

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES IN SOCIAL WORK ACROSS THE BALTIC STATES

Identifying possibilities for improvement



Annotation

From the 1st of July this year Kolping University of Applied Sciences (Department of Social Work, Lithuania) together with partners from Katholische Universität Eichstatt - Ingolstadt (Department of Social Work, Germany), Riga Stradins University (Department of Welfare and Social Work, Latvia), University of Tartu (Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, Estonia) launched a project "Management Competencies in Social Work across the Baltic States" ("Managementkompetenzen in der Sozialen Arbeit in den Ländern des Balticum").

Approved and supported through the Baltic-German University Liaison Office by the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD with funds from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic Germany, the project promotes the scientific cooperation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the one hand and Germany on the other hand in the sphere of social work. The aim of the project was to promote quality and development of social work study programmes across the Baltic States and to add value to the programmes themselves as well as to personal skills and competencies of social workers. The need to highlight the issue of management in social work arose from researches and discussions between Social work departments of Kolping University of Applied Sciences and Katholische Universität Eichstatt - Ingolstadt. The discussions revealed that good management skills have become a crucial factor seeking to overcome barriers to the successful functioning of services of social work. Therefore, aiming to improve the preparation of young social work professionals in higher education institutions, Kolping University of Applied Sciences together with partnering institutions set a task to research the needs for managerial skills of social workers in Latvia-Estonia-Lithuania and Germany and develop e-guidelines (suggestions for improvement) for improvement of study programmes.

The partnership developed an on-line questionnaire and carried on a survey to find out the needs for the main management skills of social workers in Baltic States and Germany.

The first step was to find out, which management competences social work practitioners need for their daily work situation. The results will be used to develop the training program.¹

The article is concerned with the development of the research instrument – an online questionnaire. The partners agreed on that, the instrument had to meet the following criteria:

- Consideration of the current discussion regarding management competences in social work;
- Consideration of former researches and studies;
- Classification of the competences for later use as possible modules for the training program.
- Operability – an online questionnaire requires the same aspects as a regular questionnaire, but in addition it should be short, clear and easy to handle.

The main target group for the survey consisted of students of social work and experts of social work working in HEI and social work service providing institutions. These results were the basis for these guidelines (suggestions for improvement), which will be shared and suggested to HEI in order to improve the quality of social work programmes in partnering countries.

According to the **Global Definition of Social Work** the Social Work profession recognizes that interconnected historical, social-economic, cultural, spatial, political etc. factors serve as opportunities and/or barriers to human development. For this purpose the research report begins with the historical issues of Social Work in Baltic States and Germany.

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Social Work Education in the Baltic States

Context

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Baltic countries which haven't had much experience in social work until 1990s recently have been celebrating the 20th anniversary since the first higher education institutions where one could acquire higher professional education in social work profession were established.

The roots of social work education in the Baltic States were formed simultaneously with the rebirth of social work education in Eastern European and Central-Eastern European countries in the last decade of the 20th century. At that time profound changes in market economy took place. The development of social welfare systems and social work was strong positioned in the process of innovation and change.²

Baltic States - Lithuania, Latvia Estonia in 1990 regained their national independence. Concurrently these countries were into commencing radical modernisation policy which manifested as uncompromised destruction of the previous system.

In this period society of Baltic States faced things, unseen before: unemployment, poverty, in many cases, lawlessness and social instability.

Therefore, one of the tasks and necessities of the agenda was formation of a new social policy and elaboration of a model of social security system. The social worker was expected to be a major actor in promotion of social policy and welfare of the population.

Now, after more than twenty years of independence Baltic countries have developed system in social work education based on clear ideas about professional and educational standards and harmonised with European space for higher education, defined by Bologna Declaration.

Collaboration, joint activities in research, exchange of the 'best experience' and the students and staff mobility between universities give strong impulses on innovations and on the sustainable development of social work profession in Baltic countries.

² Robert Constable & Vera Mehta. *Education for social Work in Eastern Europe: changing horizons.* (1994) International Association of Social Work.

Estonia

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For Estonia and its people social work is one of the vitally important fields that had to be built up from almost nothing since independence was regained in 1991. During the Soviet times social work and social workers did not receive the necessary attention.

In the 1990s big changes, having also an effect on social life, took place in the development of the Estonian society. Such concepts as *social work* and *social worker* were rediscovered in Estonia. There are certain prerequisites for the success of any activity (including social work). One of the most important ones is a professional, a worker with thorough preparation. Social work as an occupation requires specialised academic education, which is based on theoretical knowledge and practical skills that have been acquired through theoretical knowledge.

Social work as a profession

In Estonia it has been possible to acquire education in social work already since the beginning of the 20th century. During the last twenty years both academic education and practice in social education have been developed in Estonia.

Social Work in Estonia since Regaining Independence

On August 20th, 1991 Estonia declared its independence. Reforms have been started in every field. The system of social assistance was also changed considerably. The tasks to organize social assistance was in the authority of a local governments again. At the beginning of 1990s such positions as social worker and social advisor were established at local governments and new people were hired. Due to the lack of educated people those positions were taken by workers of the former trade unions, teachers, people with medical education, kindergarten personnel - almost one out of ten people practicing social work had gained the position incidentally (Tamm, 1998).

There was an understanding for the need of a completely different social policy and social work since Estonia regained its independence. In order to improve the quality of social work the relevant educational structures had to be established quickly. Higher education was provided again in the field of social work at Tallinn University of Educational Sciences since 1991 and at the University of Tartu since 1992.

1995 – Social Welfare Act and the Concept of a Social Worker

The concept of a social worker as an occupation has been used since 1995 in Estonia, which is when the Social Welfare Act came into force. In the Social Welfare Act social worker has been defined as a person that has obtained the respective higher education (Social Welfare Act 1995). Hence, higher education is one of the preconditions for assuring the level of professionalism of a social worker.

Educating Social Workers at the University Level

According to the November 29th, 1991 decision of the Council of the University of Tartu, the Chair of Social Work was established starting December 1st, 1991 under the Department of Sociology, Faculty of History. Lecturers were hired mainly from the field of sociology and psychology. First students, pursuing their master's degree, started in the autumn of 1992, first students studying towards the bachelor's degree were accepted in 1994. Until 1997 there was an age limit for social work students - only people that were 22 years and older were accepted. There was a presumption that people that have just graduated high school might not be mature enough to study this profession (Kiik 1998).

Social work has been taught at Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU) since 1991 and from 1992 at the University of Tartu. Afterwards also social work education at applied science level was possible mainly at university colleges. The main challenge has been to compile a programme, which would include knowledge from the Western world but serve the specific interests of modern Estonian society.

It is also possible to pursue the master's degree (80 credits) at the University of Tartu and Tallinn Pedagogical University. Preference is for people having obtained the bachelor's degree in social work or in similar fields (e.g. special education, psychology, sociology etc.).

In 2001 new curriculums, having been formed in consideration of the suggestions of the Bologna declaration and social work bachelor studies changed from 4 years studies to three years bachelor studies.

Social work as a profession is popular among young people. An indication for this is the very high competition rate (up to 1:16) in order to be accepted to the university.

Other signs for professionalization

In 2000 a workshop was formed in Estonia in order to work out the occupational standard of a social worker. Occupational standard is a basis for assessing occupational qualification and it should give an overview of the conditions guaranteeing the level of competence, which is accepted on either the grounds of regulative, historical or internationally formed requirements (Occupation Act, 2001).

Occupational standard is a document that determines the requirements of knowledge, skills, knack, experience, values and personal characteristics that derive from the occupational qualification. (Occupation Act, 2001)

Occupational standard for social workers states: "A social worker working in the institutions of the state, local government, private or third sector has to meet very many conditions, both with regard to knowledge and personal characteristics. The occupational standard was enacted in order to form the occupation of a social worker so that it would be uniquely understood and in order to adopt defined preconditions to the occupation. Every occupation has to have its qualification requirements so that a skilled worker could be distinguished from an unqualified worker or from some who is unable to manage the job. One can refresh his/her knowledge and skills in accordance with the occupational standard, upgrading his/her qualification in that way" (Sotsiaaltöötaja kutsestandard, 2001).

Only in 2004 the Association of Social Workers was established aiming at uniting people who do social work and value this activity to promote social work, the culture of social work, wellbeing and social policy. The social work code of ethics was introduced in 2005 during the 3rd Social Work Congress.

Social work programmes at the universities are based on occupational standard of social worker which is renewed after every four years. University programmes are still flexible and adjustable according to the sociopolitical changes. When case management as a main method was implemented in Estonian social work practice universities started to teach case management.

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Latvia

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The development of social work education curriculum actually was also the beginning of the development of the social work profession in Latvia. And therefore, in 1991 the Ministry of Education of Latvia Republic approved opening of the Faculty of social workers. The first school was established to educate professional social workers in Latvia and was the private higher school "School of Social work and Social Pedagogics "Attīstība".

In 1994 the social work curriculum developed rapidly in other Latvian higher schools and also state universities: the Latvian University, University of Liepāja and several colleges. The latest social work curriculum was opened at Riga Stradiņš University in 2005 /2006 school year.

Study programmes, implemented in the higher education institutions, have been worked out taking into account standards of higher education and profession. However, each of the higher education institutions develops a particular kind of specialisation in social work. Thus the University of Liepāja integrates more on social work with pedagogy, while Riga Stradiņš University develops social work in health security paradigm and integrates knowledge of social work within basic knowledge in health sciences.

The first generation of social work educators in Latvia came from philosophical, social and economic sciences, pedagogy as well field of health sciences. In collaboration with high skilled educators from other countries - Sweden, Germany, Austria, Finland, Denmark, Great Britain, and others, the best experience in social work education was selected and adapted in the socio-historical and cultural context of Latvia.

Collection of scientifically methodological articles "Dzīves jautājumi" (Issues of life, 1995) was the first teaching resource for social work students in Latvian language.

In 1996 in Riga the first international Baltic conference "Education standards in social work" took place. Among other issues the problem "Social work as science, as education or academic discipline, as professional activity" was put forward for discussion. One of the main questions of the discussion was social work in status of science.

Up to 2004 in Latvia there wasn't any doctoral study programme which could be orientated to the branch of social work. In 2005 in RSU doctoral studies in Social sciences started towards the main direction "Social policy and organisation of social work".

At present with high level academic qualifications and competence in contemporary social work a new generation of social work educators have entered in social work education and research area. They give an important input for social workers professional advancement of various kinds of formal and non-formal forms of education and have also the priority to take responsibility in the development and future of social work profession in the country.

Lithuania

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On the 11th of March in 1990 Lithuania regained its independence. **The period of 1990–1992 is considered to be the stage of the formal adoption of the concept of social work.** The independence of Lithuania brought a number of reforms resulting in the rise of various social problems as well as the birth of absolutely new social risk groups (e.g. homeless people), the growth of people's economic differentiation, the increase in poverty and unemployment as well as crime surge. A necessity emerged to replace the existing system of social support with a more effective European-type social support system. In 1990–1991 the first social workers from Western countries paid a visit to Lithuania. In 1992 the concept of social work was formally adopted; the first study programmes of social work were drawn up at Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University, Utena High Medical School (now – Utena College) (Bagdonas, 2001).

The professionalization of social work began in 1991–1992, when the above mentioned universities and Utena College introduced the education and training programs for social workers. The legal basis was expanded and improved; abundant support to social sphere was provided by Western countries; the infrastructure of social support underwent certain changes (Bagdonas, 2001). Higher education institutions in Lithuania engaged in the education and training of social workers were significantly influenced by various schools of social work from the US, Australia, Western Europe. Social work was for the first time legally defined as a professional activity in the Law on Social Services (1996) when legitimising the profession of a social worker.³

Since 2002 is the period of development of professional social work. Social work fully established itself in the life of Lithuanian people as a professional activity. After Lithuania gained full membership in the European Union in 2004, the quality of the studies of social sciences became particularly important. The creation of European-level social policy and the general globalization of social problems paved the way for the development of a peculiar Lithuanian model of social work. New changes enabled the expansion of the functions of a social worker; the definition of social work was revised. The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania was updated in 2006; among other things, the new version of the law amended the definition of social work⁴. Today, social work has its occupational description; abilities of a social worker, conditions of work, remuneration, prospects and education are defined.

Social work in Lithuania is being continuously improved: new activity fields of social workers are being developed; the number of professional social workers is being increased. The complexity of social problems and their diversity require social workers to have specific knowledge and skills; therefore, the higher education institutions training social workers continuously revise and update the study programmes of Social Work.

³“Social work shall mean professional activities which aim to find out, evaluate and help solving social problems at the level of a person, family or community. Social worker shall mean a specialist whose work is intended to strengthen the abilities of individual's adaptation to the environment, to restore his relations with the community by helping him to integrate in the society and by promoting a more full-fledged social functioning of an individual” (Law on Social Services, 1996).

⁴ “Social work shall mean the activities helping a person, a family to solve their social problems according to their possibilities and with their participation, without violating human dignity and by increasing their responsibility based on the co-operation of a person, family and society” (Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006, Article 20, Paragraph 2).

Qualification requirements for social workers as well as other legal acts governing the activities of social workers are improved (Šinkūnienė, 2010). When developing social work in Lithuania, **the professionalism of social workers, the improvement of the quality of social services and the effectiveness of social work** are among the most important objectives (Žalimienė, 2006; Pilipavičienė, 2006).

Owing to social exclusion, poverty and other problems in the society, the role of social workers is essential in the achievement of social solidarity and changes on both Lithuanian and European levels. The current identification of social problems, their evaluation and decisions as well as the growing migration encourage the cooperation of social workers from various countries. Hence, the activities of social workers acquire an increasingly more international character. The study programmes of social work implemented at higher education institutions gain more and more elements of internationality. New study programmes targeted at specific areas of social work also show a growing tendency, e.g. Child Welfare and Social Security (Kolping University of Applied Sciences), Community Development (Vytautas Magnus University).

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Social Work is a Changing Profession in a Dynamic World

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Global Agenda

We are very well aware that today's world is becoming more complex and dynamic than it used to be before. The global crisis in the world reaffirmed that the global and local processes are becoming more closely interconnected.

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (The Agenda) (International Federation of Social Workers et al., 2010) was developed in response to the increased global complexity in which we all live and work (Jones et al., 2008).

The responses broadly endorsed the four priority areas, which are:

- social and economic inequalities within countries and between regions;
- dignity and worth of the person;
- environmental sustainability;
- importance of human relationships.⁵

In order to realize these priorities Agenda put strong emphasize on social work education and training of skills: „we will work within our own organizations to promote education and practice standards in social work and social development that enable workers to facilitate sustainable social development outcomes”⁶.

Global definition of social work

“The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental in social work.”

(Definition, adopted by the IFSW General Meeting in Montréal, Canada, July 2000.)

Since then, the profession of social workers faces the new changing reality in the World, with its new priorities and challenges. It reflects also the necessity for changes in social work definition.

The point-in-time draft that has been endorsed by both IFSW and IASSW Executive/Board in March 2013 is as follows:

“The social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”⁷

⁵ David N. Jones and Rory Truett. *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: A place to link together and be effective in a globalized world.* 2012. <http://www.sagepublications.com>

⁶ *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* HE GLOBAL AGENDA
<Fhttp://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=60880>

⁷ <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/> (This final draft will then be presented to the IFSW General Meeting and the IAASW General Assembly for a membership vote in Melbourne in July 2014)

Core keywords in the new social work definition – *social change, social cohesion, empowerment and liberation of people, social justice, human rights, collective responsibility*, mean also the strengthening of knowledge, skills and competences. Leadership and management skills will be among the prior in the practice.

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Management Competencies in Social Work across the Baltic States

Description of the Need for Management Competencies to be Included in Social Work Programmes

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Social workers have variety of competences in direct client work, but they also need different management competences to complete their work successfully, i.e. to gain financial support, which is needed for the clients as well, from governments, NGO's or the European Union.

For the research the following definitions were set:

"Competences represent a combination of attributes (with respect to knowledge and its application, skills, responsibilities and attitudes) and are used to describe the level or extent to which a person is capable of performing them. Competences can be demonstrated and therefore assessed" (Stephan, 2004).

"Management consists of the interlocking functions of creating corporate policy and organizing, planning, controlling, and directing an organization's resources in order to achieve the objectives of that policy" (Business Dictionary, 2013).

To get an overview about the scientific discussions in relation to *management competences of social work*, extended research has been done (Fisher:2009; Friedrich: 2010; Germak et al: 2010; Hassan et al: 2012; Herzka, 2012; Kohlhoff: 2012; Knee, Folsom: 2012; Lawler: 2007; Leisgang: 2011; Kviesskiené: 2009). In the international context Competences of Social Workers are defined, but management competences are hardly named. An exception could be found in the National Network for Social Work Managers in the USA, which defined Management competences of Social Work Managers (Wimpfheimer: 2004; Hassan et al: 2012).

Regarding to the previous studies (Schubert; NÜß: 2001; Wimpfheimer: 2004; Hassan et al: 2012, Gevorgianiené et al: 2012), for the survey "Management Competences of social work across the Baltic States" the following competences have been chosen:

- 1) Competences in Public Relations;
- 2) Competences in Leadership;
- 3) Competences in Economics;
- 4) Competences in Quality of Insurance;
- 5) Intercultural Competences;
- 6) Personal Competence.

For the questionnaire development it was also important to define generally valid competences as the questionnaire had to be usable in four different countries with different management cultures, different histories regarding management and social work itself.

The task to shorten the questions of the online questionnaire and to make them better informative and meaningful could be met through summing-up.

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Estonia

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Introducing research results

The research in Estonia was done mainly among social workers aged 35-54 who have higher education.

The answers about managerial competencies vary a lot because more than 80% do direct work with the clients, more than 7% are involved in indirect activities with clients and only 8% work in the field of administration.

Social workers in Estonia have rated highly following areas:

- planning your field of activities effectively (72.14 % rated this competency as very important; 27, 57%- important) ;
- developing cooperation and strategically relationships (64.81% rated this competency as very important; 32.84% as important);
- evaluating, analyzing and developing teamwork relationships (60.83% rated this competency as very important; 34.72 % as important);
- using resources effectively (63.64% rated this competency as very important; 34.31% as important).

Less rated activities are:

- involving volunteers and wider public into activities of the organization (33.14% was rated as very important; 51,32% as important);
- leading the project budget (22.58% rated it as very important, 46.92% - important; 27.57% -less important);
- setting and implementing indicators of the results (23.46% indicated as very important; 55.43% - important; 16.42% - less important);
- following the instructions to do your work (43.11% rated as very important; 52.79% - important; less important – 4.11%);
- collecting the juridical and political information on social work (32.26% rated very important; 46.92% - important; 18.18% - less important);
- recording your activities (40.18% rated it as very important; 49.85% - important; 9.38% - less important);
- analyzing and evaluating juridical and political decisions which affect her/him, her/his colleagues and the organization (24.63% indicated as very important; 48.97% - important; 22.87% - less important).

All competencies concerning multicultural social work are rated lower than other skills and personal traits are rated higher than other skills.

Estonian social workers value more personal traits (73.1% rated as very important; 26.32% as important) and competencies concerning quality assurance (50.29% rated as very important; 46,49% as important) and management (59.65% indicated as important and 17.54% as very important).

Reflecting of research results

Estonian social work is 20 years old and the field itself has had many difficulties starting from the fact that first social workers did not have special education in the field of social work. Even until now 50% social workers haven't graduated from social work studies.

When social workers started to perform their work the first aim was to help people. Starting from pure helping activities and developing them to more professional communication and counseling skills, which were approved after the occupational standard was adopted and universities started to educate social workers as generalists.

The central role of managerial skills became apparent when the case management as an official method for social workers was introduced in 2005 in new concept for welfare development. Management, or what managers do or cause to happen, is critical to the development, implementation, and effectiveness of social welfare services. The core function of the managers is to lead, to catalyze action, to create circumstances that enable other people, primarily professional service providers, to perform their best. Social workers remain the primary source of management personnel in social welfare, so the quality and preparedness of this professional group is a key concern (Patti 2000: 3)

Specialized knowledge is a foundation for attaining a specialized qualification. However, at the same time one has to keep in mind that social work as an occupation is constantly changing, there is no absolute knowledge - everything is relative, dynamic and changing (Tamm, 1998). The changing nature of the activity requires reflection by a social worker, one also has to be able to evaluate his/her work and its starting-points, and learn from experiences.

Since 1998 it has been possible to specialize in University of Tartu in two directions. First it was possible to become a social advisor in which case one would be prepared to work with the problems of an individual. The second option was to study towards becoming a social director in local governments, social offices and other public offices. The occupation of a social director requires thorough knowledge of social policy, which is good knowledge about the society, its developments, economic possibilities and rational solutions in organizing education, health security, labor market, pension and assistance. Up until 1998 the curriculum had the emphasis on work with clients. The need for a change became evident from the wishes of students along with the accrual of new lecturers. The curriculum was officially changed by the faculty council in April 1998 (Kiik 1998).

During the nineties the casework was the main method to help people and provide them with welfare services. During the last ten years the case management as a tool for social workers has changed not only the methods social workers use in everyday work but has also influenced the relationship between the client and social worker.

The research showed that the personal traits are still most valued in everyday work of the social worker. Less valued are skills concerning the evaluation and documentation of their activities or bearing in mind the indicators.

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1. Kiik, R. (1998). *Sotsiaaltöö eriala Tartu Ülikoolis*. Sotsiaaltöö 3.
2. Patti, J. R. (2000). The Landscape of Social Welfare Management. In Patti, J. R. (ed.) *The Handbook of Social Welfare Management*. Sage: Thousand Oaks. Pp. 3-25.

To acquire information about how current and perspective social workers assess the necessity of management skills in their practice and how the necessity of these skills are assessed by representatives of other occupations, in the framework of the project „Management skills in Social Work across the Baltic States” 213 respondents were surveyed, 11.27% of which were full-time students, 5.16% - part-time students, who actually do social work or work in social work field, 61.97% - social workers, 3.65% - teachers/lecturers, 1.41 – psychologists, theologians – 0.47, others – 15.96%, 86.85% of which work in state/municipal institutions, 7.98% - private institutions, and 5.16% in NGO.

The survey was carried out in October-November, 2013. The questionnaire was published on internet and the anonymity of respondents was assured.

Among 213 surveyed respondents, 90.14% had university/college education, 8.92% - secondary education, and 0.94% of respondents marked the answer as „other”.

In question about social experience, 9.86% of respondents answered that they have no professional experience, 1.88% had professional experience, 15.02% of respondents answered that they have 0-2 years professional experience, 16.43% of respondents answered that their experience is 2-4 years, 24.88% - 5-9 years, 18.78% - 10-14 years, 11.27% - 15-24 years, 1.88 – more than 25 years.

64.32% of respondents have direct relationships with clients in their everyday work, 7.04% - indirect contact with clients, 21.6% - management, 7.04% - other.

If the field of professional activities of respondents is studied, it can be seen that 26.79% provide assistance to such risk groups as addicted, released from prisons, and others, 19% carry out work with children and young people, 17.45% work with questions of safety of children and youth, 9.35% provide rehabilitation for elderly and promote health safety, 10.59% working field has not been classified and 16.82% have chosen „other” as an answer.

When analyzing respondent answers in competences group regarding **Social Marketing**, the most important one has been indicated as ability to represent an organization and its values in written and oral ways– 57.28%. The next most important competence has been mentioned the ability to develop, to consolidate and to promote cooperation and strategic relationship – 38.5%.

In competences group about **management in social marketing**, significant difference among respondent opinions is not observable in groups such as the ability to motivate, to lead, and to support colleagues, students and volunteers, to be able to secure efficient work relationships and to be able to assess, to analyze and to improve teamwork, the answers are in range 60.09% - 62.26%.

Often, municipal institutions like day centers and various NGO choose to involve volunteers in the work of the organization, to make the work more efficient as well as to give opportunity for perspective social workers to advance their professional qualification. Already during studies, students of social work choose to involve in volunteering. There are also occasions in practice when a student goes to ERASMUS exchange program and involves in volunteer work in one of the state institutions of respective country. Legislation does not put the requirement for students to be involved in volunteer work, therefore such activities of students should be appreciated and the professionals who undertake to spend their time to organize volunteer activities must be appreciated as well.

However, 54.46% of respondents think that it is very important to be able to analyze workload and divide tasks among team members accordingly. „Law On Social Services and Social Assistance” states that, there must be at least one social worker on 1000 residents of municipality, but the practice often shows that it's not so, which, in turn, means that social worker is forced to work with more clients. To give ability for social workers (current and prospective ones) to plan and manage their workload and activities efficiently such study topics as Service Marketing, Strategy of Human Resources, Self Defense Methods in Social Work and other are included already in social work study programs.

In competences group about **economic**, the ability to use material and other resources efficiently is indicated as the most important competence– 48.36%, less important for respondents is the ability to understand performance indicators and to take measures to implement them – 23.47%. To improve this competence, students learn Economic, Business, Record Keeping, Economic and Management of Social Services and others in their study programs.

In competences group about **guarantee of quality**, in respondents' opinion, the ability to identify, to analyze and to assess political and legislative acts which are related to their work, colleagues and institutions, is the most important, 26.29% respondents have marked it as „very important”. There is special attention paid to make students able to recognize and to analyze various legislative documents in study process, because this is very important component of social work practice – ability to represent the interests of client, the legislative base for providing various services, etc. When working in state/municipal, private and NGO institutions, social workers must be in conformity with general and specific legislative documents when social services and social assistance is provided. At the same time, important for respondents is also the ability to collect information about legislation and political situation which is related to social work, – 42.72% have marked it. The most important competence, in respondents' opinion, is the ability to plan their actions efficiently, by 61.03% of respondents, followed by the ability to apply theoretical knowledge into practice. Therefore, also in social work study programs such topics as Social Legislation, Management of Quality, Administration of Social Services and others have been included.

When looking at **intercultural competences**, knowledge of the second foreign language has been mentioned as the most important, by 40.38%, of respondents. There is a situation in Latvia where two languages are actually mainly used, both Latvian and Russian. While The Law on Language of the State states the use and protection of the state language in state and municipal institutions, courts, organizations and companies (private enterprises), in educational and other industries, the professionals of social work, in their practice, still encounter the need of use Russian because clients often don't understand or don't use Latvian. During studies, students don't learn Russian and this create communication obstacles in the micro-practice of social work between professional and client. On the other hand, creation of intercultural competence in study process is achieved by such study courses as The Problems of Social Integration in Inter-Cultural Context and Creation of Public Relations

Only 11.27% of respondents think that it is necessary to popularize their practice workplace at international level.

When analyzing **personal competences**, respondents think that the important ones are the ability to undertake responsibility of their work – 73.83%, ability to work in team – 70.56%, to be flexible – 64.49%, to be ready for self-development and attend courses, seminars – 56.81%, to work independently – 56.07%. In the requirements for social service providers, there is statement that the municipality has to assure regular trainings for social workers yearly, no less than 24 hours per year. (Requirements for social service providers. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=75887> (seen on 11.11.13))

When analyzing 6 competence groups which were included in the survey – social marketing, management, economy, quality guarantee, inter-cultural competence and personal competences, the most important, in respondents' opinion, are personal competences – 58.88%, quality guarantee – 46.26% and management – 40.65%.

It can't be denied that the social work is an action which requires high level of proficiency and competence in various fields – in pedagogy, psychology, legislation, management and other fields, therefore, to carry out their professional roles and tasks so to successfully implement the principles of social work into practice, social workers must possess not only the competences studied in the survey, high moral principles but also other competences not mentioned in the survey.

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Lithuania

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The respondents were asked to assess the management competences that social workers are required to possess. The authors of the research named six separate areas of the above mentioned competences: public relations, management, economics, assurance of a quality, cross-cultural and interpersonal competences.

In order to find the value of **public relations** the respondents were asked how important they find:

- representation of the organization, its values and norms in written and oral manner are found *very important* by 55.3% of respondents and 38.3% believe that it is *important*.
- ability to be able to get volunteers, clients and the public involved into the activities of the organization in order to draw bigger attention to the carried out programs and activities were found *very important* by 63.2% of respondents and 31.6% believe that it is *important*.
- development, establishment and fostering of co-operation and strategic relationship are *very important* to 53.1% of the respondents, others deem it *important* - 39.6%.

Study programmes and/or other related subjects focus mainly on general management competences and rarely distinguish its different areas. Competences in public relations are also seen as management competences. Taking into account the results of this research, it is appropriate to emphasize both the whole of general management subject and individual elements of it

Management competence. Order of Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science (approved by the Minister of Education and Science in 09-04-2008, No. 2008 04 09. ISAK-980) on rules of recognition of degree in social work provides that social work studies must "enable perception of social work values and ethical principles, develop knowledge and skills required for direct interaction with customers in specific social services and their management, and ensure research and social policy and their implementation." However, this order does not provide that an educational institution preparing social workers programs should perform study of management framework, as the fundamentals of management are normally classified as secondary subjects which the institution selects subjects in accordance with their own preference (given that a list is provided with disciplines such as computer science, law or social statistics). These competences are highlighted in the "Study programs renewal: the development of competences and learning outcomes assessment methodology, 2012" where they are classified as interpersonal competences which must be allowed to develop by the higher education institution. When asked about the importance of management competences, respondents stated that:

- it is essential that a social worker is able to motivate, lead and support colleagues, students and volunteers (58.3% as *very important* and 38.5% *important*);
- an establishment of an effective working relationship is *very important* to 57.3% while it is *important* for 37.5%;
- an ability to assess, analyze and improve teamwork is *very important* to 63.5% and *important* for 32.3%;
- analysis of the workload and task distribution is *very important* for 52.1% and *important* for 37.5%;

The responses of the research participants show us how important management is as a competence in practical social work.

Competence in the field of efficiency. When asked about their opinion on importance of working efficiently, social workers responded that:

- the need for social workers to effectively use the material and other resources is *very important* for 44.7% of the respondents, and it is *important* for 46.8%.
- development, monitoring and documentation of project budget is *very important* for 28.3%, it is *important* for 47.8%; 21.7% found it to be of *little importance*.
- the knowledge of performance indicators and measures for their implementation were found *very important* by 26.4%; it is *important* for 58.2%.

Interestingly enough, efficiency competences were not mentioned in the answers to the question which management competences were deemed most important by the respondents. In the legislation of social work education of the Republic of Lithuania regarding study programmes and/or other subjects little attention is paid to training efficiency skills. In "The Methodology of Social Work Field Competence Development" (2011) the task of quality assurance is attributed to the general systemic competences and is perceived as "project design and management". The situation is different in the practical social work. Occupation instructions of every institution of social services provide that an employee must efficiently and effectively use human and material resources of the organization. This competence is developed while performing practical activities in our country.

Quality guarantee. These competences highlighted both in the "Study program renewal: methodology of competence development and study result assessment" (2012) (they are mentioned among instrumental and systematic competence areas) and in the order of Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science (approved by the Minister of Education and Science on 09/04/2008, ISAK-980) on "Confirmation of the regulation of social work study tendencies". In this document they are mentioned among cognitive and practical skills. In the „ methodology of competence development and study result assessment" assurance of quality at work is attributed to the general systemic competencies, and treated as a "focus on quality (an ability to assess and maintain the quality)". The interviewed social workers assessed that:

- it is *very important* for 64.7% and *important* for 30.9% that social workers plan their activity;
- 43.2% found it *very important* and 43.2% found it *important*, 12.6% felt it was of *little importance* that the employees follow the working guidelines set by the employer institution;
- 28.4% think it is *very important*, 46.3% - that it is *important* and that it does not matter to 3.2% that social workers independently collect information on the legal and political conditions associated with social work;
- employees' application of theoretical knowledge in practice is *very important* for 44.2% and *important* for 52.6%.
- careful, detailed and understandable documented workflow is *very important* for 45.3% and *important* for 33.7%; 20% find it *less important*;
- identify, analyze and investigate the political and legal regulations affecting themselves, colleagues and organizations 21.3% as *very important*, 41.5% *important*, 34% of *little importance* and 3.2% does not matter;

Intercultural competence highlighted in "Study program renewal: methodology of competence development and study result assessment" (2012). In this provision, intercultural competence is attributed to interpersonal as well as to systemic competences. "Social work study course description" 2012 provides that after completing the first cycle of studies social workers shall possess knowledge about: "... social problems and their expression in a multicultural environment . " When asked to rank these competences, respondents answered that:

- knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural differences (values and lifestyles) is *very important* for 43.6% and *important* to 41.5% ;
- knowledge of their country's culture is *very important* to 28.4%, it is *important* - 52.6% , while 17.8 % find it *less important*.
- application of legal and social work knowledge regarding migration, racism and discrimination problems was found *very important* by 37.2 % of respondents, *important* by 46.8 %, and *less important* by 12.8 %, while 3.2 % think that it is *not important*.
- application of appropriate techniques while working with clients/colleagues of other cultures and effectiveness and ease of cooperation is *very important* to 47.3%, *important* for 43 %, *less important* for 7.5 %.
- skill of second foreign language is *very important* to 25.3 % of respondents, *important* to 44.2 %, and *less important* to 25.3%; 5.3 % think it is *not important*;
- attraction of international interest is *very important* to 14.1 %, *important* to 47.8% and *less important* to 31.5 % while 6.5 % think that it is *not important*.

In the wake of social work as a profession in Lithuania this competence was not very important. However, the changing situation and Lithuania's entry into the European Union, growing immigration from other countries during the various staff exchange programs or similar projects causes growth of the importance of cross-cultural competence in social work. The respondents also show that cross-cultural competence should be very important in education of future social workers in high schools.

The importance of **interpersonal skills** in social work practice respondents answered that:

- it is *very important* for 66% and *important* for 31.9% that a social worker is able to work independently.
- flexibility is *very important* for 62.8% while 37.2% found it *important*.
- ability to take responsibility is *very important* for 64.9% and *important* for 29.8% - *important*, while 5.3% found it *less important*;
- critical thinking is *very important* for 51.6% and *important* for 35.8%; 12.6% find it *less important*;
- self-criticism is *very important* for 62.1%, *important* for 33.7% and *less important* for 4.2%;
- willingness to develop and improve their skills is *very important* for 80.9 % and *important* for 19.1% ;
- computer knowledge was found *very important* by 53.7 %; 36.8 % find it *important* and 9.5% deem it *less important*;
- teamwork skills are *very important* for 78.9% and *important* for 20%.

“Study programs update: the development of competencies and learning outcomes assessment methodology 2011” emphasized the importance of interpersonal skills. They are defined as individual skills and social skills. Other documents describe interpersonal competence as a social skill and personal quality. This competence was rated by the respondents as the most important in social work practice by 59.5% of respondents.

The importance of leadership competences provided in this survey was rated as *very important* by 44.2 % of respondents and *important* by 48.4 %, while 7.4 % deemed it *less important*.

The largest part of respondents believe that the most important is the skill of personal competence (59.5%), 18.8 % rated the quality work guarantee as the most important, while public relations were chosen by 11.5% of respondents, management – by 7.3% , and intercultural competence – by 3.1% of respondents. None of the respondents chose efficiency as that the most important competence.

Judging from the results of this survey, it is recommended that the institutions providing social work study programs pay more attention to the management skills in social work training.

Personal and cross-cultural competence training is provided in social work study course description and regulation. However, other management competences researched in this study should be given more emphasis in the development of social work professionals.

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Germany

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In the German survey there were 219 respondents. 70, 1% of them are women and most of them are between 25-34 years old. 79,9 % are social workers, but there are also 9,1 % full-time students, 3,7 % pedagogues, 1,4 % psychologists, 1,4 % students with work experience, 0,9% theologians, 0,5 sociologists and 2,7 % others. This heterogeneous group of respondents work to 24, 7 % in private institutions, to 34, 3 % in church institutions and to 17, 2 % in welfare organizations.

78 % of the respondents work with clients directly in contact, 24, 6 % not and 41, 2 % of them work in the management of their institutions. The respondents could choose more than one position. In these positions work 63, 6 % of the respondents fulltime and 33, 3 % halftime. 2, 0 % of them are self-employed. They all work in different fields of activity: Most of them (27, 9 %) work in a field with health, age and rehabilitation, but 24, 7 % have a mixed type of work areas. 19, 2 % work with children and youngsters, 16, 9 % work with people having risks and 16, 0 % work in the field of children and youngsters' protection.

The first competence area, which was questioned, was the **competences in public relations and marketing**. Having analyzed the results it is evident that the respondents think that it is *very important* to develop cooperation and strategic relations in consolidation and to promotion (74, 9 %). Volunteers, customers and the audience should be involved in the activities of the organizations and to pay a bigger attention to the carried out programs and activities. It is also one of the *very important* capabilities (51, 6 %). 46.8% of the respondents believe that it is *very important* to represent the organization and their values and norms in written and oral forms.

Analyzing the results of the **competences in leadership** shows that a *very important* skill of social workers is to generate effective working relations, because 67, 6% of the respondents stated that. The second *very important* skill of this competence area is the motivation, the management and support of the participants of the system (employee, students and volunteers). The analyses from the workload and the adequate distribution of the appropriate assignments in the team is for 51, 1% of the respondents *importantly* (42, 9% *very importantly*).

The ability to know how to use material and other resources effectively is for 54, 8 % of the respondents a *very important* skill of the third competence area: The **competences in economy**. To form, check and make records of a budget (project-related) is for 45, 1% of the respondents an *important* ability. But 34, 7 % of the respondents say that this skill is *very important* and 19, 7 % say that it is *less important*. To be able to apply the knowledge about methods of the measure of the efficiency and to be able to apply these, is for 46, 1% of the respondents *importantly* (22, 4% say that it is *very important*).

The fourth questioned competence area was the **competences in the quality assurance**. In this area a *very important* skill for the respondents is to plan their own activity effectively (65, 1 %). The following skills are *important* for the respondents: The first *important* skill for the respondents is to use theoretical knowledge in her/his activity (55, 5 %). Then 54.3% of the respondents say that it is *important* to follow given guidelines in their work. 51.2% have chosen that the careful and in understandable details written documentation of the work routine is also *important*. Identifying, analyzing and examining of political and legal skills of the occupation are other *important* competences in the quality assurance (50, 5 %). And to be able to fulfill around this skill, 48.8% of the respondents say that the collecting information about this subject is *important*.

The last but not the least competence area is the **intercultural competences**. In this area there were no competence skills with the valuation very important. But the first *important* skill for the respondents is the knowledge about their own culture (59, 2 %). This skill is followed by the ability to use knowledge of legal and social work to be able to deal with wandering, racism and judgment property (55, 5 %). 54.5% of the respondents think that it is *important* to use methods, while one works with customers and colleagues from other countries and 50, 7% say that it is *important* to recognize and understand cultural differences. Moreover, skills have been found with a *less important* appraisal in this competence area: First of all it is speaking the second language and secondly recognizing cultural differences in the workplace of the respondents (50, 0 %).

The last questioned competence area is the **personal competence**. It is the *most importantly valued competence* by the respondents in the whole questionnaire. The ability to work independently is *very important* - 77, 2% of the respondents stated that. Then 74.5% think that it is *very important* to value one critically. 73, 4% think that it is *very important* to be able to work in a team. The readiness to look for self-improvement and to take part in trainings is very important among 62, 8% of the respondents. 59.8% of the respondents have answered that it is *very important* to have a critical perception. 59, 4% say that it is also very important to be flexible. Moreover, 56.7% of the respondents have explained that it is *very important* to take over responsibility of their own work. Knowledge with the computer is very important among 49, 8% of the respondents.

In the last share of the on-line questionnaire the respondents had to express themselves on the **general importance of management competence**. To that question 54.4% of the respondents have said that the registered management competences are *important* in the questionnaire. 37, 8 think that the competences are *very important* and 7, 8% have the opinion that they are *less important*.

The second question of this last share asked the respondents of the choice to **the most important competence area**. 54.3% have said that the personal competence is the *most important* competence. The *second-most important* competence, within 19, 2%, are the competences of leadership. Within 14, 2% the competences of quality assurance are the *third most important* competence area. The *back lights* form the competences in PR & marketing (6, 4 %), the intercultural competences (3, 2 %) and the competences of the economy (2, 7 %).

Reflexing the German results of the research:

The field of social services in Germany is influenced increasingly by a social change and economic structure changes. By a stronger and stronger globalization social and economic aspects become more and more important. Moreover, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as financial resources for social services have become a substantial competitive factor in the market of social services. To do justice to these claims, social services must change structurally. (Arnold/ Maelicke, 2009: 5)

The everyday professional life demands a lot of social workers concerning their thinking, their memorization, their perception and motivation. Therefore, the possession of technical and methodical competence is not any more enough, but makes a possession of still some competence necessary. (See for example Menzel, D./ Pawlowsky, P./ Wilkens, U.: In: Wissens- und Kompetenzerfassung in Organisationen, S.341ff. und Erpenbeck, J./ Rosenstiel: Handbuch Kompetenzmessung erkennen, verstehen und bewerten von Kompetenzen in der betrieblichen, pädagogischen und psychologischen Praxis)

The competence areas of the questionnaire which originated in the cooperation of Lithuania and Germany stand exemplary for it. also this competence is important in the everyday professional life of a social worker.

The fact is that all called into question competences are important for the social work. One cannot say because of the question about the general importance of every competence area, for example that financial aspects are less important than personal competence. If one looks at the economic competence and on their results, one sees that also this competence is important in the everyday professional life of a social worker.

It is very important to define a narrower concept of the management in the social work, so that one can call the necessary competence for the basic conditions of the management (see Maelicke, B.: *Integriertes Management in der Sozialwirtschaft*).

Moreover, the application of a competence model would respect that competence is normally to be seen on a network and has influence on each other. For a management exchange rate supported on the competence it will be important to define competences and their influence on the everyday life of a social worker.

Moreover, one must think that the conditions of the management and the competence resulting from it are very different in every workplace position of a social worker.

This overview was to be shown the good first step how social workers estimate the importance of different competence.

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Conclusions: Management-Competences for Social worker in the Baltic States and Germany

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Since the draft of Global Definition of Social work that has been endorsed by both IFSW and IASSW Executive/Board in March 2013 points out that *“The social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”* it can be seen that strengthening of knowledge, skills and competencies of social workers is on global agenda. Leadership and management competencies will be among the prior in the practice.

The intention of the whole project „Management competences in Social work across the Baltic States“ was to research and analyze the main management competencies which are important to social workers in the point of view of the target group. The main aim underlying in the research was to formulate how social work study programmes could be improved and to suggest/open ways for further improvements, seeking to prepare more skillful and competent social work professionals. Therefore, personal development of management competencies play a crucial role in the whole cohort working in the sphere of social work: social work students, social workers a part of administration, social workers working directly and indirectly with clients and experts.

Although, the academization of social work across the Baltic States have become highly developed and is still making a significant progress, the continuing progress on both academic and practical (direct work with clients) levels should be promoted to avoid unprofessional management of social services.

It was observed that general publications on the topic of management issues in social work is not enough, the study revealed that there is a need for the separate modules for social work programmes introducing and developing management competencies of future social workers.

The results showed that:

Differences from the evaluation of the management-competencies are regarding to the composition of the interviewed **cohort**: the respondents have **direct relationship with clients** (LIT 79,6%, LET 64,32 %, EST 80 %. 24,6 GER 78 %) and **indirect contact** in their everyday work (LIT 21,9 %, LET 7,04 %, EST 7 %. GER 24,6 %) and there are respondents in the **administration** (LIT 39,1 %, LET 21,6 %, EST 8 %. GER 41,2 %).

The **most importantly valued competences** by the interviewee in the whole questionnaire is the **personal competencies**. All skills concerning the multicultural social work are rated lowest.

Consequently, the priority fields with regard to the integration of research selected for the program are as follows:

Competences in public relations

Analyzing the results shows that 33, 14 % Estonian, 53, 1% Lithuanian, 38, 5 % Latvian and 74, 9 % German interviewee think it is „very important“ to develop cooperation and strategically relations to consolidate and to promote. Also 56.89% Estonian, 55,3 % Lithuanian, 38,5% Latish and 46,8 % German interviewee believe that it is very important to represent the organization and their values and norms in written and oral manners.

Competences in management

In the competencies group about competences in management the ability to motivate, to lead and to support colleagues, students and volunteers, to be able to secure efficient work relationship and to be able to assess, to analyze and to improve teamwork, the answers are in range between 60, 83% in Estonia, 62, 26 % in Latvia, 58, 3% and 52, 1 % in Lithuania 67, 6% and 42, 9% in Germany.

Competences in economics

The next competence area, which was questioned, was the competences of economy. The ability to know how to use material and other resources effectively is for 63.64% in Estonia, 44, 7 % Lithuania, 48, 4 % Latvia und 54, 8 % German interviewee very important. Knowledge about methods of the measure of the efficiency and the ability to apply these is for 23.46% in Estonia, 23, 5 % Latvia, for 26, 4 % Lithuanian and 22, 4 % German important. To improve this competence, students in Latvia lean for example Economic, Business, and Management of Social Service in their study program.

Competences in quality guarantee

In the group about competences in quality guarantee in responders' opinion it is very important to use theoretical knowledge in the activity (Estonian 55.43%, Lithuanian 64,7 %, Latvia 61,0 %, Germany 55,5 %). 32.26% Estonian, 28,4 % Lithuanian, 42,7 % Latvia an % 50,5 German think it is very important that social workers independently collect information on the legal and political conditions associated with social work. Also the results of Estonia show the highly importance of use resources effectively.

Intercultural competences

The intercultural competences are viewed as being of little importance in the Baltic: for example the importance to recognize cultural differences and to understand (Estonia 43.4%, Lithuania 28,4 % Latvia 27.57% and Germany 50,7 %). Speaking of a second language and recognizing from cultural differences in the workplace of the interviewees are ranked between 17.6% in Estonia, 40,4 % in Latvia, 25,3 % in Lithuania and 50 % in Germany.

Personal competences

By analyzing personal competencies, respondents think that it is very important to be able to work independently (Estonia 81.23%, Latvia 56,1 %, Lithuania 66 % and Germany 77,2 %) and to be flexible (Estonia 69.79%, Latvia 70,6 %, Lithuania 62,8 % and Germany 59,4 %). The importance of other competencies (to take responsibility for the own work, to think critically, to seek for improvement, to be able to work in a team) is ranked between all the countries in the scale of 60% - 85%.

Therefore some suggestions for improvement could be formulated:

1. It is very important to accentuate for future social work professionals that *managerial approach to social services and organizational processes of social services plays a major role in social work praxis*. As the key actors in these social work processes should be included not only the representatives of different professions, but also clients (individuals, families, groups, community). Therefore, skillful management of such different cohorts participating in the processes plays a major role in qualified provision of social services.

2. In regulations of social work study programmes in separate countries basically the development of management competencies is described on a general basis, rarely separate management competencies (for example, Competences in Public Relations; Competences in leadership; Competences in economics; Competences in quality insurance; Intercultural Competences; Personal Competence) are highlighted. Therefore, while generalizing the research results, it would be appropriate to *highlight not only the subject of management in general terms, but also separate elements of management in different social work programme subject*.

3. The results showed that it is essential that social workers would be able to motivate, manage, lead and support their colleagues, volunteers. Moreover, they should be competent enough to be able to establish effective working relationships, assess, analyze and improve teamwork, make workload and distribute the tasks to their team effectively. Therefore, it is noted *that there is a need to develop social work programmes, where teamwork, reflecting all above mentioned aspects, would be a compulsory module*.

4. Under the occupational instructions for social workers in Social service institutions employees are required *to have the ability to use the organizational and human resources in an economic and efficient manner*. The results showed that social workers need to use given materials and other resources effectively, to be able to develop, monitor and document the project budget and have the knowledge of performance indicators. Therefore, *it is important to emphasize the subject of management of social projects and training programs*. To improve this competence, students should learn Economic, Business, Record Keeping, Economic and Management of Social Services and other in their study programs.

5. It is important to emphasize the importance of *quality of work, meaning the ability to evaluate and maintain the quality of work*. The study revealed that social workers should be able to plan their work and maintain their workload, to be able to document in detail the progress of the work, to recognize and analyze the political and legal regulations affecting the work of the entire organization. Therefore, also in social work study programmes such topics as *Social Legislation, Quality of Management, Administration of Social Services* and others should be included as modules to study.

6. In the beginning of the emergence of social work profession of intercultural competence was not very important. However, after the Baltic countries have joined the European Union and the bigger flow of the immigrants from other countries and various staff exchange programs emerged, the importance of intercultural competencies in social work also began to grow. The results showed that the intercultural competencies training in higher education institutions should be highlighted in the preparation of future

social workers, i.e. enabling them to understand inter cultural differences and be able to work in a multicultural environment, would be able to apply legal and social work knowledge of migration, racism and discrimination, to apply appropriate methods when working with other cultures clients / colleagues. This would increase the level of cooperation efficiency. It is suggested to incorporate more intercultural competency elements, in cooperation with other foreign countries, by organizing exchange programs for students and etc.

7. The study revealed that *interpersonal competencies* are key ones in the praxis of social work in all the Baltic States and Germany. Future social workers must be able to work independently, be flexible, be able to take responsibility, to think critically, to be able to critically evaluate their own work, participate in trainings constantly and seek for continuous improvement. *Social work study programs and all study process should be organized in such a way and have such modules, appropriate attention would be paid to develop students' interpersonal competencies.*

8. In order to improve the quality of social services while preparing professional social workers, project partners suggest that a separate training programme/ course for social work professionals or/and social work students in the frames of management competencies in social work could be developed. All political, historical and legal aspects should be absorbed as well as definitions and management issues in social work.