

New social risks and possibilities of using methods of social work in the Moravian-Silesian Region

Faculty of Social Studies University of Ostrava have been realised the research project New social risks and possibilities of using methods of social work in the Moravian-Silesian Region in the 2010 – 2011. The research was supported by Support of science and research in the Moravian-Silesian Region programme.

The main aim of the research was to map the phenomena of new social risks in the Moravian-Silesian Region and to find out how the social work react to the changes in social context and what can be the role of social work in this changing conditions and which methods of social work are in the context of new social risks used.

The research team had a multidisciplinary character and consisted of sociologists, social work researchers and social geographer.

The research had five subprojects:

1. Theoretical research of new social risks phenomena.

The results is Jan Keller's book "New Social Risks and why we will not be able to avoid them"?

The work deals with the various issues related to new social risks. Unlike most specialised literature in this area, the book not only describes these risks, it also attempts to clarify how they spread in connection with the transition to the so called post-industrial society and with the process of deindustrialisation. The author explains why the current reforms will not lead to their mitigation but rather to their further expansion, which in our conditions will also significantly affect the middle classes. The analysis oscillates between the following three areas: at the most general level, it depicts the basic features of the neo-liberal project of social transformation; at the level of social policy, it describes the effects of the ongoing reforms on Czech society; and at the empirical level, it investigates, on the examples of households in Ostrava, what approaches people use in order to cope with the impact of new social risks. The author furthermore explains why the Czech Republic will not be able to escape the expansion of new social risks, why these risks will also considerably affect the middle classes and why in their urgency they will make themselves felt primarily in the housing area. Is it possible to use the market to treat market risks? What does "mafianisation" of the economy mean? Are states allowed to organise corruption? If not, why are they doing so? What is hidden under the motto "be your own manager"? Why do people become susceptible to new social risks? Are we the country of poor middle classes?

2. Demographic and socioeconomic factors analysis in the context of the new social risks in the Moravian-Silesian Region

The report maps the distribution of those socio-demographic processes and transformations on the labour market within the Moravian-Silesian Region and the regional capital, Ostrava, which play a role in the forming of new social risks in this area. It focuses on methods which may be used to inquire into these issues, on the indicators which are linked to the creation of new social risks and finally the report also elaborates analyses necessary for understanding the spatial distribution of these risks within the region as well as their different content. For the measuring, we have used hard statistical data accessible primarily in the databases of the

Czech Statistical Office and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as well as subjective opinions of the inhabitants in the area obtained from a questionnaire survey. The report may serve as source material for the proposal of solutions to key problems in the affected areas of the region according to concrete findings.

3. New social risks by the view of social services municipality departments

The aim of the qualitative research was to find out how representatives of social services departments at municipal offices understand and interpret the causes, interconnections and effects of the transformation in social context and how this transformation, in their opinion, influences the area of social work. The basic research population consisted of 22 representatives of social services departments from municipal offices in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The research was carried out by the method of focus groups which were held in January and February of 2011.

4. Research of city mayors and social work services providers

The aim of the quantitative research was to map the opinions of city mayors (with the number of inhabitants under 2000) and social work services providers to new social risks and actual social problems in their community. City mayors and social services providers agreed with the existence of new social risks and confirmed their appearance in the practice.

5. Methods of social work and new social risks

The aim of this part was to find, describe and analyse social work methods which can be used in dealing with new social risks and to recommend realization some of them to Moravian-Silesian Region. The main topics were problems connected to the flexibilization of the family and work, working poverty, indebtedness of people, poverty in old age and risk of homelessness.

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