

European Social Work Education and Practice

Vjollca Krasniqi  
Jane McPherson *Editors*

# Human Rights in this Age of Uncertainty

Social Work Approaches and Practices  
from Southeast Europe



European Association  
of Schools of Social Work



Springer

# European Social Work Education and Practice

## Series Editors

Nino Žganec, Department of Social Work, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia  
Marion Laging, Faculty of Social Work, Health Care, Esslingen University of Applied Sciences, Esslingen am Neckar, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

*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.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/16359>

Vjollca Krasniqi • Jane McPherson  
Editors

# Human Rights in this Age of Uncertainty

Social Work Approaches and Practices  
from Southeast Europe

 Springer

*Editors*

Vjollca Krasniqi  
Faculty of Philosophy  
Department of Social Work  
University of Prishtina  
Prishtina, Kosovo

Jane McPherson  
School of Social Work  
University of Georgia  
Athens, Georgia, USA

ISSN 2662-2440

ISSN 2662-2459 (electronic)

European Social Work Education and Practice

ISBN 978-3-031-11727-5

ISBN 978-3-031-11728-2 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11728-2>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Foreword

In the best of circumstances and with adequate resources, establishing and delivering social work education is both challenging and complex. Calling out these challenges and complexities is exactly what Vjollca Krasniqi and Jane McPherson have done in this volume, *Human Rights in this Age of Uncertainty: Social Work Approaches and Practices from Southeast Europe*. With human rights as the critical framework for establishing and delivering social work education and practice, Krasniqi and McPherson have brought together educator practitioners who examine a human rights-based approach to social work education from a Southeast European perspective.

*Human Rights in this Age of Uncertainty* critically presents the educational and social historical contexts of social work education and practice in Southeast European nations. The authors explore the transition from the historical context of needs-based services to rights-based approaches and practices. They illustrate the dualism occurring between social work education that promotes human rights approaches versus social work practice that often supports a needs-based paradigm, requiring practitioners to adhere to legal regulations with little or no attention to human rights. They carefully examine the historical contexts influenced by gender inequality, discrimination, oppression, political instability, and social exclusion, which have limited the adoption of a rights-based approach to services. The authors offer a careful analysis of the intersection of the issues confronting social work approaches to human rights and social justice in Southeast Europe, and they identify and examine the challenges and obstacles faced by social work educators as they integrate a rights-based framework in social work education.

As identified by title, the organizing framework of this book is human rights in the context of the uncertainties facing social work education and practice. This framework includes an explicit grounding of practice in human rights principles: human dignity, nondiscrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability. Each principle with its multiple facets compels social workers to examine the causes of inequities and find avenues to address them. Staying true to the values and ethics of the profession, this book lays out the limitations and criticisms of rights-based approaches, outlines suggestions for how these approaches can be integrated into social work education and practice, and presents future directions for social work

practice responses to the ongoing challenges to human rights and aspirations for equality in Southeast Europe.

The book is an introduction for those interested in understanding the history and current political context of social work education programs and practice in Southeast Europe. In addition, it will be useful as a primary or secondary text in a course on international social work approaches and practices or human rights and social justice. The array of topics provides a glimpse of the challenges and complexities of establishing and delivering social work education in systems impacted by ineffective leadership, political repression, marginalization of vulnerable groups, and social inequalities.

It is easy for faculty and students to become cynical about human rights and social justice when it seems as if the whole world is engaged in unjust practices and not paying attention to the plight of our marginalized and vulnerable citizens. We recognize that rights-based approaches seem abstract and well-meaning, but often have little influence over professional practice. We acknowledge that our goal to change the profession is often obstructed by the social and political climate of the host country. This is exactly why *Human Rights in this Age of Uncertainty* is an important resource for understanding international social work education and practice; for engaging in the discourse around human rights, social justice, and rights-based approaches; and for connecting interpersonal practices (micro perspectives) with community work, policy development, advocacy, and social action (macro perspectives).

As social work educators, a large portion of our careers has focused on international social work education and practice, with an emphasis on Southeast Europe. This book speaks to the importance of recognizing and affirming the differences in educational and cultural contexts, which significantly impact the design and delivery of social work education and practice. The validity and importance of this book is demonstrated throughout each chapter.

With this in mind, we invite readers to suspend judgment based on their own historical, educational, and cultural contexts. We invite them to recognize the importance of the need for strong linkages between academe, practice, and policy. We invite them to open their minds to a significant shift from the dominant needs-based approach to a rights-based approach to reposition and redefine social work as a human rights profession.

<p>Co-Founder, Southeast European Women's Leadership Initiative Secretary, International Association of Schools of Social Work Board Chair Emerita, Council on Social Work Education Dean and Professor Emerita, University of St. Thomas St. Paul, MN, USA</p>	<p>Barbara W. Shank, MSW, PhD, LICSW</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------

<p>Co-Founder, Southeast European Women's Leadership Initiative President, Dennis A and Julia M Watkins Foundation Executive Director Emerita, Council on Social Work Education President Emerita, American University in Bulgaria Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria</p>	<p>Julia M. Watkins, MSW, PhD</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------



# Acknowledgements

This book would not exist without the groundwork and ongoing support of Dr. Julia M. Watkins and Dr. Barbara W. Shank, two farsighted leaders in global social work education who are enthusiastic advocates for social work scholarship in Southeast Europe. Through their support of the region's women scholars, the editors of this book—along with many of the contributors to it—first met at the 2015 Annual Program Meeting of the U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in Denver, Colorado. We are extremely grateful to Dr. Shank and Dr. Watkins for their unwavering encouragement, and we are honored by their foreword to this volume.

At the CSWE conference in 2015, Dr. Vjollca Krasniqi and colleagues presented “Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Communist Southeast Europe,” and Dr. Jane McPherson shared her work on “Social Work as a Human Rights Profession.” We attended each other's presentations, and through our subsequent discussions, messages, and visits, we developed long-term collaborations and friendships.

We formed our transnational research collaborative—Rights-Based Social Work Practice in Southeastern Europe—in 2016, and are grateful to Dr. Nino Žganec and colleagues at the University of Zagreb for hosting our first meeting in September of that year. In 2017, our collaborative, which included Drs. Elona Dhembo and Erika Bejko of the University of Tirana; Drs. Sanela Šadić and Sanela Bašić of the University of Sarajevo; and Drs. Nino Žganec, Marina Milić Babić, and Gordana Berc of the University of Zagreb, along with Drs. Krasniqi and McPherson, successfully obtained seed funding for our joint research from the International Association of Schools of Social Work.

We would like to thank all the colleagues who have contributed their time and wisdom as authors in this book, as well as those who have worked alongside us and helped shape our thinking, including Dr. Elona Dhembo (University of Tirana), Dr. Sanela Bašić (University of Sarajevo), Dr. Ana Marija Sobočan (University of Ljubljana), and Dr. Tatiana Villarreal-Otálora (Kennesaw State University). Dr. Sanela Šadić, Dr. Gordana Berc, Dr. Nino Žganec, Yvanna Panter, Elizabeth Craig, and Jon Jefferson all provided feedback on individual chapters that enriched the book as a whole. Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara (Indiana University) kindly offered



moral and material support as we edited the first draft of this manuscript in Berlin, Germany, in February 2022.

Dr. Nino Žganec first approached us about the possibility of putting together this volume, and we are grateful to him and to Dr. Marion Laging, co-editors of Springer's *European Social Work Education and Practice* Series, for helping see this project through to completion. Our copy editor, Teresa Barendsfeld, worked on every chapter and contributed enormously to the project with her skills and attention to detail. Kat Farlowe, graphic designer at the University of Georgia School of Social Work, generously contributed the beautiful maps that are included in the text. The professionals at Springer, including Olivia Ramya Chitranjan, Janet Kim, Brian Halm, and Misao Taguchi, have been gracious and helpful as we turned the germ of an idea into the book you hold in your hands today. In all cases, these professionals were quick to respond to our queries and worked hard to make this book the best it could be.

We are truly indebted also to those who have funded our collaboration: The Dennis A. and Julia M. Watkins Foundation, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, and both the School of Social Work and the Office of the Provost at the University of Georgia. We are grateful to Christina Autry at the University of Georgia School of Social Work for managing our accounting.

Finally, we thank our families for their patience, good humor, and kindness as we have completed this work.

We are deeply grateful.

University of Prishtina  
Prishtina, Kosovo

Vjollca Krasniqi

University of Georgia  
Athens, Georgia, USA

Jane McPherson

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Human Rights, Social Work, and Uncertainty: The View from Southeast Europe</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
	Vjollca Krasniqi and Jane McPherson	
<b>2</b>	<b>Overcoming Troubling Practices Against Roma and Among Roma People: A Human Rights Perspective in Slovenian Social Work</b> . . . . .	<b>13</b>
	Darja Zaviršek	
<b>3</b>	<b>Integrating Social Work with Human Rights in Croatia: A Long Way to Mutual Recognition</b> . . . . .	<b>35</b>
	Nino Žganec, Gordana Berc, and Marina Milić Babić	
<b>4</b>	<b>Pathways to a Rights-Based Paradigm in Social Work: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina</b> . . . . .	<b>61</b>
	Sanela Bašić	
<b>5</b>	<b>Human Rights and Social Work in Pandemic Times in Kosovo</b> . . . . .	<b>89</b>
	Vjollca Krasniqi	
<b>6</b>	<b>Social Work and Local Democracy: Promoting Human Rights Through Community Action in Albania</b> . . . . .	<b>109</b>
	Marsela Dauti and Erika Bejko	
<b>7</b>	<b>Human Rights and Social Work Practices in the Age of Uncertainty: The Case of Romania</b> . . . . .	<b>129</b>
	Florin Lazăr and Smaranda Witec	
<b>8</b>	<b>Human Rights and Social Work in Bulgaria: Policy, Practice, and Education</b> . . . . .	<b>147</b>
	Lilyana Strakova, Boncho Gospodinov, and Rossitsa Simeonova	
	<b>Index</b> . . . . .	<b>171</b>

# About the Editors and Contributors

## Editors and Contributors

**Vjollca Krasniqi** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Social Work and the Faculty of Arts, University of Prishtina, Kosovo. She holds a PhD in social work from the University of Ljubljana; an MSc degree in gender, development, and globalization from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE); and a bachelor's degree in philosophy and sociology from the University of Prishtina. Her research interests are gender, human rights, nation-building, and social policy. She has led and participated in numerous international research projects and published widely on these topics. She is member of the Executive Board of the East European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work. She has actively engaged on gender equality and dealing with the past issues in Kosovo and the wider Balkan region. She has served on the boards of directors of several civil society organizations in Kosovo.

**Jane McPherson** is Associate Professor and Director of Global Engagement at the University of Georgia School of Social Work in Athens, Georgia, USA. Her scholarship examines social work through a human rights lens, and she applies human rights principles to research, teaching, and practice. Her measurable framework for human rights practice in social work and its accompanying scales have been widely translated for use around the world. Locally and globally, she promotes participatory, transparent, accountable, and antidiscriminatory social work practices—especially those that address the unequal distribution of wealth, health, political power, and community wellness. Prior to becoming a scholar, Dr. McPherson practiced social work for over 20 years, working in maternal-child health, child welfare, bereavement, and in the treatment of survivors of political torture.

## Contributors

**Marina Milić Babić** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law, Department of Social Work, University of Zagreb, Croatia. Her research interests are related to human rights; counseling services; gestalt therapy; and support services for students in high education, children, and people with disabilities. She has published 36 articles and 2 books.

**Sanela Bašić** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She has published internationally on welfare policy, gender and labor market, ethnic conflict, postconflict, peace building, and reconciliation. She was a recipient of the Academic Fellowship Program of the Open Society Foundation (2010–2014), a member of the Executive Committee of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (2007–2017), and its secretary (2015–2017).

**Erika Bejko** is assistant professor of Social Work at the University of Tirana, Albania. Her research focuses on issues of international cooperation, local development, humanitarian aid, and evidence-based practice. Currently, she teaches courses on quantitative and qualitative research methods in social work. Dr. Bejko holds a PhD from the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Tirana.

**Gordana Berc** is Professor in the Faculty of Law, Department of Social Work, University of Zagreb, Croatia. Her current research interests are related to youth and families, school social work, family services, and counseling methods. Dr. Berc has published 42 articles and participated in national and international research projects.

**Marsela Dauti** is Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Tirana, Albania. Her research focuses on issues of political inclusion, democratic accountability, and government responsiveness. Dr. Dauti supports policy makers, development practitioners, and human rights activists in using evidence in their work. She holds a PhD from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Boncho Gospodinov** is Professor of Education (Educational Research) in the Faculty of Education, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria. Since the late 1990s, he has been instrumental in establishing and developing social work as an academic subject in the Faculty of Education. From 2006 to 2016, he was chair of the management board of the Bulgarian Association for Social Work Education. His academic interests focus on education, didactics, social work theory, and practice, research in education, and social work.

**Florin Lazâr** is Professor in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania. He is member of the editorial board of the *European Journal of Social Work*, and he participates in the leadership of European Association of Schools of Social Work, European Social Work Research Association, and of the National College of Social Workers from Romania.

**Rossitsa Simeonova** is Associate Professor of Social Work Management in the Faculty of Education, Department of Social Work, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria. She has 25 years of experience as an academic lecturer and as a trainer-consultant in social work and educational practice. Her research interests are quality management, leadership and organizational culture, change management, educational evaluation, and child rights. She is a member of the management board of the Bulgarian Association for Social Work Education.

**Lilyana Strakova** is Professor in the Faculty of Education at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bulgaria. She teaches the courses titled Professional Values and Norms in Social Work, Civic Education, Anticorruption Education, and others. Dr. Strakova is author of over 60 publications in the field of social work and education. She manages the Center for Civic Education in the Faculty of Education, as well as the master's program, Modern Educational Technologies, for training and retraining of teachers.

**Smaranda Witec** is Vice Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, PhD lecturer in the Department of Social Work, and President of the Bucharest Territorial Structure of the National College of Social Workers, Romania.

**Darja Zaviršek** is Professor in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she is also chair of the Social Justice and Inclusion Department. She is a professor of the international master's level course, Social Work as a Human Rights Profession, at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. She is the founder and president of the Eastern European Sub-Regional Association of the Schools of Social Work. Her research interests include disability, gender and critical studies, and the history of social welfare.

**Nino Žganec** is Professor at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. His professional and scientific interests include community social work, ethics and human rights, organization of social services, and international social work. He is experienced in political engagement and has served in leadership roles in the European Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the European Anti-Poverty Network, and the Croatian Anti-Poverty Network.

# List of Figures

<b>Fig. 1.1</b>	Southeast Europe .....	1
<b>Fig. 2.1</b>	Slovenia in relation to its neighboring countries in Southeast Europe .....	13
<b>Fig. 2.2</b>	Professors of social work from the University of Ljubljana protest the death of a Roma baby in front of the Faculty of Social Work, holding an Amnesty International banner: “Shall this be the last tragedy! #The Minute of Silence for Ahmetay,” February 2020.....	24
<b>Fig. 3.1</b>	Croatia in relation to its neighboring countries in Southeast Europe .....	35
<b>Fig. 3.2</b>	The building of the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb .....	38
<b>Fig. 3.3</b>	Social work students preparing for performing of different roles in human rights protection .....	39
<b>Fig. 3.4</b>	The art can play important role in social work and human rights education .....	52
<b>Fig. 4.1</b>	Bosnia and Hercegovina in relation to its neighboring countries in Southeast Europe .....	61
<b>Fig. 4.2</b>	College of Social Work, established in 1958 in Sarajevo .....	67
<b>Fig. 4.3</b>	Guest lecture of Dr. Darja Završek on the occasion of the World Social Work Day in 2013, “Social Work in Between Structural Inequalities and Human Rights Principles” .....	73
<b>Fig. 5.1</b>	Kosovo in relation to its neighboring countries in Southeast Europe .....	89
<b>Fig. 5.2</b>	Center for Social Work in Prishtina .....	96
<b>Fig. 5.3</b>	Kosovo citizens protesting by observing social distance during COVID-19 pandemic in Prishtina .....	100

**Fig. 6.1** Albania in relation to its neighboring countries  
in Southeast Europe ..... 109

**Fig. 6.2** Public hearing held in Ana e Malit ..... 115

**Fig. 7.1** Romania in relation to its neighboring countries  
in Southeast Europe ..... 129

**Fig. 7.2** The first school of social work in Bucharest, 1929..... 131

**Fig. 7.3** Cover of the first official publication of the high school  
of social work “Princess Ileana,” Bucharest, 1929 ..... 132

**Fig. 7.4** National Gala of Excellence in Social Work organized annually  
by the National College of Social Workers, on  
World Social Work Day, Bucharest, 2019..... 136

**Fig. 8.1** Bulgaria in relation to its neighboring countries  
in Southeast Europe ..... 147

**Fig. 8.2** Building of the Faculty of Education, University of  
Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski ..... 163

**Fig. 8.3** Social Work magazine publication of the Faculty of Education,  
University of Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski ..... 164



# List of Tables

<b>Table 4.1</b>	Human rights in social work education .....	74
<b>Table 4.2</b>	Knowledge of human rights.....	76
<b>Table 8.1</b>	People with disabilities hired by employers through services and programs provided by the state labor agency.....	157
<b>Table 8.2</b>	Courses in social work programs related to human rights.....	167

# Chapter 1

## Human Rights, Social Work, and Uncertainty: The View from Southeast Europe



Vjollca Krasniqi and Jane McPherson



**Fig. 1.1** Southeast Europe. (Map Credit: Kat Farlowe)

---

V. Krasniqi (✉)

Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Social Work, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo  
e-mail: [vjollca.krasniqi@uni-pr.edu](mailto:vjollca.krasniqi@uni-pr.edu)

J. McPherson

School of Social Work, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA  
e-mail: [jmcpherson@uga.edu](mailto:jmcpherson@uga.edu)

## 1.1 Southeast Europe: A Region of Continuous Transition and Uncertainty

In early 2022, as we put the finishing touches on this manuscript, the world is more than 2 years into the COVID-19 pandemic that has turned lives upside down—creating *uncertainty*—around the globe and across Southeast Europe. This uncertainty is exacerbated now by the reality of war on the region’s eastern border. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine means that Southeast Europe must brace itself for a flood of new refugees and a future whose story will be rewritten once again by conflict. In the Southeast European region, this uncertainty is nothing new. For more than three decades, the region has felt the pains and pleasures of its transition from socialism to capitalism and liberal democracy, and the region has endured the trauma and destruction of war. Still, this “normalized state of exception,” to borrow from Walter Benjamin (1968, p. 257), should not be understood simply as a condition of stagnation or chaos, but rather as one that carries within it the possibility of transcendence. Uncertainty, in this sense, can open the door to transformation, resilience, and development.

In this volume, we investigate the impact of these transitions and uncertainties on the social work profession in Southeast Europe, we examine these transformations, and we explore how human rights have been integrated (or not) into professional social work practice and education. Authors from across the region—representing the seven nations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Romania, and Slovenia—reflect on their national and social work histories and consider how effective social work has been at coping with transition and promoting human rights in their respective countries. In so doing, these authors identify barriers—structural, cultural, and individual—that prevent social workers from engaging in human rights–based approaches to professional practice. Though barriers and challenges abound, these authors conclude that social work can and must play a role in expanding access to the full gamut of human rights for all people in the region.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989, Southeast Europe has been engaged in a process of accelerated disruption, evolution, and change. Indeed, the region has been shaped by rupture. The dissolution of Yugoslavia opened the door for the emergence of new states—Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and the still-disputed nation of Kosovo—and also created uncertainty and conflict as new borders were drawn. War and interethnic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo prompted the international community to intervene by deploying United Nations (UN) peacekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, carrying out aerial bombings against Serb military and police forces in Kosovo, and by establishing UN protectorates in both countries. Though there is peace now, the ethnic divisions and tension within Bosnia and Herzegovina and between Serbia and Kosovo remain. In former Yugoslavia and across the Southeast European region, the end of the communist era required nations to develop new state systems and political