

## 2017 IFSW European Conference in Iceland

### Joint Workshop Proposal by AASW<sup>1</sup>, AZSWU<sup>2</sup>, GASW<sup>3</sup> and NASWM<sup>4</sup>

#### **Title of the Workshop: Professionalization of Social Work in Post-Socialist Countries – Cases of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova**

**Content of the Workshop:** The social work paradigm in post-socialist countries is a collectivity of professionals with systemic solutions to society's pressing problems. Social work professionals in post-socialist countries are competent agents of social change who act globally and locally through the profession-specific values, knowledge, and skills by designing and implementing effective and sustainable policy and practice interventions.

**Social Work Emerging in Post Socialist Countries:** Social work development in the countries in question (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgian, Moldova) is characterized by particular specificities, yet this process shares common trends as well. In all these countries social work has been developing since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Social work practice emerged in this region as a response to the severe socio-economic crisis brought about by the breakdown of the soviet empire, in case of Armenia in addition to the earthquake and war, and in all influenced by the recommendations of the international stakeholders. Having a tradition of “no social problems”, the official view of the socialist utopia of the Soviet Union that in a just social system (communism) social problems would disappear, these countries are faced with a significant number of social and economical challenges.

Despite 20 years of history in the region, social work has little tradition as an academic or professional path in most former Soviet countries. The training program for social workers at the university level was established in 1996 in Armenia, whereas the academic level education was introduced in 2000 in Moldova, in 2005 in Azerbaijan and in 2006 in Georgia. The need for well-trained social workers, guided by the relevant job description and supported by the effective system is profound in all post-communist societies, with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova being no exception.

**Professional Associations in the Region:** Pioneer social workers in the region have formed thriving associations as professional touchstones for all social workers. In Armenia and Georgia the associations were established in 2004 when social work had no clear professional identity or a code of standards, and few opportunities to work in the field. The associations have helped not only raise the profile of social work within their respective countries, but also supported the development of social work education as well as establishment and enforcement of a professional code of ethics, key characteristic of the profession. These developments were followed by Azerbaijan establishing the association in 2009. In 2016 social work associations was established in Moldova.

**Focus of the Workshop:** During the workshop the achievements and challenges of social work professional development in these countries will be discussed by the representative of the professional associations. The topics discussed will include the following: education, practice, profile, standards, supervision, monitoring, employment opportunities, social work and social policy tendencies, etc. The focus will be the role of the professional associations in developing the social work profession in the region. Each of the country representatives will have approx.10-13 minutes for presentations (50 minutes total) that will be followed by Q&A session (40 minutes).

**Format of the Workshop:** Expected number of participants 70-150; theater style or roundtable lay out will be fine depending on the size of the participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Armenian Association of Social Workers

<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union

<sup>3</sup> Georgian Association of Social Workers

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Social Worker in Moldova

**Presenters:**

- Armenia: Mira Antonyan, AASW, President;
- Azerbaijan: Aytakin Huseynli, AZSWU, Chair;
- Georgia: Nino Shatberashvili, GASW, Chair;
- Moldova: Vadim Moldovan, NASESAM, International Liaison

Other representatives will also be there as the resource persons during the presentations: Manane Petrosyan, Armenia; Gulnara Panahova, Azerbaijan; Lamiya Rzayeva, Azerbaijan; Ia Shekreladze, Georgia.

**Moderator:** Salome Namicheishvili, IFSW Europe, Member at Large

**Length of the Workshop:** 1 / 1,5

**Language of the Workshop:** English

**Other:** Additional materials like photos, printed materials, etc are available.