



ERIS Web Journal 2/2014

European social work and their identities

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Abstract

This paper argues that there are many social works and that it is inappropriate to seek to create and defend a single unified identity for it. Personal and social identities are the characteristics that make someone or something recognisable to others and are connected to the social and cultural meanings and values associated with an identity. Europe has multiple countries and national, linguistic and cultural identities; it is logical to assume that these would create multiple social works. An internationalist view proposed a unified social work as part of a professionalisation project in the twentieth century to institutionalise the status and recognition of social work, but differing practices, occupational groups, contributory disciplines, social institutions incorporating social work and objectives mean that multiple potentialities exist for alternative forms of social work. While social work contains many possibilities, distinctive characteristics include its objectives of contributing to social cohesion and development through improving interpersonal social relations, its humanistic values, its multiprofessional engagement and the importance of women in its practice within states offering collective public welfare provision reflecting internationally shared trends in social policy. A continuing process of change takes place in the identities of social works in Europe and internationally.

Keywords

Social work, identity, Europe, social workers