

I. Meeting of ERIS members

In 2017 there were two meetings of representatives from partner universities of ERIS (the European Research Institute for Social Work). The first was held on 4 April 2017 in Ostrava; participants discussed the Institute's research and publishing activities – especially ongoing work on the book *Philosophy and Ethics in Social Work* and plans for publications in 2018–2020 (including the contents of English language versions of the ERIS Journal following its merger with the Czech/Slovak periodical *Sociální práce/Sociálna práca*). Other topics included the content and organization of the 11th international ERIS conference 'Social Work and Minorities in Europe', to be held on 8–10 October at the Catholic University of Lille, France. The members were informed about outcomes from the ERIS representatives meeting in German Landshut dedicated to preparation of common projects within the Programme Horizon 2020. The third ERIS meeting was held on 8th October in Lille, on the occasion of the 11th annual international conference. Participants discussed plans for the 2018 conference (on the topic of Social Justice and Diversity), to be held on 8–10 October 2018 in Dornbirn, Austria. The participants also approved the dates, framework programme and organizational arrangements for the International Spring School of Social Work 2018.

II. Educational activities

The International Spring School of Social Work was again the main focus of ERIS's educational activities; the 11th spring school was held in Ostrava from 4–7 April 2017. The event featured a total of 57 participants, of whom 40 were from universities outside the Czech Republic – Eichstätt, Landshut, Koblenz, Bremen (Germany), Hertfordshire (UK), Kuopio (Finland), Trnava (Slovakia), Dornbirn (Austria) and Łódź (Poland). We also welcomed participants from as far as India, Moscow, Portugal, Rwanda and Turkey. The programme focused mainly on students' presentations based on their Master's or doctoral dissertations, accompanied by discussions with academics, group and individual consultations. The students welcomed the feedback from the academics and the opportunity to discuss the topics of their dissertations with experts from various countries in an informal and supportive environment. As in previous years, the programme included lectures and a workshop held as part of the project 'Enlargement and Development of the Research Team at the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava'. The workshop took the form of a research afternoon featuring Prof. Mariusz Granosik from Poland, on the topic 'Social Work Research – Grounded Theory'. Strengthening international links in education for students of ERIS partner universities During 2017, four academics from the University of Ostrava's Faculty of Social Studies were actively involved in teaching at partner institutions. M. Spilackova lectured at the University of Lodz, University of Trnava and Catholic University of Lille, and S. Vavrova and S. Doricakova lectured at Trnava University. K. Glumbikova lectured in Kuopio. M. Pfaller-Rott from the Catholic University of Eichstätt lectured at the University of Applied Sciences in Kaunas. B. Littlechild from the University of Hertfordshire and M. Granosik from University of Lodz lectured at the Faculty of Social Studies in Ostrava.

Prof Littlechild from the University of Hertfordshire was honoured to be made a Visiting Prof at the University of Ostrava.

III. Publication activities

ERIS Journal Eris Journal – the winter 2017 and summer 2017 English-language issues are available in electronic and printed form: <http://www.socialniprace.cz/eng/index.php?sekce=2>

Preparations continued for the fifth monograph in the series: Philosophy and Ethics in Social Work.

IV. ERIS conference

“Social Work and Minorities”, Lille 12-13th October, 2017.

The expression "minority" oftentimes arouses heated controversies on international, European and national levels; it remains a difficult concept to define. A sociological approach allows the phenomenon of minority to be regarded as a constructed social relationship structuring social reality. What appears to be central to this concept is the process of "minorization", a situation of domination, of vulnerability, and even of exclusion of the groups thus identified. Depending on the circumstances, the minority issue could therefore also include the gender gap, the disability issue, but also concern more broadly *"all groups whose existence is not covered by the statements of legitimacy of a society"* 1.

The issue of minorities is a major problem for governments and represents a complex challenge for social work. While international texts have laid the foundations for issues regarding the management of diversity, the dominant culture persists in its difficulty in taking into account questions concerning the best way to live together with respect for cultural diversity and human rights. One of the major challenges of our contemporary societies is to reconcile cultural diversity and social justice.

With a set of plenary sessions and workshops, our conference focused on bringing to light the political, social and identity-related dynamics that contribute to the emergence of the minority phenomenon in various countries. We sought to reflect on the relationship between nationalism, citizenship, democracy, and the management of cultural diversity. Moreover, the aim of this international meeting, bringing together diversified points of view and knowledge from numerous countries in Europe and beyond, was to promote the passage from invisibility to recognition of minority situations and groups, and open new horizons for social work internationally.

V. Common projects

The University of Hertfordshire has been involved in 2 research funding bids with ERIS partners: the first in which the University of Hertfordshire took the lead, was to the Equip call, which required a partner in India, but only allowed certain European countries to be part of the bid. We included partners on the list from ERIS, Lorraine and the University of Eastern Finland, as well as agencies working with asylum seeking and refugee young people concerning the development of measures for such people in order to aid their well-being and inclusion within receiving societies. We were also part of the bid led by the Catholic University of Lille on policy measures in relation to asylum seeking people to Erasmus Plus.

The University of Hertfordshire has sent information to the universities carrying out social work education and research in the UK at regular intervals, including information about the conferences and requests for contributions to books and the Journal.

VI. The ERIS website and promotional activities

Improvements and updates were made to the content, organization and appearance of the ERIS website. ERIS was promoted by representatives of all member universities at various conferences and workshops, via author profiles in journals, etc.

