



**FOSTERING THE CAPACITY OF SOCIAL WORKERS  
DELIVERING EDUCATION ON LIFE SKILLS**

AGREEMENT NUMBER 2017-1-IT02-KA204-036916  
ERASMUS + PROGRAMME KEY ACTION 2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP  
FOR ADULT EDUCATION (DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION) ROUND 1

**Project report on literature review on scientific findings  
on the impacts of life skills on social workers' daily  
work and in field learning needs identification**







Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## **Project report on literature review on scientific findings on the impacts of life skills on social workers' daily work and in field learning needs identification**

March 2019

Deliverable 1 in WP1 // Revised: 31/3/2019

The following organizations contributed to the development of the Report:

Desincoop, CRL (leading partner)

AMS

Cooperativa 3P

Filantropia

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



# Content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Background</b> .....	2
<b>Aims and scope</b> .....	3
<b>Methodology</b> .....	4
<b>Social Work Historical Context</b> .....	6
<b>Italy</b> .....	8
<b>Portugal</b> .....	11
<b>Romania</b> .....	14
<b>Definition of Social Work</b> .....	17
<b>Definition of Social workers</b> .....	17
<b>Life Skills</b> .....	21
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	24
<b>Quantitative Research</b> .....	29
<b>Focus Group</b> .....	42
<b>Emerged Data</b> .....	43
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	53
<b>Improve the organization environment and Social Workers qualification</b> .....	54
<b>References</b> .....	56
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	58
<b>APPENDIX 1</b> .....	65
<b>Report of Portuguese Literature Review - Method</b> .....	65
<b>APPENDIX 2</b> .....	69
<b>GENERAL GUIDELINES – FOCUS GROUP MANUAL</b> .....	69
<b>SHEET 1</b> .....	78
<b>SHEET 2 - Emotional Intelligence</b> .....	80
<b>SHEET 3</b> .....	82
<b>APPENDIX 2</b> .....	83
<b>Questionnaire</b> .....	83

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIEJI – International Association of Social Educators

ANEP - Associazione Nazionale Educatori Professionali (Italian Association of Professional Educators)

APSS – Associação dos Profissionais de Serviço Social

CASEL Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

CCO organizational citizenship

GHQ General Health Questionnaire

IFSW - International Federation of Social Workers

ISSSP - Instituto Superior de Serviço Social do Porto

WHO - World Health Organization

## Introduction

Four partners from three countries (Italy, Portugal and Romania) make the Partnership of the FOstering the Capacity of social workers delivering edUcation on life Skills – FOCUS project: Three NGOs and one training organization specialized in LIFE SKILLS education.

The Social Work in all the three countries was built in very specific contexts having in common a long period of a dictatorial regime and social assistance, but then in the last decades it has been able to modernize itself, integrating in the field of human rights and social justice. However, it still faces great challenges and immense problems in terms of knowledge, teaching and profession.

Life Skills refer to a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that promote mental well-being, translating into a healthy and productive life. Life Skills help to upgrade potential skills into desirable behaviours. Life Skills education has emerged as a universal notion and a topic of wide discussion in recent years. WHO has promoted and popularized Life Skills for a variety of purposes, including substance abuse prevention, bullying, AIDS, drug abuse, and positive mental health promotion. The popularization of these concepts in the form of Life Skills is widely carried out by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Ottawa Health Promotion Session (1986), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Jomtien Declaration of Education for All (1990) included Life Skills as an essential tool for survival.

The 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All advocated this vision and included Life Skills among the essential learning tools for survival, capacity building and quality of life.

The 2000 Dakar World Education Conference took the position that all young people and adults have the human right to benefit from "an education which includes learning to know, to do, to live and to be" and has included Life-Skills in two of the six EFA goals.

As ILO (2000) states the basic Life Skills, such as numeracy and literacy, problem-solving and management, communication and negotiation skills, improve confidence and capacity to explore and try new income-earning opportunities.

The context of Social Work is changing rapidly and the profession is expanding its reach. Social workers and the Social Work profession extensively use each life skills in their practice with the manifold population. But the social workers use the "life skills" namely empathy, self-awareness, decision making, interpersonal relationships etc.. As basic concepts in their practice. The absence of prefix "life skill" lead to the misunderstanding that social workers have only little to do with life skills. Social workers have lot to do with life skills and are doing so well in their manifold interventions, with diverse population. The importance social work profession has placed on each life skills are not given to the umbrella term of life skills. Social work is a potential profession that can prolifically use the life skills as an effective tool of

intervention to its diverse practice field.<sup>1</sup>

To properly contextualize the training to the learning needs and work contexts of beneficiaries was developed a research under the aegis contributions of the partnership which results from this report. Thus, transversally, there is a need to improve life skills education targeted to the need of social workers, updating training modules, as well as creating new ones, as conclude the study.

The options of the content respect the decisions of the partnership. In short, each phase of this long path it is summarized in different items of this report with a logical sequence to contextualize the main achievements and recommendations. A training program for social workers should be implemented to develop Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence as health and well-being of the social worker's protector's factors. All skills linked with communication are a subject to include in training courses. A more attention should be devoted to the use of non-formal dynamics to improve better interpersonal relationships, evidences resulting from reliable professional experiences as "study ca-ses" or "inspiring practices" to improve and increase more team collaboration. Developing platforms to share the innovations in social work practice is a requirement to improve social workers Life Skills.

## Background

With the end of the World War II and the publication of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950, Social Work development had a strong impact.

Almost fifty years later, in 1994, the United Nations (UN) recognized the Social Work importance as a scientific field and the professional's commitment to promote and protect Human Rights. This public acknowledgment was evidenced in the choice for the first volume of it *Vocational Training Series* - a collection of manuals aimed at specific audiences, dedicating to Social Work. In the same period, the World Health Organization (WHO) also produced Guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Life Skills Programmes to all that were involved in school curriculum development, school-based health, health education and social interventions.

Nowadays there is a consensus among different authors, from various nationalities, that Social Work is in a challenging moment in its professional history in the multicultural society of the twenty-first century (Punternold Bø, 2015, Misca & Neamtu, 2016). The contexts are rapidly changing; practice and the profession are facing unprecedented challenges around the world; perennial questions like poverty and globalisation, gender issues and all forms of discrimination, are highlight by the most important organisations of the profession at several

---

<sup>1</sup> Kurian & Kurian. (2014). The Nexus of Life Skills and Social Work Practice. Social Work Chronicle Volume 3 Issue 1/2

international events.

The recent conflicts, the climate change, and other disasters with mass migrations, the trafficking of human beings and as consequence the rise of indigenous voices are part of Social Agenda. New problems require knowledge, skills, and values. Social work, as human rights based profession require that social workers have an ethical responsibility to promote social justice and social change. To enhance human well-being it is crucial the improvement of lifelong learning to anticipate methods, tools to guide social work practice and fulfil the social and ethical commitment in the provision of services to vulnerable persons.

In this context, well-being and Life Skills are at least as important as other 21st century skills. Well-being is a keyword in the WHO definition of health and we can discuss how much this concept it is important, not only when referred to the population in general, but also for the social workers leading with in a changing world.

In fact, Social Workers and the Social Work profession, extensively, use each Life Skills in their practice with the manifold population. For Social Workers the use of each Life Skills namely empathy, self-awareness, decision making, interpersonal relationships are basic concepts in their practice.<sup>2</sup> How these affect the users with they work and themselves? These two questions were present in this effort of doing the state of art.

Unfortunately, the research on the topic is scarce in all the participant countries of FOCUS project. Although Social Work is a century-old profession, scientific research is recent and it is the result from the evolution of the social work professional education and the levels of qualification achieved by professionals in this area of knowledge.

The present report reviews available literature research produced mainly in Italy, Portugal and Romania. During the design of the research was not easy to advance a single concept about Social Work among partners. Each partner tried to find the concept accepted in its own country, which results from different historical, social and cultural environments. Despite all the efforts made since 2012, by the various international organizations related to the profession, still exist different approaches of this scientific field. Understanding the historical background of this diversity is a challenge and an opportunity to learn from each other's.

## Aims and scope

FOCUS project foresees the implementation of an innovative model to train Life Skills competences, based on scientific findings and relevant self-assessment tools. Thanks to the project, partners intend to qualify Social Workers with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable effective practice to meet the new and ongoing challenges and to achieve em-

---

<sup>2</sup> Kurian, Aneesh; Kurian, Tintu, (2014), The Nexus of Life Skills and Social Work Practice, Social Work Chronicle. 2014, Vol. 3 Issue 1/2, p21-33. 13p.

powering practices of people who use services. Case studies and reflective exercises will be used throughout the project training to explore these issues and help link theory to practice. More qualified and competent professionals are indicators of more healthy professionals.

## Methodology

The research design of the project was made during the preparation of the project application. The wide scope of this project was emphasized during the first transnational meeting obliging to improve and include some adaptations regarding the timelines and tools needed to achieve the outcomes.

During the first phase the three partners start for understanding the social work profession in Italy, Portugal and Romania since its emergence to the present day, to understand the different stages, the different profiles and highlighting the challenges in the context of globalization and social risk. To keep up with the diversity and dynamics of the complex problems social workers face in their daily work life was the first objective and big challenge of the partnership. On the other hand, to understand how the socio-historical conditions, in each moment and place, have been reflected in the profession, how they produced several competing paradigms and, therefore, different perspectives of analysis, going through moments of great conflicts and controversies.

The literature review was the starting point and a key moment to identify but also to select and interpret the first findings. In this project a big part of the time was devoted to this task.

To better select sources, the partnership used some criteria, the IO template and matched the professions and the target publics identified in the Kick off meeting:

- Partners have done a checklist with the most relevant key concepts linked with the purpose of the literature review;
- According to the decision of the partnership, the concept of Social Workers was used in *latu sensu* in a first stage;
- The literature review focused on the literature research of the last decade (2008/2018) on Social Workers training, Life Skills development and its impact on professional's practice and their target publics in the social sector;
- Studies that were relevant and representative in each country were identified through several means, including a computer search about the availability of sources in the subject area in Universities databases or other similar sources. Each partner produced a document highlighting the contribution of at least 10 national authors;
- Selection of the most useful and relevant research related to the impact of Life Skills on Social Workers daily work and in field learning needs identification.

As expected, almost of the documents found were not exactly from the social field as limited by partners. The social field cover a big diversity of situations, not only linked with the diversity of professionals acting in social field but also with the target publics/ final beneficiaries/ Users/Clients and their specific needs. The same situation regarding the place in which social workers develop their intervention. For the aim of this project, the research was about social workers acting in private nonprofit organizations in which users can found answer to their specific needs.

To understand the scope of the literature review each partner/country defined the institutional answers they act according the problematics and the target-publics. Moreover, because the training that result from the conclusions of this Intellectual Output (IO) will directly involve social workers from these organizations.

During the construction of the checklist some Keywords were identified, as already mentioned selected search terms and descriptors were: Life Skills, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Coping with Emotions, Coping with Stress, Coping with matched with others like "Social Work" "social sector", "training", "skills development", "management development" and "education".

Search terms used included keyword crossover. In the end partners found that, many of the keywords helped linking different studies but others were not significant, not meet the inclusion criteria and for this reason were exclude. Others were not accessible and others were repeated because they were found in different databases. The three partners shared this difficulty. As Campanini (2010) stated it is evident that meaningful differences between European countries persist in a number of ways, not only with the typology of institutions providing education in social work field, the curriculum, the professional practice preparation.

The option to this literature review started for finding who were the first doctoral graduated and follow their research, mainly regarding master advice to reach a critical summary of published research literature relevant to the topic of FOCUS project. Searches of the literature were made using mainly academic databases, websites, journals and e-books.

The body of the review will allow creating more familiarity with the current thinking and research about our topic Life Skills with WHO meaning.

The second phase of the qualitative investigation, which took place between November and December 2018, predicted the organization and implementation of one focus group by country. The selection of participants it was preceded by an institutional review at the local level to identify some worker-level patterns and their functions. The selection also respected some of the criteria discussed on the kick off meeting where the partners describe in more detail the target-public of the project mainly the professionals that should be engaged. Using Focus Group with social workers as a data collection technique it's the right choice to collect information in one field in which the diversity of problematics and work contexts is

so diverse. It also answers to the lack of transversal studies and helps to go deep in some questions because the function of the moderator is helping participants to share a more detailed view. In other hand, this is a very difficult task because some people have difficulties in sharing their true point of views others try to give a lot of information and not all are important to the subject that is in analyze.

As Parente (2003) confirmed “problems multiply either due to the difficulties verbalization of the subjects, either due to the lack of mastery of the analysis techniques in the Linguistics by the researcher. It is also known that the cognitive structures of actors have a different configuration depending on the vocabulary they use and the way they use (Parente, C. 2003, p.311)<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, were chosen moderators with scientific knowledge and were assisted by one member of the team to collect notes for further analyze.

The objective of the focus group was to explore and expand knowledge about fundamental concepts of the project, namely Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence, to foster the emergence of personal opinions on the concrete application of these skills in one's own work context reference, assess the working climate and collect any operational suggestions for interventions targeted and necessary.

The quantitative study had AMS as leading partner took place in the three countries with a sample selected by one partner per country according the profile of its own local network. The preliminary results were discussed during the second transnational meeting and statistical methods were used in data analysis.

During the Multiplier Event that took place in the Catholic University, in Braga, Portugal, the results, of these three moments, were presented and validated, to an audience of academics, professionals and students. During one part of the day the impact of Life Skills were discussed in groups, each with a panel of professionals from different age groups and intervening in different areas of social work.

## **Social Work Historical Context**

By looking into historically developments of Social Work, helps to understand the main drivers of the actual situation in the three countries involved in FOCUS project (Italy, Portugal and Romania). All three have in common centralised (authoritarian) pasts with big influence in the way Social Work affirmed its identity and developed scientifically.

According Mouro, Helena (2011, p. 271), “the profession is the product of a theoretical-political-doctrinal arrangement”. Martins, Alcina (1999; 2010) underlined the heavy inheritance of the Estado Novo, stating “the fact that lived by 25 April 1974 under an authoritarian, conservative and obscurantist regime, did not develop a knowledge of the social sciences

---

<sup>3</sup> Parente, C. (2003). *Construção Social das Competências Profissionais*. Tese de Doutoramento, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Porto. <http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/945.pdf>

and marks the whole trajectory of the Portuguese Social Work, with repercussion on the late development of its professional and intellectual status.”

Apart from this socio-political influence, these countries also share the deep power of Christian Churches (Catholic and Christian Orthodox) that were responsible for the education of the first professionals. This perspective is stressed by Stefaroi (2011) “Qualities such as empathy, presence of spirit, high level of general culture, aesthetic taste, faith and respect for moral / religious values, playful spirit, communicativeness should not be missed either by the social assistant, the psychologist or the caretaker because he is the person concrete way to empathize with the assistant.”<sup>4</sup>

Another common point, shared by this partnership, referred to the first movements that were the origin of the profession. With a remarkable female participation, voluntarism and charity base left an influence still reflected in the motivations for choosing this profession and this scientific field. “It is possible to find, in these professionals, a professional ethos based on a motivation to “Helping people” dating back to the beginning of their academic career”.<sup>5</sup> The church has significant involvement in social work education in Eastern European countries such as Hungary and Romania where the social work training can be linked with the preparation to become a deacon (Campanini, 2010, p. 689).<sup>6</sup>

Since the late nineteenth century, there have been international and pan-European agreements that have contributed to the development of the identity of Social Work, namely the Bologna Declaration that was established in 1999, including, nowadays, 47 European countries that provide social-work qualifications in universities. (Lyons, Manion, & Carlsen, 2006 cit. in Jones, 2013).<sup>7</sup>

The brief historical perspective explain some of the developments in recent times leading Social Work in a position of confront with new changes in the world and the emergency imposed to professionals that does not allow them to have time and opportunities for reflection on their practice and shaping it from a theoretical basis.

In other hand, the differences manifest themselves in the diversity of tasks across different institutions born to answer to specific needs in local contexts putting professionals in the ambiguity of looking for organizational objectives and the principles to which should obey their practice. Differences that can be observed in the three European countries are often significant.

---

<sup>4</sup> Stefaroi, Petru. (2011) The professional qualities of the professional in the field of human social assistance, the Electronic Collection, Psychology and Human Social Assistance, Romania

<sup>5</sup> Caria, T. H.; Cesar, F & Biltres, R. (2012): “O uso dualista do conhecimento das Ciências Sociais no Trabalho Social em Portugal”, Sociologia y tecnociencia, nº 2, vol. 1, pp. 1-15

<sup>6</sup> Campanini, A.(2010) The challenges of Social Work education in Europe. PSYCHOLOGICA. 2010, 52 – Vol. II, 687-700

<sup>7</sup> Jones, David. June 2013. International Social Work and Social Welfare: Europe. Retrieved from <https://oxfordre.com/socialwork>

## Italy

In the early 20th century, the earliest forms of professional social work in Italy were oriented towards factory workers. The social work task was to assist workers and at the same time to control insurgencies (Bartolomei and Passera 2010)<sup>8</sup>

Before the First World War, the Catholic Church was mainly responsible for this particular area of work, at least until the establishment of the Italian Constitution in 1948. Article 38 of the Constitution declares the right to assistance for “every citizen unable to work and without the necessary resources to live”. It focuses attention on the duty of the Italian state to take care of citizens who are physically or economically unable to look after themselves and cannot therefore lead a respectable life.

The end of World War II is a milestone to the development of Social Work in Italy. Due to this context, Social Work needed to be restructured according to the reconstruction and rebirth of the country. The first schools of Social Work were organized in the north of Italy and their aim was to train a new professional figure, in Italy called “social assistant”. This new job (predominantly, for a long time, a female job) aimed, as today, to help citizens who were in trouble and indigent on the difficult route towards autonomy. This professional role of social assistant also included the theoretical methodology of social work. (Marciano, Daniele & Salvati, Armida, 2018).

The period of development of the profession from the 50s and 60s. According to Marciano & Salvati the 1950s in Italy had a strong psychological approach focused on the individual (the case management approach) while group work and community work were only marginally used. At this time, Social Workers were employed by government-controlled agencies. In this large organization, supervision was common and well developed (Campanini, 2011, Sicora, 2015).

Marciano & Salvati (2018) argue that social services experienced a critical period during the 1960s. Specifically, there were two main questions, the first being whether or not social services should be considered an agent of change or whether social work should just remain a defender of the status quo. The economic boom, however, left unsolved the second question of social equality.

Campanini (2011) highlighted some of the changes in social status and health care during of the '60s and' 70s in which many organizations restructured during this period and new reforms:

- Decentralization (Decree n.616 / 1977 and others);
- Reform of the National Health Service (Law n.833 / 1978);

---

<sup>8</sup> Marciano, Daniele & Salvati, Armida.(2018) Two see-saws in motion: youth work and social work in Italy. The History of Youth Work in Europe. Volume 6. Youth Knowledge 23 Council of Europe and European Commission p. 85-94

- New legislation for the family (Law 405/1975);
- Law No. 180/78 with the objective of improving the knowledge and skills of psychiatrists.

Marciano & Salvati (2018) also identified some of the more relevant social events that characterized the 70s in Italy they considering that were not a peaceful decade, because of the terrorist strategy and in the same path, between the 1970s and 1980s doing to the diffusion of drugs among young people and young adults, which then lead to many deaths.

The understandable concern with a psychiatry approach as stated above with Law n° 180 also have had an impact in the role of social workers, therefore, became more and more necessary in the therapeutic communities for drug addiction, as well as in preventive detached social work (Franzoni and Anconelli 2014).

The launch of a public youth policy during the 1980s appeared in tune with social work and social policies operating at local level. Both private youth work and public social work focused on a reparative approach to health or social problems involving young people (including issues such as delinquency, early school leaving, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, sex education, teenage pregnancy, unemployment) until the beginning of the 21st century.

However, Social Work only achieved its legitimacy and legal recognition in the second half of the 1980s with:

- the recognition of undergraduate courses as the only educational path to Social Work in all Italian Universities (Decree No. 162, dated 10/3 / 1982);
- the professional registration instituted (Law No. 84, dated 03/23/1993), which in turn established the Association of Social Workers and the code of ethics that was drafted.

In this sense, the process of educational recognition defined throughout the country has provided legitimacy for the action of Social Workers as a “professional action” (Campanini, 2011, Sicora, 2015, Mordeglia, 2015).

In March 1993 the Association of Social Workers established that to work as a Social Worker, is obligatory the registration in the Professional Order Association created by Law n.84. The professional order consists of two sections:

- A. is intended for those responsible for the management and coordination of social services;
- B. is related to the role of the Social Worker (the Social Worker works with technical and professional autonomy and judgment in all phases of prevention, support and recovery of individuals, families, groups and communities in need and distress and can lead the teaching and training activities).

A national professional register supports the continuing professional education of social

workers, as well as giving them the respect of the code of ethics. Marciano & Salvati (2018) spot that the national law, therefore, recognizes the Social Work profession, and social workers are formally included in public social and health services, as well as in the social and educational services provided by the third sector.

These authors also stated that social workers are currently professionals trained through specific higher education courses. A three-year degree and a state examination are required to become a professional social worker. A further two years of academic training allows for the holding of a management role as a specialist social worker as a result of the Bologna Declaration.

This European instrument was signed by 29 countries in 1999 and it is considered a very important step in the development of a European higher education system. In this sense, Italy introduced a national reform related to higher education and established two levels of degrees in all faculties (a level entitled "Social Service Sciences" and a master's degree in "Planning and Administration of Social Services and Policies " (Campanini, 2011). After signing the agreement, the Italian Parliament reformed its own educational structure, adopting the three required levels (bachelor / master / doctor).

Unfortunately, with the changes in the political environment, this reform was not implemented in many of the Italian regions. In addition, the constitutional reform of the "titolo V" (LC3 / 2001), which gave regional governments greater autonomy to meet citizens' needs, called into question the minimum national standard for service provision, introducing the possibility different treatment from the place of residence. Although this law has created a new balance in the fields of action of Social Work it was based on services of charity, reciprocity, solidarity, non-negotiated 'production' of relationship and sociability (Ascoli, 1999, quoted by Campanini, 2011).

With the reorganisation of the social services system initiated by Law 328/2000 (Framework law for the realisation of the integrated system of interventions and social services), centres for adolescents and young people would continue to operate within the sphere of local social and health services with structures mainly entrusted to management by third-sector organisations.

As Campanini (2011) refers the growth of the third sector and non-profit organizations was accompanied by a gradual process of relations between these organizations and the public sector. Naturally, there was a gradual reduction of state intervention and a significant increase in the number of services allocated to the private social area. Social workers as various regulated professions in the sphere of education (for example professional educator, socio-cultural educator, community worker) are regularly engaged in the private sector as educators.

Social Work is multifunctional because it acts simultaneously on several fronts:

“with users; design, organization and management of services; promotion, animation

and coordination of community and private sector resources and services to solve general and individual social problems; study, research and analysis of problems and resources of the territory for the realization of projects capable of implementing local, participatory and planned social policies “(Dal Pra, 1991, cit. in Sicora, 2015, p.57).

Currently, the problems of Social Workers have not diminished. Problems are increasingly complex due to issues that have arisen in society at large, like the new poor, social exclusion resulting from transformations of family patterns and work organization, new problems among young people, the current characteristics and problems resulting new social risks, aging populations and chronic and degenerative diseases (Campanini, 2011). In other words, society in constant renewal requires that Social Workers adapt to deal with new and old problems, such as aging, migration, new families and other issues (Sicora, 2015).

Unlike the other countries, where the process is articulated with different types of interventions (teamwork, group work, community work and administrative work), the unitary method adopted in Italy calls for professional intervention to adopt the same methodological approach. The unitary methodological is one of the key features of the Servizio sociale di territorio, provided by the municipalities and including almost half of the Italian Social Workers. (Campanini, 2011).

Even if the traditional models of Social Work (psychosocial, problem-solving, task-centred, just mentioned as the best known) are still popular, the systemic model - based on systems theory and the human communication pragmatics of the Palo Alto School. Together with the network approach are probably the most influential theoretical frameworks seen in practice and Social Work education today in Italy (Campanini, 1988 cit. in Sicora, 2015). And in practice, according to Marciano & Salvati (2018) “today, the two see-saws of social work and youth work seem to come closer when social policy pushes youth workers to develop new approaches based on networking with different operators and professionals elsewhere in the youth sector”.

## Portugal

For the contextualization of Social Work in Portugal, it is essential to reflect on the training programs that were built in a process of advances and challenges that contribute to the affirmation and consolidation of the professional and disciplinary area (Monteiro, 2016).

In Portugal, the first Social Work schools were created in the middle of the 30s of the 20th century. However, during the First Republic (1910-1926) can be identified contributions to the institutionalization of Social Work. The following should be highlighted, the movement to establish Social Work in Public and Private Assistance, a result of the recognition of the need to face pauperism and beggary, but also to the implications that modern life and its

economic mutations created in people, responding to “moral and material misery” (Martins, 1999a; Monteiro, 2016).

Between 1935 and 1937 the first and second Social Work schools were established, in Lisbon (ISSL- Instituto de Serviço Social de Lisboa) and then in Coimbra (Escola Normal Social de Coimbra). The third School was created in 1956 in Porto (Instituto Superior de Serviço Social do Porto - ISSSP). In that year, was given a curricular reform<sup>9</sup> that would result in 1961 in the recognition of the course of Social Work like superior course with four years of duration.

The institutionalization of Social Work as a profession, it must be understood within the framework of the institutionalization of the New State Regime (Estado Novo) and the incitement of the Catholic Church in the field of private and confessional teaching. Until April 1974, Social Work education was under the aegis of the Catholic Church (Monteiro, 2016), as it was the case of the “Institutos Superiores de Serviço Social” (Social Work Institutes) of Lisbon and Porto. Although under the management of the local authority, the Escola Normal Social de Coimbra, it had the education under the responsibility of the Congregation of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (Ferreira, 2006).

The recognition that the Social Work developed under the framework of the Estado Novo regime does not leave aside the possibility of recognizing, in the late 1950s. XX, the first critical movements within the profession, in the face of professional intervention and the current political context (Martins, 2002). According to Monteiro<sup>10</sup>, on the later 1956, there was a moment of inflexion in the course of Social Work First it took place a “distance from the New State doctrine (although not a total breakdown). The second factor was the approximation to the demands of University education (recognition of the complexity of the manifestations of the social issue associated with urban and industrialized environments). In addition, there was the school approvals of the autonomisation of Social Work as a curricular area, giving a passage from the “medical assistentialist model” to “sociological model” (which is marked by the sociology of Le Play). Nevertheless, which highlights the need to confront social problems in urban settings in an intervention that was desired to be more collective “<sup>11</sup> Monteiro, 2016, p.29).

Although the path of Social Work was carried out under an antidemocratic regime, from the 60's of the XX century, Social Work Education undergoes a progressive reconciliation”(...) with the training models practiced in the western democracies by giving centrality to the human rights, particularly social rights “(Branco & Fernandes, 2005, p.1). As a result of a

<sup>9</sup> Decree-Law no. 40678, of July 10, 1956

<sup>10</sup> Monteiro, Alcina (1995) A Formação Académica Dos Assistentes Sociais: Uma retrospectiva crítica da institucionalização do Serviço Social no «Estado Novo», *Intervenção Social* n. 11/12 (1995) [http://revistas.lis.ulsiada.pt/index.php/is/article/view/1266/pdf\\_2](http://revistas.lis.ulsiada.pt/index.php/is/article/view/1266/pdf_2)

<sup>11</sup> Monteiro, Daniela. 2016. “Relationship between research and practice: a qualitative study with Portuguese social workers”, Trabalho apresentado em 6th European Conference for Social Work Research - Reflective social work practices in contemporary societies: dialogues and new pathways between praxis and research, In Book of Abstracts & Program Book , Lisboa.

growing critique of the restorative ideology of the corporate state and a progressive linkage of Social Work to the social sciences, and the structuring of its teaching by the traditional methods of case, group and community, that gain special focus, in this period, particularly, the last two (Branco & Fernandes, 2005).

The period after April 25, 1974, was a turning point for the academic-professional affirmation of Social Work in Portugal, because of the changes that had been under way in the previous decade and which gained a greater impulse in the mid-1970s, as a result of effective democratization and free expression, with greater possibility of continuing international openness. In this period, a great interest in Social Work research also appeared "(...) on the one hand, due to the changes that occurred in Portuguese society, which required new responses on the part of the Social Work leading to a rethinking of the profession in the socio-historical context. On the other, as the result of new influences at the level of thought currents and theoretical matrices, such as those arising from Marxism and from the various tendencies of the reconceptualization movement of Latin American Social Work "(Martins, 1999b, p.53). A change was observed in the professional project aimed at social transformation and change, which involves a positioning among the most disadvantaged classes and a commitment to them. Theoretically, a resistance to the positivist and functionalist currents was noticed, adopting more the Marxist matrix, in a search for the explanation of the social and political movements and assuming a critical theoretical position (Monteiro, 2016).

In Portugal, "it was in the late 80's and early 90's of the twentieth century that the most profound and significant changes were perceived in academic and professional terms, since it is in 1989 that the degree of "Graduation" was attributed to the social workers (Monteiro, 2016: 31). It was able to see an academic development and the construction of the disciplinary area of Social Work. Now based on the theoretical, methodological and technical dimensions, contemplating research as one of the constituent dimensions of the education profile, but also in a more strictly professional dimension, since this became one of the several competencies inherent to the then-established career of "higher social service operators" (Martins, 2008).

In 1996, a special doctoral program in Social Work was established with PUC-SP, which also contributed to the later creation of doctoral programs in Portugal (in 2003, in UCP-Lisbon and in 2004 at ISCTE) and it is understood as a step in affirming and acknowledging the academic strengthening of Social Work in Portugal (Monteiro, 2016).

Another important path is also the way that professionals found to organize the profession and the recognition of its identity. In 1978, was created the Association of Social Work Professionals (APSS) which aims to "(...) respond to the professional needs of its members (...)".

The need for professional affirmation in the public domain and the urgency of the regulation of professional practice and training in Portugal are fundamental for the professional body. In this sense, these aspects represent a high importance for the discussion and consolida-

tion of the professional identity that focuses on the defense of attributes specific to the profession and on the delimitation of its jurisdictional area through the creation and recognition of the Order of Social Workers (Branco, 2009).

## Romania

There is not much information about the formal tradition of Social Work in Romania before communism. There were charitable activities mostly from the Orthodox tradition and therefore Romanian Orthodox Christians practiced charity. Among the ethnic groups, there were also informal social networks, namely the minority churches that looked after the socially disadvantaged members and their congregations.<sup>12</sup>

Lazar, Professor at University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, it is among a- nother functions the Secretary of Association of Schools of Social Work from Romania. He identified the main milestones that conducted to what nowadays we consider the Social Work origin.

- “In the sixteenth century the poor card regulations emerged which allowed begging only for people with disabilities or for the poor able to work on condition of proving insufficient gains from work. In 1686, the Clerical Rector of Bucharest drew up a list of the poor who received money from the state budget.
- The two main social welfare institutions for the poor appeared in 1695 and it was not until 1775 that the Child Protection Act was created.
- Between 1831 and 1832, the first Organic Regulations appeared establishing the social assistance/ Social Work and in 1881 was created the Service of Social Assistance of the municipality of Bucharest.
- The university degree in Social Work was recognized at the Principesca Ileana Social Work School, in 1929, with support from sociologists and in 1936, there was a review of Social Work.<sup>13</sup>

Dümling (2004) refers that in Romania, during the communism, all Romanians had the right and the obligation to work and so there was no need for unemployment insurance. Employment was also related to the “social security system”, meaning that all those who worked received benefits such as housing, free medical care, child support or holiday tickets. She quoted (Haibach 2001:40) “Refusing to work was even defined as “social parasitism” and a delinquency that could give a prison sentence”. Because of communism, in 1969, Social Work was eliminate from the professions and only reappeared in 1989, after the end of the

---

<sup>12</sup> Dümling, Bianca (2004) Country Notes: The Impact of Western Social Workers in Romania - a Fine Line between Empowerment and Disempowerment SW&S online Journal. Vol 2, No 2 (2004)

<sup>13</sup> Lazăr, Florin. Social work in Romania. Facultatea de Sociologieși Asistență Socială Universitatea din București

Ceausescu regime (Zamfir & Ionescu, 1994)<sup>14</sup>.

According Haibach cited by Dümling (2004), "Higher education was also politicized and consistent with the idea that there were no major social problems in society, which is currently reflected in the lack of social policy and Social Work specialists in Romania".

Dümling (2004) also state that after the collapse of communism in 1989, Romania became devastated economically, politically and socially. At the political level, the democratic institutions were established at an economic level, the liberal market economy was launched and at the social level, the laws were adapted to Western standards by joining the European Union and NATO.

In Romania, the Social Worker profession it is regulated through the Law 466/2004. According to this piece of legislation, a Social Worker can be someone who graduated from a University of 3 or 4 years, with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. In order to be able to practice, the Social Worker must be enrolled in the Romanian College of Social Workers.

The Social Worker profession is included in the Classification of Occupations in Romania, with the code 263501, and this professional category includes specialists in Social Work and counselling, who offer guidance and counselling to individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations, as an answer to personal and social difficulties.

These professionals help clients (beneficiaries) developing abilities and gaining access to resources and support services that are necessary in order to answer to problems arising from unemployment, poverty, disabilities, criminal and delinquent behaviour, problems in conjugal life and of other nature.

The Social Worker profession can be performed in Public Sector institutions (General Directorates of Social Assistance, hospitals, penitentiaries etc.) or in the Private Sector (non-profit legal organizations and cults). The main objective is to help individuals, groups and communities in difficulty, by providing them with specialized social assistance through creation of the necessary conditions in order to build or regain the capacities of individuals who are in difficulty of functioning normally, respectively leading a decent life.<sup>15</sup>

Dümling (2004) in a critical analysis of the Romanian situation denounces the main sources of the "Basic social services are offered by many NGOs, churches or individuals through grants awarded by the European Union, World Bank or other global and national organisations, as well as private donations. Thus, many Western Social Workers came to Romania and strongly impacted the development of Social Work and social services in Romania. These grants refer only to specific projects over a limited period."

Sampson (1996, quoted by Dumling 2004) states, "the entire context of Romanian society

---

<sup>14</sup> Loue, Sana. (2013) Social Work, Advocacy, and Ethics: Opportunities and Challenges in Romania. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 92 (2013) 1039 – 1043

<sup>15</sup> Filantropia framework

differs, the problems that in the West are resolved by associations, are largely resolved in families, informal networks and ethnic groups.” However, these informal families and groups are not considered in the project guidelines and therefore the participation of most citizens is excluded.

Such a ‘world of projects’ is artificially created and has its own international sphere, with its own language and etiquette and pool of Western experts. Most NGOs are dependent on foreign funds, which leads them frequently to orient and design their programmes according to grant guidelines and not in congruence with the needs and interest of the people or their mission statement (Dümling, 2004).

Another of the consequences of this form of Social Work in Romania is the competition between organizations due to the great demand for funding. This competition has an impact on the level of collaboration between the networks and NGOs, and as the author points out, “it is a counterproductive trend for Romania, since it is a very divided country.”<sup>16</sup>

Loue (2013) demonstrates the weaknesses of the social work profession in Romania, partly because “is quite young and faces many of the same growing pains that characterize the growth of any new profession” The author identifies some of the context factors that influence the profession as following:

- the lack of an adequate organizational infrastructure for the profession;
  - the need to develop an appropriate curriculum in multiple institutions to train newcomers into the profession;
  - government over- or under-regulation of the profession;
  - the lack of adequate resources to sustain the newly established training programs and professional infrastructure;
  - a sense of being overwhelmed and/or frustrated by the multiple demands and limited resources available to meet those demands.<sup>17</sup>

For its part Caras (2013), advances with some of the innovations in the Romanian social work. The author explains that “supervision appears for the first time in 2004 when there appeared in the Official Gazette a series of government orders stipulating standards required for the child and family protection services, stating in fact mandatory, as a minimum standard, the “supervision of human resources.”<sup>18</sup> And gives the example of the introduction

---

<sup>16</sup> Dümling, Bianca (2004) Country Notes: The Impact of Western Social Workers in Romania - a Fine Line between Empowerment and Disempowerment SW&S online Journal. Vol 2, No 2 (2004)

<sup>17</sup> Loue, Sana. (2013) Social Work, Advocacy, and Ethics: Opportunities and Challenges in Romania. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 92 (2013) 1039 – 1043

<sup>18</sup> Caras, Ana. (2013) Ethics and Supervision Process - Fundamentals of Social Work Practice. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 92 (2013) 133 – 141

of the post-graduation program at the University of Timisoara an explaining according what Ana Muntean (2007) believes that given this a new training and qualification the supervisor has the role of trainer and mentor in supervision. The same author conclude that ethical supervision can “improve the professionals’ performance, to increase their motivation and developing an efficient work environment following the highest professional standards and ethical intervention.”

## Definition of Social Work

For a long time, some authors tried to define Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defined Social Work in a consensual form:

“Social Work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to Social Work. Underpinned by theories of Social Work, social sciences, huma- nities and indigenous knowledge, Social Work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”<sup>19</sup>

As IFSW refers, the above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.

## Definition of Social workers

According to the definition of the Italian partners:

“the Social Worker is a social operator who, acting according to the principles, the know-ledge and the specific methods of the profession, carries out his activity within the organized system of resources made available by the community, in favor of individuals, groups and families, to prevent and solve situations of need, helping users in the personal and social use of these resources, organizing and promoting performances and services for greater corres- pondence to the particular situations of need and the need for autonomy and responsibility of the people, enhancing for this purpose all the resources of the community.”

Sicora (2005) identify the most important characteristics of the profession:

1. use of interpersonal and communication skills;
2. employment by the public sector (or non-profit);

---

<sup>19</sup> International Federation of Social Workers. (2014) Global Definition of the Social Work Profession. <https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/>

3. strong bond between Social Worker and the organization where She/he works;
4. Social Work as “operational theory” (that is, knowledge is not an end but constantly directed to guide professional action);
5. strong connection between values, practice and education;
6. labour camp subject to rapid changes (trivial to say, but Social Work operates within a society subject to continuous evolution) (Sicora, 2015).

Within the New Dictionary of Social Service, under the heading “social assistant” was found this definition:

“professional who, using the cognitive and operational tools, the method and the techniques of the discipline of social service, intervenes in favor of a balanced relationship between people and the social environment, engaging in promoting change that simultaneously affects the increase in the capacity for action in individuals, opportunities and resources in life contexts.”

By placing the person at the centre of his action, the social worker intervenes from a three-room perspective through professional services focused on helping relationships, the development of solidarity and institutional responses respectful of subjectivities, with transversal implications of a relational, managerial nature, planning, evaluation, as well as contextual study (Ferrario, 1996; Gui, 2004; Dal Pra Ponticelli, 2010). In addition to its technical and professional value, its role also includes the ethical and political one, by virtue of an orientation to the promotion of justice and social inclusion that requires constructively engaging to influence social policies in this direction (Campanini, 2009).<sup>20</sup>

The “Educatore Professionale” are professionals who are specifically framed in the health sector. It is a regulated profession, they have a strong professional organization (ANEP) and code of ethics<sup>20</sup>.

Partners also mentioned the Presidential Decree of the Region March 31, 2015<sup>21</sup> Approval of the structural and organizational standards of the types of service: Anti-violence Center, Secret reception house and emergency hospitality facilities, Home for pregnant women and young mothers with children

In the Portuguese National Classification of Professions, the Social Worker belongs to the Large Group 2 - specialists in the intellectual and scientific professions, whose tasks and functions include (CNPP, 2010, p.179):

---

<sup>20</sup> The profession of Social Education in Europe. Comparative survey

<sup>21</sup> Sicily, Journal of the Italian Regulatory Office, 17 April 2015, No. 16

- Interview individuals, families or groups to assess situations and problems and determine the necessary services;
- Analyze the situation of individuals and present alternatives for solving problems;
- Compile records of cases, court reports or other legal acts;
- Provide counseling, therapy, mediation services and group sessions so that the individual develops skills to solve and deal with their social and personal problems;
- Plan and implement intervention programs to assist clients and consult services that provide financial assistance, legal aid, housing, medical treatment and other services;
- Investigate cases of abuse or neglect and take action to protect children, young people or others at risk;
- Work with “offenders” during the legal process and after sentencing to help them integrate into the community and change attitudes and behavior;
- Advise prison directors on the conditions under which an “offender” should be arrested, released from prison or subject to alternative remedies;
- Act as a lawyer in solving problems affecting groups of people in the community;
- Develop prevention and intervention programs tailored to community needs.

To many academics and Social Workers, this classification is very reductive in relation to the scope of the profession. As a reaction the Portuguese Association of Social Workers approved its Code of Ethics<sup>22</sup> to define who are Social Workers and is based on the Global definition of Social Work, approved in July 2014 by FIAS and AIESS, which is an international reference for collective for social workers.

According to the Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Portugal (2018, p.8):

“Social Worker is a professional of social intervention with an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice that acts with and for the people, in a logic of cooperation. Social workers use a set of specific skills, complementary to each other, and express their public performance in society, namely:

- a) Policies - exerting influence in public opinion and in the political system, aiming at the definition of public policies, raising awareness and mobilizing people and groups for the defense of their rights;
- b) Relational - create relationships of respect, trust, empathy and cooperation for the necessary changes, including building networks and partnerships;

---

<sup>22</sup> Associação dos Profissionais de Serviço Social. Approved at the APSS General Assembly on October 25, 2018

- c) Psychosocial - develop processes of help, training and social support and socio-pedagogical support;
- d) Assistance - respond immediately to people's basic needs;
- e) Technological-operative and reflexive - to know how to communicate, mediate, diagnose, plan, execute and evaluate within the framework of a scientific, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach".

The profession of social educator in Portugal is not regulated. The professional organization (APES) has no prospects for the future about having it regulated, taking into account that there are other professions in nearby areas the Social education that also demand Regulation.

The Portuguese Assembly of Republic is limiting the regulation of professionals since it considers there is an excess of professions regulated in Portugal. Social Educators have code of ethics and the discussion about the regulation of the profession was not included in the discussion of the creation of the Order of social workers as other professionals were.

As a profession, the Social Education takes place in the context of science education, framed by the Social Pedagogy and as Serapicos (2006) explained, "still it has not achieved a publicity and image sufficiently known to society in general and to workspaces in particular".<sup>23</sup> Correia et al. argue that the reduced research and production of publications giving visibility to the work performed also contributes for this lack of recognition. Serapicos also sustain that in addition to this difficulty, should be taken in account the fact that other professionals in the social work, namely the Social Workers (Assistentes Sociais) and the Social-Cultural Animators with apparent similarity between titles.

In this wide range of professions, that were defined as social workers, in the context of FOCUS project, was possible to find a common reflection, within the academic field, that production of knowledge is fundamental but still very scarce if we look to the varied diversity of contexts and populations with whom they interact. Which justifies the effort that should be developed in order to clarify, the kind of tasks those professionals play and the delimitation of their field of intervention. This is crucial not only for the sake of their professional identity, but also for the affirmation of any profession. In other hand is also important that the production and shared knowledge make visible the theoretical framework that shapes their practice and the specific skills needed to perform it.

According the Romanian partners the Social Worker mainly deals with the psychosocial and professional rehabilitation and reintegration of people with special needs: mental and / or physical deficiencies, antisocial behavior (delinquency), various social problems.

The social worker carries out a complex and varied activity: by analyzing the influence of the

---

<sup>23</sup> Serapicos, Ana. Alguns desafios que se colocam à Educação Social. Cadernos de Estudo. 3. Porto: Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti, 2006, p.7-15

social factors on the mental health status and the human behavior, offering counselling on the rights and obligations of the assistants, collaborating with institutions or organizations that have similar objectives, participating in the elaboration of the methods and techniques, proposing measures of assistance or recovery.

Social Work can be defined from many perspectives: as a science, as a profession, as a system, which implies a certain architectural structure (institutional network, service, performances, professionals, beneficiaries and normative context that establish the organization and its way of functioning). As a profession, social assistance is unique because of its necessity for a multidisciplinary character, as a response to the complexity of the social issues.

## Life Skills

“Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life” (WHO, 1993).

This document marks a real change of direction as it aims decisively to the enhancement of individual skills and their promotion in all areas of learning, from kindergartens to university.

For a long time the programs of prevention and support for psychophysical discomfort, were expressed fundamentally in information programs on risk behaviors and related consequences, without achieving the desired results. It is only since the seventies that prevention programs are aimed at young people before they experience discomfort: attention is now placed on the environment where the individual live and the various contexts of which he is a part, like the family, the school and peer group. Thus a new approach to prevention is born, which is characterized by the use of longitudinal studies, which aims to identify the predictors of the behavior problems of young people and interrupt the process that leads to their manifestation. For example, programs to prevent the abuse of illegal substances begin to consider the influence of peers and social norms, as factors that mediate these maladaptive behaviors (Ellickson & Bell 1990; Flay, Koepke, Thomson, Santi, S. et al. 1989, Pentz, Dwyer, MacKinnon, Flay, et al., 1989, Pentz, MacKinnon, Flay, Hansen, et al., 1989).

Since the eighties, the focus is on risk factors, and the prevention programs are also aimed at those factors that promote a healthy and harmonious development of the individual. Aware of the fact that a healthy transition to age adult does not depend only on the absence of problematic behaviors, but on a functional development in the social, emotional and behavioral area (WT Grant Consortium, 1992).

Since now the educational interventions, to be proposed to young people of school age, take into account learning as “an active acquisition that takes place through the transformation and structuring of experience (Bandura” Theory of social learning “, 1963). According to this theory in fact, individuals constantly encountered their environment and from the observation of other subjects acquire new behaviors (modeling).

Also important it was the contribution of Gordon, whose method focuses on the development of empathic listening skills in the formation of different types of people (teachers, parents, teenagers, managers), through an active methodology that invites participants not only to know these skills, but to experiment them, so as to apply them in specific situations and therefore develop greater self-efficacy<sup>24</sup> (in the theories of “Positive Psychology” (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000; Seligman, 2002) and the “Positive Youth Development” (Benson, 1997; Benson & Saito, 2000), are on the basis of new prevention interventions: children and adolescents must be equipped of skills, motivation, character and “resilience”, so that they can positively face the challenges of life, limiting the risk of developing disease and problems. Prevention interventions, then, must be based on the promotion of the well-being of children and young people, strengthening specific individual and social skills and abilities, the “Life Skills”.

The document drawn up by the World Health Organization in 1993 “Life Skills Education in Schools”, identifies the 10 psychosocial competences considered fundamental in promoting the health of the young generations:

**Decision-making:** it is the ability to decide in different moments of life and to actively evaluate the pros and cons of each choice, as well as the consequences that derive from it. It is the ability to develop a constructive decision-making process that respects one's own needs.

**Problem Solving** - this competence allows the individual not to leave unresolved issues in their existence that could cause mental and physical stress. It is the ability to take charge of one's own difficulties and to mobilize oneself to access internal and external resources in order to face them in an active way.

**Creative thinking:** thinking creatively means responding flexibly and adaptively to the various challenges of everyday life. This ability is quite connected to the first two and concerns the ability to create and explore possible alternatives to a given problem or, in the absence of a problem, to face everyday life with greater mental flexibility.

**Critical thinking:** it is the ability to analyze information coming from the outside in an objective way. Critical sense allows us to discern and recognize what belongs to the person and what comes instead as external pressure (mass media, peers, work environment, social values, cultural values, etc.). The capacity for constructive criticism contributes to the health of the individual, as it allows him to act in a more conscious and coherent manner, respecting his internal references.

**Effective communication:** having the ability to express oneself, to express opinions, desires, needs and feelings in an appropriate way. Recognize the right to ask for help, to be able to listen to others accurately.

---

<sup>24</sup> Marmocchi, Paola, Dall'Aglio, Claudia & Zannini Michela). (2004) Educare le Life Skills. Come promuovere le abilità psico-sociali e affettive secondo l'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità, Eickson, Trento

**Skills for interpersonal relationships:** ability to relate to others in a full and constructive way. Create and maintain meaningful relationships in the family and friendship that constitute an important support network for psycho-physical health. This ability also concerns the ability to close relationships in a constructive and non-destructive way.

**Self-awareness:** recognition of oneself, one's own strengths and those to be strengthened. To learn to recognize one's internal movements, tensions, stress and what instead procures well-being. Knowing your own character, desires and needs. Self-knowledge is a fundamental requirement for the enhancement of other skills, such as the ability to establish relationships with others or to communicate effectively.

**Empathy:** ability to put yourself in the shoes of others and understand them. This ability is also fundamental in the evolution of social intelligence, in being sensitive to grasping the needs of others, the need for support and help and in valuing and welcoming ethnic and cultural differences.

**Copying with emotions:** ability to recognize and "manage" one's emotions, to be aware of how these affect our actions. Being aware of one's emotional world and expressing it is a way to prevent the repression of the intensity of certain emotions (such as pain or anger) from having negative effects on health.

**Copying with stress:** recognize and control the causes of stress by acting on unhealthy behaviors and promoting healthy lifestyles. Take action on external causes when this is possible or implement actions to protect against stress (eg creating space and time to relax and take care of yourself).

Life Skills invest three areas:

EMOTIONAL - self-awareness, emotional management, stress management

COGNITIVE - problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking

SOCIAL - empathy, effective communication, skills for interpersonal relationships

Today the teaching of 'life skills' is present in a wide variety of educational programs as it is considered a valid tool of primary prevention in relation to both general and specific problems.

However, these skills are often taken for granted and therefore the WHO has indeed encouraged their teaching, starting right from the school: "it seems increasingly evident that, due to the great cultural changes and lifestyle, many young people are not more adequately equipped with the skills needed to cope with the increasing demands and stress they

face. It is as if the traditional mechanisms for transmitting life skills (family, social and cultural values) were no longer adequate, because of the new factors that affect the development of young people, including mass media and situations of ethnic and religious diversity.” (WHO, 1994)

The school, as a primary educational agency, is an appropriate place for the introduction of life skills teaching, for the following reasons: large-scale access to children and adolescents, presence of expert educators; high credibility that the school has for parents and the community; possibility of a short and long-term evaluation.

The LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (WHO) program (1993) has contributed to the achievement of positive results, especially in long-term programs. In addition to the impact on children's health, these interventions have made it possible to improve: the relationship between children and teachers (Parsons et al.1988), children-parents and school performance (Weissberg, 1989). Furthermore, there was a reduction in risky behavior, an increase in school attendance (Zabin, 1986) and a drop-in requests for specialist advice.

The implemented 'life skills education' programs suggest that the earlier the intervention, the more the results will be positive, as in the period between six and sixteen, young people seem to be much more vulnerable as regards the pipeline negative aspects related to socio-health problems, but at the same time their learning skills are better. Another factor in the success of the program is the availability, by the teachers, of continuous training, to be carried out with active learning methods and in special training centers.

## Literature Review

This literature review presents an overview of how Life Skills are portrayed on social workers literature how they use them in their day-to-day practice and with service users and carers.

The review took a broad approaching to defining Life Skills, including each one listed by WHO, the impact on users and professionals, bringing together existing published research and identifying where the literature identify gaps in special particular those related with training needs. Social Workers for a long time use advocacy at the United Nations and in each of its Agencies mainly UNICEF. This first phase of the literature review showed how this influence, at national level, was so poor in the social field and so rich in the health sector.

As already mentioned this specific field of knowledge it is characterized by an insufficient written production that only arises with greater incidence from the researches obtained from professionals that are looking for the degree of master or doctorate. Even we found some growing movement does not mean, always, that is a quality production. Yet its focus is mainly on the socio-historical conditions and the theoretical matrices that influenced each of the times and never about the Life Skills as the World Health Organization defined:

“Life Skills as “adaptive and positive behavioural skills that enable individuals to effectively manage the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO, 1994).

WHO even categorized Life Skills and promoted the ten specific competencies.

- (1) Decision Making,
- (2) Problem Solving,
- (3) Creative Thinking,
- (4) Critical Thinking,
- (5) Skills for interpersonal relationships,
- (6) Effective Communication,
- (7) Self-knowledge,
- (8) Empathy,
- (9) Emotion Management
- (10) Stress Management

To summarize the review focused on Life Skills impact in the daily professional life of Social Workers and in the services users.

The concept of competences, for Parente (2003) quoted by Santos (2017, p. 53) “results from the interaction between the cognitive aspect and the differentiating aspect, that is, the relation between the professional practices and the cognitive capacities of the individuals and their recognition in the work context.”<sup>25</sup>

Granja research (2008 ) report the views of professionals that testify they “ live in permanent tension, intrinsic to their own action, to (re) invent and adjust professional actions of difficult codification and formalization that occur within complex social relations, with individual and collective, often paradoxical and conflicting logic, where they are present feelings, emotions and values”.<sup>26</sup>

This is a key question also in other studies concluding that there is no clear link between theory and practice and there are some limits and institutional conditions that weaken the autonomy of the Social Worker (Cruz, 2010)<sup>27</sup>. In turn, Dias (2013) identified common and divergent points according to the type of team approach to which the social worker be-

---

<sup>25</sup> Santos, M. F. (2017). A prática profissional do assistente social em contexto de cuidados de saúde primários infantojuvenis. Instituto

<sup>26</sup> Granja, B. (2008). Assistente Social – Identidade e Saber. Universidade do Porto pp. 1-425.

<sup>27</sup> Cruz, S. A. (2010). Social Network: The Professional Act of the Social Worker and Social Development in Local Context. Coimbra: Instituto Miguel Torga.

longs.<sup>28</sup> Carvalho (2016) sustain that being autonomous does not imply the performance or not of networking or in partnership, but rather the freedom to perform the tasks that affect them.<sup>29</sup> According Maurício (2016)<sup>30</sup> correlations were found between job satisfaction and the autonomy variable and Pinto (2016) argues that social work in the nearest future should be more authentic.<sup>31</sup>

The daily challenge in the practice of Social Workers (Cruz, 2010) is to overcome the institutional limits using innovative and creative strategies Carvalho (2014) holds that be integrated into research networks it is fundamental in this field. Ferrão (2016)<sup>32</sup> also propose that social workers should take advantage of their professional competence that comes from a continuous process that includes their personal, academic and professional background. Santos (2017, p. 82) conclude that there are communication channels ...for example, meetings, which are fundamental for sharing and joint decision-making.<sup>33</sup>

Lourenço (2015, p.72) concludes in her research that social workers to solve problems resulting of conflicts of interest carried out by different social groups, should minimize and counteract the bureaucracy imposed by the institutions where they carry out their professional activity and bet on a more conscious and proactive professional practice.<sup>34</sup>

The other variable highlighted in the literature is linked with supervision. Mauricio (2016) found that the quality of supervision is assumed as the strongest predictor of professional satisfaction of social workers and highlights the innovative character of external supervision processes. Carvalho (2016, p.13)<sup>35</sup> considers a good practice to be followed by other institutions that have social workers on their staff.

Self-awareness it is an important skill and Lopes (2015, p.91) refer a very important aspect of social work practice. As she mentioned the social worker deals with the problems of the human being but also experiences concrete problems in her/his personal or professional sphere. The equality of this condition allows for closeness and interpersonal identification, which may be (or not) facilitators of the relationship, so it can be said that one of essential the conditions for the professional to live the relationship is the perception of himself and his problems. The demarcation of these aspects is only possible with conscious and true by the

<sup>28</sup> Dias, L. (2013). O Perfil do Assistente Social em Intervenção Precoce: Perspetivas profissionais em modelos colaborativos interdisciplinares e transdisciplinares. pp. 1-195.

<sup>29</sup> Carvalho, Maria Irene (2016) Supervisão Profissional em Serviço Social: uma experiência de supervisão externa a coordenadores de serviços domiciliários para pessoas idosas. *Texto Contextos* (Porto Alegre), v. 15, n1, p212-224, jan./jul. 2016

<sup>30</sup> Maurício, C. (2015). A satisfação profissional nos assistentes sociais: um estudo realizado na zona centro. pp. 1-163.

<sup>31</sup> Pinto, C. M. (2017). Relação entre a inteligência emocional e o relacionamento interpessoal em crianças de 5 anos. Universidade do Minho.

<sup>32</sup> Ferrão, V. (2016). Assistente social e diretor técnico: complementaridade ou dualidade de funções no serviço de apoio domiciliário. pp. 1-128.

<sup>33</sup> Santos, Marta. (2017). A prática profissional do Assistente Social em contexto de cuidados de saúde primários infantojuvenis. ISSSP Porto

<sup>34</sup> Lourenço, Patrícia (2015). Pobreza e Exclusão Social – Contributos para a intervenção dos assistentes sociais em bairros de construção clandestina. ISCTE. Lisboa

<sup>35</sup> ibidem

professional.<sup>36</sup>

Passarinho (2015, p.202) reinforce the importance of this skill “I continue to argue for the need and relevance of thinking of themselves as professionals rather than mere enforcers of more or less stereotyped procedural codes.” Moreover, insist in the ethical commitment “this profession suggests that we can develop our own thoughts about her, about ourselves and about the situations and phenomena with which we intervene, if not in work contexts, at least in academic contexts or on stages of citizenship.<sup>37</sup> The ethical commitment is one point shared by other authors (Caras, 2013).

Silva (2012), considers that the competence of decision-making related to the empowerment, can be defined as:

A process of recognition, creation and use of resources and instruments by individuals, groups and communities, in themselves and in the environment, which translates into an increase in power-psychological, socio-cultural, political and economic-that allows these subjects to increase the effectiveness of the exercise of their citizenship (Pinto, 2001 cit. By Silva, 2012).<sup>38</sup>

Adams (2003); Howe (2009) cit. by Pena (2012) also highlight the concept of empowerment through the idea of power over their own experiences and the ability to control the plans and decisions that affect the life of the individual.<sup>39</sup>

An important factor in the work of social workers is communication. Milicenco says that in the process of communication, social workers and beneficiaries come to a mutual understanding of the problems and the context in which the difficulties are manifested, while also strengthening partnership relationship. By formulating responses that lead to the determination of the goals and the location of resources for change, social assistants assign a goal to the dialogue while demonstrating respect for the freedom and self-determination of beneficiaries. This exchange requires communication skills from the social worker and the beneficiary.<sup>40</sup> Erra (2011) in her study asked if disaster intervention training is available for Social Work professionals and the conclusion was that it is important to have training at several levels:

- Disaster training - how to act, approach to use, knowledge of steps to be taken in these situations;
- Training for acting professional - for the professional to know what to do in the event of a

---

<sup>36</sup> Lopes, F. (2015). A relação no Serviço Social: Perspetivas sobre a sua pertinência e expressão na prática. pp. 1-109. <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/handle/10216/85739>

<sup>37</sup> Passarinho, Isabel. (2015). Em rede fazemos a diferença»: um percurso de aprendizagem, empowerment e inclusão educativa e comunitária com pais de crianças e jovens com NEE. Lusíada. Intervenção Social, Lisboa, n.º 42/45 (2º semestre de 2013 a 1º semestre de 2015)

<sup>38</sup> Silva, M. G. (2012). O Agir Profissional do Assistente Social: um estudo de caso sobre a Prática Profissional do Assistente Social no. Braga: Universidade Católica Portuguesa - Faculdade de Ciência Sociais.

<sup>39</sup> Pena, M. J. (2012). Relação profissional: utopia ou realidade. Lisboa: ISCTE.

<sup>40</sup> Milicenco, Stela. (2008). Communication - a determining factor in establishing participative social relations in social assistance. Social Assistance Magazine no. 3-4 / 2008.

disaster, how to deal with the victims;

- Emotional training - managing your own emotions professionals and victims of disasters;
- Training for personal skills - be aware of the professional profile

Some authors as Mitulescu, Parvu, Chirila & Ionescu (2012) had already indicate that Life Skills are a subset of certain skills that anyone must possess to have a balanced life, to develop and maintain normal relationships with others, to fulfil their objectives and management with all the difficulties. These authors consider that the notion of competence refers to the controlled behaviour that leads to achieve certain goals, fulfil some obligations or face certain situations.

In this sense, the Life Skills can be divided:

- social competences (self-knowledge, conflict resolution, communication styles, self-esteem, acceptance of differences);
- emotional skills (approaching feelings, positive and negative emotions, helping others);
- cognitive skills (decision-making, negotiation skills, problem solving, risk assessment);
- behavioural skills (planning, nonviolent behaviour, volunteering, teamwork, rights and responsibilities).

Ferreira (2015,p.126) called attention to the significant importance given to emotions at work. In recent years, a large number of studies increased our knowledge about job satisfaction that has impact in the called to humanization of Social Work. Lack of instructions how to lead with their own emotions and users emotions in work context is one of the dimensions found and another one, very relevant, was that 62% of the sample reveal no training in emotional education. Yet for showing not being very familiar with this they divergely answer the question of what type / domain of training have in this area.<sup>41</sup>

Intelligence emotion is an aspect of intelligence linked to the ability to recognize, use, understand and manage consciously our's and others' emotions. Emotional intelligence was first discussed in 1990 by the professors Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in their article "Emotional Intelligence". They define emotional intelligence as "the ability to control our's and others' feelings and emotions, to distinguish between them and to use this information to guide thoughts and actions".

Is the ability to manage ourselves, our emotions, to be aware of it, but it is also the ability to realize

---

<sup>41</sup> Ferreira, Joana. (2015). A educação emocional na intervenção comunitária – a visão dos profissionais de instituições sócio-educativas do nordeste transmontano sobre as emoções no contexto de trabalho. Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação. Universidade do Porto

what makes us productive, what distracts us from achieving our goals and what makes us more effective. [Cit. Daniel Goleman] Emotional intelligence is also about empathy that is, the ability to recognize the emotional state of the other that is how people perceives things and how they feel. Being able to use these skills means interacting more productively with themselves and other people.

It is an essential skill not only for emotional life and for the sphere of "private" relationships, but also for work and social activities.

Overall, the review concluded that:

- ✓ WHO guidelines do not constitute a reference frame in the training of social workers from the three countries involved in the project;
- ✓ Several Life Skills are recognized as Social Workers Skills (Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Effective Communication, Decision-Making Coping with Emotions, Empathy, Self-awareness, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking and Coping with Stress) but not as a whole;
- ✓ Each life skill is connected with another one, they influence mutually;
- ✓ The complexity of Social Work nowadays is a source of stress;
- ✓ Institutional environment put several limitations to social workers act;
- ✓ Social Workers identify several strategies to manage their interpersonal relationships with members of their teams, hierarchical superiors, stakeholders and users;
- ✓ Emotions play a key role in social workers daily work;
- ✓ **Training in Life Skills and Emotional intelligence is required.**

## Quantitative Research

The FOCUS Project stems from the idea that the development of certain psychosocial dimensions such as emotional intelligence and life skills can bring benefits to workers working in the social sector both on health and on pro-active behavior at work. In this perspective, the present research was aimed at analyzing the general health status of social workers from three European countries: Italy, Portugal and Romania. Furthermore, it was possible to identify the levels of some psychosocial variables that influence the quality of life at work.

Specifically, the levels of general mental health and burnout were analyzed, a syndrome that can occur in all professions characterized by important relational implications and which manifests itself in three main aspects: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and poor personal fulfillment (Maslach & Leiter, 2001). Life skills have also been assessed, that is, the set of adaptive and positive behavioral skills that allow people to effectively face the

demands and challenges of everyday life (Mohanty, & Sathyamurthi, 2017) and emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize, use, understand and manage consciously one's own and others' emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotional intelligence and life skills can contribute to improving the quality of life at work and the health of workers. In a recent work, Bastian, Burns and Nettelbeck (2005) have shown that the development of emotional intelligence can contribute to development of the life skills, and these last ones, can be considered as the protectors aspects of the health of the workers thus improving consequently the quality of the life at work.

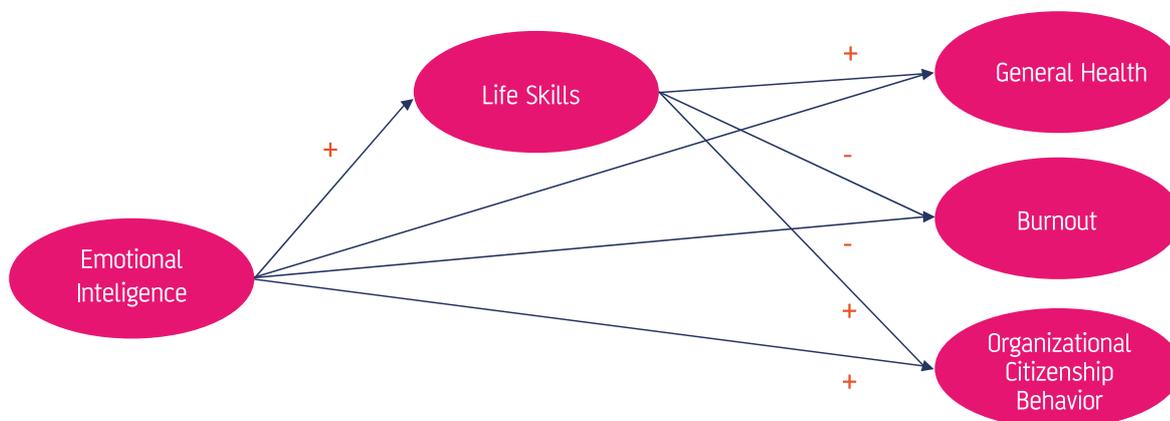
Another focal aspect in the present research is the behavior of organizational citizenship (CCO) (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). CCOs are considered a set of positive behaviors for colleagues and for the organization, acted spontaneously and not required by the task, which promote the quality of the service offered having beneficial effects on the general health of workers and on burnout. They are also considered an excellent indicator of performance at work.

After analyzing the levels of general psychic health, burnout, emotional intelligence, life skills and organizational citizenship behaviors, the relationships between these variables were analyzed. Specifically, as shown in Figure 1, the impact of emotional intelligence on life skills, on general health and on burnout and on CCOs and on the effects of life skills on general health, on burnout and on CCOs was tested. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model foreseen by the project. In this conceptual model, it is assumed that high levels of emotional intelligence can contribute to the development of life skills. In a 2005 work, Bastian and Burns have in fact shown that having high levels of emotional intelligence contributes to the development of life skills. Martins, Ramalho and Morin (2010) have also shown that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on general psychic health. Other research (Weng et al 2011) also highlighted the impact of emotional intelligence on burnout. The researchers reported that higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with lower levels of burnout. To conclude, Turnipseed and Vandewaa published an article in 2012 that clearly shows the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and CCO. According to the authors, a worker who shows high levels of emotional intelligence is more likely to activate CCOs work.

Furthermore, our conceptual model indicates that high levels of life skills can contribute to the improvement of general health and burnout and to increased CCO activation. In 2006, Haghighi and collaborators published, in fact, an experimental study that shows the positive effect of life skills training on general psychic health while there are still no published works on the relationship between life skills and burnout. However, it is assumed that the development of skills on the management of emotions can have a beneficial effect and therefore reduce the levels of workers' burnout. In conclusion, other research have shown the positive effects that the high levels of some life skills can have on CCOs. For example, in a 2011 research, Kluemper and co-workers showed that high skills in managing emotions can con-

tribute to the activation of CCO.

**Figure 1**



**Subjects**

The research was conducted with the participation of 83 social workers from three European countries: 27 Italians, 23 Portuguese and 33 Romanian. The operators have an average age of 36 (Italians), 39 (Portuguese) and 39 (Romanian) with an average service age of 7 years for Italians, 13 for the Portuguese and 12 for the Romanians. To verify the homogeneity of age and length of service among the operators of the three states, a variance analysis was performed, using Fisher’s F distribution. Table 1 shows a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) for the variable length of service.

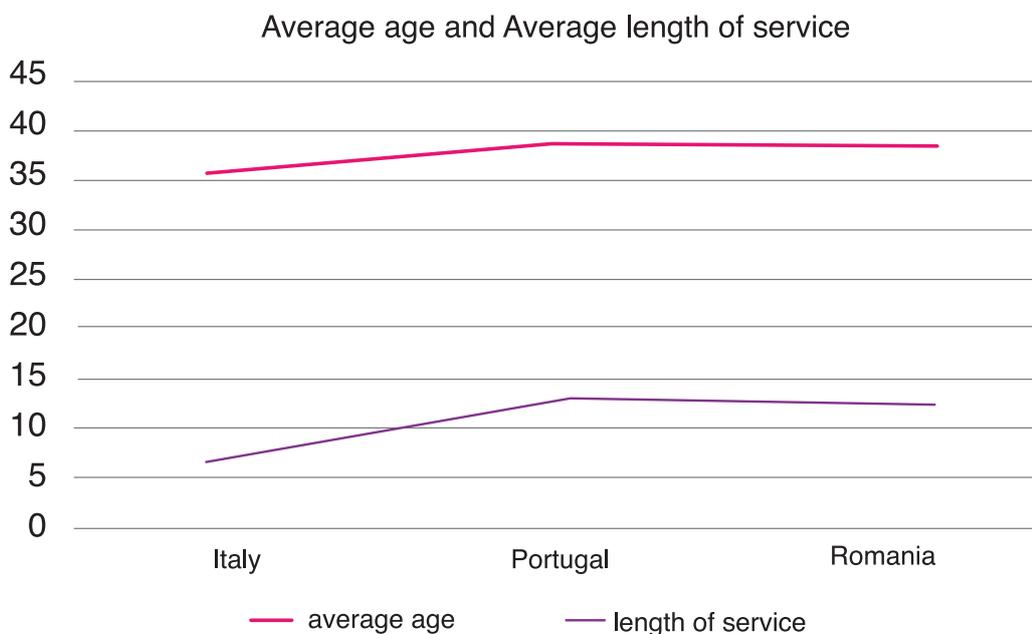
Therefore, the group of Italian operators is significantly more professionally young in comparison to the group of Portuguese and Romanian operators.

**Table 1**

	Italy	Portugal	Romania	F4 <sup>A</sup>	p <sup>B</sup>
Average Age	35,9	38,9	38,7	1,1	0,33
Minimum Age	27	24	24		
Maximum Age	45	58	54		
Average length of service	6,8	12,7	12,4	4,9	<0,001
N	27	23	33		

<sup>A</sup> The F test is a statistical test that allows to verify the hypothesis that two populations that follow both a normal distribution have the same variance. In other words, this test is used to verify whether there are differences in the average scores between two populations.

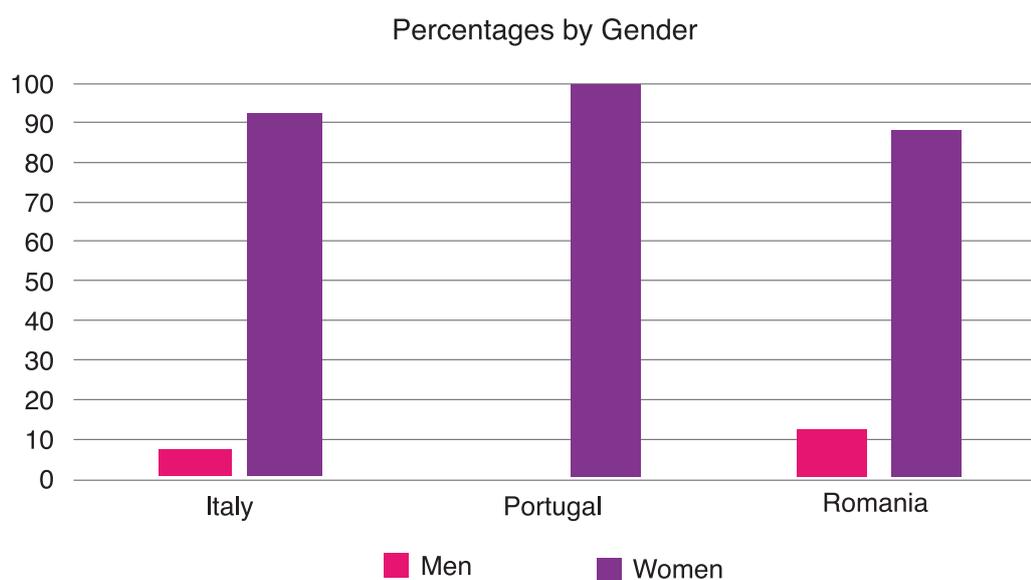
<sup>B</sup> The p indicates the minimum acceptable error threshold in hypothesis testing. A value below 0.05 indicates that the test has a probability of error of less than 5%. In the academic language, the result is conventionally accepted if the probability of error is less than 5%. In the case that the test indicates a p greater than 0.05, the abbreviation n.s. (not significant) means that there are no significant differences between the comparative scores.



Finally, table 2 shows that this type of work is a predominantly female job, in fact, 93% of Italians, 100% of Portuguese and 88% of Romanians are women.

**Table 2**

	Italy	Portugal	Romania
Men	7,4	0	12,1
Women	92,6	100	87,9



## Instruments

In this project, a set of standardized tests and questionnaires approved by the scientific community was applied. Furthermore, a series of questions made it possible to enrich the information gathered to have a more complete representation of the operators' experience. The battery of questionnaires consisted of:

- General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12, Goldberg, 1988) to measure the general health of workers; GHQ is a tool that measures the level of general psychic health suitable for adult administration. The tool consists of 12 items that describe some minor psychiatric symptoms. The subject is asked to indicate with a response mode to 4 steps from 0 (much less than usual) to 3 (much more than usual) the intensity level of the symptom by comparing the current state to that of a few weeks ago. The scores from 0 to 14 indicate the absence of problems, from 15 to 18 are scores that indicate a moderate symptomatology, scores above 19 indicate the presence of a high symptomatology (Piccinelli, 1993).
- Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI - Maslach et al., 1986) to measure burnout; The MBI is a tool that measures the level of burnout of workers. It consists of 22 statements that describe three factors behind the construct: emotional exhaustion, that is, the lack of energy to face the working day, a feeling of apathy and detachment from work. This dimension is evaluated by 9 statements; Scores between 0 and 13 indicate no emotional exhaustion, between 14 and 22 an average level and above 23 a high level of emotional exhaustion. The depersonalization that indicates an attitude of detachment and hostility towards colleagues and users, disinterest and intolerance towards the suffering of others and is characterized by impersonal and dehumanized relationships. This dimension is evaluated by 5 statements; Scores between 0 and 2 indicate absence of depersonalization, between 3 and 5 a medium level and above 6 a high level of depersonalization. Personal achievement is a factor against scaling, that is, it evaluates the reduced personal fulfillment, which is a feeling of personal failure; disinterest in the work done, and intolerance towards work and perception of inadequacy for work are an example of the experience of workers who have a low level of personal fulfillment. This dimension is evaluated with 8 statements. Scores between 0 and 32 indicate high levels of personal achievement, between 33 and 38 average levels and above 39 low levels of personal achievement (Maslach, 1986).

Life Skills Scale to identify the ten dimensions recognized in the model Subasree and Radhakrishnan Nair (2014): self-esteem, decision-making, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, effective communication, emotional management, management of stress and interpersonal relationships. This tool allows to evaluate the perception that a subject has about 10 life skills as foreseen by the model proposed by (Subasree, and Radhakrishnan Nair (2014). In this sense three items have been developed for each dimension for a total of 30 items (Es: *"When I'm angry I act on impulse"*.) Subjects are called to respond with a 7-step

scale from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always) in relation to personal opinion. To interpret the average scores for each of the 10 dimensions the threshold (5) was used: scores equal to or greater than 5 indicate the presence of a high level of life skill.

- Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10 - Davies, et al., 2010) in reduced version to 10 items; This instrument measures with 10 statements, five typical aspects of emotional intelligence, that is: evaluation of one's own emotions, evaluation of the emotions of others, regulation of one's emotions, regulation of the emotions of others and use of emotions. Each dimension it is represented by two items. Subjects are called to respond with a 7-step scale from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always). An example of an item is: *"I know how others feel by simply looking at them"*. As for the life skills assessment scale there are no threshold values suggested by the authors, so the threshold (5) was used to interpret the average emotional intelligence scores. Scores equal to or greater than 5 indicate high levels of emotional intelligence.
- Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB - Podsakoff et al., 1989). The original version of Podsakoff (1989) was used to measure organizational citizenship behaviors. The tool consists of 24 statements, which describe the five groups of behavior: Altruism, Conscience, Sportiness, Courtesy and Civic Virtue.
- Altruism (5 items) is characterized by helping behaviors towards a colleague in difficulty.
- Conscientiousness (5 items) represents those behaviors that go well beyond the minimum requirements required by the organization.
- Sportsmanship (5 items) represents tolerance behaviors and a general *laissez-faire* for minor events.
- Courtesy (5 items), or a set of behaviors to prevent any relationship problems with colleagues.
- Civic virtue (5 items), that is, behaviors that outline active participation, responsibility and involvement in activities. Subjects are called to respond with a 7-step scale from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always). An example of an item is: *"Help those who has a lot of work to do"*. Scores equal to or greater than 5 indicate high levels of emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, were studied the opinions of the operators on the organizational aspects to be improved and the degree of importance of the 10 life skills for their work.

## Results

The first analysis was aimed at identifying the general health level of social workers and the level of Burnout in its three dimensions. Table 3 shows that the average general health level in the three countries is good and is below the threshold value (19), moreover, there are no significant differences in the comparison of the three countries. On the other hand, as regards the three dimensions of Burnout:

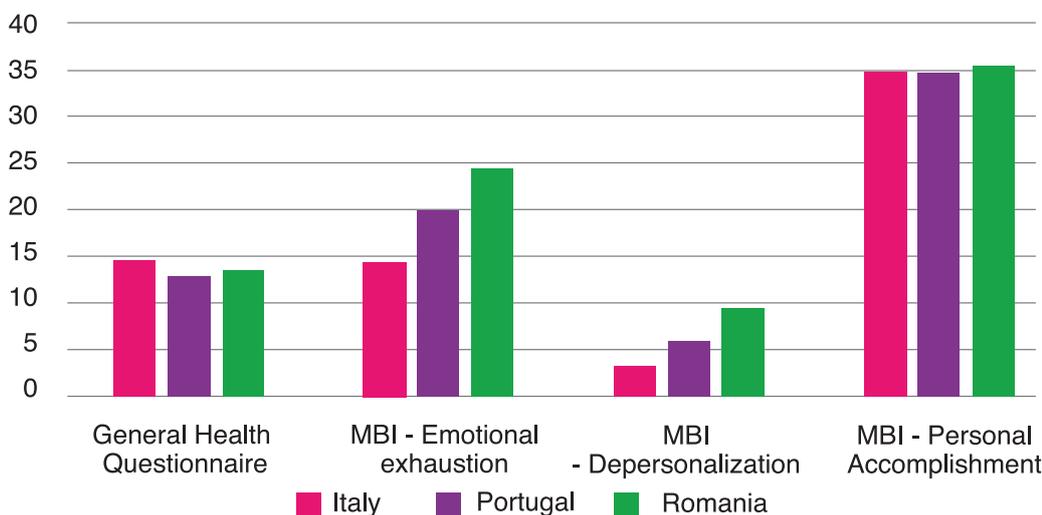
- ✓ Italian operators obtained moderate scores in the dimensions of depersonalization (3.5), emotional exhaustion (14.7) and the size of personal fulfillment (34.4);
- ✓ Portuguese operators have achieved high scores in depersonalization (6), and moderate in emotional exhaustion (19.8) and in personal fulfillment (34.4);
- ✓ to conclude the Romanian operators have declared a level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization significantly higher than the threshold value, which is therefore of high intensity.

In addition, no significant relationships were found between age, general health and burnout and between seniority, general health and burnout.

**Table 3**

	Italy	Portugal	Romania	F	p
General Health Questionnaire	14,7	13	13,5	0,6	n.s.
MBI - Emotional exhaustion	14,4	19,8	24,3	8,6	<0,001
MBI - Depersonalization	3,5	6	9,5	8,9	<0,001
MBI - Personal Accomplishment	34,4	34,4	35,2	0,2	n.s.

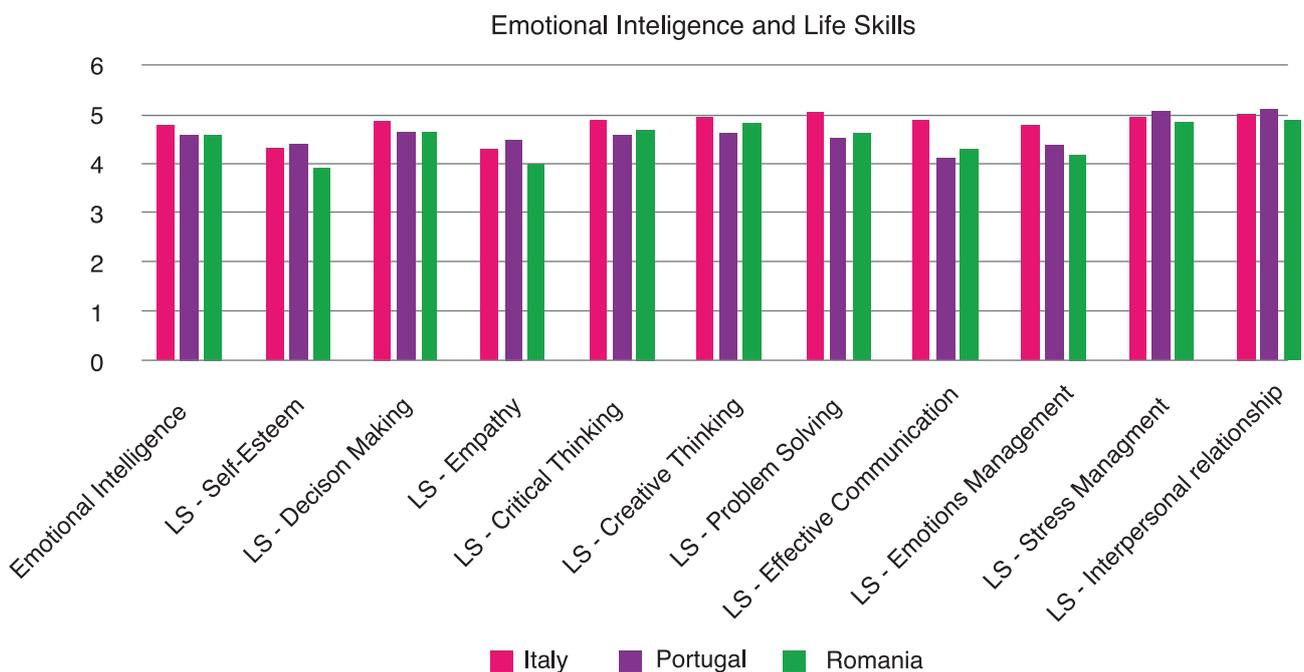
General health and Burnout scores by country



In the second analysis, the levels of emotional intelligence and life skills of social workers were gauged. These variables are considered as protective aspects of the health and well-being of the operators. In the present work, the desirable average levels of these variables should be higher than 5. With regard to emotional intelligence, the average values of the three groups are of medium intensity (Italy = 4.8; Portugal = 4.6; Romania = 4, 6). The Italians show high average scores in the dimensions of problem solving (5), stress management (5) and interpersonal relationships (5). As for the Portuguese operators, there are high scores in the dimensions of stress management (5.1) and interpersonal relationships (5.1). All the average scores of the Romanian operators are of medium intensity with a range from 3.9 to 4.9. In conclusion, there are no significant differences between the average scores for the three countries except for the “Effective communication” life skill.

**Table 4**

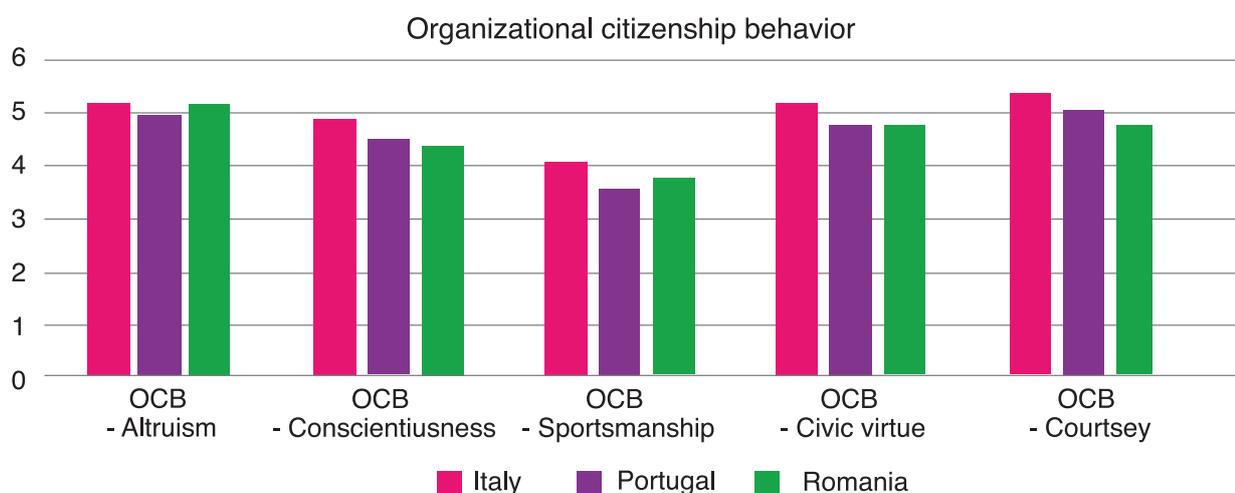
Scale from 0 to 6	Italy	Portugal	Romania	F	p
Emotional intelligence	4,8	4,6	4,6	0,4	n.s.
LS - Self-esteem	4,3	4,4	3,9	1,5	n.s.
LS - Decision Making	4,8	4,6	4,6	0,5	n.s.
LS - Empathy	4,3	4,5	4	2,3	n.s.
LS - Critical Thinking	4,9	4,6	4,7	1	n.s.
LS - Creative Thinking	4,9	4,6	4,8	1,9	n.s.
LS - Problem Solving	5	4,5	4,6	1,6	n.s.
LS - Effective Comunication	4,9	4,1	4,3	4,1	<0,01
LS - Emotions Management	4,8	4,4	4,2	0,2	n.s.
LS - Stress Management	5	5,1	4,9	0,4	n.s.
LS - Interpersonal relationship	5	5,1	4,9	0,2	n.s.



Concerning the Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, values above 5 were considered high. In general, all scores obtained are of medium or high intensity. Italian operators have obtained high scores in the dimensions of altruism (5, 2), civic Virtue (5, 2) and Courtesy (5, 4). The Portuguese operators obtained high scores in the dimensions of altruism (5) and courtesy (5, 1); Romanian operators have achieved high scores in the altruism dimension (5, 2).

**Table 5**

Scale from 0 a 6	Italy	Portugal	Romania	F	p
OCB - Altruism	5,2	5	5,2	5,4	<0,01
OCB - Conscientiousness	4,9	4,5	4,4	9,8	<0,001
OCB - Sportsmanship	4,1	3,6	3,8	2,4	n.s.
OCB - Civic virtue	5,2	4,8	4,8	1,7	n.s.
OCB - Courtesy	5,4	5,1	4,8	3,9	<0,05



A series of linear regressions<sup>42</sup> also allowed us to verify the conceptual model. Table 6 shows the effects of emotional intelligence on life skills. The results show positive and statistically significant effects of emotional intelligence on 9 of the 10 life skills. Surprisingly, the only life skill that does not seem to be influenced by emotional intelligence is empathy.

<sup>42</sup> Linear regression is a statistical model that investigates the functional relationship between two variables.

**Table 6 – Effects of emotional intelligence on life skills**

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>p</b>
LS - Self-esteem	0,41	<0,001
LS - Decision Making	0,45	<0,001
LS - Empathy	0,09	n.s.
LS - Critical Thinking	0,41	<0,001
LS - Creative Thinking	0,56	<0,001
LS - Problem Solving	0,30	<0,01
LS - Effective Communication	0,23	<0,05
LS - Emotions Management	0,32	<0,01
LS - Stress Management	0,44	<0,001
LS - Interpersonal relationship	0,44	<0,001

Moreover, emotional intelligence seems to have a positive effect on the general health of the operators, on the size of the personal accomplishment of the burnout and on the altruism dimension of the behaviors of organizational citizenship.

**Table 7 – Effects of emotional intelligence on health, burnout and OCB**

	<b>Beta<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>p</b>
General Health	0,27	<0,001
MBI - Personal accomplishment	0,68	<0,001
OCB - Altruism	0,35	<0,001

Following the conceptual model proposed in Figure 1, were investigated the effects of life skills on general health, on burnout and on OCBs. Four life skills have positive effects on overall health. Specifically, critical thinking (0.25), creative thinking (0.28), emotion management (0.32) and stress management (0.19), appear to be dimensions that can contribute to the improvement of general health.

<sup>c</sup> Beta is the standardized regression coefficient. Its value varies from -1 to +1. A value equal to 0 indicates an absence of relationship between the two variables, from (+ or -) 0.1 to (+ or -) 0.3 the relationship between the variables exists but is of weak intensity from (+ or -) 0.4 to (+ or -) 0.6 the relationship is of medium intensity; above +0.6 or below -0.6 the relationship is strong.

**Table 8 – Effects of life skills on general health**

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>p</b>
LS - Critical Thinking	0,25	<0,05
LS - Creative Thinking	0,28	<0,05
LS - Emotions Management	0,32	<0,05
LS - Stress Management	0,19	<0,05

Critical thinking (-0.24), problem solving (-0.26) and effective communication (-0.30) seem to negatively influence burnout levels

**Table 9 – Effects of life skills on burnout**

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>p</b>
LS - Creative Thinking	-0,24	<0,05
LS - Problem Solving	-0,26	<0,05
LS - Effective Communication	-0,30	<0,05

Finally, empathy (0.23), creative thinking (0.26) and relationships (0.22) positively influence the organizational citizenship behaviors.

**Table 10 – Effects of life skills on OCBs**

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>p</b>
LS - Empathy	0,23	<0,05
LS - Creative Thinking	0,26	<0,05
LS - Interpersonal relationship	0,22	<0,05

To increase the understanding of the phenomenon, social workers were asked to indicate among the list of 10 possibilities which aspects to improve in their organization. The Italians, almost unanimously (92% of the total responses) indicated that action should be taken on the circulation and clarity of information, personnel should also be valued (41%) and increase investment in staff training (40%). For the Portuguese, we should intervene to improve the relationship between colleagues (39%), work on the relationship with the superiors (35%) and improve the clarity of the objectives and invest in technologies (30%). For

Romanian operators, it would be necessary to invest in staff training (45%), on the safety of the working environment (30%) and on the possibilities of career development (42%).

**Table 11**

**In your opinion, what are the things to improve in your organization?**

	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Romany</b>
Comfort of the working environment	0,0	0,0	27,3
Safety of the working environment	0,0	0,0	30,3
Circulation and clarity of information	92,6	0,0	9,1
Relations between colleagues	11,1	39,1	3,0
Relations with superiors	7,4	34,8	0,0
IT and technological supports	3,7	30,4	18,2
Flexibility of working time	11,1	21,7	3,0
Clarity of objectives and tasks	11,1	30,4	15,2
Enhancement of staff	40,7	26,1	24,2
Staff training and updating	40,7	21,7	45,5
Incentive distribution system	14,8	13,0	21,2
Relations with users	3,7	13,0	6,1
Possibility of a career development	29,6	24,8	42,4
Assignment of resources	11,1	13,0	24,2

What are the best life skills for the type of work done was also asked: Italian operators argue that for the type of work carried out are important interpersonal skills (52%), effective communication (48%) creativity and stress management both at 40%. For Portuguese operators the most important life skills are decision-making (69%) empathy (56%) and creativity (43%). For Romanian operators the most important competence is problem solving (94%), empathy (36%) and relational skills (36%).

**Table 12****What are the life skills that you think are essential for your job?**

	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Romany</b>
Knowing how to solve problems	0,0	30,4	93,9
Knowing how to make decisions	0,0	69,6	27,3
Creativity	40,7	43,5	9,1
Critical sense	14,8	4,3	3,0
Self-awareness - Self-esteem	3,7	13,0	12,1
Interpersonal skills	51,9	7,4	36,4
Effective communication	48,1	26,1	15,2
Stress management	40,7	17,4	30,3
Management of emotions	29,6	17,4	27,3
Emphaty	37,0	56,5	36,4

**Conclusion**

The results of the present study suggest that the general health of social workers is mid-level and that there are no significant differences in the comparison between the three countries. However, the differences are present with regard to burnout levels. Italian operators do not seem to have important problems of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization while Portuguese workers have achieved high scores in the dimension of depersonalization. Romanian workers have achieved high scores both in the emotional exhaustion dimension and in the depersonalization dimension of the MBI. For the three countries, there is a moderate satisfaction with regard to personal fulfillment.

Concerning levels of emotional intelligence and life skills, the results indicate that social workers have a good level of development of these skills and the values are for most of them just below the threshold value indicative of full development. This result justifies the training intervention aimed at improving emotional intelligence and life skills.

To conclude the analysis on social workers, the Altruism dimension of the OCBs is the only dimension that exceeds the threshold value in all three countries. It is obvious that given the characteristics of this work the manifestation of altruistic behavior is inherent in the work itself. The Sportsmanship dimension appears to be the most fragile that must therefore be attentive during the training intervention.

In the second part of the study, the relationships between the variables were analyzed. The idea would be to identify the beneficial effects of emotional intelligence on life skills, general health, bur-nout and organizational citizenship behaviors and analyze the relationships between life skills, general health, burnout and organizational citizenship behaviors. The

results indicate that high levels of emotional intelligence can contribute to an improvement of nine life skills in 10, to an improvement in general health and to increase personal fulfillment (the burnout dimension identified as critical in all three populations). High scores of emotional intelligence are also associated with the altruistic behavior of OCBs.

Developing the ability to manage emotions and stress, creative and critical thinking can have a beneficial effect on the general health of social workers; critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication can reduce burnout levels. In addition, creative thinking, empathy and relational skills are associated with organizational citizenship behaviors. These results therefore underline the importance for social workers to develop these skills in order to improve their personal and professional quality of life.

## Focus Group

In this part of the report partners presents the results of the second phase of research consisting in a qualitative survey, through the organization and realization of one Focus Group, in each of three countries participating in FOCUS Project, which took place between November and December 2018. The purpose of the Focus Group was to collect the cognitive and emotional representations of social workers regarding the relationships between Life Skills, emotional intelligence and quality of life at work. And also, to investigate and to expand the knowledge about the fundamental concepts of the project, namely “life skills” and “emotional intelligence”, to encourage the emergence of personal opinions on the concrete application of these abilities in the context of the work, to evaluate the work environment and to collect operative suggestions for targeted and necessary interventions.

Participants were recruited through representative sampling, with respect to the topic that it was intended to investigate. Homogeneity has been sought in the cultural background and not in the attitudes of the people involved.

The selected participants were 28, in the total, from the three countries belonging to member organizations Italy and Romania (Cooperativa 3P and Philanthropy Federation) and in the case of Portugal to Desincoop team and local partners from social economy sector. At the Portuguese session there were also 4 social workers who were unable to attend for unforeseen reasons.

The distribution by profession was the following: coordinators (Italy 1, Romania 1, Portugal 0) responsible (Italy 1) social workers (Italy 1, Romania 9; Portugal 1) psychologists (Italy 1, Romania 2; Portugal 2) educator (Italy 5) social educators (Portugal 2) social animator (Portugal 1) and social pedagogue (Romania 1). The different distribution according the countries is related with the mission of the belonging organization.

The moderators of the Focus Group were:

- Italy Dr. Mariangela Cardinale from AMS.
- Portugal, Mrs. Daniela Monteiro professor of Social Work at Catholic University, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences of Braga, doctorate in Social Work and the president of Desincoop Mrs. Luísa Oliveira.
- Romania, Mrs. Monica Alexandru, a professor at the Faculty of Social Assistance in Bucharest, and Ms Adriana Căruntu, director of the St. Nectarios Palliative Care Center Bucharest.

According to a predefined structured scheme, to ensure the compatibility of the collected information, the focus group had 4 phases:

1. Presentation of the participants and the general objectives of the study;
2. Exploratory / cognitive approach to the theoretical concepts of the study;
3. Exploratory at the level of personal opinions;
4. Conclusions.

The moderators aimed to stimulate discussion between the participants on each subject as explained the Focus Group was divided into two moments: the first moment in which the discussion was semi-structured and more directed to direct questions about Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence and the second moment of free discussion. The guidelines for driving the Focus Group were designed by the AMS partner.

## **Emerged Data**

### Question no.1:

Let's try to provide a definition of life skills. What are the life skills for you? (as a social worker)

Objective: activation on the topic of Life Skills / defining and sharing the concept of Life Skills

The Italian participants have been able to fully define the concept, agreeing all on characteristic of the essentiality of such competences for an adaptive and flexible management of "situations of life", ranging from every day to work, from complex and problematic experiences to the most simple. Resources that are present in each of that, and us if trained, can improve the personal life quality.

In the group of Portugal, only one participant stated that these skills are directly related to education / schooling. However, the rest of the group felt that they are skills that help to improve aspects of personal and professional life.

The Romanian participants provided definitions close to WHO's concept of "life skills", emphasizing the skills needed for adaptive and flexible management of "living situations" encountered in the workplace, regardless of their complexity. As the Italian participants highlighted that each person has his / her own internal resources, which can be with the help of training courses, efficiently potentiated and channeled.

In the three countries, there is a homogenous perception of the link of these skills with mainly living situations and their influence in professional life.

#### Question no. 2:

Defining and sharing the concept of emotional intelligence (EI)

Objective: activation on the EI topic / define and share the concept of Emotional Intelligence

The same good understanding of the concept of "emotional intelligence" was perceived in all countries as well, as the sum of personal skills of self-analysis and self-awareness and relationship skills with others that are reflected in motivations, behaviors and relationship management.

In the definitions provided, the most commonly used terms by the participants were:

Italian: recognizing, managing, making sense, contextualize, understand, read behind ..., go beyond ...

Portuguese: relationship management, empathy, deal with emotions, emotional management, problem solving.

Romanian: knowledge, understanding, relationship management, empathy, awareness, communication, balance.

#### Question no. 3:

What are the three skills you consider important to train your workplace? Why?

Objective: in-depth study on the application of constructs in the workplace.

The Italian group reports an initial difficulty in choosing the 3 Skills: for them all 10 Life skills are necessary in the management of their work.

In the discussion phase, the group states that the difficulty of choice is related to their perception that every single skill is connected directly to the other (example: problem solving and decision-making, self-awareness and emotion management, problem solving and creative thinking ...).

These links between Life Skills reflect the theoretical subdivision into macro-categories (emotional, relational and cognitive) proposed by the WHO. Even if the Empathy (the most voted among the skills) is associated with emotional rather than relational macro-category.

Basically, the three skills chosen by the group, reflect the reality of their work, which you see them move on two fundamental dimensions. Specifically, the group considers Empathy as the fundamental skill for this type of work: *“Fundamental for those who work in the social sector. We are dealing with particular situations, with victims of violence and abuse (in our case mothers and children) and to help them and really understand them it is necessary to put oneself in their shoes and understand every decision and behavior ”*; *“There ... it allows us to understand the reactions and go beyond the fact. Give a reading key different”*

This choice is in line with Erra (2011) argues that managing emotions of clients / users of services, especially in traumatic situations requires individual preparation, so training in emotional management is a form of self-protection in terms of mental health of professionals and simultaneously facilitates the management of emotions of those with whom social workers relate.

The Italian participants also mentioned this skill as basic not only in relation to users (defined several times guests) but also in the relationship with the work team: *“empathy in the work group, between colleagues, is a point in favor of our working environment.”* This self-awareness indicates that empathy can be considered a protector skill *“An understanding between colleagues that goes further and that it certainly allows to face the daily work with more tranquility.*

In line with the above, the choices of the group fall mainly on emotional skills, such as stress management and Emotion management, followed by Problem solving and Decision Making, considered closely related, and the Effective communication. Self-awareness was defined as a means of measuring one's own limits and creative thinking, understood as pure creativity, is considered a skill that tends to lose its importance in a work context that too often requires *“order” interventions practical”*.

The Portuguese participants in the discussion choose three competencies, they consider the most important for the work context and which, in their opinion, are fundamental to the professional practice of social work:

- emotional - stress management;
- social - effective communication;
- Cognitive - problem-solving.

The life skills listed by Romanian respondents are mainly by the following order:

- social (empathy, assertive communication, functional interpersonal relationships),
- cognitive (flexibility in decision-making, problem solving, creativity)
- emotional (emotional management, stress management).

In the three groups, the links between Life Skills are recognized. These links reflect the theoretical subdivision into macro-categories (emotional, relational and cognitive) proposed by the WHO. Even if the Empathy (the most voted among the skills) for the Italians is associated with Emotional rather than relational macro-category.

The examples given during the discussion are also in line with the literature. Kurian & Kurian (2014) consider social work a stressful profession doing the complexity and emergency of user's problems that obliges good communication skills, the ability to evaluate and be able to take decisions in a constructive way.<sup>43</sup>

#### Question no. 4:

Which life skills are the ones that you think are the most useful for your beneficiaries? Why?

Objective: in-depth study on the application of constructs in working with users.

We start from the assumption, common to all the participants, more expressed by Italian and Romanian groups, that the choice was difficult also in this case, because every single user has his/her own history and characteristics and for this, he/she would need a personalized plan for developing personal skills.

The Italian group agrees that management of stress and self-awareness training is of primary importance for its users, though convinced that such workouts, on a user who has

*"... lived years of violence and abuse ..."* is not easy and would require long-term interventions.

Specifically, Stress Management would be required as soon as they are incorporated into

---

<sup>43</sup> Kurian, Aneesh; Kurian, Tintu. (2014) The Nexus of Life Skills and Social Work Practice. Social Work Chronicle . 2014, Vol. 3 Issue 1/2, p21-33. 13p.

the structure *“They find themselves alienated from their habits, in a house that is not theirs, to live with people other than their friends, unwanted roommates and to deal with educators who tell them what to do, with managers who talk about courts. They are always under pressure “*

Users feel continuously observed, evaluated, judged: *“... they live this constant press of the evaluation and many of their abrupt reactions are dictated by this situation which I am not in able to manage”.*

About self-awareness, *“we must work on recognizing the problem, because they are not aware of their own problems. Moreover, if they do not recognize a problem, how do they act on this? “It is therefore necessary to work on the Self-awareness of their experiences, on the capacity of discover, understand and use forgotten personal resources and make them understand “what they can do so many things that before they could never have imagined doing on their own”.*

Following the previous discussion, the Portuguese participants agreed that (1) Empathy; (2) Active Listening; (3) Emotional management are core competencies to work with the beneficiaries of social work insofar as they play an important role in achieving more effective interventions. In this sense, one of the participants stated:

*Most of all empathy! I work with the elderly. I feel that they need to tell their stories, their problems, whether they are food or whether they have had a question with another colleague ... they are there to vent and unburden themselves today. We have to be there constantly to listen ... or to borrow something and every 5 minutes to remember “look do not forget this”, so you need empathy, a lot of empathy and a very good ear!*

This means that service recipients often have a need to talk and to be heard, which in turn implies that the professional actually has skills such as empathy and active listening. This participant added that when technicians empathize with service users, they are more likely to achieve success in their activities and, in turn, better results. According to Kurian and Kurian (2014), using Karol and Gerden and Elizabeth, A. Segal (s.d.), the empathic action we undertake can affect individuals, groups and communities.

The Romanian group agreed during the discussions that empathy is of primary importance in relation with the beneficiaries: They are essential skills for practicing the profession, because *I have to know myself and understand others so that I can provide the necessary support, and sure all this can be achieved through effective communication.*

It was also highlighted the role of interpersonal skills:

Relationship management, because *a good relationship with superiors and colleagues leads to good communication, a unity, forming a team that can solve problems more easily; we need to know each other to know the role of each in the institution and who we can rely on for certain things...*

Respect for the person and his dignity; respect for privacy; respect for confidentiality; respecting the right of choice and self-determination of the client, as well as respecting the local cultural traditions and model, cooperating with local social actors, adapting the intervention to the specifics of the community and adapting it to its cultural values.

Following the previous discussion, the participants agreed that the core competencies to work with the beneficiaries of social work insofar as they play an important role in achieving interventions that are more effective are linked with communication and the conditions and skills required. In this sense in all groups there is a common agreement regarding the importance of empathy, active listening and emotional management. Decision-making was also a skill mentioned in the discussion.

#### Question n°. 5:

How can we develop emotional intelligence among social workers? What actions, in your opinion, would be necessary?

Objective: collection of opinions about the development of skills in the workplace

The Italian group talked about ongoing training with specialized operators, specific refresher courses and periodic updating meetings. These solutions are considered useful for both the acquisition/training of personal skills, both for the enhancement of resources and skills of each operator, in order to encourage greater motivation in the management of problems encountered daily in one's work.

Other instruments cited: role-plays, simulations, dramatizations, personal supervision and of self-awareness group.

For the Portuguese members this moment of the discussion was centered in the enumeration of some strategies that can be used by the professionals to develop their emotional intelligence. In this sense, the participants started by referring to the sharing of experiences through team meetings or even non-formal meetings. However, one of the people involved says that the action has an obstacle:

*I think maybe I agree with colleagues. But I think that nowadays, in the social area it is very difficult to manage teams, that is, it is very difficult to work as a team. I think it's getting harder every time.*

In addition to the aforementioned strategy, participants discuss the development of compe-

tencies that help improve emotional intelligence: *“Improving skills, for example the interpersonal relationship ... and empathy ...” through dynamics or role plays: “It is through challenges that the person tries to put himself in the place of the other ... Dynamics ...”*. Bradberry and Greaves (s.d. cit. By Ackerman, 2018) propose evidence-based strategies for building emotional intelligence through self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. According to Goleman (s.d. cit. By Ackerman, 2018) promoting “social and emotional learning” helps to develop emotional intelligence and learning abilities but also helps in personal and professional success, reducing or some of the most distracting and harmful behavioral problems.

The Romanian group recognize this vision *“Emotional intelligence lies in the ability to know and understand you and to know and understand others. This is related to concepts such as love, empathy, spirituality, and not related to the intelligence coefficient. I believe that self-awareness courses are required to develop a person’s emotional intelligence, but also to engage directly in social activities.”*

In their opinion, Emotional Intelligence can be trained and developed through:

- ✓ workshops for personal / professional development for social assistance professionals;
- ✓ training courses;
- ✓ communication optimization and personal development;
- ✓ seminars on “Managing stress and burn-out effects.

#### Question no. 6:

What are the negative elements (excluding any delays in payments) that affect or could affect the work environment?

Objective: collection of opinions about any weaknesses of the organization that affect the working climate.

In answering the question, the Italian Group makes it clear that each operator refers to the individual belonging community, considering it impossible to give a general and valid assessment for the 3 community, as each of them is characterized by different teams, different users, different activities planned and specific problems.

Having said that, the group immediately identifies the lack of a critical element Communication *“at all levels”*, the lack of comparison and the consequent lack of a shared common line.

Furthermore, there is talk of a lack of recognition of one's skills, especially "*from above*" (ex: Institutions) and "*not feeling valued for the work done*".

The central aspect referred by Portuguese Focus Group was the human resources management, which can influence several factors. Mismanagement of human resources stems from communication influence, good or bad communication can lead to good or bad human resources management, good or bad decision making, good or bad distribution of tasks in turn can lead to overwork, and consequently to Burnout.

In this sense, the scientific literature Freudemberger (1974, quoted by Gonzalez, 2000), defines it "as the feeling of exhaustion, disappointment and loss of interest in professional activity, especially those who dedicate themselves to social work. That is, Burnout arises because of unfulfilled expectations.

Participants also highlighted the lack of self-awareness as a determinant. One participant corroborates this idea but adds: "*The poor management of human resources. I think this is what can affect, now regardless of everything if we do not have love to sweater, I think it is not worth working in the social area.*"

The Romanian participants pointed out that: "*we do not work for money (although without them we can not easily get through this life) but for the satisfaction of seeing socially accomplished and reintegrated beneficiaries.*"

In addition, identified the following negative elements that affect the work environment:

- lack of communication or compatibility with the professional team,
- inadequate legislation to the needs of the beneficiaries;
- lack of feedback from the hierarchical superior;
- lack of resources / insufficient resources;
- maladministration of resources;
- difficult exposure to beneficiaries;
- exposure to risk factors through contact with various recipients with hygiene or medical problems, circulation and clarity of information at institutional level.

Question no. 7:

What are the three things that improve or could improve the work environment? Why? How?

Objective: collection of opinions about the necessary development of skills in the workplace.

The Italian group makes their choice through the following order

- (1) The relationship between colleagues;
- (2) The clarity of objectives and tasks;
- (3) Circulation and clarity of information.

To the Portuguese three fundamental aspects that improve the work environment are:

- (1) The relationship between colleagues;
- (2) Safe environment;
- (3) The allocation of resources.

From the list and following the Manual instructions the Romanian Group choose

- (1) The relationship between colleagues;
- (2) Assignment of resources for their users;
- (3) Relations with superiors.

There is a clear consensus among the three groups that the main factor that influence the good work environment it is the relationship between colleagues. According the Italians understood as a fundamental network of support, not only for what concerns working situations but also for personal ones. The Portuguese considered the most important element in the daily work. The Romanians add the importance of a common vision and complementarity of the multidisciplinary team, because without colleagues (social worker, psychologist, nurse, social pedagogue, priest) cannot have consistent results.

This is followed by “the clarity of the objectives and tasks”, which is fundamental for working as a second team a common line, “the circulation and clarity of information”, necessary for good management of the work team.

All these elements intricate into working conditions that include:

- Assignment of resources for their users in the sense of legislation tailored to the

needs of the beneficiaries, as standards and working conditions are set by the legislation in force;

- The promotion of a safe environment meaning that the infrastructures location should protect workers from beneficiaries.
- Allocation of resources in order social workers manage their time and efforts:
- Good communication with superiors, meaning clear transmission of objectives and appreciation of work results.

*Safety in the workplace because we work mainly in the field and in unfavorable context mainly with (...) in social neighborhoods and it turns out to be difficult to work with open door as I usually say, users enter it to circulate and enter and leave and ... the home visits we do ...*

Thus, with respect to the working environment, Rego et al (2003, pp. 19-20, cit. By Sintra, 2013) point out that "... A favorable climate ... encourages employees to adopt behaviors of organizational citizenship (actions of interpersonal help, team spirit, identification with the organization, interpersonal harmony, individual initiative, constructive suggestions)".

Staff training updating and exchanges at international and inter-institutional level are key factors to improve and assure the quality of work environment.

#### Question n° 8:

What is the aspect of your work that enjoys more than any other?

Objective: strengths of one's work

In the first place, it was pointed out that the motivations are very subjective. If for some the social area includes work with emotions and affections, which in itself makes the work rewarding, colleagues and users. In the first case the constant confrontation with prepared colleagues and humanly close.

Among others the other aspects emphasized were the improvement of the quality of life of users of services: *"The aspect of the life I enjoy most is the involvement in increasing the quality of life of the beneficiaries I interact with each day; What I enjoy most it is to bring a smile on the faces of the beneficiaries. And the recognition and concern expressed by users towards professionals. "... when they amaze you with small gestures that cancel practical*

*problems ... a smile, a sudden embrace, a gift, a draw ... you understand how you entered the heart and that you are working well “*

Another aspect of work that brings joy and satisfaction is volunteering, charity actions, humanitarian campaigns that contribute to the development of moral-Christian values, positive behavior, of being generous to the fellow human beings, to the development of empathy and the spirit of self-help.

*Work means to serve. It's about dedicating a bigger cause than you! It's about being totally dedicated to your work, living through it. It means putting you in the service of people and yourself. The purpose of your work is to evolve, not to acquire, to leave the world better than you have found, not to passed through it just to collect the fruits of others' work.*

From the discussion about factors that make participants work more rewarding than any other are the knowledge of new cultures and different lives as motivate factor to work in the social field.

The information gathered through the Focus Group will provide useful material for developing a model of training for private social workers starting from their needs, in line with the general objective of the FOCUS project. We point out that the information has been collected by applying a qualitative research tool. The results of the focus group, presented in this part of the report, are therefore an overview of the views and opinions of the participants on the topics investigated by the project. without claiming to be exhaustive or statistically relevant.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Social Work is a profession based in the interpersonal relationship with the users, with other members of the multidisciplinary teams and with community stakeholders. The quality of professional's relationships is linked to job satisfaction and to mental health.

Unfortunately, there is no large-scale study to know the full impact of the Life Skills have in the daily work of Social Workers to systematize the discovery of differences and similarities in different contexts. In fact, it is a hard task to compare political, cultural and social realities and their different historical pasts.

As shown from the literature review, the main challenges that social workers face are external factors that influence their performance and have influence to the levels of burnout that these professionals experience as others professions characterized by their role on human sufferance and injustice.

The main difference found between partners are more in the motivation to work in this field and even with different perspectives on social work, there are similitudes on the values and principles.

The literature review showed that social workers should improve the research and develop skills on writing in order their work have more visibility and be recognized. With recognition will be more clear the need of resources allocation and advocacy will be more effective.

This Report results from the effort to juxtapose findings in the different phases to achieve the core skills expressed directly or indirectly by the professionals that participated in this study and all the others to whom the main results were presented and gave their contribution to the discussion.

### **Improve the organization environment and Social Workers qualification**

As shown from the literature review and as a result from the contextualization of Social Work in each country and even in each one, the diversity of situations requires different approaches. The main challenges that social workers face are strongly linked with the conditions in which they develop their profession. The data collected in this point are for the purpose of this project an important source of reflection not only by professionals but mainly by education institutions, professionals associations and employers. Qualified professional's means more citizens empowered and owners of their projects of life. The Italians, almost unanimously (92% of the total responses) indicated that action should be taken on the circulation and clarity of information, the same perception was illustrated in the Focus Group discussion. Personnel should also be valued (41%) and the clarity of objectives and tasks and circulation and clarity of information were pointed out as strategies. Increase the investment in staff training (40%) was manifested as well.

The Portuguese social workers expressed as an evidence the necessity in spaces for debate and joint reflection, both at the level of the institutional contexts as well as between peers, in the literature review, during the Focus Group and finally illustrated in the quantitative data, in which was found that it is important to improve the relationship between colleagues (39%).

For Romanian operators, it would be necessary to invest in staff training (45%), on the safety of the working environment (30%) and on the possibilities of career development (42%). All aspects connected with working conditions.

Several dimensions of Social Work profession(s) were evidenced in these results:

- ✓ the need for permanent updating and the pursuit of knowledge;
- ✓ the work conditions in which the career development is one of the key points as a source of job and personal satisfaction;
- ✓ Lastly and as most important, the central focus of the existence of the profession, the users and the role those professionals can develop to advocate for assignment of the adequate resources and empowerment conditions.

## Recommendations:

- ✓ A training program for social workers should be implemented to develop Life Skills and Emotional Intelligence as health and well-being of the social worker's protector's factors.
- ✓ All skills linked with communication are a subject to include in training courses.
- ✓ A more attention should be devoted to the use of non-formal dynamics to improve better interpersonal relationships, evidences resulting from reliable professional experiences as "study cases" or "inspiring practices" to improve and increase more team collaboration.
- ✓ Develop platforms to share the innovations in social work practice.

During the production of this Intellectual Output were identified some gaps that can be answered in future projects and researches. Here is a summary of these suggestions:

- ✓ To replicate in larger population samples the instruments used for this project purposes in different cultural backgrounds (north Europe countries, Anglo-Saxon countries) to gain a better overview of the different social workers realities;
- ✓ To confirm if stress management is also identified by males social workers and how life balance influence this need;
- ✓ To understand why effective communication life skill is not identified as an important skill to be improved;
- ✓ To explore ways of increasing critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication among social workers to avoid burnout;
- ✓ To replicate an in depth study how Life Skills are important in social services users since literature is scarce in this topic.

It is also hoped that some findings of the research will be able to make a helpful contribution to social work and social work education and to whom has the responsibility of improving the work conditions.

## References

Ackerman, C. (2018). O que é a Inteligência Emocional e como melhorá-la? Obtido de Positive Psychology Program: <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/emotional-intelligence-eq/>

Gonzalez, J. (2000). Cuidado de Cuidadores. Em A. Pacheco, V. Rojo, D. Peral, J. Elorrieta, & A. Moreno, *Mastér International de Medicina Humanitaria - Intervenciones en Salud en la Acción Humanitaria*. Porto: Universidad Miguel Hernández - Universidade de Oporto.

Kurian, A., & Kurian, T. (2014). The Nexus of Life Skills and Social Work Practice. *Social Work Chronicle*, pp. Volume 3, Issue 1 & 2,.

Sintra, J. (2013). Responsabilidade Social e Clima de Segurança: um estudo correlacional com uma amostra de uma unidade militar. Lisboa: Secção de Psicologia dos Recursos Humanos, do Trabalho e das Organizações - Universidade de Lisboa.

World Health Organization. (1994). *The Development and Dissemination of Life Skills Education: An Overview*. Geneva: Division of Mental Health, World Health Organization.

Branco, Francisco, & Fernandes, Ernesto. (2005). *O Serviço Social em Portugal: Trajectória e Encruzilhada*, Lisboa (original: Branco, Francisco e Fernandes, Ernesto *Le service social au Portugal: trajectoire et enjeux*). In J.-P. D. e. Y. Hurtubise (Ed.), *Le travail social international. Éléments de Comparaison*, Canadá, Les Presses de l'Université Laval. Canadá: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

Ferreira, Maria Emília Freitas. (2006). *Serviço Social e construção do conhecimento: contextos, lógicas e significados no Serviço Social português*. (Doutoramento), Pontífice Universidade Católica de São Paulo, São Paulo.

Martins, Alcina. (1999a). *Génese, Emergência e Institucionalização do Serviço Social Português*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian e Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.

Martins, Alcina. (1999b). Serviço Social e Investigação. Serviço Social, Profissão & Identidade, Que trajectória? Lisboa e São Paulo: Veras Editora.

Martins, Alcina. (2002). Investigação em Serviço Social: Perspectivas actuais. In B. A. Henriquez & M. A. Farinha (Eds.), Serviço Social: Unidade na Diversidade, encontro com a identidade profissional. Aveiro: APSS.

Martins, Alcina. (2008). Investigação em Serviço Social no Portugal Contemporâneo. Paradoxo e desafios. Locus Soci@l(1), 32-47.

Monteiro, Daniela. (2016). A Investigação na formação inicial em Serviço Social: modelos e práticas. (Doutoramento), Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisboa.

(2014) International definition of Social Service “Global definition of Social Work”. Edited by A. Sicora v1 dd. 30.04.14

Folgheraiter, Fabio (2014). What is social work and social work as a scientific discipline (part two). Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. Milan, Published by “be equal” <http://beequalideeinmovimento.blogspot.com/2014/06/cose-il-lavoro-sociale-e-il-lavoro.html>

Bortoli, Bruno & Folgheraiter, Fabio (2001) Social Work. University of Trento. N° 1/2001 of Social Work, Quadrimestrale of methodology and professional cultures - ERICKSON; <http://annotazioni.wikidot.com/lavoro-sociale>)

(2009) “The dialectic between Social Work and Social Service” <https://www.fondazionezan-can.it/news/view/124>)

(1984) Ministry of the Interior - General Direction of Civil Services. First definition of 1984

Parente, C. (2003). Construção Social das Competências Profissionais. Tese de Doutoramento, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Porto. <http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/945.pdf>

## Bibliography

Almeida, J. G. (2010). Sobrecarga dos cuidadores familiares de pessoas com doença mental: dimensões analítico-reflexivas na perspectiva do Serviço Social.

Amaro, M. (2009). Urgências e emergências do serviço social contemporâneo: contributos para a discussão dos fundamentos da profissão.

Andrade, A. C. (2015). Integração profissional & serviço social: um estudo de caso. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Balancho, M. L. (2010). Concepções e Razões de Felicidade de Pessoas a Viver em Condições de Pobreza: um estudo exploratório com beneficiários de Rendimento Social de Inserção dos Açores. Lisboa: ISPA.

Bento, M. (2016). Serviço Social e municípios: trajetórias e desafios dos assistentes sociais portugueses nos territórios municipais.

Branco, F. (2015). Itinerário das profissões sociais em Portugal, 1910-1962. Lisboa: Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa.

Brites, J. R., Batista, V. C., & Cordeiro, E. J. (2016). Projeto de Vida em Lares de Infância e Juventude: Perspectivas dos Técnicos. Viseu: Revista de Psicologia da Criança e do Adolescente.

Brito, L. S. (2011). Famílias monoparentais no feminino em contexto local: Serviço Social e políticas sociais. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Canastra, F. (2007). O perfil do formativo-profissional do educador social. pp. 1-397.

Canha, L. N. (2008). Promoção de Competências Pessoais e Sociais, Desenvolvimento de um Modelo Adaptado a Crianças e Jovens com Deficiência, Manual Prático. Odemira: INR.

Caria, T., Sousa, P., & Almeida, J. (2017). A Identidade Profissional Institucional: Atualidade da pesquisa em serviço social. pp. 149-165.

Carvalho, M. I. (2015). Desafios do Serviço Social na atualidade em Portugal. São Paulo.

Carvalho, M. I. (s.d.). Social work and intervention with older people in Portugal: a critical point of view. *European Journal of Social Work*.

Coelho, V. A., Marchante, M., Sousa, V., & Romão, A. M. (2016). Programas de intervenção para o desenvolvimento de competências socio emocionais em idade escolar: uma revisão crítica dos enquadramentos SEL e SEAL. *Revista Análise Psicológica*.

Cortês, A. S. (2017). Da evidência da prática profissional à emergência padronizada de competências: serviço social em cuidados paliativos. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Costa, A. S. (2014). Práticas institucionais do assistente social com toxicodependentes. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Costa, A. S. (2015). As emoções e o trabalho emocional em contexto organizacional: um estudo acerca das agentes de geriatria. Braga: Universidade do Minho.

Cruz, S. A. (2010). Rede Social: o agir profissional do assistente social e o desenvolvimento social em contexto local. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Dias, I., Gomes, A. R., Peixoto, A., Marques, B., & Ramalho, V. (2012). Treino de competências de vida: Conceptualização, intervenção e investigação. Braga: Universidade do Minho.

Dores, A. C. (2011). Promoção do desenvolvimento de competências emocionais: um programa de intervenção no pré-escolar. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Duarte, F. (2015). A Violação dos Direitos Sociais nos Países do Sul da Europa. Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada.

Ermelinda Caldeira, M. J. (2017). Educação Sexual na Escola Contextos Para a Mudança. Riase.

Faermann, L. A. (2015). O trabalho do assistente social no contexto da crise do capital: problematizações necessárias. Brasil: Revista da Faculdade do Serviço Social da Universidade do Estado do Rio e Janeiro.

Fernandes, A. I. (2012). Visões da pobreza na primeira pessoa: contributos para o entendimento do fenómeno da pobreza na cidade de Beja. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Franja, B. (2011). A Competência Reflexiva Processual em Serviço Social na Ação Profissional junto às Populações. pp. 428-453.

Gaspar, S. M. (2013). A Prática da Educação para a Saúde dos Enfermeiros Comunicadores. Lisboa: Universidade Técnica de Lisboa Faculdade de Motricidade Humana.

Gil, I. M., Costa, P. J., Cardoso, D. F., Parola, V. S., & Apóstolo, M. d. (2018). Effectiveness of reminiscence therapy in improving older people's cognition, depressive symptoms, and quality of life: systematic review protocol.

Godinho, J. (2014). Avaliação do desempenho de pessoas numa IPSS : desenvolvimento de um modelo funcional. Leiria: ISLA. pp. 1-134.

Gomes, J. F., & Veloso, A. F. (2016). Regresso às Origens: A Importância do Indivíduo na Criatividade nas Organizações. Brasil.

Gonçalves, C. M. (2014). Conceção de um Modelo para Implementação de Avaliação de Desempenho numa IPSS O caso do Centro Social e Paroquial São Mamede de Agrochão. Bragança: Instituto Politécnico de Bragança.

Gonçalves, H., Silva, P. G., & Sacramento, O. (2014). Social and Labour Market Integration of Women Benefitting from Social Inclusion Schemes: Case Studies of Northern Portugal.

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Guadalupe, S. (2009). *Intervenção em rede: serviço social, sistémica e redes de suporte social*.

Jesus, A. (2015). *Intervenção social com crianças refugiadas: estratégias profissionais do Serviço Social com crianças refugiadas em Portugal*. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Leite, M. (2013). *O Estado e o associativismo profissional e sindical dos assistentes sociais em Portugal. Trajetória e perspetivas atuais*. pp. 1-54.

Leite, M. B. (2013). *O Estado e o Associativismo Profissional e Sindical dos Assistentes Sociais em Portugal: trajetória e perspetivas atuais*. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Marôco, J., Marôco, A. L., Leite, E., Bastos, C., Vazão, M. J., & Campos, J. (2016). *Burnout em Profissionais da Saúde Portugueses: Uma Análise a Nível Nacional*. Porto: Revista Científica da Ordem dos Médicos.

Martins, A., & Santos, C. (2016). *The Education of Social Assistants in Portugal: Trends in Critical thinking*. pp. 333-341.

Martins, I. C. (2015). *Políticas de Imigração e Integração: Intervenção do Serviço Social*. Lisboa: Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Mendes, S. R. (2017). *A Inserção Profissional de Assistentes Sociais na Escola Pública em Portugal Continental*. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Miranda, S. C. (2011). *Stress Ocupacional, Burnout e Suporte Social nos Profissionais de Saúde Mental*. Braga: Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Monteiro, H., & Veiga, S. (2017). *Enfoque Axiológico na Formação dos/das Estudantes*

de Educação Social. pp. 579-604.

Monteiro, M. J. (2011). Competências para a Vida em Adolescentes: Avaliação da qualidade de vida relacionada com a saúde e da competência social. Faro: Universidade do Algarve.

Montenegro, M. (2018). Ser Professor em novos contextos culturais - trajetórias e identidades. Lisboa. Universidade de Lisboa.

Morgado, M. (2016). A intervenção do assistente social com pessoas idosas institucionalizadas. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Neves, C. F., Rente, J. A., Ferreira, A. C., & Garrett, A. C. (2017). Quality of life of people with multiple sclerosis and their caregivers. Revista de Enfermagem Referência.

Nunes, S. X. (2016). Significados atribuídos à Competência Emocional do Enfermeiro: estudo empírico e impacto na educação. Riase.

Passarinho, I. (2015). Em Rede Fazemos a Diferença: um Percurso de Aprendizagem, Empowerment e Inclusão Educativa e Comunitária com Pais de Crianças e Jovens com NEE. Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada.

Pena, M. (2012). Relação Profissional: utopia ou realidade?

Pena, M. (2013). A relação profissional no quadro da intervenção do assistente social. pp. 55-70.

Pinto, C. M. (2017). Relação entre a Inteligência Emocional e o Relacionamento Interpessoal em Crianças 5 Anos. Braga: Universidade do Minho.

Pires, C., Queirós, A., & Rodrigues, A. (2016). A influência do marketing interno nas atitudes e comportamentos dos colaboradores: aplicação a uma organização de cuidados sociais e de saúde. pp. 292-304.

Pires, S. (2009). Urgências e emergências do serviço social contemporâneo: contributos para a discussão dos fundamentos da profissão. pp. 1-76.

Pissarra, J. (2015). Intervir e Trabalhar com Grupos voltou à Agenda de Profissionais e Académicos. Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada.

Rafael, M. G. (2007). A relação de ajuda e a acção social no contexto universitário: a entrevista de ajuda nos serviços de acção social em Portugal. Revista Textos & Contextos Porto Alegre.

Ramalho, N. A., & Silva, A. C. (2015). A Intervenção Social com Populações “Desassistidas” em Contexto de Rua: O Caso do Projeto ‘TRANS-PORTA’. Lisboa: Universidade Lusíada.

Rebelo, Â. (2012). A relação profissional no quadro da intervenção do assistente social. pp. 1-142.

Rego, A. A. (2008). Crianças e Jovens Maltratados e suas Famílias uma Abordagem Clínica e da Saúde. Lisboa: Universidade Aberta.

Ribeirinho, C. M. (2005). Conceções práticas de intervenção social em cuidados sociais no domicílio. Lisboa: ISSSL.

Ribeirinho, C. M. (2018). A supervisão profissional como locus da (re)construção da intervenção do Serviço Social com pessoas idosas em Serviços de Apoio Domiciliário. Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

Rodrigues, G., Costa, D., Rocha, Lúcia, Monteiro, A., & Mendes, E. (2006). Avaliação sociológica de doentes com cancro do pulmão – Estudo casuístico em Internamento hospitalar. Revista Portuguesa de Pneumologia.

Rodrigues, M. D. (2018). A dimensão política e institucional do trabalho social comunitário a nível local.

Ruela, A., & Albuquerque, C. (2015). *Intervenção Social e Processos de Accountability: como conciliar interesses e expectativas entre diferentes stakeholders*. pp. 135-153.

Santos, M. J. (2012). *Intervenção do Serviço Social com famílias, crianças e jovens em perigo integradas em medidas de proteção em meio natural de vida*. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Silva, A. S. (2014). *Cuidados Paliativos em Portugal na Perspectiva de Assistentes Sociais*. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Silva, D. C. (2015). *Inteligência Emocional e Estilos de Coping: Estudo Exploratório numa População de idosos*. Porto: ISSSP.

Sulsbach, P. A. (2012). *A resiliência das mulheres que sofreram violência doméstica: uma revisão*. Florianópolis.

Vicente, C. S. (2015). *Burnout em Cuidadores Formais de Idosos e Doentes Crónicos - Atualidades*. Lisboa: Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Vicente, N. M. (2015). *Impacto das Medidas de Austeridade na Política de Segurança Social e no Trabalho dos Assistentes Sociais Afetos ao Rendimento Social de Inserção no Distrito de Coimbra*. Coimbra: Instituto Superior Miguel Torga.

Vieira, P. C. (2016). *Contributos para o aperfeiçoamento das organizações onde o serviço social opera*. Lisboa: ISCTE.

Zangão, M. (2014). *Desenvolvimento de competências relacionadas na preservação da intimidade durante o processo de cuidar*. pp. 1-396.

## APPENDIX 1

### Report of Portuguese Literature Review - Method

In 1<sup>st</sup> stage we search for documents, available in Portuguese, English and Spanish, in electronic databases of universities' repositories and Bon, at national level, covering regions from north to south of the country; For 3 months, 187 documents were selected with publication date of the last 10 years, in the following preferential order: (1) Doctoral Thesis; (2) Master Thesis; (3) Article.

The search terms used included key word crossover:

Social Work	Social Worker
• Life Skills	• Life Skills
• Skills for life	• Skills for life
• Decision Making	• Decision Making
• Problem Solving	• Problem Solving
• Creative Thinking	• Creative Thinking
• Critical Thinking	• Critical Thinking
• Effective Communication	• Effective Communication
• Interpersonal Relationship Skills	• Interpersonal Relationship Skills
• Self-awareness	• Self-awareness
• Empathy	• Empathy
• Coping with stress	• Coping with stress
• Coping with emotions	• Coping with emotions

In a second stage, the 187 documents were assigned, codes (for example, 1A; 5ED) defined by the following table:

1. Social Workers	A. Vulnerability
2. Psychologists	B. Mother with child
3. Social Educators	C. Minors
4. Managers	D. Unaccompanied minors
5. Teachers	E. Refugee
6. Trainers	F. Low qualifications
7. Students	G. Victims of violence
8. Trainees	H. Day centres
9. Volunteers	I. Nursing homes

With the assignment of the codes, 101 documents did not meet the inclusion criteria, did not have access or were repeated, hence were excluded. In the third stage, the 86 documents were considered based on inclusion and exclusion criteria:

### a) Keywords evaluation

	Social Work	Social Workers
Life Skills	0	0
Skills for life	0	0
Decision Making	0	0
Problem Solving	0	0
Creative Thinking	0	0
Critical Thinking	1	0
Effective communication	0	0
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	0	0
Self-awareness	0	0
Empathy	0	0
Coping with emotions	0	0
Coping with stress	0	0

### b) Title Evaluation

	Social Work	Social Workers
Life Skills	0	0
Skills for life	0	0
Decision Making	0	0
Problem Solving	0	0
Creative Thinking	0	0
Critical Thinking	1	0
Effective communication	0	0
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	0	0
Self-awareness	0	0
Empathy	0	0
Coping with emotions	0	1
Coping with stress	0	0

### c) Abstract Evaluation

	Social Work	Social Workers
Life Skills	0	0
Skills for life	4	5
Decision Making	0	0
Problem Solving	0	0
Creative Thinking	0	0
Critical Thinking	0	1
Effective communication	0	0
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	4	5
Self-awareness	0	0
Empathy	0	0
Coping with emotions	0	1
Coping with stress	0	0

### d) Conclusion Evaluation

	Social Work	Social Workers
Life Skills	0	0
Skills for life	7	8
Decision Making	4	4
Problem Solving	2	2
Creative Thinking	1	1
Critical Thinking	0	0
Effective communication	4	6
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
Self-awareness	1	3
Empathy	2	4
Coping with emotions	2	5
Coping with stress	0	0

At the fourth stage, after the evaluation by keywords, title, abstract and conclusions, 58 documents that did not contain the crossword of the above words were excluded, leaving 28 documents for the literature review.

## **Findings**

Of the 187 identified initially, 101 documents were withdrawn because they did not meet the inclusion criteria, did not have access or were repeated. Starting from a base of 86 documents that were subject to inclusion and exclusion criteria, these being, evaluation by keywords, evaluation by title, evaluation by abstract and evaluation by conclusions. Subsequently, 58 documents were excluded, leaving 28 documents to carry out the literature review.

## APPENDIX 2

### GENERAL GUIDELINES – FOCUS GROUP MANUAL

#### What is the Focus Group

The focus group is a qualitative research method based on group discussion, which allows gathering opinions and evaluations on a given topic that you want to investigate in depth ( Bloor et al., 2002).

This research does not provide numerical data, subject to statistical analysis, but allows analyzing events from the perspective of those who live them, facilitating and enriching the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Zammuner , 2003).

So the focus group is a research technique whose purpose is to promote the expression of opinions and/or opinions about a particular topic; is also a group interview led by a moderator who has the task of formulating the questions in order to stimulate the conversation and favor the comparison between the participants.

The moderator asks the questions according to a structured scheme, which includes questions ranging from general to particular.

It is important to never forget that the participants of the focus group are very different people and the task of the moderator is to bring out these differences to get answers/results interesting and differentiated about the topic, subject of the focus group.

#### Duration of the Focus Group

The focus group it should not take less than 90 minutes and, but should also be not longer than 120 minutes. (90min to 120min)

#### Conduction

The focus group can be conducted by a moderator or by two people: a moderator who leads the discussion and an observer who examines the group's relationship dynamics.

We recommend to audio-recording the focus.

#### Characteristics of the moderator/leader of the focus group:

- Ability to manage leaders and followers;
- Follow the track of the previously selected structured questions;

- Ask additional questions in case the group discussions remain is not precise (ex: could you explain better? could you give me a concrete example?);
- Involving those who do not take space in discussion or talk/participate less than others;
- be impartial in front of the ideas / solutions / opinions proposed by the participants;
- maintain a certain climate of general serenity to avoid the emergence of positions/ discussions and debate among the participants.

Always remember that who conducts focus groups you should not worry to solve the problems/ issues: it is not the place.

The focus group aims to leave the group of participants free to describe the topic and propose possible solutions.

### Participants

The focus group participants must be at least 6/7 and no more than 12/13 people (optimal number is 8 people), since a lower number could affect group dynamics, while a higher number often tends to censure the intervention of contrary or weak opinions, not allowing all participants to better express their ideas.

### Structured questions

In the beginning, will be elaborated/communicated stimulus questions to be followed for the management of the focus group. It is preferable that for each stimulus question, individual answers sheets are prepared (for each question, to distribute a card) to encourage a greater individual reflection through writing. Furthermore, the paper material is necessary during the analysis of the post-focus data.

The participants will read their answers in turn and those answers will become the key to manage the discussions.

### Preparation Focus Group

- Identification of the target and preparation of a list with names and contacts of the participants;
- Prepare questions to ask to the group, for the conduction of the meeting;
- Prepare the material, useful for the focus: answers sheets, post - it, pens and markers, audio recorder;

- Blackboard for Brainstorming and for keywords.

### Preparation of setting

- Sheet with list of names: collect signatures and e- mail for each participant;
- Make sure that the space of the meeting is perfectly placed before the group arrives: set the chairs around a table or in circle;
- On the day of the meeting, check the salon carefully and, in advance, make sure everything is in place (blackboard, pens, pc ...).
- Prepare everything for the audio recording of the focus group;
- For each participant: pen, papers, response cards;
- General check: for example, open the presentation on PowerPoint to see if the program works.

### Stages of development

1. Start/IceBreaking - is the most delicate phase in which the outcome of the focus group is determined, because often the conductor and the eventual observer is perceived with diffidence, such as investigator intruders. Therefore, is better to have a well mitigate climate with a friendly approach and “soft” atmosphere.
  - The meeting starts with a general introduction and individual presentation, but also the project presentation in general.
  - Introduction on how the meeting will develop: explaining why they are here, what their task will be, the expected times.
  - It is good to provide an introduction that explains the purpose of the focus group and the topic of discussion (not taking for granted that everyone is familiar with the topic of discussion).
  - Explain that there are no right or wrong answers: it's a session that allows you to exchange ideas.
  - Ask the participants to introduce themselves: propose an icebreaking game, so that could be easier for the participants be open sharing their ideas.
  - We then begin to structure the communication on the content, stimulating the participants with a roundtable or using the technique of brainstorming. Participants are invited to reflect on the general theme of the focus group that must be more and

more specified and investigated in the useful direction with respect to the intended purposes, following the reasoning and the words of the participants themselves and making a semantic analysis and the content to make the critical issues emerge.

2. Motivation/debate questions - this phase consists of the start of questions about the issues of interest.

- Start with the questions that will allow you to conduct the study (distributing any response sheets).
- Start with a brainstorming that activates participation on the central topic, for example: "we define the concept of ... organizational climate, life skills, emotional intelligence ..."
- Have the answers read in turn by the participants and from these, start reflection together and encourage discussion among those present.
- If appropriate, the moderator will write on the flipchart the key words that emerged from the participants' answers.
- The moderator encourages the participants to expand their answers by asking questions such as "What do you think the cause is?", "Who would see it differently from you?", "What do others think?", "Can you explain what you mean with this statement? ", " Does anyone else see it this way? ", " Something to add? ", etc.
- If the subject is delicate, the group is large or the people do not respond, divide participants into smaller groups. Let the participants discuss each other, then ask each group to introduce themselves to the others and explain their conclusions. The other groups will be able to add further opinions at the end of this intervention.
- Moderator Tricks: If a person dominates the conversation and does not let the others intervene, pass an object to the participants: only the one who has this object in his hand can speak. When it ends, pass it to another.
- In this moment, they can emerge the most felt issues: it is therefore important, in addition to let the group highlight its own critical issues, to try to calm the participants so that conflicts do not occur, avoiding also that the focus group becomes a "troublemaker", being more personal affirmation than professional needs.

3. Closing - this phase concludes the activity with a round exchange of opinions about the to-pic and the various opinions heard etc ...

Then:

1. Recapitulate and re-elaborate all the contributions of the people;
2. Explain what will be done with their opinions;
3. Thank the participants and explain why it was so important to receive their input.

Some advices

- Do not hazard questions whose answer cannot be assumed.
- Contain the informal leader who tries to drag the group with his vocal arrogance or his ascendant.
- Do not let the meeting become a “troublemaker”, therefore contain those who make too long interventions and not related to the objectives pursued.
- Try to increase the relationship between the conductor/observer and the participants.
- Always give voice to the silent and shy people, otherwise you risk losing important points of view.
- Block those group questions that focus on personal issues.
- Never get in conflict with the participants, even if they are contrary the general ideas.
- Never express your opinion or make judgments, instead try to relaunch the question to the group.

### **Focus Group Track**

Presentation:

Material: Recorder

Time: 10 Min

Objective: to know the participants and activate the group.

- Brief presentation of the conductors, of the Focus project and of the purpose of the Focus Group.
- Continue with a presentation of the individual participants of the group.
- Example of icebreaker: Everyone has to say their name, their role in the organization and 3 adjectives that “make him/her unique”.

- Make participants aware that the focus group is audio recorded, for the simple purpose of research (to facilitate the subsequent analysis of the group discussion).

## 1. Question Stimulus: Definition and sharing of Life Skills concept.

Material: Recorder, white sheets for each participant, pens, Sheet 1.

Time: 10 Min

Objective: to activate the participants on the topic Life Skills.

- Distribute the sheets to each participant and ask each one to write their own idea, encouraging reflection and specifying that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Application for the Group: “Let’s try to give a definition of Life Skills. What are life skills for you? “.
- Reading of individual definitions.
- Reading the general definition of the WHO (1994):
- “This term refers to the emotional, cognitive and social skills necessary for positive and adaptive behaviors that allow us to deal effectively with the questions and challenges of everyday life”.
- Resume the speech by specifying the division of the Life Skills and the classification: “The World Health Organization document identifies 10 Life Skills, to be used as a basis for promoting the health and well-being of children and adolescents but also for adults, especially in the context of HUMAN RESOURCES.

Those skills are divided into three large areas:

- a) emotional area (self-awareness, emotional management, stress management)
- b) cognitive area (decision making, problem solving, creativity, critical sense)
- c) social area (empathy, effective communication, effective interpersonal relationships).“

- Distribute the Sheet 1 with the 10 skills.

## 2. Question Stimulus: Definition and sharing of the concept of emotional intelligence

- Material: White sheets for each participant, pens, Sheet 2.
- Time: 10 Min
- Objective: to activate the participants on the topic.

### Application for the Group: "Try to give your definition of emotional intelligence"

- Let everyone write their ideas freely, encouraging reflection and specifying that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Resume the speech giving a definition of the construct:
- "Intelligence is not just a set of logical skills, ability to find links or have a great memory; there is a strong emotional component even in the most rational functions of thought. Ex: Why are the most intelligent people in the traditional sense of the word not always those with whom we work more willingly or with whom we could be friends?"

The definition of EQ: "The ability to recognize one's own emotions, those of other, manage one's own, and interact constructively with others".

It is a mix of skills, innate but that could be partly improved and optimized, which lead us to know and control ourselves and to understand and involve others.

Put simply, the EQ has two components:

- The first component concerns personal skills, towards the inside, managing one-self well.
  - So, let's talk about "self-mastery", self-awareness, the ability to manage conflicting and unpleasant emotions, to stay focused on objectives even during crises, and adaptability.
  - The second concerns social competences, towards the outside, and includes the ability to "tune" into other people, create empathy with them, understand how they are, what they think of the project you are facing, their expectations, resolve the conflicts, make them perceive their interest in them. This allows us to understand how to communicate, influence, guide, involve the best, thus obtaining the maximum from the relationship with the other.
- Distribute Sheet 2 with the general Goleman model.
  - Conclude the reflection emphasizing interchange ability of the two constructs:
  - "Life skills and emotional intelligence are two concepts that bind and overlap, are not to be considered separate or opposed. Both are INDIVIDUAL and SOCIAL skills, which can be trained and developed, and which guarantee the best results in the management of one's private, relational and work life ".

### 3. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion / Sheet 1 and 2
- Time: 20 Min
- Objective: Deepening on the application of constructs in the workplace.

– “ Known the two constructs ...”

Application for the Group: “What are the 3 skills that you think are important to train for your job? Why?”

- If possible, encourage the group to report examples of possible practical application of Life skills on their work.
- Let everyone say their idea freely, encouraging discussion.

### 4. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion
- Time: 20 Min
- Objective: Deepening on the application of constructs in the workplace: work with users.

– “ And going more and more specifically ...”

Application for the Group: “ Among the life skills which are the ones that you think are most useful for your users and why?”

- Ask for practical examples and experiences.
- Let everyone say their idea freely, encouraging discussion.

### 5. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion
- Time: 20 Min
- Objective: Collection of opinions on the development of skills in the workplace.

– Application for the Group: “ How could we develop emotional intelligence among operators? What actions, in your opinion, would be necessary and useful? “

- Let everyone say their idea freely, encouraging discussion.

#### 6. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion
  - Time: 20 Min
  - Objective: Collection of opinions about the possible weaknesses of the organization that affect the working climate.
- Application for the Group: "What are the negative elements (excluding any delays in payments) that affect or may affect the work environment"?

#### 7. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion, Sheet 3.
  - Time: 20 Min
  - Objective: Collection of opinions about the necessary development of skills in the workplace
- Distribute to each participant the Sheet 3, necessary to answer the question.
  - Application for the Group: "What are the three things that improve or can improve the working environment? Why? How?"

#### 8. Question Stimulus:

- Material: Free discussion
  - Time: 10 Min
  - Objective: Strengths of your work and closing demand.
- "To conclude, quickly ..."
  - Application for the Group: "What is the aspect of your work that gratifies you more than any other?"

#### Conclusion:

- Thanks, and greetings

## SHEET 1

### Definitions of the 10 Life skills (WHO, 1994)

- 1. Decision making** (ability to make decisions): competence that helps to constructively deal with decisions in the various moments of life. The ability to actively elaborate the decision-making process, evaluating the different options and the consequences of the possible choices, can have positive effects on the health plan, understood in its widest meaning.
- 2. Problem solving** (ability to solve problems): this ability allows facing the problems of life in a constructive way.
- 3. Creative thinking**: acting in a synergistic way with respect to the two above mentioned skills, enabling them to explore the possible alternatives and the consequences deriving from doing and not doing certain actions. It helps to look beyond the direct experiences, it can help to respond in an adaptive and flexible way to the situations of everyday life.
- 4. Critical thinking**: it is the ability to analyze information and experiences objectively. It can contribute to health promotion by helping to recognize and evaluate factors that influence attitudes and behavior.
- 5. Effective communication**: knowing how to express oneself, both on the verbal and non-verbal level, with appropriate methods with regard to culture and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, needs and fears, to be able, in case of necessity, to ask for advice and help.
- 6. Interpersonal relationships skills**: helps to relate and interact with others in a positive way, to create and maintain friendly relationships that may have a strong impact on mental and social well-being. This ability can be expressed in terms of relations with the members of one's family, favouring the maintenance of an important source of social support; it may also mean being able, if appropriate, to end the relationships constructively.
- 7. Self-awareness**: that is, the recognition of oneself, one's own character, one's own strengths and weaknesses, one's own desires and one's own intolerance. Developing self-awareness can help you recognize when you are stressed or when you are under pressure. It is a basic prerequisite for effective communication, for establishing interpersonal relationships, for developing empathy towards others.
- 8. Empathy**: it is the ability to imagine how life can be for another person even in situations with which you are not familiar. Trying empathy can help understand and accept the "different"; this can improve social interactions for ex. in situations of cultural or

ethnic differences. Empathic capacity can also be a sensitive help to offer support to people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance.

**9. Management of emotions:** involves the recognition of emotions in ourselves and in others; awareness of how emotions affect the comportment and the ability to respond to the same properly.

**10. Stress management:** it consists in recognizing the sources of stress in daily life, in understanding how these “touch” us and in acting in order to control the different levels of stress.

## SHEET 2

### Emotional Intelligence

According to Goleman (1995), Mayer and Salovey (1997) emotional intelligence includes five areas:

- know your emotions: self-awareness;
- handle your emotions: self-management;
- motivate yourself;
- recognize the emotions of others: social awareness;
- use social skills in interacting with others: relationship management.

#### 1. Personal skills:

- Self-awareness (emotional self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem, accurate self-assessment). Being aware means being able to identify one's emotional reactions, recognizing who / what unleashes them, the effect these emotions can have on one's behavior. Aware people are able to recognize the relationship between what they feel and the way they behave (eg Luigi has betrayed my trust, I feel angry and cry against him). Moreover, Goleman suggests that people with this ability also have a good sense of humor, they believe in themselves and in their abilities and are aware of the way other people perceive them.
- Self-management (emotional self-control, reliability, adaptability, innovation and conscientiousness, optimism). This implies the ability to regulate and manage one's emotions. Self-control is the ability to resist the "emotional storms" that can occur within us and is one of the most effective tools we can have. Those who have good self-control tends to be flexible, adapting well to changes and is also able to manage conflict and mitigate tensions. People who can effectively control themselves rarely attack others verbally or make hasty or emotional decisions. Furthermore, being able to manage one's own emotions also means developing a more positive approach to life.
- Motivating yourself can be seen as the push that the individual will use to reach a certain goal. Emotions create an optimal experience in achieving the goal: emotions

are positive and are present feelings of harmony and joy. This level of emotion leads to success because the individual does not focus on action, but rather on the pleasure of the act.

## 2. Social skills:

- Social awareness (empathy, valuing others, understanding others, promoting diversity, awareness of organizational policies ...), one of the most important social skills, which increases empathic skills and other social skills. Empathy is the ability to read emotions in others and know how to put oneself “in their shoes”. Empathy also includes the kind of response we give to this information (for example, if we notice that someone is ill or sad, we can change the way we use our communication, treat it with greater care and attention). Being empathetic allows people to understand the dynamics of power that often influence social relationships, especially in the workplace. Who is competent in this area can understand who possesses power in relationships and correctly interprets the different situations that depend on these dynamics.
  
- Relationship management (influence, communication and persuasion, conflict management, mediation / negotiation, inspiring leadership, catalyst for change / positive management of change, collaboration / cooperation / group work, teamwork, building of bonds / profitable management of interpersonal relationships). In the workplace, knowing how to build quality relationships with colleagues is important both for working well in the work team and for leadership to influence and inspire others. Emotionally intelligent people have natural security, bring out the best from other people and can make others feel comfortable in their presence by caring for them and giving them full attention. In difficult situations they do not panic and remain focused on solutions, they always have a positive overall picture that helps to realize that things can settle down.

## SHEET 3

**Which are, in your opinion, the things to improve in your organization?**

**(maximum 3 answers)**

<b>The comfort of the working environment (structure, material available...)</b>	
<b>The safety of the working environment</b>	
<b>Circulation and clarity of information</b>	
<b>Relations between colleagues</b>	
<b>Relations with superiors</b>	
<b>IT and technological supports</b>	
<b>Flexibility of working time</b>	
<b>The clarity of objectives and tasks</b>	
<b>The enhancement of staff (eg. recognition if you have done a good job)</b>	
<b>Staff training and updating</b>	
<b>The incentive distribution system</b>	
<b>Relations with users</b>	
<b>Possibility of a career development</b>	
<b>Assignment of resources</b>	

## APPENDIX 2

### Questionnaire

This short questionnaire is addressed to the participants of FOCUS project to identify some typical aspects of life at work and its general state of health. We ask you to answer all questions with sincerity and attention. There are no right or wrong answers; we are only interested in your personal opinion. To reply to the questionnaire, you will simply have to put an X on the number that best reflects your opinion. His answers will help us to gather a series of information to better guide our work. You must not specify your name on any sheet. The data will be analyze in an aggregated and anonymous manner. We only ask you to write a code of recognition because we would like to compare the answers before and after the intervention.

#### Personal data

*Please answer this short form before you start answering questions.*

Sex  M  F ; Age:.....; Nationality: .....; Service seniority: .....

**CODE (the code is personal, guarantees anonymity, but will allow us to compare the data between this questionnaire and the one you will receive at the end of the project).**

Month of birth	Last letter of the father's name	First letter of the mother's name

For example:

0	2	O
Month of birth	Last letter of the father's name	First letter of the mother's name

<b>In recent weeks, have you felt ...</b>		<b>Much more than usual</b>		<b>Much less than usual</b>	
1	... able to concentrate on what you were doing?	0	1	2	3
2 <sub>r</sub>	...to have lost so much sleep so much to worry about?	0	1	2	3
3	...to be productive (having done many things) in most of the activities?	0	1	2	3
4	...able to make decisions in most cases?	0	1	2	3
5 <sub>r</sub>	...constantly under pressure?	0	1	2	3
6 <sub>r</sub>	...of not being able to overcome difficulties?	0	1	2	3
7	...able to cut out your free time and enjoy it?	0	1	2	3
8	...able to solve your problems?	0	1	2	3
9 <sub>r</sub>	...unhappy or depressed?	0	1	2	3
10 <sub>r</sub>	...as if you had lost faith in yourself?	0	1	2	3
11 <sub>r</sub>	...as if I had less esteem than you?	0	1	2	3
12	...with an overall happy emotional state?	0	1	2	3

	<b>Never</b>						<b>Always</b>	
1	I help those who have a lot of work to do	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I do my job without needing constant requests from the bosses	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I think it's fair to earn my salary honestly by working hard every day	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I do not waste time complaining about trivial things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I try not to create problems for my colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	I keep myself updated on the changes that take place in the company	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I tend to exaggerate the problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I am not interested in the consequences that my actions have on my colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I participate in meetings that are not mandatory but that are considered important	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I'm always ready to help those around me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I participate in activities that are not required but that are important for the corporate image	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I read the organizational communications to keep up with the news	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Help who has been absent from work	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Respect the rights of the people who work with me	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I can spontaneously help those with work problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I always take the positive side of things rather than the negative side	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I commit myself to avoid conflicts with my colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I stay to work beyond the scheduled time	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I always find flaws in what the organization is doing	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	I am aware that my behaviour affects the work of other people	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I do not take breaks apart from those allowed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I Comply with company regulations even when nobody observes them	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	Help the new ones to orient themselves even if it is not required by the company	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I am one of the most scrupulous employees	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	<b>Never</b>						<b>Always</b>	
1	I know how others feel by simply looking at them							
2	I look for activities that make me happy							
3	When I feel a positive emotion, I know how to make it last							
4	I like to share my emotions with others							
5	Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.							
6	I am aware of my emotions as I try them							
7	When another person tells me about an important event in his life, I almost feel like personally experiencing this event							
8	I know why my emotions change							
9	Help other people feel better when they are down							
10	I recognize people's mood by listening to the tone of their voices							

		Never					Always								
1	I do not listen to everything that a person is saying because in the meantime I think about what I will have to say.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	When I talk to someone, I try to look him in the eye.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I interrupt people who speak because I want to talk before I forget what I have to say.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I get angry right away.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I easily fight with others.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	When I'm angry, I act on impulse.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I cry when I see a sad comedy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I get angry when I see a friend being treated badly.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I worry when I see a sad friend.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I make a decision thinking about all the information I have about the different choices.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I think about the choices of the past when I make new decisions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I speak with colleagues before making a decision.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I can work in a group with my work colleagues.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	At work we help each other	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	At work we know how to find an agreement to solve a problem.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I think I'm not good at all.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Overall, I'm satisfied with myself.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I feel I do not have much to feel proud of.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	When I solve a problem, I do the first thing that comes to mind.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	When a solution does not work, I try to understand what's wrong.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I compare every possible solution to find the best solution to solve my problem.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I can explain my opinions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	I can easily tell if what I have done is right or wrong.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I understand immediately when I'm right.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	Develop my ideas by gathering information.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	Before acting, I think about the possible consequences.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	Before acting, I think about my past experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	I think of new solutions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	I can go beyond the box.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	I have creative ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Never					Always								
1	I feel emotionally exhausted by my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I feel exhausted at the end of the day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I can easily understand how my users think.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I seem to treat some users as if they were objects.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	It seems to me that I work all day with people.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I deal effectively with user problems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I feel exhausted from my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I think I positively influence the lives of other people through my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Since I started working here, I became more numb with people.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	I am afraid that this work can harden me emotionally.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I feel full of energy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I am frustrated with my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I think I work too hard.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I do not really care about what happens to some users.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	Working directly in contact with people creates too much tension.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I can easily make users relaxed and at ease.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I feel rejoiced after working with users.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I have accomplished many things of value in my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	I feel I cannot do it anymore.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	In my work I deal with emotional problems calmly.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I get the impression that users blame me for their problems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Which are, in your opinion, the things to improve in your organization?  
(maximum 3 answers)**

- The comfort of the working environment (structure, material available ...)
- The safety of the working environment
- Circulation and clarity of information
- Relations between colleagues
- Relations with superiors
- IT and technological supports
- Flexibility of working time
- The clarity of objectives and tasks
- The enhancement of staff (eg recognition if you have done a good job)
- Staff training and updating
- The incentive distribution system
- Relations with users
- Possibility of a career development
- Assignment of resources

**Select from the following skills (Life Skills) which, in your opinion,  
are your professionalism (maximum 3 answers)**

- Knowing how to solve problems
- Knowing how to make decisions
- Creativity
- Critical sense
- Self-awareness - Self-esteem
- Interpersonal skills
- Effective communication
- Stress management
- Management of emotions
- Empathy

Provide a brief motivation of the choices made:

---

---

---

---

---



---



---

	<b>For nothing</b>						<b>Highly</b>
How much do you feel informed about the project focus?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do you think that your participation in the project activities could be useful for your personal training?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do you think that your participation in the project activities could be useful for the work in your organization?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do you consider useful a training on life skills and emotional intelligence foreseen by the project?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
What level of relapse could this formation have in your work?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
What level of relapse could this formation have in your personal life?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## **FOSTERING THE CAPACITY OF SOCIAL WORKERS DELIVERING EDUCATION ON LIFE SKILLS**

---

AGREEMENT NUMBER 2017-1-IT02-KA204-036916  
**ERASMUS + PROGRAMME KEY ACTION 2** STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP  
FOR ADULT EDUCATION (DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION) ROUND 1

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.