

# Professionalization and Higher Education in Social Work in Italy

*Annamaria Campanini, EASSW*

Social work education is in a very challenging and sometimes also difficult situation in Italy. In accordance with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, Italy has introduced a national reform of higher education establishing two levels of degree in all university faculties. With regard to social work, there is a degree entitled “Sciences of Social Work” and a Master’s Degree in “Planning and Management of Politics and Social Services”.

The transformation from a Diploma to a Degree has contributed to legitimate social work in the academic framework, but at the same time, has determined a challenging situation in the social work education that was based, in general, on small groups of students (30/60 for each course), on active teaching methodologies and field placement organised with special attention.

The new degrees are open, in general, to a higher number of students and this fact implies more difficulties in finding places for students training and skilled supervisors that can allow significant learning experiences.

A new national reform of curricula is on the way and, within other changes, a fix number of credit for “training” is established both for BA and MA.

The discussion about which kind of training is necessary, how should be organised, which relation between theory and practice in the educational path for social work, is becoming more and more important. A research has been structured to analyse how the practice placement has been organised, till now, in Italy but also in Europe and the results will be ready in few months.

For these reasons the Italian Association of Teachers in Social Work Disciplines organised a study seminar on the field placement. In September 2007, in the beautiful centre of the S.Servolo Foundation in Venice, more than 30 teachers from different Italian Universities discussed this topic.

Two interesting contributions were presented by Prof. Umberto Margiotta of the University of Venice and by Prof. Jan Agten, Vice President of EASSW. Prof Margiotta underlined the evolution of the social professions and the need to understand how practice placement could contribute to prepare future social workers. Prof. Agten presented the Competence based learning in supervision and field training.

Looking at a document set up by the National Order of Social Workers, that purpose a protocol between Universities and Regional Orders to realize the training experience, the group of teachers has discussed in order to define some general guidelines that can serve like support and base in order to plan this formative experience inside the various universities contexts.

This is a first step towards having a stronger voice in the discussion with the “academy” that in Italy is still more oriented to prepare people for a degree and not to plan a curriculum oriented to train professionals.

*Annamaria Campanini is President of the European Association of Schools of Social Work and Social Work Educators (EASSW), president of the degree courses in Social Work at the Università della Calabria, Teacher of Social work at the Università della Calabria and Università di Parma, Coordinator of the Thematic Network EUSW- European Platform for a Worldwide Social Work, [www.eusw.unipr.it](http://www.eusw.unipr.it), President of AIDOSS (Association of Italian Teachers in Social Work), [www.aidoss.org](http://www.aidoss.org) and President of CESIP (Centre for Psycho-Social Intervention) in Parma.*