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Social Work in Post-Socialist Countries: Divergence and Common Ground

Abstract. This chapter¹ outlines a range of the general and the unique features of the social work's development in the post-socialist countries of Europe and Eurasia after the dissolution of the socialist bloc. The author describes the general trends and varieties in the development of social work as a profession. Short historic background provides the reader with general picture and peculiarities of welfare policy and social work formations during socialism and under the transition. The short cases of each of the 27 countries present information concerning the role of the state and non-governmental organizations in service provision, education and training possibilities, status of social workers. The chapter is concluded by the outline of some general trends and variations in social work development throughout the region. The chapter is based on the study of the available literature and personal communications with social work experts. Following abbreviations are used throughout the text: FSU – Former Soviet Union, CEE – Central and Eastern Europe, EU – European Union, CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States, OSI – Open Society Institute.

Keywords. post-socialist, post-Soviet, former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia

1. Social work behind the iron curtains

The history of so-called 'post-socialist countries' has less in common than it might appear. Many new independent states previously had been part of other imperial entities, namely, "the Habsburg empire, Tsarist Russia and

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the Ottoman Empire before WWI. They went through uncertain political times in the interwar years, were either occupied by Nazi Germany or joined this regime in WWII, and many fell under the power of Soviet Russia after 1945” (Waaldijk 2011). Various forms of social care and social service were developed under all these different political regimes. As elsewhere, the pre-professional history of social work included religious and civic institutions and activities related with charity and social care. Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions played important role in organization of social care and training for personnel in such social services as shelters for homeless, disabled and impoverished people, institutions for orphans and poor children. Many of such institutions were reestablished or continued to exist under the state socialism but on the different ideological basis, because the charity and religious approaches to social care were criticized and abolished.

As official state policy did not recognize the existence of social problems in most parts of the region, a need for social work could not be articulated explicitly. The disciplines of sociology and psychology as the most solid core for critical thinking and dissent were eliminated from the university curricula or they were allowed only to follow the line issued in Moscow (Guzzetta 1995, p. 192).

In its golden age, relating to Khrushchev’s and early Brezhnev’s period, the Soviet government built one of the most advanced systems of social assistance in the world, concerning access equality as well as the volume and quality of services. And although the right and duty for labour determined the access to many social services directly from the workplace, the segment of a universal welfare regime with typical disposition of domiciliary services available for all district residents was extended as well (Iarskaia-Smirnova/Romanov 2009). The Soviet system of social welfare shaped in the 1950s-1960s served as a model for the most states of the Eastern European socialist bloc (Schilde/Schulte 2005). At the same time, throughout the history, these countries were characterized by a high degree of diversity of cultural traditions as well as political and social-economic systems, and it was still in place under socialism.

Indeed, in the Soviet Union, the public, the governments and the academia did not have an understanding of professional social work, while in several socialist countries in Europe, it survived communism although its development stopped for the periods of various length when it “was deemed an unsuitable activity” by the regimes (Zaviršek 2008, p. 734).

2. Social work at university level

University courses in Hungary were terminated in 1948, the departments of social work at universities in Czechoslovakia and Poland were also closed down in 1952 (Ibid.). In spite of the closure of university departments, in Czechoslovakia training programs for governmental social agencies continued to exist and a 'social nurse' program was working in 1945-49 and since 1953. In Poland training programs for social service workers were reestablished in 1966, by 1969 service agencies were starting to appear, and church was recognized by the state as an agent of social services (Guzzetta 1995, pp.192f.). After the mid-1980s, Hungary proposed an educational program in social work and took a initiative to create a service agency which could address personal and family problems (Ibid., p. 192).

In Yugoslavia, the communists ensured the establishment of university schools for social workers throughout the country in 1950s (Zaviršek 2008, p. 735), and the Centers for Social Work were created in most urban municipalities in the early 1960s. In Romania, 4-year higher education programs dedicated to social work existed in 1929-1952, 3-year postsecondary training for social care assistants survived until 1969, and a modified kind of social work education was tried in Romanian universities by 1978, but these courses were specifically identified as social work programs only in 1990 (Coposescu 2002, cited in Crawford/Walker/Granescu 2006, p. 488).

The state and its various agents played a major role in carrying out the double-edged care-and-control task at all levels of social life. At the same time, certain non-governmental, international and in some cases religious organizations, too, were allowed and even encouraged to provide social services.

3. International Contacts

Some international contacts were possible even behind the iron curtains. With help of IASSW, in mid-1980s, a few specialists from various Western countries were able to go to Hungary and Czechoslovakia in order to provide ongoing consultations for the scholar-activists eager to introduce the profession of social work to the countries. The delegations from both countries were able to attend the Montreal IASSW Congress. This formed a basis for an expanding network of contacts, source of information and materials, books, and creation of association of social work educators (Guzzetta 1995, p. 198).

Because of limited resources of the state and following the socialist ideas of self-government and the socializing role of collective, voluntary children

workforce was broadly used in providing help to people with disabilities, and the elderly, while issues of women and children, family issues have been dealt with by women's councils and trade union units. During socialism, social work or its substitutes performed the care-and-control functions that were in common with certain forms of professional service elsewhere. However, such areas of social work as issues of disabilities, mental health, ethnic minorities, violence against women and children were silenced. The population not only passively enjoyed the benefits of socialist welfare but but actively were seeking state welfare and demanded fairness which led to repressions and elimination of protesters.

4. Social welfare under transition from socialism

During the transition towards market economy and democracy the rapid and profound change of the economic and the political systems have been associated with dramatic losses for many groups of populations, which caused resistance to these changes (Freed 1995, p. 40). Free education, public health care and social benefits that had been a fact of life for decades in the Soviet Union have become an object of deep nostalgia and frustrations for many people, especially the elderly.

The economic decline, increase of levels of poverty and unemployment, and extreme lack of resources has tempered the welfare reform throughout the region. High levels of poverty particularly affected vulnerable groups such as older people and people with disabilities especially in Albania, Armenia, Romania, Tajikistan. In many countries of CEE, Caucasus and Central Asia, the situation was worsened by the armed conflicts, when thousands of people were killed, and millions were displaced as it was, for example in Armenia where the severe problems of the transition period were made even worse by the in 1988 and the war with Azerbaijan in 1991–1994.

The combination of social transformation, natural disaster, and war produced much poverty, unemployment, homelessness, deaths, forced migration, and orphans (Khachatryan 2011). A variety of professional, self help and mutual aid activities emerged to assist refugees, earthquake survivors and others who had been displaced in the new economy (Humphreys et al. 2004, p.32) in order to prevent social exclusion related to the weak kinship ties, lack of mobility, to poor health, and to psychological passivity due to repeated failure to integrate into the labor market or a support network. NGOs are working in areas of elderly and nursing care, child support, employment generation activities, and protection of refugees and the disabled. But most of them operated on a very small scale, hampered by limited funds (WorldBank 2011). In 1993 by the decision of the government 56

regional centers of social services were established in the country which aimed to provide financial aid to the needy. It was not mandatory for the regional centers of social services employees to have social work qualifications; rather, they should have knowledge of family benefits and associated legislation but not to have significant skills in social work. However, since the very beginning, special 6-months training courses have been arranged for them at the University.

Having embraced a different shape of economic and political development during socialism, countries of CEE and the FSU undertook big and various efforts to repair the former welfare states or to build them anew. The post-socialist transformation proceeded in diverse ways in 1990s and the differences only increased in 2000s – 2010s. Though there was an obvious general trend of social security systems in post-socialist countries of convergence towards residual regime, now the great differentiation of countries of this group is happening. The vector of social reforms has continued to change under the influence of national political agenda and international influences.

5. Social security

Russia inherited from the Soviet period a complex system of social security based in public institutions, without professional social work and with the small social transfers to a wide range social groups (people with disabilities, single mothers, veterans, etc., altogether more than 150 categories of population), which were in addition irregularly paid. In accordance with neo-liberal ideology of reforms, a universalistic approach was considered ineffective, and the emphasis in solving welfare problems was shifted in mid-2000s to a means tested scheme.

As Lynne Haney (2002) has shown in her research on welfare restructuring in Hungary during 1985-1996, with the adaptation of a discourse of poverty, all needs of clients became 'materialized' being reduced to means-tested poverty relief. During the transition from socialism to the market, new surveillance techniques and disciplinary welfare practices were introduced that pathologized and stigmatized, and social workers were striving to increase the distance between themselves and their clients thus restricting the identity of the latter to materially needy and a potential "welfare cheat" (Haney 2002, p. 235).

Under the conditions of policy reforms, driven by the neo-liberal values of individualism and privatization, commodification of relationships and communities increases (Green 2006, p. 614). While in the West an increase in commodification and raise of individualism is explained with a crisis of

the welfare state, in the post-communist countries these processes are caused by the fall of socialism, expanding of market reforms, reforming of institutional structures of social policy, and changes in the way people see and make sense of social differentiations.

6. Social work profession after socialism

In the 1990s a series of new social legislation have been adopted throughout the region. Many post-socialist countries became a member of the Council of Europe, the signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and have ratified a number of other international human rights instruments as well as European Social Charter. New institutions had to be built in order to resume the place in the global international order. The governments became aware of the need to develop a system of social services as a part of a modern and professional social welfare system and continued to develop or started to establish a new system of social services based on essentially new legislation. In many countries, social work was introduced as a new occupation.

7. The title „social worker“

In Russia, the persons with a title “social worker” stated on a badge first became known for public during *perestroika*, in late 1980s. It was a time of a total shortage of food and goods, when people have been standing in huge queues in the shops in order to buy such ordinary products as sugar or milk. “Social workers” had the right to buy things without waiting in a queue as they were assisting the elderly and people with disabilities with some domestic chores. A professional of a higher status received here in 1991 a separate definition of “specialist of social work”. Another title for a practitioner with similar qualifications, a “social pedagogue” was introduced in early 1990s in Belarus, Bulgaria and Russia, adopted from the German and Danish models.

In other countries of the region, the term “social worker” was introduced translated into the local languages.

The development of social work in the region is being shaped by different power relations. A number of policy actors have been promoting their interests in shaping the legislative, socio-economic and political environment, competing for their legitimacy and status in policy processes, mainly the state, international foundations, and academia. Many international

projects attempted a knowledge transfer while introducing new models of social work from a variety of European and transatlantic countries.

7.1 Former Czechoslovakia

In the former Czechoslovakia social work courses were introduced since 1989 into Charles University in Prague, and by 1991, legitimate university study programs have been established both in Brno and Bratislava (Guzzetta 1995, p. 194) as well as in Olomouc (Chytil 2006). The university programs benefited through participation in the project with the Netherlands (Schmidt 2012).

In *Czech Republic* today, more than 15 universities and higher schools offer the BA, MA, and PhD in the area of social work and social pedagogy. Social workers are occupied in the health sector, schools, community services, day care centres, in the penitentiary system, in social care institutions, etc. After 1989, non-governmental services have also been established to provide social services, and they provide jobs to social workers. The standards of practice were established in 2002. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs implements monitoring and standardization of social work and of the relevant training. The Act on Social Services (2006) sets up the order of service provision by the local NGOs and public organizations. The largest non-governmental social services associated with the church activities are: Caritas, Diaconia of the Evangelical Church, and the Salvation Army (Chytil 2006). There are several independent professional associations nowadays: The Union of Social Workers, Association of Educators in Social Work, the Czech Association of Street Work (Schmidt 2012). Educational standards were established in 2009 by the Association of Educators in Social Work. The current priority is the retraining of the helping professionals to improve their qualification. Since 2012, local authorities have been obliged to provide retraining for all staff. Social workers are mostly employees of municipalities and public servants. A share of professional social workers with a relevant academic qualification is bigger in nongovernmental organizations which are the core providers of social services in the Czech Republic, while in general the positions of social workers exist in municipal public services, employment services, child protection units and in residential care. On a local level, the public agencies are not well equipped by specialists with a relevant degree despite the strong formal restrictions against non-educated workers (Ibid.) The contemporary division of social work reflects the general trend to keep the balance of empowerment and care; the system includes three main dimensions: care, counseling, and preventive work (Ibid.).

An academic degree in social work in *Slovakia* was accredited in 1993 simultaneously with the official status of professional social workers. Today, there are eight higher educational programs in social work. Slovakian social work is on the way of finding its own way from Austria-Hungarian, socialist, and Czech social work (Ibid.). The past and contemporary social work is directly linked with residential care which constitutes the majority of services introduced in the Law about social services (2008). More than a half of residential care units are established by local authorities, in contrast to the Czech Republic, the Church provides residential care on a broader scale. In Slovakia, the church mostly runs centers for elderly and adults, and provides relevant training of social workers (Ibid.). Since 2011 social work has been transformed according to the National plan of deinstitutionalization. This plan modifies care for children and people with disabilities towards local programs of mentoring and family based work, while intervening with elderly and people with mental disabilities is going to be based upon the transformation of residential care into semi-community care combining community and residential care. Simultaneously, standards and regulations aimed at licensing social workers were introduced in order to provide organizational framework for community care and mix-welfare services. The current changes in training and recruitment of social workers are compatible with these trends: since 2004 the Retraining Center within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family has been providing short-term trainings for the practitioners of in residential units (Ibid.).

7.2 Poland

In *Poland*, the 1990 Social Welfare Act decreed programs creating a need for social workers in a short time (Guzzetta 1995, p. 192). First schools of social work were established in Gdansk, Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan and Bydgoszcz, and today, both BA and MA programs operate in the country. In the Welfare Act of 1990 a term social service was introduced based on a new philosophy of building ability for self-help in clients (Krzyszkowski 2004/2005). Simultaneously, a selective access to public support was introduced, and privatization began, especially in such fields as care for the elderly (Rek-Woźniak 2010). Since 1999, social services here have been decentralized and much responsibility in the field of social welfare was given to the local self-government level. There have also been positive signs of a growing cooperation at the local level among statutory agencies. However, cooperation with NGOs has been weak due to lack of regulations, and mistrust among public sector welfare managers. There was also an extensive privatization in residential care with no interest in this process on the part of local welfare au-

thorities (Krzyszowski 2004/2005). The Polish Welfare Act (2004) defines social work as a professional activity aimed at assisting both individuals and whole families in strengthening or regaining the ability to function in society (Pawełek 2008). The introduction of the 'social contract' became a tool of 'active' social policy towards the long-term disadvantaged individuals and families. This measure is twofold: not only an instrument of empowerment, but also a tool of control over so called 'welfare-dependant' clients. The ethical standards of the profession were accepted by the Polish Association of Social Workers in 1996 (Rek-Woźniak 2010). Description of their professional tasks in Welfare Act (2004) stressed independence, ability to analyze social problems, to decide about undertaking intervention, and to be creative. In such strategic documents as National Report for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008 and National Strategy for Social Policy 2007-2013 social workers are coined as actors of 'active' social policy. (Rek-Woźniak 2010). Nevertheless, the salaries of frontline social workers are low and the practitioners feel neglected by public authorities (Blok 2007).

7.3 Former Yugoslavia

In former Yugoslavia the history of social work education goes back to 1950s. The 2-year schools arranged throughout Yugoslavia back in 1950s, were meant to educate welfare workers (social protection officers) who were already active within the welfare system. One of the peculiar features of the first social work students was that the majority of them were. The high number of male students is considered by Darja Zaviršek (2008) not only as a consequence of a structural focus on male needs, but a deliberate move to counter the pre-war tradition of female charity and philanthropy to be turned into a profession. However, the schools of social work were recruiting women from poor backgrounds, and brief vocational training provided an ideal opportunity to spread socialist ideology among them (Ibid.). Nowadays, the Centers for Social Work in this region are considered the primary employer of social workers in the public sector, and hope to improve outreach and community care models (USAID 2008).

The first university program in social work started in *Croatia*: a 2-year course in 1952 and a 4-year study in 1972. In 2000, post-graduate studies were initiated. In *Slovenia*, the 2-year social work course was open in 1955, and it became a higher school by 1960. In 1975 it became a part of the University of Ljubljana, and began offering a four year degree program in 1992. It remains the only institution of higher education for social work (up to the doctoral level) in *Slovenia* (Zaviršek 2008). In *Macedonia*, a 2-year program began in 1957 and in 1984, the Institute of Social Work and Social Policy

was established at the University in Skopje. Today, they offer BA (4-year) and MA (2-year) degrees. *Serbia and Montenegro's* 2-year program began in 1958. Today, Serbia offers BA and MA degrees. In Montenegro, social work education is well-established with close ties between the Universities of Montenegro and Belgrade. In *Bosnia & Herzegovina*, a university education program started in 1958 at the University of Sarajevo and today there are BA and MA-level degree programs in three universities (USAID 2008).

In *Kosovo*, one of the poorest countries in the region, development of social work has been slower than in neighboring countries. The BA degree, offered at the University of Kosovska Mitrovica, the Serbian District of Albania, started in 2004, and at the University of Pristina, beginning in 2006. Building the capacity of the Centers for Social Work around issues of ethnic conflict and integration are on the social protection agenda (USAID 2008). In 2011, the first Department of Social Work of the University of Prishtina, Kosovo received an international accreditation and in 2012, the first 40 social work students were admitted. The first university-trained social workers will graduate from the University of Prishtina in 2015 (Seifert 2012). The results of neoliberalization, such as huge unemployment figures which according to official estimates are around 45%, make social work support all the more necessary. Still, the Centers of Social Work are struggling with underfinancing and a very high work load, while staff are paid 250-300 Euros a month, which approximates the average salary in Kosovo and is somewhat less than the salary of a secondary school teacher. As of now, qualified social workers are a minority in Kosovo (Ibid.). Currently, a commission created by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare licenses persons with qualifications other than in social work as social workers if they meet the standards set up by the commission. Apart from the Centers of Social Work, the correctional services are in acute need of trained personnel and the Ministry of Justice has started supporting further training in resocialization. Also, various NGOs, such as women's shelters or institutions of child protection require trained and qualified personnel. The churches - Muslim or Christian - are not an important factor in Kosovar society or politics and do not play a major role in social work (Seifert 2012).

All countries of the former socialist space became a field where various international projects in area of social work training and practice modeling have been implemented. They started to form consortia and build professional collaboration bridges with Western countries and among themselves. For example, the development of the legislation and professional associations in some of the FSU countries, in particular, CIS, has been modeled in close collaboration with the Russian Federation. International collaboration under the support from the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, EU, OSI, the Nordic Council, etc. was welcomed as an important economic and symbolic

resource. During the 1990s, most of the new independent countries have established university programs in social work, and in some countries, in social pedagogy (see the details about each country in USAID 2008).

7.4 Balkan

In the Balkans, social work schools were opened in the early 1990s with social work practice initiated in social protection programs in public services and NGOs, with an emphasis on deinstitutionalization.

In Romania, social work education was established since the early 1990s in four universities, there are BA, MA (1992) and PhD (1994) levels of studies. A profession and field of practice is recognized through the Social Work Law (2004) on the status of social workers and the law on the national social assistance system (2006). According to the legislation, social workers are required to register and to have a licence/certificate prior the beginning of practical activities. There is one national regulatory body, the National College of Social Workers (Huseini 2011, pp. 15f.).

Bulgaria opened social work schools in 1990 at the BA level, and MA programs started in 1992. The Law for Social Support defines the qualifications for social work, and there is a rich NGO practice environment. Social work professionals see a need for outcome research to better inform practitioners.

In Albania social work education started in 1992. Social work is considered to be well- integrated into public child protection and social services units. Interdisciplinary models of social work are utilized in gender violence programs. Current needs are strengthening field education and human rights content in the curriculum (USAID 2008).

7.5 Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union

Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine

While in several CEE countries, the profession has acquired public recognition and universities have been developing their programs for several or many years, social work was a very new profession in *Russia and other former Soviet republics*². As an educational program, it was imported here from

2 The fifteen former Soviet Union republics are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russian Federation,

the West through the efforts of universities, individual scholars and social work practitioners who became involved into the various forms of collaboration, knowledge exchange, academic mobility, the establishment of joint degree programs. Local academics have been actively engaged into such cooperation while governmental agencies and social service administrators played an important role in opening the gates into the practice fields.

In *Belarus*, the education in social work is provided by the branch of Russian State Social University in Minsk since 1998 and several national universities offer the 5-year diploma programs and some universities offer 1-year MA degree in 'social work (social pedagogical activity)' and social pedagogy. Belarus has not yet started Bologna reforms. Social work is defined by the Social Service Law (2000) as a "specialist with relevant qualification which fits the requirements and nature of work as well as committed to provide social services by personal qualities". Social work is included into the national register of the jobs and professions.

Moldova initiated social work education at the BA level in 1997 and the MA started at the State University in Chisinau in 2007.

In *Russia*, the first four universities started to teach social work courses in 1991 and by 2011 the number of university programs of social work was 175 and they covered the entire country. In addition, there were 115 university programs in social pedagogy. Currently all universities are involved in a process of transformation towards the Bologna system switching to 4-year BA (1992) and 2-year MA (1996) levels but many of them also still continue to offer traditional 5-year diploma programs of "specialists in social work" (1991).

The system has certain problems in labor market for the graduates of such programs. Due to the low salaries offered to qualified social workers, young university graduates are choosing other jobs for themselves. There is no special legal regulation of professional social work practice in Russia. In the Law on Bases of Social Services (1995) the term 'social service workers' is used, while a social worker is defined in the new Law on Social Services (under consideration since 2011, to be enacted in 2014) as a specialist with professional education relevant to the job functions, who works in any kind of organization that performs social services. The new Law formulates the rights, responsibilities and guarantees of a social worker.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. Please pay attention that central asia, baltic and caucas countries all should be included under the "russia and other ...". I would prefer subheadings without the numbers or please rename and re-number them in the relevant order. I have changed the order to be alphabetical and suggested a slightly corrected structure.

In the early 1990s four professional associations were created: Association of Social Workers, Association of Social Pedagogues and Social Workers, Association of Social Workers, Association of Social Services Employees, Association of Schools of Social Work; several magazines on social work have been established. Since 2001 the Union of Social Pedagogues and Social Workers has been acting as the national association with over 4500 members in 70 Regions of the Russian Federation. It has been active in promoting the prestige of social work and building a national community of social work practitioners, administrators and educators but was not in possession of self-regulatory and licensing mandate.

In the 2000s, the monopolized position of public social services persists in Russia. At the same time, the neoliberal idea of new managerialism entered in the social services sector, which means that the central government intends to make relationships between the citizens and the state more efficient and effective. It also opens possibilities for non-governmental organizations to compete for budget finance with the municipal services. This process is however limited by a lack of standards of social services, a weak knowledge base concerning the methods of working with clients and standard regulation in this field, a lack of skills in project management and evaluation by many public and non-governmental organizations.

The concept and skills of empowerment, an important component of social work education is not yet recognized by practitioners and administrators in Russia. In order to mobilize resources of local communities to help vulnerable groups fully realize their social citizenship, social workers need to collaborate with non-governmental services, including women's organizations, trade unions and human rights organizations. By contrast, non-governmental organizations, which have grown out of the service users' associations and grass-roots movements, developed a strong emancipatory view in their work. A number of such organisations is rather limited and unstable due to the economic and political situation in Russia, where involvement of foreign donors is not encouraged while national funds to support non-governmental activities are scarce (Iarskaia-Smirnova 2011b).

In *Ukraine*, education in social work started since 1991 when the State Committee on Labor established the study at the BA level, with degrees in 'social work' and 'social pedagogue'. The first MA degree program opened in 1995. Approximately 50 universities and colleges provide degree programs in Social Work and Social Pedagogue (USAID 2008). Social work with children, youth and families is being practiced in the Centers for Social Services for Youth since 1992. In 2001, social work was defined in the laws on social protection. Both the Law on Social Work with Children and Youth (2001) and the Law on Social Services (2003) define social worker as a professional who provides a range of social services specific to the needs of

their clients, aimed at improving the quality of life and protecting the rights of persons in vulnerable situation (USAID 2008, p. 27). After the Orange Revolution in 2004, the Minister for Family, Youth and Sport introduced family-based alternatives to the institutionalization of children through new legislation. National standards on social work are being developed now by the Ministry of Social Services for Family, Children and Youth. This is seen as opening the prospects for raising the prestige of the social worker profession (USAID 2008). Public organizations, NGOs and church are involved in providing social services. In Ukraine there is no system of certification of Social Workers. No diploma is required in NGOs or churches, not always at public organizations as well. Most of the heads of the social services agencies came from the other occupational fields (Batori-Tartsi 2012). However, the importance of professional education is being acknowledged and more specialists of social work became employed in the system of social services. Practitioners conduct studies at the universities or non-formal training courses with a support of international and national foundations (Ibid.).

Revival of social thought in FSU countries, supported by national and international foundations, animated public discussion on matters of social inequality, social exclusion and social problems and through the activities of university departments and independent research and training centers. With the help of international foundations through the local non-governmental initiatives and universities important steps have been made in preparing the first trained social workers for the countries.

Central Asia

A short history of the profession in Central Asia shows its peculiar development based on recontextualization of modern academic and practice models of social work and social policy (Ganieva/Kim 2011).

Kazakhstan has emerged as the most economically developed and politically stable country in the region (Thorningetal. 2012). Since 1992, the terms 'social worker', 'specialist in social work', 'social pedagogue' have been included into the national register of occupational qualifications. Simultaneously, social work 5-year study was opened, and since the republic takes part in Bologna reforms, social work courses are now conducted on the MA (2006), BA (2008) and PhD levels. Throughout the country nowadays, 22 universities have one or several levels of social work studies. Most of the positions for the graduates are open at the centers for social services and psychological pedagogical assistance, employment and rehabilitation centers, governmental departments, schools, health centers. However, the low salaries often discourage university graduates to take social work jobs.

Association of Social Workers of Kazakhstan (2004) and Association of social workers and volunteers (2006) conduct trainings, seminars and conferences in social work. Nowadays the system of social services undergoes modernization. Mostly, social work is conducted in public sector but the private practice is growing. Religious organizations provide charity. In addition to such traditional clients groups as people with disabilities and the elderly, children left without parental care, new services have been also rendered for the survivors of domestic violence, ex-prisoners, children and adolescents in trouble, youth, etc. However, there are some limitations due to financial frames and some legislative contradictions. There are some lacks in inter-agency and inter-sector cooperation in relation to practice and training, high level of bureaucratization, especially in the public sector (Mukhtarova/Kozhamkulova/Sudakova 2012)

In *Kyrgyzstan* social work university education was established as 5-year study in 1994, and by now, there are BA (2006) and MA (2008) programs at seven universities. Officially, social work as a profession was registered by the government in 1998 by the initiative of the Association of social workers and the Ministry of labor and social protection. The functions of social work are described in the Social Services Law (2001) and Code for Children (2006). Although the term of 'social work' is not used there, the Law outlines criteria for persons who provide a range of social services, emphasizing the importance of a higher education degree in relevant field. Standards for social workers have been developed but they apply only to benefits officers. Public social services are arranged for the elderly, while services for children and families are provided by the non-governmental organizations with the support of international funds and municipalities. There is lack of services for people with disabilities and families with children. Association of Social Workers of Kyrgyzstan was established in 1998, and today it has full membership in IFSW. The Association has internationally-funded projects on child protection and social work development with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. They also publish a monthly bulletin, "Social Worker" (USAID 2008, p. 20) Monthly salary of a social worker is low, the other issues are related to the lack of cooperation the agencies, public and non-governmental organizations, leaks in the legal base of social services, the limited financial resources of the government, lack of the qualified staff and of the system of quality assessment, and the low social status of the employees of social services (Orozova 2012).

In *Tajikistan*, professional education of social work students have been started in 2009. In the same year, an Association of Professional Social Workers has been established by the initiative of the alumni of the USA

social work programs who studied in the USA with the support of the OSI.³ There is a lack of teaching and learning materials, practice manuals in native language. The average salary of a social worker is rather low (Kurbanbekova 2012). The Ministry in collaboration with UNICEF and EU has been working to establish a national resource center on social work and modeling social work practice in area of child welfare (Worrall 2011).

The Government of *Turkmenistan* approved a Social Code in 2007 which foresees mainly in three types of social services provided to vulnerable citizens: home-care services for disabled and lonely elderly persons, day-care centers and residential care. According to the Code, social services can be provided both by governmental and non-governmental institutions. The total number of persons living in institutions is comparatively small. This is closely related to the Turkmen tradition, where the extended family is still prevalent, especially in rural areas. It is customary to take care of the elderly and the disabled family members within the family (UNDP in Turkmenistan). There is lack of services for people with disabilities, children, and there is no specialized education for social workers. Social Work education and the profession of social work are only beginning to appear, primarily through the international NGOs, UNDP and UNICEF (USAID 2008, pp. 26f.).

In *Uzbekistan*, social work began to develop since 1998 when it was introduced into the National register of educational programs. The 4-year educational program was established in 2004 at Tashkent State Institute of Culture, which now offers BA and MA programs, as well as the training courses in collaboration with UNICEF among the other four BA programs in the country. Training courses were provided for the practitioners of child protection system from 2007 till 2010 by National academic team, Institute of culture and the Republican center, supported by UNICEFs (Ganieva/Kim 2011). Officially, the position of “social worker” exist only in the children’s homes and family type children homes, it also is being introduced into the Center for social adaptation of children (2010) as well as into orphanages for the babies (2012). Social workers in elderly care are not formally trained. Social services in general and social work in particular are provided mainly by the public sector. The role of the state is dominant in the field of family support and child protection. But some social workers are hired also by NGOs for direct services (ex., SOS Children Villages in Uzbekistan, crisis centers, etc.). The social status of the profession is still weak. An

3 See for further information the homepage of the ‘Tajikistan Association of Professional Social Workers’, www.tapsw.org.tj (accessed 1.01.2013). See also UNICEF Tajikistan; McInnes (2012).

average salary lies below the subsistence minimum. With a few exceptions, the profession is not included into the job positions in many social services. There is a lack of awareness on the professional competences of social work and an attitude of the profession as home attendants without academic background is wide spread. There is lack of public recognition of the profession, understanding, commitment and resources to develop social work services. Thus social work future as a profession depends on the international donors from one hand, and on state stakeholders from the other, while the latter is often mainly based on personal involvement and support of an individual senior public official (Kim/Isayeva 2012).

Caucasus

In the *Caucasus*, the social work development has taken different forms. The effects of the socioeconomic transitions, local wars and natural disasters for many groups of populations were the increased poverty, unemployment, in many cases followed by the violation of human rights, the rise of mortality rates and the deepening of social inequality. Under these conditions, the legal foundations and a professional education and training for the social work profession has been (or started to be) shaped by the efforts of the governments, universities, international organizations and foundations, as well as local NGOs.

In *Armenia*, the roots of social work being established in response to the devastating 1988 earthquake. The first social work courses were taught here since 1992. Professional education exists today at the BA (1996), MA and PhD (2000) levels as well as one-year distance learning diploma. The social protection legislation includes a Social Work Law (2005) and Code of Ethics (2008) that establishes the requirements for qualified “social work specialist.” Social work practice is well integrated into model public and private programs (USAID 2008). Currently it is relatively well developed in the area of child protection – orphanages, day care centers, regional child protection units, and nursing homes. It is still in the process of development in the health care system and education (Khachatryan 2011).

In *Azerbaijan*, the courses on social work were offered at the State University since 1990s but the government was skeptical about a possible positive impact of this profession on social problems and institutionalization of social work as a profession was postponed. Gradually, the understanding is being changed with the influence of local academic and qualified practitioners as well as of international experts. Now social work education exists at the MA (2005) and BA (2008) levels. By 2012 seven universities offer social work degrees (Rajabov 2012). The state program on De-Institutionalization

and Alternative Care of children (2006–2015) contributes to official recognition of the role of social workers (Rajabov 2011, p. 21). In 2011, the Law on Social Services was approved by the parliament which requires having professional social workers and establishment of social services. Although some graduates of MA program can find better salaries in social work profession, in general, in Azerbaijan, employees of social services have a low salary and low status which prevents recruitment of qualified social workers into the public jobs. Family traditions are very strong and cultural barriers prevent specialists from working with families and children. The communications between social worker and a family may result in conflict which has to do with the lack of legislation and credibility of a professional (Ibid., pp. 22f.). Great lack of the literature in native language, while most of the books are in English and Russian, makes the reading inaccessible for many students. The lack of awareness, lack of legislation about social services and social work as well as the lack of a social work model which would depict cultural values and local demands of the Azerbaijani society create obstacles for developing social work in the country (Ibid.).

In *Georgia*, many social work practitioners have been trained by UNICEF in 1990s, but university social work education started later, in 2004 at the BA level and the MA level in 2008, now there are also PhD studies. Georgia has multiple legislation (2006, 2007) that clarifies the roles and function of social work in specialized areas such as child welfare and social assistance, which is due to the fact that the various vulnerable groups served by social workers come under the auspices of different ministries. The research conducted by Hollis (cited in USAID 2008) found out the overemphasis on material needs (such as housing, medicines, clothing, and food) at the expense of consideration of psychosocial needs. The rural/urban divide in accessibility of social services is of great concern, too (USAID 2008). The founders of the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW), established with assistance from OSI in 2004, received their MSWs in the United States in conjunction with OSI's Social Work Fellows Program. They are key members of the social work education community and lecturers at the university (Social Work Education 2008). Association conducts training courses in areas of disability, mental health, probation, initiates volunteer activities.

Baltic countries

In the *Baltic countries*, social care was based in 1920s–1930s in various charity and religious institutions, e.g. the Red Cross, organizations for war refugees and Christian social work (Ziverte/Laiveniece 2003). University pro-

grams in social work and social pedagogy were introduced in the beginning of national independence. The profession has been recognized soon after that. Municipalities are responsible for social care and social services. As Ulbricht (2008, p. 6) shows, the role of social worker is more extensive in Lithuania than in Latvia and Estonia.

In *Estonia*, the social work education was introduced in early 1990s and is now provided at BA, MA and PhD levels, social pedagogy MA. For example, Tallinn University offers five different curricula fully accredited since 2007. The Social Welfare Law (1995, amended 2007) defines 'welfare workers' as a broad category that covers the whole range of social services or welfare services, including monetary benefits. It requires social work to be provided by a person with higher education and appropriate professional training, without specifying the necessity of social work education (Ulbricht 2008, p. 6). Social workers feel they only have time and possibilities to work with acute crises. It is difficult to find time for preventive action. Social assistance was reduced to financial support and material help (Groeningsaeter/Kiik 2009, p. 28). The public sector dominates in social services in general, but the private sector plays an important role in field of residential care (European Commission 2011, pp. 164, 166). There is an officially recognized social work professional body: Estonian Association of Social Workers. The Estonian Qualification Agency runs the professional qualification system, with study programs for each profession, including social work (Hussein 2011, p. 39).

In *Latvia*, the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance (2002, amended 2006) claims that social work should be carried out by persons with higher professional education in social work. Those providing social care, social rehabilitation of social assistance services must receive training in the relevant fields of studies. As Ulbricht (2008, p. 4) mentions, originally the law contained provisions on a register and on certification of social workers but in amended versions it was repealed. According to this Law, the professional activity of a social worker and a charitable social worker are regarded to be aimed towards achieving and promoting practical resolution of the social problems of an individual and improvement of his or her quality of life, integration in the society, and the ability to help him or herself (Hussein 2011, pp. 51f.). There is a qualification accreditation body for social work. Since 2008, social work qualification are based on BSW (4 years) or several options of postgraduate or higher professional education (2 years). All higher educational programmes are accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science. Latvian Association of Professional Social and Care Workers adopted a Code of ethics.

In *Lithuania*, higher education in social work began in 1991. Three years later, the first legal document to define social work and its qualification was

adopted. Since by this time a number of qualified social workers was not yet sufficient, a Concept of Social Support (1994) states that individuals from different professions may perform as social workers. It mentions the necessity to develop professional ethics and values and presents micro, mezzo and macro levels: social work with individual and families, social work with groups, and social worker forming social politics (Varžinskienė 2009, p. 125). The Social Services Law (1996) defined the purpose of social work profession as re-establishment of interrelations between a person and his/her environment, when the person himself/herself is not able to do this. Currently, the new Social Services Law (2006) gives more vague definition of social work as a help for the person dealing with his/her social problems. At the same time, it requires that all social workers who practice without a professional education, should obtain a degree by 2011, and gives quite strict competence requirements (Ibid.). The Lithuanian government adopted qualification requirements for the social pedagogues (1997, confirmed 2001). The government confirmed educational standards and included BA and MA programs in social work in 2001 and social pedagogue in 2003 into the official classification among the other fields of higher education in social sciences. Social services are provided by public organizations as well as NGOs, including religious initiatives. An example of cross-sectoral collaboration is a Generation House established by the Lithuanian Caritas Federation in mid-1990s and financially supported by Kaunas Municipality. This service is a system for referral for single homeless mothers with children and for the elderly. There are separate programs for each group and one general program aimed to unite the generations (Swindell 2004).

8. Mapping social work in the post-socialist space: concluding remarks

What is understood by social work, significantly varies across the countries (Hussein 2011) and to draw a map of social work in the post-socialist space is not an easy task. There was a wide variety in history and contemporary understanding of social work across the region. While in many countries, social care or social work existed as occupation, and training was provided in the beginning of XX century, this occupation has survived socialism and was established as training program only in a few of them. In most of the others social assistance and care were provided without official presence of social work as a profession, which was introduced only in late 1980s–1990s. During these years, all countries of the FSU and former socialist bloc underwent transition from socialism to market economy and democracy; and

crucial transformations occurred to the role of the state, ideology of social support, models and instruments of social policy and social services.

Most of the countries have social services legislation defining either social work in direct terms or as a social service provision. Nevertheless, the meaning is often confused and vague. Besides, in changing the social service field, its administrators and workers as well as clients were not aware of the importance of the assessment of needs and outcomes of the services (Freed 1995, p. 41). National standards for social services which specify functions and activities of workers are gradually adopted in countries of the region but their implementation is a slow process.

Under the state socialism, the state provided residential care and material assistance for certain categories of population while social problems were to be solved by the teachers, police, formal and informal collective networks. This approach has been challenged as narrow, but such an assumption is still widespread and leads to an emphasis on the provision of social assistance benefits at the expense of professional family support and psychosocial services for clients (Hollis 2008 cited in USAID 2008). Social work in child protection area, deinstitutionalization, juvenile justice, work with children with disabilities and their families, and with youth are the new areas of research and training as well as practice models. In most of the countries the movement to deinstitutionalize children in vulnerable situations is confronted by a weak child protection system that might increase risks for children.

Social work was for a long time not recognized as a true profession by administrative bodies. Only in a few countries in the region, there is a regulative legislation that requires a formal education in social work for a person in order to start professional practice. Professional associations exist almost all over but in most cases the membership is low and they have no power as regulatory bodies.

The top-down approach to solving social problems and to regulation of profession is still in place as it was under state socialism. In most of the countries, the state has the main jurisdiction over the new profession and provides it with financial and symbolic capital. By setting up inadequate wage policies for social workers, the state has reinforced the societal assumption of this occupation as a “cheap women’s labour” (Iarskaia-Smirnova/Romanov 2008). The high fluctuation of personnel due to the poor wages, large caseloads, and insufficient training opportunities in many cases hindered the professional development of social services.

Public discourse that frames social work practice contains a mixture of various and often contradictory value positions concerning normative models of good citizens, men and women, families and children. Old prejudices against certain groups have sustained from the past (Guzzetta 1995, p. 202)

not only in the region. In fact, the revival of neo-conservative movements is sadly known in many countries of the world, including 'old' and 'new' Europe and ex-Soviet republics, where escalation of sexism, homophobia and racism, prejudices against Roma, people with disabilities, other minorities are seen and experienced. Thus, the wider societal context of social work is constituted by the mixture of ideologies, where voices of neo-fundamentalists sometimes are interwoven with social-democratic and/or neo-liberal agenda while "paternalist and authoritarian values of legislators, bureaucrats and even the public" (Freed 1995, p. 40) are clashed with the agency of those service users, NGOs and service providers who tries to criticize and challenge the networks of power (Iarskaia-Smirnova/Romanov 2012). The concept of care or charity is a priority above the concepts of citizenship and civil rights in social service legislation (Krzyszowski 2004/2005).

While highly heterogeneous in themselves, the two groups of countries can be singled out according to a formal basis of a division: CEE and FSU. In general, in the CEE countries the effects of European integration for social work professional development are visible in the advanced agenda of public policies focusing on the matters of inclusion of vulnerable social groups and strategies of social cohesion, on professional regulation, registration, education and training, including field practice. Although many countries assume licensure is a way to legitimize the profession, so far only in a few countries of CEE social work is licensed profession. As university graduates avoid seeking jobs in social services due to a low pay, the vast majority of social workers (or specialists in social work) in FSU countries and in some CEE still have not received formal education or professional training. At the same time, not all training courses necessarily pay attention to antidiscriminatory social work principles, while the code of ethics has not been interiorized by the agencies or individual workers. Due to a long suppression of social sciences and psychology during Soviet times, the social work textbooks are insufficient in their critical appraisal of social problems, in preparing social workers for the reality they will face. Social work as a home assistance for the elderly is the most typical public understanding of the profession in the FSU countries. And in spite of the greater emphasis in education and legislation is put on non-monetary social work services, social workers still are not always distinguished from benefits officers.

After a period of experimentation with Western models, CEE programs develop their own particular styles, based on their own traditions and culture (Guzzetta 1995, p. 207) and framed by national and local policy contexts. One of such contextual elements is religion. In some countries, e.g. Poland and Czech Republic, the Roman Catholic Church continues as an important presence and is closely associated with the changes which made social work there again possible (Ibid., pp. 207f.). The church is visible in

social service provision in Armenia, Ukraine. In the FSU countries, the role of religion in the lives of the people is taking on significant meaning, particularly the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam in the revival of charity but the role of the religious organization in service provision is rather small. The most characteristic feature of socialist legacies in FSU is the persistence of the monopolized position of public services and the limited possibilities for creating a competitive environment (Romanov 2008). Having grown out of the service users' associations and grass-roots movements, the NGOs use emancipatory and egalitarian ideology in their struggle to establish human rights and principles of independent living. However, a number of such organizations is rather limited and unstable due to the specific economic and political situation in Russia and many other FSU countries, where extensive involvement of foreign donors is not encouraged while national funds to support non-governmental activities are scarce.

Most of the countries already work with the BA and MA levels, and a few have PhD programs in social work. In the beginning, these study programs often were considered with skepticism as not academic and cost-ineffective (Guzzetta 1995, p. 203). One of the most critical issues for the beginning of educational development in 1990s was the lack of teachers competent in the subject and teaching materials. By now, social work literature in native language is growing; a few translations and many original works are published in journals and books by scholars and practitioners in the region. Resources published in local languages are still quite limited especially in countries where the establishment of the education and professional field was postponed until the 2000s.

In addition, formalized internship was and partly still is especially difficult to establish when appropriate field placement did not exist (Guzzetta 1995, p. 205; Montague/Morgan/Sommerville 2008, p. 241). Although during 20 years of social work education, the placements have been secured, field supervisors are still lacking in those settings where low salaries and absence of career opportunities prevent employment of university graduates in social work agencies, while social workers with a long experience not necessarily have adequate qualifications.

Opportunities for training and continuing education for practitioners and teachers became and still are available mainly through international collaboration between foreign universities and practice agencies, the government, social services and academia. Such schemes are welcomed both in the countries of the FSU and in CEE. Such projects provided resources for institutional and curriculum development; they influenced teaching methods and widened opportunities for teachers to improve their qualifications through new cross-cultural communication experiences, and the acquisition of updated professional knowledge (Iarskaia-Smirnova 2011b); affected

practice models in the projects that have been involving governments and social service agencies. International collaboration induced multi-faceted exchanges and influences. Many countries of the regions have built strategic international partnerships on all levels of welfare governance and practice. These partnerships were built not only between the West and ex-socialist nations but also among the new independent states.

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