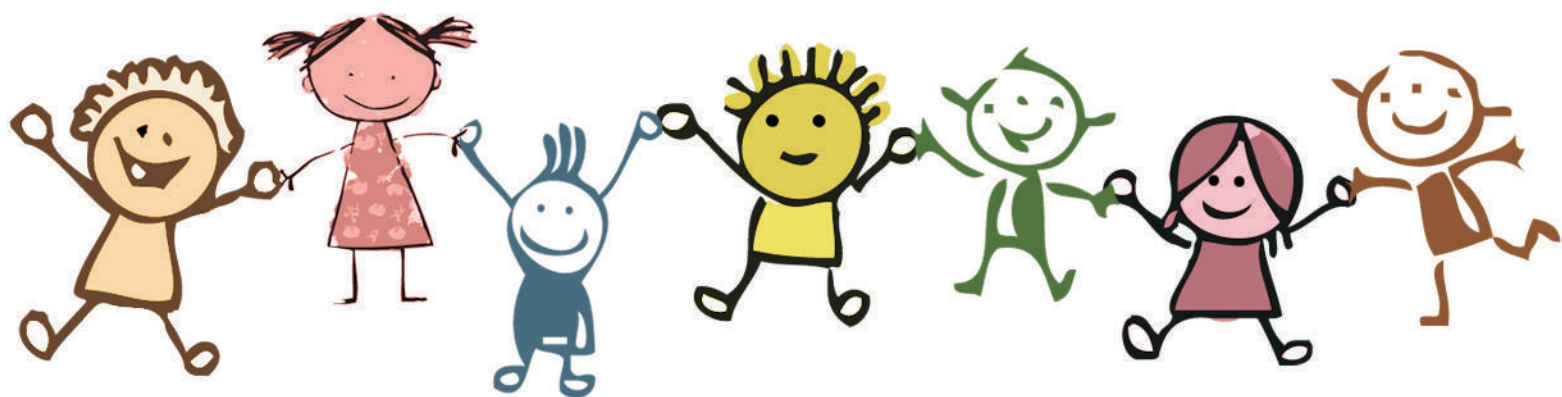




EUROPEAN  
PLATFORM  
FOR *Youth*  
DEVELOPMENT

## SOCIAL WORK IN ROMANIAN COMMUNITIES

volunteering as a means for  
self and community fulfillment



**Craiova**  
**January 2010**



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Volunteering as a means for self  
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## EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR *Youth* DEVELOPMENT

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## Insights into the current book

*The current work is the result of 5 months of working in a Rroma neighbourhood, Mofleni, of two volunteers of the "Learning by Doing" project: Sara Ortega Zubiequi and Nuria Morales Ruiz.*

*They both graduated Sociology – social work and intended the present document as a tool for non-professionals and experts alike to use in their work in Rroma (or similar) communities.*

*The book is not merely a diary, but a structured work unfolding from a general overview on the discipline of social work, contextualization of the profession (Ist chapter), locating the action in a broader context (IInd chapter), understandings of the concepts of "culture" and socialization (IIIrd chapter) to internalizing the action by means of self-knowledge, self-care and self-information (IVth chapter) in order to get to the method "a magic recipe for the practice to be a success and turn out a wonderful project" (Vth chapter).*

*The progress of this science from the initial charitable work to final acknowledgment, the theoretical quotations and theories are not left unexplained, but are fully detailed by "on site" examples from daily work. The last three chapters make up a broad case study out of which more generalizing conclusions can be deducted.*

*Working in a minority community made up of disadvantaged ethnics enabled the volunteers to experience their sociological background.*

*Writing this book was thought as an instrument to guide following volunteers/ social workers in Mofleni towards a more exhaustive approach on the reality in the community, better planning the action considering causes and consequences, traditions and attitudes.*

*It is a lived case study mixed up with theoretical highlights from their studies.*

*Their legacy for the volunteers to come and for anybody interested in working in a such environment.*

**Mihaela Jilavu**  
**Chairwoman, EPYD**

**Carmen-Elena Tufagiu**  
**Project Manager**

## Overview of Learning by doing EVS group project

*Learning By Doing is a group EVS project that gathered for 6 months 11 young volunteers from all over Europe, giving them opportunities to experience and grow on personal level as well as the challenge to contribute to the European Awareness and civic involvement of the project' target group. The target group consisted of young people aged from 12 – 25. The various activities that were developed within the EVS project in general as well as the additional activities developed by the organization and its members provided the volunteers with a rich intercultural learning context.*

*Of the 3 phases of the project (preparation, implementation and evaluation) the implementation was the longest and the most complex one. Activities such as thematic training sessions, intercultural exchange, national and international opportunities contributed to the personal development of the volunteers. The cooperation with the education institutions and boosting their participation in supporting the activities also contributed to the promotion of the non formal education as an effective personal development method.*

*Between the 15th of August 2009 and the 15th of February 2010, the 11 volunteers closely guided by the staff and the mentors worked their way into the community of the city of Craiova.*

*They first received professional trainings related to time/ conflict/ project management, animation, non-formal methods of education, team building, and communication. During this period the volunteers were also guided into planning the next months and their activities, gathering the children interested in the different workshops to be done, informing the teachers and the parents.*

*Different kind of activities have been implemented: non-formal activities such as manual activities, sport, promotion of European Values and culture by means of thematic films and videos, promotion of the European Voluntary Service through the Caravan held in the rural areas around Craiova and the University, the National EVS Conference – “EVS beyond Rhetoric”.*

*During the last two weeks a general evaluation was made together with the team, teachers and monitor of the project, the results showing the general success of the programme and the elements to improve.*

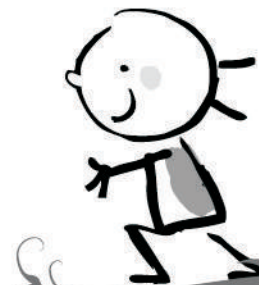
# CHAPTER 1: Understanding the Social Work (SW). Contextualization of the profession.

## Social Work ... What does it mean?

In the early 20th century, welfare charity focused on helping those in need, in a religious context. Thus, it has provided food, shelter and companionship for the poorest persons, which is the ultimate goal of intervention. It is defined as art "to help", using common sense without theory.

Starting with 1930, begin to understand that poor people, disabled, sick and orphaned children should not only eat and sleep under one roof, their needs go further than that (refer to be loved, to be integrated, to be competent ...), extending the center of the matter. It comes up the problem of human complexity and relationships. It is necessary to organize and follow a methodology of action, since action is not only shelter in large buildings, but help them develop as individuals and participate in society.

In the '60s, "the agent of change" appears. First, the role is not "giving" to the person what he needs but helping that person to change the state of need. (Do not give him fish, but give him the rod, because giving him fish will immobilize the person, not letting him move freely in and for life). Therefore, the person and not only, 'gets' help but he has to be an actor in the process of change.



In this theory, SW on the one hand, it conceptualizes again the identity, purpose and is defined as a specific profession. On the other hand, it is recognized the fact that the development of the profession requires certain skills. Thus, SW creates different theories (sociological, psychological, anthropological) and methodology (for research and action) to help develop the work. In other words, the SW uses other sciences for setting its own.

This led SW to a specific profession with a scientific character; with the same professional, scientific level that medicine uses to deal with medical needs, SW serves personal and social needs. So, just as there are thousands of doctors working in the world, providing resources to improve the health of people, thousands of social workers are struggling to provide resources to improve quality of life for individuals, groups and communities.

## SW? What?

Social workers are involved in planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and changing the social policies. They perform activities with individuals, groups and communities, such as: informing, research, prevention, support, advocacy, mediation, planning, management, supervision. Its dynamics is to find a remedy to the need or needs identified. This means working with the pair need - resources.



## Why SW?

As VOLUNTEERS what do you think about the world?

Social workers consider that in the current pattern of life there are certain injustices that might be generated by the ubiquitous economic system. For this system to remain there, the curve of "supply and demand" must be powered. As this development was achieved (medical, technological) does not mean that quality of people's lives has improved. Middle class citizens do not benefit from this development: it is still difficult to find jobs for at least 40 hours per week and, in many cases, to resist. The powers of the richest countries, create new needs among the population, create trend sites, and use a marketing system that convinces people to buy. It is as if these great powers should establish a lifestyle that must be followed, where "what is different" has no place and where happiness seems to be achieved by obtaining material goods. "To be" no longer matter, what matters is "to have". Companies are becoming more individualistic and lost values of solidarity and community life. This is reality.

Thus, in richer countries, where is a system of education, health, or of Justice.... There is system of Social Services, which has a series of laws and policies, which in most cases have applications in these individuals and groups who for various reasons, are less likely to develop in this highly competitive world: which means that SW is there because, although we all have the same rights, there are groups to which their exercise is more difficult: they are most vulnerable, it is more difficult to lead a normal life and being integrated with the rest of society.



And SW is also the discipline to prevent personal and social problems. Beginning with SW, it is starting to be accepted that it is necessary to take action in contemporary society to prevent people to get into difficult situations. Rather than solve the problem, we must act to prevent that problem to appear.

Think of 7 groups or collectives that a social worker can work with and try to explain why these are groups who need additional support to exercise their rights as citizens. Consider also the 7 issues that can prevented with social work.

**NOTE:** However, you should note the importance of Community SW, which is not concerned only about vulnerable people or groups, but focuses on the entire community (in a neighborhood, a city ...); including persons that do not have special needs. It aims to empower the community as a community, creating support networks and aid among people. People need to be involved in changing their situation and be aware that we all have an obligation and a commitment to help others. Reality can be a little better, and we all have a responsibility to do something. Moreover, this "to give something to improve things", can become a source of fulfillment and happiness for each person individually.





But Social Assistance has also its place within the unjust relations that exist globally. Economic Imperialism, above motioned, has global implications: the rich countries use the materials and labor from poor countries (Africa, Asia and Latin America), for manufacturing the goods (appliances, clothes, toys ...) for the first world (Europe and USA), generating an inhumane and extreme inequality between countries in North and South, the last living famine, disease, dehydration ... living together with death, because the Nordic countries, will not help them live with dignity. Prefer to spend money on weapons, aesthetics, football and a range of things superficial. But these are things that allow them to fuel the economic system which gives them a good situation, and in parallel, allowing the same system that takes them feeding the poor in misery. Also, environmental problems are worse; the Earth cannot support our rate of consumption and our methods of violent action and pollution.

But worst of all this is that the powers from rich countries do not show the reality full of injustice. The means of transmitting information and culture (media, education ...) that should show the reality and to help citizens understand the world they live do nothing. Power hides the truth. This way, there is Social Assistance, because it considers as essential for people to be aware of the phenomenon of inequality and environmental problems. In richer countries there are Social Workers working in organizations providing direct support to poor countries.

After all, Social Assistance exists because there are a number of social injustices and it serves achieving social justice.



## Social Assistance heading where?

### CHAPTER 2: Locating the action in a broader context

"Location" is important.

SA means that it is crucial to locate the problem situation (PS) and action (A), in a broader socio-political context, taking as an example the realities present in the Roma community:

- . - (PS) unproductive free time for the full development --- (A) draft for free time with gypsies, children.
- .- (PS) waiver to start school in early childhood (A) a program of scholar support and awareness on the compatibility between higher education and the quality of being Roma
- (SA) school absenteeism --- (A) school project adapting to the cultural reality and awareness of families about the importance of education.
- .- (CA) --- Child abuse (A) a program to prevent child abuse.
- .- (I) illiteracy --- (A) A program for minors and adult literacy.
- .- (LRE) --- lack of regular employment (A) programs to integrate on the labor market.
- .- (EGC) to exclusion in Gypsy culture. --- (A) projects to facilitate contexts, groups and intercultural activities and promote equal opportunities to participate in standardized processes as citizens.



1. - Why does it take to understand the problem from a cause-effect perspective?

2.- Why is relevant to know that our action is included in some laws and/or social policy, and also to know laws that provide the rights and obligations of persons with whom we work?

3.- It is necessary to know the other services and resources? Why is it necessary to look beyond the action that we perform, to learn about other practices?

1.- It is necessary because often the problem situations (such as for example, socially excluded people with disabilities, loneliness in the elderly, young and drug addiction, street children, battered women, hungry, divisive communities .. .) that social workers try to improve, do not occur by chance. These problems are the result of other different realities, are the effects of other factors (not origin) are the symptoms (not disease). Think of the possible causes of the problems listed above in parentheses. So, there are certain circumstances that generate a problem-situation and for this situation to change these circumstances must be modified. The problem can be solved only by intervening in causes of the problem.



Note that individuals and social reality are more complex phenomenon than the cause - effect, a problem- situation is multi-causal (there are several reasons to explain this situation, not just one), multifactorial (there are several factors – such as economic, political, social ) and also a problem-situation has many effects on social reality, not just one.

The way to solve the problem may be to act indirectly on the circumstances affecting it. Many times, problems are not addressed directly, by addressing the problem directly, but indirectly by addressing it. This means that to solve the problem we must develop strategic ways that indirectly led to a solution.

*The Roma community, the reality of absenteeism problem is a consequence of other circumstances:*

- a) formal education is not a priority in Gypsy culture,*
- b) children have other roles besides being students;*
- c) schools are not interested or do not know how to adapt the curriculum to Roma culture.*

*It is essential to know and understand the circumstances leading to the outbreak cause that lead to symptom called "skipping school" and act on them.*

*So to address this issue, we should not only work with children (who are required not go to school and formed the problem- situation called " skipping school "), but necessarily have to work with families and the school system.*



2. It is relevant to locate the action in a legal and political frame. Knowing the rights and obligations of individuals and the social policies helps to legitimize the action. If the action is based on laws it becomes more serious and objective. All persons have certain rights, but they are often unaware of them. The social assistance justifies its action in protecting such rights.

We present a series of rights that can be violated among children from Mofleni, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly on November 20, 1959 (United Nations).

The child shall enjoy special protection and have opportunities and facilities in order to be able to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Child is entitled to receive education, which is free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. Education will promote his general culture and will enable it, in terms of equal opportunity to develop their skills and individual participation, sense of moral and social responsibility, and become a useful member of society. Children must be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. No child should be allowed to work before an appropriate minimum age and in any case will a child not be allowed to be employed in any profession that would prejudice his health or education, or interfere his physical, mental or moral development.



## Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 20, 1989

1. Children are entitled to protection against neglect or negligent treatment.
2. Children are entitled to protection against child labor.
3. Children are entitled to adequate information.
4. Children are entitled to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.
5. Children deserve to grow up in a family that gives them affection and love.
6. All children have the right to food and nutrition.
7. All children are entitled to live in harmony.
8. All children are entitled to the fun.

**3** .- Social workers must know the network of social resources of the district, village and city and to offer them to the users. Information is power, and in this case, by informing people about the possibilities they are given the power to solve, prevent in a independent manner, or to live a richer life, participating in cultural events, sports ...

Another reason why it is important to know the resources, it is because it avoids duplication of work. If the entity is aware of existing resources, we can use them. If he dose not know, they can fall in the absurdity of making something that already exists.



4. Social workers should be aware of practices that are being developed elsewhere, as this may allow to use successful examples developed elsewhere, and to exchange experiences, allowing the improvement of professional practice.

*In countries like Spain 20 years ago the reality of the Gypsy community was quite similar to that encountered in Mofleni. But the movement of the association has been an increasingly important over time and now, just an indicator of there is barely any trace of school skipping and illiteracy and Gypsies are, every day, more and more integrated common market.*

*I will describe a little one association that I know of my town called Gao Lacho Drom (village of the right way). To give you an idea, ongoing programs are: Insert on the labor market of Roma women, prevention of antisocial behavior in youth, training, prevention and rehabilitation of drug addicts, housekeeping, learning computer skills.*

*There is a difference in the level of available resources because the association benefits from an interdisciplinary team of about 20 people (administrators, psychologists, social workers, teachers ...) and it is intended that, wherever possible, a Roma person to work in each programs.*



## CHAPTER 3: To understand the concepts of "culture" and socializing in order to understand the "other"

Culture is symbolic world that all men allows the unconscious by a vital process of socialization, which includes norms, values, traditions, beliefs, habits, etc..


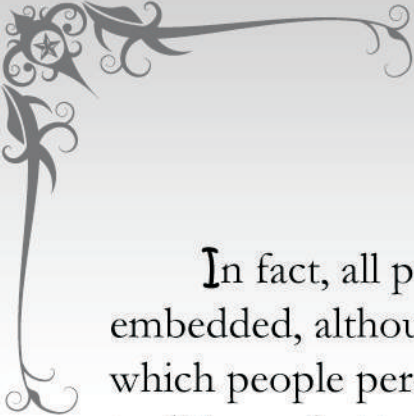
Culture gives people a feeling reference to its own cultural identity, provides a sense of belonging and makes each society unique. Thus, culture gives us an identity, makes us feel part of something, marks us and allows us to experience other cultures, in contrast with ours.

Understanding the concept of culture, it would be a mistake to label a person or group as being "uneducated", as everyone has their own culture, each person has their own symbolic construction. There is nobody who has no culture. People make the symbolic reconstruction, allows the culture through various means: family (what I do, see, hear at home), school (content and values learned), media (roles and ideals they receive, values, selected information received ...) and personal experiences.

Thus, power through these systems, more or less powerful, people absorb norms, values, rules of the game (what should and should not do what is right and what is wrong, how to behave in different places and different relationship, which is important and what to expect). And everything is done unconsciously.







In fact, all people are shaped by the culture in which they are embedded, although not aware of it. It may resemble the glasses through which people perceive reality in which they live. Culture goes beyond simple tradition: what to do to celebrate a marriage or a death. Culture is something deeper that affect how people act, think and even feel every day, but are not aware of it.

For example, a woman is not aware that he assumed the role of a women in a patriarchal society, with all that implies this, but is angry, worried, stressed if clothes have tight for washing, for not responding to the role of woman that she feels we should have in her culture, have a tidy house. Why not a man feeling as bad or as anxious?

Why do I understand that I have the opportunity to choose what to do with my life? Why do I think we need to arrive on time to meetings? Why don't I feel pretty or thin enough? Why should I drink alcohol when I'm out? Why do I tend to have a busy program and spend so little time with my family? Why do I think I have the same rights as a man? Why not stay a virgin until marriage? Why aspire having a family at 30 years, a house and a car? Why choose whether to believe in God or not?

In short, we all experienced a process of socialization which leads us to believe, think and feel as we desire, although we are not aware of this process.



Think of what education you received, in which country, period, culture, family you've grown in, the roles that we person (female, brother, student, volunteer), and try to explain what you are, why do you think and feel as you do. Would you be, would you think or would you feel as if you were born in another era, country, culture or another family? Would you be, would you think or would you feel as if you were born a Roma?

And just as each of us has absorbed a culture driven by social, historical past, Gypsies have also internalized a culture driven by social context and history: the Roma culture. And although Roma people are living very close to us, in European countries, talking about Roma culture is like talking about a culture that lives in the Far East thousands of miles away, meaning that their symbolic world is quite different from ours.

If working with the Roma community, a reflection on their culture should be mandatory since we all are influenced by stereotypes and prejudices that have formed over centuries and are still forming. How many times have we heard that the Roma are poorly educated and ill, that they are homeless living in crime and using social benefits, that Roma people are not integrated because they don't want to?



It is true that in many cases the Roma people may seem rude. Gypsies entering or leaving a group, without saying goodbye or welcome, going to a Gypsy house, they are not coming to the door to say goodbye, Roma people not saying „please” or „thank you”. From this point of view, a deeper understanding of their culture means understanding that if you do not say „goodbye” they will believe that you are a rude person .So, the parameters of "educated people" to non-Roma and Roma are different. And could give many examples to understand how they think, act and feel.

Well, in order to work with them no prejudices are needed, because we may treat them as unable to change. The only way to eliminate prejudices and to approach the "other" is to understand his own culture.

Understanding culture does not mean that we should think that realities arising from it are appropriate, positive or good. Each culture has a positive or a negative side to it. To understand culture is to understand why they act, how they work, why they believe in, how they think and to accept that, like us, Roma, in time, have unconsciously absorbed their culture. Understanding their culture is the correct and efficient key to transform this group. Understand their culture provides clues for our own actions.



In short, we must always rely on knowledge and respect for another cultures and understand that a culture is always changing. Culture is not something that is kept sealed for eternity, culture changes slowly, actively.

## The process of socialization

The Roma community is, according to EU social policies, a minority group. A minority group is a group that has the same opportunities to achieve the same benefits and services as everyone else. Some groups have not the same starting point, they have to overcome obstacles and some disadvantages: they are poorly seen socially, have financial difficulties, health problems, a low level of education in order to live as other citizens or to exercise their rights. And it is accepted that the Roma people are a socially excluded minority.

Understand the concept of "socialization" might explain why there are people living an integrated life in the society and others excluded from it.

A) So there are not the children, people with experience -a process of socialization and positive standardized in the society in which they live .A process that supports their integration and normalization in the community. Thus, these people will be integrated with the possibility to personally and socially grow.



- 1 .- David goes to school , his parents are forcing him to go, they are preparing a place for him to study, they are interested in his results, praise him when he has good grades and ask him for more when negative.
- 2 .- It is normal that David was advised by his father to ask things using "please", say "thank you" or "sorry".
- 3 .- In his life, there are people who invite David to think and decide what he wants to be in the future and who reinforce his self-esteem to feel capable .So he feels 'unconsciously' that he can choose one of the many professions out there.
4. - When David is 13, 14 years old, is treated as a teenager and he has the possibility to go on with his studies.

So, David has many chances to go to college to seek for a job and to have a normal social life.

B) But they are also children going thru a bad integrative process .So if the socialization process does not allow the person to internalize these elements and ways of doing things considered normal in a given context, there may experience social maladjustment.

B) But equally, there are also other children and persons who suffer an unfavorable socialization process for a normally integrated life in society. So if the socialization process does not allow the person to internalize these elements and ways of doing things considered normal in a given context, there may appear social maladjustment process.



1 - In Ionut`s phase of tuition, his parents do not obligate him to go to school; going to the market, taking care of a relative or resting is more important than going to school. At home there is no workspace, nor books. His language is much poorer and he can not understand many words from books or of the Internet. He has many difficulties to read and write well. His parents have not ever asked him about exams.

2 – Ionut`s parents have not ever taught him to ask things with “please”, to say “thank you”, they have not educated him in this sort of "educated".

3 – Ionut has learned that he can function as a vendor at the market, no one encouraged him to pursue other things, so unconsciously Ionut accepts that he`s no good for other professions.

4 - Ionut at 13, 14 years is conceived as an adult, he perceives himself that he no longer has the age to go to school, he feels that he must do other things.

*In conclusion, it is very possible that Ionut soon abandons study to go work at the market, that is, there are little chances of going to college or university (although there are specific places, free for him), and to integrate into society.*

It`s important to understand that all adapted or misfit behaviors are learned. **It is taught, it develops and maintains an adaptive behavior, in the same way that it is taught, it develops and maintains an misfit behavior.** Meaning, in the same way that David learns to say “please” before asking for things, learns that theft is wrong and it is important to go to school, Ionut learns to ask for things suddenly, finds out that stealing is not wrong, and that going to school is not important, is not worth.



In this moment it's understood that the inadequate person is not born, but becomes inadequate in the process of socialization, in the same way that a person becomes adapted through a favorable process.

In conclusion, it is true that Roma have vacant spots in institutes and universities, have the possibility to attend classes, to participate in interviews and try to work in a normal market...But in practice, accepting that Ionut is one of the many Roma living in Europe, do you think that he has the same opportunities as David to get into the higher education institutions? Obviously not. Ionut has the same rights as David, but not the same opportunities for him to perform them.

Try to be detached from the statement "Roma are not integrated because they don't want to be" through a reflection about the thoughts and behaviors that Roma learn and develop in the socialization process and about the culture that they unconsciously internalize in this vital process.



## Chapter 4: Because “I” am an important element of the relationship. Working with self: self-knowledge, self-care and self-information

In working with yourself, emphasize three aspects:

### Self-awareness/Self-knowledge

A. – When working with people, and in relationships in general, it is very important that you know yourself. In terms of social work, when working with people, one must try to act from a neutral, professional level, not motivated by emotions or beliefs. And if there is something that affects us, it is pertinent to review why it affects us emotionally, otherwise we will act in pain, hatred, admiration...and not objective and rational. At this point, for example, it wouldn't be appropriate to favor certain people, because we sympathize them more, or because such experiences are consistent with ours (separated parents, sick sister..) or similarly to treat with contempt those who are not so tied to us.

In this self-knowledge, which should be conceived as a continuous process, it is also important to know the strengths and weaknesses that we have personally and professionally. This helps the person to be conscious of itself: on one part, being aware of the weaknesses that can cause us to make a mistake, to anticipate and avoid, on the other hand, just being aware of its strengths, the person may benefit to achieve a good practice.





*For example, in relation to voluntary work, I know that sometimes I am: a) impulsive. I will give just one example of many ...*

*One day at leisure activity of Mofleni, I realize that Alin does not know how to write and I tell him by Aida (who knows spanish): "I will ask you a question and you will have to think "Would you learn to write?" Think and answer me on Monday." Obviously I am rushing, in something as important as this. He does not respond, and I improperly risked the beginning of the classe. I did that without realizing what am I doing, and without a clear picture of what do I want, how would I do it and if I could (I have to ask permission to use the classe, to plan the literacy process). Thus, it is better to shut up, than to speak without knowing what I am doing. And I am becoming more and more aware of my weakness and I think before I say things. Similarly, in working with the community I proposed to offer flamenco, circus classes...In order to offer, starting immediately the action was a mistake. I experienced that this knowledge needs time. And perhaps if I spent more time learning, I could have done a more transforming action. Ah! And no one participated in the classes of flamenco or circus. It wasn't time to give it. Again, I rushed.*

*a) not punctual and disorganized in writing, knowing that it must make an effort to better organize my time and writing, c) a little more independent and I find it difficult to dispose, as though aware that I must learn to do teamwork and that if I have a problem while working with a colleague, it can be related to my difficulty in accepting other proposals. I am saying that all of these things I have learned from the mistakes I've made and reviewed.*



*Regarding the positive things, in my practice, I remember that my tutor told me that he saw that I knew to manage well the silent moments. Only when I became aware of it, I could use this skill when and how I wanted to achieve the goals set (let me think about the next thing I could say to make the other person to think). If I am not aware of my potential, I can not use it strategically.*

*And I had to learn to control my emotions, trying to be emotionally balanced with the others. Imagine that I had a fight with my partner, I am very sad and I don't control those emotions and I start to cry in front of the children group whom I work with, in an other day, I hit my car and I am very angry, I uncontrollably yell at them, the next week I am very happy because my sister has given birth and I stand before the children group very happy and sincere, but after two days, my cousin is awaiting test results and I am very nervous with the children and I can not focus on my activity, I walk from here to there.*

*Thus, professionally it is considered important to know how to manage and manipulate emotions: anger, joy, anger, sadness, exuberance ... Think about these weaknesses and the potential that you have in front of you to work with people and try to be aware of them, but also of the mechanisms that you can use to manage emotions.*



## Self-care

B. - Similarly, among social workers is widely accepted that a person who dedicates himself working with people should have a good inner state. In certain moments, he can be emotionally balanced, but with a certain level of stress, and perhaps at other times, he should take care of itself ( do things that he likes, to give itself space for review, reflection, relaxation), to avoid frustration, a damaging level of stress, discouragement, confusion ....

Think about the activities or exercises that could help you find the emotional equilibrium , in that less comfortable moments.

## Self learning

On the other hand it is necessary for the person working with people to have a continuous training , considering the fact that problematic situations are complex and change all the time , practice must always be reviewed , in order to avoid being caught only in one perspective , only in one way of intervention ( not to work with people mechanistically) .

What must be noticed is that learning it's up to you. Nobody will teach you anything , we won't learn anything from volunteering , if we are not willing to learn .

Learning should be both a conscious and responsible process (I want to learn , I am the one checking myself if I have learned or not , I made this mistake and I reflect about it ...).





## Each

person is responsible for it's own self learning and for the competences that he / she acquires , having always in mind that competition means knowledge , skills ,and attitude . In this world , where all information are exaggerated , it' s always a good thing for each of us to project our own learning strategies (written diary , reading ten pages every week about the problems you are interested in , documents with interesting web-sites , interesting books ) , and it is not always so easy to remain constant .

Think about not only what you would want to learn and what skills you would want to develop but also meditate about the way you intend to realize this learning or skills development .



## CHAPTER 5 : The method , a magic recipe for the practice to be a success and turn out a wonderful project

Considering the explanations above in the introductory part , social labor is a scientific discipline, and as a consequence there is a scientific and cyclical method. These are the measures that must be taken into consideration:

a ) **knowledge** : consists in collecting information through reading , observation , interviews showing the reality on which we want to interfere . In this phase are expressed hypothesis that must be checked before interpreting and diagnosing.

*Only the data collected through observation in Mofleni are discussed :*

- Most of the inhabitants are rroma people and they live rooted in their culture . Early marriages , lot of children .*
- Many of the children are not going to school , they do not have extracurricular activities. During the winter they stay home and watch television (cartoons , music ) with their brothers .In summer time they play in the street .*
- There are lots of children and adults that are illiterates.*
- There are families that do not allow their children to come to the extracurricular activities*
- .*
- The school does not offer quality education for the children and many of them miss school.*
- Many of the children work (they cut woods, go to the market , transport goods , take care of the house and the animals).*



- *Some of the girls say that being a rroma woman means not to have freedom , life is not good (they do the cleaning , the cooking...), you cannot do anything .*
- *There are no community spaces . They gather to celebrate weddings , funerals , but in every day life each family has its own life inside the house .*
- *There are huge differences between the rich rroma people and poor ones . The differences appear in the way their houses and cars look and in general in their fortune. It happens very often that those having a higher level of living leave towards France , Italy , Spain , Greece .*
- *Some of their complains refer to the streets , which are not paved and don't have drainage.*
- *In October 2009 a large park having swings and sport spaces was inaugurated near Mofleni .*
- *The parents' style of education is authoritative.*

b) **Interpretation / diagnosis** : consists in organizing and interpreting the data , offering meaning , because the data in itself means nothing . There must be a clear idea about what happens in reality , what are the problems , the needs , causes of these problems and needs ,and effects of these problems, strong points ...Meaning that , in this stage from a professional and scientific point of view is explained what's happening with that person , group or community .

This is a critical stage and the needed time should be as much as necessary , as in Medicine the key step in healing a disease is a good diagnostic. Imagine going to the doctor and him not knowing how to diagnose me , could put a bandage on my left foot when what I need is a flu treatment .



In this way , the success of the action will largely depend on a good diagnosis , that is made according to reality , and based on some demonstrable indicators (not projected by what I , Sara, as a person , think it's happening).

*In this case , the diagnosis would be to answer the question : What 's happening in Mofleni ? , clearly , without bluffs.*

*First of all , there is an overview of the neighborhood :*

*In Mofleni are perceived problems that lead the population to the risk of social exclusion.*

*Secondly , let's make a more specific analysis (taking into consideration the problems , age groups...)*

*There is a problem referring to formal education : high rates of truancy , illiteracy , and early school abandonment . This aspect is connected to the incapacity school has in adapting to pupils ' needs and also to the lack of motivation in changing the existing situation . In the same time there is a cultural factor influencing the effect that formal education is not a priority for rroma families , who give children responsibilities as taking care of someone or even working .*

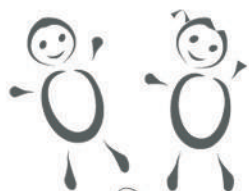
*From this problem two main implications are derived . First , a process that is not an appropriate educational experience prevents the children from developing their potential and learn about other realities , and / or opportunities of choosing and does not facilitate the processes of changing the situation . On the other hand low academic qualification makes difficult the inclusion in the regular labor market .*



*Another problem refers to the violation of rights (unequal relationships between men and women , abuse against the child , children ‘ labor , discrimination by the majority of the society). One of the factors contributing to this phenomena is not knowing and not being aware of these problems. In a similar way this violation is connected to the existent cultural model , the lifestyle and the educational parental model that predominates in this group . The lack of governmental mechanisms or the third efficient sector in detecting and solving these problems , sustains its keeping alive . This problem affects the family dynamics and causes a high level of personal suffering .*

*Needs referring to the non – productive use of the free time and lack of community spaces in Mofleni were identified. A factor influencing this problem is the non – integration of rroma people in the majority culture , a factor preventing rroma people from beneficiating services and resources for the professional training , for their culture and spending their free time , existent for all the other citizens. Another factor influencing this problem is the absence of physical spaces for community use (bars , culture rooms ) in the neighborhood.*

*In this way Mofleni inhabitants don't have spaces to learn through formal education , a reality which increases their rooted way of living , and as a consequence , their chances of changing diminish , they do not have group spaces , and the result is that each family has its own separate life .Another consequence of the fact that they do not have this community spaces is that children especially are very opened to new proposals and activities.*





After diagnosis it must to make a forecast. Forecast consists of making a projection in the future development of tools and social developments of the community, the group or person according to this is performed or not the social intervention. What happens if we not interfere? At what level will exacerbate the problems? What impact will have the intervention?

*Regarding formal education, non-intervention would keep truancy and low educational level in the neighborhood, and the difficulties of integration and inclusion. It is believed that intervention in education is one way to prevent situations of risk of social exclusion and the most appropriate way to initiate the processes of integration and the personal and community change in Mofleni.*

*Non-intervention in child rights violations, given the variety the laws that protects them, it means to leave children without protection from Mofleni. In addition, it is the continuing situation of individual suffering. So it is necessary to provide resources for intervention in this area.*

*By intervening in the area of leisure, it means to allow the development at individual level, group and community, and to facilitate empowerment of people for change. In general, non-intervention means real damage of the neighborhood*

*Once these ideas are clear (What? What are the problems? What causes this problem? and what will change with the action?) lines of action may raise, expressing their schematic, not very developed.*



*Regarding gaps in formal education of the district, the line of action is to improve the action quality from the school and to make the family to be aware of the importance of education. It facilitates the creating of an area of educational support outside the school hours to support students in need, claiming that all to reach the minimum necessary in all the compulsory schooling stage further study.*

*Regarding violation of rights, the line of action is the information about the population from Mofleni, and equipment resource base for intervention in eliminating or prevent these violations. It is proposed to change the prevailing model of child growth.*

*Concerning leisure time, is proposed to create a physical space for Community use and implementation of leisure activities available for residents effectively, especially for minors. Thus, in general, is proposing an community process by focusing on education area, recreation and rights that involves people from Mofleni and looks for a change of the situation.*

c) **Planning:** Planning is a dynamic scheme of calculation that accompanies the action. Thus, planning is not something static that is first and then forgot. Remember that planning makes sense before and during the action. Thus, planning is a continuous process, for example, it is planned, will be reviewed according to plan, adjust as revised ... planning must be consistent with the facts interpreted and analyzed. It must be profitable, requiring efficient use of time, resources and labor.



*When we start to work in Mofleni, we want to work on these topics with the target group:*

*1.- What I would like to be when I am older?*

*A) Reflexive process*

*B) Look for high school and more information about formal education. (It is supposed to include the parents).*

*2.- What I know about Spain, Europe, Romania?*

*3.- Gipsy culture*

*A) give them documents, experiences, pictures, style of live... about the gipsys in Spain) B) Speak about their culture here. (It is supposed to include the parents).*

*4.- The third world (awareness about the situation of poor countries in Africa, Asia and South America).*

*5.- Environment problems*

*6.- Know yourself (things good and bad; what I can improve; how I am?; how I am with the others?;*

*7.- Stereotypes and the idea of all of us are diferent and we have to respect each other. All of these topics were going to be worked with the children through the non formal educations, it means, through games, dynamics, short explanations....*

*When we started to work there, after knowing their family and social situation and our difficulties with the language, we revised our planning, and we decided to change our aims, which shouldn't be so high in this moment, and we wanted to:*

- to give them a space to have a relaxing atmosphere*
- to achieve an established group*
- to develop some educational process.*

*It means, we had to revise the plan and be realistic with the reality encountered.*

*Regarding how to plan an effective technique, as explained to us Florin, is the projection in the future (whether short or long). First, you must do is to dream, to see the horizon, which is to be achieved, the ideal situation in which you want to go ... "What I like to get this group of young people here in 9 months?" . In this act of looking to the future we must accept that we are not alone and therefore should be considered and other actors, accepting that they seek their own objectives and to develop their own strategies. It means, in this projection in the future, you not only must have an innocent dream, but you must take into account external factors, expected difficulties to be included.*

*And from this dream and the anticipation of what might happen, it is planned. From this dream, the aim should be transferred in the present and projected the process.*

d) **Action - intervention:** is the implementation of the plan. Although people often rush to act, because otherwise we do not believe that anything should be clear that the action is not the most important. The most important thing is the process that we go through professionals in technical (way ahead) and the change process that mobilizes individuals, groups or communities.



What should be clear on this point is that the things shouldn't be done, not knowing what to do and why. It's like in the kitchen, a chef knows which ingredients are used (salt, spices, flour, water ...) available, what they make (salty, bold, softening ...) and when them, not put things in the pot at random . Thus, being aware of what is and what it is, working with people is a process, because we know that unless such action is for something that has to change, to prepare the next phase ... is only one action, not a process.

Social worker should always have clear objective (which is meant to achieve), which is the action (having a clear plan for what you do), at which stage of the method is found (essential for driving the process), and in the stage is an individual, group or community (essential to know whether they will be receptive to what is tested).

Personally it took me a long time this step, and now often I act without being conscious of what I do and why I do. I like to do, simply because I do this thing.

*But when you realize what you do, this whole change process turns into something wonderful and very interesting. To be conscious we must do an effort to change .... I remember that I gave off the bus 29, and I was closer Mofleni , put my Social Work glasses. I was talking with people, I was knowing families, families ...*



*But behind these informal discussions, in my head I was thinking I had a purpose. I mean, I knew what I do, I haven't spoken only to speak. Let me give some examples, which for me are fundamental:*

*a. When I went to present the activity to the Mrs Director of the school with the mediator Trust, I knew that either in that day I will not present anything to children, because I was not prepared presentation, I was not clear what you offer. I knew then I will comment on the proposal before the Director and the Ombudsman. At that meeting, repeatedly insisted to go to class to inform children. I went not because I was aware of what I had come to do in school that day, if I was aware, I have accepted the proposal and I would have made a negative presentation.*

*b. When I went from door to door presenting me and talking about work, I knew that I had three quarters of an hour for it and that my scope was to capture. I was aware of this. So when families get to tell, I knew I must try to put an end to the conversation, because my scope was not entertainment or conversation, but to attract minors. With those families who did not trust us or not let children come, I knew at that time that I must gain confidence parents. in the end children who come or not, depend on them. For this, I emancipated them and I took care of the relationship, with the objective to win their trust.*

*c. When I first started the process of learning how to write and read with the three brothers, my first action was to send their parents a letter asking them to assume the responsibility for their children – they must learn how to write and read.*

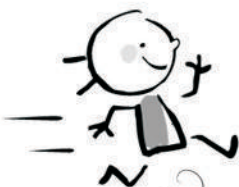


*During the first days when I came near their houses , my purpose was to draw their attention , to make them aware of that serious problem - their children didn't know to write or read . So , my attitude was not the attitude of a “ mate “ but the attitude of a very serious person , but not an authoritative or superior attitude .*

*d ) At the Christmas feast my final purpose was to have the parents coming . As a consequence I went to invite the parents to come at the party . I understood they may be ashamed to come or even a bit scared , but I reduced the level of incertitude , telling them that they would only see the show , drink a cup of coffee and enjoy .*

*e ) When I had to attract informal leaders I was aware of what exactly I had to do . Sometimes I had conversations , in order to legitimate the person and through this , to increase their faith in himself / herself . After this step I tried to make him / her know our activity and step by step introduce him / her in our labor by offering a role in the activities . And , in the same way I have made mistakes and I didn't take advantage of all the situations .*

e) **Evaluation** – allows the measurements of the degree in which the established objectives were accomplished, the way in which all the planning was realized. As the planning, the evaluation is a continuous process, it's not happening only at the end of the process but during the process. Have in mind that evaluation is important during and after the action.



In this way, evaluation professionals will receive a continuous feedback (what have they realized, what they have not realized, what have they learned) , a thing leading to an improved action . In other words, evaluation is not a theoretical exercise, but a practical one that should lead towards proposals concerning improving.

Every day (Monday and Thursday) I taped the activity, taping that proved to be very useful. This shows an example of daily evaluation, although we know that it must evaluate a larger period of time permitting you to observe the realized gains (Monthly and half – yearly comments of the project ).

Date	Objective	Activity	Number	Evaluation	Comments
7 decembrie	I offer the children a relaxed atmosphere . Improving manual dexterity of the children and their knowledge about numbers . Improving relational skills and team working.	Hand work . Cutting out and putting together images to realize a butterfly . Bingo.	15  12 small 3 big	A good activity . I have realized the planning and I created a relaxed atmosphere . The group is a good one , it must be maintained , because these children come regularly . Theodora , a main and authoritative character in the community is present . We should establish better the roles in the activity . We do not have time to allocate for each child .	A good capture of the attention . I know Geovanni ' s mother ; they live near Comtesa . Geovanni and Cristi are brothers . Ionut has left to France . Denisa came again , she lives in the orange house near the school . I have to go twice to bring Darios but eventually he comes . Mihaela si Raluca read a little bit . They are excited to read . I like when Nuria says good by and “ Today , Ionut , you behaved really good “ .





*And every day, I also looked at some pictures that helped me memorize the faces and names of children. This record helped me make me a very important Charter of issues: every child lives where, and therefore where we should direct us to capture.*

- *Organization of families (who are brothers, cousins ...) and their living habits.*
- *Personal aspects of each child, relations between them. For me it was useful to note that information every day, because it provides essential information for more details look, so when I went to Mofleni I not felt lost.*

*Similarly, in the assessment of each day with my partner, I made comments on the issues highlighted in children and on the group as a whole. We acknowledge the mistakes made. We reflect on how we can improve what we did wrong. I mean, this moment of assessment helped us to examine what we did wrong and, of course, we ask and obtain suggestions for improving coordination on the same line of conduct.*

Before ending, I must say that working with people is not something echanical, which is served by a linear structure for the purposes of:

- 1) knowledge
- 2) interpretation
- 3) planning
- 4) action
- 5) evaluation.



It is followed precedence order but the characteristic method of social assistance is that it is cyclical phases are interwoven in this process. It means that I am planning in Mofleni, stage of knowledge, I evaluate. After I make the diagnosis, I make the action plan. I make the plan of action on three months , what I accomplished and what I will do, and then I planning each week. I evaluate weekly. When I act (action stage) I still observe and know to make assumptions. Sometimes, during action observation also serves to assess if I have achieved something previously planned. This is the cyclical nature of the method.



**The European Platform for Youth Development (EPYD)** is a non-governmental, non-profit, apolitical body based on regional cooperation between the European Union and partner countries from SEE & Caucasus created in 2005 (EPYD was established as a legal body in 2007).

### **Mission of EPYD**

To increase the quality & accountability, support the development, lobby for the recognition, and advocate the active participation of organizations working in the youth field, emerging as an innovative tool to work on the lack of recognition and validation of youth work, poor quality of international youth projects and scarcity of capacity building and sustainable development in the youth field. EPYD is to counteract the major lack of structural or policy impact on the youth field due to the low level of involvement of local, regional and national authorities in the support of youth actions that hampers any sort of long term development.

### **Areas of action**

1. Promoting, designing and implementing EVS group projects;
2. Prompting the establishment of structures for EVS management in Caucasus, Middle East, Latin America and Africa;
3. Put the foundations of trans-continental networks to advocate for quality and sustainability in youth work.

### **Work Portfolio**

**Capacity Building in Youth Active Citizenship, evaluation and planning meeting,**  
2008

**Participation for Integration, training course on active citizenship and inclusion,**  
2008

**Learning by doing,** EVS group project, managing 10 volunteers from Caucasus and  
European Union, 2009

**SEED,** EVS group project, managing 10 volunteers from the European Union, 2010



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