



## Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education T@SK project

*Towards increased awareness, responsibility and shared quality in social work*

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### WP 4.5

#### Roundtable

**“Strengthening the University's partnership with social services institutions”  
Report**



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## Track of changes

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# Report

## Roundtable

**“Strengthening the University's partnership with social services institutions”**

Tirana, 5 March 2020

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

*In line with WP 4.5 that require the constant involvement in the T@sk project and the participation of the political and social Associated partners during the entire lifespan of the project, a roundtable was organized at the premises of Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana, on 5 March 2020 on “Strengthening the partnership between universities and social service institutions”. The roundtable was organized by Department of Psychology – Social Work, University of Shkoder “Luigj Gurakuqi”, in cooperation with Department of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Tirana and the Department of Social Science, University of Elbasan “Aleksander Xhuvani”.*

*The purpose of this round table was to generate ideas on the strategies and mechanism that might best enhance the partnership between Albanian Universities and Social Services in Shkoder, Tirana and Elbasan.*

*In the roundtable moderate by Galsvinda Biba (representative of University of Shkoder) participate 13 persons, members of the three universities and representatives of their associated partners.*

*This report provide a summary of the discussion at the Roundtable and the recommendations that emerged.*

## **II. SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS**

In the opening of the Roundtable discussions, Ms. Galsvinda Biba, spoke about the importance of partnership between the social work profession and social service practice. She enlightened that the reasons for collaborating are varied, and there are real benefits for both social services and universities. Social Services are the largest employment camp for social worker and the need for training is high. As well as benefiting the partners there are also clear benefits for students and employees, who develop new skills alongside work experience. Universities and social services, therefore, have a significant opportunity to build new alliances, and spread those that already exist.

**Session I** focused on the Cooperation between the Faculties of Social Work and Social Services in Albania. Ms Elisabeta Osmanaj (Head of Social Science Department, UE) highlighted that the partnership between the University of Elbasan and the Municipality is long and fully consolidated. The University has a formalized relationship, based on agreement signed at the beginning of the academic year, regarding the distribution of students for the implementation of the internship. These agreement clearly define the rights and obligation of each party aiming at creating a welcoming and stimulating environment in student’s knowledge application during internship.

Ms. Rudina Rama (Head of Social Work and Social Policy Department, UT) reinforced the same practice regarding the university’s cooperation with Municipality of Tirana. She said that although the number of social services offered in Tirana is high, so is the number of student who need to do the internship. This makes it difficult to implement an effective and qualitative practice.

Ms. Bujane Topalli (member of Psychology – Social Work Department, USH) said that the experience of cooperation with social services in the Municipality of Shkoder is positive but is more consolidate with private services and NGOs compared to the Municipality.

Participants stated that cooperation at formal level is very good but in practice there are problem with student internship.

**Session II** was dedicated to sharing examples of good practices and lessons learned on how to promote communication and collaborative activities among universities and Social Services.

Ms. Flutura Musta, Social Worker at Psychiatric Hospital of Elbasan, used her opening statement to describe her experience with internship practice in this institution, activities organized according to the level of students in the passive and active practice that they carry out. She emphasized the importance of sustainable activities between institutions and particularly highlighted the fact of staff sustainability as the main success in this effective relationship.

Ms. Rama highlighted the shared experience of activities between NGOs and the Faculty on joint projects. The Tirana Department constantly invites NGOs to use their environments, are part of consulting meetings, and provides consulting services for social service improvement by playing a key role in promoting and consolidating the social worker's profession in social services.

The participants evidenced different experience of cooperation between three universities and regional social services. Elbasan was characterized by collaboration at municipality level, Tirana at central, regional and NGO level, Shkoder in stronger partnership with NGO sector. During the subsequent discussion, participants emphasized that the role of the Rector and the Deans in particular in establishing an ongoing partnership with public or private social services is very important.

**Session III** focused on development of more formal opportunities for faculties to gain experience in work place of social services. Ms. Galsvinda Biba emphasized that building higher level skills through university and employer collaboration can ensure skills link closely with real work and jobs.

Ms. Elisabeta Osmanaj explained that improvement of Albanian legislation has hampered formal co-operation between the University of Elbasan and private sector & NGO. This is because by law Universities have to pay a fee for each student in internship to the NGO/private sector. So, the budgeted for internship is high and is impossible to be covered from University budgeted. She highlighted the work being done to formalize the student's practice by reflection in diploma supplement all internship student's institutions. Thus the student can apply for mobility program in Internship. Currently the University of Elbasan is finalizing a cooperation agreement with the University of Bari for the realization of mobility internship program.

Ms. Denisa Asllani shared her experience as a student supervisor during their internship at the Center for victims of trafficking. She noted the commitment and desire of students to be involved and engaged more than practice and institution enables them. The close cooperation with the university has facilitated student supervision and enabling the skills that practice requires.

Ms. Rama point out that University of Tirana based on the number of the student and the income it generates can cover the internship payment. For her the problem lies in the fact that the public sector does not offer much opportunity for internship and private sector lacks sustainability in the services it offers due to the lack of sustainable budgeting.

Ms. Bujane Topalli stressed that the problem of payment to the private sector has not yet become evident, this is probably because most of the NGOs are religiously oriented. The problem lies in the small number of students that they carry on and unmet needs of internship.

The importance of the subject matter was highlighted by all participants.

**Section IV** focused on possibilities of improving the curriculum of Social Work to better respond to labour market. The moderator of the meeting Ms. Galsvinda Biba underlined the importance of the Task project in improving the curriculum, enriching contemporary literature and exchange of experience in the provision of social services between partners of the project.

Ms. Elisabeta Osmanaj pointed out that even this collaboration showed that the curricula of social work in Albanian is contemporary. The problem, according to her, lies in the lack of a market study of the needs and employment of social work students.

Ms. Izela Tahsini (member of Social Work and Social Policy Department, UT) emphasized the importance of the academic role of university. According to her, the low payments of part time lecturers affect the quality of the seminars and even student internship.

During the discussion which followed, participants offered a number of recommendation for action.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants made a number of practical suggestion on how the partnership can be strengthening. The bullet below summarize recommendations made by participants.

- Conducting a study on social worker labor market
- Enabling reflection of the internship record in the student's diploma supplement
- Explore the possibilities to allocate fund for internship payment
- Lobbying for the creation of the Social Worker Order
- Increasing student employability through work based practice

**ROUNDTABLE**

**“Strengthening the University's partnership with social services institutions”**

Tirana, 5 March 2020

*Time: 14:30 – 17:00*

*Venue: Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana  
Tirana, Albania*

*Moderator of the roundtable: Galsvinda Biba*

14:30 – 14:45 Welcome and Opening Session

14:45 – 16:30 Round table discussion

*Bujane Topalli; Visar Dizdari; Ueda Hebovija; Elisabeta Osmanaj;  
Elvira Dode; Rudina Rama; Izela Tahsini; Monika Canameri; Daniela Kalaja; Flutura Musta;  
Emanuela Dervishi; Andi Topuzi; Denisa Asllani.*

- ✓ Cooperation between the Faculties of Social Work and the Social Services in Albania: an assessment
- ✓ Promoting organization, communication and collaborative activities among universities and Social Services
- ✓ Creating more formal opportunities for faculties to gain experience in work place of social services
- ✓ Improving the curriculum of Social Work to better respond to the labour market

16:30 – 17:00 Closing Remarks

ANNEX II: List of Participants

ROUNDTABLE

**“Strengthening the University's partnership with social services institutions”**

Tirana, 5 March 2020

University of Elbasan:

1. Elisabeta Osmanaj,
2. Elvira Dode

University of Tirana

3. Rudina Rama
4. Izela Tahsini
5. Monika Cenameri
6. Daniela Kalaja

University of Shkoder

7. Bujane Topalli
8. Galsvinda Biba

Stakeholders:

9. Flutura Musta, Psychiatric Hospital of Elbasan
10. Emanuela Dervishi, Municipality of Elbasan
11. Andi Topuzi, Center for Victims of trafficking, Elbasan
12. Denisa Asllani, Center for Victims of trafficking, Elbasan
13. Ueda Hebovija, “The DOOR”, Shkoder

Annex III: Round Table Photos



