

**EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
OF SOCIAL WORKERS.
Experience of a project in the Republic of Moldova**

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Abstract

The author mentions that the modernization of the educational (didactic) process according to Bologna Process recommendations, that determined the necessity of making an essential reform of the university curricula at the contents and structure level, is encouraged at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of Moldova State University by a new project TEMPUS (ETF – JP – 00471 – 2008) „The Professionalization of the Education in Social Work”. This project is implemented in collaboration with Gip Fipag – Public Interest Group – Training and Vocational Integration of the Academy of Grenoble (France), the University „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iasi (Romania), the University of Aquila, the Catholic University del Sacro Core of Milan (Italy) and other European educational institutions.

In the article are analyzed the results of the sociological research, made within this project, which have permitted to be emphasized: the main social work domains developed in Republic of Moldova at the moment; difficulties that social work face during their activities; the quality of the university education and of the social work services; social work domains that need some changes in curricula; social work key specializations, asked by the labor market, and the necessary skills for exercising these specializations (Social Work with Child and Family in risk situations; Social Work with Aged People; the Management of Social Services) and qualitative one (semi structured interview), have been put at the research basis, by the university professors and the practices of social work services, of professional cards for those three specializations, all these reflecting the skills, knowledge and the abilities that social work have to possess. Taking account of the professional cards contents, the plans and curricula have been revised. The author considers that only in this way closed connections may be established between university educational system and social problems, which Republic of Moldova face, labor market requirements, and as a result the number of unemployed people with higher education diploma can be diminished.

Keywords: *European standards, education of social workers, Republic of Moldova.*

The orientation of the strategy of developing the higher education in the Republic of Moldova towards the European standards, which have found an explicit embodiment in the objectives of the Bologna Process, have determined the necessity of making an essential reform of the university curriculum at the contents and structure level: passing to the system of 3 university cycles (bachelor’/

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licentiate's studies, master's degree studies, doctor's degree studies and post-doctorate); introduction of the system of transferable credits; reciprocal recognition of the diplomas, etc., all these having as purpose the formation of a common European space in higher education, as well as increasing the chances of professional insertion of the young people both at internal and external labor markets. It is known, however, that the chances of enrolment in the job market are in a direct dependence on the knowledge and the skills of the specialist. That is why the stipulated reform in higher education presupposes that the entire didactic process to be centered mostly on getting the functional competences, which constitute a polyfunctional integrity of knowledge, abilities and values, education, in other words the skills of participation of the young people in solving the problems which the society confronts with, on transmitting the knowledge necessary for life experience, for rapid adaptation to the changes in the society, etc.

The modernization of the curricula according to the European standards is given the impulse at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work (FSSW) by a new project TEMPUS – The **“Professionalization of the Education in Social Work”**, which unites 56 institutions from 14 countries: France, Italy, Greece, Great Britain, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Russia, Kazakhstan etc. In the Republic of Moldova the project is implemented by Moldova State University (FSSW) in collaboration with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, State University „A.Russo” from Balti, Academy of Economic Studies, Industrial Pedagogic College from Cahul, Theoretical Lyceum „Gaudeamus” from Chisinau, Republican Social Work Resources Center, Municipal Direction for Protection of Children's Rights, Foundation „Neohumanist”, student unions of FSSW. By close cooperation between the educational institutions and social services, the Project aims at approaching the process of education to the social-economic realities from the country, creating finally 3 new specializations in social work corresponding to the requirements of the labor market.

For this purpose in June - August 2009 within the project TEMPUS - “Professionalization of the Education in Social Work” (ETF–JP–00471–2008), **was realized an extensive sociologic research by application of the questionnaire and an interview guide, which contained the following objectives:**

- detection of the principal specializations/domains of social work developed in present in the Republic of Moldova;
- identification of the difficulties met by the social workers during the realization of their professional activities;
- analysis of the specialists' opinions in what concerns the development of the system of social work services and university and pre-university education in the domain of social work;
- determination of the specializations/domains of social work, which require some changes in curricula;
- identification of the new specializations/domains of social work demanded by the labor market.

The suggested objectives were realized by using *quantitative methods* (sociologic inquiry form based on a questionnaire) and *qualitative methods* (interview based on an interview guide). Were elaborated 2 types of questionnaires (one - for officials and specialists from the domain of social work, but the other - for teachers from educational institutions in the domain of social work) and 2 types of interview guides (for officials and specialists from the domain of social work).

The quantitative research contained a sample of 566 of persons (see *Table 1*), from which – 488 of specialists from the system of social work (37 officials – 7.6%; 60 managers/administrators – 12.3%; 391 of public responsible employees: social assistants, social workers, specialized educators, animators, etc. – 80.1%) and 78 teachers from higher education institutions, colleges and lyceums (56 university professors, 20 college teachers 2 teachers from lyceums).

For a deeper knowledge of the socio-economic realities and of the problems e which exist in preparation of the specialists in the domain of social work, the quantitative research was combined with the *qualitative research*, within the bounds of which were realized 64 interviews (see *Table 2*): 13 interviews with officials from Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Municipal Direction for Protection of Children's Rights, Department of Social Work and Protection from Balti; 21 interviews with managers/administrators of centers of social work, civil associations, religious missions, city/town halls.

At the present time the Republic of Moldova is passing a complicated period of development, marked by contradictory transformations of market liberalization, which are accompanied by economic decline, appearance of some grave social problems, high degree of vulnerability not only of separate persons, but also of communities, entire groups. ***The most stringent problems, which the population of our country confronts***, according to the opinion of interviewed specialists are: poverty (66.7%), migration of the population (49.2%), unemployment (36.9%), alcohol abuse (32.5%), family violence (29.8%), children abandon (28.8%), weak population health (21.2%), old people abandon (15.9%), absence of social work services (11.8%).

On the assumption of these problems were determined *the persons which stringently need social work services*. In the vision of the participants of the study, these are the single feeble old people (62.5%), disabled persons (47.1%), poor families (42.1%), abandoned children (38.4%), orphan children (32.8%), families with many children (27.4%), young people (15.2%), the unemployed (14.5%), single-parent family (12.2%). Also is increasing the number of disorganized families, drug addicted persons, persons in conflict with law, etc. In other words, on the basis of new transformations appeared insurmountable difficulties, which the majority of the population cannot overcome by itself. This state of things impose the necessity of some corrections through the external economic mechanisms, through developing a complex system of social work services, meant to support the persons in difficulty.

Table 1: Structure of quantitative research sample

Categories of respondents		Specialists		Teachers		Total	
		Nr. ²	%	Nr. ³	%	Nr. ⁴	%
Sex of respondents	Masculine	51	10.5	13	16.7	64	11.4
	Feminine	434	89.5	65	83.3	499	88.6
Age	20-24 years old	96	20.1	5	6.4	101	18.2
	25-29 years old	93	19.5	21	26.9	114	20.5
	30-34 years old	66	13.8	8	10.3	74	13.3
	35-39 years old	54	11.3	10	12.8	64	11.5
	40-44 years old	46	9.6	8	10.3	54	9.7
	45-49 years old	56	11.7	8	10.3	64	11.5
	50-54 years old	36	7.5	8	10.3	44	7.9
	55-59 years old	22	4.6	6	7.7	28	5.0
Studies of respondents	60+ years old	8	1.7	4	5.1	12	2.2
	Higher	323	67.3	78	100	401	71.9
	Higher incomplete	41	8.5	-	-	41	7.3
	Secondary special	95	19.8	-	-	95	17.0
	Secondary	14	2.9	-	-	14	2.5
Specialty of respondent	Others	7	1.5	-	-	7	1.3
	Social work	157	33.3	14	18.9	171	31.4
	Pedagogy, including special pedagogy	96	20.4	16	21.6	112	20.6
	Psychology, including psychopedagogy	52	11.0	19	25.7	71	13.0
	Medicine	26	5.5	2	2.7	28	5.1
	Jurisprudence	26	5.5	1	1.4	27	5.0
	Economy, including accounting	24	5.1	2	2.7	26	4.8
	Management, including administration	24	5.1	2	2.7	26	4.8
	Technology, merchandising, engineering	16	3.4	-	-	16	2.9
	Philology	10	2.1	2	2.7	12	2.2
	Sociology	7	1.5	12	16.2	19	3.5
	Others	31	6.6	4	5.5	35	6.9
Medium of residence	Rural	215	44.6	-	-	215	38.4
	Urban	267	55.4	78	100	345	61.6

² Difference till 488 represents the number of those that did not indicate the answer to the category.

³ Difference till 78 represents the number of those that did not indicate the answer to the category.

⁴ Difference till 566 represents the number of those that did not indicate the answer to the category.

Table 2: Structure of qualitative research selection

	Nr. of interviewed persons	Representatives of following institutions	Their function
1.	13 officials , out of which 10 2 1 (IIA F)	Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family Municipal Direction for Protection of Children's Rights (Chisinau) Department of Social Work and Protection from Balti	Chiefs of department, consultants Chief of direction, principal specialist Principal specialist
2.	21 managers/administrators 12 7 1 1 (IIA M)	Social work centers Civil associations International associations Religious missions	Managers Directors Directors Directors
3.	30 specialists 13 6 5 3 2 1 (IIA A)	Social work centers City/town halls Civil associations International associations Religious missions Foundations	Social workers, Specialized educators, Animators, etc.
	Total		64 persons

Certainly, for vulnerable categories of the population during recent years were developed more types of social work, about which testified the persons themselves involved in the research. Thus, referring to *the condition of the social work services*, 96.5% from respondents indicated that in the locality which he represents there exist such services. Only 3.5% of respondents indicated that in their locality are absent social work services. Analyzing, however, the opinions concerning the grade of covering the necessities of the population in social work services, we determine that 57.1% from the questioned persons consider that the services existing in the communities satisfy *partially* the population necessities, 22.5% - *to a very small degree*, 15.4% – *to a big degree* and only 0.9% from the respondents consider that the social work services existing in the community cover *totally* the population necessities (see *Table 3*)

Table 3: The measure in which the existing social work services existing in the community cover the population necessities

		Nr. of persons	%
1.	Total	5	0.9
2.	To a big degree	83	15.4
3.	Partially	307	57.1
4.	To small degree	121	22.5
5.	I don't know	22	4.1
	Total	538⁵	100

The above-mentioned testifies that the system of social work services in the Republic of Moldova is still quite fragile, especially in the rural zones, and requires a special attention from the state for improving the situation of marginalized persons because of diverse socio-economic factors.

As *the social work services provided the most frequently in the localities of the republic* the respondents mentioned the following: distribution of material help (72.2%), services of nursing at residence (68.0%), services for the persons with disabilities (62.0%), social canteens (53.6%), consultation and support of families with children (51.2%), services of psychological help (47.7%), services of hosting families (44.2%), services of nursing in asylum (40.6%), social services for young people (39.1%), services of spending free time (34.0%), social services for persons infected with HIV/AIDS (33.1%), services of socio-professional integration (30.5%), social services for the people in conflict with law (30.3%). In fact, these are also the more developed domains of social work in the Republic of Moldova, even if some of the enumerated services are not connected with authentic content of the social work (for example, the distribution of material help). The presented picture demonstrates that the social work is perceived by the respondents as predominating from the perspective of economic dimension, the accent being put on different types of material and financial benefits. This situation has a certain explanation in the extension of poverty, which affects more and more groups of population, but not only, as we will see a bit later. In the reality the content of social work is much vaster and comprises, as a part of the respondents relates, an entire variety of services, even if these, in many cases, are at an initial stage of development and don't satisfy the necessities of the population to the full extent. Or, social work has two principal dimensions: economic dimension and social and psycho-social dimensions themselves, which are concerned with providing specialized services for those in need, as well as are those of socialization and resocialization, of social integration and reintegration (in family, in professional, cultural, normative planes, therapies of psychological help for disorganized couples, drug addicted families, infected with HIV/AIDS, victims of diverse forms

⁵ Difference till 566 represents the number of those that did not answer this question.

of abuse, refugee persons, resocialization of delinquents, etc.). The social work cannot be observed, thus, only as an economic protection, cannot be reduced only to a set of financial benefits delivered to the poor. The beneficiaries of the social work are all vulnerable persons, but, as we know, not all vulnerable persons are poor too.

The erroneous limitation of the domain of social work to offering the material money support (help in form of money, food products, clothes, etc.) leads to reconsideration of the profession of a social worker, the competences of social workers being reduced to the role of bureaucrats, which verify the files and work out social questionnaires. So, the illusion is created that any official, even any worker coming from any other domain can perform the function of a social worker without having a special preparation. About this to some extent we are told by the structure of quantitative selection (*Table 1*), from which we find out that *only 33.3% of the interviewed specialists have studies in the domain of social work*, but the others have come from the domain of pedagogy (20.4%), psychology and psycho-pedagogy (11.0%), medicine and jurisprudence (respectively 5.5% each), management (5.1%), sociology (1.5%). At the same time, a significant part (over 10%) is without studies in the domain of social work or a related discipline. Hence, a part of questioned persons, which activate as specialists in the domain of social work, cannot know to the necessary extent the obligations of the profession and perform activities, which are not directly connected with this domain (for example, the evidence of population and households and others). Thus, among the activities realized more often by the social workers were mentioned: supply of help, social support – 64.2%, identification of persons which need services of social work – 60.8%, identification of problems in the community – 40.6%, developing projects of support for socially vulnerable categories – 36.0%, help for the population in execution of certificates and documents - 34.2%, distribution of material help – 30.8%, household help for old people, persons with disabilities – 18.5%, record keeping of population and households – 9.0%, etc. (the respondents had the possibility to mark several variants of answer). We note that in this case the emphasis is also put predominantly on the provision of material help.

Analyzing the duration of activity in the domain of social work, the realized research demonstrates that *the biggest part of the interviewed specialists (63.5%) have an experience up till 1-2 years in the domain of social work*, and only 26.5% of them have an experience bigger than 4 years. This situation, probably, has also an explanation in the fact that within the bounds of city/town halls was established a unit of social worker only in year 2007 (Decision of The Government of the Republic of Moldova Nr.24 from 10.01.2007). It is evident that the existing condition concerning the studies and experience of the specialists will influence *the quality of the social work services* offered by them. So, only 9.7% of the respondents appreciated the quality of the social work services from the communities as being high, whereas 67.5% from them consider that these services are of medium quality, but 16% consider them of low quality.

In the context of the afore-said, we mention that, though at the actual stage there exists already a significant number of young specialists with higher education studies in the domain of social work, their absorption in the public system at all levels is still quite modest. A strange situation continues to persist, when on one hand the need of social workers in the Republic of Moldova is far from being covered, but on the other hand – even the number, relatively small, of the social workers with higher education studies in the domain is not used to the sufficient extent, because of the lack of vacancies in the institutions or because the function of the social worker is performed by other persons. Of course, not in the last turn, also because of the insufficient payment a part of the graduates of social work faculties is not employed according to the obtained profession or abandons this activity. Even if among the motives which stimulated them to master this profession, the respondents mentioned: wish to help the persons in difficulty (36.6%), they like to work with people (33.1%), is a necessary domain for the country (13.5%), a domain of perspective (10%) (only 4.8% of them because they didn't have another choice), anyway the labor conditions existing in the city/town halls (lack of working office, necessary techniques, etc.), the low salaries and the big volume of work upsets most of all the majority of social workers.

At the same time with the achieved realizations, the social work in the Republic of Moldova is confronting at present multiple ***problems, difficulties in what concerns the development of judicial framework, system of services, and education of human resources***. As the participants in the investigation indicated, the legislative and normative framework in the domain of social work is dispersed, what imposes the necessity of unification of all documents from this domain in a legislative package concerning the social protection, elaboration of mechanisms for implementation of existing normative-legislative framework; there doesn't exist a well-structured system of social work to cover the needs of the population, the necessity of population are neither known nor studied; there don't exist documents and working instruments type/general which could be borrowed, adapted and used by the render of services; the state institutions are oriented predominantly at the development of residential services, but the social work of community is rendered predominately by the non-governmental sector; the social services are developed preponderant in the urban area; for some social work standards of quality hasn't yet been elaborated; there doesn't exist an agency which would evaluate and accredit/license the existing social work; the number of social workers in function units of Directions/Departments of Social Work and Family Protection is reduced, but the budgets of these directions/departments are small and don't permit the development of social work at the local level; there doesn't exist a partnership and an efficient collaboration of the governmental sector with that non-governmental; a part of social workers, who were employed in the city/town halls, don't have preparation in the domain of social work or relative disciplines, don't know the legislative base, the national strategies in social domain; there don't exist data bases about the existing services at the level of republic, etc. All these happen, in

the opinion of the interviewees, because “*the social work is perceived by some social actors as a useless activity and is not treated seriously*” (IIA F16, II A A32, IIA M37 and others). In that context, it is appropriate to underline that the social work has become today an acknowledged necessity of the majority of world governments, because coming to support the people it contributes to the maintaining of order, social stability.

From the investigation’s data we establish that with the same difficulties also confront the managers of the non-governmental organizations. Having been systematized, the difficulties enumerated by the investigation’s participants, appear as *difficulties* which are connected with:

- *imperfect normative-legislative base* (lack of some well-determined policy in the domain; lack of the mechanisms for application of the legislation; difficult collaboration between the ministry within the jurisdiction, departments of Social Work and Family Protection and the non-governmental organizations);
- *reduced financial capacities in the domain of social work* (insufficient communication and lack of cooperation between academic medium, ministries within the jurisdiction, state and private renders of the social work, practitioners);
- *human resources* (lack of studies in the domain for some social workers, ignorance of those of the responsibilities written in the blank of post, big fluctuation of the stuff, little practical experience of the young specialists, lack of experience in the management of social work).

Presently, it becomes more and more important to be conscious of that the efficiency of the social work activities depends both on the development of social protection systems and *the level of preparation of human resources* for this domain. In other words, because of the fact that the activities undertaken by the social workers are extremely various and complicated, it is necessary for them to have a special preparation, to possess a vast scientific horizon and practical abilities of application of the social work methodology. The formation of social workers presupposes a theoretical and practical preparation of long duration, in which the professional skills are obtained as a result of an instructive-educational process realized in an organized system. The professional title can be obtained only by the persons, which passed all the stages of training, and the whole curriculum which presupposes certain standards and which can be realized only in the accredited educational institutions, possessing the right to prepare the stuff in this domain.

In this context, as the participants of investigation have testified, is rather important the functioning of the faculties that prepare the specialists in the domain of social work is rather important: Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of Moldova State University, Faculty of Psychology and Social Work of State University “A.Russo” from Balti, Faculty of Psychology and Social Work of Free

International University. Referring to the quality of studies in these institutions, the respondents have mentioned that these are “*in correspondence with the current legislation and the reforms which take place in the system of social work*” (IIA F1, IIA F16, IIA A24 and others). The big majority specified that “*the disciplines included in the curriculum are oriented at a general knowledge of the aspects of social work, with certain specifications for principal groups of beneficiaries*” (IIA F4, IIA A43 and others) and “*in correspondence with the necessities of society*” (IIA F1, IIA M4, IIA A34 and others). The training of social workers has as its purpose the combination of theory and practice, an important emphasis being put to the legislation of the Republic of Moldova in this domain, on the analysis of some concrete situations from the reality of Moldavian society. The courses are taught by well-prepared teachers, the fact which subsequently permits “*the successful integration of the young people in the labor market*” (IIA F4, IIA M11, IIA A14 and others). However, more practice would be necessary, “*a more active practical implication of the students, because sometimes they don't possess the practical skills at the level required by the labor market*” (IIA F5, IIA F6, IIA M10 and others). Also it is necessary to analyze and “*to explain the modalities of interaction between the sector of social work and other adjacent sectors, such as the medical sector*” (medical-social services) and others (IIA F6, IIA A29, IIA A46 and others), which often are not understood as different domain. All these, as well as other lacunas, impose, in the opinion of the interviewed specialists, ***the necessity of perfecting the curricula***, especially for the courses: Social work with abandoned children, orphans; Social work with families in the situation of risk; Social work with people with disabilities; Social work with the persons in conflict with law; Social work with the unemployed; Social work with elderly people; Social work with the persons infected with HIV/AIDS (see Table 5).

Table 5: Curriculums for social workers which require to be perfected, %

	Curriculum	Specialists in the domain of social work	Teachers	Total
1.	Social work with abandoned children, orphans	59.5	71	61.2
2.	Social work with families in the situation of risk	58.5	68.1	60.0
3.	Social work with people with disabilities	60.3	55.1	59.5
4.	Social work with the persons in conflict with law	47	46.4	46.9
5.	Social work with the unemployed	46	46.4	46.0
6.	Social work with elderly people	43.5	53.6	45.0
7.	Social work with the persons infected with HIV/AIDS	44	47.8	44.5
8.	Others	5.3	1.4	4.7

Participants of the investigation enumerated a number of components of the marked out curricula, which require to be revised or with which these must be completed. Among the key moments in the perfecting of curricula are introduced the following:

1. For social work with abandoned children, orphans – more practice, the procedure of abandon determination, methods and techniques of working with abandoned children, including those in the result of parents' migration to work abroad;
2. For social work with families in the situation of risk – more practice, new methods of economic and psychological help, interdisciplinary consideration of the family in the situation of risk;
3. For social work with people with disabilities – more practice, methods of psychological help, promoting models of inclusive education, modalities of multidisciplinary team work;
4. For social work with the persons in conflict with law – more practice, typology of the beneficiaries, specific methods of work with them, knowledge of the legislation in domain;
5. For social work with the unemployed – a broader space for the typology of unemployed problems, causes of unemployment, strategies of insertion of the unemployed;
6. For social work with elderly people – more practice, knowledge about the reform of pension system, themes destined for the psycho-social problems, methods of social work with this category of population;
7. For social work with the persons infected with HIV/AIDS – adaptation of the curriculum to the realities of the Republic of Moldova, emphasizing the specificity of the working methods with this category of beneficiaries.

Analyzing the opinions of specialists concerning the university curricula for training of the social workers, we observe that the majority of them mentioned, firstly, *the necessity of increasing the practical hours* for this specialty. In other words, we cannot put the sign of equality (as it is being done up till present) between the practice of social work and the pedagogical one, offering them only 13% each from the total number of hours provided for the educational process. The experience of European countries makes us face the other realities: for the stage of practice are offered 30%-40% from the total number of hours. Certainly, the solution of this problem doesn't mean the increase of the studies duration. There exist other modalities, such as merging the small courses in modules and avoiding the repetition of themes, but especially reasonable is the stimulation of students' implication in the activities of volunteering through quantifying these activities by a certain number of credits.

The perfecting of university curricula must be a continuous process of renewing the content of the courses and technologies of teaching according to the social changes, which are produced at national and international planes, with new

strategies, policies of preparing the social workers, by permanent cooperation with practitioners, who are involved not only in the realization of practice stages, but also in the elaboration of curricula, teaching some courses and other forms of education.

Having mentioned the most stringent social problems which our country confronts at the actual stage and the principal groups of population, which require the support of social workers, the participants of investigation have expressed their ***opinions concerning the new key-specializations in the domain of social work, required by the labor market and which must be developed in the educational institutions.*** We should mention that these specializations were situated by the respondents differently on the hierarchical scale of importance and urgency of setting up.

Thus, *in the vision of officials* (37 of questioned and 13 of interviewed) key-specializations which must be developed in the domain of social work are (in order of priorities):

1. Social work with families in the situation of risk.
2. Social work with abandoned children, orphans.
3. Management of social services.
4. Social work with elderly people.
5. Social work with the persons in conflict with law.

The managers of service centers (60 questioned and 21 interviewed) determined as the key-specializations (in order of priorities):

1. Management of social services.
2. Social work with families in the situation of risk.
3. Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration.
4. Social work with elderly people.
5. Social work with people with disabilities.

Specialists in the domain of social work (391 questioned and 30 interviewed), who provide social work, consider that the new key-specializations required by the labor market are (in order of priorities):

1. Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration.
2. Social work with families in the situation of risk.
3. Management of social services.
4. Social work with people with disabilities.
5. Social work with elderly people.

Teachers from the higher educational institutions and those secondary of the specialty (78 of teachers) consider that the key-specializations required actually by the labor market in the domain of social work are (in order of priorities):

1. Social work with families in the situation of risk.
2. Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration.

3. Social work with elderly people.
4. Management of social services.
5. Social work with people with disabilities.

We notice, thus, that even if the opinions of respondents differ partially, there is anyway a set of ***stringent common key-specializations in the domain of social work***, which are considered by them to be in accordance with the requirements of labor market and necessary to be developed in the educational institutions.

These are:

1. Social work with families in the situation of risk.
2. Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration.
3. Management of social services.
4. Social work with elderly people.

The causes which determine the development of the mentioned key-specializations are connected with the fact that actually in the educational institutions of the Republic of Moldova are being prepared generalist social workers; correspondingly there is a lack of specialists with preparation in the emphasized domains. Also, the mentioned key-specializations are centered on the priority problems from the Moldovan society, on the most numerous and vulnerable social groups. So, as the interviewed persons mentioned in the research, *Social work with families in the situation of risk* constitutes the primordial direction of the society, dictated by the increasing and diversification of the problems, with which the family confronts, and by the insufficient work with the latter; *Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration* is dictated by the growing number of children abandoned as a result of the parents' migration to work abroad, by the strategy of desinstitutionalization and the necessity of developing the services for preventing abandon; *Management of social services* is an important domain, determined by the necessity of perfecting the process of coordinating the institutions, by improving the quality of the provided social work; the necessity of *social work with elderly people* grows together with the evolution of population's aging process and growing number of the single elderly persons.

Among other specializations, which were mentioned by the respondents to a smaller extent, but which cannot be taken out of the social workers vision, as well as of the profiled educational institutions, are the following:

1. Social work with the persons in conflict with law.
2. Social work with young people.
3. Social work with drug and alcohol addicted persons.
4. Social work with the victims of violence.
5. Social work with the trafficked persons.
6. Social work with persons infected with HIV/AIDS and others.

Of course, it is impossible to establish specialties or separate specializations for each group of the persons which have difficulties. More than that, all the mentioned groups of population can be the components of the vulnerable categories, on which are centered the four mentioned stringent key-specializations (*Social work with families in the situation of risk; Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration; Social work with elderly people; Management of social services*), within the bound of which can be developed some modules oriented to them.

In continuation, the specialists have expressed opinions concerning the skills which must be developed for each key-specializations, but which, as we notice, to a large extent are common for the mentioned four specializations. Thus, for specialization *Social work with families in the situation of risk*, in the opinion of respondents, the skills which should be developed in young people include (in order of priorities):

1. Economic and social psychological help for the family (53.1%).
2. Help and social work for persons in difficulty (50.9%).
3. Prevention and mediation (27.6%).
4. Informing, orientation concerning the elaboration of partnership accords between the providers of the social work and the future beneficiaries (22.0%).
5. Accompanying/supervising the persons in the offered service (18.8%).
6. Social diagnosing of a city district, collective evaluating of a territory needs (18.8%).
7. Piloting a project of social intervention (17.7%).
8. Social work with multicultural groups (9.1%).
9. Strategic management of a social structure (5.4%).

For specialization *Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration* the participants in the research consider that it is necessary to develop the following skills (in order of priorities):

1. Prevention and mediation (52.3%).
2. Help and social work for persons in difficulty (49.2%).
3. Informing, orientation concerning the elaboration of partnership accords between the providers of the social work and the future beneficiaries (22.4%).
4. Economic and social psychological help for the family (21.2%).
5. Accompanying/supervising the persons in the offered service (20.1%).
6. Strategic management of a social structure (18.2%).
7. Social diagnosing of a city district, collective evaluating of a territory needs (18.1%).
8. Social work with multicultural groups (10.1%).
9. Piloting a project of social intervention (9.9%).

In the training of specialists for *Management of social services* the skills, which must be developed, include (in order of priorities):

1. Strategic management of a social structure (65.7%).
2. Piloting a project of social intervention (44.8%).
3. Informing, orientation concerning the elaboration of partnership accords between the providers of the social work and the future beneficiaries (31.3%).
4. Social diagnosing of a city district, collective evaluating of a territory needs (29.5%).
5. Accompanying/supervising the persons in the offered service (26.5%).
6. Economic and social psychological help for the family (19.0%).
7. Help and social work for persons in difficulty (17.2%).
8. Standards of quality and the evaluation of social work's quality (15.7%).
9. Social work with multicultural groups (5.6%).

The education of specialists in the domain of *Social work with elderly people* will have to center on the formation of the following skills (in order of priorities):

1. Help and social work for elderly persons in difficulty (90.0%).
2. Accompanying/supervising the elderly persons in the offered service (39.7%).
3. Information, guidance on developing partnership agreements between service providers and future beneficiaries (34.0%).
4. Piloting a project of social intervention (25.4%).
5. Social diagnosing of a city district, collective evaluating of a territory needs (22.0%).
6. Economic and social psychological help for the person/family (16.7%).

The above-mentioned denotes the fact that the persons participating in the research didn't manage to determine explicitly the specific skills for each specialization, the accent being put on the general aspects. And in this case, the explanation has, probably, the origin in the degree of preparation of the interviewed specialists, a big part of which, as we have seen, don't have studies in the domain of social work. Undoubtedly, in the elaboration of the curricula for the key-specializations, determined within the research, will be taken into consideration the skills emphasized by the respondents, but they will also be completed by a number of other skills both general and particular/specific, necessary for the social workers which will activate in the corresponding domains.

Because of the fact that *Social work with families in the situation of risk* and *Social work with orphan and abandoned children, including those who remained without parents' care as a result of migration* are very close according to the content, they have been merged into one, getting a larger name: *Social work with a family and child in the situation of risk*. So, taking into consideration the objectives of the Project "Professionalization of the Education in Social Work", the

key-specializations identified in the bounds of the undertaken research were distributed in cycles of education, as follows:

at the bachelor/licentiate's level:

- Social work with a family and child in the situation of risk;
- Social work with elderly persons;

at master's level:

- Management of the social services.

According to these specializations/options a group of professional experts-analysts (20 teachers and specialists-practicing in the domain) have elaborated 3 files of professions with a thorough description of the activities, which must be undertaken by the social workers from these 3 domains, the knowledge, the skills, which they must possess. The files of professions were subsequently consulted by other 36 specialists from the system of social work from different regions of the country, inclusively – from rural zones, what permitted to retain the most necessary skills for offering qualitative services. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family validated the files of professions, what permitted to begin the work for the renewal of curricula, the latter being completed with the disciplines by which can be formed the skills determined in the files of professions. The curricula were approved by the Ministry of Education. Thus, in the year 2010, at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of MSU were initiated two new options at the bachelor/licentiate's level (*Social work with the family and child in the situation of risk*, *Social work with elderly persons*) and a new specialization at the master's level (*Management of the social services*). Only in such a way it is possible to determine a tight connection between the university education and the social problems, which the Republic of Moldova confronts, the demands of the labor market, but as a result it is possible to obtain the diminution of the unemployed with the higher education diplomas.

In conclusion it is necessary to mention that resolving the social problems, which the Republic of Moldova is confronting at present, is unimaginable without the restructuring of the system of social protection, an important component of which is connected with the increasing of attention towards the education of human resources. The offer of social work services should become the privilege of qualified specialists, educated in correspondence with the integral conception of the university curriculum, centered on the necessities of the country, demands of the labor market, and which will update systematically the knowledge through different forms of continuous education. In order to maintain a high professional level, it is necessary that the personnel involved in the domain of social work to be systematically attested by a National Commission, formed from competent didactic stuff, which activates in the accredited higher educational institutions, qualified practitioners and specialists from Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family.

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