



History

In Hungary, the development of social work as a profession had basically followed the international line of improvement until the communist bureaucracy started its liquidation on ideological grounds after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1945. Communists considered social policy and social work unnecessary - as they claimed, in every political act in "the people's democracy" (a contemporary euphemism for the totalitarian communist regime) the highest possible level social care is manifested. Admitting the existence of social and mental problems would have disclosed the failure of the entire social system. "Social work" was degraded to an element of control and most of its early representatives were not professionals but "reliable party members". The legalization of social professions started some years before the transition of the social system in 1989 and demanded the devoted and strenuous work of the new generation of social professionals who endeavoured to bring about major changes.

The structure of training and the curricula, though adapted to national traditions of higher education in Hungary, was largely based on contemporary Western European and American professional expertise. The Hungarian Alliance of Social Professionals was formed in 1991 to ensure high standards in academic work and research. Our Department was the first to introduce two semester placements in the training.

Hungary's recent accession to the European Union has demanded even more accommodation to EU standards and structures. With the onset of the Bologna-process the social worker training in Hungary has been transformed to facilitate our joining the European Higher Education Area. ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), one of the major improvements of the Bologna process has been introduced to promote the exchange of academic information among European institutions of higher education. ECTS facilitates the recognition of studies completed abroad as well as international curriculum development, serving the interests of a more integrated and flexible European labour market. The Bologna process does not demand European universities to unify their degree programs but to look for points of convergence. The Bologna Declaration has adopted a structure of clearly defined study cycles: undergraduate (bachelors) and graduate (masters and doctorate). This three-cycle training has recently been introduced in Hungarian schools of social work. (<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/03sept/BolognaGlossary.htm> [1].) Universities in Budapest and Pécs are presently the only institutions in Hungary where students can obtain an Masters degree in Social Work and Social Policy.

The International Federation of Social Workers (ISWF) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) issued a document in 2004 in Adelaide: Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training. In defining Hungarian national training standards the philosophy and recommendations of this document were followed.

Currently, social workers in Hungary have to face a number of problems and some of these are both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the social problems of the Western European welfare states, such as increasing poverty, marked regional inequality, ethnic minority issues, indebtedness, homelessness and a high incidence of various forms of self-destructive behaviour, including alcohol and drug-addiction. Economic problems, constant transformations in various economic and social sectors, severe budgetary restrictions and the legacy of state socialism are a major challenge for social professionals that they can respond only if they can mobilize their creative potentials and are ready to rely more on available community resources. Therefore, to teach the philosophy and the practice of learned resourcefulness is a priority in our training.

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Links

[1] <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/03sept/BolognaGlossary.htm>