

# SOCIAL WORK IN ALBANIA

*Starting from 'scratch' ... and moving on (?)*



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# Starting from 'scratch' – the(back)ground

- No history of social work profession in Albania until 1992
- Poor tradition of charity work until 1945
- 1945 – 1990 - prevailing 'socialist ideology'
  - 'The new socialist man/woman'
  - Party structures regulated social behavior/issues
  - The paradox of obligatory volunteer work

- The 90's - deep political, economic, and social changes
  - transition from a totalitarian system in a democratic and free trade economy
  - freedom of movement
  - deep structural reforms
  - deeper socio-economic disbalances and increase of marginalization
  - weakening of the traditional social structures (family, connections and social norms)
  - weakness of the non-consolidated institutions in defence of groups at risk
  - absence of specific and clear strategies and programmes for protecting groups at risk



# The beginnings

- new knowledge and institutions were required
- MoLSA, MoE, supported by Grand Valley University, Michigan & BSS, Albania:
  - 1992 - The Faculty of Social Work
  - 1992-1995 – 3 one year SW courses
  - 1992-1996 – the first graduates of the 4 yrs BSW course



# SW practice & employment of social workers

- Missing data –
  - SW and labor market
- Around 1800 graduates
  - SW practitioners, most of them in NGO-s
- Outside of the profession
  - Many SW graduates work in public and non public institutions, in positions related to working with people, such as public relations, human resources, customer services, etc



# Social work practice/ – NGO-s

- Health
  - hospitals, maternity hospitals, community mental health services, palliative care
- Education
  - schools and in education/child –focused org.
- Justice
  - Ngo cooperating with prisons, courts, police, probation etc
- Family and child services
  - Ngo focused on youth, family and child care, violence and trafficking, in daily/residential centers for children, foster care, etc
- Disabilities/special needs services
  - Residential & daily centers
- Addiction treatment and prevention
  - Residential & daily centers



# Social work practice – state services

## ■ Mental health and health

- 1996 law (2012)– multidisciplinary team
- Community & inpatient MNH services
- Hospitals (Tirana)

## ■ Child protection

- 2010 law – CPU worker with SW diploma
- Working in municipality and administrative units (1 CP worker, without other roles' obligations, only for administrative units with more than 3000 children)
- residential care and daily centers for children
- Residential shelters for abused women and victims of trafficking

## ■ Education

- 2012 law – psycho-social service in schools
- Working in teams (psychologists and social workers, in a few schools, mostly only one of them is hired, and psychologists have the priority)
- **1 SW/..... students**



# Social work practice – state services

- Social welfare
  - Social workers (case managers at administrative units), according to the new law for social services, yet to be implemented)
  - The law foresees 1 social worker /10.000 citizens, although feedback on implementation is not optimistic; it seems difficult to be implemented.
- Justice system
  - Parole officers
  - Detention & pre-detention
  - The recruitment criteria are in general: social sciences background





# Moving on (?)

- The reform of social care services aims to ensure that social protection works for the most vulnerable members of society.
- Goal –
  - to improve the efficiency of the social protection system and the quality of social services for vulnerable groups.



# The social care services reform

- Restructuring of social services in central and local level
- A new law on the regulation of social work profession ( SW Order Law approved in 2015)
- Retraining of current social work force in social care services



# Order of Social Workers

- Approved as a Law in 2014, December;
- Regulates the profession of SW:
  - Regulation of licenses (continued education)
  - The approval of the Code of Ethics for Social Workers and the creation of a mechanism that monitors the Code (The Board of Social Work)



## Different kinds of services (According to the Law 121/2016)

- Residential services
- Community services
- Pre-social services (mainly informative services for potential beneficiaries)
- Family services
- Specialized services
- Alternative care services
- Counseling services via online/phone
- Services in emergency situations



# Beneficiaries of social services

- Individual/Family
- Children/families in asylum;
- Individuals with Disabilities;
- Adults with social problems, victims of violence (including domestic violence), human trafficking victims, drug or alcoholic dependants;
- Pregnant girls or single parents of child up to 1 year old;
- Minors and young people in conflict with law;
- Elderly in need.



# The weight of interventions - is right balanced?

- Prevention (Child protection)
- Protection (mainly the social services are on protection interventions)
- Promotion (active policies are few, but there are some encouraging actions such as active employment, economic endowments in child educations, etc)



# Path dependency

- SW structure within state institutions is strongly dependent on political and historical developments
  - Before 90 – dismissal of the need for such roles in a socialist state which takes care of its citizens;
  - After 90 – residual model of social services;
  - Lack of state social services, limited to economic aid;
  - lack of social work professionals to shape and influence developments in state social services;
  - Positive models represented mostly by NGO-s, case of Terre des Hommes in Child Protection and embodied by the state.; case of Mental Health/multidisciplinary team by WHO since 1996;



# Path dependency

- The reform on social services started only in 2013 and is moving slowly;
- Decentralisation of services preceded the preparation for such step, resulting in local level not taking full responsibility for being the main service provider at that level;
- Social plan of municipalities are only now being drafted;
- Lack of focus of municipalities in social services, resulting in lack of vision, budgeting and human capacities;