



NEWSLETTER

Looking at the end... ...Thinking about the future

Dear colleagues, this is the last newsletter in our Thematic Network and I want to thank everyone for the contribution that you have given to our project, for the time spent together, for the interesting exchanges we have had, for the new relationships we have built and also for the friendship and the fun we shared .



For our future, we have good and bad news. First the good one: congratulations to Anne Karin and all the colleagues involved in preparing the new Virclass application for their great success. This experience which began in our previous network developed also with considerable support in terms of not only the skills and professional competences of many member of our TN, but also with a consistent financial support. We are really happy about this result.

The bad one, is, as you already know, that we were not able to submit the new application for the TN and also that the dissemination

project that we presented in March has not been selected by the EU. In March we took a decision to defer the writing of the EUSW III application for next February 2009. There are fundamental requirements that need to be fulfilled, that were not present last February. We need to have:

- a. At least one representative of all ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES, (in the last attempt we missed 6 of them...);
- b. Very detailed planning that requires an in-depth agreement among ALL PARTNERS on many key-decisions such as the number of meetings, the venues of the meetings, the number of participants, the who-does-what for each product (called "deliverable"), taking in account that we don't have, like in the past, freedom in relation to changing the venue and the duration of the meetings, the nature of the products, etc..;
- c. A very strong and active commitment (that frankly was, for many reasons, not so evident in these past years), since it is of primary importance to be able to rely on the work of ALL partners participating in the initiative;

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Despite the difficult situation and the unsuccessful result of our Dissemination project we are still willing to undertake further work. We spent 6 years of our life working on this and obtained considerable results, for which each day spent together (or alone) for the project was useful and good. Maastricht will be an important occasion to prepare a so-called “democratic” application, in which each partner take on its own responsibilities and identifies its fields of action, in agreement with all other partners. What we have written until today is still valid and consistent with what agreed in Seville (and further developed by the Board in Milan and Maastricht). Therefore we can prepare a more competitive and well-structured application.

We need really good participation in this meeting to be able to reach our aim, so I hope to see everybody in Maastricht!

Annamaria Campanini

The network’s present and future – a personal reflection

Six years ago, I was part of the first annual meeting of the EUSW thematic network. At that time, we were between forty and fifty partners that had gathered in Parma to discuss how to use the knowledge and experience from social work teachers and researchers for the good of the development of social work and social work education.

Since then, many things have happened. We have organized two summer schools with, in all, over 100 students and many teachers from different countries. A virtual classroom has been opened, and people from the network later formed their own consortium and now annually give important courses for social work students from Europe and beyond. Six books have been produced, with academic knowledge. Four of the books can right now be downloaded for free for students and teachers from all over the world from our website opened for everyone to use. And the other two will follow soon.

We have had local seminars and conferences in England (Bristol), Sweden (Göteborg), Greece (Athens) and Cocenza (Italy) where teachers from all over Europe have met with

social work practitioners and students from these countries on topical issues such as the position of service users, social work supervision and European experiences in social work.

We have also produced newsletters, had annual meetings, written about comparative research, had seminars on how to write EU applications, how to write for academic publications etc etc.

And everything was done by people who have not been paid separately for this, but as a part of their ordinary jobs. The experience is priceless, many of us would not be the same without it, and today we are more than 100 partners from more than 30 countries. So there is a lot to be proud of, for all of us.

I have now not mentioned all the important contacts and bi- and multilateral agreements signed up between partners, making it possible for students to travel and take courses at other European departments. And there are also other outputs and that should have been mentioned, such as curriculum development, an international masters course on family issues, presentations at international conferences, joint research activities, tuning activities and many more things.

And now the future – should we be pessimistic, since we were not funded for a dissemination year for the network? I do not think so. I think we have a much better situation today, compared to when this network started. We know what have worked well before. We know that together this community can produce well-informed outputs, whether it is books, seminars, research or teaching activities. We have a preliminary plan for three more years in the new network built on everyone’s participation at last year’s conference. What we now need is everyone to commit to different outputs, and to promise to fulfil another network. I also think it is time for new people in the network to take place in the board and also in the core board of the network. We do need to build on what we have done, but we also need renewal and regeneration. I am happy to let someone else in the network have my place in the board and core board for the next three years. Then I can take part and promise to work according to some of the other outputs instead.

We both need the experience from the old network as well as the enthusiasm of newcomers. So let us start with the annual meeting in Maastricht and then work for a great application for three more years in a new EUSW network.

Staffan Höjer

Core board member of EUSW
The university of Gothenburg, Sweden

Dear colleagues,

the EUSW Thematic Network will stop its activities next 30th September 2008, just ten days after the last Annual meeting that will take place in Maastricht (thanks to the commitment of Prof. Maria José Freitas).

Without leaving the first EUSW experience behind, over the last six years of (hard) work lots of things have been done, many ideas have turned into reality, concrete initiatives have opened new frameworks of cooperation and the former professional acquaintance of professors in the same discipline has given space to worthy, friendly and lasting relationships that have been really contributing to bringing Social Work up to a European level.

It is undeniably evident that, without the financial support given by the European Commission, maybe all this would never have happened, but it is also undeniably evident that without friendship, enthusiasm, spirit of cooperation and, why not, bravery, such a network could not have existed.

From a personal point of view, Social Work is just like any other scientific discipline: it may be boring or exciting, attractive or uninteresting, innovative or traditional but, in any case, always worthy of claiming its European dignity and status. The so-called European Space for Higher Education will be done, in the end; all the efforts that are being made let us hope of a "happy ending" for this challenging objective.

But, in the future, maybe in 2040 or even later, I'll want to remember that the creation of this Space was possible also thanks to the efforts carried out by a relatively small group of people and universities that decided to put their knowledge, expertise and know-how together in order to build something "worthy" in the discipline they were good in. What started in a hotel in Brussels on a

Saturday afternoon became something important for all of us and also for many other professionals, students, teachers, teachers and researchers acting and learning in the present and in the future.

Although completely uneducated in social work, I believe that much more can be still done to raise European Social Work at its best. It is for this reason that this group needs some more time to work its things out; some of the activities can be improved, the network can be further opened to new partners, new initiatives can be planned and organised. This is why we need to submit another application, to make new efforts, to have new friends, to look outside Europe.

Whether the coordinator will be Parma or someone else, well, that's a decision you all have to agree in Maastricht. This decision is not the most relevant for the success of the initiative; it is the spirit and the right attitude that count: as a group of friends working together for something "worthy and important".

Thanks to all of you

Dr. Alessandro Bernazzoli

Servizio Rapporti Comunitari e Internazionali
Office for EU and International Relations
Università degli Studi di Parma



VIRCLASS NEWS

(The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe)

VIRCLASS is a task force group in EUSW and has since 2007 been organised as the VIRCLASS Consortium coordinated by Bergen University College (HiB) with partners from Jönköping University, Inholland University of Applied Sciences, Haarlem; Mannheim University of Applied Sciences, Complutense University, Madrid; Miguel Torga University College, Coimbra; Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences, Dornbirn and Parma University.

The next VIRCLASS courses for BA students and professional social workers will start for the fourth time the e-learning courses: "Social Work in Europe – Commonalities and Differences" in October 2008. **Applications must be sent before 22 September.**

Information about the curriculum plan, the application guide and form can be seen at www.virclass.net



Hiking to the top of Skjerjehamn

E-pedagogy course for teachers in HEI

In late April this year an e-pedagogy course for teachers in HEI was arranged by VIRCLASS. By offering e-teacher competences to teachers in social work we hope to get in contact with teachers and partners that might be interested in becoming part of the VIRCLASS e-teacher staff. The course has been developed by Anne Karin Larsen together with colleague Grete Oline Hole from HiB and staff from the Media Centre at HiB. Klas-Göran Olsson from Jönköping participated as guest teacher. In the end of this course the students have developed an e-learning module.

Eight students from Spain, the Netherlands, South Africa and Germany have participated in the course this year. Interesting new modules are developed covering different themes as: Active Aging: A European challenge for Social Work; Social work in School; Pioneers in the History of social work; Social Work and Social Inclusion: Art & Cultural Techniques for SW; Social work with groups – A Comparative perspective.

Some of the students had never done e-pedagogy or e-learning before, and some had been e-teachers already. The group of students were a mix of persons who know each other well and some meeting for the first time. A Campus week in Bergen with a prestart seminar at Skjerjehamn with

teambuilding and presentation of subjects of interests for e-modules was on the agenda, made this a good and well cooperating group from the very beginning.

The pilot project has been supported by grants from Norway Opening Universities (NUV) and Bergen University College. With some adjustments based on the feedback and results from the final survey we will arrange the course also in 2009. It is interesting but also a great challenge to develop courses for colleagues. It is a balance between using their skills and knowledge and finding what will be new and interesting for them to learn.

New e-pedagogy course (10 ECTS credits) will be announced autumn 2008 and will start spring 2009. Information about the curriculum plan, application and course fee will be announced at the www.virclass.net



*Behind from left:
Jochen Peter,
David Alonso Gonzalez
In front from left
Vivienne Bozalek,
Antonia Picornell-Lucas
and Rina Visser-Rotgans*

*From left:
Elke Kruse
Remmelt Veenkamp
and Andres Arias
Astray*

Future plans

The VIRCLASS Steering Committee with partners from Complutense, Jönköping, INHOLLAND and HiB developed in 2007/08 an application for the Erasmus Life Long Learning Programme; Virtual Campus. The application was sent February 2008 and we received a positive response from the Commission in August 2008. To develop an application like this is hard work and several meetings were held in Bergen and Haarlem to finish the work that we succeeded with good and competent help and support from the international offices at INHOLLAND and HiB. Knowing that we have received the grants we are looking forward to the development of a new international specialisation in BA programmes in social work.

Partners in the new **SOCIAL WORK - VIRTUAL CAMPUS (SW-VirCamp)** are HiB, Swansea University, Miguel Torga University College, Bodø University College, INHOLLAND, School of Health Sciences, Jönköping University, Complutense University, Mittweida University of Applied Sciences, Kempen University of Applied Sciences (KHKempen), Liepaja Pedagogical Academy, Lusofona University, Mannheim University of Applied Sciences. As part of the strategy of VIRCLASS going worldwide three associated partners have been invited to take part in this application: University of Tarapaca, Chile and the two South African Universities: University of Western Cape and University of KwaZulu- Natal.

A kick-off meeting for the new project will be held in Bergen in the beginning of October 2008.

The second VIRCLASS consortium meeting was hosted by Jönköping University in June 2008. The Consortium is interested in increasing the partner group and will invite the new SW-VirCamp partners to become partners also in the consortium. Planning a new module in Comparative Community Work and Community Development is part of the new application and to develop an international specialisation in the Social Work BA programme, offering VIRCLASS courses, placement and study abroad (60 -75 ECTS credits).



Consortium Management Group and Teacher staff – Jönköping 2008

Meetings can be hard work, fun and cost consuming. To reduce the cost, but hopefully not all the fun and good work VIRCLASS will for the next year hire an electronic conference room for online meetings (VITERO conference room). We will evaluate the effect and experience by using this room during and after the following year.

The next Consortium Meeting will take place in Mannheim 8-9 June 2009, with teacher meeting one day before.



A teacher meeting was held while we were in Sweden and we used the opportunity to congratulate and celebrate Eduardo with his marriage.

The VIRCLASS Consortium's three pillars are Education, Development, and Research.

In 2007/08, 48 students from 12 countries applied for the VIRCLASS courses. 29 students finished module 1 and 19 students finished module 2. The courses is demanding and students quit by different reasons, like lack of language skills (English), lack of time for cooperation and comparative work, and some because e-learning is a new learning arena and demands independent learning strategy. We know from those who finish the course, that they find the course interesting and inspiring, offering a companionship with students from other countries, but also challenging mostly because of difficulties with integrating the courses in their ordinary programme.

Development of new courses demands project grants and the e-pedagogy course as well as the new application for the SW-VirCamp have been part of the strategy for development of VIRCLASS.

Research and dissemination with focus on e-learning has been going on for a while and 2007 was a very productive year resulting in many publications both in national and international journals as well as paper presentations at conferences. In September 2008 a new publication is published in the journal *Social Work Education*, Vol 27, Issue 6 pp: 623-633. The article is written by Larsen, AK., Sanders, R., Astray, AA., Hole, GO: *E-teacher challenges and competences in International Comparative Social Work Courses*.

A full publication list is available at www.virclass.net

Experiences from VIRCLASS was presented at the EDEN 2008 Annual Conference in June in Lisbon by Eduardo Marques from Miguel Torga University College.

In relation to the plans of going worldwide and constructing a new module in Community Work and Development a research seminar is going to take place in the beginning of November in Cape Town. The focus for the seminar is to start a research group with focus on community work education and community work practice.

Anne Karin Larsen



Jönköping 2008

ANNOUNCEMENT

E-LEARNING PEDAGOGY COURSE FOR TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

Bergen University College/VIRCLASS – The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe offer new courses in e-pedagogy for teachers in Social Work (10 ECTS credits),

starting 1 April 2009.

Application deadline is 2 March 2009.

Campus week in Bergen from 20 – 25 April 2009.

Collaboration online with colleagues from other countries.

Course fee: 5000NOK

Application form will be available online from January 2009.

For more information go to www.virclass.net or contact Anne Karin Larsen, anne.larsen@hib.no

REMEMBER:

The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe

VIRCLASS COURSES – APPLICATION DEADLINE 22 SEPTEMBER 2008.

Module 1:

Social Work in Europe – Commonalities and Differences begins 6 October 2008.

Application form, instructions for applicants and curriculum plan are available at

www.virclass.net

International meetings and conferences

In the month of April I was asked to participate in two very interesting meetings concerning social work education in Europe.

AFORTS (Association Francaise des Organismes de Formation et de Recherche en Travail Social) organized in Paris one day meeting on « Les formations sociales dans l'espace européen : enjeux et perspectives » (the social workers education in an European context: challenges and perspectives). The title clearly expresses the intent to offer an opportunity, for the schools partner of AFORTS, to reflect upon the possibility to open the French education towards an European and international perspective.

I have been invited and in my presentation I draw the scenario of the social work education in Europe, as described in two different books edited within the network.

One of the specific aim was also understand and develop the ECTS system in the French education for social workers, to be able to implement the exchanges between students and practitioners in Europe. A very interesting contribution in this sense has been offered by Beatrice Delpouve, expert on the Bologna process, who presented the Tuning methodology in organizing competence based curricula.

After the speeches, the participants have been divided in different groups to listen some paradigmatic experiences and discuss and develop new proposals around different topics , like participation to European programmes and implementation of European partnerships, student mobility, utilization of ECTS in the education.

The meeting was very successful and many people were interested in the TN.

One week after in Granada was held the annual conference of the representatives of social work education in all Spanish Universities. The organisation of the conference was a mix of plenary sessions and workshops. During the plenary sessions Moneréo Perez spoke about the social rights in the system of European tractates, Hoffer-Mehlmer presented the professional situation of social workers in Europe between

commonalities and differences, and myself I spoke on the social work education reform in Europe. The interventions in the workshops were organized following some specific lines like “ social work in front of new and old social problems”, “ debate and changes in social welfare: new context for social workers” “ the reform of the education inside the HE in Europe, challenges for social work education and profession”” research and development of social work discipline and profession”. Very successful and interesting meeting with the participation of teachers, professionals and students from all over Europe. Very important aspect to underline is the document made by the representatives of the Universities, signed by the Minster of the Education in which are designed the new curricula, based on competences.

**34th Biannual
Congress of the
International
Association of
Schools of Social
Work (IASSW)**

**Transcending
Global-Local Divides**

**20 - 24 July 2008 - International Convention
Centre (ICC) - Durban, South Africa**



Different colleagues from EUSW were supposed to present some speeches. Gerard Moussu, Maria Michailidis, Ewa Kantovicz and Silvia Fargion had abstract accepted, but were not able to attend the congress, Annamaria Campanini and Liz Frost, presented a speech on Educating Social Workers in Europe – new perspectives and new challenges, Klas Goran Ollson, STUDENT EXCHANGE: A NEW OPTION BY THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM FOR SOCIAL WORK (VIRCLASS); Staffan Hojer Supervision a Bridge between Experience and evidence in Social work? and Jan Agten about Bologna Process in European Higher Education as a frame for competence based learning and Supervision in Social work education. During the congress

new members of Direction Board have been elected: Angelina Yuen Tsang as President, Helle Strauss as Secretary and Vmla Dankardi and Daria Zavirsek as member at large

Annamaria Campanini

INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,

(ICSD-European Branch) and **ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA UNIVERSITY** were co-organisers of the 11th Biennial European ICSD Conference on the topic: “**European societies in transition - Social development and social work**”. The conference took place on **25-27 June 2008** at the **Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, in Romania**.

Issues related to conference focused on the following subtopic:

- Strategies, models and values in social and community work
- Social inclusion of vulnerable groups, particularly children and minorities
- Civil societies and the state: The role of religious communities.

The papers for the conference were mainly inspired by the present status of social work and social policy in European countries and in the United States, as well as social welfare in the Romanian society itself.

The conference attracted and inspired many teachers, researchers and practitioners in the social work area of societies in transition and also worldwide. There were representatives of many European and international institutions and organizations.

Our thematic network was represented by Ewa Kantowicz from the University of Warmia and Mazury in Poland, who dealt with the paper related to *Traditions and new approaches in child's care system in Poland* and had promoted the book of EUSW “Social Work in restructured European welfare systems” (V.Fortunato, G.J. Friesenhahn, E.Kantowicz ed.), Carocci, Rome 2007 during this conference.

Ewa Kantowicz

Research Synergies in Social Professions

Edited by:

**Maria P. Michailidis,
Silvia Fargion and Robert Sanders**

This book is published within the “EUSW-European Platform for World-wide Social Work” network, whose primary aim has been to develop a robust knowledge base on a variety of issues related to social work, policy, practice, education and service users across Europe. The backbone of this has been the previous Social Work Thematic Network “EUSW- Commonalities and Differences”.

The network is enriched with more than a hundred organizations and institutions (universities and agencies), contributing knowledge from their different geographical locations and specialized perspectives to underpin the ever expanding European multicultural knowledge base.

The book is the sixth in its series of EUSW publications. It is about research synergies in social professions. It draws on different research areas: reflections on research in social work, researching families, researching vulnerable subjects, and research into good practice. The book's different applications of collective resources of pan-European knowledge, aim at helping professionals, practitioners, teachers and students to develop a most comprehensive understanding of research within different regions in Europe and beyond.

The EUSW Research Group has been working since 2005 to identify common research paths to help in the creation of research groups with common interests in order to favour the implementation of high-quality teams. These have been working on specific research topics (some comparative in methodology) related to: families, disadvantaged groups, poverty, social cohesion, ethics and policy. The results, most of which can be found in this volume, have

been also disseminated in selected conferences, seminars, workshops and other publications.

The book is a collective attempt of members of EUSW's Research Work Group – composed of the following professionals:

Maria Michailidis, (Research Group Leader, EUSW Board member), Cyprus

Staffan Hojer, (EUSW Core Board member), Sweden

Christine Labonte-Roset, (External Evaluator), Germany

Silvia Fargion, Italy

Robert Sanders, UK

Gerald Moussu, France

Carla Moretti, Italy

Michael Knoch, Portugal

Jose Maria Moran Carrillo, Spain

Gabiella Ciot, Romania

Wilfred Dieckman, The Netherlands

Dick Herweg, The Netherlands

Further, this volume was brought to completion by the significant contributions of the University of Trento, Italy and IBS-Intercollege Institute of Bank Studies in Cyprus and Romania.

Producing relevant knowledge is crucial for all professions, but has proved particularly complex for social work. Having recognised that professional work needs a solid relation with a field of knowledge, one of the challenges here derives from the fact that social professions have always been considered controversial, difficult to define and often playing an ambiguous role in society. This is hardly surprising: from the beginning social work has worked across what are considered the lines which divide and fragment society as well as our experience. Summing up his research aiming to circumscribe social work identity, Abbott (1995) reversed the terms of the question. Instead of looking for the boundaries of the profession, one would rather acknowledge that social work was best understood as the profession of boundaries. And this, possibly, is not just because it works across and along the divide between professions, social classes, and different cultures, but also because it deals with the contacts and connections between different segments of society. It is actually so, also because social work operates on the interface between the private and the public sphere, between lifeworld and system, which means moving in a ground intrinsically characterised by conflicts and contradictions (Lorenz, 2004).

As a consequence, defining the boundaries of social work as a discipline and its specific domain has been as controversial as defining the boundaries of the profession.

No wonder that more and more attention has been moved from knowledge as a product towards the process of producing knowledge, and that the heuristic and research dimensions are held as so important: in fact, working on boundaries and connections, within a dynamic environment, makes it difficult to use consolidated ways of dealing with problems, and there is an intrinsic need to find, new paths, new solutions. Social work identity itself seems to be intrinsically intertwined with research (Lorenz 2004).

Research has become crucial also because social workers, in the context of a managerial turn in social services, have been put under pressure to prove the efficacy of their intervention. Actually in the present context, where we have seen in most countries an emphasis on proceduralisation and bureaucratic mechanism in social services, social professions have been under an unprecedented attack and had to face a strong tendency towards de-professionalization and technocratization. The attack to social professions goes with a neo liberal culture which limits the state's task to provide for people marginalised and in a weak position and which tends to reduce social rights. In order to face this attack it has become even more fundamental for their survival that social professions become accountable and are able to show the value of their contribution in terms which are meaningful and relevant for the humanistic and developmental ethos of social work.

The connections between research and social work practice are therefore manifold; and the first point is that practice itself has been often seen as having a strong intrinsic research dimension. The concept of practice wisdom, which has acquired more and more importance in understanding social professions, places a great emphasis on knowledge production in the work process. Social workers have been seen as sort of ethnographers and scientists. This entails that the great step to be made is the ability of articulating this knowledge and make it explicit. In this line many have observed that there are strong similarities between social work methods and research methods. But also that research on social work practice can represent a step which helps this process of verbalising practice wisdom and can cooperate in the process of rendering social work knowledge transferable. It is a sort of

translation of social work knowledge into the language of managers, politician, community members etc. (Fook, 2004).

On the other hand, the pioneering role often played by social work entails a need of sound evidence and knowledge based on systematic and rigorous inquiry. The problems social work deals with are often new and change shape very rapidly; there is the need for a strand of research capable of addressing directly the questions coming up from practice and helping practitioners facing the challenges of their daily encounters with clients. And again there is a need to find ways to be accountable without losing the specific characters of social work practice. The ambiguous role often attributed to social work has made it important to stimulate research and reflection on ways of conceiving of the social professions, in order to promote awareness of the possible unintended consequences of social interventions.

In summary, social professions need research in order to systematise and verbalise the knowledge produced through practice, to develop an understanding of emergent or controversial problems, to find new and more appropriate ways to make social work practice accountable, and to provide material for reflection on social work, its identity and its role in society. And these are what can be considered the distinctive traits of social work research: namely, its connection and relevance to the challenges of social work practice. Social work research is oriented and guided by the questions that arise from the endeavour to practice within the social justice values which characterise social work. Therefore, research in social work is not just connected to achieve academic legitimisation. More practically it is aimed at providing practitioners with means, ideas and information in order to improve their ability to serve clients.

Many have indeed noticed how social work research is torn between the need to be practice relevant and the importance to be recognised in academic terms in order to get funds (Orme and Powell, 2007). In the last twenty years, social work has been cut across by strong debates and divergences around research and the kind of research needed. The main one has been related to the success, particularly in some countries, of the evidence based practice movement, connected to the empirical movement in the

United States. The narrow version of this position deals with the demands of providing evidence bases for social work practice and to legitimise practice, choosing to privilege the most legitimised research methods and strategies, namely those connected to a positivistic paradigm and to experimental and quantitative methods. The main criticism addressed to this orientation is that this focus on evidence based practice has taken research far from practice: the price of developing a purely experimental research seems to be a choice of research questions that are not relevant for practice.

Strangely enough this divergence, which has animated many social work debates in the Anglo-Saxon literature during the last few years, has not been considered directly in the chapters of this book. While in the call for papers we directly asked for reflection on research issues, we did not receive any contribution to this specific issue. This does not mean a pragmatic attitude as, on the contrary, most contributions relate to theory/ies. On the other hand, there are both examples of qualitative and quantitative research. We are inclined to consider this as a sign on the direction taken by social work research at an international level: the importance here seems to have been given more to the themes and issues researched than to debating the exclusive choice of a research strategy. This view has provided the framework to collect pieces of research, or reflection on research, with a pluralistic view of the knowledge needed by social professions, embracing what has been defined as an open ended orientation: different types of research will produce different types of knowledge (Trevillion, 2008); the idea forwarded with this is that the final goal of our endeavour is promoting social work research through strengthening dialogue and discussion, as well as identifying common lines and research themes to develop.

Synergy has become increasingly important in social work and other areas of professional practice. It signifies that multiple actions are more effective when they are well coordinated. In such a situation, each action is made more effective, or potentiated, by the operation of the other actions, thus actualising the Gestalt psychology maxim, 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts'. Each action in multiple action systems is rendered more powerful when there is an emphasis on

synergy. It is a defining characteristic of intervention systems.

We see this emphasis in recent trends in social work practice, where social work is delivered more and more as part of an overall collaborative holistic plan to meet the wide array of needs arising from complex human social systems. More emphasis is placed on coordination and collaboration of service delivery (as might be seen in child protection); greater emphasis is being placed on the delivery of social work from within multi-disciplinary teams (as might be seen in the UK, for example, in relation to youth offending).

Therefore when thinking about 'research synergies' we can conceptualize this in various ways. It can represent research into synergies in the client world, synergies in the working relationships between agencies, synergies between client and worker ('partnership working') and even synergies when different disciplines collaborate to undertake research in the social domain, that is, in the research process itself. It is an extremely wide ranging concept which is why the material in this book is so seemingly diverse.

The structure of the book is divided into four parts. Part One, **Reflection on Research in Social Work**, begins with Moussu who locates the discussion of the impact of modernity on social work ethics in a socio-historical analysis considering the work of Touraine, Giddens and Beck. Knoch continues the theme of social work ethics noting the need for research into the ethics of social work, and considering the need to locate social work ethics within a 'bi-polar' model between distributive and egalitarian justice approaches. Ioakimidis asks 'Is social work research neutral?' and using several examples from Greece, illustrates that social work research is deeply embedded in its historical, political and cultural contexts. From Sweden, Johnsson and Svensson describe *Sociorama*, an agency/university partnership, using 'research circle groups' to link the university social work programme with practitioners to engage practitioners in an epistemological dialogue, challenging them to think about *how* they know what they apply in practice. Carillo discusses three theoretical foundations to social work practice, functionalist, conflictual and intersubjective and argues that that the perspective that one

adopts will influence where one looks for data in undertaking ones work. Sanders looks at the difficulties inherent when ethical oversight of social work research is required to be adapted to fit into a medical model of ethical research supervision, and considers the barriers to social work research thus created. Using a quantitative approach, Giménez-Bertomeu explores the gap between real and required social work practice in Alicante, Spain, by providing results of a survey of social work practice in terms of six required Spanish competences.

Part Two, **Researching Families**, begins with Moretti's consideration of family associationism, a trend in Italy in which families are assisted through linking them to other families with the same difficulties and through better coordination between the families and service providers. Palattiyil used a grounded approach to analyse qualitative data obtained from interviewing family carers of persons with HIV/AIDS in both India and Scotland and found struggle, commitment and resilience to be the major themes to emerge. Panagiotopoulos looks at young people dropping out of school, and discusses three 'synergy' themes emerging from the literature, consultation with school staff, involvement of parents, and interagency collaboration before describing the development of new multi-agency teams established in Cyprus to address this issue. Rees examines the literature in relation to substance use during pregnancy and highlights the need for a non-discriminatory and non-judgemental approach to health and social care service delivery for pregnant women. Tsangari and Pantzi present an empirical study of women who took maternity leave and found that although women thought they were aware of their rights, in fact many were not.

In Part Three, **Vulnerable Subjects**, Amitsis considers the challenges to social workers arising from the presence of transmigrants in Greece and Cyprus, (those who move back and forth frequently across borders). Ciot & Michailidis provide us with the first of three chapters to examine the issue of disability, with a study (content analysis) of the representation of disability in the written media in Romania. Domínguez, Jiménez, and Aguilar, provide two examples of research into disability in Andalusia, Spain. The first explores factors associated with the employment of people with a disability,

targeting questionnaires at disabled workers, their families, colleagues, employers, specialists on the integration of disabled persons into employment, and representatives of bodies related to disability. The second presents the results of studying the experiences of social exclusion of thirty people with a disability and considers how the body becomes a focus for this exclusion. The final chapter, by Sidhva in this part returns to the theme of HIV/AIDS to uncover the lived realities of women with HIV/AIDS in both Scotland and India. It utilises the 'life history method' to enable women to reveal their 'subjective experiences and the emotional landscape of [their] responses'.

Part Four, **Good Practice** begins with two chapters by Aktas and colleagues in relation to social work in Turkey. In the first, the authors Aktas & Genc discuss a project to evaluate the provision of services for children in need of protection. One reason for the failure to meet service objectives is simply the lack of social workers available to carry out the necessary roles. In the second chapter the authors Aktas, Dimirci & Genc discuss a 'work in progress', a capacity-building community development project in two neighbourhoods on the fringe of a medium-sized Turkish city focusing on the development of a multi-purpose community centre. Colarusso used an ethnographic approach to enable Italian social workers to talk about their relationships to the organisations within which they worked. The nature of the relatively recent legislation-driven interagency working in Italy is described by Moretti ('Associated Management') who notes that agencies are at different levels of development of the model, and there were some areas of service delivery where the model is better developed than in others. Helping people with learning difficulties move from institutions to the community is a challenging task and one that is impeded by poor joint working between workers in health and social services as was found to be the case in the UK by Paralalis. Barriers to joint working as well as suggestions for improvements were highlighted by the author. Spaneas and Cochliou, put forth the concept of 'cooperative inquiry' whereby a multi-disciplinary team assesses its development of inter-professional practice in the context of the changing legal context in England.

As noted there is a rich diversity of material in this book. There is research in the social domain, there is research about social work, including in several cases its role in relation to other service providers, and there are theoretical reflections about social work and social work research. A number of the chapters focus explicitly on the mechanisms whereby members of different professional groups can work more effectively together. All contribute to the significantly to the development of 'research synergy'.

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State of the Art of Social Work in Europe: in dialogue with the world

The purpose of this year's programme is twofold. The first part (Thursday and Friday morning) appeals to a general audience, providing an international forum for dialogue and exchange on social work education and practices. The second part (Friday afternoon and all of Saturday) appeals to EUSW members and potential members specifically, aiming towards their active involvement in the development of the future EUSW network.
