

Community social work – few aspects of a curriculum

based on the EU project „Community care approach: a strategy for social inclusion” (2006-2008)

Community development has become significant in political terms in the past few years in the policy of the European community. Often in the first stages of community development the degree of involvement is determined by external factors encouraging local residents' participation in relevant activities. Therefore it is strongly related to community social work and involves assessing community needs and resources, making connections between socially excluded groups and local institutions, strengthening inclusion mechanisms and empowering excluded people. In this context the EU project „Community care approach: a strategy for social inclusion” (2006-2008) has been implemented.

The overall aim was to increase the consciousness of factors which contextualise and influence community work, such as social situations and living conditions, social organisation, welfare systems, economical and political systems, and knowledge about theories and methods which community workers utilise. One of the main tasks was to develop curricula of community social work which would conform to the needs of different countries.

The curriculum developed in the project consists of 6 modules. They focus on:

- a) theoretical aspects of community work (learning to identify theories of community work relevant in a specific local social work context; apply relevant methods of community research in order to assess community needs, strengths and weaknesses, etc.);
- b) methods and techniques of community intervention (learning to apply methods of social support aimed at enhancement of individual responsibility and autonomy; operate the process of community needs' research (identification, definition, analysis, etc.) and organize social work intervention in community, etc.);
- c) organizational aspects of community work, means and finances (learning to relate authentically to people and groups of people within his function; work in teams and in organisations and associate with partners in a network of organisations, etc.);
- d) specific issues in community development (learning to distinguish among communities of place, of interest, and of practice; comprehension by defining collaboration and identifying strategies that led to successful collaboration, etc.);
- e) role, identity and attitude of a community worker (develop professional autonomy, self-reliance and self-responsibility, reflect upon and understand the relationship among personal, professional and cultural values and their impact upon community social work practice, etc.);
- f) political issues in social work with communities (get insight into the current debates on social policy and the ideologies behind them and their effect on social work; get an overview on social work as an international movement for human rights (the politics of the profession), etc.).

The main principles of the curriculum implementation across the different countries are as follows:

- a) the curriculum should be based on competencies developed for each module, a) it can combine different methods: theoretical knowledge (in direct contact with a teacher) with individual work and field practice, as well as virtual learning activities, c) it can involve a wider spectrum of specialists-trainees, directly or indirectly involved into the community work, d) the form of implementation should be flexible taking into account each individual university's programs, convenient time, target group, etc.

The curricula implementation can gain comparative aspect by using, for example, a model „SLEPT” (practical social work case analysis in theoretical, social, legal, economic and political perspectives).