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NEWSLETTER

EUSW – “European Platform for Worldwide Social Work” and Perspectives of Public Welfare

Extract of the opening speech from Annamaria Campaninis at the second annual meeting of the EUSW Thematic Network at Olsztyn (Poland) 19th of October 2006

The Thematic Network “EUSW European Platform for Worldwide Social Work” is a wide network, with more than hundred partners, grounded in the relationships and experiences of the previous one and reaches not only people from local authorities, from associations, from the third sector in Europe, but also some international partners. Which is the meaning of this initiative? The diversity of traditions and culture in Europe is an evidence, but at the same time we can say that 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.



Last week, at an international conference in Bielefeld (Social Work & Society), a group of professors, experts and professionals have discussed together a very provocative topic “Why Social Work? Perspectives of Public Welfare”. Many analysis underlined a risk of a market centred process also in the social services context, with a social worker like a control agent of deviant behaviour or therapist,

Many voices claimed more attention to the care-control dilemma, to redefine the meaning of such basic concepts as self-determination, social justice, equity and empowerment in the context of contemporary trends (Reisch). How can social workers take a more activist, mobilising role that assists individuals and communities in fulfilling their potential to care and provide for each other in non-stigmatising, interconnected and holistic ways (Dominelli)? How can they grasp neoliberalism’s contradictions as opportunity for an explicit social policy engagement at the micro-level to re-construct “ the social” around personal relations and networks (Lorenz)? I think that our network should be engaged in trying to give an answer to all these questions, to discuss possibilities and strategies, to reflect how we can consolidate the social work role through a clever and effective process of education.

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We also are 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 problem to know >Why social work?< leads not only to redefine the meaning of this profession inside the society, but also to draw a new profile to answer a new question: Which kind of social work? for this society. The commitment of the European Union to social inclusion and human rights is unequivocal, like the "Strategy of the European Committee of social inclusion 2004" enlight.

What have we done during the past year?

The meeting in Berlin has been very important to plan the activities of the different working groups. At the moment we have reached many important goals:

two books are almost ready to be published "Changing Social Work Education in Europe" and "Restructuring Social Welfare without social work" ready. A third book about "Migration and responses in different European Countries" is ongoing. A new website has been set up and two newsletters have been produced. To enhance the European dimension in social work has been organised "Social Work in transition: what can we learn from Europe?" 25th and 26th April in Bristol and the 27th in Gloucestershire and another course has been realised in Finland in September. The thematic network is contributing to the organisation of the next European congress "Social Changes and Social professions" that will take part in Parma 15-17 March hosting some workshop 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.

We have much work to do to meet all the output we planned in our application and, as always, this requires a huge effort. Everyone is involved in many activities at national and international level. We know that also the

process of transformation, according to Bologna statement take, many energies, but we have to be reliable and we have a responsibility to use the Union money in the best way. I hope that our work should contribute to give a significant support to social work education, practice and policies to respond to the challenges we are facing at different level in Europe and worldwide.

**REPORT FROM
THE VIRCLASS
PROJECT
VIRCLASS meeting
November 2006:**



From 23-25 November the VIRCLASS meeting took place in Bergen (Norway) hosted by the City of Bergen and Bergen University College. Managers and teachers from participating universities in the VIRCLASS project were invited to discuss the future for the VIRCLASS project. Eight of ten partner institutions were represented. The purpose for this meeting was to realize a new financial and administrative model for the future running of the VIRCLASS programme. So far the program has been funded by Norway Opening University (NUV), and by the Bergen University College. To be able to continue the courses also from autumn 2007 the funding needs to be realized by the partners themselves. It is also an option that the partner institutions should include the VIRCLASS e-learning programme Social Work in Europe as an optional course for students in their social work programme.

Bergen University College as project leader proposed a financial and administrative model for VIRCLASS and suggested to establish a VIRCLASS Consortium as a juridical entity for the next three years. All this has been discussed during the meeting. It is a fact that VIRCLASS is an international, innovative, unique and interesting program that also promotes the Bologna process, e-learning pedagogy, English language skills, as well as social work on an international European level. So far the project has been financed by project money and a lot of voluntary work from participating teachers and assessors. In the future the costs have to be paid by the partner institutions in addition to grants that might be possible to get for development of new elements in the VIRCLASS programme. This is the challenge we now have to deal with.

Partners agreed on signing the letter of intent where they committed themselves to work hard on realising future pedagogical, and financial involvement. All partners left Bergen with

homework for realising the new financial and administrative model. Partners promised to give feedback at the proposed model, and after this the Board of VIRCLASS is going to prepare a final Consortium Agreement. Our plan is to establish the VIRCLASS Consortium by the 20th of March 2007. After that new courses can be advertised and prepared started also from autumn 2007.
(Remmelt Veenkamp)

WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

GROUP 2 - Publications

The group met in Olsztyn (Poland) from 19th – 22nd of October 2006. For the book “Social Work in restructured European welfare systems” the group decided to keep the structure which we agreed in our meeting in Koblenz, with three sections. Until now we have five contributions for the first section on ‘Restructuring Social Welfare’ (from Italy, The Netherlands, Finland, Wales and Germany). Then we have four articles for the second section on ‘Social work practice within changing perspectives’ (from Sweden, Czech Republic, Poland and Cyprus). And finally, we have three more papers for the third section on



‘Social work contribution to the development of civil society’ (from France, Spain and Romania).

Talking about the book on “Migration and responses in different European countries” and after having made a further request we have about 12 proposals and we are looking forward for more articles.

We also agreed that the last book published by EUSW in 2008 will be a collective production integrating the outcomes from all working groups of the network: research, educational opportunities, networking and international development, etc.

In order to advertise all books produced by the

network we decided to undertake to follow actions. First, to ask Carocci to print 5000 prospectus with information about the content of the books and how to order them. Second, to write a short article to be published in the International Social Work Journal. Third, to write a shorter version of this article in English and to publish its translation into different languages in national journals of social work. The group will meet again at the EASSW conference in Parma in March 2007.

GROUP 3 - Information

There have been difficulties in starting the process during the first year. Changes of group members in a very small working group have been compensated. The production of newsletters has been set up, struggles are the commitment. How can members of the network be motivated to deliver information and reports? A new website has been set up, which is in the process of being improved. How can the website be more attractive and interactive? How can members of the network be motivated to deliver information for the website?

During the 2nd annual meeting in Olsztyn Working group 3 and 4 (Web enhancement and ODL) worked together. Participants were Remmelt Veenkamp (WG 4), Klaas Göran Olsson (WG 4), Beatrice Rova (WG 3), Barbara Giacconi (WG 3) and Gudrun Ehlert (WG 3). The reasons for working together were pragmatic and content related.

Website: To make the website more attractive several proposals have been discussed. There should be a **Mailing List** – automatic information about news on the website via e-mail to all network members. There should be installed a **Blog**, which informs about the activities of the core board. A **Forum** will be set up and moderated by Remmelt Veenkamp and Klaas Göran Olsson. Further ideas for a more interactive website: records from key notes of the annual conferences. Book adverts could be done in form of video announcements from the editors. There must be an Update of board members and of the participants of the working groups. There should be inserted new headlines: Publications, Education. A Google Search to the subject “European Social Work” showed that the EUSW-website is at place number 5 at the Google site.

Newsletter: Beatrice Rova and Barbara have

been asked to report about the 2nd annual meeting. The next newsletter should be published in the end of November 06, a second regular one in May 07. A special edition of the newsletter should be produced and presented at the EASSW conference in Parma in March 2007.

Perspectives: Working 3 and 4 should cooperate in order to deliver the basis for communication within the network and to represent the EUSW thematic network as platform for worldwide social work.

(Gudrun Ehlert)



GROUP 6 - Networking and International Development

Aims & Objectives of WG 6

- a. Encourage international partnership building and support the establishment of collaborative projects
- b. Submit 10 proposals including network partners
- c. Utilize network expertise in the development and delivery of proposals (e.g. teaching in English)
- d. EUSW will provide primary support for the coordination of these projects
- e. Create partnerships outside Europe in order to enhance the worldwide aspects of the network
- f. Increase interaction between the EUSW network and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)

In October 2006, WG 6 met in Olsztyn, Poland. At this meeting, the working group accomplished a tremendous amount. At a network workshop, the EUSW Administrator Alessandro Bernazzoli presented significantly helpful material highlighting the key components of WG 6 which heretofore had not been concretised. These included:

- (1) encourage development of international partnerships;
- (2) encourage submission of collaborative

- proposals by members;
- (3) collect data on existing proposals; and,
- (4) develop partnerships with international partners outside the EU.

This workshop clearly motivated current WG 6 group members and all EUSW members to recognize the importance of such work as well as facilitate action. In addition, the EUSW Administrator will be providing information about the various funding streams for international collaboration to WG 6. After assessing this information will be available on the EUSW website in order to stimulate available funding streams for international collaboration (i.e. Lifelong Learning, Socrates, Leonardo, Grundvig, Minerva, Asia-link, EU/US). Additionally, this involves how to build international partnerships and prepare appropriate applications.

WG 6 restructured immediate tasks including three primary outcomes:

1. Collect information about existing partnerships within the EUSW
2. Provide this information to all EUSW members
3. Stimulate further interest in partnership development

This resulted in the decision to develop a database including existing EUSW partnerships, current applications, EUSW membership areas of expertise and future ideas for collaboration. WG 6 felt that this database should be an interactive medium for exchanging ideas, sharing resources, and networking. Consequently, WG 6 designed a questionnaire to gather this data from EUSW members.

Questionnaire

This questionnaire should be easily completed while gathering the necessary information related to the objectives of the working group. This will be uploaded to the EUSW website as an electronic questionnaire; data will be automatically downloaded to the aforementioned database. In light of the possibilities for international collaborations, the questionnaire and database should be inclusive of the various interest and specializations of the EUSW. As a result, the questionnaire and the resulting database will reveal the ongoing potential of the network.

The first draft of the questionnaire was completed and reviewed during working group meetings. WG 6 determined that the questionnaire would be pilot tested in three phases: (1) finalize first version of the questionnaire; (2) WG leaders (board members) will complete the questionnaire in a

timely fashion; and, (3) WG leaders will provide feedback to WG 6 about the feasibility and the time taken to complete as well as the inclusion of working group topics in the questionnaire.

WG 6 developed a timeline for task completion:

WG 6 will meet in Brussels in early December to review preliminary findings of the questionnaire and to integrate Board members' feedback. This will enable WG 6 to adapt the questionnaire prior to submission to the webmaster for uploading. Additionally, WG 6 will review the various funding streams provided by the EUSW Administrator in order for these to be uploaded to the website for EUSW access.

Interaction between the EUSW & IASSW

During the IASSW conference in Chile entitled "Growth and inequality. Social work scenarios and challenges in the XXI century" The EUSW network was presented in a workshop by Agustin Monivas. This presented was reported to the EUSW members in Poland. At the meeting in Chile, there were the beginnings of discussion about international collaborations outside the EU, especially regarding Latin American countries. WG 6 coordinator approached the president of IASSW to discuss future projects with the EUSW.

Future actions

1. Questionnaire follow up
The questionnaire needs to be finalised and outlined for web-use, so that the working group leaders can fill in and give feedback.
This feedback will lead to a review of the questionnaire.
2. Database follow up
The database will provide us with information related to objectives a., b. and c. The data will be researched by WG 6 in order to select appropriate information for members. This information will be posted on the EUSW website.



3. Develop a new questionnaire for non-universities partners

The first questionnaire is developed for university partners. The network has also non-university partners with international relations, projects, expertise and competences, which will be gathered in a second questionnaire and made available for the members via the website

4. Make the information about the various funding streams for international collaboration available on the website
(Jan Agten)

GROUP 7 - Research Opportunities

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES of WG 7:

To generate research activities within the network, to harness existing research projects, to seek funding sources and network with national and international research bodies, to provide one to two research publications in English, total of six for the life span of the network and to create a data base within the network for the facilitation of research network.

(1) EUSW European Research Database

The primary objective of the EUSW European Research Database was to start a research database for the EUSW in order to:

- a. enable its members to search/find colleagues within the network who are engaged in similar research topics,
- b. to find partners for staff mobility (guest lectures),
- c. to start collaborations on join projects for cross-cultural and comparative work.

The database is a tool to find partners. It is based on a questionnaire which was developed beginning 2006 (see Attachment 1). The construction of the questionnaire was based on the study of several databases, suggestions and commentaries from the Work Group 7 (WG7) members. After long brainstorming sessions during the Annual Meeting (27- 30 October in Calabria) Italy, the first draft of the questionnaire was formulated and then tested and corrected several times. It was then distributed among the EUSW members before the Berlin venue in 2006 with

a second call a few weeks afterwards. During the WGs meeting 26th-30th January 2006, in Berlin, Germany, preliminary results were discussed, which are summarized below:

In total 71 completed questionnaires were received. All information was compiled in an excel database together with a protocol (see attachment 2).

A short scan of the collected data gives a preliminary impression of the types of research and the research topics/items the EUSW members are engaged with. The comments that follow should be read as an indication, as a sample of EU research topics:

Language

If one considers English as “the lingua franca”, only 33% of the research findings are accessible, the rest of the recorded data appear to be in the native languages of the members, several are in Spanish, German, French and other, making the readability of these documents difficult if no translated versions are supplied.

Type of research

From the data collected, 34% of the research is based on secondary research analyses, (literature reviews); a rather large percentage, considering the practice orientation of Social Work. It appears that more emphasis, training and encouragement should be given to the collection and analysis of primary data. Thus, enhancing the diversity of the network’s research.

Keywords/Topics of the publications

It is hard to make meaningful comments or to draw conclusions from the long list of keyword or items. Clustering topics could be done but then one has to have more information about the different topics.

The absence or meagre score on some topics is striking, such as:

- The issue of ageing in Europe is almost not present,
- Issues relating to migration, integration, exclusion etc. score extremely low considering the ongoing debate in Europe. This hopefully will change with the call of proposal for the Book on migration and related issues,
- The re-emergence of religion (especially Islamic religion) in European countries is not dealt with,
- Another major tendency, globalization (international social work) is only mentioned twice, hopefully this would also

expand as the network expands to members beyond EU members.

The future of an EUSW research database

Its relevance/value is directly related to:

- a. the amount of input
- b. the possibility of updating
- c. is it accessibility

After discussing the preliminary results with members of WG 7 via e-mails, and during the Annual Meeting in Poland, October 2006, it was decided that a third call for updated information will be sent to EUSW members and member organizations during the last week of October 2006. Once the updated data is received, a new report on the database will be given, and finally the data base with its protocol will be placed it on the EUSW web site for public use.

(2) EUSW Research Projects

All WG7 members have been actively contributing to the research projects that this group is targeting to produce by September 2008.

Some members have been working on theoretical issues, some on practical issues, and some on a combination of issues using a comparative approach. Further, the WG 7, members have been using a variety of methodological approaches in conducting their research, ranging from extensive literature reviews, to the collection of primary data via interviews, surveys and case studies. Some examples of research projects completed or ongoing are listed below:

- Ethics - Learning from experience – Ethics as a discipline in Superior Teaching, The significance of ethics in social science - An epistemological reflection
- Theory and practice - Theory and Practice: A Matter of Words. Language, Knowledge and Professional Community in Social Work (Submitted for publication),
- Comparative issues on social policy such as- Examining issues related to housing, health and educational policy in selected EU countries. Comparing the support services to vulnerable families in two EU countries (France and Spain),
- Policy making and Disability,
- Unemployment - Rising unemployment its impact on the family and social policy,
- Specific issues such as - Poverty - Current poverty research in selected EU countries -

Outcomes/evaluations of poverty research -
Other phenomena Statistics - Comparative
research on poverty in selected EU
countries - Factors producing poverty/
explanations of poverty in our countries

Summer school linked research papers

As a result of collective research by all
WG7 members, several papers (at least
6) will be written up regarding Poverty on
at least 6 EU countries. Each country will
produce a contribution on poverty, and
then a comparative paper will eventually
be produced. Ultimately these papers
will be presented to the Summer school
in 2007 in Austria.

A number of WG7 members have been
preparing chapter contributions to the EUSW
book (s) on Social Work in Restructured
European Welfare System and on The impact
of Immigration.

Also most WG7 members have sent papers for
presentation at the Conference in Parma Italy,
2007 titled "Social change and social
professions".

Further, a network member organized a day
long workshop on "Entrepreneurship and
Women" in order to help unemployed women
enter the workforce.

During the workshop a variety of guest
speakers presented useful information to the
participants on issues such as Personal
development, Work-Life balance, Business
opportunities, Training and development,
Financial and legal issues, Diversity and
gender issues.

Additionally, in an attempt to seek funding
sources and network with national and
international research bodies, two WG7,
members will be representing EUSW at the
CERTS conference in Brussels on the 4th & 5th
of December 2006. Several other attempts
were made seeking funding from EU
programs.

(Maria Michailidis)

Unemployed women and Entrepreneurship: Getting the "push" in developing skills in starting your own business. (Preliminary report)

Michailidis, M* ; Louca, S.; Christou, C.

INTERCOLLEGE, NICOSIA CYPRUS

Although this paper started as a result of an on
going project on unemployment, which aimed
at examining some ways which the Cypriot
authorities are trying to enforce (in order to
relieve the devastating effects of the raising
unemployment in Cyprus), it ended up being
an encouraging document regarding women's
desire to entrepreneurship.

The data presented in this document
were gathered by three Intercollege's
professors who were involved with issues
regarding: unemployment, women,
entrepreneurship and Information Technology
(IT). One of these professors was also
employed as an employment/occupational
advisors/career Counselors in the Ministry of
Labour and Social Insurance, unemployment
office.

Employment/Occupational
advisors/career Counselors were recently hired
employees under a project funded partly by EU
and partly by the Cyprus government. These
were specializing in offering personalized
services to the registered unemployed aimed
at matching the demands of both the
employers and the employees, and getting
these individuals independent and away from
public assistance.

One cannot consider unemployment in
Cyprus in isolation, without taking into account
the global employment trends and more
importantly of the European Union (EU)
employment trends. As outlined in the "Global
Employments Trends Brief, January 2006" the
labor market outcomes are the result of both-
long term evolution of the socio-economic
environment in which people work, as well as
shorter term external shocks that impact an
economic growth.

The following provides a non
exhaustive list of the labor market challenges
that impact labor markets: energy prices, the
importance of labor market recovery after
natural disasters, the impact of phasing out of
the Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA), global wage
inequalities, sectoral employment shifts, labor
market challenges as the result of
unemployment, discrimination against women
on labor markets, HIV/AIDS, outsourcing and
the informal economy. Some of these labor
market challenges are of major concern of the
Cypriots and have a negative impact on the

marketability of several groups of them.

Through the numerous interviews and consultations meetings the authors had (February –October 2006) with unemployed individuals both women and men, teenagers and young University graduates, single parents, handicapped individuals and middle age adults, it appeared that entrepreneurship was of great interest by both men and women unemployed but mostly by women with families. It is interesting to note (Greenberg & Baron, 2003), that when individuals lose their jobs, their self-efficacy (which is an individuals' belief concerning their ability to perform specific tasks successfully), often suffers. However, training in job-search skills, can restore their lost confidence, increase their chances in finding another job, stimulate entrepreneurship and encourage innovation.

Today, there is evidence that a growing number of people are opting to start their own business. Entrepreneurship is rapidly becoming the career path of choice for many people, some turning away from the corporate world, and some are considering entrepreneurship a viable career option, to get them away from unemployment. According to numerous studies on entrepreneurship (Berman, 1999; Global Entrepreneurship Minor, 1999); in the U.S. about 30% of the population is involved in a start-up business. Reports in Europe state that between 1997-2002, enterprise birth rates above 10 % were recorded mostly in the new Member States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Slovakia), Romania and Norway. Among the EU-15 countries for which data are available, only Luxembourg has continuously registered a similarly high birth rate, while Slovenia was the only new Member State reporting a birth rate below 10 %.

Rosenberg (1999), mentioned several trends in business and technology which are making entrepreneurship a popular and viable option among young individuals among them being the wide use of the internet which makes it easier for entrepreneurs to gain inexpensive access to new markets and learn about updated research; the downsizing increase in many companies which breeds up insecurity in individuals in corporations and reduce interest of individuals in climbing up the corporate ladder; and governmental funding to start-up business which makes it viable to entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurship workshop was carried out as part of a pilot study, in an attempt to gather opinions and identify problems, success factors and needs of women who are: unemployed or underemployed, entrepreneurs or individuals who are considering becoming entrepreneurs

but are not sure how. The objectives of the workshop were to provide the participants with the tools in order to have *a clearer picture of their own situation and be provided with a roadmap on how to develop/improve their careers/own business in a successful and creative manner.*

The Workshop:

The day long workshop (8.5 hours) was supported by EU funding, was organized by the three authors of this document and was conducted in October 2006 at Intercollege, Nicosia Cyprus. It was free of charge, and the participants were provided with a certificate of attendance. The workshop was attended by 45 individuals, 2 men (one an unemployed graduate students and one from a Training and Development Company) and 43 women ages 20 to 45. Some were unemployed and some were already employed in industry but wanted to start-up their own business. The workshop aimed at benefiting the participants by presenting issues related to the following:

- Personality promotion: learn about the typical "pitfalls" for women in business and learn how to improve your business style,
- Self-assessment tools: check your Entrepreneurial skills and strengths,
- Work-Life balance: assess your situation and get advice on efficient and effective business strategies
- Entrepreneur profile visibility: put your profile on the Showcase of Excellence for women entrepreneurs in different employment sectors including the ICT sector,
- Sharing of experiences with a targeted audience
- Getting connected: benefit from the networking at an international level and the interaction with other women entrepreneurs, trainers and decision maker.

The invited speakers/trainers (women and men) conducted workshop on an unpaid basis on the following major areas:

- Legal issues in setting up your own business
- Financial issues in setting up your own business,
- Human resource (gender) and diversity issues,
- Work-Life Balance
- Business opportunities, - the employment trend in Cyprus
- Training and development,
- Self Assessment

During the modules all participants could learn new skills, refresh existing knowledge and see

other possibilities of placing themselves at all organizational levels, career and individual developmental levels, overview their priorities, see other work possibilities and funding. The workshop formula had been tested and it seemed to be very attractive to both the trainers and the participants. It helped in the facilitation of opening communication channels better between the trainers and the participants themselves. The workshop catered to all types of learners with the help of handouts, visuals in the form of power point presentations, videos and written case studies. Questions and discussion was on going throughout the workshop.

All participants responded to a Feedback questionnaire. General comments were mostly concerned with the need to deepen the knowledge presented at the workshop. Further workshops will be scheduled but are contingent upon funding.

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Michael Knoch **Learning from experience – Ethics as a discipline in Superior Teaching**

The teaching of a discipline such as ethics provides to teachers, and also to students, several challenges. In the beginning, students usually expect to receive some "tips": rules, norms and advices for professional conduct and also for their life. On the one hand, they want to know what they should do, but, on the other hand, they often feel uneasiness when they suspect of the morality weight inherent to

the discipline. They say: "we have already heard many moral advices", but we know that in real life things are different. There, everyone fights for his place as he can.

So, teaching would loose its sense, if it were a mere transmission of "subject-matter" with no connexion with the life of those who are learning. We could even put Plato's question of if Ethics is something that can be taught! Goodness seems impossible of being taught, for instance, in spite this is what adults want from young people! Nevertheless, when asked about their personal ethics – departing from the presupposition that each one of us is a moral Being – they use to tell their life, where is inscribed a behaviour, and a demanded moral posture that they declare to have been instilled through "education", be it more soft or authoritarian. What society demands, and where it punishes the transgressions, is the "Right" and the "Wrong". So they talk about ethics in a distant way; ethics reminds them of imposition, be it from their parents or from other marking figures from their childhood, be it particularly from society, which imposes its rules on us, punishing those who don't comply, or at least those who don't keep up appearances.

Immanuel Kant, the founder of modern ethics, forged for this practice the term *heteronomy*: a moral strange to Man, that departs from superior values and that lies heavy on him, constituting a certain inheritance of submission to authority, but often accompanied by internal distance. Sometimes it seems that the individual doesn't commit himself, but only unties himself, searching for personal survival, instead of social and institutional commitment. Obviously, authoritarianism and dogmatism leave no space for dialogue. Is Ethics so?

Instead of it, modern Ethics, since the XVIth century, has for fundament the *freedom* – and that freedom needs to be taught to those that don't conceptualize it or live it. The teaching of Ethics as the teaching of freedom or the teaching of obedience – that is the question!

I will try to explain:

Ethics is a discipline of reflection and not of memorization! And so, the reactions are opposed: sometimes "*it hearts to think*", as the psychoanalyst Bion once said, and other times "*thinking is the cheapest pleasure*", as the dramatist Brecht said, with a certain irony. I would say that thinking can provoke a certain perturbation, especially in the tradition of a magisterial and frontal teaching, where the teacher "knows" and the student memorizes where there are not many possibilities for learning to question themselves.

Ethics is a discipline that is transversal to scientific and technical disciplines. The question if Ethics as a science is controversial.

Personally, I affirm that it isn't. I'm not interested in a "moral science" or in a descriptive ethics, where moral usually is not more than a "mix" of habits, tradition, social norms and acceptance, and sometimes blind being dominated by laws and orders. No, Ethics is a discipline that in its core leans over the human action and reflects on the decisions we are taking at each moment, whether they are individual, institutional, or social. We can define our way of living morally as *fundamental attitude + rationality (science) + acting*. Under the primacy of action, the subject of Ethics is found, contrarily to sciences, purely in an orientation to future. Nevertheless, the future, in spite of all the planning, is a lived slope, open and contingent. We don't control it, although we live it and we create it at every moment. This means that modern Ethics cannot depart from an eternal social or institutional stability, even if they are most desired. It embraces dimensions such as conflict, controversial discussion, and personal commitment, critical and auto-critical dimension, which require a conscience examination more than the attribution of guilt to the ones who fail. So, Ethics cannot be dogmatic, but will be a rational and inter-communicable search for those who have to act in an open field. Its teaching has also a dialoguing structure inherent.

I once wrote, in a text on deontology, that ethics must be able of giving us criteria, when we have to oppose to law or to a rule – obviously, not to usufruct of an advantage, but for the subsistence of our client. I speak of the civilian disobedience (John Rawls) and the civic one. That is, Ethics requires courage – and I would like to stimulate in the students the courage to take their own decisions, even if those are troublesome. An attitude that Kant calls *autonomy*.

So, how to make of Ethics a structured teaching? I see three pedagogical and educative dimensions: There will be no teaching of Ethics without a personal dimension, eminently connected to life, transforming *ways of living* in *experience*, when we are capable of acting and reacting through an existential and rational learning. Using the title of the famous book from Bion, "*Learning from experience*", I refer to learn the "looking to the inside" of Ethics. I invite the students to elaborate a text, "My Ethics" that obviously cannot be evaluated. The personal *insight* of the students was revealed in the practice of the teaching much easier than I thought it would be – the students are open and all have a life to tell. Is the impression wrong that there are often the teachers that are hiding as persons, behind the knowledge and the subject-matter?

This requires three things:

- a) the presence of the student in the classroom, because it is not easy to include living experience without a process of oral dialogue. I'm aware that this may create difficulties to students that work, but on the other hand, in my experience, they are the ones, when they are present, that intervene the most, because they have lived and suffered more! Maybe it is worth clarifying that "academic freedom" is a freedom of consciousness not of acting. This can not be a freedom for the student to skip classes when he wants, but is a freedom in the classroom: for the teacher to choose the subject-matter and methods only in accordance with two factors, his own conscience, without censorship, and in dialogue with the students and their consciousness;
- b) to admit that modern Ethics starts with a moment of "not-knowing", a "Socratic moment", when we leave the until now superior and unquestionable certainties to enter into a rational reflection. It is not that rationality is the fundament of Ethics, the acting depends on the *good will* (Kant), on a personal dimension, where the person himself is his Ethics, identifying with it. But rationality is the only instrument we have, without it we are stuck to prejudices;
- c) the teaching of a dimension of the human interior. To stimulate or create this dimension is not automatic, specially to transform a natural feeling in reflection, because it demands a certain reflective attitude until a speculative or creative *insight* that, deplorably, is not a part of school formation.

Nevertheless, modern Ethics cannot simply impose rules and laws from top to down. It wants to prepare the student to participate in the rational construction of those, not so much by decree or (micro) power, but through our practical acting. We call that, today, *responsibility*. I'm talking about the responsibility of an adult person that is capable of giving without expecting self advantage. It's a responsibility far from envy or punishment spirit, which likes the others, and doesn't feel the "society" or the totality of life as threatening or simply "bad".¹ Kant wanted to say that, when he developed the concepts of *autonomy* (which is different from autocracy and independency from others) and *categorical*

¹ It is not so rare, the students are speaking about their "good family" in contrast to the "bad society"!

imperative (which doesn't pretend to be an imposed rigid commandment, but a radical invocation of altruism, something, what we can express like "it ought to be done"). This Kantian imperative is not an obligatory charge from a hierarchical superior, but he includes only humanity and universality, so he gives the liberty of own rational thinking to decide and act in concrete situations. Thus, the teaching of Kantian ethics intends to take people away from general dependency, where they feel tied up from everywhere.

Obviously, this is not easy, not for those who learn, nor for those who teach. The moment of enlightening, of having an *insight* on oneself, arrives like something *not-told* within so many words of teaching. But bigger is the joy when it happens! And it happens a lot, even if sometimes can also appear like a resistance or fear for liberty and rationality, when the own person is met in question.

Of course, in the teaching of XXI century, those 200 years old conceptions need to be reinterpreted and updated for a much more complex scientific and social approach in which we live today. When Kant asked: *What shall I do?* We ask today: *How do I orientate myself in a world not only more complex, but also more contradictory?* (W. Schmid, 1998). That way, we don't defend a mere recitation of the thoughts of a classical author. However, that it is not easy to assume a responsibility that is not guided by any authority. And here the thinking of Kant opens the possibility for some revolutionary reorientation. I confess that it may even be a check for students that grew up in a school system that works still in the exact repetition of concepts and until even words of the teacher, "*not to fail in the perfection*", or "*in the clearness of scientific concepts*" (quotes from students and from my teachers). In other words: There will be no teaching of Ethics without the famous Kant definition: "*Dare to use your own reasoning!*"

I add to this an important message: in spite ethics, departing from a certain comprehension, can become easy and something obvious, there is no study, not of Ethics, nor from any scientific discipline, without reading. I refer to the reading of books, not of note-books containing the oral speech of the teacher.

What demands the reading of a book or of a scientific article?

In the first place, the capacity of being alone and the abstraction of one's own worries and anguishes, of the subjacent uneasiness that characterizes most of our students.

In the second place, there is no reading without the almost visceral curiosity about learning, discovering, imagining, inventing, in sum investigating something about something

we had never thought before. The one who knows everything, or worse, who has heard about everything, takes no interest for anything. Everything is digested from note-books, and evacuated in the exam – a process that transforms, emotionally, the knowledge of something interesting into threat and boredom that "must be studied"! That way, there is no joy or insight! I think that the perfection that the best students look for, becomes an enormous obstacle to an open learning (without knowing already the solution of the detective story!), to the reading of a book where the result of the problem is not offered in a few words, but where we emerge in a speech, in which we don't see immediately the light at the end of the tunnel. Our students, in the 5th year, seem to know everything: the know Kant, Max Weber, Bourdieu, Durkheim, Foucault, Phenomenology, Freud, Systemic Theory, Experimental Planning, etc., but they don't confront personally with those or other authors, or work in those models. I recall an oral examination of a group of students of grades of 18², who knew f. ex. Erving Goffman from several disciplines, but never read one of his texts. That had not been asked! I wanted to remind the proverb: *Less would have been more!* And I wanted to ask: What is the value of one's own thought, even if not orthodox?

Last but not least: I also think that the teaching is not possible without the so called *community of teachers and students*, an ideal that is not only the one of my youth. The proximity between teachers and students must not provoke the anguish that students will lose respect for their teachers. Instead, being university community means that there is a dialogue also outside the classroom and outside the subject-matters. For example, I recall reports of working students on questions of their lives and works and their families. I didn't know that there are parents that borrow money to finance their children's studies and when they fail, this might originate a family crisis! Also the extra loads for students, which work to finance their studies, often in precarious manner, is often not be silenced. In those dialogues students opened my eyes to the hard social reality, but I also started to understand what it means for them to study.

In sum: Teaching, and especially, the teaching of Ethics, doesn't happen in a closed space. I've already said that Ethics is not merely individual. When it starts becoming a reflection, it gets close to social Ethics and the Ethics of institutions. It cannot be a warning of "Be good!", but a structured attitude that is mine, related to a YOU and with a society that is ours. I'm talking of mutual personal

² The best note in Portugal is 20.

commitment by rational agreement.

It is Ethics that makes the institutions work and not the Law. The relationship between Ethics and Law is a very interesting theme, which implies "hot" themes as for instance guilt and punishment, prohibition and protest, but also Bio-Ethics or Economical Ethics. I would like to approach that subject in another opportunity.

For now I'll say: While Law react post-factum, Ethics aims to the future. Law and punishment are not a means of education, they don't make the services work, they are only capable of delimiting a limit-line, while in the core and centre of human activities and of society they don't command, but trust in those who know voluntarily how to assume responsibilities that

they fulfil in their conscience. The ones, who constitute social life, are men and women that live and suffer, but in this decide and act.

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NEWS

The start of the EUSW – forum at December 2006

What is a forum about?

A forum is a tool to start an forum gives you the possibility subject related to the field of EUSW thematic network.



interactive discussion. This to express your opinion about Social Work, and to the

Why a forum?

The network starts with this forum to give you the possibility to participate active to the plans and ideas of the network. And also to bring in your own ideas. This gives you an opportunity to be involved to the work of the network.

Contributions about what?

On the forum you find different sections. Each section is related to one of the Working Groups of the network. You can bring in every idea you have, as long as it's related to the field of Social Work. Address your contribution to one of the sections. You also can react to a contribution. By this there is going to be a thread.

Who can contribute?

The forum is accessible for everyone (only the "General Discussion" section). To access all the forum sections you have to [REGISTER](#). The forum moderators expect that contributions are related to the field of Social Work, or the network. Contributions which are offensive or insulting will be removed by the moderators.

You are kindly invited to participate, please go to <http://www.eusw.unipr.it/forum/>.