

**EUSW Thematic Network - Department of Social Work TEI / Athens
Training Seminar**

14 – 15 December 2007

Welcome Speech

Prof. Anna – Maria Campanini

President of EASSW

Coordinator of EUSW Parma University

It is a pleasure to celebrate here in Athens this seminar on “Supervision Models and Fieldwork Placements in Social Work Education in Europe”. It is an initiative organised by TEI in cooperation with the Thematic Network “EUSW European Platform for Worldwide Social Work», promoted by Parma University and funded by the European Community.

Athens University has been one of the first partner in our previous thematic network and the cooperation with Maria Papathanasiou has started more than ten years ago. In Athens we realized together with colleagues from Goteborg, Bergen, Swansea, Mannheim a very interesting intensive program about the role of social workers in Europe. So it is really a pleasure to be here again. Few words about the Thematic Network.

This Thematic Network has evolved from a longstanding set of partnerships involving a core group of European Social Work Courses which have been working in cooperation since 1993, realizing programmes of student mobility and teaching staff exchange, Intensive Programme, Curricula Development.

That a Social Work Thematic Network would hugely benefit paneuropean education research and practice was a mutual conclusion formulated by this group in 2001, and then submitted to the approval of the academic bodies. They recognised the importance and welcomed the idea that the Network could be the voice to express a need commonly shared by all the group that had been cooperation together for so many years.

The final approval by the European Commission arrived in July 2002 and the activities started with the first annual meeting in Parma that took place from 30th Oct. to 2nd Nov, 2002. A second proposal “EUSW – European Platform for WORLDWIDE Social Work” was submitted in 2005 and approved; the final year of the second network concludes September 2008.

EUSW is a wide Network, started with about 50 partners in the first edition, has reached more than a hundred partners, from universities or institution that provide education in social work, local authorities, professional associations, and representative of the third sector in Europe, but also outside Europe.

From 2002 to 2008, meetings were organized in many European cities, 4 important social work books were published and other 2 are on the way; the results of comparative researches and analysis of relevant topics in social work have been accepted in scientific European journal and in congresses.

Newsletters and a website were set up.

From the beginning of January 2005 Virclass, an European e-learning based education experience, was implemented involving students and teachers from all Europe. Thanks to this experience has also been realized a virtual book on social work topics.

Two summer schools, hosted by Parma University and Dorbirn, have been offered to European but also international students involving teachers from different countries. A third one is foreseen in July 2008 in Dorbirn.

To enhance the European dimension in social work further meetings were organised: "Social Work in transition: what can we learn from Europe?" that took place on April 2007 in Bristol and Gloucestershire, "Listening" on April 2008 in Goteborg, this meeting on Supervision and fieldwork placement now in Athens .

In February 2008 will take place a meeting in Arcavacata di Rende on "Welfare State in a changing Europe. The role of field placement in social work education"

The ESUW Thematic Network contributed to the organisation of the very successful European congress "Social Changes and Social professions" that took place in Parma from 15th to 17th March 2007 hosting some workshops led by colleagues from the Network.

Different surveys have been done inside the network on topics of interest to be used like core themes for the next conferences and meetings; on researches available within the network (and a data base has been provided); about experiences and skills of the

partners in ODL; on tuning process in the education with special attention to practice competences, on structure and models of students practice placement experience in social work education .

From our six years experience, we can argue that the diversity of traditions and culture in Europe is an evidence, but at the same time we are facing many similar challenges: poverty, ageing population, multiculturalism, globalization and an increasing attack to the public welfare from governments of all shades of political colour.

We are also facing a process of change in the education path for social work profession. Despite the Bologna process, from our previous research (Campanini A., Frost E. 2004) the standard of education in social work is still extremely varied. There is a risk in some countries that social work training, underdeveloped in higher education, will become even more marginalised which will lead to a further drop in professional status and consequently in client service.

The process of reforming requires a 'tuning' of curricula, in terms of structures, programmes, and actual teaching. Although is very important to protect the rich diversity within European education, at the same time, it is necessary to identify competences and learning outcomes, and to design, construct *and* assess the qualifications provided throughout this education.

An important step within this harmonisation process could be identified through the "Dublin Descriptors"; the product of an informal group of specialists originating from different countries, united under the banner of "The Joint Quality Initiative" (www.jointquality.org). The expected attributes of a student are clarified within these descriptors through the definition of knowledge and understanding, application of this knowledge and understanding, making judgements, communication skills, learning skills.

These specific qualities are graduated and matched to the demands of the perceived successful completion of the first, second and third Bologna cycles, and highlights the progressive steps between these cycles.

In many countries there are discussions on the changes required to revise the educational systems in order to meet the demands of the Bologna process. The Tuning project is still working towards an overall objective of implementing discussion and reflection upon the changes Bologna has brought to educational structures and study content.

This seminar provides a clear example of how is it possible to reflect and learn from each others differing approaches and ideas to produce improvements in our educational and applied activities.

We all know the importance of the integration between theory and practice in the education for social work and how crucial are the experiences of supervision and fieldwork placement in this process.

Thank you very much for organizing such an opportunity! I wish you a fruitful work, but also a pleasant stay in Athens.