The challenges of Social Work education in Europe

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In my presentation I will explore the situation of social work education in Europe, looking at the challenges of the XXI Century, underlining the effects and the demands arising from the application of the Bologna process and stressing the importance of developing innovative experiences in training, that focus more on competences and on an international dimension in education.

Social work education initially grew in Europe at different stages from the beginning of XXth century till the end of the second world war, but also had a new and important “rebirth” after the crash of the communist regime in the central eastern part of Europe. In the last two decades the creation or re-opening of social work education in eastern European countries has been of considerable significance. What does ‘social work’ mean today and what currently are the social professions being referred to in different European countries? Authors like Lyons, Lawrence (eds.2006) and Lorenz (2006), among others, deal with the topic of social professions in Europe, with a particular focus on the role covered by education in preparing social workers. Education in social work is worthy of such a sustained focus, because of its unique nature in reflecting specific cultural and contextual dimensions. Historical backgrounds, social policy trends, pedagogical and disciplinary relationships and ‘politics’ all have implications for the way in which training in social work has been established in different countries. Local factors and European policy developments are all important elements in determining in what way social work education is evolving in terms of structure, curricula and pedagogical issues.

1-The state of the art

Many initiatives have been taken during the last decade in social work education, and our intention here is to offer an, albeit impressionistic, overview of the situation of social work education in Europe, from different actors in the field. We can refer to some that have involved many different countries, such as the thematic networks ECSPRESS (1999) and EUSW (2002/2008). In both of this experience many

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