Orientation Questions for the Workshops

April 19 – 23, 2021: Virtual Social Europe Days
Challenges for Social Work, Social Policy & Human Resource Management

Content

General instructions for Workshop Presentations

Dear students, please read these instructions carefully to **enjoy the unique opportunity to discuss highly relevant topics in a truly European atmosphere**:

1) First, **change your mindset when preparing the presentation**: In these international workshops, **you prepare the presentations for your fellow international students**, not for the lecturer or for getting a good grade. The quality of these students-for-students workshops depends entirely upon the quality of your input. Design the presentation as you would personally like it to be introduced to a European topic!

2) Bearing your diverse and international audience in mind, it is important to **focus on key issues** in your presentation. Remember the motto: **"Less is more".** Select carefully which issues you want to present, which background information is absolutely necessary and put most attention to concrete approaches, solutions and good practice examples from your country in regard to the topic at hand. Main elements: (a) short helicopter view on the essential political context in your own country (b) description of the controversial issues & debates on the theme (c) your own reflections and opinions and their arguments

3) After a short introduction by the lecturer, your presentations will follow. In addition to the slides, prepare a PDF version of your slides to be shared among all participants after the workshop presentations.

4) Again, **keep your presentation short and focused**. If you are a large team, not everybody has to present. You can select people to present and others to facilitate the discussion after your presentation.

5) Aim for a **10-minute presentation** and 10-20 min minutes for discussion where you can bring in all the knowledge that you cut out of your presentation. If you use PowerPoint slides, 5 slides (with about 7 lines per slide) are a good idea to follow. Bear in mind that **presenting in a foreign language** normally **takes more time** than in your native language.

6) **Prepare the discussion after your presentation**. What would you like the discussion to focus on? What would you want to know from your audience?

7) At the end of the workshop, a comparative discussion from a European perspective will take place facilitated by the lecturer that joins your group. If you bring what you learnt in creating your presentation into this discussion, **you are well prepared already!**

At the end, **three central** questions will be discussed:

- What are the most striking **differences and similarities** between the countries as far as the theme is concerned?

- What do the members of the workshop **think** about these similarities and differences? How do they evaluate them?

- What can we **learn** from this and from each other within Europe: what are **best practices?**

Image: Pixabay

Workshop 1: Superdiversity and Social Cohesion

Where there is difference, there is the potential for unfair discrimination, since there is the potential for groups to be identified as 'different' and therefore treated less favourably. We live in societies characterized by inequalities and power imbalances that affect us all. The diversity approach acknowledges the significance of diversity and the need to affirm and value it and that differences between people can and should be seen as assets to be appreciated, rather than problems to be solved. Race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation and identity, age, language, disability, religion and so on are just some of the ways in which difference can so easily be translated into discrimination and oppression as a result of power imbalances. The reality for each one of us is having to deal with a complex set of interactions across perhaps several of these different areas.

This workshop aims to increase students' awareness of the way people's personal struggles are inextricably linked to oppressive structures in our society. As students, you are invited to explore and analyse the inequalities that exist in your different countries, and the discrimination and oppression faced by many groups and individuals.

1. **Key concepts:** What are the factors underlying discrimination and oppression? What are the common issues and the key differences across the various forms of discrimination: sexism, racism, ageism, heterosexism, ableism and so on? Why is it important to value diversity?

2. **Main struggles:** Please give an overview of the situation concerning women, LGBTIQ, ethnic minority groups etc. in your country. What are the main struggles that these different groups face? How has the situation changed in recent history?

3. **Culture and language:** Societal privilege and oppression is maintained and perpetuated by the many institutions that make up our society. Institutions are the policies, laws, rules, norms and customs that disadvantage some social groups and advantage others, both intentionally and unintentionally. It is through institutions that people are given advantages or denied opportunities. Can you identify aspects of the culture you were brought up in that perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination? Can you identify ways in which the structure of society might affect different groups, their circumstances and their problems?

4. **Social cohesion and the labour market.** What is the link between social cohesion and economical participation? What is the policy of your Member State to stimulate different groups to participate in the labour market?

5. **Social cohesion in practice.** How do local governments or organisations in your country try to stimulate active participation and social cohesion between all members? Give an example of a good practice that manages to break down 'barriers of distrust' between inhabitants.

6. **Superdiversity and regulation**. How does the government in your Member State contribute or fight oppression against minority groups through legislation or institutions? How do non-governmental organisations influence / enforce such legislation?

Workshop 2: Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe

This workshop will focus on analysing the significance of poverty and how it determines an increase of social exclusion in Europe. To do this, students are supposed to contextualise the main topic of poverty in the framework of their own country. The workshop moderators will introduce the topic and give some input on defining and measuring poverty and social exclusion, so the emphasis of the student presentations can be on current debates regarding poverty and social exclusion in their own country and on policy measures and best practices, observed in the work field.

1. **Facts and figures:** Poverty and social exclusion in your own country:

    -   Which sections of the population are especially affected by poverty and social exclusion?
    -   What are the reasons for this – from a historical, sociological, demographical and/or cultural point of view?
    -   To what extent has the appreciation of poverty changed in the last years and decades and why?

2. **Ideology:** Social reactions on poverty and social exclusion:

    -   How do people and political institutions deal with the phenomena of poverty and social exclusion?
    -   What are the current debates in your country regarding this topic?
    -   Who is considered to be responsible for poverty and social exclusion?
    -   Are the social effects of poverty and social exclusion met by means of control and repression or rather by measures of integration?
    -   Which groups receive attention, which are ignored or even frozen out?

3. **Policy and action against poverty and social exclusion:** What can other students learn from your country?

    -   What kind of **policy measures** against material poverty (in the sense of basic necessities of life like housing, food, and clothing) does your country apply?
    -   What are the most **effective approaches** to restrain social exclusion in your country? Are there specialized integration programs, pressure groups or lobbies for the encouragement of socially and culturally deprived and excluded sections of the population?

What kind of approaches for better **participation and empowerment** do you know of in regard to children, youth, single parents, ethnical and religious minorities, unemployed, elderly people, working poor etc.? How is it possible for them to achieve more attention and respect? Note: **More information related to this workshop on the final page (14)**

Workshop 3: More People at Work

The aim of the Lisbon Strategy was to make Europe the most competitive economy in the world: more people at work. This is known as activation policy to be realised through better allocation, better training, and coaching (internships and apprenticeships) and strict regulations. Despite this in several Member States huge numbers of people are excluded from the labour market. During long periods of unemployment, they lose their skills, causing a loss of human capital. More social economy and more community services can be one of the important elements in the struggle against structural long-term unemployment. A common aim for such programs is 'the creation of employment for the unemployed'. Flexibility, mobility, and employability are seen as appropriate ways of activation. Politicians promote 'activation' as a main goal and priority. Individual shortcomings of unemployed and people in poverty are accentuated, while mechanisms of structural exclusion seem to disappear into the background. In this workshop we invite you to take part in a critical review of activation policy on the one hand and social exclusion on the other.

Please find below 5 orientation questions for this workshop

Up to 80% percent or more people at work? Is it a noble aim as part of modern activation state policy or rather an expensive Utopia? Please give your arguments pro and con.

Explain HOW to get jobless people back into Work. When and why is activation the first and the best choice and in which cases is it not indicated?

1. Please explain your view on how to deal with benefit recipients: emphasise more on:
    a. The entitlement on the employment benefit (or benefit social minimum)
    b. What is social policy doing within your region with the challenge to get as much people as possible at work?
    c. How does your country deal with bringing the jobless into work and with related questions of poverty and social exclusion, especially with long time unemployed people? Please explain in short, the main laws and regulations for unemployed people and give the facts and figures of the recent years (un)employment and poverty/social exclusion.

2. Which concrete forms of social economy, public and community services and local projects are organised in your member state? Can you mention good practices?

3. What are your reflections on the quality of social policy within your region towards the theme 'more people at work' (in relation to human rights and social exclusion/inclusion)?

Workshop 4: Work and Unemployment

In this workshop we will compare the different social benefit systems in case of unemployment and work activation policies across different EU states and critically review them. To prepare the discussion we ask the participants to fill in the added template with data from their own country. Based on this schedule, we expect the participants to be able to explain the social benefit scheme and the work activation policies of their own country in general lines.

The discussion shall take a critical look at the balances/tensions between on the one hand unemployment/social benefits given and the work activation measures that encourage people to enter the formal labour market in comparison to the minimum wage.

Discussion based on the filled template (see below)

1. In your opinion what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the unemployment/social benefit system versus the work activation policies given by government in your country with regard to labour market participation. We will compare and discuss these for the different countries.
2. Is the minimum wage in your country sufficient to cover the costs of a life in dignity?
3. Do you think an unconditional minimum income would be a more suitable answer to current challenges of the labour market such as globalisation, digitalisation or sustainability?
4. *Do you think that social benefits (such as unemployment benefits, job seekers allowances and/or social assistance) must become subject of strong European regulations (with in the end a European social benefit system) or do you consider it as wise to trust in member state's own sovereignty?*

Income examples	Employment benefit +duration	Social benefits for people without means/ unemployment benefits	Activation measures /benefits to encourage people for paid work	Minimum wage
A *single*				
2 *parents +2 children*				
Single parent +2 children				
Average child benefit/family allowance			1 *child versus 2 children until the age of … of children/students*	
Do you get social assistance or unemployment allowance if you finish university in your country and do not find a job? If yes: how much and for how long?				

Workshop 5: Recruitment and Selection

This workshop will focus on the current challenges on the labour market in relation to "recruitment and selection."
A short definition of selection and recruitment:
"The process of attracting and choosing candidates for employment. Recruitment and selection are the process by which a company makes its choices for new hires. The company must recruit potential candidates, and then put them through a rigorous application, review and selection process."
Recruitment and selection involve a number of specific steps that help to lead the company to a proper selection of employees. Recruitment and selection are also parts of a long and expensive process.

Please prepare the following orientation questions for this workshop:

1. There is an imbalance in the labour market. Many vacancies cannot be filled because there is a shortage on the labour market. At the same time there still are quite some unemployed people. This means there still are some groups that can be activated.
• Name (at least) three examples of sectors (or professions) for which it is difficult to find new employees in your country.
• Give (at least) three examples of groups of unemployed people in your country.
2. Research shows that discrimination in the recruitment process still exists. What laws does your country have on anti-discrimination? And what are the effects on the labour market?
3. In many European countries, social media are used in the recruitment and selection process. How are they used in your country? In what creative ways would you use social media for employer branding? In what creative ways would you use social media to attract applicants? Would you use social media in the selection process to gain more information about your applicants? Why? Why not?
4. In recruiting, soft skills are becoming increasingly important. What are, according to you, the most important 21st century soft skills for social workers and HR-employees and why? Several studies show that after the corona crisis employees will be working more from home. Does this require other soft skills, besides ICT-skills? Which ones?

After the presentations we would like to brainstorm together on the following questions:
•   What creative ways can we come up with to help fulfil the vacancies for which employers have trouble finding personnel for?
•   How can we convince the groups of unemployed people to apply for the vacancies?
•   How can social media play a role in this?
•   How do we prevent discrimination?

Workshop 6: Digital Economy & Society

Digitalisation marks a transformation that cuts across all economic and societal sectors. On the one hand, implementing digital technologies in nearly all areas of life has a great potential for social progress, gains in economic efficiency and political inclusion as well as participation. The recent pandemic has shown the possibilities that digital technologies provide for home office, remote work, home schooling etc. On the other hand, digitalisation might also lead to disruptive economic developments, threaten citizen's privacy, or lead to new forms of social exclusion. Many issues concerning the digital futures are not yet resolved. Thoughtful analysis and action are needed to ensure that technical innovation also becomes social innovation and increased productivity is not realised at social costs. Digitalisation also impacts the professional domains of Social Work (SW) and Human Resource Management (HRM): new opportunities arise, e.g. employer branding or recruiting with social media in HRM or enhancing participation of handicapped people in SW. Professionals in both fields are required to explore these new opportunities and to help shaping the implementation of digital technologies according to their professional standards.

Bearing this in mind, provide answers from your country's perspective on the following orientation questions:

1) **Digitalisation in general:** How can you describe the state of digitalisation in your country? Amongst other sources you could use the "Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)" that highlights "the evolution of EU member states in digital competitiveness" (https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi last accessed 29.01.2017)

2) **Uptake in your professional field:** To what degree are digital technologies already used in the fields of HRM or SW? What are the drivers for digital transformation in your professional fields, what are the barriers?

3) **Good practices:** Find 1 or 2 examples in your professional field that use digital technologies in your country in an interesting way. Describe the context, the technologies used, the intended outcome, and experiences made.

The **good practice examples** should be the focus of your presentation.

Workshop 7: The Future of Work

This workshop will focus on analysing several aspects of the Future of Work, of new forms of working and its implications on the labour market. Big companies are in keen competition to catch the best talents from their own country, from Europe and from the world. That's why employers have to create attractive workplaces, build a high-quality relationship with their employees, characterised by trust, pride and camaraderie and promote themselves in the international labour market by means of employer branding and dynamic work.

On the other hand, we see a very strong growth of precarious work: the work of those who fill permanent job needs but are denied permanent employee rights. Globally, these workers are subject to unstable employment, lower wages and more dangerous working conditions. They rarely receive social benefits and are often denied the right to join a union.
In this workshop you can refer to literature from the internet «the future of work», «great place to work», «employer branding», «dynamic work» and «precarious work» **http://thefutureofwork.net ;** http://www.greatplacetowork.net

In the literature on «the future of work» you will find three central elements: Bricks, meaning how to build future workplaces. Bytes, meaning how to optimize the use of ICT and social media, and Behaviour, meaning how to develop new sustainable labour relations for the future.

These are the 4 orientation questions for this workshop:

(1) Give an **overview** of how the Future of Work is discussed in your country, paying attention to Bricks, Bytes and Behaviour on several levels (government, employers/employer branding, trade unions, HRM- and business management magazines, papers, researchers etc.). Please also pay attention to several forms of both *precarious work* and *dynamic work.*

(2) Describe the **characteristics** of Great Place to Work and give **one impressive example** from your country. Please pay attention to *dynamic work* too.

(3) Prepare **a plea** about the role and tasks of a HR consultant/Occupational Social Worker in an organisation that deals with new forms of working, creating an attractive working place and promoting of the company as a Great Place to Work, stressing the employer branding issue, making the world of work more dynamic and less precarious.

(4) Finally formulate **a short statement** for the discussion on this subject making use of a short film from the internet that your group considers more or less representative for the way the Future of Work is dealt with in your country. Please bring the film on USB-stick

Workshop 8: Healthy Ageing

The unprecedented ageing of Europe's population is already having profound consequences for individuals, businesses, governments, policymakers and investors. The ageing phenomenon is challenging the established economic models, reshaping consumer spending and presenting higher costs for the welfare state. Demographic change constitutes a societal challenge for Europe, but also offers new opportunities for innovation, growth and jobs. European countries are enduring a major challenge and an important part of the solution to this challenge is extending the working age of workers. As an HR and Social Policy professional you are a part of the collective ability to seize this opportunity. Investing in health of the working population is an opportunity to improve the quality of life of the ageing population, to move towards more sustainable health and to create economic growth and jobs. How can HR and Social Policy contribute? Solutions will require collaboration and a shared vision amongst local society, business leaders and managers, innovators, public authorities and policy makers.

This workshop is designed to inspire and to give you insights on the topic of healthy ageing. Please

answer the following orientation questions below:

1. Facts and figures; concerning ageing population in your country, current year up to 2040. Give a short overview of meaningful statistics of the ageing population and demographic change within your country, comparing rural with urban areas please.

2. Is there a social debate on the issue of ageing population and workers? Who is considered to be responsible regarding solutions? Why do you think this topic is important? Is there an aging gap? What do you think about the role of seniors in the society, what´s the experience in your country?

3. How do they fix the case of those wanting to join the labour market after being retired? Is there any provision about this? What is the policy of your country to stimulate older workers to participate in the labour market?

4. Life-span development theory provides a framework for understanding human ageing, whereas the increasing number of technological resources (i.e., e-health for seniors, and others) contrast many times with the phenomenon of the loneliness of Seniors, concerning healthy ageing, can you give an example of a good practice to promote health and labour-social integration of seniors? Do you detect many gaps in the design of the social policy targeting this group of population?

Possible sources of information related to this workshop: see final page (13)

Workshop 9: Gender Inequality in Europe

The Gender Equality Index is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to measure gender inequality across the EU. With an EU-average score of 67.9 out of 100, EIGE claim that the EU is at least 60 years away from reaching complete gender equality. The index shows that advances are moving with an average improvement of just half a point a year. There are obviously big differences across the EU, from Sweden with the highest score (83.8) to Greece with the lowest score (52.2) in 2020. The index measures inequalities across the six core domains of work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. It also looks at the additional domain of violence and at intersections of gender with disability, country of origin, age group, level of education and family type. Some pertinent issues in relation to gender inequalities include the gender pay gap, imbalance in caring responsibilities, sexual harassment and intimate partner violence, lack of women in decision-making positions, the effect of toxic masculinity on boys and men and the feminisation of poverty.

Please answer the following orientation questions below:

1. What is the situation in relation to gender equality in your country and what are its causes?

2. What is the impact of gender inequalities on women/ men, on families and on society as a whole?

3. What policies can be adopted to improve gender equality? Discuss the options which are most relevant to your country.

4. Some argue that gender inequalities are not an issue anymore. What arguments are put forward to sustain this position and what is your opinion on this claim?

Workshop 10: Social Work and Climate: People, Planet, Profit

Climate change has begun to make itself felt even in Europe. More extreme weather conditions, such as flooding and the extreme summer heat, may well have something to do with climate change. They do not only affect the environment, but our lives and societies, and livelihoods, too. Farmers find that they cannot use their land anymore, or not in the same way as before – resulting in economic loss: the yield in agricultural products is decreasing, prices for essential food staples are going up. Industry or businesses may be affected in a similar way, although obviously many industries contribute, or have contributed, to the current situation. Species are becoming extinct or choosing to migrate, other species are appearing, bringing new diseases that may also be contagious for human beings. Social consequences are likely to involve higher costs of living, insolvencies, frustrated investment, job losses, health issues and social costs. Another challenge is likely to be mass migration of people from areas that have become uninhabitable due to climate change. Often the poorest of the poorest are hit worst by natural disasters caused or aggravated by climate change and would most need support.

The question arises whether states or regions do something, and if so, what, to adapt to such changes, and who may have to bear the costs. This may be obvious here and there, for instance, the health systems of the states will probably look after persons affected by infections carried by the tiger mosquito. However, may the farmer or the businessperson of our example also expect compensation for their losses? How about persons losing their jobs in the areas they are trained for, but cease to exist? How can the social balance be re- established or maintained? How can profits made from causing climate change be used for combatting it, or at least for adapting to climate change?

In the light of this, please address the following questions:

1. Effects of climate change: What are the effects of climate change in your country which also have an impact on society and the economy?
2. Adaptation measures taken: Is there a strategy, or various strategies to adapt to climate change and to address these consequences? By which measures and at which level: your home state, region and/or municipality?
3. Focus of strategies: Do any such strategies and measures take a local, national or European approach, or do they also look at the climate-related causes of migration? Do they consider specifically vulnerable groups?
4. Compensation: Are there efforts in your country to compensate people whose basic rights to life, health, work or property are affected by climate change? Differentiate according to the groups (more or less vulnerable) such strategies may be aimed at.

Possible sources of information related to workshop 8:

Article: *Development (f)or Maintenance? An Empirical Study on the Use of and Need for HR Practices to Retain Older Workers in Health Care Organizations*
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hrdq.21200/abstract

Aging, Adult Development, and Work Motivation http://amr.aom.org/content/29/3/440.short

Active Ageing? Perspectives from Europe on a Vaunted Topic (Critical Studies in Socio- cultural Diversity) (Book) by Gómez Jiménez, M.L and Parker Jonathan, (collective materials with a view in a comparative between countries at the EU). https://www.amazon.es/Perspectives-Vaunted-Critical-Socio-cultural-Diversity/dp/1861771339/ref=sr_1_1?qid=1581012742&refinements=p_27%3AJonathan+Parker&s=books&sr=1-1

More information related to workshop 2:

In 2017, according to Eurostat, there were 112.8 million people in the EU-28 who lived in households at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), equivalent to 22.4 % of the entire population. 6.6% of the population in the EU-28 were severely materially deprived. More than a third of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in three EU Member States: Bulgaria (38.9 %), Romania (35.7 %) and Greece (34.8 %). At the other end of the scale, the lowest shares of persons being at risk of poverty or social exclusion were recorded in the Slovakia (16.3 %), Finland (15.7 %), and Czechia (12.2 %).

Poverty, social exclusion and health are closely interrelated. They can be a cause or a consequence of one another, and the relation amongst the three is often cyclical. Many of the mechanisms leading to and perpetuating poverty and social exclusion are related to health, which reflects a marked correlation between socio-economic status and health. As part of its *Europe 2020* Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the European Commission launched a European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. One of the five headline targets of the Europe 2020 headline indicators is to reduce poverty by lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020. The Commission identified the following areas for action:

- Greater and more effective use of the EU Funds to support social inclusion.
- Promoting evidence-based social innovation.
- Working in partnership and harnessing the potential of the social economy.
- Enhanced policy coordination among the Member States.

In this workshop we will tackle the key question on how to fight poverty and social exclusion effectively, by discussing policy interventions and best practices performed by social work professionals in the different member states.