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The Project

The WIT project aims to expand and strengthen skills and knowledge of social care professionals, through an open and dynamic way to share experiences and exchange information and views on a national and international level.

Newsletter Contents



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- 1. Vilnius: brief summary of the events.....p. 2
- 2. Short history of the Vilnius University.....pp.2-3
- 3. WIT Second Seminar.....pp. 4-6
- 4. WIT Second Workshop.....pp. 7-9
- 5. WIT 3rd Round-Table..... pp. 9-10
- 6. Next events in Sofia.....pp. 11-12
- 7. How to access the WIT COP.....p. 12

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Vilnius: brief summary of the events



A further round of the WIT project activities (**2nd international seminar, 2nd workshop and 3rd round table**) took part in Vilnius University, Lithuania, on June 25-27th 2014.



More than 120 participants representing fields of social work, social policy, working in governmental and non-governmental organizations from different regions of Lithuania attended the events. The Small Hall of the Vilnius University, famous for many significant international level events and for prestigious lecturers, has been their location.

Short history of the Vilnius University

Established in 1579, the oldest and largest Lithuanian higher education institution is an active participant in international scientific and academic activities.

Mission



- To maintain freedom of thought and diversity of opinions
- To develop a unity of research and studies
- To conduct a broad spectrum of fundamental and applied research
- To pursue international excellence in the interdisciplinary research

Short Chronology of the University

1570: a Jesuit college is established in the city of Vilnius.

1579: on April 1, King Stephen Bathory issues a charter, proclaiming the transformation of the college into an establishment of higher



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education. On October 30, Pope Gregory XIII issues a papal bull confirming the transformation.

1641: the Faculty of Law is established.

1753: the Astronomical Observatory is set up.

1773: the Jesuit Order is dissolved in Europe and the University is put under the secular authority.

1832: the University is closed down by order of tsar Nicholas I.

1919: the University reopens and is soon taken over by the Polish government after the annexation of the Vilnius region by Poland.

1939: the University is brought back under the control of Lithuania.

1940: the University is reorganised according to the model of higher schools of the Soviet Union.

1990: Lithuania having restored its independence, the University regains autonomy and its statute is adopted.

Vilnius University today



Currently, the University has 12 faculties, 7 institutes, 3 university hospitals, the oldest Library in Lithuania (established 1570), Astronomical Observatory, Botanical Garden, St Johns' Church.



Research priorities and acknowledged achievements

- Baltic Studies
- Research on History, Philosophy, Lithuanian language and literature
- Biochemistry, Genomics and Biotechnology



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- Laser Physics and Technologies
- Physics of Semiconductors and Non-crystalline Materials
- Mathematical Methods and Models, IT
- Cardiovascular system reconstruction and development of new treatment methods



2nd Seminar “The role of organization in enhancing the development of the “21st century skills” of social professionals”



On the 25th June, teachers of the Social Work Department, organizers of the event, have met the colleagues from Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences (Berlin) and discussed the expectations they had for the seminar and workshops, as well most recent developments in the social work field in Germany and Lithuania. The vice-dean of the Faculty Vida Jakutienė has presented during the meeting ongoing projects, as well as described the content of many long-lasting international relationships cultivated by the Faculty with other SW schools.



On June 26th, the 2nd international seminar on “**The role of organization in enhancing the development of “the 21st century skills” of social professionals**” took place. Besides the Project partners from the Province of Milan (Italy), NDA (Bulgaria),

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Universities of Berlin and Vilnius, a number of highly qualified and well-known Lithuanian professors presented results of their research, related to the 21st century skills.

The welcoming speech was delivered by the **Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Professor Arūnas Poviliūnas**, who emphasised challenges of the contemporary societies and a particular role of social work professionals in solving them. He was delighted with the active participation of many social field professionals in the seminar.



The international seminar was started by Germana Di Falco, EU policy expert, who made a presentation of the WIT project, and later in the day – described the **Italian experience in solving the challenges which arise in developing new skills of professionals of social service field**.

Prof. L. Žalimienė (Vilnius University) has then analysed **organizational support in social services' organizations and implications for new skills**. She emphasised the significance of organizational aspects such as, for instance, supervision, opportunities for constant qualification development and the possibility to tune work and family life as important preconditions for development of workers skills. Prof. L. Žalimienė also stressed that a professional's commitment to competence development is directly related to her/his satisfaction with the work and presented interesting research data about work satisfaction. According to that data, such factors as democratic management, success in achieving aims, awareness of a specialist's power to make decisions on behalf of a client, support of one's creativity, etc. are important prerequisites of satisfaction with the work and further commitment to skills' development. In general, the research allowed summarising that the following skills will become more and more important in the nearest future:



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- Ability to use motivation strategies
- Ability to involve workers into management of an organization
- Ability to delegate responsibility
- Strategies of indirect control
- Creation of trust-based organizational culture
- Strategies of resolution of value conflicts
- Management of information and efficient communication.



Prof. B. Gruzevskis (Vilnius University), also director of the Institute of Labour and Social Research presented the labour market trends and the need for the labour force in Lithuania. In his presentation **“Trends of Labour Market and the Need for the Labour resources in Lithuania”**, he discussed the relation between the supply and demand of the labour market, especially stressing the problems which arise for young people in all countries of EU. B. Gruževskis defined the current challenges for social work professions, and possible solutions to them. Presented statistical data show that in 2013 only 43 percent of employers (including in Germany, UK, USA) were able to meet their needs for the qualified labour force. According to the forecasting in 2020 there will be lack of almost 85 mln of specialists of high and moderate qualification in the world (McKinsey Global Institute). This picture is further more complicated by the big numbers of unemployed in all countries – this indicates the discrepancy between free labour places and the irrelevant competences offered by the unemployed people. Professor B. Gruževskis emphasised that in this situation there are quite a few resources which are not employed in order to enhance employability, for instance, such as databases of potential employees, activation of search for employees (dissemination, awards, advertising), direct contacts with NGOs, etc.



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The afternoon was dedicated to the **2nd Workshop on “Definition of a new set of specific social service management oriented courses and updated training courses for transversal social professionals”**.



Assoc. Prof. Birutė Švedaitė (Vilnius University) talked about working conditions of social workers: the changing organizational culture in her presentation **“The neglected professionals”: social workers and their power**”, which was based on a scientific research project “Social Work - Between Dependency and Autonomy”.



She emphasised the big challenges in Lithuania: 1) the demand for social work is formed and controlled by entities devoid of sufficient knowledge of this field (red-tape administrators guided by their red-tape logic), 2) the professional community of social workers is not strong enough to represent its professional identity and needs in the institutions they work in. B. Švedaitė talked about the discrepancies between social workers' attitudes and their actions: 81 % agree with the fact that they should be active members of associations and represent the interests of the profession, however, only 17 percent practise that and 19 percent encourage others to do that. She also



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talked about the dilemma of powerfulness and powerlessness, which does affect the way how social workers implement their functions.

Lyubomir Grancharov (CEO of NDA, Bulgaria) gave an overview **on emerging skills within social professionals and social services management sector in Bulgaria**. He talked about changes in social sphere that have lead to a more ethical understanding of social services - social services are necessary to support the individual, family or group, not to impose sanctions. He also discussed the problems and challenges of decentralization and deinstitutionalization of social services and problems of financing, which arise in the process. L. Grancharov indicated challenges which still remain, such as poor control and poor mechanisms for ensuring quality of services, lack of preliminary research of the situation, excessive bureaucracy, little or no control and influence over the actions and decisions of local authorities, etc.



Andrea Metzner, Network Management and Social Research Expert, (ASH, Germany) analysed **occupational fields for social workers and social work studies in Germany in the 21st century**. She discussed the academic reform (Bologna process) and its shortcomings. A. Metzner mentioned a variety of occupational fields and stated that in the practical social work is impossible or difficult to make a clear distinction between different occupational fields, and this is also related to transversal skills which are important to many related professions. Among those skills, such as child guidance, counselling for parents, assisted housing, intensive individual care, follow-up help for people released from psychiatric treatment, coordination of measures for individual support, etc.



Following the presentations given, a discussion arose: the participants of the international seminar asked lecturers a few questions, related to specific social services to elderly people,





financing, etc. These questions, as later commented by the participants, are more and more interesting due to the migration from the country - neighbors or family members often work in other countries in the field of social services.



The working day ended with the Partners' 3rd Coordination Meeting. During the meeting, which took part in the Faculty of Philosophy, the state of art of the Project activities was discussed and remaining tasks defined.



WIT Third Round-Table on competences and skills needed for social work professionals

The discussion of **3rd round table** was focused on **issues of competences and skills needed for social work professionals.**

Colleagues from VRC shared the experience of the center and the methodologies used. VRC provides vocational rehabilitation, which includes a comprehensive application of rehabilitation, social, pedagogical, educative and other measures with a view to developing and restoring working capacity of the persons with disabilities and increasing their employment opportunities. As the professionals of the center deal with assessment of vocational skills, during the round table Rasa Noreikytė – Ustinavičienė, Project Manager at VRC and Natalija Markovskaja, Head of Unit for

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Employment at VRC, presented different tools used for assessment of physical, psychosocial vocational skills of a person and the tools for comparison of the received results with the future vocational/workplace requirements. For use of these methodologies, the specific professional background and competences of social workers are needed. Specialists of the Valakupiai Rehabilitation Centre are licensed lectors for the assessment of standardised vocational skills and development methods.



Assessment of vocational skills is carried out via the application of standardized methodologies and methods which have been applied in European countries and the United States for many years. After the assessment, the team of vocational rehabilitation specialists elaborates recommendations on:

- a possibility to engage in work activity;
- restoration of lost vocational skills, improvement of current underdeveloped skills and development of new skills;
- adjustment of workplaces (if needed).



The round table ended by discussing the importance of **management skills of social workers in 21st century**. Management in social work combines not only the ability to plan, implement and control, but also the ability to measure the qualitative and quantitative indicators and use to ensure quality management and ongoing improvement of the process of social services. Natalija Markovskaja had presented the system to ensure quality in social services sector - The European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS), which is an initiative of the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR).





Next Events in Sophia



Next Events in Sophia inspires discussion on the WITGIS, information systems and public-private partnerships

During the last week of September 2014, it will be the moment for the National Development Agency (Bulgaria) to host other very motivating project events.



The events will start with the **2nd international conference “Supply of social services and demand of social support: a challenge for Europe”**, discussing an advanced version of the WITGIS. Among the international experts and professionals on the field who will investigate the status of the labour market in the field of social services and best practises in Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania and Germany: Mrs Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova, Assoc. Professor MD, MPsy, PhD (South-West University), Mrs Germana Di Falco, EU policies Expert, Province of Milan, Italy, Ass. Prof. Violeta Geviorgianiene (Vilnius University), Prof. Dr. Heinz Stapf-Finé (Alice Salomon University).



The afternoon will be dedicated to the 3rd Seminar introducing the 3rd and 4th workshops which will take place the day after.



On 25th September, **the 3rd and 4th Workshop** will deal with the themes of information systems on skills needs and jobs opportunities, career guidance for social labor market entrance and of public-private partnerships in social services management. The two

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workshops will be attended by a number of Bulgarian social services providers. They will be further enriched by field visits to organizations offering social services management.

The intense working 2-day session will moreover end with the Partners' 4th Coordination Meeting, planned for 26th September morning.

How to access to the WIT COP



Are you interested to share your expertise and join a thematic workshop? **WIT thematic workshops** are open focus groups of experts, practitioners or simply very interested in the field people (researchers, advisors, people from the worlds of NGOs, public and private social sectors, to mention some) focusing on a specific subject, while sharing knowledge and experience. Each thematic workshop tries to feed practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities in the field drawing on experience derived from tailored useful projects, initiatives and practices.



You can easily join the on line thematic workshop and download all useful background information, videos and materials via this [link](#).



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