Social Work in Eastern Europe
Darja Zaviršek, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
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Abstract

Historical, economic, and social differences as well as common experiences of state socialism in Eastern Europe made social work a profession with many commonalities and differences across the region. With some exceptions, university-based social work education began after 1991. Modern social policies and social work practices have developed during the time of transition from communism to a free market, which produced economic hardship, ethnic wars, racism against ethnic minorities silenced under communism reemerging, increased social inequalities, large-scale migration, and a new understanding of individual needs and people’s everyday desires, all reflected in social work practice.

Introduction

Eastern Europe politically and socially is part of Europe (although not always the case geographically) and encompassed countries embedded in state socialism as the dominant political system for approximately 50 years. These include former Soviet Union republics – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and countries that have become part of the European Union in 2004 (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia, including the three Baltic countries already mentioned), 2007 (Bulgaria, Romania), and in 2013 (Croatia).

Their communist past has been an important marker that influences today’s social work education, social welfare institutions, and social work knowledge and practice, but it is not the only signifier. Different historical powers (belonging to three different empires – Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian Tsars), geographical and economic differences, large disparities between urban and rural areas, religious influences (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim), multiethnic territories, and relations between ethnic groups, influence everyday life among Eastern Europe’s diverse populations.

After the change in political regimes, the ‘iron continent’ became fragmented through ethnic wars, massive economic crises, migration, and state-building ventures among the former Soviet Union and Yugoslav Republics alongside international political players (the World bank, International Monetary Fund, and European Union institutions), which influenced economic lives and social policy/legislation of the countries in the region. The area acquired different names according to geographic, economic, or social specificities or international interests (Central Europe, South East Europe, the Balkan region, the countries of the former Soviet Union, and Russia). Some names are historically loaded and negative. The pejorative word ‘Balkanization’ became used globally to describe phenomena prone to unpredictability, fragmentation, and conflict. Some Eastern European countries were defined as in need of ‘Europianization’ despite their geographical placement within Europe. Many countries were urged to stop human rights violations of minority peoples if they wanted to become part of the European Union (at least formally). This had some positive impact in democratizing societies and social work (Sasse, 2009). Across the region, a wide specter of different social work practices coexist, varying from very innovative, radical, and liberating ones for persons requiring services and support to oppressive, traditional, and narrow-minded pathology-based responses by professionals and social work institutions.

Social Work’s Historical Development before 1991

Despite the belief that social work did not exist in Eastern Europe prior to 1991, there is considerable research showing that professional social work education was established in some countries in the region after World War I, but was disrupted and closed down at the end of the World War II, or soon afterward (Hering and Waaldijk, 2003; Schilde and Schulte, 2005; Hering and Waaldijk, 2006).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, and Bulgarian founders of social work education periodically went hand in hand with the Western counterparts following the idea that social work has to become a profession based on proper education and training – Margit Slachta in Budapest, Helena Radlinska in Warsaw, Princess Ileana in Bucharest, Rayna Petkova in Sofia. They struggled against economic, social, and symbolic inequalities of populations during times of quick and brutal industrialization and deruralization of societies and some fought for the so-called ‘woman’s question’ – women’s right to vote, the right for civil marriage and divorce, and more gender equality.

During the period of state socialism, when existing social work training, schools, and institutes were closed down, some communist countries replaced them, e.g., ‘social care assistance training’ in Romania, ‘social nurse’ program in Czechoslovakia, and ‘social service workers’ training in Poland (Jarkska Smirnova, 2013). For the communist leadership, social work was associated with capitalist ideology, seen as backward, and a counterideology compared with the socialist idea that universal employment would ensure that all other economic, social, and emotional needs of people were addressed by the system of universal social and health protection. Additionally, it was believed that the state as a ‘good father’
would protect children, older people, and disabled people through a wide range of long-stay social institutions. Socialism was seemingly able to eradicate the need for social work interventions and ensure the well-being of every ‘human being.’ Additionally, the omnipotent communist leaders did not allow any innovations except those that came from the Communist Party. One of the first Yugoslav social work teachers who pleaded with the highest Communist Party members to open the school for social work in Slovenia in 1955 expressed their attitude:

We could write about what happens in the West and about social work abroad, but always in such a way, that it was obvious that ours [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] had written or said that already before them [the Westerners]. We had to be always in front of anyone else (Zaviršek, 2005a). (Katja Vodopivec (1917–2012) was a professor of law. In 1958, she wrote the first Yugoslav book on social work methods (in Slovenian language) which was not allowed to be used by social work students and teachers during communism) (Zaviršek, 2005a, 2012)

Yugoslavia was the only communist country that had established schools for social work after the communist takeover compared to 1952 in Croatia, 1955 in Slovenia, 1957 in Macedonia and Serbia, and 1958 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, this is perceived as the unique development of social work education under communism (Zaviršek, 2005a,b, 2008, 2012). This top-down decision making has to be understood contextually, partially as the personal influence of some women Communist Party members who were commended for their commitment during the partisan struggle, were active in the area of welfare protection, and maintained Cold War equilibrium. When the Yugoslav Communists ended their close relationship with Stalin (Cominform split in 1948), they started to cooperate with the United States to avoid political isolation and economic vulnerability (Bilandžić, 1985). Soon afterward, American and Scandinavian advisers became involved in the processes of establishing the first social work curriculum in Croatia in the early 1950s, and social welfare institutions called ‘centers for social work’ throughout Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. Centers for social work have remained the major welfare institutions in all parts of former Yugoslavia until now.

Social work education also served as a useful way to carry out several goals of the Communist Revolution and partially change the gender order. Social work training ensured education for masses of women and was therefore potentially emancipating. It was simultaneously seen as suitable for retaining traditional femininity and women’s ‘natural vocation’ intact. It created new jobs for women who became employed in large long-stay welfare institutions – nursing homes, boarding schools for disabled children, and asylums for people with disabilities, and was proof that the Communist Party cared about women, especially the peasantry and those from poor rural areas. Large, semiclosed places of welfare state institutions were meant to replace women’s unpaid caring work at home. The institutionalization of social work training gave the Party control not only over welfare and gender regimes but also ‘in the field,’ where ‘deviant’ behavior such as alcoholism, work hatred, and prostitution could be carefully monitored.

The official definition of the socialist social work was that “social work carries out the goals of social policy” and social workers were primarily expected to work in the areas of social assistance delivery, family protection (which included foster care for children who had lost parents during the war, divorce, and single mothers issues), and to prevent ‘deviancies.’ Social work education was imposed from above to influence the everyday life of people from below.

From State Socialism toward Neoliberalism

The ‘emergency welfare state’ (the term used by Tomasz Inglot (2009)) processes after 1991 included new social policy legislation and the development of the mixed system of social services (governmental, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and private providers). The times of economic liberalization were harsh for most Eastern European countries and the majority of people (Jäppinen et al., 2011; Bessudnov et al., 2011). The existing industries and state enterprises collapsed and a period of enormous unemployment, among men, women, and ethnic minorities (especially Russians in the Baltic countries, and Roma people in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria) started to dominate everyday life. Poverty expanded and remained the central fact of life. It affected most heavily the rural areas of the region, from where people migrated to capital cities, or from its more eastern parts toward the western parts, and from southern parts toward the north (from central Asia to Russia, from Ukraine to Poland; from Kosovo and Albania to Croatia and Slovenia). In Albania, rates of poverty in rural areas are almost 70% higher than in the capital (Ymeraj, 2007).

People faced many breaks in their everyday routines: privatization of publicly created goods during state socialism (kindergartens, local health centers, factories), flexibilization of labor and consequently unemployment after a long period of full employment, early retirements of a huge number of workers in some countries (Vanhuysse analyzed this phenomenon as the deliberate governmental strategy against the potential resistance toward the neoliberal reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic (2009),), ethnic conflicts and wars, economic migration and the transformation of extended family care systems and family life, the development of huge economic inequalities (‘the new rich’), and the return of religious powers as the key political and social players in secularized societies. Eastern European countries moved from state socialism to neoliberalism. Many researchers revealed that international financial institutions heavily influenced national governments’ decision making in the economic and social policy areas and worked toward the neoliberalization of the whole region (Deacon et al., 2007).

Violent ethnic conflicts (Croatia, Macedonia), ethnic wars (Armenian, Azerbaijan), and ethnic cleansing and mass killings (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), which appeared almost immediately after the fall of Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, caused deaths, disability, forced migration, voluntary and compulsory remigration, increased poverty, transgenerational
loses, and trauma. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 100 000–300 000 persons were killed and out of a population of 4.4 million, 1 million fled the country between 1992 and 1995 (Maglajlić Holiček and Rašidagić, 2007). Similarly, 850 000 persons fled from Kosovo in 1999 and 360 000 Kosovans sought refuge in neighboring Macedonia, comprising 17% of the whole population of Macedonia (Gerovska Mitrev, 2007; Cocozzelli, 2007). After Kosovo proclaimed independence in 2008, social work students disputed whether they are ethnically ‘Albanians,’ ‘Moslems,’ or ‘Kosovans’ and remained divided into three different ethnic identities (personal notes, University of Pristina, 2008).

During state socialism, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ primordial understandings of the blood–kin relationship based on singular ethnic belonging were replaced by the pragmatic communist ideology, which suppressed ethnic identities to construct a singular, but new identity of a ‘socialist proletariat.’ After 1991, ethnicity became a ‘new’ political and social identity for the vast majority of people. This identity was not formally recognized and had not been individually important for almost half the twentieth century. The ‘imagined identities’ were mobilized by political elites for a new political project of shifting national and state borders. In 1992, the new Slovenian government deprived more than 25 000 persons (official holders of Yugoslav passport who came to Slovenia as economic immigrants) of citizenship rights and erased them from the register of permanent residents of the Republic of Slovenia. They lost all social and political rights and were treated as ‘illegal migrants’ vulnerable to detention and deportation (Zorn, 2009). In Baltic countries, the exclusion of internal ‘others,’ e.g., the Russian ethnic minority, helped to construct seemingly ethnically homogeneous states.

Roma people, who are today the largest ethnic minority in Europe, have suffered severely during the past 20 years. There are 9–12 million Roma people in the region, with 2.5 million in Romania. The figures are estimates and include people who have defined their Roma ethnic belongings during National Censuses and those who have not (mostly because of racism). Roma men have lost their jobs due to closures of heavy industry and poor education. Additionally, they have lost alternative sources of earning (e.g., iron, collecting plastic bottles, simple craft, and music) and remained largely without income, and dependent on social assistance money. Many Roma fled ethnic wars. In Kosovo, for instance, Roma villages were burnt after the war, as the local population defined Roma as Serb collaborators. Many of them became asylum seekers, illegal migrants, and long-term homeless. Unemployment levels among Roma people in all countries of Eastern Europe are extremely high, currently ranging from 60 to 90%. Roma women are transgenerationally marginalized, living mostly in segregated settlements that they barely leave. They are unemployed, sometimes illiterate, but receive welfare assistance if they have children. Regardless of the size of Roma populations, all Eastern European countries articulate nationalist rhetoric against Roma peoples ranging from moderate to extreme, some ethnically motivated hate speech, and violent attacks against Roma settlements (Vermeersch and Ram, 2009). This ethnic hatred is the product of a long history of exclusion in the precommunist period, during communism (when Roma people lacked long-term industrial employment and were categorized in the lowest class among socialist citizens, called the lumpenproletariat), and today.

Economic crises and neoliberal transformations in national governments made thousands of people migrate to Western countries to seek jobs and support those who stayed in their country of origins with remittances. In Albania, of 3.1 million people, a quarter (mainly young men) left the country between 1990 and 2005 for Greece and Italy (Ymeraj, 2007). Thousands of women from Ukraine and Lithuania have become care workers, comprising part of the phenomena known as ‘global motherhood’ (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003). They care for the family of their employers abroad while providing economic care for their families, especially their children, at home. In Germany alone, there are 200 000 female care workers from Eastern Europe with more than 30 000 from Lithuania. In the Ukraine, some estimates show, that in every third family at least one woman member is a migrant worker abroad (Tolstokorova, 2010).

Remittances from Eastern European emigrants have become either a crucial income source or the only family income that helps numerous families to survive. These are therefore desired by governmental officials. Only recently has large-scale migration by women become a governmental concern. In Lithuania, the mass media speak about the ‘national epidemic,’ while in Ukraine, social workers and other social service professionals speak about the ‘Italian syndrome’ (abandoned and lonely children receiving monthly incomes from their mothers working mainly in Italy). Some creative responses by social workers were developed to support children who are left alone, e.g., Lithuania introduced temporary guardianship for grandparents who care for children of migrant workers (Malinauskas, 2011). Not only relatives but also friends, neighbors, and school teachers provide social parenting for these children. Social parenthood has become a reality for a growing number of adults and children (Zaviršek, 2009b).

Nevertheless, many researchers express concern that in poorer Eastern European countries, the system of home care is entirely based on the unpaid care work of family members, mostly women, who are today leaving home to seek paid care work abroad (Prochazkova and Schmid, 2009). Older people who are left alone can afford to pay neither state-run nursing homes nor even more expensive private ones. In some countries, social workers are involved in poorly paid community-based home assistance services for the elderly.

**Post-1991 Social Work Practice in Eastern European Countries**

After 1991, new approaches in social work practice focused on individual and family counseling, the development of community-based services that aimed to replace large long-stay state institutions (especially regarding the care of ‘social orphans’), foster care that aimed to replace the system of orphanages, international adoptions, violence against women and women’s shelters, crises centers for children, day centers for people with disabilities, and activities linked to ‘social inclusion.’ For service users, ‘social inclusion’ was the consequence of early exclusion on the basis of
medical diagnosis seeing intellectual disability, mental health diagnosis, ethnic belonging (identity) as pathology, and early long-stay institutionalization (sending children into boarding school far away from home). Economic, social, and symbolic exclusions created by social workers, health professionals, and pedagogues have been followed by the welfare processes of ‘social inclusion’ involving the same professionals. Roma children, for instance, who had been labeled as intellectually disabled and sent to special schools across the region, have recently become welfare objects of ‘social inclusion.’ Not only the countries that became part of the European Union but also other states from the region have adopted modern legislation and policies that have foreseen social inclusion, community services, and deinstitutionalization, but lack implementation. The majority of countries signed and ratified the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities but in countries in Central Asia, activities for people with disabilities are almost entirely supported by international NGOs and done by the mothers of the persons with disabilities (Zaviršek, personal notes, September 2012, Bishkek; Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2013).

The delivery of social assistance money to people who are unemployed, poor families, ethnic minorities, elders, and persons with disabilities is a main part of social workers’ activities. In wealthier countries in the region with a wide range of long-stay governmental institutions and community-based welfare services (day centers for people with multiple diagnosis, sheltered workshops, crises centers for children in need, family helpers system, women refuges, and group homes for people with mental health problems and other disabilities) social workers provide placements to these institutions and organize payment contracts usually covered by local municipalities, the state, and the person and his or her relatives. Most of the welfare facilities are located in cities and people from rural areas have difficulties accessing them or must send relatives far away from home to long-stay institutions. The 2008 economic crises caused by international financial organizations forced radical cuts in social protection. Consequently, even more social work activities are focused on social transfer delivery, while community development activities have diminished.

Many types of welfare organizations, styles of work, and approaches have remained the same until the present, for example, long-stay institutions for disabled people despite pilot projects on deinstitutionalization, the denial of most legal and actual rights of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, the nonexistence of independent advocacy work, the denial of self-determination of service users, and the absence of social action approaches in deprived communities. Several conceptual fallacies persist. Many professionals see violence against women in the private sphere as individual pathology instead of structural inequality, welfare systems prioritize closed adoptions for the ‘child’s own good’ instead of open ones, and many children and adults with disabilities are considered well protected in segregated boarding schools.

Social workers from governmental welfare services avoid any form of community action in Roma settlements, and the relationship between Roma and social workers remains highly conflictual (social workers take children into foster care, give conditional social transfer money, and blame mothers for not sending children to school). Local and international NGOs usually work in Roma settlements, mostly organizing different projects with children. Women’s empowerment work and awareness-raising on how to protect themselves from violent men are sometimes undertaken by local and international NGOs, but the area remains highly contested. Discussions about child maltreatment and early marriages of Roma girls are avoided and silenced. A small number of gojim social workers have developed a strong trusting relationship with Roma men to tackle issues of violence against women and children. There are innovative projects in Bulgaria and Romania, where international NGOs together with social work students and local people set up Roma cooperatives in their settlements.

Local and international NGOs cover many different social work areas. Some social work innovations were only possible with the use of the international money, for example, violence against women, support for rape victims, the development of personal assistance projects and independent living for persons with severe disabilities, deinstitutionalization initiatives, cooperatives for people with long-term mental health problems, support services for mothers with children with impairments, counseling for stigmatized people living in the same-sex partnerships and transgendered people, medical aid and counseling for people affected with human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. In Belarus, disability activists try to make the government sign the UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities and a well-known organization for the prevention of women’s slavery, La Strada, works against the trafficking of women and children across the borders of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.

The overrepresentation of the international NGOs had negative impacts too. A joke known across the region during the 1990s has addressed the phenomena: an Eastern European family consists of a mother, father, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and a local NGO! A common critique against international NGOs was that they dictated the topics of concern and ignored the context and needs of local populations, creating a ‘project culture’ instead of needs-based provisions (Arandarenko and Golicin, 2007). In some of the poorest countries in the region, international NGOs locally distributed food and other goods to people in need, which established them as the main players among people. A director of a state center for social work from Kosovo recalled: “They had the money to help people, and we didn’t have anything to distribute. Then we lost even more credibility” (Zaviršek, personal interview, May 2009, Pristina).

Economic hardship has been experienced by social workers too, and poor salaries have pushed many out of the field (especially from local NGOs). There is no research about the impact of this situation on the quality of social work practice, but some personal stories of social workers show that they individually identify with their clients. A Kosovan social worker who has worked at the center for social work for 30 years has shared this personal story: “My son woke me up in the morning asking me for the money to buy bus tickets. I told him I couldn’t give him the money as I didn’t have it. Then I thought to myself that I became ‘a social assistance case’.” I made myself ready to go to work, went to the center for social work where...
the clients already waited for me” (Zaviršek, personal interview, May 2008, Pristina).

In the past decade, all countries of Eastern Europe started to promote market principles in social welfare, especially in the area of nursing homes for older people, sheltered workshops for people with intellectual disabilities, and individual counseling for private customers. The economic crises hit this area of welfare provision too. Private welfare businesses today seek opportunities in areas with cheap labor (establishment of older people’s homes in eastern parts of the region for people from its western parts). Recently in Slovenia, older people and their relatives cannot afford to pay expensive residential care anymore, and long waiting lists to enter long-stay private institutions dwindled as facilities emptied. In one of the older people’s home, staff went on strike because they had not received their salaries for months.

The Academization of Social Work and Social Work Networks

In 1988, the European Association of the Schools of Social Work conference was held in an Eastern European country for the first time. An anecdote from that conference manifests the Zeitgeist and differences between East and West:

> Coming from the West to the conference held by a socialist country, we expected to share with you our new enthusiasm about community work and collective action instead of focusing predominantly on the individual person. But the Yugoslav social work teachers were all against those ideas. We said, "The community work is the right thing to do!” And they said, “No, the work with individuals is what shall be done in social work.” (personal communication, 2007)

For Yugoslav social work teachers who were forced to prioritize the community over the individual, the shift toward more individualistic approaches in social work was seen to be something radical and unwanted by the Communist regime. For the colleagues from the West, the turn toward the collective was a radical move, given their individualistically oriented societies that prioritized the individual above the collective, so community action was a more important shift for their social work theory and practice.

After 1991, all countries of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Turkmenistan, established social work education, mainly as a 4- or 5-year university program. The country with the largest number of social work undergraduate programs is the Russian Federation (175 social work departments), followed by Ukraine (50 social work programs), Kazakhstan (22 social work departments), Czech Republic (15 programs), Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan (seven universities where social work has been taught), and Romania (four universities) (Jaraska Smirnova, 2013). The universities with social work programs that have been developed lately are in Montenegro (2003), Uzbekistan (2004), Moldavia (2007), and Kosovo (2012). After 2000, intensive development in postgraduate master-level studies appeared and intensive international collaboration in teaching and student exchanges took place. The processes of the academization of social work are seen in research and the establishment of doctoral studies in social work already in Armenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Romania, and Slovenia. A cross-national collaboration is also shown in the first international doctoral program in social work and social policy (Indosow) from 2009, which is run by a consortium of the schools of social work from Eastern and Western Europe and was initiated by an Eastern European school of social work (Zaviršek, 2009a).

Today, most of the countries have national associations of social workers and some of them, like the Czech Republic, also have an association of social work educators (since 2009). Social work academics have been active in establishing a number of academic journals mostly in local languages (The Journal of Social Policy Studies, Saratov University; Social Work, University of Ljubljana, est. in 1962; Social Policy and Social Work, University of Belgrade, est. in 1971). Some of the journals contain a mixture of local and foreign languages (Social Work Review, University of Bucharest; Social Work Yearbook, University of Zagreb), while some are published in English only (Social Work in Transition, Kiev Mohyla and Sheffield Hallam Universities). (Only to mention few of them, although almost all countries in the region have academic social work and social policy journals.) In 2008, the schools of social work from the region have established the East European Sub-Regional Association of the Schools of Social Work, which is a large network of social work scholars from the region.

One disturbing characteristic of university-based social work education in some countries is the high number of social work students who enroll because they lack employment opportunities. The quantity of students threatens the quality of social work education. Some social work programs have become hybrid academic-welfare institutions that ‘care’ for young people and keep them ‘in the system’ until the age of 25 years or more. Many students seek motherly care instead of academic training from predominantly female members of the academic staff. The University of Sarajevo is a blunt example, but not the only one. Its Social Work Department enrolls 500 undergraduates yearly. They are taught and supervised by 11 academic staff employed in the department. One of the social work teachers bitterly complained: “The government is buying itself social peace while offering 500 social work students’ placements at the university!” (Zaviršek, personal notes, March 2013, Sarajevo).

Social work programs across the region lack critical theorizing, historical perspectives, and an engaged community-based and advocacy-oriented practice, which would give students an understanding about differences, diversity, equality, and rights. The area of antioppressive practice is one of the most underdeveloped areas in social work across Eastern Europe. Even when social work students are taught to be critical about governmental social policy regimes and advocate for service users, when they become employed, most of their critical knowledge gets forgotten. This makes a huge gap between social work education and practice. Critical social workers often seek employment in NGOs (local or international), to avoid administrative social work in state welfare services. Lessening the divide between critical social work education and a grim social work practice as well as a thoroughly evaluated practice by the state are future challenges for social workers in the region. Nevertheless,
some social work teachers have worked hard to establish social work training as a social science discipline.

A parallel process alongside the academization of social work is practicing social work as a charity activity and without academic education following the revival of the religious social services. Church power has been reestablished economically after countries returned some (or as in Slovenia, even all) of its confiscated property from precommunist times. With increased neoliberalization, the state’s abandonment of social assistance money, housing, and other forms of support for people in need, the church became involved in social welfare work by ‘serving the poor.’ At the same time, religious authorities became front-runners in morally driven debates against same-sex partnerships, condemning the equal rights of children from rainbow families and promoting increased births among ethnic majority women while enjoying the silent support of different governments. While professional social work has hardly established its moral authority as a human rights profession based on universal human rights documents, religious organizations have built their authority according to an ahistorical natural moral law and its ideological impact is growing.

In conclusion, these developments demand a strong critical social work presence in the region. Social workers who respect universal human rights for service users and support the individual needs of diverse populations to improve the lives of communities can help bring Eastern Europe from its grim history between the ‘iron curtain’ and neoliberalism toward a more democratic region where individual needs and rights are respected.

See also: Armed Conflict and Social Work: Significance and Implications; Marxist Approaches to Social Work; Neoliberalism; Roma People: Discrimination and Social Work Practice; Social Work Education; Social Work in Russia; Social Work with Racialized Groups: Frameworks for Practice.

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Tolstokorova, A., 2013. Where have all the mothers gone? The gendered effect of the church became involved in social welfare work by ‘serving the poor.’ At the same time, religious authorities became front-runners in morally driven debates against same-sex partnerships, condemning the equal rights of children from rainbow families and promoting increased births among ethnic majority women while enjoying the silent support of different governments. While professional social work has hardly established its moral authority as a human rights profession based on universal human rights documents, religious organizations have built their authority according to an ahistorical natural moral law and its ideological impact is growing.

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