

Applied Research Partnerships with Developing and Transition Countries

Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education

Project title

Empowerment of social services and the role of social research in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thematic focus

Inter- & transdisciplinary cooperation, social planning

Year

2008

Project location

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Swiss Institution

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Description

The overall objective of this preliminary project was to establish a research partnership between the Department of Social Work of the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (UASNW), the University of Tuzla (Faculty of Philosophy/Dept. Social Work, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation), the NGO Vive žene Center for Therapy and Rehabilitation (as a representative of the NGO sector), and the state (Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Tuzla Canton) in order to develop a joint research project design that focuses on a relevant theme and in addition serves as an example of an inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary

cooperation process, illustrating the cycle of practice, research, and policy.

In the context of this preliminary phase, a project team has been formed, the topic 'juvenile delinquency' as an urgent issue of the Bosnian society has been defined and a research design has been jointly developed.

Through this project all project stakeholders, i.e., the representatives of the social field, acquire experience with an inter- and trans-disciplinary analyzing, planning, and implementation process.

Development relevance

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the context of the post-war situation and the transition from a socialist state to a federal democratic republic has created new challenges for the institutions and organizations working in the social field. This preliminary project and the planned main project are contributing to build up and strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders to generate findings in application oriented

research and in facilitating and promoting the transfer of knowledge between practice and research as well as between state and civil society. A multidimensional approach and the integration and participation of all interest groups in the social planning process foster solutions that are context based and needs-oriented.



Meeting with the Rector of the University Tuzla



Presentation of current research projects of all partners

KFH

Rektorenkonferenz der Fachhochschulen der Schweiz
Conférence des Recteurs des Hautes Ecoles Spécialisées Suisses
Conferenza dei Rettori delle Scuole Universitarie Professionali Svizzere
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Main features of the project

The preliminary project phase started with a workshop at Tuzla to exchange research interests, experiences in research and methodologies and to introduce in the local context. This has included presentations of current research projects of all partners (BiH and CH) and teambuilding activities as well as exchange on context and research topics. Further we had meetings with various governmental and private/NGO institutions: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy; NGO Vive Zene; Psychiatric Clinic Tuzla; Center for Social Work; SDC office Sarajevo.

The strengths, the potentials, and the threats regarding this partnership have been anticipated, experienced and discussed; they will be considered for the following main project.

A further step of knowledge exchange was the contributions of Bosnian partners to the Winter School of the UASNW (January 2009) on the topic of reconciliation. BiH partners have conducted several workshops with the focus on 'ethnic conflicts and reconciliation' in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the occasion of this visit meetings with the representatives of the cantonal working group on mental health in BiH (FR, JU, BE, and GE) and visit of the youth advocacy at Basel were arranged. In return, the Swiss team gave lectures on the topics 'reconciliation' and 'social screening' at the University of Tuzla Summer School (June 2009).

As a result of this satisfying cooperation, an interdisciplinary project team with representatives of the University Tuzla, the state, the NGO sector, and the UASNW has been established.

The final output of this preliminary phase was the development of a common research topic and a project design. One of the most important tasks in the challenging context of BiH is to support the children and young people and to support their socialization process. In connection with this, our BiH partners consider the topic of juvenile delinquency to be an urgent issue. Therefore the title of the common research project will be: "Influence of different contexts of socialisation on the development of juvenile delinquency in post war BiH. Recommendations for prevention and intervention."

A number of processes that are characteristic in the aftermath of war and for countries in transition are affecting lives of children and youth directly or indirectly and are increasing risk factors for children's and adolescents' health and social behavior. According to the data available, the number of offences has increased significantly in postwar BiH, and neither prevention nor intervention measures are adapted to the needs. There is little evidence-based information available on risk factors and efficient measures. The implementation of the reform processes needed in the field of the juvenile justice system and the urgently needed reform process of the social sector and services are proceeding slowly because of structural obstacles but also because of a lack of experience and expertise regarding the challenges and requirements of the ongoing transition process. With our research we aim to provide solid data on risk factors that have negative effects on socialization as well as on positive factors for prevention activities and (re)integration of offenders.

Further, the project also targets social planning and implementation processes in general and will provide a model that promotes an inter- and trans-disciplinary approach.



Presentations by the BiH partners on 'ethnic conflict and reconciliation' at the UASNW / University Basel Winter School



Joint development of project design