rights due to structural oppression or disadvantage;

4.5.8 "Holism" to see Human Rights over western civilization, rejecting a restricted linear thinking accompanied by a critical understanding of "Postmodernism and post-structuralism" and its challenges and implications to Social Work intervention.

4.6 "Empowerment" as a second major theme is the capacity of Social Workers to enable people to define their rights and to act in order to have them realised (Ife, 2001).

4.6.1 "Dialogical Praxis" a " dialogue" linking the personal and political;

4.6.2 a process of "conscientisation" in the view of Paulo Freire;

4.6.3 "Participatory democracy" another dimension of

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3 In social work theory, praxis is the reflexive relationship between theories and action. It describes a cyclical process of social work interactions developing new theories and refining old ones, as well as theories directing the delivery of social work interactions.

4 In the scientific language is often used the term 'ethic' for scientific value-orientation, while the term 'moral' is used for the traditional or cultural or religious-influenced attitudes and behaviour of people, which is not seen or reflected in the perspective a scientific based ethic.

"Empowerment" that means to create specific conditions to all people for the maximum participation. "Feminism" or better, sensitivity in view to justice in gender-relationships and "Anti-Colonialist" practice as a way to fight against oppressive or dominate strategies of groups, individuals or states";

4.6.4   Non violence" another dimension of "empowerment" that is adopted according to the Social Work principles;

4.6.5   "Needs" because citizens must be "allowed" to express their needs[5]. As a central component of Human Rights based Social Work needs are identified through professionals in partnership with people;

4.6.6   "Research "methodologies that must be addressed towards empowerment and Human Rights and cannot therefore be neutral, positivist, value free research, but rather research with clearly articulated value positions" (2001: 159);

4.7   "Contextual /universal issues" - "Confronting such universal /context dualism is a major challenge for Human Rights- based Social Work" (Ife, 2001:160). Dualisms are referred to as:

4.7.1   "The personal and political";

4.7.2   "Private and public";

4.7.3   "Cultural relativism";

4.7.4   "Macro and micro practice";

4.7.5   "The global and the local".

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5   See also Doyal, Len and Gough, Ian (1991). *A Theory of Human Need*. London: Macmillan.

5.   Qualification

5.1   The most common and minimum education level for Social Workers in all of the participant countries is currently the undergraduate Bachelor Degree level

5.2   The structure and remit of competences and role of Social Work to be more clearly defined and appraisable:

    5.2.1   As the exigency for the profile of Social Workers becomes more and more felt, preparing the students to know themselves as persons, citizens and future members of a specific professional body (the questions of professional identity, according each, culture, historical and political context and region) becomes even more important;

    5.2.2   It is equally important to prepare students concerning the "market" exigencies (and services objectives) as well as meeting service users' needs and Human Rights (following historical and cultural Social Work paradigms, according to new challenges);

5.3   The balance between theoretical proficiency and practice experience:

    5.3.1   This balance is very pertinent to the professional development of the practitioner. It is important for students to be able to relate both practice to theory to develop their practice experience as well as relate theory to practice to develop their critical thinking towards theory;

5.4   The role of practitioners in the formation of students:

    5.4.1   This method results in a positive experience of mutual learning for both students and practitioners involving the experience of professionals teaching the students; the student's questions challenging reflection and continuous learning by the professionals.

5.5   Interdisciplinary practice; bringing the contribution of other disciplines' knowledge into operation in line with the objectives of Social Work;

     5.5.1   It is important to provide students with an open view about academic and professional knowledge sharing. This also goes for knowledge shared between students, practitioners and experts from different fields of knowledge. It is important for Social Workers to know the fundamental theories of other social sciences and be aware (be critical) about underlying philosophical contradictions concerning Social Work values and principles and must consequently learn to manage these.

5.6   The integration and operationalisation of knowledge:

     5.6.1   This topic was identified as one of the most important objectives of all educational processes of Social Workers' formation: students must be able to apply, in the context of their academic practices: theoretical knowledge; methodologies; skills and ethical behaviour.

     5.6.2   This aspect requires the teachers to possess specific competences in order to integrate pedagogical methodologies that focus on essential subjects selected according to the students' experiences and personal options as future professionals.

     5.6.3   Attention was drawn to the fact that in several curricula and in particular those following the Bologna Process, the courses had a tendency to become shorter and with less time assigned to reflective learning praxis.[6]

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6   See also Schön, Donald A. (1987). *Educating the reflective Practitioner.* S. Francisco e Londres : Jossey-Bass Publishers.

5.7 In view of the above considerations and in view of the new emerging social model of society, the International Federation of Social Workers, Europe recommends that to support students' education as future Social Workers, Schools should move towards:

5.7.1 Guaranteeing a Bachelor of (as a minimum qualification) 6 semesters (1st level) with a University credit and the availability of a Master degree of 4 semesters (2nd level);

5.7.2 Introducing in the curricula disciplines on topics such as (optional disciplines or not) gender subject; sexual minorities; multiculturalism, environment/sustainability; incertitude and risk; terrorism/counterterrorism;

5.7.3 Supporting the students with tutorial attendance by teachers that must possess the specific relevant competences;

5.7.4 Using specific methodologies where the learning process can be guided (steps development) by the student and not only by the teacher (a learning process rather than a teaching process);

5.8 Another issue of key significance is that of further education. That means a life-long learning opportunity and challenge to develop one's skills.

6. Accountability and Organisational contexts to enable Good Standards of Practice

6.1 All Social Workers and service users should have the possibility to refer to a body with the legally recognised remit of safeguarding of professional standards;

6.2   Social Work is practised in a variety of settings including State services, Health Care, Specialist agencies, Independent practices, Voluntary and not-for-profit bodies, User-led organizations, Private sector companies and Private practice.

6.3   Many Social Work roles help implement European and National policies. Among others they are essential in enabling local government, schools, healthcare and justice services to carry out their roles. In safeguarding human, social and economic rights, governments and organisations that employ Social Workers have a responsibility for ensuring resources are sufficient to meet needs and maintain standards of good practice.

6.4   These guidelines are being proposed in the context that the main organizational problems faced by Social Workers are found to be:

6.4.1   Ethical issues

6.4.2   Stress and Burnout

6.4.3   Lack of Workload and caseload management

6.4.4   Fragmentation of care

6.5   Social Worker's responsibilities

6.5.1   It is the responsibility of the Social Worker to exercise their professional duties towards their service users in accordance with the relevant national and international codes of practice (local codes, legislation, IFSW statements).

6.5.2   The Social Worker has a duty to keep their knowledge and skills up to date and they must follow practice based on best evidence and current knowledge.

6.5.3   The Social Worker is accountable for their work, and they must not delegate work unless they are confident that the person(s) to whom the work is delegated is competent to carry out the work in an appropriately safe and competent manner. They must not accept delegated work themselves unless they are confident they can undertake it in a safe and skilled manner.

6.5.4   At the International Level Social Workers are accountable to the International Federation of Social Workers by means of:

- The Guidelines and statements of International Federation of Social Workers and Global and Regional level;
- Professional membership;
- The Definition of Social Work;
- The Joint Statement on Ethics;
- The Global Standards for Education and Training in Social Work;
- Regional Standards and Guidelines;

6.5.5   At the National level, various models of accountability have been identified, however the following are considered of basic importance for the good and accountable practice of Social Work:

- National Social Work Codes of Ethics;
- National Standards of Social Work Education;
- Frameworks for professional accountability – e.g. regulatory entities, professional boards, professional councils, by self regulation and/or state legislation involving service user perspectives;
- Organisational policies and procedures regarding Social Work in an organisational setting;
- Standards of Social Work practice and services;

6.6   Employer responsibilities

6.6.1   The employer must ensure that they have the appropriate professional Social Work management and leadership in place to ensure that Social Work values of Human Rights and social justice are upheld throughout the agency and Social Work services;

6.6.2   Ensure that people engaged as Social Workers must hold the necessary recognised qualifications and must be legally recognised to practice as Social Workers;

6.6.3   The employer is responsible for ensuring that they comply with legislation and relevant codes of practice, and that they do not ask their employees to breach these; Have policies and procedures in place to enable Social Workers to meet the Standards and Guidelines set out by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of the Schools of Social Work as well as those in the National Legislation/regulatory frameworks;

6.6.4   It is the responsibility of the employer to create the right working conditions and structures that support the Social Worker to deliver safe, effective and accountable practice;

6.6.5   The employer must meet their legal obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of all workers - a significant aspect of which relates to the identification, prevention and management of work-related stress;

6.6.6   Having clear policies and procedures for minimising the risk of violence and managing violent incidents and supporting Social Workers who experience trauma or violence in their work;

6.6.7   Have and regularly review written policies on: confidentiality; equal opportunities; risk;

6.6.8   To support good practice, the employer must provide good quality induction (orientation) to new entrants and those moving jobs, good supervision, realistic workloads, access to continuous learning and professional development, enabling a suitable working environment;

6.6.9   Provide professional remuneration to Social Workers that is comparable to that of other professions[7];

6.6.10   Having systems in place to enable Social Workers to report inadequate resources or operational difficulties which might impede the delivery of safe and effective working with service users and address these issues to the relevant authorities;

6.6.11   Making service users aware of relevant policies, standards and codes of Social Work practice;

7.   An Organisational framework supporting good practice

7.1   A framework for supporting good practice should be largely focused on practices of induction, supervision, workload management and continuing professional development.

7.2   Such a framework has as its principle objective better outcomes for service users by helping the worker to deliver the best service they can at all times. In order to achieve this objective, along with ensuring safe practice, the Social Worker and the employer must be willing to engage jointly in these processes. The framework is based on the premise that both the employer and the Social Worker have responsibilities for supporting good practice.

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7   According to Eurostat www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu, retrieved 15/04/2009 the average salary by tertiary level of education/ Education; Health and Social Work; Other community, social, personal service activities/ total males and females/2006 is 3087.19 Euro per month.

7.3   A well planned and executed induction, supervision, workload management and continuing professional development (CPD) framework:

7.3.1   Provides a system of structured support for good practice, and enables the Social Worker to meet their responsibilities;

7.3.2   Helps to address and combat the problem of work-related stress;

7.3.3   Supports the recruitment and retention of staff by fostering the commitment of the employer/agency, and the employee, to their joint enterprise of providing a Social Work service. Hence, both the employer and the Social Worker benefit.

7.4   The following core values and principles should underpin the framework for induction, supervision, workload management and CPD (Adapted from Green and Myers, 2008).

7.4.1   All staff working in Social Work settings, irrespective of their role, have the right to effective induction to their job role, high quality supervision, manageable caseloads and continuing professional development opportunities;

7.4.2   Supervision must ensure the effective management of practice, develop and support staff and promote their engagement with the organisation;

7.4.3   A review of workloads and caseloads must be an important part of the supervision process;

7.4.4   The quality of induction, supervision and CPD and the workload have a direct bearing on the quality of service delivery and outcomes for service users;

7.4.5   Social Workers and social care staff bear a responsibility for their own work and, to this end, should prepare for and make a positive contribution to the supervisory process, and their own professional development;

7.4.6   Induction, supervision, workload management and CPD must promote anti-discriminatory practice;

7.4.7   All practice must be consistent with local and International Federation of Social Workers codes and statements referring to Social Work practice.

7.5   Induction (Orientation)

7.5.1   On arriving at an agency for the first time as a new employee, a Social Worker, whether he/she is newly qualified or with long experience, should have a structured introduction to that agency to ensure that the worker is familiarised with the agency's methods of working and the context in which the work takes place.

7.5.2   For newly qualified Social Workers, a period of more intensive planned support should be offered following arrival.

7.5.3   Similarly, Social Workers moving across borders to practice in another legislative and cultural context need a more extensive induction programme to ensure that they are competent to practice in that country (Skills for Care, 2007).

7.5.4   As a minimum, the agency should have policies or guidelines that set out the content of an induction programme and the method by which it is offered.

7.5.5   The content of the formal induction process should include:

   i.   History and philosophy of the Social Work team/service

   ii.   The aims and objectives of the team/service

   iii. Key staff within the team/service and the agency

   iv.   The organisational and environmental contexts in which the team/service operates.

   v.   Key staff in partner agencies and services provided

   vi.   Workload, including caseload and working methods (for example, use of computerised information systems)

   vii. All policies and procedures followed by the Social Work team/service

   viii. A clear understanding of Human Rights legislation and the requirements of such legislation as it is set out in each country.

7.5.6   IFSW Europe e.V Member organisations can support Social Workers by:

   i.   Engaging in the development of codes of practice for appropriate preparation and induction programmes for Social Workers entering the profession, or moving to new roles, including Social Workers who have obtained their qualifications outside the country;

   ii.   Advocating with employers to ensure that they have written policies and procedures for providing induction to Social Workers, including internationally qualified workers, to prepare for new or changing roles and responsibilities;

   iii. The policies and procedures, and induction programmes should cover all levels of staff, including managers, temporary and agency staff, students and volunteers on placement, and those moving jobs within the agency;

iv. Advocating for the support of induction processes within statutory professional registration frameworks, where these are in place.

7.6   Supervision

7.6.1 Supervision is a vital component of support for Social Workers for the reasons mentioned above. The tension must be managed between the use of supervision for the purpose's of accountability on the one hand and professional development on the other. Supervision is a tool to allow the Social Worker to reflect on his/her use of their professional knowledge and skills alongside the need to ensure that the service user is receiving an appropriate service.

7.6.2 In this regard, supervision should also be used to examine the wider context of Social Work and service delivery and the role of Social Work and agency in this. Supervision should be used to develop the worker's critical thinking about issues such as anti-discriminatory practice and anti-oppressive practice to help evaluate how well these practices are upheld.

7.6.3 Supervision, then, serves to:

i.   meet the worker's support and developmental needs
ii.   help the worker exercise good professional judgement, and
iv.   meet the needs of the agency in offering a service.

(Coulshed & Mullender et al, 2006)

7.6.4 Agencies should have written standards regarding supervision. These could include the following:

i.   Supervision takes place regularly (frequency to be stated)
ii.   Supervision is arranged and conducted in such a way as to permit proper reflection and discussion.

iii. There is a written supervision agreement

iv. Supervision is planned and purposeful activity

v. Supervision sessions are recorded promptly, competently and stores confidentially

vi. Supervisors and supervisees are trained to carry out their role

vii. Supervisor ensure that that the management and administrative functions are met (accountability)

viii. Each supervision session considers the employee's/ Social Worker's workload, and adjustments are made accordingly

ix. An objective and transparent means is applied to measure workloads example by using set tools and criteria

x. Supervisor ensures that the CPD function is met

xi. Supervisor ensure that the support function is met

xii. Supervisor ensures that the engagement function is met (two way commitment and engagement with the agency)

xiii. Supervision promotes a commitment to Human Rights and diversity in all aspects of work.

xiv. Managers assure the quality of supervision (Adapted from Green and Myers (2008).

7.6.5 IFSW Europe e.V Member organisations can support Social Workers by:

i. Engaging in the development of codes of practice for supervision, in partnership with employers and other stakeholders.

ii.   Advocating with employers to ensure that they have written policies and procedures for providing supervision to enable Social Workers and social care staff to practice safely and achieve positive outcomes for service users.

iii. Supervision policies and procedures should cover all levels of staff, including managers, temporary and agency staff, and students and volunteers on placement.

iv.   Advocating for the support of supervision within statutory professional registration frameworks.

7.7   Workload management

7.7.1 High workloads can lead to poor service quality for the user and stress and burnout for the worker. Three factors are identified as creating a current need to manage workload effectively and transparently. High workload levels:

i.   Have been connected with negative impacts on practice and outcomes;

ii.   Have been associated with increased stress in a profession that already suffers higher than average levels, and

iii. Carry implications for the workforce in terms of the interaction between stress, burnout and turnover (Stevens, 2008).

7.7.2 Implications for implementing workload management systems are drawn from a number of workload measurement and management studies. Three issues are identified.

i.   First, workload management systems need to be informed by good quality, up-to-date workload measurement.

ii.   Second, involving practitioners and other stakeholders in the whole process will be the key to its success.

iii. Finally, changing patterns of demand and different models of practice carry implications for workload management systems, suggesting the importance of their regular review (Stevens, 2008).

7.7.3   Agencies should have written standards regarding workload management. These should include measures to meet the following purposes:

i.   To offer guidance on what a reasonable caseload for a Social Worker should be in line with contemporary and researched best practice;

ii.   To enable managers to identify and prevent overload of the individual Social Worker or teams and to inform workforce planning;

iii.   To provide an avenue whereby Social Workers can have clear expectations about the acceptable workload which they can carry;

iv.   To inform case allocation by Social Work managers;

v.   To establish a coherent system of priorities for individual Social Workers, the Social Work team, the family and individual / child care programmes;

vi.   To contribute to supervision process in terms of discussion about organisational, professional and personal objectives;

vii.   To provide an overall measurement of the workload;

viii.   To enhance the quality of service provided to service users; and

ix.   To highlight unmet need.

7.7.4   Caseload and workload management tools should be based on the following principles:

i. A recognition that individual Social Worker's capabilities will vary depending on experience, skills, and knowledge;

ii. Personal circumstances will also influence an individual Social Worker's capacity at times and must be given consideration by the manager when assigning points e.g. assessed year/induction phase.

iii. Caseload weighting is not just a question of numbers. It has to be part of a framework to assist effective monitoring, evaluation, supervision, support and accountability.

7.7.5 This Framework recommends the consideration of indicators although not prescriptively for the implementation of good practices for workload and caseload management tool.

7.7.6 These include, however not exclusively indicators based on:

i. The distribution of working time

ii. The number of clients

iii. Risk

iv. Complexity

v. Travel

7.7.7 The following are considered reliable examples of how the above indicators may be used:

i. Normal working time is typically divided between direct and indirect client work with 60% of working time devoted to direct client work which includes preparation for a certain client or client group, planning, decision-making, documentation, reporting, cooperation, consultation etc (Talentia, 2009).

ii. While at least 40% of working time is devoted to indirect client work including cooperation, development, advocacy, continuing education, work counselling, familiarisation, mentoring and training, consultation etc. (Talentia, 2009).

7.7.8 Social Work caseloads would typically range between 10-30. This figure should not be regarded as prescriptive and would not be applicable within the context of certain practice such as community work or highly specialised practices.

i. The heavier and more intense the working process, the more demanding the service needs of the clients and their objectives, the more urgent their rehabilitation needs and their condition, and the more limited the available consultation or other support services, the closer to the minimum the maximum number of clients should be.

ii. The demands that legislation poses on the working process, e.g. the social guarantee with its time limits or the obligatory service plan, should be taken into account in staff dimensioning.

iii. Risk factors also need to be taken into account. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2008). These may include, but not only the following examples:

- Vulnerability
- Lack of information
- Likelihood of significant harm
- Lack of access to support services

iv. Complexity may include the following examples:
- Multiple problems
- Child protection issues

- Legal status and other issues
- Care Placement
- Multi-agency involvement
- Travel issue may include the following examples:
- Siblings placed in different placements
- High level of contact
- Placement outside Trust area
- Location of court

7.7.9   IFSW Europe e.V Member organisations can support Social Workers by:

i.   Engaging in the development of policies and processes for appropriate workload management systems.

ii.   Advocating with employers to ensure that they have policies and processes in place to measure and monitor Social Workers' workloads in a transparent and an equitable way.

7.8   Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

7.8.1   Continuous professional development provides for the ongoing development of the Social Worker's knowledge and skills base and increase on their competence in the changing context of Social Work practice.

7.8.2   The aim is to continuously improve the quality of outcomes for people who use Social Work services by supporting the people who are delivering these services to be the best they can be.

7.8.3   CPD includes the activities that develop professional knowledge, skills and competencies for Social Work practice in relation to work with individuals, families, groups,

organisations and communities. It also includes knowledge
and skills required for areas such as policy development,
management, research, education and the promotion of the
Social Work profession. Therefore, it should include the
following:

i.   Post-qualifying training;

ii.   Participation in conferences/seminars and skills
        development programmes;

iii.   Reading professional journals;

iv.   Providing practice placements for Social Work students;

v.   Providing and receiving professional supervision;

vi.   Academic study;

vii.   Writing and presenting professional papers;

viii.   Participation in research activities;

ix.   Active membership of professional associations/other
        relevant bodies or committees;

x.   Participation in the education of Social Workers and
        other health/social care professionals;

7.9   IFSW-E Member organisations can support Social Workers by:

i.   Engaging in the development of standards for culturally
        appropriate CPD.

ii.   Developing mechanisms for the provision of CPD and
        access to such CPD programmes.

iii.   Advocating with employers to provide opportunities and
        adequate resources for CPD.

iv.   Advocating for the support of CPD within statutory
        professional registration frameworks.

7.10   Work Related Stress and Burnout

7.10.1   Among the main Health and Safety hazards for Social
Workers are stress, burnout and vicarious traumatisation.

7.10.2   The issue of the stress has been identified at a general level
in 2004 by the European Social Partners: European Employers
and Workers who agreed on a document called "Framework
agreement on work related stress" whose aims are to identify,
prevent and manage the problem of work-related stress.

7.103   The European Directive 89/391 states:

'the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in
the safety and health of workers at work'.

7.10.4   'Under framework directive 89/391, all employers have a legal
obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of
workers. This duty also applies to problems of work-related
stress in so far as they entail a risk to health and safety.
All workers have a general duty to comply with protective
measures determined by the employer. Addressing problems
of work-related stress may be carried out within an overall
process of risk assessment, through a separate stress policy
and/or by specific measures targeted at identified stress
factors.'

7.10.5   To prevent, eliminate, or reduce work-related stress, the
Agreement proposes some measures such as:

i.   Management and communication measures such as
clarifying the company's objectives and the role of
individual workers, ensuring adequate management
support for individuals and teams, matching
responsibility and control over work, improving work
organisation and processes, working conditions and
environment,

ii. Training managers and workers to raise awareness and understanding of stress, its possible causes and how to deal with it, and/or to adapt to change,

iii. Provision of information to and consultation with workers and/or their representatives in accordance with EU and national legislation, collective agreements and practices.

8.0   Conclusion

8.1   This document, is intended to consolidate the basic parameters within which Social Work in Europe operates into a common framework for Social Work in Europe. This framework is considered a key step in contributing towards the ongoing development of Standards for Social Work Practice in Europe.

More awareness needs to be raised regarding the activities of Social Work as human rights practice and of ways to build on individual case solutions to influence policy change. This projects also aims to contribute to raising this awareness and securing further the profile of the profession and the conditions required by Social Workers across Europe to continue to fulfil this mission.

As Social Work looks to the future, the profession has an opportunity to assert its human rights focus more clearly. The strong compatibility of the profession's mission and values with human rights suggests a natural linkage. Human rights provide the profession with a clear direction for a presence at the international level, while also bridging local and national issues with global concerns.
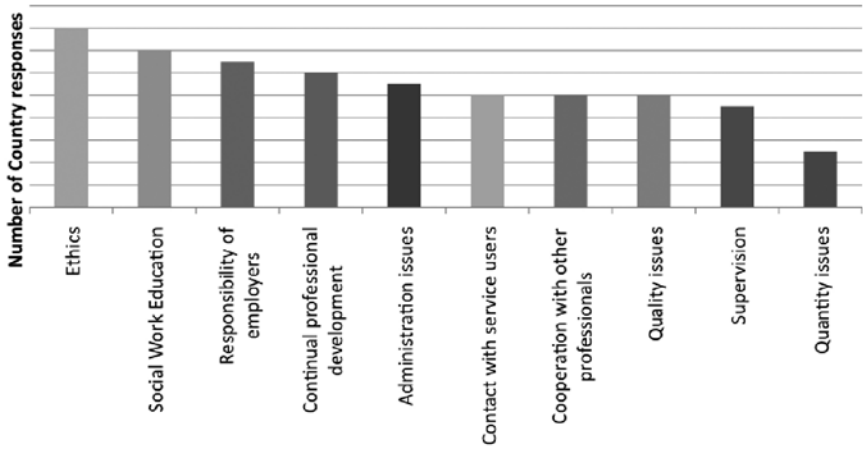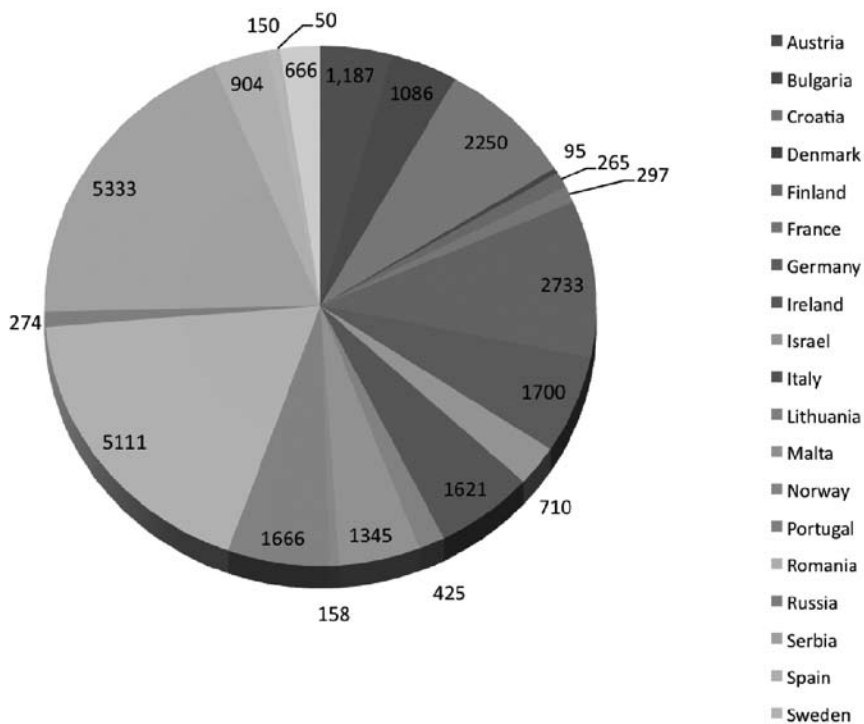
Areas of Social Work practice that Social Work Standards cover according to the understanding/situation in the different countries

BA 3yrs+

BA and MA 3yrs+

BA, MA and Phd 3yrs +
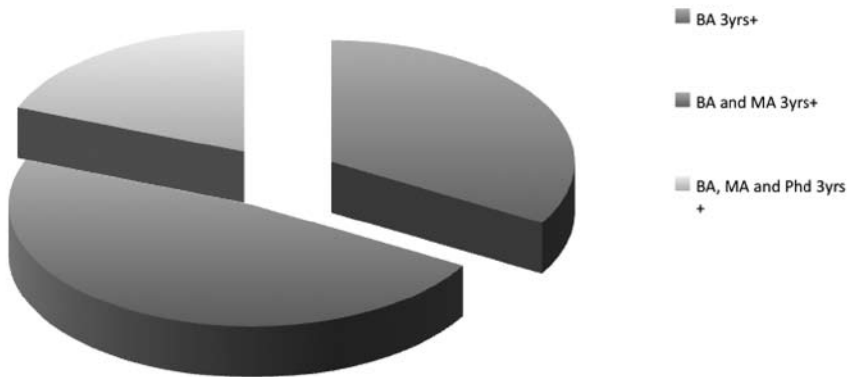
Type of Social Work Education in Europe

Estimated no of Inhabitants per Social Worker in different countries in Europe

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1   The full report with complete references and bibliography is available at www.ifsw.org/europe