



9th CONGRESS

OF SOCIAL WORK

70 YEARS OF CO-CREATION
OF SOCIAL CHANGE

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

20 & 21 NOVEMBER 2025
ZREČE, HOTEL VITAL

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70 years of co-creation of social change

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EDITORIAL

70 YEARS OF CO-CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE Introduction to the Proceedings of the 9th Social Work Congress

Celebrating the anniversary and historical role of social work

On the occasion of the 9th Congress and the 70th anniversary of social work education, we reflect on the rich history and significance of our science and profession. Social work, as an organised practice and academic discipline, began to take root in the 1950s in what was then socialist Yugoslavia. Despite initial doubts and prejudices from the authorities and its subsequent inevitable use for the purposes of social state policy, social work developed its own education, ethics, and identity. After 1991, in the context of transition and social crises, it established itself as a profession that advocates for human rights and the democratisation of everyday life. Despite being pushed to the margins of social sciences and professions, and its historical dual role – socially necessary yet at times used by the authorities and often marginalised in the eyes of the public – social work has remained committed to dignity, solidarity, and social justice.

Today, our mission continues in new circumstances. The world faces acute social challenges: growing economic inequality, increasingly precarious security for people, and declining trust in institutions. According to the World Social Report 2025, more than half of the world's population has little or no trust in governments, while social stratification and a sense of insecurity threaten social cohesion. The report calls for a new global consensus based on three principles – fairness, economic security for all, and solidarity – as the foundation for sustainable social development. The anniversary congress is therefore an opportunity to reflect on the path we have taken and to commit ourselves to remaining faithful to these values in the future, despite the global challenges they face. The main thematic areas of the congress are presented below.

Key topics of the 9th Social Work Congress

The congress programme covers seven content clusters that intertwine historical foundations, current analyses, and visions for the future:

- **Research, education, and theory:** 70 years of academic development, research achievements, and the question of how to maintain the quality and criticality of education in times of rapid change.
- **Inclusion and co-creation:** partnership with users, linking education, practice, and research, and developing innovative forms of collaborative work in organisations and communities.
- **Technology and digitisation:** e-social work, ethics and privacy, and the impact of digital transformation on the values and identity of the profession.
- **Social policy and social change:** the role of social work in a changing welfare state, responses to inequality, migration, environmental and other crises; countering the hyperpathologisation and hypermedicalisation of social phenomena.
- **Working with different communities and groups:** current challenges and good practices in working with different populations, from families and young people to marginalised groups, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people in mental distress; emphasis on advocacy and topics such as palliative care, homelessness, migration, and the integration of migrants.
- **Social work in different fields:** long-term challenges and new topics in different sectors—health, education, justice, work, crisis situations; professional identity, ethics, and interprofessional collaboration.
- **Creativity and culture in social work:** expressive-creative approaches to empowering individuals and strengthening a culture of care and solidarity in the community – nurturing the values of peace, intergenerational connectedness, respect for diversity, and care for oneself and others.

The gallery of congress contributions, with abstracts and brief presentations by the authors collected in this publication, includes two plenary lectures, a plenary dialogue for the first time, three round

tables, six workshops, ninety-four papers, and presentations of new books. The congress will feature a total of 106 presentations showcasing new scientific and professional work.

The collection contains a particularly large number of contributions in the fields of social policy and social change, work with different groups, and research and education. This focus clearly reflects some of the most pressing challenges and concerns of the profession: the future of the welfare state, the quality of education for new generations, and innovation in practice.

Critical reflection on neoliberal influences

A common theme in many of the contributions is a critical reflection on the impact of neoliberalism on social protection, research, and education. New public management practices, with their focus on efficiency, standardisation, and quantitative indicators, often conflict with the ethics and mission of our profession. Social workers are frequently caught between administrative demands and the real needs of people.

Neoliberal management is linked to the individualisation of social problems: poverty, unemployment, inequality, and mental distress are seen as personal failings, with responsibility shifted to the individual. This simplistic view ignores the wider context and structural causes of distress – such as inadequate policies, discrimination, precariousness, and inequalities. The congress contributions therefore reinforce the call for social work to continue studying and critically reflecting on the social factors underlying people's distress, to reject hyperpathologisation, and to focus its efforts on policy change, not merely on »fixing« individuals.

Constructionist approaches: co-authorship, dialogue, connecting different levels of practice

The second focus of the collection is the establishment of constructionist-based – collaborative, dialogical, contextual – approaches in social work. We understand users as co-authors of desired changes; contemporary social work occurs in a dialogue that equally values people's life experiences and knowledge alongside professional expertise. Such co-creation strengthens epistemic justice – the fair distribution of "knowledge power" – and leads to more sustainable,

people-friendly, and meaningful solutions, as well as to the empowerment and dignity of those for whom support and assistance are intended.

Contemporary practices bridge the gap between the so-called micro and macro levels: we place people's personal stories within broader social contexts. In addition to direct assistance, we include advocacy, social action, and raising awareness of the structural causes of hardship. In the collection, this attitude and understanding are expressed in various ways – from defending the rights of individual users and families to calls for policy changes. Updated global standards for social work education also emphasise competencies for work ranging from the individual to the community and systemic dimensions, and the need to integrate practices at all these levels. Success is measured not only by the support and assistance provided to individuals and families, but also by the contribution to more equitable structures, so that there will be less hardship in the future.

An invitation to co-shape the way forward

These proceedings are more than an archive of contributions – they are an incentive for joint reflection and action that should continue to resonate after the congress. Seven decades of education have taught us that, as a community of researchers, experts, students, users, and allies, we can achieve the desired changes when we persist in dialogue, co-authorship, and mutual learning.

Let the 70th anniversary be not only a memory of the past, but also an inspiration and a promise for the future: let us build social work that is resolutely critical of social injustices and, at the same time, deeply human in its relationship to the individual. Let us remain connected, share knowledge, and together implement the values of our science, profession, and art in wider society. Each of us is a co-author of the next chapters of social work in Slovenia – in institutions, in the field, and in public policies. With this optimism, on behalf of the congress programme committee, we wish you an inspiring read of the proceedings and continued success in your professional, research, and social work – together in the spirit of solidarity and knowledge.

Lea Šugman Bohinc and Petra Videmšek

INVITED LECTURE

Vesna Leskošek

THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE OR THE GAP BETWEEN POLITICS AND PROFESSION?

According to the definition of the International Federation of Social Workers, social work is a practice-based profession and academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and freedom of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity are central to social work. Drawing on social work theories, the social sciences, the humanities, and knowledge developed by communities to solve problems, social work focuses not only on working with people but also on addressing the structural environment and policies that shape living conditions and opportunities for problem-solving.

The Code of Ethics states that the mission of social workers is to defend social welfare, human rights, solidarity, equality, and sustainability. Social work pays special attention to people who are marginalised, oppressed, or living in poverty. The Code of Ethics also states that ethical conduct is a key element of the quality of social workers' practice. The main principles of this work are respect for human dignity and integrity, social justice and humanity, respect for diversity, and professional integrity.

Social work theories primarily address the position of service users within the social work process of assistance and support, focusing on strengthening individuals' power and ability to influence their own life course, develop agency, and take responsibility for themselves and those they care for. Social work generates knowledge about understanding individuals' situations, their hardships, and difficulties. It develops strategies for coping with these challenges, recovering from traumatic experiences, taking responsibility for one's actions (as in cases of violence), and confronting unpleasant aspects of oneself to change what hinders relationships with others. Beyond working with individuals, social work also develops knowledge and methods for working with groups and communities, as it considers people's place within their environment. It therefore addresses the intersec-

tions between individuals, their personal circumstances, and the environment in which they live. In this context, it primarily develops knowledge and understanding of diversity, awareness of oppression, discrimination, and the variety of life circumstances. It teaches us to understand the position of minorities, people with non-heterosexual identities and sexual orientations, people with disabilities, young and older people, among others. Social work theories develop knowledge and understanding of the effects of social inequality and poverty, domination, hegemony, boundaries and power relations, subordination and subjugation, as well as liberation. In summary, social work theories focus on enabling people to live better, to thrive, and to leave their relationship with a social worker feeling empowered, more capable, and with positive experiences that give them strength.

However, at present, it appears that such education is of no use to social workers. Students return from their internships with the familiar refrain: forget what you learned at university, reality is completely different. Administrative skills are required, as is knowledge of procedures and public authorities, to avoid procedural mistakes. You need to master service recording programmes, methods of enforcing court decisions, know how to adapt people to requirements, monitor their actions, and check whether they are complying with agreements, and so on.

So the key question is, why does this gap occur? Why does social work change so much from theory to practice? The obvious answer is that people adapt to the structural frameworks set by politics. This determines work through legislation, finance, organisation, digitalisation, and supervision. The style of leadership and management determines the possibilities for work, limits professional autonomy, and dictates ways and methods of working. However, such an obvious answer is not sufficient to explain the transformations in practical social work. Part of the answer must also be sought in the changes in the understanding of professionalism brought about by new concepts that are currently taking on the role of primary knowledge. In this article, this claim will be supported by examples from the field of violence treatment.

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INVITED LECTURE

Sanja Sitar Surić

IMPROVING THE POSITION OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WORKERS IN PRACTICE THROUGH THE CONSISTENT USE OF CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

Social work has developed into a scientific discipline and profession with modern and postmodern concepts of assistance. Although social workers carry out vital tasks of assistance, support, and protection for users within their social environment and are an important part of social policy, the profession has been at a crossroads in practice for some time and faces numerous challenges. In practice, social workers encounter bureaucratisation of the profession, an inadequate and inappropriate staffing structure, insufficient time for their work despite increasingly complex cases, and growing scrutiny of procedures and media pressure. Increasingly, professionals from other fields are being employed in social work positions, which leads social workers to feel they lack a distinct doctrine for their work. These factors not only hinder the effective use of theoretical concepts of social work in practice, but also weaken the identity of social workers and limit opportunities to develop a unified practice based on science, professional knowledge, methods, and skills of social work. Changes in legislation, such as the Family Code, and the reorganisation of social work centres, which have had a profound impact on the work of social workers, have not produced the desired effects or promised improvements in assistance and support services for users. There remains a significant gap between the theory and practice of social work. In practice, social workers apply theoretical concepts, such as co-creation in working relationships, inconsistently. I examined this issue in my doctoral dissertation, "The Application and Development of Theoretical Concepts of Social Work in the Practice of Social Work Centres." In the Life research project, where practitioners collaborated with the Faculty of Social Work, the consistent application of co-creation in working relationships proved extremely

effective in social work help and support processes.

Social work approaches differ from those of other sciences and disciplines in the broad field of helping people in life crises, precisely because of their unique theoretical concepts of help and support. Therefore, I believe that consistent application of these concepts in practice would give social workers greater professional power, and strengthen and improve their identity and overall position among professions and in society. To ensure greater recognition of social work, a unified professional doctrine, and a stronger professional identity for our field, we must first value our own work and consistently apply modern concepts of assistance – in other words, speak the language of social work in practice. We need to increase our professional confidence and learn to defend our profession.

How can we achieve this?

To support social work in practice, we need, above all, a strong connection between theory and practice. More direct links are required between student mentors in practice and mentors from the Faculty of Social Work. This should continue through more intensive cooperation between practitioners and the faculty. We must implement theory more consistently in practice, and practice must consider the development of theoretical concepts, methods, and techniques. Their effectiveness should be tested in practice to contribute to further development.

Additionally, a comprehensive update of social welfare assistance standards and norms, along with the necessary legislative changes, is needed. It is essential to clearly define and distinguish tasks that require social work skills from those that require skills from other professions, and to ensure more time for professional work, which is crucial for performing our tasks consistently and in accordance with professional doctrine. Greater promotion of good practices described in research and professional articles, and presented at scientific and professional congresses, conferences, and round tables, is also necessary. Politicians must pay greater attention to social workers who highlight the inadequate and limited possibilities for implementing services and programmes that can significantly improve people's lives and situations, and reduce the need for supervision and intervention. It is also important to involve social workers more actively in

changing legislation and developing social policy.

Social workers represent the voices of those who need help and support within their social environment. However, we must also advocate for social work itself at every stage of our professional practice. We need to highlight our role and demonstrate the effectiveness of assistance and support grounded in scientific knowledge and social work expertise. It is equally important to draw attention to the challenges we encounter when we are expected to provide appropriate forms of assistance to users but are prevented from doing so by systemic shortcomings. In all these efforts, we require the support of both the Faculty of Social Work and other partner organisations. It is also essential that we know how to care for ourselves in this demanding profession – through regular supervision, training, teamwork, intervention, and, above all, by performing our work in a professional social work manner, as we are trained to do.

Author presentation:

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INVITED DIALOGUE

**Lea Šugman Bohinc in conversation with Miran Možina
and Tone Vrhovnik Straka**

**HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR PILLS TODAY? THE CHALLENGES
OF MEDICALISING MENTAL HEALTH IN SLOVENIA**

In a dialogue between psychiatrist and psychotherapist Prof. Miran Možina and philosopher and person with personal experience of mental disorder Tone Vrhovnik Strako – moderated by Assoc. Prof. Dr Lea Šugman Bohinc – we will discuss the urgent issue of the alarming situation in mental health care in Slovenia. We will also present more comprehensive approaches to protecting mental health and providing help in cases where it is at risk, which have already been recognised as successful in research and clinical practice but have not yet been established in Slovenia.

Miran Možina points out that, according to World Health Organization reports, Slovenia is one of the most backward countries in the European Union in the field of mental health care. The key reason for this is the rigidity of the biomedical approach. Individuals with mental health problems are often diagnosed and pathologised too quickly and prescribed psychiatric drugs without consideration of the broader social, economic, cultural, ethnic, and other contexts. The management of severe and long-term mental disorders still takes place mainly in psychiatric hospitals rather than in the community, and deinstitutionalisation is slower and less effective than in other countries. This situation was further highlighted during public debates on the Psychotherapy Act, in which some representatives of the psychiatric and clinical psychology professions defended the orthodox disease model as the only scientifically sound approach. The imposition of this model is often based on intimidation: if you do not take your medication regularly, you are not entitled to medical treatment, sick leave, or therapy, your brain may be irreparably damaged, and so on.

The increasing medicalisation of mental health is not only a Slovenian phenomenon but a global trend. Among the many negative

consequences for individuals and society, the following are particularly notable

- overemphasising psychological problems and viewing them as unchangeable,
- inappropriate and excessive diagnosis due to lowered diagnostic thresholds (e.g., depression, ADHD, bipolar disorder, autism spectrum disorder, PTSD),
- the creation of new „disorders“ and iatrogenic diseases,
- overprescribing and overuse of psychiatric drugs and their side effects,
- the assumption that neuroscience provides all the answers to mental health problems,
- stigmatisation and discrimination against people with mental health problems, defining them as fundamentally different from others,
- failure to consider the unique needs of individuals,
- imposing a way of describing and classifying people’s experiences and behaviours as objective facts, rather than in an open and transparent manner,
- inefficient use of public and private funds.

These anomalies are not only a sign of epistemological narrowness, but also a result of systemic distortions. The healthcare system is increasingly becoming a business, where constant „improvements“ lead to greater control over employees and increased bureaucratisation. Instead of contact with users, administration is taking up more and more time. Costs are rising, while the quality of care often stagnates or declines. The burden of rules reduces creativity and threatens professional and scientific independence.

The biopsychosocial or contextual approach, rooted in traditional healing practices and humanism, offers an alternative. Rather than adopting the dualism of mind and body, it emphasises holism and views health as a balance of physical, psychological, and social factors. Instead of relying on categorical psychiatric diagnoses, it develops methods to assess an individual’s mental state within their social and cultural context. It is based on integrating subspecialised and fragmented forms of help or treatment, and on research findings that the success of assistance is significantly influenced by factors rela-

ted to the user, the helper, and their collaborative relationship and alliance. The focus is on practice-based evidence and evidence-based practices that consider the complexity of the human being. The emphasis is on the relationship, collaboration, and adaptability of the help or treatment to the needs and characteristics of the individual user.

The contextual model incorporates an objectively grounded medical approach, but enhances it by including subjectivity, idiographicity, dialogue, and pluralism. The medical model thus becomes one layer within a broader contextual, constructionist-based framework – like a smaller doll inside a larger one in a Russian nesting doll. This enables psychiatry and other disciplines in mental health care to move from control to dialogue and dialogical pluralism, and towards an epistemologically responsible, open-dialogical, and polylogical search for meaning in mental suffering.

Personal experience of Tone Vrhovnik Straka:

„My introduction to the field of mental health occurred on the battlefield. At nineteen, I never understood why I – non-violent and willing to cooperate – had to be draconically confined to a bed with bars, incapacitated by strong doses of antipsychotics, and held in a locked ward until I was deemed ‚cured‘.

The basic form of „successful“ treatment is blind adherence to instructions. Any doubt or question is interpreted as resistance, an additional symptom, or both. When I recently visited a friend who was dazed from medication and asked her why she was not joining us for a walk, she told me she was not ‚cooperating‘ because she was not participating in occupational therapy. When I checked with the nurse, she confirmed that patients must ‚cooperate‘.

This ‚participation‘ is based on the assumption that professionals know what leads to recovery. The biological model defines health as the absence of symptoms and is still rooted in the centuries-old belief that following instructions will ensure health. Psychiatry often stubbornly clings to this doctrine and blames the patient and their disobedience for failure.

But even though people follow these instructions for many years, they often do not recover. Diagnoses change, therapies are adjusted, and medications are replaced – often only after severe side effects.

Nevertheless, responsibility is shifted to the individual. Suicides after discharge from hospitals also continue. That is why I am simply advocating that the healthcare system and the state – together with loved ones, the community, and social services – recognise that individuals with mental health issues have all the rights that belong to every human being. These rights may only be restricted where specified by law.

Let me return to my friend who does not want to paint to music: she has every human right to think and act this way, so this should not deprive her of other therapeutic options, such as going for a walk accompanied by professionals.

Presentation of authors:

Miran Možina, PhD and MD, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, is the director of the Ljubljana branch of Sigmund Freud University in Vienna (SFU Ljubljana).

Tone Vrhovnik Straka is a user, a person with experience of mental disorder. After almost 40 years since his first hospitalisation and a quarter of a century of activism in the field of mental health, he still wonders why we take away the dignity of people in mental distress under the guise of treatment, why help is so unbearably harsh, and why only complete submission is understood as cooperation. Why is it that only people with mental health problems are not allowed by society to receive help at a humane pace that takes into account their needs and human rights?

Lea Šugman Bohinc, PhD in Psychological Sciences, is a certified psychologist and systemic psychotherapist and an associate professor at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana.

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ABSTRACTS

FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE CONCRETE
Understanding, articulating and putting into practice
the values of VDC Kranj with invitation to embrace them

Care and Working Centres (VDC) provide an organised form of social care for adults with intellectual disabilities. We approach users enrolled in the “Guidance, Care and Employment under Special Conditions” program holistically, acting in their overall best interest. At VDC Kranj, we recognize that a sense of fulfillment and a higher quality of life are fostered by understanding and practicing values every day. In the project “Values connect us and make us happy”, participants explored the abstract concept of values and presented their insights through an original kamishibai performance and a watercolour comic art exhibition. In doing so, they not only developed their creativity but also internalized the most important values, inviting others to embrace them as well. The project helped them to build their confidence, strengthen their self-esteem and set new goals for themselves. With their success in presenting their work, they showed that barriers exist only in our minds and that every individual can find a way to express himself, which leads to self-fulfilment. They also contributed to raising public awareness about the challenges faced by adults with intellectual disabilities.

Author presentation:

Pia Buh, MA, the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, specializes in Art Therapy, and has passed the professional examination for social welfare workers. She is employed at the Kranj Care and Work Centre as a group habilitator and heads the Kranj unit.

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BIBLIOTHERAPY IN SOCIAL WORK

The workshop will start with a warm-up exercise, through which the participants and the facilitator will briefly introduce themselves and connect with their current feelings. A short theoretical introduction will introduce the method of bibliotherapy using fiction, the areas and ways of its application in social work, and strategies for its implementation, including the use of specific techniques such as working with symbols and metaphors and creative writing. In the experiential part, a bibliotherapeutic process will be carried out in a small group using a selected fiction text in prose. After reading the work, the group leader will lead a bibliotherapeutic discussion with the participants through four stages. This will be followed by an evaluation of the participants' experience of the bibliotherapy group and an evaluation by external observers. The second part of the experiential part will be devoted to guided creative writing, through which the participants will focus on their inner experience on a chosen topic. At the end of the workshop, there will also be space for any questions and discussion on the application of the method in the context of social work.

Author presentation:

Eva Frankol holds a degree in comparative literature and a master's degree in social work. Her master's thesis focused on bibliotherapy using fiction.

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HARM REDUCTION CULTURE BETWEEN ITS PRINCIPLES AND EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

In this workshop, we will first discuss the understanding of “harm reduction culture” and define the “life space orientation” of social work and social pedagogy. We will present and argue why the harm reduction approach is one of the most pragmatic approaches in social work (in the field of drug use and beyond). We will also point out the overlooked nature of this approach, and we will address experientially and theoretically the possible reasons why this approach is overlooked or under-implemented. Further on, we will use selected techniques and games to explore participants’ attitudes towards harm reduction (in the field of drug use and/or broadly). We will also try to show possible gaps between the declarative and the concrete level of implementation of harm reduction principles. The key purpose of the workshop is therefore to explore participants’ own views on harm reduction, to contrast these with those of other workshop participants; to test what happens when we move from a declarative level to a more concrete, everyday level in examining views; and to explore the landscape of the harm reduction culture between its potentials and limitations.

Presentation of authors:

Meta Rutar is a social pedagogue and graduate of the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana. She graduated in circus pedagogy. She runs a day center for illegal drug users in Nova Gorica.

Luka Mrak is completing his master’s degree at the Faculty of Social Work. He runs the Field Work with Illegal Drug Users program in Šent. He is the professional director of the Goriška Safe Room program.

Špela Razpotnik, PhD in Social Pedagogy, is an associate professor and a researcher at the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana in the field of social pedagogy.

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FACTORS OF CHANGE IN PROCESSES OF SUPPORT AND HELP IN SOCIAL WORK

This paper examines support and help processes in social work, focusing on the interpersonal space co-created by social workers and users. It explores key change factors in social work and the significance of early experiences, particularly those from upbringing and growing up. Based on my research, I categorize change factors into three groups: factors outside direct involvement, factors within the dynamic interpersonal space (DOS), and security and confidentiality in the DOS. The findings suggest the need to enhance the co-creation model with additional elements of security, confidentiality, and addressing past experiences. This paper deepens the understanding of what occurs within co-creation working relationships and offers essential tools and guidelines for engaging with users. It also highlights both the transformative potential and risks of human behavior in professional relationships, emphasizing the necessity of ongoing support for social workers through peer supervision and structured supervision sessions.

Author presentation:

Gašper Lesar, PhD in Social Work, is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a lecturer at Sigmund Freud University Vienna – Ljubljana branch.

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Tamara Rape Žiberna, Anže Jurček

TRAINING FOR INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION
An opportunity to develop skills
and professional confidence

The presentation describes the development and implementation of a new module on Social Work and Interprofessional Collaboration, designed by the Chair of Research and Organisation in response to identified gaps in practice. The module aims to enhance professional competencies and strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration within social work education. Research shows a lack of professional self-confidence, identity and the acquisition of interprofessional skills in social work studies as well as numerous benefits of training in interprofessional settings. Besides describing the activities (publication of a book, fieldwork, guest) and various training techniques, including simulations and interdisciplinary meetings (with law, education and health students) conducted during the 2024/2025 academic year, the presentation also includes student feedback on the experience and contribution of interprofessional training and findings on acquired competences, the development of professional self-confidence and identity, and the implementation of practical training with the increased involvement of mentors and a joint final evaluation. Suggestions for improvement are also presented.

Presentation of authors:

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Mojca Urek, Jelka Zorn

LGBTQ+ ISSUES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The aim of this contribution is to present the development of education in the area of the LGBTQ+ issues at the Faculty of Social Work. These topics are part of the critical social work which considers experiences of people within heteronormative and cisnormative context and is based in knowledge of queer social movements. The second aim is to evaluate the experiences of the last three generations of students in relation to the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in the course. The answers to our questions were obtained by analysing the combined data from: the three focus groups of students who have completed the course, the oral group evaluation at the end of the course, the evaluation of their knowledge acquired as a component of their final essay, standardised student surveys. They developed an understanding that the intersectionality is the key to understanding otherwise heterogeneous group of people. The teachers, who during the course also reflect on their own position as members of the LGBTQ+ community, see their involvement on a spectrum ranging from activism to pedagogical and scientific engagement.

Presentation of authors:

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Liljana Rihter, Renata Kozel, Mojca Suhovršnik

HOW TO ENCOURAGE INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION?

Case study within the LINK project – Learning and Innovation Network

As part of the international project LINK – Learning and Innovation Network (Erasmus+), core team of the Learning and Innovation Lab in Slovenia (researchers from the Faculty of Social Work and experts from the Social Work Centre (SWC) Spodnje Podravje), have set the goal of strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration within the local community. Interdisciplinary (team-based) work faces numerous challenges at different levels: the macro level (legislation, various systemic frameworks), the mezzo level (organizational characteristics, strategies, leadership) and the micro level (characteristics and competences of professionals). This project focuses primarily on the micro level and partly on the mezzo level. This presentation shows how experts at the SWC have established an interdisciplinary collaboration with school counselors and professionals at the Center for Mental Health. We highlight the Open Dialog method as an important approach to foster collaboration. Based on a (self-)evaluation, we highlight aspects that promote multidisciplinary collaboration and identify obstacles that professionals from various fields encounter when establishing interdisciplinary collaboration.

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Špela Malečihar, Katja Verbovšek Zabukovec

**SUPERVISION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS
AT URI SOČA LJUBLJANA
Presentation of qualitative research**

Supervision is an important process in the professional development of social workers, as it allows them to improve their professionalism, independent thinking and stress management. The purpose of supervision is for social workers to reflect on their practice, develop their professional identity and cope more effectively with the challenges and emotional strains of their work. Research conducted at the University rehabilitation institute Republic of Slovenia Soča (URI Soča) highlighted the impact of supervision on social workers facing various stressors at work. The presentation is based on the results of a qualitative research conducted in January 2023, when we used an open-ended survey method with non-probability sampling to identify the reasons for social workers' involvement in supervision. We investigated which stress factors social workers recognize as the most stressful at work. We were interested in how emotional burdens affect the performance of the profession and whether supervision is helpful in this regard. The research involved 14 social workers employed in different departments of URI Soča. The results were processed by qualitative data analysis and coding process.

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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING
USING SIMULATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK:
RESEARCH RESULTS**

In contemporary social work and healthcare, interdisciplinary collaboration has become crucial due to the increasing intertwining of the social and health needs of users. As a result, there is an increasing need for interdisciplinary training to develop skills and knowledge for teamwork. One innovative method to achieve these goals is simulation, which allows learning in a controlled, realistic environment. This paper examines the effectiveness of interdisciplinary training using simulations for social and health care workers. The results of the study showed significant improvements in several areas. Participants showed significant improvement in teamwork. We found a difference between the performance of simulations conducted in the study before (54.99%) and after training (97.85%) with the simulation training method of 42.86% in the group of nursing students (N=20) and a difference between the performance of simulations conducted in the study before (28.09%) and after training (80%) with the simulation training method of 51.91% in the group of social work students (N=21).

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THE USE OF ICT IN SOCIAL WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE Opportunities and Challenges

Digitalization is fundamentally changing how young people communicate and form relationships, presenting a significant challenge for social work - a profession traditionally based on direct personal contact. This paper examines how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can contribute to social work with young people, focusing on adapting to changed communication patterns and needs of youth in the digital age. I will present the results of a mixed-methods study conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation, which includes perspectives from social workers and young service users on the use of ICT in support and assistance processes. The research also addresses the key competencies that social workers need for effective ICT implementation in practice, and touches on institutional frameworks that can either support or limit the use of these technologies. In this paper, I will place special emphasis on the ethical aspects of ICT use in social work with young people, challenges, and guidelines for collaboration using ICT tools.

Author presentation:

Iris Dežman Burazer, MA in Social Work, is a doctoral student and a researcher employed at IRSSV in the field of digitisation of long-term care and social welfare. She is a social worker with professional experience in various areas of social work, primarily with young people.

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DIGITALISATION OF SOCIAL WORK CENTRES

As of 2025, entry points for long-term care have been established at social work centres. These bring together long-term care advisers in 16 cities across the country to provide information and manage the process of claiming rights. This process is accompanied by the launch of a new information system, initially for the entry points, which will connect all long-term care stakeholders by 2028. The Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (IRSSV) is contributing to the development of the new information system by providing the Ministry of solidarity-based future with substantive guidelines for planning the IT solution. For this purpose, we are conducting an assessment of the digitalization status of social work centers, covering all professional areas of their work. The research methodology is based on a quantitative approach including all regional centers and units. We will present preliminary research findings including the level of digitalization of social work centers and the digital competences of employees. The results will serve as an important foundation for planning future measures to advance the digitalization of social protection and long-term care.

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Mirjana Borenović

**THE UPCOMING IMPACT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY,
ROBOTICS, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
ON THE PROVISION OF PERSONAL ASSISTANCE**

Personal assistance today is a “one-on-one service” where a personal assistant helps an individual, following their instructions and relying on a respectful, professional relationship. Modern technology, robotics, and AI have not yet significantly impacted personal assistance, but in the next seven years, societal acceptance of technological advancements is expected to reshape its organization and delivery. This will likely lead to greater efficiency, lower costs, and a reevaluation of what personal assistance is and how it is provided. The integration of technology, AI, and robotics presents staffing, ethical, and legal challenges, especially regarding responsibility and privacy. Maintaining the relational aspect of personal assistance will require conscious effort.

Author presentation:

Mirjana Borenović is an expert working in the field of social welfare and human rights. Her professional career includes extensive experience with personal assistance, as she has encountered this field as a researcher, user, and provider of personal assistance.

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**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL WORK:
FRIEND OR ENEMY?**

**The positive and negative aspects of artificial intelligence
in social work**

In a world dominated by robotization, digitalisation, and the rise of artificial intelligence, where many jobs have already been replaced by robots, we inevitably ask ourselves from time to time, will my job, the job of a social worker, also be taken over by a robot? Nowadays, artificial intelligence has already surpassed humans in certain areas. Something that not long ago seemed like science fiction is becoming a part of our everyday lives. But what about social work? Does AI pose a threat, something that will replace social workers, or is it a tool that can help streamline work processes? Social work is a field that requires a great deal of empathy, communication skills, solidarity, and a deep understanding of working with people. However, it also involves a significant amount of administrative tasks, official records, reports, opinions, documentation, database management, and much more. With responsible use, adherence to ethical principles, and proper data protection, artificial intelligence can provide great support in social work. But where is the line between an “assistant” and someone who gradually takes over our work?

Author presentation:

After completing her MA in Sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Manca Marinič continued her work in the field of guardianship as a trainee. She is currently employed at the Ljubljana Social Work Centre, Šiška Unit, KP Medvode, in the field of guardianship and the enforcement of rights from public funds.

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DIGITAL SOLUTIONS IN LONG-TERM CARE

Digital solutions play a key role in ensuring accessible and inclusive long-term care, especially in the face of the growing demographic challenges of an ageing population. The Long-Term Care Act establishes the legal basis for a register of e-care providers to promote the expansion of digital services and strengthen the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). E-care includes advanced solutions such as smart sensors and mobile applications that enable health monitoring and improve communication between users, carers and their families. Moreover, artificial intelligence (AI) contributes to the personalisation of services through data analysis and behavioural pattern recognition, increasing users' safety and autonomy. Despite the promising opportunities of digitisation, challenges remain, such as ensuring equal access to services, training staff and protecting the privacy and security of users' data. Social work has an important role to play in ensuring the ethical and inclusive use of technology and ensuring that digital innovation remains at the service of human dignity and social justice.

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Katja Debelak, Barbara Grah

OLDER EMPLOYEES - CHALLENGES OF AGE DISCRIMINATION AND SKILLS GAPS

Older employees are key carriers of knowledge and experience; however, they frequently face various forms of age discrimination and limited employment opportunities (OECD, 2023). Although age discrimination is legally prohibited in the EU, perceptions of such discrimination remain widespread, with 60% in existence (Eurobarometer, 2022). Investing in the development of talents and skills of older employees is crucial for their long-term success in the labor market. In 2022, an average of 35.4% of employees aged 55–64 in the EU-27 participated in (non-)formal training programs, which is significantly lower than the 49.9% participation rate among employees aged 35–54 (Eurostat, 2025). The situation is even more concerning in Slovenia, with only 27.9% of older workers participating in training compared to 49.3% of those in the 35–54 age group (Eurostat, 2025). The lack of training opportunities and insufficient knowledge transfer are serious issues. Therefore, organizations that actively invest in developing older workers' competencies enhance productivity, reduce employee turnover, and improve intergenerational collaboration and organizational culture (Numhauser-Henning, 2018).

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**KEY FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY ON THE PROTECTION
OF CHILDREN'S BEST INTERESTS IN DIVORCE CASES
INVOLVING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The paper summarises key findings of the research by the Social Protection Institute of the RS (2023) on protecting children's best interests in divorce cases involving domestic violence. The study addresses: a) children's right to express opinions in proceedings and receive information, b) consideration of their best interests, c) supervised contact arrangements and d) inter-institutional cooperation. Good practices and challenges were explored through interviews with child advocates, SWCs and NGOs staff, and an online survey for SWC staff. Their experiences confirm that domestic violence remains a pressing issue with long-term consequences for victims, especially women and children. Despite existing laws, offering numerous possibilities for victims' protection, proceedings are often ineffective, lengthy, inconsistent and complicated due to staffing or organisational issues. To improve child protection, stronger inter-institutional cooperation, better qualifications and (staff, spatial, time) capacities of key stakeholders, along with clear guidelines for supervised contacts and interviews with children, are needed. Above all, domestic violence must not be overlooked or minimised.

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INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION IN CASES OF COERCIVE CONTROL DURING HOUSE ARREST

In the practice of the probation service, we increasingly encounter complex cases where house arrest intersects with the issue of coercive control. In the presented case, the convicted person served a house arrest sentence at the residence of her partner, where her minor child was also present. Despite initial cooperation, regular supervision revealed signs of hidden violence, triggering a swift and coordinated response from the relevant institutions. The key to a successful intervention was efficient and rapid collaboration—the probation service, social work centers, the police, and the judiciary ensured the timely protection of the victim and the child through quick communication and coordinated action. A multidisciplinary team implemented key measures and organized a relocation to a safe environment for the convicted person and her minor child. This case demonstrates that probation is more than just supervision—it is a crucial factor in safety, protection, and comprehensive support. By working together, we can improve the management and protection of individuals under house arrest and develop best practices that will be even more effective in preventing violence.

Presentation of authors:

Jana Hafner and Jasmina Čavuzić are certified social workers with many years of experience working with people who need support in rehabilitation, reintegration, and social stability. They work at the Celje Probation Unit, where they supervise convicts, conduct risk assessments, and provide counseling and support.

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**ENSURING INTERCOUNTRY CHILD PROTECTION
Collaboration with all participants in the help plan**

Social work in the field of child protection can also be carried out intercountry, with the involvement of foreign authorities, if there is a need for cooperation to ensure the best interests of children. A creative approach in the social work relationship and a high degree of commitment from all those involved are needed. Social work centres are confronted with clients living in very diverse and complex circumstances. This includes users coming from different cultural contexts, often with a history of migration experience and with weak social networks. In the context of child risk identification and child protection planning, a social and working relationship with the child and the family must first be established that is culturally sensitised. Language is often a challenge in co-creating a working relationship with a child and family from a different cultural context. In this paper we will present an example of good practice in working with the German child protection system in relation to clients who enter the working relationship involuntarily and consequently find it more difficult to trust the working relationship and the help they receive.

Presentation of authors:

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**SOCIAL WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE
OF CRIMES AT THE SOCIAL WORK CENTRES**

The world of young people is complex. In this paper, I focus on working with youth who have experience of crime and are dealt with at the Centre of Social Work. These young people are often labelled as vulnerable: various authors describe them as individuals between the ages of 10 and 24 who are racially defined, experiencing poverty, abuse, foster care, homelessness, or have marginalised identities (Emig et al., 2018). Terms such as street children and young people fleeing from home are frequently used in aid and control systems, where they are labelled as bad children, dropouts, gang members, or as individuals who have chosen to risk their lives to be part of the street and crime. But what if crime for young people is not a choice, but the result of being embedded in systems, rules, and structures that marginalise groups and individuals? Assistance to youth at the Social Work Centre includes support with difficulties in growing up, treatment before and after criminal proceedings, and educational measures. The paper will address topics such as whether the Centre's responses are appropriate, whether young people have a voice, and how they experience their relationship with social welfare institutions.

Author presentation:

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**FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND ACTION TOWARD
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Mental health systems around the world are still not meeting all the obligations set out in international human rights standards, especially those in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The WHO QualityRights initiative offers a number of practical solutions, resources and tools that have proven to be effective in different countries. They are based on good practices, community-supported services and legislation that is aligned with the Convention. These solutions can lead to sustainable change in mental health, including improving the quality of services and respecting users' rights. The initiative promotes a shift towards services based on a community approach and the strengthening of individual rights. It speaks of a human rights-based paradigm, building on both the existing health and social models. In Slovenia, we have also joined the ranks of countries that are implementing the QualityRights model as part of mental health system reform, where dialogue and consensus among the professional community is key to quality implementation.

Author presentation:

Suzana Oreški, PhD in Social Work, has more than twenty years of experience in the field of mental health in the community and in the implementation and development of community support models in the non-governmental sector. She is a researcher at the National Institute of Public Health.

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**BARRIERS TO INDEPENDENT LIVING AND APPROACHES
TO ENABLE INDEPENDENT LIVING**

In this paper will be present the concept of the composite identity of people with handicap and the change in perspective from patient to citizen, i.e. from an object of care to a holder of rights and, above all, responsibility. It will be highlight the differences between the concepts of independence and autonomy. In the second part of the paper, I will show the approaches and views that prevent independent living, where they come from, and in the following, participants will learn about the approaches and views that allow individuals freedom to make choices and assume responsibility, and personal assistance services as a tool for enabling independent living. In the last part of the paper, I will present the relationships between the service provider and the user that enable the latter to live independently and also those that hinder the development of their potential.

Author presentation:

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**Andreja Rafaelič, Urška Sorta Kovač, Tatjana Knapp,
Nevenka Kos, Anuška Podvršič, Jana Bedrač**

THE FUTURE OF DEINSTITUTIONALISATION

Deinstitutionalisation has recently gained momentum in Slovenia. After two pilot projects (Dom na Krasu and CUDV Črna na Koroškem), the Ministry for Solidarity-based Future adopted the Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for Deinstitutionalisation in Social Care for the period 2024-2034, which paves the way for this process at the national level. The round table is dedicated to the future of closing institutions and developing community-based support. It will bring together experts from (non-)governmental organisations, each with their own perspective, to present how they see the future of deinstitutionalisation. The aim of the roundtable is to stimulate further discussion.

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Nevenka Kos has personal experience of living in an institution and also of moving out of it and living with support in the community. She is an activist.

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**STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK
IN THE CHANGEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES**

The strength-based approach is not just a method but a mindset that redefines how social work is practiced. It bridges practice with theory by incorporating elements like positive psychology. Positive orientation has become widely recognized in many scientific fields during the last decade. These frameworks enhance the ability of practitioners to uncover and utilize strengths in diverse contexts. By integrating theory and practice, the strength-based social work approach becomes a versatile tool that can be applied across various scenarios. In this article the author represent complementary social work approaches that are proved as effective in a contradiction to most applied and dominant in practice nowadays problem-oriented model of social work. Therefore, the aim of the article is to overview social work practices as a ground for starting modeling strength-based approach in Positive Social Work. Literature analysis was employed to ground different approaches of social work. As we look toward the future, the strength-based perspective in social work practice will remain a cornerstone of effective and ethical social work.

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**DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR LONG-TERM CARE
IN SLOVENIA**
From pilot projects to policy

The presentation will focus on an evaluation of eligibility for long-term care as outlined in the new Long-Term Care Act. The aim is to present the results of testing the scale, namely to determine which applicants were not eligible for long-term care, to show the distribution of applicants across the five categories of long-term care, and to identify factors associated with higher identified needs for long-term care among users. In the presentation, we will show data collected as part of pilot projects on long-term care, as well as potential current data that will have been collected by social work centers by the time of the presentation. With the new law, centers are becoming the entry points for long-term care and, thus, the assessors of eligibility. The results indicate that 21.1% of the applicants in the project were not eligible for long-term care. Further research and monitoring of the implementation of the new law will be crucial for adapting procedures in a user-centered manner, ensuring that the eligibility assessment adequately addresses all the specific needs of individuals.

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**FROM INFORMAL TO FORMAL LONG-TERM CARE?
Establishment of a care service for family caregivers**

The conceptual foundations of long-term care in Slovenia are based on the individual and their care needs, with the aim of ensuring that care is provided when needed and in the form and environment of the person's choosing. The Long-Term Care Act establishes a comprehensive system of long-term care. A key guiding principle of the reform is the strengthening of formal home-based care, thereby reducing institutional care and dependence on informal, unpaid care. The first right introduced by the new law is the formalization of the role of the caregiver of a family member, which entails the recognition and regulation of care provided by family members. An amendment to the law extends this right to retired individuals. Using an action research approach, we will present the first analyses of the implementation of this legal entitlement in practice, focusing on the role of caregivers of family members. We will examine who these caregivers are, the key drivers that led them to assume this role, and what the formalization of such informal caregiving work has meant in terms of recognizing the 'invisible' labor, which is most often carried out by women.

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WAR AND PEACE STUDIES IN SOCIAL WORK

While some internationally renowned pioneers of social work explicitly advocated for peace on the eve of the First and Second World Wars, social work theory and practice on war and the post-war period came to a complete standstill after the Second World War. It was believed that there would be no more wars in Europe. The situation changed with the imperial war in Ukraine. It is important for social work to reflect on the needs of people in war and post-war periods, to reflect on some examples of transnational social work solidarity in times of war, and to rethink the existing global ethical principles of social work. It can be observed that much attention has been given to migration and internally and externally displaced persons as a consequence of armed political conflict. Less attention has been paid to issues such as survivors of gender-based violence, people living in vulnerable contexts and individuals who reject the necropolitics of war. The presentation will introduce some of the main areas of war and peace studies and focus on the importance of social and transnational solidarity.

Author presentation:

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Tamara Rape Žiberna, Liljana Rihter, Tatjana Rakar

THE POTENTIAL OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ADDRESS ACCESSIBILITY GAPS IN PUBLIC SERVICES IN SLOVENIA

The presentation, based on the CRP Potential of NGOs in Slovenia to Address the Needs of Local Communities, discusses the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in addressing inequalities in access to public services. Based on mixed research methods (analysis of secondary data, 14 focus groups and an online survey) and a theoretical background, we analyse the capacity and contribution of NGOs in ensuring the accessibility of community services. The research identifies regional differences in the availability of these services and highlights areas where public services are underdeveloped. In addition, we make suggestions on how to close the gaps more effectively, including improving NGO infrastructure, professionalisation and cooperation between different actors. We pay particular attention to the needs in the area of social welfare. The results also show, among other things, that NGOs, which are often closest to the users, need more political support and that their complementary role to the public sector must be recognised. Strengthening their role can make an important contribution to more inclusive and accessible public services in Slovenia.

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Ana Marija Sobočan, Špela Arhar Holdt, Senja Pollak

ACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION RIGHTS IN SLOVENIA

Social rights are the cornerstone of a just and well-ordered democratic society, where all members have equal opportunities, regardless of their personal circumstances (age, gender, disability, ethnicity or nationality). In practice, however, the exercise of these rights is often hampered by various obstacles, including a lack of awareness of the existence of social rights, which is often linked to a limited understanding of the legal information needed to exercise them. Key reasons for this are certainly the complex legal language of laws and other sources of information, but also the lack of a more inclusive and proactive approach to informing the public about rights, where social workers also have an important role to play. This paper will present a research project involving the legal, linguistic, computing and social work professions, with the aim of identifying barriers and approaches to increase the (linguistic) accessibility of resources in the field of social protection.

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WELFARE STATE: THE STRUGGLE FOR AN OLD JUSTICE!

The classical concept of the welfare state is in crisis both globally and domestically. The condition of the Slovenian welfare state is relatively good - this applies even more to the Slovenian economy and, at present, even to the political system (we still remain a democratic island, as authoritarian forces are gaining strength in our immediate neighborhood as well as in the broader European and global context). Nevertheless, the need for change should not be in question; the only open question is the direction of that change. This article presents the three main weaknesses of the Slovenian welfare state - weaknesses that are rarely, if ever, addressed in public discourse. These are: prejudice, costs, and values; and in all three areas, Slovenia significantly lags behind the European average. This analysis also provides an answer to the question of what direction reforms should take - summarized in the old slogan: the struggle for an old justice. Based on empirical data, the article demonstrates why this approach to reform will be both more difficult and, at the same time, simpler than in other countries.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A RESTRAINING ORDER IN CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN KOSOVO

The subject of research of the doctoral thesis is the institutional response and protective measures needed to ensure greater safety for victims of intimate partner violence. The formulation and adoption of complex legislation in the field of prevention of intimate partner violence in Kosovo has been influenced by the international community and based on the transfer of the 'best practices' and the model of foreign legislation, without taking into account the specific cultural context of the country. The applied value of the PhD thesis lies in the identification of local, institutional and international responses to the protective measure of restraining orders in the context of the treatment of intimate partner violence in Kosovo. The thesis critically illustrates the response of stakeholders in the treatment, which most often results in an unsatisfactory situation in the field of the first, interventionist measures of the institutions, which primarily include social work, the police and the judiciary. The absence of training for social workers for several decades, the lack of resources and political will, the neglect of the role of social work and, above all, the lack of professional competences have prevented the application of better quality social work methods and approaches, including the active participation of the victim in the treatment process, empowerment and participation in the setting of objectives in the decision-making process on protective measures.

Author presentation:

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PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS OF VICTIMS' PERSISTENCE IN VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

The question “why doesn’t she leave?” is often asked when discussing intimate partner violence, but this overlooks the complex reasons that prevent victims from leaving. Victim-blaming is still common in society because it is assumed that if the situation were really that bad, the woman would leave. This view also extends to institutions, where victims who do not take an active part in the proceedings or who cannot follow up complaints are sometimes held partly responsible for their situation. Understanding the psychosocial factors that make it difficult for victims to leave a violent relationship is crucial in this area. In 2023, we conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with women who had experienced intimate partner violence. The women’s testimonies are published in the book “In Her Skin”, which is aimed at the lay and professional public. It addresses different aspects of the victims’ experiences, both of the violence itself and of the significant systemic barriers they encountered in reporting it.

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Andrej Brdnik Stupan, Maša Kerin

ASPECTS AND FEELINGS OF SECURITY AMONG EMPLOYEES AT SOCIAL WORK CENTRES

Workplace safety refers to the measures and practices implemented to ensure the safety and security of employees, assets and information in the work environment. It includes creating a safe and healthy work environment by identifying and reducing potential hazards, preventing unauthorised access and responding effectively to security incidents. In this paper we will present a survey we conducted among employees of SWC Maribor, SWC Spodnje Podravje and SWC Pomurje. We were interested in different aspects of security: physical security, security from the supervisor, security in the team, feeling of security while working with clients and how all of the above is related to gender, age, field of work and length of employment. We also looked at the security measures taken to ensure the safety of employees and whether employees in different SWC feel the same sense of security. The aim of the survey is to improve the security aspects of employees at the SWCs and to prevent employees from leaving for other jobs.

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THE VOICE AND BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IN DIVORCE CASES INVOLVING COERCIVE CONTROL

Coercive control is a form of violence that goes beyond physical abuse and involves the systematic restriction of freedom, control over personal choices and intimidation, whereby the perpetrator achieves power and dominance over the victim. In the context of divorce, this form of violence often continues after the breakdown of the partnership, where the perpetrator uses legal procedures, intimidation, manipulation of children, undermining of the mother-child relationship and economic pressures to maintain power over the ex-partner. Such violence severely interferes with the freedom, security, autonomy and identity of the victim and impedes recovery from the break-up. Children in these situations are not only passive bystanders but often (in)direct victims of violence. They are often exposed to manipulation, conflicts of loyalty and emotional distress. Nevertheless, legal and social systems often work towards encouraging contact with both parents. This approach, however, ignores the child's need for security. Divorce violence therefore requires systemic approaches that combine legal, social and therapeutic interventions to protect children (and mothers) and support their voice.

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JUST FIREFIGHTING?

Neoliberalization and dehumanization of social work with children and families at social work centres in Slovenia

I will present partial results of a research I conducted on current practice in social work with children and families in SWCs across Slovenia and the current orientation in the Slovenian system of social care for children and families, which includes the child protection subsystem. The research showed that social work with children and families in SWCs is currently oriented mainly towards fire-fighting, i.e., late 'help' in the form of reactive social work, which is linked to measures to protect children's best interests. Social workers act mainly as administrative workers and 'soft policemen', and less as co-creators of support processes with children and families in the community. Preventive support services in community, are almost non-existent. We can speak of a dehumanisation of social work with the most vulnerable groups of children and families in society. A major structural factor contributing to this is the neoliberalisation of social work with families (austerity policies, lean state, cuts in services, transfer of aid to the market and NGOs). Consequences? More child removals, too few foster families and the hidden institutionalisation of (early) childhood in Slovenia.

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**SOCIAL CARE IN HEALTH CARE AS A FUNDAMENTAL
HUMAN RIGHT**

**Social work in healthcare on the path to recognition
and progress in the profession**

Health is a primary factor in the social, professional, and employment spheres. Social work in healthcare is an established concept with its own services and legislation. The professional basis and development opportunities in this field need improvement, reflected in the gap between service complexity and educational resources. In Slovenia, about 253 social workers in healthcare contribute to the concept of social care across disciplines and need professional support, as experience alone is no longer sufficient. Integrating the necessary knowledge and skills through core institutions is essential for preserving social care and the healthcare profession. Social justice and participation are fundamental concepts in healthcare social work, where social workers are expected to have specific knowledge of health sciences in addition to their specialised expertise. They apply this knowledge integratively, appropriate to the profession and situation. They advocate for the biopsychosocial model of health, recognising that health is not only medicine, but a measure of quality of life. The common good, even if enshrined in the Constitution, cannot be taken for granted.

Author presentation:

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VIOLENCE HAS MANY FACES

Aggression is a form of human behaviour that can result from how people react in different circumstances, how the brain works and from different disorders. Violence has many faces is a descriptive study in which my colleague and I qualitatively analysed the observations of the practical work of employees with users from different perspectives. Theoretical insights informed the discussion. Employees can be victims of violence from users, as they can provoke aggression through inappropriate approach or response, ignorance and fear. They may also be perpetrators of subtle forms of violence, due to users' dependence on others. The aim of reflecting on the observations was to manage and prevent violent behaviour as much as possible, while preserving the individual's dignity and rights. Theoretical findings show that knowledge, experience, personal qualities and sufficient staffing and resourcefulness of all those involved play an important role in dealing with violent behaviour. The reflection on the experience or observations, over a period of 6 months, in the professional work in the public social care institution, VDC Novo mesto, showed that institutional violence is still a common phenomenon in social care institutions.

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**PREVALENCE OF BURNOUT AMONG SOCIAL WORKERS
AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS AT SOCIAL WORK CENTERS
IN SLOVENIA**

What is burnout, and why is it talked about so much? Burnout is not a new phenomenon, but it is often overlooked due to the broad range of definitions and still non-uniform diagnostic criteria. It is one of the key challenges in social work, causing high turnover, absenteeism, and staff shortages. This thesis examines the prevalence of burnout among social workers, identifies the most common risk factors, and explores which organisational and personal self-care strategies can mitigate its effects. A quantitative survey conducted on a sample of 319 employees at centres for social work in Slovenia revealed that 77% of respondents have experienced or are experiencing symptoms of burnout. The main stressors include high workloads, lack of organisational support, and psychosocial risk factors related to working conditions. At the same time, the study shows that physical activity, relaxation techniques, and participation in supervision and intervision can help reduce symptoms. Although burnout is not yet systematically recognised as an occupational disease in Slovenia, the findings highlight the need for improved working conditions and greater organisational support for social workers.

Author presentation:

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GORIŠKA DRUG CONSUMPTION ROOM
Can the institutionalization of drug use be a step
in the right direction?

When we talk about drug consumption rooms, we are simultaneously talking about dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms—essentially, everything that users of these programs have long lost. With drug consumption rooms, we restore humanity to people and reduce health and social risks, primarily for the drug users themselves, and alongside them, for everyone else who shares the community with them. We must offer achievable and pragmatic solutions to people in distress, with the involvement of stakeholders representing various professional disciplines. Based on more than two decades of efforts, in 2023, the Šent organization launched the Goriška drug consumption room project, which opened its doors to users in August 2024. The Goriška drug consumption room is the first drug consumption room in Slovenia and the wider region. The main goals of the Goriška drug consumption room program is: prevention of viral and bacterial infections; effective management of overdoses and related deaths; reduction of public drug use; contact with hard-to-reach and most vulnerable drug users; and the inclusion and integration of drug users into other social welfare and health care programs.

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Estera Čuček Pintarič, Peter Pišek

INTEGRATED TREATMENT OF CONVICTS IN ZPKZ MARIBOR AND OO ROGOZA

The paper deals with the holistic treatment of convicts in the Prison Institution (ZPKZ) Maribor, with special emphasis on modern working methods and social integration. In accordance with the provisions of the Act on the Execution of Penal Sanctions (ZIKS-1), planning for the return of convicts to society is of crucial importance from the very beginning of their imprisonment. This paper analyses the cooperation between the different staff profiles and institutions that enable convicts to make the transition to the outside world as stress-free as possible. The paper presents examples of good practice from ZPKZ Maribor and the Rogoza detached open ward, which include interconnection and cooperation between the two units. Special emphasis is placed on the use of modern working methods based on an individualised approach and the inclusion of convicts in various social support programmes. The paper concludes with conclusions on the effectiveness of the integrated treatment and suggestions for further improvements that could contribute to an even more successful reintegration of convicts into society.

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INTEGRATING SOCIAL WORK INTO NATIONAL PROTECTION AND RESCUE PLANS

A crisis situation (disaster or horror) occurs suddenly and unexpectedly. It takes an individual or a community by surprise and disrupts their everyday life, normal adaptive responses fail ... This makes it all the more important that, in such situations, experts from different disciplines pool their skills to offer rapid and effective forms of assistance ... The round table "Embedding Social Work in National Protection and Rescue Plans" will discuss:

- why and how to integrate social work into National Protection and Rescue Plans;
- how social workers can contribute to a more effective and integrated aid offer in the context of an interdisciplinary team;
- possible ways for organisations to work together and cooperate in the field of emergencies;
- the introduction of a complementary course on 'Social Work in Crisis Situations' at the FSD, UL.

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GREEN SOCIAL WORK AS A LONG-TERM CHALLENGE

The aim of this paper is to situate green social work in social work, in which we work with other disciplines to transform those harmful practices that affect people's quality of life, while at the same time protecting the natural environment for its intrinsic value. The environmental crisis threatens human health and deepens social and environmental inequalities. The consequences of climate change affect society as a whole, and are felt most acutely by economically, socially and environmentally vulnerable communities, and will continue to do so in the future. If social work in Slovenia wants to be part of the solution in tackling climate change, it needs to change its role and place in society, and actively engage in society. We need to equip social workers with the knowledge and tools needed to respond to climate change. Abroad, social workers and ecologists have concluded that green social work is a key tool in addressing the current global challenges and that as a profession it should take a leading role in developing initiatives and policies to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis, emphasising the need for social work that incorporates both ecological perspectives and interdisciplinary action.

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THE VOICE OF THE BIOLOGICAL CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

In this theoretical-empirical paper, I will present my research findings on whether and to what extent biological children in foster care were involved in the decision-making process of foster families. Was there room for the children's voices in the family? How are their opinions heard and considered? What is the role of the social worker at the Social Work Centre (SWC) in preparing the biological children from the arrival of the foster child to the end of the foster care relationship? The data were collected at the SWC Maribor, Lenart Unit, through structured interviews with five adult biological children from foster families. The research results show that most of the social workers' attention is focussed on the children in foster care, who usually need more help, while the biological children are often only informed about foster care and are not sufficiently involved in discussions and decision-making processes.

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**TREATMENT OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES AND
DISORDERS IN LIGHT OF DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION**
Challenges and solutions

In modern society, we increasingly encounter children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral difficulties and disorders (EBD). The new Act on the Treatment of Children and Adolescents with EBD in upbringing and education (ZOOMTVI) has introduced significant changes in deinstitutionalization, regionalization, post-discharge care, and the establishment of a mobile service for early intervention. My research examined the impact of these changes on professional centers (PCs). Despite reforms, several issues persist, including staff shortages, long waiting lists, lack of programs for children facing violence and addiction, and inadequate placement options. For many, the PC is their only home, often leading to homelessness after discharge. Preventive programs in schools and kindergartens are insufficient, and inter-institutional collaboration remains inadequate. Strengthening support for parents and guardians, improving professional training, promoting foster care, and developing tailored programs is crucial. A comprehensive and compassionate approach can alleviate children's distress and enhance their development and integration into society.

Author presentation:

Katja Bergant, LL. M, collaborated with Anita Ogulin in providing free legal assistance to socially disadvantaged individuals at the Moste-Polje Youth Friends Association in Ljubljana. She later completed her studies in social work at the Faculty of Social Work, specializing in mental health in the community. She is also a family mediator.

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Julija Mejač Leskovšek

SOCIAL WORK IN A PRISON

The main goal of social work in a prison is to find individualised ways for the successful social integration of the individual into the local community after release from prison. The preparation of individuals for their release begins at the start of the sentence, when professional social workers draw up a social integration plan, which is an integral part of the personal plan. Social work in institutions is oriented towards the individual, his/her family and the environment from which the individual comes, but the comprehensive offer of a form of assistance is achieved through cooperation with various governmental and non-governmental organisations. Most important is the cooperation between institutions and the competent social work centres. Social work centres also cooperate with the prison during the sentence, if this is necessary for the convict's successful integration into society after imprisonment. Cooperation with the Employment Service, housing organisations, health care institutions, etc., is important in planning social integration after release.

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Lara Fornazarič, Patricija Žgavec

**PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION IN THE EVENT
OF AN ACCIDENT INVOLVING FOREIGN NATIONALS
WITH A FATAL OUTCOME**

Travelling abroad has become frequent and joining the European Union has allowed us to go to nearby countries without visas. The increase in the number of trips and holidays abroad is linked to the increase of accidents and other unpredictable events in a foreign country. In some cases, there arises a need for a psychosocial intervention by the social services, which operates also outside official hours. The authors were involved in dealing with an extremely challenging situation when, in June 2024, a group of French children were involved in a road traffic accident with a fatal outcome. The Social Work Centre actively cooperated with the health service, the police and the French consulate in providing assistance to children. The social workers held psychosocial interviews, arranged temporary accommodation for the children, assisted with transport arrangements, cooperated with the parents and coordinated a safe return of the children home. A challenge was to judge and ensure the best interests of the children in connection with recognising the role and tasks of the social services. This has led to the need for creating a protocol for dealing with unusual emergency situations.

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WHAT SHOULD SOCIAL WORKERS KNOW ABOUT THE WORK OF MOBILE PALLIATIVE CARE UNITS ?

Palliative care is the holistic care of the patient and loved ones at all stages of advanced, terminal illness. Patients want to be cared for in their home environment, but the willingness of the patient's loved ones to provide care declines as the burden of symptoms increases and the patient's physical strength decreases, affecting their lives. Mobile Palliative Units (MPTs) are organised in such a way that they can provide 24/7 support, either by telephone advice or a home visit. MPTs are ahead of the organisation of long-term care in the home environment, so often, despite their best efforts, they are not able to fulfil the patient's wish to die at home. The role of the social services is crucial when the patient's social network is weak. The possibilities in the patient's environment for organising care support and financial resources of the economically deprived need to be identified. Sources of support for relatives, to prevent burnout and to improve emotional resilience are needed. Social care is too often activated too late, which points to the need for closer cooperation between the social care centres and the MPT.

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Tamara Pejanović Jovanović

**FROM COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION
TO EVERYDAY LIFE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR SOCIAL WORK IN STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL
INCLUSION OF PATIENTS**

Comprehensive rehabilitation is key to patients' recovery from injuries, illnesses or other health problems that affect their physical, mental and social functioning. However, the real social challenges only begin after rehabilitation is complete, when individuals return to their home environment and everyday life. After discharge from rehabilitation institutions, they often face limited access to support services, barriers to employment, and stigmatisation and psychosocial problems. Strengthening social inclusion is therefore essential for a quality and dignified life and to prevent social isolation. Social work in the health sector can make an important contribution to the holistic treatment of patients, the development of community programmes and public awareness through an interdisciplinary approach and the integration of different sectors. Key challenges include the lack of readily available support services and the weak integration of the health and social sectors. Opportunities include the development of tailored services and system solutions that facilitate patients' transition to everyday life and strengthen their social inclusion.

Author presentation:

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**INDIRECT TRAUMATISATION OF PROFESSIONALS
WORKING IN THE FIELD OF CHILD AND FAMILY
PROTECTION AT THE SOCIAL WORK CENTRE**

Given the complexity and multiplicity of the issues we face as employees in specialised areas at social work centres, it is important to talk about self-care. Our daily lives are intertwined with the difficult experiences of the individuals and families we support in our working relationships. Their stories affect us - how we experience and feel. So when we recognise changes in ourselves, it is important that we have support within the team, in management and at home to take care of ourselves. What is happening inside us can be described as vicarious trauma, secondary traumatisation, compassion fatigue, post-traumatic stress syndrome or burnout. The point of all of them is that our work, which we enter into personally and with a great deal of empathy, in the light of the experiences and experiences of others, makes us experience it ourselves. How intensely we respond to the experiences of our interlocutors depends on several factors - the institution, the support we receive and our personality characteristics. In this paper, based on my personal experience, I would like to point out that it is important to talk about this and to create the conditions at all levels to enable employees to take care of themselves and, as a result, to do a good job in the most demanding areas.

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Amir Crnojević

BETWEEN DUTY AND ABUSE
Where is the line between care and violence
against the old people?

Violence against the elderly in the home often remains hidden and systemically undertreated, despite its serious consequences for victims. The elderly are frequently unable to report abuse due to physical frailty, cognitive decline, and social dependence. This paper examines the issue through the case of a user of a home-based social care service, analyzing the forms of violence, reasons for its concealment, and the role of social services in identifying and addressing such abuse. The focus is on the role of the Home Care Institute and other stakeholders in the early identification of warning signs and the protection of vulnerable individuals. The discussion also addresses the delicate balance between care and control, which can lead to violations of the elderly's rights. The paper highlights the need for clearer intervention protocols, interdisciplinary collaboration, and greater awareness. Proposed solutions include strengthening advocacy efforts and adopting a comprehensive social work approach to violence prevention—one that goes beyond individual interventions and addresses broader societal and institutional challenges to uphold the dignity of the elderly

Author presentation:

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MIGRANTS IN CROATIA: THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

Perspectives of local government, institutions, and migrants in the integration process

There is no relevant literature on the challenges of integrating migrants in Croatia, making it difficult to develop appropriate policies for their integration. The research was made possible by the project “SHAPE - SHARing Actions for the Participation and Empowerment of migrant community and Local Authorities”, co-funded by the AMIF programme. The aim of the research was to analyse the experiences of migrants and the perceptions of local authorities and institutions regarding migration and integration. The research aimed to provide insights into the situation of migrants, to identify barriers to integration and to offer guidance for improving policies and practices. The research focuses on education, health, housing and employment. Analysis of semi-structured interviews (N=7) and focus groups (N=16) identified the key needs of migrants: greater acceptance in society, better language courses, access to better paid jobs, and more translators and cultural brokers in the health sector. The results of the research underline the importance of involving migrants in the design of immigration policies and provide concrete recommendations to better adapt them to actual needs.

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Metoda Novak, Maja Rozman

TINA'S JOURNEY
From institution to residence and employment
with support

Tončka Hočevar Care and Work Center, which has a 57-year tradition of experience in how to empower and support users in becoming as independent as possible. In this article, we will present an example of successful professional cooperation with user Tina. In our professional work with Tina, our guiding principle was to follow the concept of a working relationship, where the user was active in the process and decisions, the concept of personal leadership, the concept of a power perspective and the concept of advocacy. When working with users, we follow the concept of normalization and the principles of lifelong learning. Thus, Tina today realizes her potential by working in a normal working environment and living independently. Her journey in our institution began with living in a classic boarding school - a home, 26 years ago and working in one of the workshops. With a network of professional colleagues, we supported Tina in her personal development and progress and enabled her to live a full life with support – a shift in living and employment. According to the principles of deinstitutionalization, Tina lives a full life; in accordance with her values, desires and needs.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL WORK TO MENTAL HEALTH TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

This paper will highlight the role of the social worker in the context of interdisciplinary teams working in adult mental health centres. The implementation of these centres is part of the MIRA programme, which is derived from the Resolution of the National Mental Health Programme. Special emphasis will be given to the challenges of creating a new identity and competences for social work in community teams, which represent a new approach to the treatment of people with mental health problems in the context of adult mental health centres. The reform of mental health services allows for the provision of services at primary health care level, including outreach and community liaison. The interdisciplinary approach allows for a more holistic treatment of users and their social integration, which forms the basis for more effective support and improvement of their quality of life. The social worker contributes to supporting individuals in need, managing their living situation and also plays a key role in prevention, deinstitutionalisation, destigmatisation and linking different professionals in an integrated network of services for a more holistic treatment and social inclusion of users.

Author presentation:

Suzana Oreški, PhD and BA in Social Work, has more than twenty years of experience in the field of mental health in the community and in the implementation and development of community support models in the non-governmental sector. She is a researcher at the National Institute of Public Health.

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Tjaša Franko

MENSTRUAL JUSTICE
The role of social work

Menstruation is an important yet often overlooked topic. Although it is a natural physiological process, it remains stigmatized in many cultures. This affects, for example, access to information, education, menstrual hygiene products, and adequate health care. This systemic neglect of menstruation reflects deeper patriarchal structures that marginalize women and sexual minorities. The paper focuses on menstrual justice as a framework grounded in feminist perspectives on bodily autonomy and women's health. It seeks to address systemic discrimination and entrenched inequalities related to menstruation while advocating for a comprehensive approach to menstruation. Social work could have an important role in developing and implementing holistic strategies to promote menstrual justice, which requires an interdisciplinary approach.

Author presentation:

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**INTEGRATING SERVICES AS A POTENTIAL
FOR ADDRESSING COMPLEX NEEDS BETTER**

In this paper, we present the integration of services in the field of complex needs as a necessary development pathway that can help to densify the current insufficient support networks, which often leave the most vulnerable members of the community inadequately supported, possibly leading also to a revolving door effect. We explain the concept of complex needs and how it cuts across disciplines. We mainly focus on the interaction of the following factors: drug use, psychosocial distress, homelessness. Based on the analysis of selected cases, we illustrate the possibilities and limitations of the different forms of service integration present in our environment. On the selected cases we show how cross-sectoral cooperation, community networking, the creation of consortia, is already partly responding to the challenges of people with complex needs. We also discuss how to continue to densify support networks, in terms of inter- as well as transdisciplinarity, considering the users' perspective and the specificities of each local community.

Presentation of authors:

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Vera Grebenc, Amra Šabić

NEW FORMS OF COMMUNITY IN CONTEMPORARY GENTRIFIED CITIES

Ljubljana is confronted with increasing urbanisation and gentrification, reflecting the conflicting aspirations of private and public investors in housing. Expensive flats are being built in the city centre, while public and social housing is being built in the suburbs with poorer infrastructure. The authors will present examples of the consequences of gentrification based on the results of a survey in the suburban neighbourhood of Novo polje. The neighbourhood, which was built in response to the lack of affordable housing for young families, socially disadvantaged families and individuals, is confronted with a conflict of values resulting from ill-considered urban planning. The research was conducted as part of the Erasmus+URGE (Urban Age Ethics and Social Inclusion) project and focussed on residents' values, their needs and their views on the community. A mixed-methods approach was used, using ethnographic, narrative and participatory research methods and analysing different types of data. The research was conducted in cooperation with the NGO Kraljki ulice. We found out how the residents use the public space, what tensions exist between them and how they resolve them.

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Mitja Svete, Anja Lazar, Lea Lebar, Maruša Tomc Arko

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LONG-TERM CARE ACT IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia, like other European countries, is facing the challenges of growing and changing long-term care needs that are becoming increasingly complex. The need to regulate long-term care in Slovenia has been highlighted by international and national organizations for many years, and in 2023, Slovenia adopted a new Long-Term Care Act that gradually introduces new rights to long-term care as well as new procedures and methods. At the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, we are monitoring the development of the service network and the introduction of the long-term care system. In 2025, the rights to long-term home care and other new rights will be implemented. In this presentation, we will focus on the current results of our monitoring and evaluation.

Presentation of authors:

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN FLOODS 2023

Natural and other disasters are a constant feature and have been throughout history, but it is hard to shake the feeling that disasters are more frequent and widespread. The consequences of disasters, are far more than just an economic burden on people and the state, remain with people even when they are no longer perceptible in nature. In August 2023, Slovenia was hit by massive floods, drastically affecting people's lives. During the floods, social workers responded and, within the framework of their competences and their very role as an institution in society, provided assistance to people affected by the floods. Without clear guidelines, social workers developed innovative approaches tailored to individual communities and circumstances. They carried out needs assessments, provided psycho-social support and linked them to other forms of assistance. They also helped to arrange social transfers, organise accommodation and provide support to help people get back to their daily lives. By involving social workers in protection and rescue plans in a timely manner, we can contribute to a more coordinated and effective response, preventing contact and minimising long-term consequences.

Author presentation:

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CARING FOR RELIEF

Social work is a specific profession that is stressful because of the nature of the work - daily and direct interaction with people with personal experiences. We will present why self-care is necessary in social work and what are the practices that social work practitioners use in their every day practice. We present how social workers understand self-care and what are the most common barriers to self-care. The survey showed that social workers care more about their interlocutors than about themselves. Almost all respondents agree that self care is very important for the well-being and professional work of social workers, but only 38% state that they know how to take care of their own well-being, and only 23% take care of themselves on a daily basis. The most common barriers to self-care are overwork and lack of time. Self-care for social workers in Slovenia is still under-researched, we will present possible steps to increase self-care both in education and in everyday social work practice. We start from the assumption that self-care is not only the responsibility of the individual professional, but of the whole team and, the organisation.

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**THE INSTITUTION OF GUARDIANSHIP FOR ADULTS
AS A SOCIAL CHALLENGE**

Human rights caught up in legislative procedures

At social work centers (CSD), we encounter new challenges of modern society, which is inevitably aging, in our work of providing assistance. Most rights are regulated by various offices with different applications and documentation. In our work, we have noticed that individuals can only secure their rights by submitting an application themselves or having a guardian do so on their behalf. At the SWC, we point out that more and more rights—especially in the area of elder care—are tied to specific official procedures that are only accessible to persons under guardianship. In this article, we wish to draw attention to fundamental human rights and freedoms and the interference of the institution of guardianship in these rights. Furthermore, we will draw attention to the growing number of cases in the field of guardianship over adults and the acquisition of rights (e.g., the right to long-term care, home help, personal assistance, health rights, rights under the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia ZPIZ) that users are unable to exercise if they are unable to submit claims or applications themselves.

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Klara Golob, Polona Kladnik

VOLUNTEER PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT DURING EMERGENCIES AND OTHER CRISIS SITUATIONS

In our session, we will discuss the system of volunteer psychosocial support during emergencies and other crisis situations, which the Slovenian Red Cross – Local branch Ljubljana has been developing since 2014. After completing their training, the Group for Psychosocial Assistance volunteers offer two forms of support: during “peaceful times”, they support individuals and families who face challenges due to poverty and other circumstances, and during emergencies (such as floods, mass migrations, fires, storms) they support those who are impacted by or have witnessed the crisis. The emergency response system is being developed in collaboration with the Municipality of Ljubljana’s Emergency Management Department. The voluntary system serves as a bridge between those in need and professional aid systems, allowing us to provide support to a larger population. However, it poses a professional challenge in terms of mentoring, training and providing adequate support – to both the volunteers and those in need.

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**MOBILE SERVICE FOR EARLY FAMILY SUPPORT AT HOME
The SWC Gorenjska project as a response to the needs
of families in complex life circumstances**

The conceptualisation of family support is a relevant topic in the context of socio-political issues and direct practises that are reflected in the concrete experiences of family members. Approaches to family support can be child-centred or parent-centred, support-based or control-based, universal or problem-specific. In the pilot project "Mobile Service for Supporting Families with Multiple Challenges", in collaboration between Social Work Centre Gorenjska and the Faculty of Social Work (UL), we have been developing early family support, where we work with families in their home environment, families receive help when they need it and can receive it for as long as they need it. Professionals in mobile service provide help in the form of regular, continuous, relationship-based and collaborative support. The aim is to prevent the escalation of problems and to avoid additional adverse experiences. The results of the focus group analysis of the pilot project experience, conducted with SWC management, practitioners and researchers, showed that appropriate responses can be developed through collaboration, both in terms of actionable knowledge and in terms of creating an appropriate institutional context for the work.

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HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH TO TELL
Experiences of heterosexual men who have survived
intimate partner violence

The aim of this paper is to highlight the fact that not only women but also men experience intimate partner violence. I am interested in the voices of men in heterosexual partnerships who experience both physical trauma and psychological violence. A quantitative study was carried out by SURS on a nationally representative sample of respondents exploring personal safety in the private environment (SURS, 2020). From that survey, I tried to extract what men had to say about violence against them by their female partners. The research follows the course of the original survey, which first gives an overview of violence and then explores in more detail the violence of current and former partners. A detailed analysis of the secondary material shows that men also experience all forms of violence (including sexual violence) from their partners, that they do not report incidents of violence to the police, that they seek help only rarely and only by talking to someone close to them. This is an overlooked topic that should be given more attention in the future, not least with a view to developing appropriate forms of support for men. My further work, i.e. research interviews with male survivors of intimate partner violence, will also contribute to this.

Author presentation:

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**USERS IN COMPLEX CIRCUMSTANCES WHO ENTER
THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP INVOLUNTARILY**

The couple, aged 84 and 83, were evicted from the house where they lived two years ago. For half a year before that, the Social Work Centre (SWC) had been actively involved and had offered help, which they had refused. At the beginning of the help offered, mental health problems began to manifest themselves. After the eviction, they left on their own to another part of the country, where the SWC was involved by the Police. They were then temporarily placed in a hostel and SWC sought crisis accommodation for them, but they refused help. In the meantime, they disappeared for several months. The CSD found out that they were living with a person who had taken all their money. The SWC initiated the procedure of admitting the person to a secure ward of a social care institution. A court expert opined that they did not need it, so the SWC initiated proceedings for admission to a special ward of a psychiatric hospital, and the court followed the proposal. At the same time, proceedings were under way to place the adult under guardianship. In this paper we will focus on the challenges SWC professionals face in providing help and support to groups who refuse help. It will present concrete challenges of crisis placements.

Presentation of authors:

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**SOCIAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS
FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS AT THE SKATEPARK
UNDER THE FABIANI BRIDGE**
Revitalizing urban spaces through sports education

In September 2022, a free skateboarding program for children and adolescents was launched at the skatepark under the Fabiani Bridge in Ljubljana. As a long-time skateboarder and youth educator, I initiated the project with the support of Samo Bajc, and it was funded by the City Municipality of Ljubljana. The goals were to make the basics of skateboarding more accessible, to revitalize the skatepark, and to reintegrate it into the community as a safe space for movement and social interaction. Previously neglected and unsafe, the skatepark was transformed into an open environment for positive connections. Special attention was given to children and young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, immigrant families, and those with behavioral and emotional difficulties. Through regular participation, they developed a sense of self-worth, improved social skills, reduced feelings of isolation, and gained positive experiences of cooperation. The project also encouraged regular physical activity, reduced engagement in risky behaviors, and provided vulnerable youth with access to a safe, supportive, and empowering environment.

Author presentation:

Vid Florjanc works as an educator at the Bežigrad Student Residence in Ljubljana. In 2022, he launched a project offering free rollerblading lessons under the Fabiani Bridge, combining social work and sports education.

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Suzana Wolf, Tina Mijatović

CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL WORK WITH THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS IN SLOVENIAN PRISONS

Being in a prison environment and deprived of personal liberty represents in itself a demanding psychosocial challenge. Third-country prisoners face additional challenges in Slovenian prisons, requiring flexible, innovative, and culturally sensitive social work approaches. Problems such as a lack of basic resources, communication and cultural barriers, restricted contact with family and social support networks, and insufficient preparation for life after release demand a comprehensive response that goes beyond institutional boundaries. Social workers play a key role in addressing these challenges, acting as intermediaries between incarcerated individuals, institutions and wider society, with the aim of ensuring dignity and social inclusion for all. Their task is to ensure that the rights and needs of foreign prisoners are recognized and adequately addressed, contributing to a more humane and effective penal system in Slovenia. The topic is particularly relevant due to the current overcrowding of prisons and the increasing number of foreign nationals detained or convicted of offenses under Article 308 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes the illegal crossing of national borders.

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Anže Jurček, Ana Cristina Santos

**EXPLORING THE LIFE STORIES OF LGBTI+ OLDER PEOPLE
USING THE BNIM METHOD
Experiences from the TRACE project**

The TRACE project – Tracing Queer Citizenship over Time: Ageing, Ageism and Age-related LGBTI+ politics in Europe (ERC-2021-COG, TRACE, 101044915) is presented. The TRACE project focuses on the experiences of older LGBTI+ people in five Southern European countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Malta and Slovenia) and is based on an in-depth analysis of age-related LGBTI+ politics, ageing and ageism, examining countries that have historically experienced extensive changes in the lives of LGBTI+ people, both in legislation and in society as a whole. Older LGBTI+ people have a unique knowledge of these changes, having lived through different eras, from the time of the criminalization of homosexuality to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the present day. To this end, 12 LGBTI+ people aged 60+ in Slovenia were interviewed using the Biographical Narrative Interpretative Research Method (BNIM). In addition to the project, the presentation focuses on the application of a less frequently used research method in Slovenian research and the opportunities and challenges of researching the invisible population of older LGBTI+ people with this method.

Presentation of authors:

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NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO TRAUMA
Coercive control and women survivors of violence

Violence against women often leaves deep and long-lasting consequences that go beyond physical and psychological harm. It affects identity, self-esteem and a sense of control over one's own life. This paper introduces the concept of 'imposed control' developed by Evan Stark and highlights how social work can help women survivors of this form of violence to regain their autonomy and transform their life stories. Narrative practices emphasise that meanings of experiences are shaped in social and cultural contexts. Practices such as externalising problems, re-writing stories, exploring extraordinary experiences and using external witnesses allow women to question dominant narratives and form new, empowered perspectives. This paper will highlight two examples from co-counselling practice that illustrate how narrative approaches contribute to better outcomes in addressing systemic and interpersonal dimensions of violence. It will also highlight the role of community work and advocacy in creating sustainable support structures for women.

Author presentation:

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**,SO YOU'RE JUST STAYING AT HOME'
Hidden discrimination of informal carers**

Caring tasks require a lot of time, commitment and coordination from informal carers, which can lead to conflicts with work commitments. Carers are often overworked and labelled as less productive and discriminated against in comparison to other workers (William et. al, 2012). This research examines how informal carers of children and adults with disabilities and older people experience the challenges of balancing work and care, and their relationships with their employer and colleagues. For this purpose, 26 interviews were conducted. The aim of the research is to address the issue of discrimination against family informal carers in employment and work. Preliminary results show a lack of understanding on the part of employers and colleagues and limited opportunities for promotion. Social work can directly address the problem of discrimination through advocacy, public awareness raising, psychosocial support and empowerment of carers. Advocacy can improve workplace policies, awareness-raising can reduce stigma, and psychosocial support and empowerment can help to cope with stress and improve the situation in the work environment.

Presentation of authors:

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Nika Cigoj Kuzma

SOCIAL WORK WITH PEOPLE IN DISTRESS USING CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

Various creative techniques will be presented for people with mental health problems: how they can help themselves, in a group, or others with their knowledge and skills. In this way, we can avoid medication. Around the world, the following are used to alleviate mental distress: psychodrama, ego-structural dance, solo singing, choir singing, drawing, photography and video structuring, various creative writing and thinking techniques. The person relaxes, improves their mental state, and finds balance. Creativity helps overcome various obstacles and stressful situations in life and prevents mental crises.

Author presentation:

Nika Cigoj Kuzma is a psychologist with a postgraduate degree in Social Medicine. She is certified as an advocate for people with mental health issues and a care coordinator for people with mental health challenges in the community. She is also the vice president of SVIZCI, an association for users.

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Sara Jerebic Starešinič, Lucija Trabos

**DOLFKA BOŠTJANČIČ TRAINING, WORK
AND CARE CENTRE, DRAGA**
**Social inclusion and equal societal role of adolescents
with moderate intellectual disabilities**

With this article, we aim to present examples of best practices from the Dolfka Boštjančič Training, Work and Care Centre, Draga. Regarding the inclusion of adolescents with moderate intellectual disabilities in educational practice and community involvement. Educational practice takes place within the framework of the Special Education Program. As an example of best practice, we will highlight the work in The Second Violin and The Special Sort Café. As part of community involvement, we will present the projects Good, Better, Together with You and I Do, I Cheer Up, through which we develop and enhance the cooperation between the adolescents of the Draga Centre and the female inmates of the Ig Penitentiary. Through such programs, we encourage the development of more independent approaches to life and the growth of more caring and responsible personalities. These programs are comprehensive processes in which students and inmates strengthen their ability to trust themselves and their decision-making skills. At the same time, we aim to contribute to social inclusion, a more equal societal role, and a society that is more inclusive in its approach.

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Tamara Narat, Žana Marušič, Urban Boljka

**CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH EMOTIONAL
DISTRESS AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS
IN THE SYSTEM OF HELP**

The article deals with the problem of children and adolescents who are violent towards themselves and/or others or who experience violence in the family environment and, as a result of these problems, find themselves in various institutional forms of care. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the care system and how it addresses the needs of the target group of children and adolescents. The data on which the paper is based were collected in the framework of a survey conducted by the Institute of Social Protection of the Republic of Slovenia in 2024. The survey was carried out with the participation of various stakeholders, children placed in institutional care and their parents. Their experience confirms that the support system in this area is not working well. Improvements are needed both at the level of early treatment and prevention, new approaches and programmes need to be developed, good practices need to be strengthened and, above all, it is important to establish functioning inter-institutional cooperation at all levels (vertical and horizontal).

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WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AND DEMENTIA

People with intellectual disabilities (ID) and dementia face challenges that require different treatments and find it more difficult to express their problems, making early identification of dementia more difficult. Often there are other co-morbidities, which further complicates diagnosis. This paper will present behavioural and structured approaches such as memory cafes, reminiscence therapy and cognitive stimulation that improve the quality of life of people with ID and dementia. VDC Tončka Hočevar uses a screening test that allows rapid identification of cognitive decline and a household model of care that allows for a more personalised approach when working with users. Multidisciplinary teams (professionals, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, health professionals, etc.) play a key role in support and care. Early identification of dementia, a respectful approach and the involvement of people with MDR in daily activities are key. Integrated and personalised work that takes into account the individual abilities and needs of people with MDR and dementia is essential for a good quality of life.

Presentation of authors:

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ACTIVATING OLDER PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES THROUGH DOG THERAPY

Care and Work Centre Kranj (VDC Kranj) provides a service of guidance, care and employment under special conditions for adults with intellectual disabilities, who may have additional sensory or motor impairments. Beneficiaries can join the service after the age of 18. There is no legal upper age limit for inclusion. They are included for as long as they want to be or as long as we can provide them with appropriate care. Currently, 45 people with intellectual disabilities over 50 years of age are included in our service. In the framework of the activities aimed at improving the quality of life of the users, VDC Kranj cooperates with Tačke Pomagačke, the Slovenian Association for Therapy with the Help of Dogs. The professional worker carefully prepares the dog therapy sessions with his knowledge of the users and cooperation with the handler. The dog is the medium through which we achieve our professional goals - the activation of elderly users, which in practice means promoting social interaction, improving physical activity and cognitive stimulation. Through a number of guided activities with the help of the dog, we can see positive results in their psycho-physical functioning.

Author presentation:

Katja Polanec first studied analytical sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, then received MA in Social Work with Families at the Faculty of Social Work. She is employed at the Kranj Care and Work Centre as a group habilitator.

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Katja Ronchi, Sabina Menart

CHILDREN ARE OUR GREATEST TREASURE
Social work at the Department for (Re)Habilitation
of Children, URI Soča

Children are our greatest treasure. But what happens when a long-term illness or serious injury intervenes in a child's life? In this paper we look at the impact of illness or injury on family dynamics, on parents' coping with a different reality and on the family's first contacts with a social worker in a rehabilitation setting. Through examples from practice, we learn about the dimension of social worker support in the health system, which is unique in its systemic approach and its linking of the micro-family environment with the macro-system (local community, state).

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Jana Mali, Anže Štrancar, Klara Mestek

**PALLIATIVE CARE FOR RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA
IN OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES**

Presentation of the In-touch project

People with advanced dementia are most often accommodated in homes for older people. In the final phase of life, it is particularly important that their needs are at the forefront of care, that family members of residents with dementia receive appropriate support and assistance, and that staff are appropriately trained to provide care. In line with these guidelines, the Faculty of Social Work has joined the international In-touch project. We will be conducting research in 56 homes in seven countries to study palliative care for residents with dementia, with the aim of providing better quality care. An important part of the project is to reduce the social exclusion of residents and their family members and to increase the involvement of residents in personalised care home activities. The project will run for five years. In the first phase, we will analyse the rights of people with dementia as enshrined in our health and social legislation. In this presentation, we present the results of the analysis, focussing on the presentation of the anti-discrimination elements, the right to live independently in the community, the right to privacy, health and social services.

Presentation of authors:

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CONNECTING THE THREADS OF LIFE
Social work as a support in long-term rehabilitation
of individuals with acquired brain injury

Acquired brain injury (ABI) often profoundly changes an individual's life, leading to a loss of independence and social roles. Long-term rehabilitation requires a holistic approach, where social work plays a crucial role in re-establishing identity and reintegration into the community. At Centre Naprej, we implement social work activities based on individualized planning, including both individual and group support, guidance in building social networks, strengthening life skills, and exploring work opportunities. We focus on the challenges of integrating people with ABI in society, using »The Wheel of Life« for a comprehensive assessment of life domains and setting achievable goals. Our goal-oriented approach enhances individuals' motivation, their sense of competence and independence. Examples of good practice will be presented, demonstrating how we support individuals with ABI in establishing social connections, acquiring skills and developing life strategies that promote greater autonomy. Our practice confirms that holistic rehabilitation, based on an individualized approach and supportive tools, significantly contributes to improving the quality of life of individuals with ABI.

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BETWEEN MEMORIES AND THE EVERYDAY OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Living with dementia involves many changes that affect relationships, independence and daily life. Social contacts may be reduced due to difficulties in communication. Established routines, an accepting environment and emotional support can improve the quality of life of people with dementia. In this paper, I present preliminary results of a study carried out as part of my PhD research. I have analysed eleven interviews with people with dementia, varying in age, gender and stage of the disease, some living in the community, some in an institution. The main themes are daily routines, the role of carers, the importance of memories in maintaining identity and communication. Daily life can be fulfilling if people with dementia have the right support and understanding. Maintaining independence, adapting to the environment and integrating into society boost self-esteem and well-being. It is important for social work to consider them not only through the lens of diagnosis, but as individuals with their own story. By accepting dementia and communicating appropriately, we contribute to destigmatising it and creating an environment where people with dementia are included and valued.

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Simona Rožkar, Denis Mencigar

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS

Vocational rehabilitation is a set of activities aimed at training people with disabilities to perform certain tasks, acquire a profession or publicly recognized education, employ a person with a disability, maintain employment and advance in employment or change their professional career. The most important goal of employment rehabilitation is to provide people with disabilities with appropriate individual assistance so that they can recognize their abilities, actively participate in planning to solve their problem with the aim of maintaining employment or obtaining new employment. Achieving goals is the result of interdisciplinary cooperation between various experts who together form a professional team, of which a social worker is an indispensable member. In this article, we will touch on the role of a social worker in a professional team and the specific way of working and procedures that take place within the framework of employment rehabilitation. We will round off the presented theory with an example from practice, which will provide even better insight into the diverse field of social work with individuals who have acquired the status of a person with a disability.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN WITH DISABILITIES

Violence against people with disabilities remains one of the least recognised forms of violence in our society, despite legislation that is supposed to protect such individuals. In this paper, we focus in particular on men with disabilities who experience violence but often go without adequate support and assistance due to systemic gaps. The focus of the paper is therefore twofold: on the one hand, we shed light on the overlooked reality of violence against men with disabilities, and on the other hand, we seek systemic responses and options to improve their situation. In Slovenia, only the Association of the Physically Disabled and Victims of Violence VIZIJA offers accommodation facilities for male victims of violence with disabilities. But even this option has limitations - between 2021 and 2024, 14 men were turned away because the capacities were already occupied by female victims of violence, which is not an adequate solution to the problem, as it only addresses the problem to a limited extent. The paper is based on a reflection on many years of field work with people with disabilities who have experienced violence and on case studies. Violence against people with disabilities is not only a personal tragedy - it is a reflection of societal failure. The right to security, privacy and dignity must be guaranteed to everyone - regardless of gender, physical ability or circumstances.

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PALLIATIVE CARE OF LESS PRIVILEGED GROUPS - WHEN SOCIAL PROBLEMS ARE BIGGER THAN HEALTH ONES

Today, palliative care must be understood as a universal right for every patient facing an incurable, progressive, chronic disease that will lead to death. Palliative care necessarily includes the patient's loved ones, who support the patient through the illness. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that there are groups of patients who are not offered palliative care because of differences in socio-economic status. Among the less privileged population groups are the homeless. The definition of this group of people includes people living in shelters, as well as people who do not have a permanent/ stable place to call home. In Slovenia, as in the rest of the world, there is an increase in the number of homeless people, but no right strategies to help them adequately have yet been developed. Care should be organised in their environment, as most of them do not want to be institutionalised, early measures should be planned in case of deterioration, and for the last period of life. It is necessary to empower the people who care for them and to organise medical support so that they are adequately supported at all stages of the disease.

Presentation of authors:

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**FAREWELL RITUALS AND GRIEF OF SOCIAL WORKERS
AFTER THE DEATH OF THEIR USERS**

As part of my thesis, I researched the farewell rituals and grieving methods of social workers in elderly homes. I was interested in how the work with dying users is carried out on an emotional level, how social workers grieve for users, what are the farewell rituals that help them to cope with the loss, how the institution where they are employed enables the mourning of its employees, how work and professional experience has influenced the grief of social workers, and how the work with the dying has influenced their own attitudes to transience and death. The research is qualitative, I collected data using a questioning method with semi-structured interviews, and I included eight social workers in the sample. The results showed that social workers are often in contact with dying users, most of whom experience difficult feelings at the time of their death. Social workers cope with these feelings in different ways, with different levels of support from organisations. After the death of a user, social workers carry out various farewell rituals, and there are also group rituals in organisations. Work experience has helped to facilitate social workers' grieving.

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Eva Erbežnik, Nataša Kopač

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE TREATMENT
OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS
Drug Addiction Treatment Centre and Alcohol Addiction
Treatment Unit**

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a chronic and recurring disease that affects all aspects of an individual's life. Successful recovery requires complete abstinence. Addiction to psychoactive substances (PAS) not only impacts physical health but also affects mental well-being, social relationships, family dynamics, professional life, and overall quality of life. In Slovenia, various programs are available for the treatment of substance use disorders. The Drug Addiction Treatment Centre and Alcohol Addiction Treatment Unit play a crucial role in this process. Social issues significantly influence treatment outcomes. Factors such as social support, access to healthcare services, stigmatization, and economic conditions strongly shape an individual's chances for successful rehabilitation and long-term abstinence. The role of social worker extends beyond ensuring access to social benefits. It involves active participation in individual and group therapy, equipping individuals with essential social skills, and engaging family members in the treatment process. Effective treatment requires a holistic approach to the individual and multidisciplinary collaboration.

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Amir Crnojević, Pika Nahtigal

**SOCIAL WORK AT THE INTERSECTION OF AGEING
AND MENTAL HEALTH**
**The importance of psychosocial support and mental
health promotion**

The ageing population presents numerous challenges, with the mental health of older people often being overlooked. Depression, anxiety, and cognitive impairment are common among older adults, yet access to appropriate support remains limited. Social work plays a crucial role in providing psychosocial support and preventing social exclusion among older individuals. This paper explores the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration in delivering mental health care for older people and highlights examples of effective social work practices in this field. It focuses on prevention programmes, support groups, therapeutic activities, and innovative approaches that enhance psychosocial support for older adults. Despite the progress in integrating social work into mental health systems, challenges such as resource limitations, stigma, and systemic barriers persist. This paper examines potential solutions to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of services, contributing to a more integrated approach to mental health care for older people.

Presentation of authors:

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SOCIAL INCLUSION OF LJUBLJANA HOME CARE INSTITUTE USERS THROUGH ORGANIZED VOLUNTEERING

Loneliness and social exclusion among older adults represent a significant societal challenge that requires the collaboration of all relevant stakeholders. The Home Care Institute of Ljubljana addresses this issue by enhancing existing volunteer practices through a new model in which service users themselves take on the role of volunteers. In doing so, they move beyond the passive role of care recipients and become active co-creators of support activities for their peers. Their life experience and deeper understanding of the needs of similar populations provide added value in establishing authentic and supportive interpersonal relationships. A key feature of the model is the connection of individuals with shared life circumstances, which fosters mutual understanding and a sense of belonging. This form of engagement has a positive impact on all participants—strengthening their sense of purpose, self-esteem, and enabling meaningful use of free time. The contribution will present the theoretical foundations of this approach, highlight examples of good practice, and emphasize the importance of active user participation as a key element in preventing the social exclusion of older adults.

Author presentation:

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SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Presentation of the social inclusion service for people with disabilities at VDC Tončka Hočever

People with intellectual disabilities have different cognitive and adaptive skills that affect their independence and social inclusion. They face difficulties in learning new skills, planning daily tasks and adapting to social situations. Without adequate support, they find it more difficult to integrate into the wider social environment and remain dependent on their families or institutions. The Social Inclusion Act enables them to access social inclusion services aimed at supporting them to live as independently and autonomously as possible. VDC Tončke Hočever has been providing this service since 2022 under the name "With support I can do anything". Through personalised support, we enable them to become more independent in managing their personal life, planning and carrying out daily life tasks and spending more quality free time. Support workers - students and volunteers - play a key role in the service, helping users with everyday challenges and enabling them to actively participate in the community. In this article we will present our experiences and the challenges we have faced in implementing the service and the impact it has had on the quality of life of the users.

Presentation of authors:

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Mojca Čavničar, Katja Mrzlić

CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL WORK IN THE FIELD OF PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

In the seventh year since the adoption of the law, personal assistance is facing challenges that pose many dilemmas for disability care professionals in social work centres. The aim of personal assistance is to enable individuals with various disabilities to live as independently as possible despite the obstacles they face, to remain active and integrated in society according to their wishes and abilities. This paper aims to illustrate the role of the Disability Care Coordinator at the Social Work Centre, who manages the procedures for obtaining the right and monitors the implementation of personal assistance. In this process, we often find ourselves in a professional dilemma about the appropriate course of action and must be careful at all times to follow the profession of social work, while respecting the law, and to remain in a working relationship with the user. In practice, we often find ourselves torn between the real needs of the user and his/her social network and the public interest that we, as officials, must pursue. As one of the most important solutions to regulate the field, we propose to expand the range and scope of support and assistance services in the community to respond more adequately to the real needs of people with different types of disabilities.

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STRENGTHENING THE DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY

For vulnerable groups, strengthening their community is crucial, allowing them to step out of anonymity, showcase their uniqueness, and advocate for respect and rights. Community empowerment is an ongoing process. For the Deafblind community, it requires a holistic approach that integrates accessibility, support, inclusion and continuous education. A community can only thrive if it has its own language – the language of the deafblind. By developing and promoting this language and educating its members, we ensure better access to information, stronger connections, and greater inclusion. Achieving this requires professional support for individuals with deafblindness and their environment, as well as systemic regulations. Through adapted communication, technology, education, professional assistance, psychosocial support, and public awareness, we create an inclusive environment where people with deafblindness can fully participate and contribute. This is essential to reducing isolation and improving the quality of life.

Author presentation:

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FAMILY AND CHILD SUPPORT PLAN **Forms of support and help in practice**

Within the framework of the Measures for the Protection of the Interests of the Child procedure, before the court decides on a measure of a more permanent nature, the CSD draws up a plan of assistance for the family and the child. The plan of assistance contains a description of the situation, the needs of the children, the family's possibilities, the method of monitoring, forms of assistance and a description of the implementation of the measure. The CSD can include various forms of support and assistance in the plan of assistance for the family and the child. In this article, I will present an example from practice and a brief overview of the forms of assistance that are available. When drawing up a plan of assistance for the family and the child, professionals often encounter problems regarding the possibility of referral to existing forms of assistance - various programs are only available in larger cities and there are waiting lists for many forms of assistance, etc. With this article, I would like to draw attention to the perceived problems and differences regarding the availability of forms of assistance and present the perceived needs for new or differently designed forms of assistance.

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INVISIBLE POWER STRUCTURES
How informal practices shape user experiences

The paper analyses the role of formal and informal rules and practices in institutions and their impact on users with disabilities. It focuses on enabling and disabling practices and their impact on user autonomy. The research is based on qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews and autoethnographic reflection and highlights the interactions between formal and informal institutional structures. The findings highlight the 'silent power' of informal enabling practices, which can sometimes compensate for the rigidity of formal rules and create space for flexibility, collaboration and personalisation. The paper highlights the importance of understanding institutional processes at the informal level and their role in shaping supportive or constraining environments. The findings are relevant for social work and psychosocial counselling as they offer a basis for developing adaptive practices that enhance user autonomy and reduce existing institutional barriers.

Author presentation:

Marino Kačič, PhD and BA in Social Work, is a psychotherapist and lecturer at SFU Ljubljana. He has over 25 years of experience in psychosocial counseling and psychotherapy with groups, families, individuals, and couples.

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PATHWAYS TO AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL
The contribution of social work to the inclusion
of vulnerable children

Social workers in school counseling are an important support in the inclusion of vulnerable children in education as they work closely with teachers, families and the local community. Inclusive schools aim to ensure equal opportunities and participation for all children by eliminating discriminatory practices and adapting the learning environment to different students. Social workers can contribute to the comprehensive transformation of schools and develop inclusive practices together with teachers at different levels (numerical, social, psychological, epistemological inclusion) and in different settings (lessons, classrooms, breaks, extracurricular activities), following the multidimensional concept of inclusion (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Our research investigated how inclusive Slovenian elementary school are for Roma children, immigrants, children with special needs and children living in poverty. We conducted case studies in 16 schools and collected data from school records and interviews with school counselors, teachers and children. The paper presents the inclusive practices developed for each group of children and outlines further possibilities for developing school inclusion.

Author presentation:

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EMPOWERING PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents of children with special needs face challenges that go beyond typical parenting roles. The development of specific psychosocial skills and competences is important for their well-being and the quality of life of their children. In this study, we analysed group support for parents of children with special needs and identified key aspects needed for empowerment, emotional resilience and parenting strategies. Data were collected from transcripts of parents' group meetings, and thematic analysis revealed several dimensions of parenting competencies: (1) the importance of emotional support in the group, (2) the impact of parental autonomy on the development of children's capacities, (3) the role of social work in providing support and coping strategies, (4) the development of advocacy skills, and (5) the establishment of support networks to reduce parental isolation. The findings suggest that social work with parents can be key to their stability and to a better quality of child-rearing. Group meetings and professional support strengthen parents' sense of competence and reduce helplessness. This paper proposes guidelines for working with parents of children with special needs.

Author presentation:

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**MULTIPLIER EFFECTS OF TREATMENT OF CONVICTED
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS**

**Treatment of persons who cause domestic violence
within the framework of protective supervision**

The probation-based supervision of individuals convicted of domestic violence, as well as those convicted of child neglect and abuse, plays a critical role in reducing the risk of reoffending. It helps individuals understand the underlying causes of their violent behavior, encourages accountability, and supports the transformation of harmful behavioral patterns. The long-term benefits include a reduction in violent behaviors and their consequences, such as permanent physical injuries, lasting psychological effects, challenges in forming healthy relationships, and social exclusion. Addressing violent behavior not only benefits the individual but also prevents its transmission to future generations, contributing to lasting social change. Probation intervention includes a structured risk and needs assessment using the Model for Risk and Needs Assessment (MOT). Based on this assessment, an individualized action plan is developed with the individual, setting specific goals related to identified needs or risks, alongside concrete activities aimed at positive behavioral change. Effective risk and needs assessment requires close collaboration with social workers, through consultative meetings, multidisciplinary teams, or services provided by social work centers.

Author presentation:

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**PUBLIC HOUSING FUND OF THE MUNICIPALITY
OF LJUBLJANA**

**Providing city rental housing units and support
for the most vulnerable groups**

Public Housing Fund of Ljubljana (JSS MOL) is the central local institution for the implementation of the housing programme at local level. Despite the fact that the JSS MOL has increased the number of city rental housing units by almost half since 2002, we note that the lack of these units in Ljubljana is even increasing. It has been estimated at around 4.000. JSS MOL provides non-profit rental housing, purpose-built rental housing (sheltered housing, housing for youth, housing for special purposes, which JSS MOL rents out to governmental and non-governmental organisations). The "Co-living for the Elderly" project is also under development, and the construction of a Shelter for the Homeless is in its final stages. JSS MOL also provides urgent housing units for the most socially vulnerable groups of the population. Securing and maintaining tenancies for the most vulnerable groups are key challenges for JSS MOL. The rise of inappropriate use in relation to mental health problems, homeless young people, ending foster care - where to next and so on are issues that require the involvement of both governmental and non-governmental organisations, with support at national level. Only by working well together can we enable better development for society as a whole.

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**PERSONAL ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE
WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

**The impact of personal assistance on users, families,
and integration into wider society**

We will introduce the concept of personal assistance - who is eligible for it, how it is financed, the process of obtaining it, who can become personal assistants, what services are included. We will highlight the positive effects of personal assistance - how it impacts users, their families, and society as a whole. We will discuss how users gain confidence and independence, the significance of active leisure time, forming new social connections, and how family members experience relief from caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, we will outline the differences in providing personal assistance for individuals with intellectual disabilities compared to other users. Next, we will present examples of good practices, focusing on two aspects: the relationship between users and personal assistants and how personal assistance has influenced entire families. Another perspective on best practices is the interaction between personal assistance providers and users. We will introduce the project "Play Together, Get to Know Each Other", an example of innovation and inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Author presentation:

Polona Kotnjek, a biology and home economics teacher, has passed a professional exam in social welfare. For several years, she has led and participated in lifelong learning programs and family programs organized by the Sožitje Association.

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Valerija Ilešič Toš, Tadeja Kodele, Nina Mešl

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF (MICRO)INNOVATIONS
AT THE SOCIAL WORK CENTRE
Challenges of families and social work: with polyphonic
community to desired outcomes**

In recent years, social work has increasingly used (micro)innovations to respond to social problems at various levels. This has been the focus of the international project LINK - Learning and Innovation Network (Erasmus+), which aimed to develop a model of Learning and Innovation Labs (LABs) to support services in social and health care and to strengthen practitioners' knowledge and abilities to provide person-centred help and to respond appropriately to systemic barriers. This paper presents an analysis of the development of the LAB in Slovenia. The content and activities of the LAB were planned from the beginning in a co-creative integration of practice, education and research in social work. For the practitioners of the Social Work Centre Spodnje Podravje and the researchers of the Faculty of Social Work, the working relationship of co-creation was a guiding concept for the work on different levels. The analysis has shown that (micro) innovations can be developed within the existing institutional context, which contribute to creative responses to given challenges, but that for major systemic changes the institutional context needs to be adapted.

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**SOCIAL WORK AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN PEOPLE
WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AND EMPLOYERS**
**Opportunities and challenges for equal opportunities
in the labour market**

European research shows that the employment rate of people with visual impairment is significantly lower than the average for the general population. Despite many legal incentives and facilitations, many remain unemployed. In 2023, the Union of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Slovenia, within the framework of the social development program Lifelong Learning for the Blind and Partially Sighted, under the mentorship of social worker Nastja Žlajpah, created an advocacy group on employment, which brings together 10 users with different educational and professional profiles. Through the empowerment model, the professional supports the users in acquiring knowledge and skills and encourages them to identify their own sources of strength and potentials to perform more effectively in the social and economic environment. Through meetings, users create promotional materials to raise awareness among employers, participate in expert consultations and act as advocates to motivate other visually impaired people to play a proactive role in society. The advocacy group also conducted a small survey on the challenges of employing people with visual impairment in Slovenia, the results of which are presented in this paper.

Author presentation:

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**SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS
IN PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT**

**Presentation of a practical example using the concept
of co-creation of help**

Social workers in the field of child and adolescent psychiatry encounter many challenges in their work with children and adolescents and their families. The fundamental starting point of social work in this area is that we cannot help children and young people only individually, but in the context of their environment. In a co-co-creative working relation, we look for sources of power for recovery with all the important contexts of help and support. Social workers are part of the healthcare team who have the knowledge to act to identify and eliminate environmental risk factors and plan the necessary changes to recover and strengthen mental health. Social work is a profession that is oriented towards solutions and the process of helping to co-create solutions with everyone involved in a problem situation. An important part of the treatment and recovery of children and adolescents with mental distress and problems related to environmental risk factors are conversations in a peer group, conversations with parents, schools, and external support services in the direction of strengthening the child and adolescent and co-creating the necessary changes for their recovery.

Author presentation:

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PROJECT WORK AS A FORM OF PRACTICAL STUDY

An effective form of learning for social work students in practical study is one that combines mentor-led experiential learning, work with users, reflective practice and interdisciplinary collaboration. The student builds on theoretical knowledge with skills and methods of working in concrete manifestations of social work with users, and gains an overview of field of SW and an understanding of the interdependence of theory and practice. The practical study involves a team of three, the student, faculty mentor and learning base mentor. Evaluation (2024) show that each of them does their job correctly and acquires certain skills, but the data also show that there is less contact between them than we would like. More dynamic knowledge flow and joint reflection contribute to a higher quality of learning. The key to the process of practical study is the quality of the working relationship and the common goals set. In project-based practice, contact, knowledge exchange, reflection are more frequent, goals are shared and more clearly expressed. In project-based cooperation, issues of complementarity of skills and professional exposure, arise, which may affect the motivation of the participants.

Author presentation:

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PRACTICAL TRAINING IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In social work education, practical training plays a key role in linking theory and practice. Students gain invaluable practical experience in learning bases, learn about user communities and social work fields, acquire skills and methods in social work, integrate theoretical knowledge in a real working environment and face real social work challenges. A round table for dialogue and discussion, co-created by practitioners and faculty mentors together with participants (in addition to the above, users, students, etc.), will address key challenges and good practices in integrating academic knowledge with practical training and exchange between practitioners and teachers. Participants will discuss good practices of collaboration, opportunities and challenges of mentoring, as well as practical training and the importance of mentoring for the competence and professional identity of future social workers. The round table will also be an open space to address questions or themes that arise from different stakeholders and are relevant for the development of this important field.

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Lea Šugman Bohinc

COLLABORATIVE SOCIAL WORK

At first glance, it is simple to define collaborative social work (CSW) as work done in collaboration between a social worker and a system involved in a project. However, the practical application of this definition is not straightforward, as it lacks a precise explanation of 'how' collaboration takes place, and each CSW relationship develops its own definition of what collaboration 'means' to those involved. I make two main assumptions about CSW: 1. that it not only overcomes but resists generalization, standardization, or domination, and 2. that it can bridge the historically unattainable balance between the two goals of social work—individual and societal change. Through continuous professional self-reflection on our individual, social, and cultural construction of collaborative processes and outcomes, and the use of feedback-informed practice, we will co-create a dialogic trans-theoretical approach. In this theoretical-empirical workshop, we will discuss and explore mutual exploration, transformative partnership, relational expertise, trust in uncertainty, demystifying the helping context, and bridging the individual and society.

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Violeta Potočnik Krajnc

**IMPLEMENTATION OF DEINSTITUTIONALISATION
IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE OF RESIDENTS
AT THE HOME FOR OLD PEOPLE VELENJE
The role of autonomous teams and relationship
co-creation as the foundation of contemporary
institutional care**

Dom starejših občanov Velenje, prvotno zgrajen v obdobju, v katerem so prevladovali hierarhični institucionalni modeli, se je po letu 2010 začel temeljito preoblikovati v sodobnejše pristope. Ključni cilj je bil vzpostaviti avtonomne delovne skupine in zagotoviti aktivno vlogo stanovalcev kot soustvarjalcev svojega bivalnega okolja. Najpomembnejši strokovni razvoj se je zgodil med in po rekonstrukciji in dozidavi stavbe. Ta kompleksen proces je vključeval preselitev 190 stanovalcev na začasno lokacijo, rušenje stare stavbe, gradnjo novega objekta, ki temelji na načelih kulture harmoničnih odnosov (CHR), in selitev stanovalcev nazaj v nove prostore. Model CHR se je izkazal za ključnega pri preprečevanju stiske, omogočanju nemotene prehoda in ohranjanju občutka domačnosti, s čimer je podprl deinstitucionalizacijo znotraj institucionalnega okolja. Stanovalci so bili aktivno vključeni v ves proces, kar je okrepilo njihovo zaupanje in zmanjšalo negotovost. Ugotovitve temeljijo na raziskavi, opravljeni z intervjuji z zaposlenimi in stanovalci, ki ponuja vpogled v njihove izkušnje. Danes dom uteleša načela četrte generacije oskrbe starejših: deinstitucionalizacijo, individualizacijo in normalizacijo bivanja.

Author presentation:

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EVOLUTION OF DRUG POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The field of illicit drugs is framed and defined by international and domestic legal commitments, policies and approaches. Many initiatives in Slovenia and around the world have emerged as a result of local needs and the interests of individuals and population groups. Local initiatives have contributed significantly to the development of broader national and global actions and programmes. This paper will present the evolution of some drug policies around the world and some of the epidemiological trends and measures that are emerging as a result. Furthermore, it will present a project implemented by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with a number of social and health care providers and NGOs.

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MAD IN SLOVENIA

In November 2024, an informal network consisting of an interdisciplinary group of professionals (e.g. psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, social workers, social educators, homeopaths, etc.), professionals from experience, survivors, users, patients, clients, relatives, etc., started to meet. Under the name of Mad in Slovenia, we joined the international website Mad in America, founded in 2012 by Robert Whitaker. The Network's mission is to promote change from the dominant biomedical to a biopsychosocial approach to mental health. Based on our contacts with users, we have also determined that there is a need for a special clinic for discontinuing psychiatric medication, which we are planning to establish within the SFU Ljubljana Psychotherapy Clinic. Over the years, we have come across numerous cases where users were too quickly diagnosed with various mental disorders within our healthcare system and, on this basis, were too quickly and excessively prescribed psychiatric drugs.

Presentation of authors:

Saša Kranjc, psychologist and psychotherapist, has personal experience with psychiatric treatment.

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SOCIAL WORK WITH FAMILIES EXPERIENCING A RARE DISEASE AT THE PEDIATRIC CLINIC LJUBLJANA

Social work with families experiencing rare diseases must be highly sensitive and carefully planned in close cooperation with parents who are facing difficult diagnosis in their child and, consequently, completely new challenges in their family life. Social worker can provide significant support to these families. Collaboration with families is full of challenges but also inspiring. In this paper, I will attempt to outline both aspects and, in doing so, demonstrate the importance of social work in supporting families in their everyday reality.

Author presentation:

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