European Social Work Education and Practice

Marion Laging
Nino Žganec *Editors*

Social Work Education in Europe

Traditions and Transformations

EASSW European Association of Schools of Social Work

Springer

European Social Work Education and Practice

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European Social Work Education and Practice is a Series developed within the frame of the contributions of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) on the current developments of social work education and its links to the practice of social work in a European context. The Series supports the international dialogue among social work academics, practitioners, service users, and decision-makers. The aim of the Series is to provide a platform for identification and discussion of various challenges and developments within European social work. Similar to other professions, social work also is constantly contending with new demands regarding changing fields of work, new financial models, rising competition among the institutions, new groups and types of service users, and many other challenges. All of these circumstances require professionals to be well prepared and to provide new responses on how to work in the context of globalization and neoliberalism while adhering to the principles of solidarity, social justice, and humanity.

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Preface

The idea for this book grew out of the efforts by the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) to enhance social work education through numerous activities in the course of the last two decades. The main focus of the EASSW is to promote the development of social work education throughout Europe, to develop standards for enhancing the quality of social work education, to encourage international exchange and to provide forums for sharing social work research and scholarship. The EASSW says the following about its mission and vision: "EASSW's mission is to promote social justice and develop high quality education, training and knowledge for social work practice, social services, and social welfare policies in Europe. The EASSW's vision is Europe as a socially just region with the highest quality of social work education that promotes unity and nurtures diversity." Aware of the need to make a kind of inventory of education traditions and models throughout European countries, we wondered what the best way was to go about it, keeping in mind that it is impossible to cover all European countries. That is to say, as also prescribed by the EASSW's bylaws, "The membership of the association shall be composed of those engaged in social work education within the Council of Europe membership. Members of EASSW can be outside of the countries listed as members by the Council of Europe, where there are historical and cultural links with Europe." Such a definition of the rather broad membership did not allow us to include all countries, so we decided on an alternative path. Specifically, in the conception of this book, we aimed at selecting countries that could provide quality insight into typical examples of various traditions of educational models for social work in different parts of Europe. Aware of the many limitations of such an approach, we believe that readers will still have the opportunity to gain solid insights into what we can roughly call the "European model of education for social work". As can be seen from the various contributions in the book, it would probably be better to talk about different models, but if we accept this difference as a common feature, then this is a certain backbone of the "common model". The book represents ten countries from northern to southern Europe – Finland, Latvia, Germany, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Croatia, Romania and Cyprus. Unfortunately, despite

our efforts, we were unable to provide an overview of two other countries that would significantly complement the overall picture, namely Poland and Spain. We believe that in some future edition these countries (as well as some others) will certainly be represented. We asked the contributors, who are all social work academics, to look at some of the key determinants that affect social work education in their countries. These determinants included, among other things, the following items:

- description and analysis of significant moments in the process of professional social work development in their respective countries
- description of the main areas of activity of social work in the respective country
- description of the current model of education for social work in their respective countries, including a description of levels of academization which social work education has achieved
- critical analysis of whether or to what extent the educational system is able to reflect on and respond to the current challenges faced by social work as well as providing several types of answers, for example: What features should an educational programme have to prepare students for sustainable and responsible social work that is based on human rights and social justice? Are there discrepancies between what educational institutions aim for and what the practice field demands? What importance do social policy analysis and awareness have for the development of critical practice competences of social workers? What meaning/importance/potential has academic social work achieved in this context? What role does or could a European perspective or European organizations and exchanges play in this process? What specifically could students from other countries learn from a study period in social work in this country?

The aim of this book is to provide an in-depth overview of current social and socio-political transformations in Europe and their effects on social work and its educational structures. It elucidates these transformations and structures on the individual level of selected countries and goes on to elaborate a European perspective in this field. Readers are offered insight into the variety of activities in social work and its educational structures in Europe and at the same time understanding starting points for the exchange of ideas, collaboration and further development in individual countries and in Europe.

The authors' contributions point to very interesting national traditions in social work education that are influenced by various factors such as socioeconomic conditions, historical development, key challenges residents face and many more. All these factors influence the development of specific models of education, along with professional, educational and scientific assistance that some countries receive from abroad. With this book, EASSW, in collaboration with Springer, is launching a book series entitled *European Social Work Education and Practice* with the aim of gathering a wide range of knowledge, opinions and expertise, ultimately creating a focal point for the exchange of best practices, theories and empirical data in European social work. We truly hope that the different titles planned for publication within the framework of the aforementioned series will provide comprehensive insight into the state of the art of European social work.

Plans to prepare and publish this book were in the works long before the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a number of changes have taken place in the interim regarding the way education is conducted and in the priority topics dealt with by educators and students (and, of course, social work practitioners), the contributions in this book are not specifically focused on the new normal. Nevertheless, we believe that their relevance is beyond question. The introductory chapter, written by Professor Walter Lorenz at a time when COVID-19 was already widespread, partially resolves this issue and temporally contextualizes the topics addressed in the book. Because the impacts of the pandemic on education and social work practice will certainly be manifold, impact analyses will have to be conducted. Some of the future titles in the book series *European Social Work Education and Practice* will, in our view, focus on the analysis of these impacts.

The editors would like to take the opportunity to thank all the authors for their very valuable and useful contributions, as well as EASSW and Springer for the opportunity to collaborate on this important project.

Esslingen, Germany — Marion Laging
Zagreb, Croatia — Nino Žganec

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Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Marion Laging, **PhD,** is a qualified social worker with a specialization in education and many years of experience in several social work fields like care for the elderly and persons with disabilities, adult education and addiction care. After completing her PhD in 2005, she obtained the post of professor for social work at Esslingen University of Applied Sciences in Germany. Since 2008, she has been director of the Bachelor's degree programme in social work and is especially committed to the internationalization of the degree. Since 2019, she has been Vice President for Education and Advanced Studies at Esslingen University of Applied Sciences. As a board member of the German Association of Schools of Social Work and of the Executive Committee of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), she is engaged in the further development of social work qualifications at the national and European levels.

Nino Žganec, **PhD,** was born in Croatia, where he completed the Study of Social Work at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. Since the beginning of his career he has worked as faculty teacher in various positions – assistant professor, associate professor and full professor. The fields of his practical and scientific interest include community social work, ethics and human rights, organization of social services and international social work. He has published in various domestic and international journals and books, participated in domestic and international scientific research projects in his fields of interest, and delivered many keynote speeches at domestic and international social work conferences. He has experience in political engagement as assistant minister and state secretary in the Croatian Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. During his term in office, comprehensive reform of the social care sector was launched. Since 2011 he has served on the executive committee of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), and in 2015

he was elected president of this association for the 2015–2019 mandate. In the same period he served as vice president of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). He was also elected member of the executive committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network and president of the Croatian Anti-Poverty Network for the 2014–2020 mandate. His teaching activities include graduate and postgraduate programmes, including PhD programmes in several European countries.

Contributors

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Miriam Lorenz, MA, is a qualified social worker (Master of Arts) with experience in the care of children and adolescents, international youth work and social work with immigrant families. She studied in Stuttgart and Esslingen, Germany, and is currently working as research assistant at Esslingen University of Applied Sciences on a participatory research project with refugees while doing her PhD.

Walter Lorenz, PhD, MSc, was professor of social work at University College Cork in Ireland (1978–2001) and at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in Italy (2001–2017), where he also served two terms as rector. He is currently contract professor at Charles University Prague, Czech Republic. A native of Germany, he qualified as Social Worker at the London School of Economics and practised for 8 years in East London, UK. His research interests cover current and historical aspects of European social work and social policy. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the Universities of Ghent and Aalborg in Belgium and Denmark respectively.

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Introduction: Current Developments and Challenges Facing Social Work Education in Europe

Walter Lorenz

1 Europe Under the Impact of the Corona Crisis

This introduction sets out to reflect on the chapters of this volume, a task which suddenly takes on an entirely new dimension, unexpected at the start of this project. The other chapters were all written before the COVID-19 pandemic shook the global society, and now the questions being asked are the following: Are we facing a completely new scenario of future developments in social work education in view of a crisis that has become the hardest test for economic, social and indeed political recovery since World War II? What will social work's contribution be, how can this be furthered through appropriate social work education programmes, and, above all, will this be a task for the individual nations of Europe or does a European orientation count specifically in this unprecedented situation? With respect to the overview presented in this volume, it is interesting to note that significant international surveys on social work education were also conducted in the face of impending or after immediately experienced profound world crises. Alice Salomon published the first international survey of social work education, funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, in 1937, the year she had to flee Nazi Germany, having been well aware the threat nationalism posed to the social work profession, which had asserted its international orientation so spectacularly and successfully at the 1928 International Conference of Social Work in Paris (Kuhlmann 2008). In addition, in the aftermath of World War II, the newly founded United Nations commissioned Katherine Kendall in 1950 to survey social work education internationally, an exercise which was repeated in 1955 and again in 1958 by Eileen Younghusband in recognition of the cross-national importance of social work education in the democratic

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reconstruction of war-torn societies (Healy 2008). Hence it is entirely appropriate that this European survey also speaks to the current crisis, which forces us to re-examine thoroughly the principles that guide our social work education programmes. Not only is this exercise of importance for social work educators, but it holds up a mirror to society at large in which social tensions and unresolved issues become apparent, issues which social work must address.

The contributions of this volume focus on selected countries in Europe, and whilst they were never conceived from a purely descriptive perspective but with a view to drawing lessons from the experiences of those countries for future developments in social work education, the current crisis lets us recognize much more sharply the salience of these features of social work and the impending challenges for social work education. Furthermore, the corona crisis has underlined the urgency for social work educators to examine their fundamental understanding of social work, the profession's role in society, its methodology, its theoretical grounding and its political mandate in order to then confront the acute question how to equip future practitioners with knowledge and skills that will allow them to make an impact on the reconstruction of societies. For nothing less is facing Europe and the international society but the necessity to re-examine its social, economic and political order fundamentally in the face of a crisis whose nature has never before confronted the global community.

References to wars and past pandemics are at least partly valid comparative reference points, not so much because of the vast scale of the disruption caused by the virus but on account of the enormous vulnerability which it revealed in a global, intricately interconnected world. To use war analogy: many societies lacked appropriate defences against the onslaught of the virus in terms of the lack of medical equipment but above all with regard to weaknesses in their organizational structure and capacity. Something went wrong in the nation states' balanced handling of this dense web of potentially contradictory, economy-driven promises of globalization and of personal liberation. A social work perspective makes the failures that brought about and accentuated the crisis quite evident: it was the blatant neglect of the social dimension of human interrelations and the prioritizing instead of "mechanisms" that were partly determined by economic (i.e. profit) and partly by political (i.e. power) interests, mostly in combination (Lorenz 2016). The central tenet of social work, itself a product and "invention" of modernity, is that "the social" is never to be treated as a (quasi-automatic) by-product either of genetic or of psychological or economic self-regulating processes. Instead, the quality of human social relations can only be established and assured by paying explicit attention to the factors that make possible living in constructive and productive communities. The "capabilities" of which Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum speak as the essence of a "life worth living" are not innate personal capacities but consist of an array of rights, freedoms and opportunities that enable citizens to "function" fully in society and hence also take on responsibilities (Nussbaum 2011; Sen 2005). The utter dependence on others, which humans show from birth, is not organized and secured by any instinctual, innate psychological processes any more than the cohesion of a community or a society is secured by blood relations or by territorial boundaries, no

matter how much nationalists operate with this fiction. The capacity to become "social beings" develops through being accepted in one's individuality by a social community is a matter of socializing through education, a matter of providing adequate material resources and of experiencing the "right to belong" in a legal, political and cultural sense. Around this realization and with the aspiration to secure this requirement in legal terms the notion of social justice and citizenship developed in Western modern societies (Lorenz 2014).

An emblematic term that made the rounds during the crisis, both as a safety device and as an unwelcome restriction on personal liberties was "social distancing". Through the ambiguity contained in this (highly inappropriate) term, a pronounced polarization of reactions ensued which demonstrated how deeply the notion had already penetrated the sensitivity of the population before the crisis. On the one hand, compliance with isolation was widespread, but on the other hand, various forms of discontent surfaced, sometimes violently in demonstrations against restrictions of liberty and indeed in riots and attacks on state authorities in the form of the police. Evident at the economic level in the form of the accelerating distancing of wealth and poverty and at the political level in that of the rise of populist nationalism and racism, social distancing surreptitiously had already infiltrated social and political processes under the pretext that "there was no alternative" and that its results were ultimately "in the common interest" (Aluffi Pentini and Lorenz 2020). If the concept and method of distancing become "normalized" after the crisis or in the light of recurring epidemics, the isolation of particular groups of society like elderly people, people living in residential institutions, at-risk buildings or neighbourhoods may enter the repertoire of accepted social and health measures without much debate. Alternatively, the reliance on "herd immunity" (a term with a clear racist history) will deliver the "selecting" and segregating effects quasi-automatically. Without fundamental political revisions the continuation of current policies, which divide further the winners and losers of globalization, will deepen this divide. Despite pronouncements that "we were all in the same boat", life during lockdown brought into sharp relief the plight of unemployed people living in cramped conditions with few outside connections against the quasi-holiday conditions enjoyed by those protected by continued secure incomes, ample living space and unrestricted access to resources.

The Europe that forms the background to this volume is showing its fragility during the crisis very openly. The closure of borders and the prioritizing of national interests, for instance by prohibiting the export of medical crisis equipment to neighbouring countries, were revealing spontaneous political reflexes. It seemed that already in the period before the corona crisis Europe was on the verge of being driven apart not by Brexit alone or by the measures of "distancing" through material and ideological fences which countries like Hungary and Poland were erecting against "external threats", but also by the economic politics which lately prevailed in the EU. The fading of a European social policy agenda which had once been promoted under the Delors EU Council presidency and the subsequent focus on enforcing market principles and fiscal control caused widespread scepticism concerning the state of European solidarity and painful internal divisions in countries

like Greece and others bordering the Mediterranean on account of their total blindness to the social dimension necessary for European integration (Streeck 2019). The future of Europe as a unification project and as a sociocultural model of unity in full recognition of cultural diversity will depend on a radical reversal of these policies that prevailed right into the heart of the crisis and which then had to be hastily and provisionally revamped. It is the voice of social workers and others who are charged with low-paid but now glorified caring tasks that needs to count in a more permanent and sustainable reversal of these misguided policies and overall in the reconstruction of the social fabric of Europe. This volume serves to focus on those voices and to chart a way forward for social work education based on the lessons the social professionals are entitled to derive from the experience of this crisis.

2 Educating for What Version of Social Work?

The reports on social work education in the countries of this volume at first glance give a picture of an academic discipline still struggling to find an identity. This manifests in various ways. Firstly, there is considerable variety in the areas of need for which education is meant to prepare future practitioners. In some countries social workers are responsible for assessing people's eligibility for welfare payments and therefore need to be taught corresponding legal and procedural details, while in others this is not considered the task of social workers at all and the focus is much more on counselling, bordering even on or overlapping with therapeutic responsibilities. It seems sometimes as if the area of social responsibilities were defined by so-called gaps in the system, when other services, for instance the medical, the educational or the judicial system, reach the limits of their mandate and people are in danger of "falling through the gaps in the system". This can give social work the appearance of "rescue work" for which, in order to be performed competently, knowledge of selected elements of all these systems is required to make up the curriculum with no clear core subject other than something like "social work principles". Secondly, this is reflected in the wide range of methods of intervention taught in social work courses. Here it is of significance that the methodological "schools" that used to characterize training models and institutions in the pioneering phase of the profession, such as psychodynamic, psychosocial, behavioural or systemic approaches, no longer prevail in these countries, and pragmatic considerations determine the choice of methods presented, with the recent emphasis on evidence-based practice (EBP) making a strong and ominous appearance everywhere in these accounts, signalling some kind of convergence. However, the role of EBP as a guide to appropriate methods has also attracted widespread criticism in terms of the implied narrowing of the whole purpose of methodology to a "what works best" pragmatism (Ziegler 2020). This debate has at least spurred a growing emphasis on research as the basis for a clearer methodological orientation, but this trend again is characterized by a great deal of dependency on research traditions of other, "bordering" disciplines such as sociology, psychology, political science and

anthropology. A clear definition of what constitutes specific social work research approaches and social work research fields is only occasionally discernible (Lorenz and Shaw 2017).

This lack of specificity is partly due to a tension that characterized academic programmes for social workers right from the beginning, the tension between the need to maintain an orientation towards national requirements in terms of legal frameworks, social policies, service structures and, not least, cultural factors, on the one hand, and the requirement, if social work were to justify its claim to "proper" scientific status, to focus on universal aspects of human behaviour and of social, economic and historical processes. In this lingering tension, not only is social work's academic status at stake, but the autonomy of the profession from national political and legal conditions is as well, a neutrality which some earlier international programmes in social work education sought to promote according to the motto "people are people". This tension is particularly visible in countries where the impetus for the development of academic social work training came from outside the country, as was the case in most parts of Western Europe after World War II when US, UK and UN "social reconstruction" programmes promoted a kind of standard model of social work, in the form of casework, group work and community work, with the aid of predominantly English-language literature (Harrikari and Rauhala 2018). Similar influences and pressures are reported on more recent developments in Cyprus and in former Communist countries after 1989. In all these cases the attraction of scientific universalism rubs against the need to "indigenize" social work education, as shall be discussed subsequently. Yet the overall impression of the countries under review here is that there is no sign of convergence to a "standard model of social work" in Europe, and the meaning and the implications of this diverse state of affairs need to be considered very comprehensively (Lorenz 2017).

3 Social Work, Welfare Politics and Political Conflict

Therefore, these country reports rightly include very explicit references not only to the national histories of social work education but also to the history of the development of very distinct welfare traditions. The epochal change from traditional agricultural to modern industrial types of societies, which occurred obviously at different points in the history of these countries, had brought with it the necessity to organize and ensure social cohesion and indeed national unity by way of devoting explicit political attention to the organization of social solidarity provisions and, hence, of welfare measures. In this process the three key players that could be entrusted with the primary responsibility for ensuring welfare, i.e. the autonomous individual, the organizations of civil society and the state itself, gave rise to the defining political panorama of major political parties with their correspondingly ensuing "welfare regimes" (Esping-Andersen 1990): Liberalism with its preference for ensuring liberty, and hence also the responsibility of the individual, produced residual public welfare structures in which the state is only allowed to function as a

last resort so as not to "pamper" individual citizens and make them less motivated to look after themselves; Bismarckian conservatism stressed the importance of civil society as the primary provider of integrative impulses, emphasizing the principle of subsidiarity according to which the state must always give preference to but also subsidize the efforts of traditional or community-grounded organizations like churches or philanthropic societies like the Red Cross, and indeed the core social unit in conservative thinking, the family; social democracy as the third option declared the provision of comprehensive welfare support to be a public and, hence, a state responsibility in order to ensure the equity of welfare coverage through universal entitlements.

Social workers came to play very distinct roles in the different emergent political systems, whilst at the same time they promoted their international orientation and, hence, the desire for autonomy from political influences. Evidence of this were the lively worldwide exchanges of the prevalently female pioneers of social work for whom this international orientation was particularly important (Hering and Waaldijk 2003; Kniephoff-Knebel 2006). Even as these political constellations seemed to converge recently towards neoliberal principles, which have left a definitive mark on all the countries described in this volume, the traces of these political traditions are still noticeable. References to these established but submerged preferences in political culture serve social workers, for instance, in Finland as points of critique and resistance against the pressure to conform to neoliberal principles that seek to promote "activation" among welfare recipients instead of defending their welfare rights.

Relating current politics and virulent internal conflicts back to corresponding national histories is by no means only an academic exercise for social work educators but is essential for the development of specific competences to deal effectively with the psychological and social implications of these conflicts and their aftermath. This volume contains vivid illustrations of the unavoidable need by social workers to understand acute political conflicts critically because history has an impact on the entire social fabric of a nation in the cases of Cyprus, Croatia and Northern Ireland. The experience of these countries teaches that preparing social work students for situations of acute or latent conflict is not a matter of specialization for those few who might be seeking work in foreign conflict zones or deal with refugees as victims of political violence, but it needs to form a "standard" element of professional competence. Only by learning to confront this necessity were social work courses positioned to effectively address situations like sectarianism and civil war in the case of Northern Ireland. For most social workers in Europe, political conflict has – so far – thankfully been a marginal issue, but this is no reason to marginalize the required skills. The accounts of social workers in Northern Ireland show the consequences of not being able to address explicitly the political implications of those situations. For a long time they were left to cope only by avoiding being drawn into the political conflict and withdrawing into an assumed position of neutrality, until it was realized that this neutrality made them incapable of really reaching clients and their specific combination of needs, which were invariably affected by the conflict (Campbell et al. 2019). War situations are indeed not a hypothetical scenario for

social workers in Europe but form part of the lived reality of many, either in open political conflict, as is still the case in Northern Ireland, or in dealing with the consequences of war, as in Croatia and Cyprus and all countries through encounters with refugees. And when we analyse those experiences and the way they were taken up in the various social work curricula at a more general level, we realize that they contain insights and messages for mainstream social workers because traces of political conflict, to varying degrees of visibility, are to be found everywhere in European societies, whether in the form of racism or in that of other forms of hostile exclusion and discrimination, right down to situations of domestic violence, which ultimately also have political implications. These skills will again become particularly acute in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, which has already brought about a rise in domestic violence and will lead to increased social tensions at all levels, for instance in the severity with which racism has resurfaced as an acute issue right in the middle of what cannot be limited to being considered just a health crisis. Social workers operate on the boundary between latent and open conflict because they have to negotiate constantly between conflicting interests. Therefore, an understanding of the wider structural background of conflicts in history and in politics is an essential part of social work education in all countries that allows students to recognize the connection with the immediate helping situation.

4 Addressing Diversity as a Core Strength of Social Work

With these reflections on the tensions and indeed conflicts in which social work is enmeshed, the seeming lack of focus in the contributions concerning the orientation of social work education takes on a completely different significance. Rather than portraying the discipline as "incomplete" and the profession as being in disarray, the reports bear witness to the necessary but difficult engagement with different historical and political processes that is the distinguishing mark of social work. What appears to be a weakness when compared to other disciplines like psychology or medicine, which can be taught more or less according to the same international format and the same scientific paradigms across countries, social work teaching finds its particular strength in taking into account the specific context in which it is being practised and for which it is preparing students. Therefore, efforts to harmonize the appearance of the discipline internationally are not only futile but miss and weaken this distinguishing element of social work. Harmonization was indeed on the agenda of the European Union when it issued a mandate to establish a consortium consisting of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), the Formation d'Educateurs Sociaux Européens (FESET) and the European Centre for Community Education (ECCE) for forming the First Thematic Network in the Social Profession in the 1990s (Chytil and Seibel 1999). But the exchanges and discussions over the profiles of social work and social work education across countries conducted by this consortium focused much more fruitfully on such questions as to what can be learned from the apparent different "versions" of social work

operating in different countries and how a comparative European analysis can contribute to national social work courses examining their specificities more critically. The tensions and apparent inconsistencies one notices when looking over the chapters are indicators of an essential ongoing process of development. External inputs from other countries prevent this process from exhausting itself in the minutiae of regulatory alternatives instead of confronting fundamental questions.

In this way, several dimensions concerning unresolved dilemmas for social work education that span across most of the presentations in this volume can be identified and questioned as to their deeper significance:

1. There are considerable discrepancies concerning the academic level and status of social work education. While there is a universal drive for full "academization", meaning access to universities at all three levels of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D., a pronounced dualism persists between "classical" universities and other higher education institutions with a more vocational orientation offering social work education in parallel. It is nevertheless remarkable that more and more Ph.D. programmes are springing up, even, slowly, at German "universities of applied sciences". Potentially, this renders visible the specificity of social work as an academic discipline, but in most countries that have instituted a Ph.D. in social work there is still a dependence on so-called neighbouring disciplines like sociology, psychology or pedagogy. The same applies to the qualifications of staff themselves who teach social work courses. The requirement that they should have at least a Ph.D. if they take up academic positions, and not remain employable only as contract staff, is gradually gaining ground, but this does not mean that those candidates necessarily have a Ph.D. in social work, even when they are called to teach core social work courses. This is particularly apparent in Italy, where 30 years ago the professional association had campaigned very strongly for social work education to be exclusively located at universities, a demand which was conceded but at the price of most of the professors, who had led and taught courses on non-university schools of social work, not gaining access to academic university positions (Facchini and Tonon Giraldo 2013). There, social work education is struggling to assert its identity against the prevalence of professors who represent other fields and disciplines. The question of social work's place in academia generally hinges very much on the role practice elements play on social work courses, and this concerns not just the quantity of placement time included in the curricula but how they can be planned, supervised and evaluated to professional social work standards. Giving practice this prominence and linking it so strongly with theoretical curriculum contents, as is necessary for a professionalizing degree, often jars with academic expectations, even though other disciplines like medicine or economics make the same claims. Placements that are structured and designed properly so that they help students to reach standards of professional accountability are very labour intensive and, hence, costly to the university as they require extra staff for supervision in addition to the tutors appointed in the respective agencies and extensive written reports. Furthermore,

the results of placements are not easy to quantify and to put in relation to academic subjects concerning the award of credit points within the Bologna Process.

Nevertheless, for a number of countries where social work was in the process of being established as an academic discipline, the Bologna Process was a useful vehicle for achieving full integration into academic structures, for meeting formal requirements and for justifying the minimum length of social work education. This helped social work education, for instance, in the UK to finally achieve the minimum of a three-year B.A. programme in 2003. However, the rigid adherence to the rule of 3 + 2-year cycles also meant that, for instance, Finland had to split its integrated 5-year programme into two phases, and there was resistance also in countries like Romania and Germany against this standardization. Overall, the idea that all university courses should conform to a three-year cycle with the pre-defined levels of competence laid down in the Dublin Descriptors became accepted, but uncertainty remained as to whether the qualifying level for social work should be the B.A. or the M.A. In view of the growing demands on the social work profession arising from ever more complex situations of need, it is really not possible to cover all fields of practice and all methods at the undergraduate level. Yet without adequate funding and support from employers, students enrol for specialized M.A. courses and indeed Ph.D. programmes more or less only at their own expense, which means that most students seek work already after the B.A. and employers correspondingly do not generally recognize a higher qualification in terms of higher salary levels.

2. This relates to the question, which features in all the reports, whether there is scope for specialization in undergraduate courses. Some countries have always emphasized the generic nature of social work training that would allow graduates to find employment in a variety of fields and learn the required specialized skills "on the job". Others, however, maintained separate avenues of specialization right from the beginning. The Netherlands is an interesting example in this regard because it went through phases of merging the separate training strands and then more recently differentiating them again in the latter stages of undergraduate courses into "Social Work and Community Development and Inclusive Society", "Social Work and Health Care" and "Social Work and Youth Professionals". But despite these attempts at grouping training around such predefined areas, the various fields of social work practice are differentiating more and more, if one considers the impact of legislation alone in areas like psychiatry or child protection. Yet there simply is not enough space in undergraduate courses to accommodate more than an overview of fields like family work, medical or psychiatric social work, disability, probation, and work in educational settings, to say nothing of community work or community action or work in crisis situations such as with refugees or in the current pandemic. Furthermore, it appears to be a paradoxical consequence of the trend towards EBP that the idea of an organically structured build-up of knowledge and skills, starting with a generic core and branching out into ever more specialized fields of practice and methods, is disappearing – which is paradoxical because natural sciences organize epistemologies exactly in such an hierarchical way. At the academic level in human