

RESOLUTION (67) 16

(Adopted by the Ministers' Deputies on 29th June 1967)

THE ROLE, TRAINING AND STATUS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The Committee of Ministers,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its Members for the purpose, among others, of facilitating their social progress ;

Considering that under Article 14 of the European Social Charter the Contracting Parties accept certain obligations with a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to benefit from social welfare services, and that Article 19 of the Charter contains provisions concerning social services for migrant workers ;

Considering that the growth of social legislation and the development of new research concerning man and his environment open new fields and call for new methods in social service, and that European co-operation increases considerably the need for inter-country social service and for a trend towards harmonisation of training, methods etc. ;

Considering Assembly Recommendation 466 on the shortage of social workers in Europe ;

Being informed that in all European countries an ever-growing number of well-trained social workers is needed to meet the new and constantly changing needs and that, therefore, the training of social workers, together with the training of other social personnel has become a problem of the first order ;

Mindful of the fact that in a number of countries social workers are hampered by unsatisfactory conditions, such as lack of adequate training facilities, particularly with regard to such training as gives access to leading positions, lack of advancement possibilities and of a recognised status ;

Considering that this leads to great difficulties in recruiting new social workers ;

Taking note of the Social Committee's study on "The Role, training and status of social workers in the member countries of the Council of Europe" ;

Stressing the close interdependence between the function, the training and the status of social workers,

Invites member Governments to take the following principles and suggestions into account in the further development of their social services :

I. The functions of social workers

Social work is a specific professional activity which aims at favouring a better mutual adaptation of individuals, families, groups and the social environment in which they live, and developing self-respect and self-responsibility of the individuals, utilising the capacities of persons, interpersonal relations and resources provided by the community.

This aim is a fundamental one ; however, concrete means for its realisation vary according to the economic and social patterns of the different countries. The advent of new social needs calls for a widening of the field of activity of social workers, whilst new methods of social work are developing.

In order that social workers in the sense of professional workers exercising social work as defined above, may fulfil their functions as efficiently as possible, the following recommendations are made :

1. In each country a study of the functions of social workers should be kept under review and further developed. This study which could *inter alia* be facilitated by the compilation of statistics in this field could bring to light not only the tasks to which the social workers should be assigned, according to their professional qualifications and the needs of the population, but also the tasks which do not fall to social workers and could be entrusted to other persons.

2. Having regard to the complexity of human problems and to interdependence of their components, it is important to give to social workers the opportunity of working in contact - either temporarily or continuously - with members of other professions such as doctors, psychologists, teachers etc. With further regard to this complexity, part-time social workers and/or auxiliary workers should also be enabled to share responsibility in meeting the growing needs of society.

3. Attention should be focused on the preventive as well as the remedial aspects of the different branches of social work : in fact, a better knowledge of the needs and existing means to meet them can help to avoid problems which are onerous and difficult to solve.
4. It should also be accepted as one of the responsibilities of social workers to help communities to initiate preventive as well as remedial services, e.g. by developing the participation of the population concerned.
5. It is desirable that social workers should participate in social research.
6. Social workers and their associations should contribute to the development of social policy by pointing out the needs of the population and by giving their opinion on the means designed to meet them.
7. Social workers and their associations should be encouraged to play a constructive role in the implementation of social measures at both central and local level.

II. The training of social workers

Social work training has as its aim to equip social work students with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective professional functioning. Schools of social work exist to provide the necessary number of qualified social workers required by the social services of each country. They might also provide training for others whose main function is not social work but who are closely associated with the social services, such as doctors, psychologists, sociologists, administrators etc.

The following recommendations are made :

1. Governments should consider whether existing schools of social work are adequately equipped to meet these needs, taking into account that social workers are required to work in various capacities either in the provision of basic social services or by accepting responsibility for supervision, consultation, administration, teaching and research. This situation may call for training at various levels.
2. In order to harmonise social work training on a European basis and to facilitate the conclusion of bilateral agreements on the recognition of equivalent qualifications, attempts ought to be made to secure the same standards of training in the member countries.
3. Curricula ought to cover the same body of knowledge in the following three main elements : the study of man, the study of society and social services, and theories and methods of social work.

4. Practical training is an essential part of social work training, and Governments should encourage social agencies and institutions to contribute to social work training by providing facilities for students to receive the supervised practical training.
5. The teaching staff in schools of social work should include a sufficient number of full-time teachers as well as part-time teachers. The part-time staff could include both social workers and persons of other professions.
6. Curriculum planning and appraisal ought to be done in co-operation between schools of social work and social work agencies.
7. Steps ought to be taken to provide a well-balanced curriculum in the training programme of each school of social work. Sufficient attention should be given to the teaching of social group work, community organisation and social administration, where these subjects do not yet constitute a part of the curriculum. Practical training should be included in the teaching of these subjects.
8. A period of general training ought to precede specialisation of social workers. If, for special reasons, specialised training is preferred to general training, as much general content as possible should be included in it;
9. Governments might envisage where appropriate the organisation of part-time courses of an equivalent level to meet the needs of those who are not able to undertake full-time training.
10. Complementary training should be organised either by the schools of social work themselves, by professional organisations, by social work agencies, or by other bodies:
11. There should be facilities for advanced training for social workers wishing to take up posts as teachers of social work, or leading positions in the social services, or to undertake research; the possibility of linking advanced training with the universities should be explored.
12. When attending courses of training in social work in an institution provided or approved by the competent authority, students in need thereof should receive adequate study allowances in so far as economic and financial resources permit.
13. Social workers should, as far as possible, be given opportunities to participate in study groups, seminars etc., organised both on a national and an international basis, as well as international exchanges of social workers, fellowship schemes etc. Employers of social workers should be encouraged to grant such facilities.

III. The status of social workers

Taking for granted that social workers should have a status that is in accordance with their professional responsibilities, the following recommendations are made :

1. Where the need arises, and as far as practicable, measures should be taken to protect the respective titles of professionally trained social workers in their respective countries.
2. Social workers should be granted within the social service appropriate possibilities of career advancement and of fair salaries.
3. The confidential nature of the information given by the client to a social worker should be recognised and respected.
4. A social worker employed by an undertaking for the benefit of its employees should enjoy as high a degree of independence as possible in the performance of his functions within the undertaking; the frequently delicate and confidential nature of his work should be recognised and respected by the employer and other responsible services of the undertaking.
5. Governments should favour measures and developments which may enable social workers who are nationals of one of the member States of the Council of Europe to take employment in the territory of another member State.