

INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM 'Against Social Suffering: Social Work in Alliance with People with Disabilities in Times of Crisis', of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) and the East European sub-regional Association of the Schools of Social Work (EEsRASSW).

From 17th June to 19th June 2013 the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work hosted the International regional symposium titled 'Against Social Suffering: Social Work in Alliance with People with Disabilities in the Times of Crisis'. The symposium was funded by the IASSW and EASSW and symbolised a joint collaboration between the sub-regional (EEsRASSW), regional (EASSW) and global associations (IASSW). Regionally, it was of key importance that the symposium was organized under the lead of the sub-regional organization, EEsRASSW, and that it focused on the issue of disability, which is one of the pertinent issues in the region. The organisation of the regional symposium was taken over by the Department of Social Justice and Inclusion under the leadership of Prof. Darja Zaviršek.

Disabled people internationally, including people from the East European region, suffer great inequalities, but their personal experiences often remain silent and invisible. Poverty, social isolation, poor health conditions, experiences of violence and the denial of their competencies often intertwine and cause disabling conditions and more inequalities. The purpose of the symposium was to reflect today's social movements, recent changes towards greater dispossessions of disabled people, and social work responses towards these processes, in order to put the wider notion of disablement caused by social inequalities and human rights violations into the focus of research. Speakers from different countries explored the experiences of physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities, mental health problems and civic disability and focused on the local, the national and the global levels. The symposium engaged prominent researchers and social work educators from the region and from the wider academic community for a global exchange of ideas, concepts and visions for a just society. Among others, the speakers addressed the following topics: recovery oriented mental health services, de-institutionalization, motherhood of women with intellectual disabilities, cultural construction and social conceptions of disability, inclusion of children with disabilities, disabled people's movement in times of crisis, palliative care, disability in the media, politics of gender and disability, transitions into adulthood of youth with disabilities, everyday life of families of children with disabilities, well-being and being-ill paradigms, disability and inequality, stigmatization of people, personal assistance, employment of people

The poster features a large silhouette of a person in a wheelchair in the background. At the top right, there is a small photograph of a group of people protesting on a street. The text is arranged as follows:

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Against Social Suffering:

June 17-18 2013

University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Work
Slovenia

Social Work in Alliance with People with Disabilities in the Times of Crisis

PARTICIPANTS

Zsolt Bugarszki	Iago Kachkachishvili	Valeriya Markina	Ruth Seifert
Susana Buljubasic	Vjolicca Kraonjci	Rosa Fulgosi Marnjak	Ana M. Sobocan
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Elena Iarskaia-Snimova	Chandani Liyanage	Pavel Romanov	Andre Viliers
Liljana Igric	Antoinette Lombard	Sanela Sadik	Angelina Yuen

Darja Zaviršek (chair of the symposium)

Logos for IASSW AIETS, EASSW, and EEsRASSW are present. At the bottom, there are four small photographs of individuals with disabilities: a woman in a wheelchair, a young boy with glasses, a woman holding a child, and a woman standing.

with disabilities, deconstructions of inclusion, children with disabilities in adoption and foster care, access to social rights, community support research programs, students with disability, disability and the Roma, social work education, and east-European perspectives on disability.

Other important purposes of the symposium were: to establish and strengthen the connections and networks among social work agents (researchers, academics, practitioners, service users, students etc.) in Eastern Europe, wider Europe and also globally; exchange and transfer of knowledge among these agents and regions; capacity building in the region; identification of challenges in the field of disability and providing suggestions to address these challenges.

The symposium was opened by Prof. Vimla V. Nadkarni, president of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, Prof. Susan Lawrence, president of the European Association of the Schools of Social Work and Prof. Darja Zaviršek, president of the East European sub-regional Association of the Schools of Social Work. Importantly, this symposium brought together a really international community of social work educators and researchers: including guests from Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, China, Georgia, Russia, Greece, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, UK, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Hong Kong, etc.; altogether around 120 people in two days. The audience was diverse, both regionally as well as professionally. The symposium brought together: social work researchers, students, professionals, public health practitioners, social policy officers, policy makers, pedagogues, sociologists, alumni of the faculty, social workers working in the public sector, private sector and in governmental organisations, service users, parents and people with experiences of bodily or civic disability themselves.

The event contributed to awareness raising, sharing academic knowledge, creating new and stronger professional links, all in the field of social work in the area of disability studies including the studies of disablement which does not necessarily come from impairment itself.

To secure sustainability of the debates, the results of the symposium were published as an open source text and audio e-book (easily accessible at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/57z2nrhn3km5mk0/Against_Social_Suffering-EBOOK.pdf).

Ana M. Sobočan