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RECOMMANDATIONS

Recommendations issued by street social workers

1. GENERAL – STREET SOCIAL WORK

Street social work, an essential instrument in the accompaniment of people, has an intrinsic political dimension and a vision of open, inclusive and solidarity society. The third ‘Words from the Street’ Forum was an opportunity to reflect on our role as street social workers, not only in terms of good practices, but also to make our voice heard in the political debate.

- We recommend recognizing street social work as a central part of the system of guarantee and exercise of human rights, as well as a specific and necessary practice in the construction of social cohesion. This work must be considered essential especially in times of crisis, for its ability to contact people in break-up, and for its adaptive and efficient method, centered on the relationship and not on a logic of problem/solution (or performance/result).
- In the Member States, the recognition of social street work should be given concrete form, with a legal framework that defines its tasks; we advocate that our work is not part of a logic of security and control of public order.
- For street social work to make sense, it is necessary to give priority to long-term funding. It is too often linked to ephemeral programs, which deprive social work of its nature.
- In order to professionalize our profession, it is necessary to think about and build training in social work on the street, both in the higher study paths, and in the offer of training for workers.

2. EDUCATION

- Street social work is a fundamental tool for the promotion and protection of human rights, yet it is necessary to consider it as part of the education system.
- Schools and educational spaces must be inclusive, open, flexible and able to adapt continuously to the circumstances and needs of communities, promoting social cohesion and fluidity between different educational spaces.
- It is necessary to develop school systems that are attentive to the specific needs of each student, especially those who are part of vulnerable populations.
- In this regard, we invite the Member States to follow and implement the principles contained in the International Convention on the Child (Art. 28,29)

3. GENDER

- We support the European Union in its work to raise awareness and fight discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. As workers in the field, we observe the risks and suffering caused by these discriminations; an effort for an inclusive society

respectful of all identities is necessary at all levels of power, unfortunately trends in the opposite direction continue to take hold in some Member States

- It is therefore important to support civil society organisations and education and social professionals in the development of programmes to promote the rights related to the diversity of gender identity and sexual orientation, and in the fight for gender equality.

4. MIGRATION, DISCRIMINATION, RIGHTS OF MARGINALIZED AND STREET POPULATIONS

Among the people we accompany are particularly vulnerable groups who are on the margins of society. Some live on the street or are 'in street situations'. For example, migrants - especially undocumented - and refugees regularly face serious difficulties in terms of access to adequate housing, health care, education and work.

- We reiterate that social services must be easily accessible to everyone, including those in street situations, and that they form part of a comprehensive plan that can guarantee their rights.
- We believe it is important for the European Ombudsman (EU Ombudsman) to play a more central role in defending the rights of people in street situations.

5. HOUSING

The right to housing is a fundamental human right: we strongly recommend that the European Union encourage Member States to implement policies according to these principles:

- Housing for young people in extreme poverty as a preventive measure against homelessness and wandering
- A courageous, coherent and adapted social housing policy with the aim of making decent housing available to people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods.
- Implementation of rent control and fight, also through preventive actions, against property speculation and other practices limiting the supply of affordable housing. These measures should include, for example, the occupation and adaptation of empty buildings for the creation of housing and the regulation of para-hotel platforms (e.g. AirBnB)
- Provide specific support to young people with low incomes who buy their first homes.
- Combating discrimination against minorities (e.g. migrants) in access to social housing.

6. PUBLIC SPACE

The public space, as we, the street social workers, conceive it, is above all a meeting place, as a place of life, as "agora" for the inhabitants, is a space of citizenship, exchange and play, which allows us to get in touch with our audiences.

- We request that we think about and make these spaces live by taking into account particularly vulnerable audiences (women, girls, drug users, homeless, young people...) too often excluded from the equation.
- Faced with the ubiquity of digital service spaces, we recommend maintaining open physical reception spaces so that this dematerialization of media and services does not result in the exclusion of vulnerable audiences from access to rights and information, to health, ...

7. DRUGS AND ADDICTIONS

- We recommend that addiction be considered a public health issue, sometimes a mental health issue, not a crime issue.
- We advocate decriminalization of drug users. We insist on strengthening social work to take care of users as a whole. Addiction is often only the symptom of a deeper evil being.

Countries that have chosen to decriminalize, such as Portugal, with risk reduction policies, are achieving results that are consistent with our vision in the right direction.

- We recommend increasing the number of places that promote these reductions, such as safe consumption rooms, needle exchanges, etc.

Recommendations issued during the regional workshops

Europe

We call on the European Union:

- Within the framework of the revised European Social Charter of the Council of Europe, to encourage Member States to adopt the related collective complaint protocol. Currently, only 15 states have adopted it.
- To ratify the European Convention on Human Rights.
- To provide for an adversarial procedure between the Member States, civil society and the European Union on the implementation of the European Social Rights pillar.
- To develop a strategy of direct communication with the citizens of the Member States.
- To consider the societal impacts of digital on Social Rights.
- To strengthen its unity and increase cooperation between intergovernmental bodies by prioritising the interests of the European population.

America

- There is a need for a Human Rights approach in any programme rather than a needs-based approach, which dehumanizes and strengthens welfare rather than empowerment.
- There is a need to combat intensively the stigmatization of street populations and other discriminated populations (LGBTQ+, migrants, indigenous people, travel people, etc.)
- A Pan-American Monitoring, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Body should be set up to report on the respect of human rights in each country.
- The role of social and human rights defender in the practice of street educators (street social workers) should be recognized.

Africa

- African states must fund social services/NGOs/associations that raise awareness of migration issues among young and old.
- Young people should be taken into account in their specificities, beliefs, values, vision, problems and their migration path, among others.

Asia

- An International Follow Up, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Body should be set up to report on respect for the Rights of the Child in each country.

Recommendations issued by youth

This week, we too had our say in the Forum, as young people. During one afternoon, we gathered among young people from Brussels from different neighborhoods. Normally, we would meet with young Europeans, but because of Covid, all this was cancelled. It is a bit sad, but we were able to meet street workers from all over the world. As a result, we were able to show them the ideas and projects that we carry out here.

For example, young people in the Merlo neighbourhood showed a film they made to highlight the stereotypes that people have about young people. The girls who attend Dynamo AMO Ixelles came to explain the functioning of their 100% girls group that sets up activities made by girls for girls.

Subsequently, a question and answer session was held with workers from all over the world. We were able to learn a little more about them, about their work and why they loved doing it so much. We were also able to answer their questions and explain to them how we young people perceive adults and that as long as we are treated with respect and understanding, everything goes well.

After the questions and answers, we were able to express ourselves about the ideas and recommendations that the workers had come up with during the first two days of the forum. We did this through a moving activity of debate and we were able to see that sometimes our visions of the street and its organization were different. But this is normal: after all, they are adult workers and we are young people, so we see things differently. But here, the difference is a wealth to be exploited to improve our relations. With the debate, we were able to understand each other better.

Finally, we said that recommendations from workers are good, but that recommendations from young people are better. So there have been some proposals put forward that would improve the public space for young people. So we immediately thought we would ban racism and prejudice, which seems obvious to us, and we let you think about how to implement it quickly.

Otherwise, more concretely:

Mutual aid and solidarity should be further developed. For example, to create more associations or shelters for young people, but also for homeless people or people who are harassed. We know that there are already, but not enough. The goal of all this solidarity would be for everyone to feel good about their life.

Second, there should also be more infrastructure in the public space, for example:

- Have free public washrooms
- More green spaces with even more benches, table tennis tables and play areas
- Developing urban farms and vegetable gardens
- Develop sports spaces
- Or develop a free public Wi-Fi network for all

And since we thought of everything, we could renovate vacant or abandoned buildings to gain space.

We should also develop a more correct security. We think that safety is important, but we have to strike a balance and get rid of certain stereotypes so that safety is the same for everyone.

We also think that the way of living one's religion should not be a barrier to going to school or simply being in the public space.

Finally, much more attention should be paid to the financial situation of young people. We should make all schools free so that everyone can get the education they want. Develop affordable housing for young people and more accessible and cost-of-living supports.

Thank you for listening to us. These recommendations are only a small part of youth, but we hope they will give you some food for thought. And if you still need more ideas, don't hesitate to ask us, the social workers know where to find us. After all, it's always better when we work together, right?

More recommendations from young people

1. Robot that gives you unlimited food when you walk
2. Free connection everywhere
3. Accept the trainings

4. Accepting religious signs in public space
5. Free school
6. Free unlimited Wi-Fi
7. Proper security (feeling safe – but without abuse by authorities)
8. Skatepark
9. More respect
10. No more free public toilets
11. Organize parties every Saturday
12. More youth centres
13. Renovate the buildings
14. Creating more space for sport
15. Organize more extracurricular activities
16. Waste Collection
17. Organize farm activities – farm in town –
18. No more vegetable garden
19. Visit neighbourhoods, learn their stories
20. Amusement Park
21. A castle
22. Brand store at -80%
23. A free bank
24. Free concert every day
25. Free hairdressers
26. Increase in wages
27. Pollution control trucks
28. No more compulsory school
29. Remove all the wrong people
30. Housing the poor
31. Allow the wearing of headscarves at school
32. Open a pool in Forest
33. Helping everyone in need
34. Accompanying and caring for harassed persons
35. Banning racism
36. Prohibit bias
37. More neighbourhood houses
38. Lower cost of living
39. More activities for more solidarity between young people and adults
40. Park layout (table, table tennis, etc.)
41. Of the babyfooters
42. Football days a few days a week
43. Buses that lead directly to places
44. Help people in need, do everything to make everyone feel good