

# Report on the International Conference “Preventive Social Work in Russia and Europe”

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The Conference has been held in St. Petersburg on November, 10-12th 2008, organized by the Faculty of Sociology of the St. Petersburg State University and The International Centre of Social Services Studies with support of the Committee on Science and Higher Education of St. Petersburg, The Committee on Social Affairs of Leningrad Region, The Committee on Labour and Social Affairs of St. Petersburg, University of Helsinki (Finland) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Germany, Agency in St. Petersburg).



The basic idea of the Conference was the principle of integrating existing theories of social work and practical activities of social service organizations. Therefore academics, researchers and social professionals from governmental and non-governmental organizations from Russia and several European countries were taking part in the Conference. Representatives of St. Petersburg State University (Russia), Kuban State University (Russia), University of Helsinki (Finland), University of Lapland (Finland), Bielefeld University (Germany), Catholic University of Applied Sciences Northrhine-Westphalia, Aachen (Germany), University of Applied Sciences Koblenz (Germany), Friedrich-Schiller University (Germany), Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania), University of Aarhus (Denmark), University of Warwick (Great Britain), as well as representatives of the Committee of Social Protection of Leningrad Region (Russia), of Labour and Social Protection of St. Petersburg (Russia), the St. Petersburg Centre of NGOs' Development (Russia), the Family Support Centre St. Petersburg (Russia), St. Petersburg Institute of Early Intervention (Russia), Social Services Centre in Svetogorsk (Russia), Committee of Social Affairs in Vyborg (Russia) and from the NGO “Save the Children” (Finland) participated in the Conference.

Also the Conference was the final event of Russian-Finnish project “EMPATHOS Russia – Preventive Social work with children and families in Russian-Finnish border region”. The main theoretical and empirical research results of the project were presented by Valentina Samoylova (St. Petersburg State University) and Maritta Törrönen (University of Helsinki): evaluation of contemporary conditions of preventive social work with families and children in

parts of Leningrad region close to the Russian-Finish border, problems and needs of families living in this area, challenges which social professionals face in their activities and perspectives of preventive work's development. After summing up the results the main idea was that it is necessary to develop further primary prevention. The contemporary social work in Russia is based much more on the intervention in difficult life situations instead of early prevention.

A wide range of issues on modern conceptions of theory and practice of the preventive social work in Russia and Western European countries has been discussed during the Conference: challenges in development of preventive work systems, organization and management, interaction and co-operation of different agencies, features of preventive work with different groups, goals, evaluation and outcomes of preventive work. One of the important questions was the role of NGOs in preventive social work, since it is not enough development of NGO's activities in Russia out of big cities like St. Petersburg.

The dialogue between theoretical and practical social work, opinions and experience exchange between professionals within Russia and Europe has to be continued.

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