T@SK PROJECT: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY THROUGH SOCIAL WORK

Giorgia Bulli, Giulia Mascagni, Sheyla Moroni

Department of Political and Social Sciences, Università degli Studi di Firenze (ITALY)

Abstract

Professionalization, modernization and Europeanization of Social Services in Albania have been the main goals of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building T@sk Project "Towards Increased Awareness, Responsibility and Shared Quality in Social Work" (2017-2020).

T@sk Project pursued these aims through three main actions: 1) Internationalisation and 'Europeanisation' of Albanian Higher Education Institutions; 2) Knowledge triangulation between university lecturers, students, and social stakeholders; 3) Networking of social and political stakeholders.

T@sk methodology was based on a subsidiary and multilevel approach agreed amongst the project consortium composed of the University of Florence, the Complutense University of Madrid, the ISCTE of Lisbon, the Professional Order of Social Workers of Tuscany and the three Albanian public universities that offer Bachelor and Master courses in Social Work: University of Tirana, University of Elbasan, University of Shkodra.

T@sk project achieved its objectives thanks to the engagement of Higher Education staff with the changing social work environment in Albania and in the participating countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal). The promotion of a constant dialogue with social services on the ground in the four countries, the identification of the respective social needs and the reflection on theoretical and empirical research were the key actions of the project. A dense network of associated partners (social workers operating in the public and in the private sectors, NGOS, institutional stakeholders) complemented the peer-to-peer training programme for teachers, students and trainers.

During the three years of the project, participants were confronted with problems related to the regulation of the social work profession in their own country. Those experiences have supported the production of 3 volumes dedicated to the Albanian Social Services, standardized guidelines for social workers, and a code of ethics (all publications and training materials are available and downloadable from the project website: https://www.taskproject.eu). The project followed the creation of the professional Order of Social Workers in Albania, finally accomplished in 2022.

By the end of the project 50 university teachers, 140 social workers and 500 students had been trained. A total of 21 memoranda of understanding were signed by local and central policy makers, new agreements implemented, and 2 ICT laboratories created. The investment of T@sk in the digitalisation of teaching and learning activities in Albania proved to be strategic at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic made the use of online learning management systems indispensable. Despite the fact that Albania was the beneficiary partner, the co-design of training activities allowed a cross-reflection on the welfare models adopted by the participating countries. The translation of universal social rights into tailored interventions rests upon institutional, economic and cultural variables, all taken into account through the comparative approach of the project.

Currently, project members are continuing to collaborate on specific research project focusing on the resiliency of Social Services in the face of new challenges (digitalization; new forms of poverty, epidemiological, social and economic effects of COIVD-19) that strongly question the capacity of any Welfare system.

Keywords: Social services, Social work, Albania, Higher Education Institutions, Internationalisation, ICT.

1   INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, the European Union decided to open accession negotiations with Albania, candidate country since 2014. During the last six years, the European Commission has been monitoring the development of the country with regards to the fulfillment of the most important conditions for access. Among them, the respect of fundamental rights of citizens and the related implementation of social policies have been observed with particular attention. The 2019 European Commission Report on Albania is particularly severe in the

assessment of the condition of social care services described as "currently underdeveloped, underinvested and lacking in many areas" and in the evaluation of the insufficient capacities and resources of the local government units. (EC 2019: 80). The request to establish an efficient network of social care institutions goes hand in hand with the main pre-condition of the respect of fundamental social rights for all Albanian citizens. A recent UNICEF report produced in cooperation with the University of Tirana (Unicef 2022) pointed out that time has come to include "new social workers" in empowerment projects. Families should be helped to "stand on their own two feet". A combination of public economic aid and implementation of self-determination strategies would be of great help in achieving individual goals.

The creation of a social policy system in Albania is rather recent (Pere and Bartlett 2019). Its functioning has been newly affected by a new lawmaking on territorial decentralization that is going to profoundly affect the distribution of responsibilities in the delivery of Social Services (Dauti 2015; Dizdari, Troshani and Drishti 2019).

The foundations of the Albania's social protection system have been established in the Constitution. The initial strategic objectives of Albania's social protection system aim to first prevent any further degradation of the social security in the country, as well as the establishment of an efficient social protection system that will address emerging social problems" (Akesson et al. 2016, 15). New legislation was enacted accordingly.

With a definition largely aligned with the IFSW/IASSW recommendations, the Law No. 163/2014 on *Order of Social worker in the Republic of Albania* establishes that Social work is the professional social activity based on the relevant practice and academic discipline, which promotes social change, development, social cohesion and social justice. The purpose of this Law is to regulate the organization and activity of the Order of Social workers, as well as the legal and ethical-professional relations of social workers. More specifically, Article 4 defines "Social work" as a practice-based profession, as well as an academic discipline that promotes change, development, social cohesion and social justice, and the empowerment and independence of people. It also recognizes the "Social worker" as a regulated occupation practiced in the field of social work, at macro, meso and micro level, serving individuals, families, groups, communities, and central and local-level institutions in the public and private system.

The law comes at a time when social workers are being given a pivotal role in the new social service structures and the responsibility to integrate case management into that system (Tahsini, Lopari, Tasku, Voko 2013); it also expands the official scope of social work practice to women, children, mental health, probation services, psychosocial services in schools, and reproductive health.

Following these principles, Social work is a regulated profession exercised at every level of the social field like individuals and families, groups and communities, in institutions of central and at the local level, in the public and private system. Social administrators who had been primarily managing cash benefits deriving from social protection national provisions until 2013, should now operate on a case management level, as part of a general systemic approach (Dhembo 2015).

Some data might be helpful to acquire a more detailed view: the 2016 *Law on social care* and the 2017 *Law on child protection* specify that "social workers (with degrees in social work) have to be employed in municipal social services structures in needs assessment and referral units at a rate of 1 social worker per 10.000 population and in child protection units at a rate of 1 social worker per 3.000 children" (Rogers et al. 2018, 19).

Referring to perceptions and understanding of the social service workforce it emerges quite clearly how the 2016 Law on Social Care and its accompanying reforms to local authority responsibilities for social services planning has enhanced the role of social worker as case manager (Matković 2017). "The reformed legal and policy framework gives the social worker a clear mandate for outreach work with families and for intervening in child protection and other cases. These changes introduce clarity in the role of the social worker and may have an impact on how the social work workforce is perceived, as well as building trust in the system" (Rogers et al. 2018, 47).

The theme of the recognition of the profession and its professional operators still stands. Social Assistance is still primarily represented as a cash benefit for poor families, according to the household incomes and monthly distributed. Consequently, "social service workers were viewed largely as government bureaucrats who serve as gatekeepers to financial assistance for vulnerable groups. Although their role in child protection is not well known to the general public, where they are perceived to be involved in child protection, it is as those who take children away from their families" (Akesson et al. 2016, 11). The negative perception of social service work often tends to be viewed precisely through the prism of the Albanian social security system: for example, the *ndihma ekonomike* (= economic assistance), that is the core poverty reduction mechanism, "has contributed to an understanding of social service workers as simply municipal employees who administer financial assistance" (Akesson et al. 2016, 11).

Since February 2020 the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic in Albania strongly impacted the local social services system. Transformation of needs went along with the need to modify the modality of provision of the services themselves.

The exceptional nature of the situation drove the public administration to modify the support schemes in the name of flexibility and digitalization, making use of the support of information technologies to deliver services (López Peláez et al.).

The T@sk Project (2017-2020) operated in the scenario described above, with the main aim of creating sustainable networks between the Higher Education Institutions and the professional figures of Social Services delivery in Albania.

Academic cooperation, research and social innovation are key elements in the Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) projects. Investing in Higher Education in terms of professionalization, modernization and Europeanization is the main principle at the basis of the cooperation amongst three European Universities, three Albanian Universities and one professional Order of social workers within the framework of the ERASMUS+ Capacity Building Project *T@sk – Towards increased Awareness, responsibility and shared quality in Social work* (for details on the composition of the consortium, see the *Acknowledgments* section). The introduction of Social work is relatively new in the Albanian policy arena and its development represents an essential factor for the improvement of society (SSA 2002). The recent creation of a professional Order of Social workers in Albania – which was achieved as a follow up of the T@sk project – testifies of the crucial role of a professionalized approach to the Social Service delivery that the T@sk project recognizes as its main general objective.

Starting from the assumption that Social work establishes a strong link with the environment and sustainable development, as a profession and as an academic discipline, the main aim of the project consisted in strengthening the delivery of Social Services in Albania through the empowerment of the Higher Education System in social work. By including all Albanian public universities offering Bachelor and Master degrees in Social work in the Project, T@sk was able to stimulate a process of modernization of the theoretical and empirical approaches to the delivery of Social Services, with a particular attention to the role played by professional Social workers (Dhembo, Akesson and Cheyne-Hazineh 2019). In order to meet its ambitious aims, T@sk adopted the recent *Global Definition of Social work* approved by the International Federation of Social workers (IFSW) General Meeting and by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) General Assembly in July 2014 (please see: https://www.ifsw.org/what-is-social-work/global-definition-of-social-work/) as theoretical benchmark and empirical milestone.

2 METHODOLOGY

T@sk activities can be described from a double perspective: following its main *levels of intervention* on one side and focusing on the differentiated *fields of action* on the other.

The levels of intervention deal with the practices that aim to promote an increased level of teaching and learning in the Schools of Social Work in Albania. The *fields of action* correspond to a triangulation of spheres that each include a precise set of activities that aim to stimulate – in the long run – social intervention and social change.
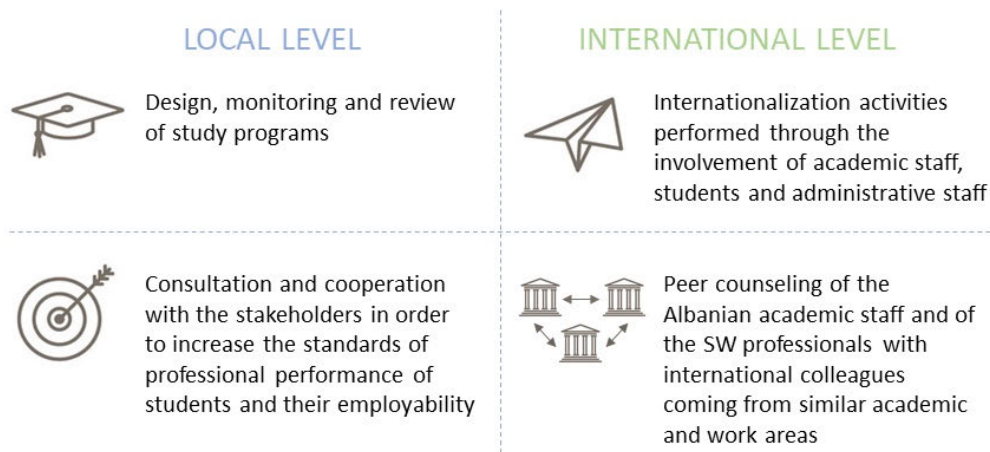
The *first level* consisted in an in depth theoretical and methodological updating of the University staff of all the Albanian public universities offering Bachelor's Degrees or/and Master's Degrees in Social work through a peer to peer approach. Starting from the basic concepts of the theory and practices of Social work deriving from the convergent – yet different – models of "Mediterranean Welfare" developed in Italy, Spain and Portugal (Pau and Moreno-Fuentes 2013), the scientific updating covered the main relevant issues in Social work – from its inspiring principles to the practices of social diagnosis and social work intervention (Righard 2018; Healy 2008). The digitalization of the teaching and learning activities has been a transversal and key aim in the broader goal of modernization of the future professionals in social work and it was pursued through the gradual adoption of learning management systems in the curricular teaching and learning activities.

The *second level* consisted in the promotion of a constant dialogue between the Albanian Higher Education System and the related social background and working environment in the Social Services. At this purpose, Albanian Social workers and public managers responsible for the delivery of social services at the local level were involved in all teaching and updating sessions held in Albania. They provided feedback and stimulated the debate on the possible application of the theoretical models of Social Work discussed during the training sessions to the Albanian professional environment (Gasker 2018).

The *third level* focused on the analytical assessment of specific *policy areas* (particularly underprivileged and disadvantaged women) within the general framework of deviance prevention and mitigation of detention conditions (Ramon et al. 2019).

3 RESULTS

Projects' actions implemented with the aim of modernizing and professionalizing the teaching and learning of Social Work in Albania can be placed in a spatial axis that goes from the local environment to the international environment (Campanini 2018 and 2019; Gray and Fook 2004), as briefly illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1).

LOCAL LEVEL

Design, monitoring and review of study programs

Consultation and cooperation with the stakeholders in order to increase the standards of professional performance of students and their employability

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Internationalization activities performed through the involvement of academic staff, students and administrative staff

Peer counseling of the Albanian academic staff and of the SW professionals with international colleagues coming from similar academic and work areas

Figure 1. T@sk main intervention outputs in the Local and International environment.

The activities represented on the left side of the figure have had a major impact at the domestic level. They were designed to meet the education needs of the future Albanian Social workers. The right side illustrates the requirements of internationalization of the Albanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the activities promoted by T@sk in order to meet this goal focusing on a constant exchange of practices deriving from comparable models of Welfare States, as the ones of Italy, Spain and Portugal (Lippi and Tsekos 2019).

The observation of the T@sk activities from the point of view of the *fields of action* aiming to stimulate – in the long run – social intervention and social change, offers an alternative and complementary vision of the project's activities. T@sk's commitment to promote social change is represented in its 4 key actions – *Researching, Networking, Updating, Experimenting*. These actions identify a complex strategy of interventions inspired by the Quadruple Helix, including the involvement of science, policy, entrepreneurship and civil society (see Fig. 2, *a*dapted from Schütz, Heidingsfelder, Schraudner, 2019)

Experimenting

GOVERNMENT

SOCIETY

Updating

Networking

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

BUSINESS
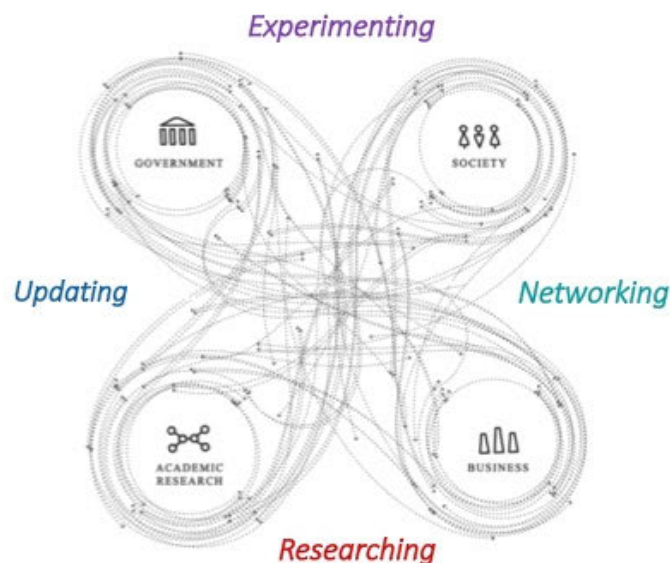
Researching

Figure 2. T@sk Strategy in the Quadruple Helix Model.

Since the very early stage of the project creation, research has been playing a very important role. The needs of the HEIs in Social Work were identified by the members of the consortium through assessment visits that allowed to identify the necessities of the Schools of Social Work and the requirements of social services in Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan. The integration of research into the study of social work is a necessary step in the process of professional preparation of future social workers (Labonté-Roset 2005, 293). A first step of desk comparative research was conducted on the academic curricula of all institutions involved in the project. This research activity showed that a considerable amount of differentiation coexists at the country levels with the noticeable homogenization of social work programmes (Campanini and Frost 2004). This is the result of the different traditions of the developments of social work in the countries involved in the project. The second and more ambitious research activity was conducted by the Albanian academic staff in the assessment of the state of the art of the Social Services in the respective provinces. To produce the three detailed reports on the Social Services in Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan (AA. VV. 2000), the academic staff developed an intense relationship with professional social workers, policy makers, local and central managers responsible for the delivery of social services – with whom they realized in depth interviews - and made use of the (still insufficient) statistical documentation. This transdisciplinary cooperation made it possible to push forward the *networking* activities that had been already implemented for theoretical updating purposes. The same model of networking was adopted during the field visits carried on in Italy, Portugal and Spain. The presentation of the best practices amongst the social services of Florence and Lisbon was preceded and followed by interviews to the societal stakeholders, to grasp the possible adaptation of some selected aspects into the Albanian social and political context. The following activities of *experimentation* were realized in the final phase of the project. They dealt with the analysis of the best practices visited abroad, their presentation to social workers and policy makers in Tirana, Shokder and Elbasan by the Albanian academic staff, and with the potential adoption of selected aspects or inspiring principles. Finally, the Project's investment on *updating* activities is expected to activate in the long run the virtuous circle of the quadruple helix model through a convergence of theoretical, methodological and empirical (policy-based) upgrading and renewal of curricular Social Work contents, internship procedures, policy adjustments, and adoption of best practices.

To conclude this overview of the objectives and strategies implemented by the T@sk Project, a detailed summary table of the implemented activities is provided below (Table 2).

Table 1. Main T@sk' Project Key Actions.

NAME OF ACTIVITY	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	MAIN OBJECTIVES	KEY ACTIONS
Management	Internal to the consortium	Planning, organization and coordination in detail of the project activities foreseen in WP plan and socialization of the main aims of the Project	Regular meetings of the steering, scientific and ICT committees, plus face to face events
Observation and Preparation	Internal and External as addressed to all the colleagues and stakeholders	- Increasing the knowledge on the Albanian Social Services system - Filling the gap between theoretical and empirical knowledge on the functioning of the Albanian Social Services through the observation activities in Albania by all T@sk institutions	- Visit to the Albanian Social Services of the municipalities involved (Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan) - Production of three in-depth reports on the Local Social Services in Albania, with a collective effort of writing and supervision by the entire Project Consortium.
Training	Internal and External as addressed to all the colleagues and stakeholders	Offering focused training on the specific theoretical and empirical needs of Albanian colleagues to be trained in light of the concrete needs at local Social Services level	- Holding training sessions directly on site (Albania) focused on main local needs and adapted in terms of partners agenda for better usability and effectiveness. - Revision e amendments to the syllabi of Social work courses in the Albanian universities involved
Quality	Internal to the consortium	Successfully pursue of the Quality Management Strategy, defined through three key processes, namely Quality Planning, Quality Assurance and Quality Control.	- Satisfaction surveys (both on scientific and management aspects) - Timetable compliance - Partners' constant networking and cooperation support
Dissemination	External: addressed to stakeholders	Giving visibility - not only in the academic sphere but more generally in the public sphere - to the project activities, and to the dissemination to the project's societal stakeholders of its results.	- Interviews and press releases scheduled according to the main training and dissemination activities of the Project. - Updating of the Project's website and social media

4   CONCLUSIONS

The activities developed by the T@sk Project fully respond to the needs underlined by the European Commission in terms of adequacy to the political and social context; appropriateness of the methodological approach; investment on the Albanian's educational, social and political resources.

The first achieved aim consists in the reinforcement of the delivery of Social Services in Albania through a direct investment in social work education at the Higher Education level. As acknowledged by the favorable final evaluation by the EACEA, T@sk project directly and positively addressed the still insufficient quality of the Albanian Welfare State. Social workers are indeed drivers of social change (Amaro et al 2018). Their intervention can promote social innovation, social intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship (Nadan, London and Bent-Goodley 2015). However, their role in the Albanian society is still largely poorly acknowledged, and their professional conditions are extremely demanding, if one considers the average ratio of the number of social workers per Albanian citizen, the largely unimplemented reform on decentralization, and the scarce central and local financial investment in the Social Services. The professional preparation of Social workers also suffered from the troubled transition of Albania to democracy (Moroni 2020) which deteriorated the quality of the preexisting social capital (Holland 1998) and delayed the reform of the Education and Higher Education System (HEIs) (Bassler 1995; Papadhopulli and Mico 2016). All these factors negatively impacted on the development of Social Sciences at the Higher Institution level, and hampered a real investment in the teaching of Social work. Considered together, the limited State financial support to the Social Services- especially in the country's periphery - the late development of the Social work Schools at the Higher Education level and a very low level of recognition of the professional status, risk to produce a vicious circle for the current and future Social workers in Albania.

The second achieved aim consists in T@sk's ambition to modernize, professionalize and getting the delivery of Social Services in Albania closer to a European standard. The successful strategy pursued by all institutions involved in the project rests on three methodological pillars: peer to peer exchange, transdisciplinary cooperation and digital innovation. These principles were adopted in the framework of capacity building practices, where Social work is considered to be "in a good position to meet the challenge of transmitting theory and applied research" (Poole 1997, 165).

Since the inaugural activities performed by the T@sk project during the field visits in Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan, peer to peer professional exchange amongst academic colleagues and professional Social workers granted a circulation of knowledge at the local, national and international level. The assessment of the quality of Social Services in the three districts conducted by the Albanian lecturers in cooperation with professional social workers not only allowed to realize the integration of research into the study of Social work (Labonté-Roset 2005, 293), but also enhanced the transdisciplinary cooperation with the societal stakeholders, typical for Eu-funded Capacity Building Projects (Meyer, Zimmermann, O'Grady 2017).

A reinforcement of transdisciplinary cooperation also took place at the level of the European partners' countries through the selection and the presentation of the social services' best practices to the Albanian colleagues in Italy, Spain and Portugal. Finally, T@sk project initiated the digitalization of Social work teaching practices through the introduction of online learning management system in the Universities of Tirana, Shkoder and Elbasan. This fulfilment made it possible to rapidly push towards the modernization of the teacher-student relationship (Larsen et al. 2008) during the unexpected circumstances of the lockdown measures following the Covid-19 emergency.

The third achievement of the T@sk project consists in an increased recognition of the professional role of Social Workers in Albania. The pandemic created a condition "where social workers have been and continue to be at the forefront advocating and leading change in nearly every country" (Truell 2020). The statement by the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) describes a situation where – for Social workers - being at the vanguard and leading social innovation go hand in hand. This is not only true during times of heavy crisis, but also applies to everyday circumstances. The valorization of the role of all actors involved in the process of the delivery of social work activities – Higher Education teachers, students in Social work, social workers and Social Services managers at the local and central level- allowed to initiate the quadruple helix model (Figure 3), that applies well to situation of social experimentation.

The setting of a capacity building project offers a unique opportunity to get in line with the ongoing similar development of social work school programmes in almost all European countries (Campanini and Frost 2004), while at the same time promoting social innovation by encouraging the adoption of new teaching methodologies, boosting the present and future social workers' (self) reflection on their professional role, stimulating their professional motivation. However, all the above is not sufficient without a financial and

organization investment (Ymeri 2018 and 2019), urgently needed in Albania, particularly at the local and rural level.

T@sk project operated in a social and political environment stretched between opportunities and challenges. The opportunities originated by the long-awaited official opening of accession negotiations with the EU are the final step of a long process of preparation for the achievement of the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria, that started in the early 2000's.

During these years, the Albanian institutions have been making remarkable efforts to draft new and urgent legislations in the field of social policies, territorial decentralization and reorganization of the Social Services. The current situation is characterized by the existence of a legislative framework whose realization is difficult due to the lack of resources and a growing need in expertise.

In this context, CBHE projects in the Western Balkans are likely to have a limited impact on governmental policies in the short run. However, in terms of enhancement of know-how and share of best practices at the European level, the T@sk project is fully inscribed in a context of capacity building whose main aim – the reinforcement of the professionalization of present and future social workers – is successfully under construction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

[1]   AA.VV., *Social Services in Albania: Background and State of the Art. A report from Tirana, Shkodër and Elbasan*, Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2020 [www.cacuccieditore.it/download/getdownload/4474ae7c-5014-4fa4-a9dc-dcbebc0a5442].

[2]   Akesson B. et al., "The Social Service Workforce as Related to Child Protection in South-east Europe: A Regional Overview*", Child Protection Hub*, 2016 [www.cpcnetwork.org/resource/social-service-workforce-regional-review].

[3]   Amaro M.I., Ferreira J., Pena M.J. and Alvarez-Pérez P., *Social Work Education at ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon. The Learning-teaching Model*, MIMEO, 2018 [www.taskproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ModeloEnsino_Aprendizagem.pdf]

[4]   Bartlett W., "The Political Economy of Welfare Reform in the Western Balkans" in *Poverty and Exclusion in the Western Balkans. Economic Studies in Inequality, Social Exclusion and Well- Being* (Ruggeri Laderchi C., Savastano S. eds.), pp. 245-259, New York: Springer, 2013.

[5]   Bassler T., "Beginning a Transformation of Learning in Albania" in *European Journal of Education, 30(3),* 307-315, 1995.

[6]   Campanini A., Frost E., *European Social Work: Commonalities and Differences*, Roma: Carocci, 2004, eds.

[7]   Campanini A., "Internationalization vs. Indigenization in the Social Work Curricula. How to Handle this Challenge?", *4th Scientific-Practical Conference on Advancement of Social Work in Post Soviet Countries: Achievements and Challenges in Social Work Education*, Baku, Azerbaijan: April 26-27, 2018 [www.iassw-aiets.org].

[8]   Campanini A., "Social Promotion in Action: Social Policies and Social Work", *Sociologia,* 2019(1), pp. 81-88, 2019.

[9]   Coulshed V., Orme J., *Social Work Practice*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

[10]   Dhembo E., *Baseline Study to Map Child Protection Practices and Related Workforce Needs in Albania*, Child Protection Hub for South East Europe, 2015 [ww.childhub.org].

[11]   Dhembo E., Akesson B., Cheyne-Hazineh L., "Social Work Education in Albania: A Developing Landscape of Challenges and Opportunities", *European Journal of Social Work*, pp. 1-14, 2019.

[12]   Dizdari V., Troshani A., Drishti E., "The Bumpy Road of the Externally Transferred Austerity Agenda in Albania and Its Fragmentary Effects on Local Public Services" in *Local Public Service in Times of Austerity across Mediterranean Europe* (Lippi A., Tsekos T. eds.), pp. 193-216, Cham: Springer/Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

[13]   Ferrera M., *The Boundaries of Welfare: European Integration and the New Spatial Politics of Social Protection*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[14]   Gasker J., *Generalist Social Work Practice*, Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE, 2018.

[15]   Gray M., Fook J., "The quest for a Universal Social Work: Some Issues and Implications", *Social Work Education*, 23(5), pp. 625-644, 2004.

[16]   Healy L.M., *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008.

[17]   Holland J., "Does Social Capital Matter? The Case of Albania", *IDS Bulletin,* 29(3), pp. 65-71, 1998.

[18]   Labonté-Roset C. "The European Higher Education Area and Research-Orientated Social Work Education", *European Journal of Social Work*, 8(3), pp. 285-296, 2005.

[19]   Larsen A.K., R. Sanders, Arias Astray A., Hole G.O., "Eteacher Challenges and Competences in International Comparative Social Work Courses", *Social Work Education,* 27(6), pp. 623-633, 2008.

[20]   Lippi A., Tsekos T., *Local Public Services in Times of Austerity across Mediterranean Europe. Governance and Public Management*, Cham: Springer/Palgrave Macmillan, 2019 (eds.).

[21]   López Peláez A., Díaz H.L., Marcuello Servós C., Castillo de Mesa J., "Digital Social Work: Challenges, Trends and Best Practices", *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Vol. XLVIII (3), pp. 5-9, 2021 [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol48/iss3/2].

[22]   Matković G., *The Welfare State in Western Balkan Countries*, Belgrade: Center of Social Policy, 2017.

[23]   MeyerJ., Zimmermann F.M., O'Grady A., "Establishing Science-Society Networks for Transdisciplinary Teaching in Higher Education: The Case of Albania and Kosovo" in *Handbook of Theory and Practice of Sustainable Development in Higher Education. World Sustainability Series* (Leal Filho W., Azeiteiro U., Alves F., Molthan-Hill P. eds.), pp. 165-178, Cham: Springer, 2017.

[24]   Moroni S., "Albania 1992-2017: The Main Historical Events of The Last 25 Years" in *Social Services in Albania: Background and State of the Art. A report from Tirana, Shkodër and Elbasan*, (AA. VV.), pp. 3-26, Bari: Cacucci Editore, 2020.

[25]   Nadan M., London M., Bent-Goodley T., "Social Workers as Social Change Agents: Social Innovation, Social Intrapreneurship, and Social Entrepreneurship", *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 39, pp. 38-56, 2015.

[26]   Pau M.K., Moreno-Fuentes F.J., "The Southern European Welfare Model in the Post-industrial Order", *European Societies*, 15(4), pp. 475-492, 2013.

[27]   Papadhopulli S., Mico H., "Higher Education and Research in Albania in the Way of Achieving the Objectives of Bologna Declaration", *Working Papers in Higher Education*, 2 (1), pp. 21–57, 2016.

[28] Pere E., Bartlett W., "On the Way to Europe: Economic and Social Developments in Albania: Recent Economic and Social Developments" in *Western Balkan Economies in Transition* (R. Osbild R., Bartlett W. eds.), pp. 73-87, Cham: Springer, 2019.

[29] Poole DL., "Building Community Capacity to Promote Social and public Health: Challenges for Universities", *Health Soc Work, 22(3),* pp. 163-170, 1997.

[30] Ramon S., Grodofsky M.M., Allegri E., Rafaelic A., "Service Users' Involvement in Social Work Education: Focus on Social Change Projects", *Social Work Education*, 38(1), pp. 89-102, 2019.

[31] Righard E., "Conceptualising Social Work Through the Lens of Transnationalism, Conceptualising Social Work through the Lens of Transnationalism. Challenges and Ways Ahead", *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 8(4), pp. 245–253, 2018

[32] Rogers J. et al., *Literature Review on the Development of the Social Work and Social Service Workforce in the Europe and Central Asia Region*, 2018 [www. unicef.org/eca/media/6626/file/ Literature-Review-Development-Social-Service-Workforce-ECA.pdf.pdf].

[33] Schütz F., Heidingsfelder M.L., Schraudner M., "Co-shaping the Future in Quadruple Helix Innovation Systems: Uncovering Public Preferences toward Participatory Research and Innovation", *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 5(2), pp. 128-146, 2019.

[34] SSA - Social Security Administration, *Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Europe. Online Report*, 2002 [https://www.ssa.gov/policy/index.html].

[35] Tahsini I., Lopari E., Lasku A., Voko K., *Reform of Social Care Services in Albania: Assessment of Capacities of Social Service Providers on Case Management Model in The Field of Social Services*, Albania: Terre des Hommes, 2013.

[36] Truell R., *COVID-19: The Struggle, Success and Expansion Of Social Work*, Rheinfelden: IFSW, 2020.

[37] UNICEF, *Social Workers embrace new challenges to better respond to children and families in need*, Online Press Release, UNICEF, Albania, March 26th 2022, [https://www.unicef.org/albania/]

[38] Ymeri S., *A Review of Local Budget Spending on Social Care Services*, Tirana: Leave No One Behind, 2018.

[39] Ymeri S., *ESPN Thematic Report on Financing social protection. Albania. European Social Policy Network (ESPN)*, Brussels: European Commission, 2019.