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EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS & INCLUSION



E-Newsletter N. 6

This number of the WIT newsletter intends to concisely present a resume of the project events taken place last October 2014 in Sofia. It will moreover introduce the WIT White Book, one of the WIT project final outputs that will be presented during the project closing conference, next 4th December 2014 in Milan.



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## Second International Conference in Sofia



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### Second International Conference in Sofia

The second international WIT conference “Supply of social services and demand of social support: a challenge for Europe” has been launched in Sofia on Monday, October 13, 2014 with a welcome speech by the CEO of the National Development Agency – Bulgaria, Lyubomir Grancharov. Mr. Grancharov introduced the audience with the work of NDA and briefly summarised the state of social services in Bulgaria, the slow flowing and spinning process of deinstitutionalisation and decentralisation, currently faced by the country.

After the introduction of Mr. Grancharov, Mrs. Germana di Falco (on behalf of the Province of Milan) presented to the Bulgarian audience, an advanced snapshot of the project output, WIT geographical information system. The WIT GIS has been conceived as an infographic system able to identify some of the European sources supporting the upgrading of skills for European social services professionals, with a particular focus on the four partners countries (Italy, Bulgaria, Germany and Lithuania).

Additionally, thanks to the easy-to-read data provided, the WIT GIS will help realizing a better match between supply of social services and demand of social support, supporting social work professionals (i.e. newly graduated or having different levels of professional education) to a better understanding of territorial instruments at their disposal. More than 180 cards have been collected, reporting description of the main activities carried out by the recognized “places” for the development of formal, informal and not formal skills to help the enhancement of the social work profession.

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Moreover, Mrs. di Falco drew attention to the challenges which Europe faces in the area of social services.



The conference continued with Assoc. Professor Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova (MD, MPsy, PhD, South-West University – Bulgaria) on the status of the labour market in the field of social services in Bulgaria. Special attention was paid to:

- Social services for children;
- Social services for elderly;
- Problems and perspectives for improving the quality of social services in Bulgaria;
- Remuneration of social workers in the country;



Additionally, Assoc. Professor Stancheva gave attention to the diffusion of some best practices implemented in the Bulgaria in the recent years.



The conference represented also an opportunity for a presentation of the current situation in the other partner countries: Italy, Germany and Lithuania. Andrea Metzner (representative of the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin), Laimutė Žalimienė (Department of Social work Vilnius University) and Germana di Falco (on behalf of the Province of Milan) focusing on:

- Organisational changes in the social sphere in each country;
- The role of the organisations in the public and private sector;
- Different types of social workers, educational differences in the social services area, working conditions, salaries and wages in each country, as well as the recurrent issue faced in the social service area.





### 3rd Seminar in Sofia



In the afternoon of 13<sup>th</sup> October the stimulating 3rd international seminar “Introduction to pioneering social innovation devices and improvement of information systems on skills needs and jobs opportunities” took place.

Germana Di Falco (on behalf of Province of Milan, Italy) opened the seminar underlying the achievement by the WIT outputs, conceived as effective tools to help the decision makers and key actors on the field to read data in a comprehensive manner and to stimulate debate on the development of new skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century social service professionals.



It has been then the turn of Mrs Silvia Boyanova from the Center for Interethnic Dialog and Tolerance “Amalipe”, particularly focusing on the “Identification of existing networks, partnerships and systems of cooperation”.



After a short presentation of the work of the organisation all over the country, Ms. Boyanova draw the attention to one of its international projects "A step forward - empowering young people and women from the local Roma communities", implemented through the joint participation of Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary and Romania.



After a short coffee break, the word was given to Marin Baychev from the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA). Mr. Baychev presented to the audience, the structure and functions of the agency, as well as brief historical data about its existence. He focused on the management and control of social services at local and regional level, as well as on some projects carried out by the

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agency. The presentation prompted the first serious discussions in the room. Representatives of various non-governmental organizations attending the event started raining Mr. Baychev with the various challenging questions related to the work of the ASA.



The conclusion of the third international seminar was given by Temenuzhka Malcheva from the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" moving to the use of new technologies for assistance for children with special needs." Mrs. Malcheva presented a specialized software environment that supports teaching to children with cerebral palsy. Through this specialized software, children with special needs have the opportunity to learn how to use and handle a computer in the form of a game.





## Skills need and job opportunities



### 3rd and 4th Workshops

On October 14th, the third workshop of the project WIT titled "Improvement of information systems on skills needs and jobs opportunities, career guidance for social labour market entrance", was launched.



Assoc. Professor Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova introduced the topic of training and career development of professionals in the social services in Bulgaria. She reviewed the universities that offer programs for social studies and graduate programs. She presented various forms of continuing education, and all the challenges tackled by the teaching of social activities.

The second speech given by Mrs. T. Nikolova, representative of the public sector from the Agency for people with disabilities focused particularly on the needs of the labour market for social services at regional and national level.



Talking about the future of work "in the 21st century", Mr. Raichin Rachev presented to the audience an online platform for language training, information technologies and vocational training.

After a short break, the fourth workshop has begun, titled "Pioneering Social Innovation devices enabling Public-Private Partnerships' in social services management."



Due to the high interest of representatives of various NGO organizations who wanted to take part in the workshop and present the work of their organizations, the original schedule of the fourth workshop was rearranged.

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Particularly interesting was the theme that Mrs. Nelly Kiriakova (representative of the "Eurointegration" association) presented to the audience, "Challenges faced by the volunteers and the non-profit sector organizations for social work". Mrs. Kiriakova familiarized the audience with the problems associated with insufficient municipal funding, especially in larger cities where many needs are identified. The following issues were highlighted:

- The shortage of qualified and motivated staff;
- Lack of a clear assessment of the needs for social services by the respective populations;
- Lack of regulated quality standards for various social services;
- Other important aspects related to the work of NGOs in the country



A vigorous discussion and debate arose between public and private sectors in the hall.

Mrs. Kapka Panaiotova, representative of the "Center for Independent Living" was one of those participants. With her sincerity she immediately captivated the audience and revealed to everyone in the room the hurtful daily world of the people with disabilities. She spoke about their desire to have a choice and to be able to live independently and receive the necessary support in order to achieve this. Mrs. Panaiotova also stressed that the independent living of people with disabilities is possible when they have a choice, equal rights and can fully participate in all aspects of the social life.



The "Business Agency" Association was introduced by Borislava Ivanova, together with some of the major projects developed by the association.

Another representative from the public sector, Evtim Evtimov (Association of the Social Service Providers) participated in the workshop. He introduced the project "Telekear", currently under development by the association. Mr. Evtimov presented the services they provide to people with disabilities (social assistant, domestic worker, home attendant services, etc.).





He also familiarized the audience with the development of methodological materials for support of social service providers and trainings:

- NGOs;
- State institutions;
- Municipal administration;



Anna Lyubenova representative of the "Initiative for Health" foundation concluded the workshop. Some of the main activities of the Foundation presented by Ms. Lyubenova were field work for HIV prevention and reduction of health harms among drug users in Sofia, as well as the foundation's work with the Roma communities and special programs for the prevention of HIV and tuberculosis.

Extremely interesting and varied topics were discussed throughout the day. The event revealed that there is a ground for new partnerships as well as willingness of the organizations that are part of the social services sector in Bulgaria to develop and enhance their activity in partnership with the public sector.





# WIT

# WHITE BOOK

Within the project WIT, co-funded by the European Program Progress 2007- 2013, partners from Italy, Lithuania, Germany and Bulgaria have started and widened a reflection on their national welfare systems, existing social professions, consolidated and emerging policies and professionals' skills, in the field of welfare and healthcare in the four European countries.

This White Book is meant to give an overview on all the main project's results and findings, according to a shared vision of the three thematic pillars leading the analysis of the WIT partners, on the upgrading of social work professionals' skills.

The first section is dedicated to deepen the identity, qualities and roles of social work professionals; it shows the main achievements disclosed by project's events and undertaken activities passing through social work professionals' identity, their personal qualities, and their key role in the policy making process. A further focus has been dedicated to social workers as disregarded professionals and their empowering skills with reference to different kinds of already existing and emerging vulnerable groups (i.e. abandoned children, traumatized boys, elderly, people encountering different kinds of discrimination, women experiencing gender violence or human trafficking, people recovering from mental diseases, young disabled). The second



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thematic section refers to emerging skills, with an intent to examine potentialities of blending skills (new, renewed and/or borrowed from other sectors) applied to new social needs. Pressure for highly specialised education and specific target groups and/or specific methods are more and more relevant for these professionals. At the same time, generic transversal competences and skills will facilitate cooperation between different profiles, providing a shared ground of intervention. The third section has finally been oriented to reflect on the theme of innovative schemes of training, especially identifying new inspiring training models, already experienced in the partners countries. They in particular refer to vocational training models that have into mind transversal social services professionals, they could be for example professionals working for "social purposes", but also in not conventional "social contexts". An interesting contribution from the Province of Milan has been on these two themes: "An innovative model of training experienced on the complex issue of autism" and "Conducting support groups and/or mutual help aimed at caregivers of the elderly and not only ". Each section has been enriched with thematic boxes highlighting specific contributions from the WIT partners, especially focusing on national elements arisen during the WIT project events' debate.

WIT activities, main findings and results are intended to support policy makers decisions about education and training, directed to develop new skills for social work professionals dealing with vulnerable groups and thus to improve the quality of services provided to citizens, also by strengthening private-public collaborations. A strong engage, in this sense, has been undertaken by WIT partners to sustain training and development institutions, universities and research centres of the targeted regions. Additionally, WIT aims to support innovation in the organizational models and to minimize information deficits on current and emerging social sector professionals' skills requirements.



## WIT Closing Conference and 5<sup>th</sup> Workshop



### WIT closing Conference and 5<sup>th</sup> Workshop, Milan, 4-5 December 2014



Within the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013), the Province of Milan, Welfare sector, Third sector and Support for disability and fragility, Training Service will organise the final project conference, that will be held in Milan (4<sup>th</sup> of December 2014).

The aim of the closing event is to debate crucial issues of developing new skills for professionals of the social welfare and of social innovation at a local, national and European level, within the EU Programme Progress. WIT Partners and experts are invited to debate and exchange their ideas during the final conference and the final thematic workshop.



Also within the Italian Council of the Union Presidency semester, the event will be the occasion to disseminate to the widest audience the WIT project results and main findings. The final conference will convene representatives of the project partners, and will be attended by programme representatives, social policy makers, key actors from the no profit sector, training sector, public administrations, other experts and civil society interested in the goal of the WIT project: "identifying new competencies for a new welfare". The day after moreover the Province will host the 5<sup>th</sup> project Workshop on the Enhancement of multi-skilling profiles in a more inclusive welfare".



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### How to join and share experiences: the WIT Community.

Are you interested in sharing your expertise and joining a thematic workshop? **WIT thematic workshops** are open focus groups of experts, practitioners or people simply very interested in the field (researchers, advisors, people from the worlds of NGOs, public and private social sectors, to mention some) focusing on a specific subject, while sharing knowledge and experience. Each thematic workshop tries to feed practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities in the field, drawing on experience derived from tailored useful projects, initiatives and practices.



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**Don't lose the occasion to join the on line thematic workshops! You can easily download all useful background information, videos and materials via this [link](#).**





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