



ERIS Web Journal 1/2014

Welfare states and social work in Middle and Eastern Europe – 20 years after the fall of Communism

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Dear readers,

we are pleased to see that we have received so many interesting contributions for this new thematic issue of the ERIS Web Journal. Two decades after the fall of Communism we found it quite relevant to reflect the different and common developments in some of the Middle and Eastern European countries and to analyse the changes in their Welfare States and systems of social work.

These changes often started with high hopes. In her popular book “Café Europa”, the Croatian author and journalist Slavenka Drakulić mentions her curious observation that in nearly every Eastern European City, a “Café Europa” could be found soon after the fall of Communism. These Cafés in “Western style” often embodied the dreams and promises of a then changing world.

But how have these promises and hopes developed after twenty years? Could they be realised according to the vision of the former Polish dissident and author Adam Michnik who was describing the possibility a Europe of “humanism and tolerance, the same dignity for all citizens, the liberty of the individual, solidarity with the weak and political pluralism”? Or did people face other realities? Did they find rather disappointing results? Or could they develop innovative approaches towards the vision of a good society beyond Western ideas?

The issue 1/2014 is aimed to provide space for analyses on the changes that happened in different welfare systems as well as the social work profession in some of the Middle and Eastern European countries. Therefore, each article is focussed on one country and the predominantly perceivable effects from the system changes from the last twenty years.

We asked authors to reflect developments of the national state and welfare state, the system of social work and its actors of provision, the effects on populations and the target groups of social work, the realisation of values of human rights and social justice, the effects on social movements and citizens’ organisations, the demands that should be met for a positive development in the near future and for some possible prognoses and scenarios for the nearer future.

We finally could receive contributions from the following authors:

- Darja Zaviršek from University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, reflects on the situation for Slovenia but also integrates thoughts on other Middle and Eastern European countries. In her text, she follows the controversial question if something like an “Eastern European social work” can be identified.
- Reima Ana Maglajlić from the University of Sussex and Jasmina Selimovic, a former child protection co-ordinator from Bosnia and Herzegovina, reflect how the changes from former Yugoslavia to Bosnia and Herzegovina were enacted and practised. They especially reflect the ongoing impact of the 1992-1996 war and the specific welfare activities of both national and international organisations and give an outlook on the current challenges for the near future.
- Ondrej Botek, Andrej Kállay, Lukáš Pavelek and Miriam Slaná from Trnava University, Department of Social Work, reflect the situation for the Slovak Republic. Their text focusses on the development of the welfare state, social work education, citizen’s quality of life and issues of social justice.
- Eva Klimentová and Kateřina Thelenová from Palacký University Olomouc reflect the situation for the Czech Republic. They write with a special focus on social policy and analyse the development of the welfare state within its transition from a totalitarian regime to the demands a democratic society that respects freedom and human rights and guarantees social security.

Beyond these thematic contributions, this issue contains also News from Research about the VEDTYM project at the University of Ostrava, a Research Report from the Research institute for Social and Economics Sciences of Vorarlberk University and a research project from the University of Eastern Finland.

We hope this new issue can again inspire you as a reader and support reflections on social work from an international perspective.

With best regards,

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