

SOCIAL WORK IN ROMANIA

**Interview with Prof. Elena Zamfir¹, Ph. D.
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After the revolutionary events of December 1989 an activity domain and, implicitly a profession, have been re-established in Romania: the domain of social assistance, respectively the profession of graduate social worker, abusively abolished by the totalitarian communist regime. The paper emphasizes the beginnings of social assistance in Romania, the history of this activity domain being tightly related to the sociological school from Bucharest, led by Professor Dimitrie Gusti, immediately after the first World War. The interview also analyzes the development of the national system of social assistance during the last years, the expected reforms in the near future, as well as problems related to the professional training of human resources for the social services. Another issue upon which it focuses is the role of the social worker in the complex process of institutional reforms within the field of social protection, required by the integration of Romania in the European space.

What can you tell us about the issuing of the Social Work Review? What is its role in developing social work in the present moment?

This is not an entirely new publication. It is reviving a tradition of a very good social work publication in the past, initiated by the Bucharest Sociological School under the co-ordination of D. Gusti. The "Social Work Magazine" has been issued between 1929 and 1938 as a periodical newsletter being an instrument for learning about the social problems and dissemination of the practical and theoretical results of the social work system, as well as the possibilities for active intervention for rapid solving the cases requiring social

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assistance. After setting up the Association for the Progress of Social Work by D Gusti in 1936, the magazine has been co-ordinated by this association till 1944. The magazine became an efficient communication tool amongst professionals, fulfilling an important documentation function through containing theories, studies, and book reviews to be applied in the practice of social assistance. Another important function is as a mean of learning about the educational policies in the field of social work, through systematic discussions regarding the curricula, the training of social workers and evaluation of social work education. We could say that the strong point of those publications was the presentation of the most important results of the field action research undertaken by the Bucharest Sociological School in order to promote social change. The dissemination of the theoretical and practical results of the social assistance system, the presentation of the strong and weak points of the social services and the examples of excellence turned this publication into a valuable communication channel, a mean to learn about social problems, an efficient intervention mechanism for social action in the benefit of the community.

I believe that the expectancies of the professionals created by the 1989 Revolution regarding the social protection of those in difficulty, will be met by the new magazine according to the good tradition, if it will be an efficient way of debating the present social problems, a way to learn about the social assistance legislation, a fruitful dialogue for designing efficient strategy for social protection and social intervention, as a stimulant for creating new specialised social services.

In this respect, I believe we can all remember the general enthusiasm that characterised the beginning of the first year after the 1989 revolution, when the specialists in sociology have foreseen the effects and social/human costs of the transition and have designed various possibilities for alleviating these costs through a coherent social policy aimed at protecting the population at risk. At that moment we hoped that this coherent social policy would be supported by social therapies within specialised services. Unfortunately, after 12 years of transition, one can see that this complex process of adopting the new market economy mechanisms meant for those in difficulty a much greater shock and too little therapy.

I am very happy to express my confidence that the Social Work Review will bring to the attention of readers the valuable tradition of the school of sociology and social work school in the past. Moreover we hope this magazine will provide a practical support for social workers and social work,

as a genuine dialogue regarding the solving the social problems the Romanian society faces, as a possibility to disseminate good practice examples in social work. The magazine can promote a modern approach of the restructuring the national system of social work.

Our optimism specific to any beginning is based on a few essential aspects which fundament the reform the social work system in the last period. I refer to the framework law of social work recently adopted that stipulates the compulsory design of a complex methodology for its implementation. Thus this framework law allows and requires the rethinking of the of the entire social work system. I mention only a few implementation requirements:

- The development of a public system of social work services
- The elaboration of a specific laws for social work: the minimum income guarantee law, child law, social work services law, people with disability law, the elderly law, the partnership law, the volunteer law, etc.
- Legal co-ordination of the efforts of different ministries and institutions involved in social work necessary for eliminating the fragmentation of the present system.
- Synchronised thinking of the reform actions undertaken in the system based on a social policy designed within an inter-ministerial commission.
- The organised and well-thought decentralisation of the social work system and focus on the family and community problems in order adjust the system to the individual needs.

Thus using an integrative multidisciplinary vision the system will meet the specific needs of those in difficulty, taking in to account of the specific structure of the fundamental needs of the individual.

After 1989 we assisted at the rebirth of an activity and a profession in Romania, social work and the profession of graduate social worker. Please refer in the beginning to those aspects.

The revolution in 1989 generated high expectations regarding the restarting the rich tradition that our country had had in the field of social work between the two world wars. During that time Romania has known a spectacular progress in social assistance, including in training social workers. I might add that we are amongst few countries in this world that initiated a professional system of academic graduate and undergraduate training for

social workers within the school of sociology run by Prof. D. Gusti and Prof. Henri Stahl. They developed a well-structured community urban network of social assistance, and intended the same system for rural areas too. This comprehensive network required trained professionals.

In 1929 “Princess Helen” Superior School of Social Work has been set up, under the co-ordination of the Romanian Social Institute, with the approval of the Ministry of health and social care. In the beginning the entire curricula for social workers (4 years of studies till 1959 and three from 1959 till 1969) as well as the practical training have been designed, guided and organised within the Romanian Social Institute. Prof. D. Gusti the initiator of social assistance in Romania, together with the minister of health and social care, Dr. Iuliu Moldovan, the director of the institute of statistics, Sabin Manuila and the director of the school of social assistance Venturia Manuila, have designed the curricula and the training plan, defining the practice objectives and launched model practice centers. They have evaluated the intervention, counselling, therapy and action methods, defining the particularities of social statistics. The Romanian Social Institute has designed in 1930 the law of social services, law that addressed communities in difficulty, law that stipulates the developing of community specialized services and community development programs. We could argue that the implications of this law are applicable in the present practice of social work and respond to modern requirements.

What is the social work education system characterised by in that period?

We can highly appreciate the strong link between the social theory and the practical aspects of social work of that time. Thus all those involved in the developing of the social work training system have studied abroad (for longer or shorter periods of time) learning about the Western educational process. It is significant to mention here the co-operation between various fields of social assistance development and how D. Gusti organised a special department of social statistics in 1936. This department undertook a general census of all social activities and units at that moment. The results of that census have been published in a volume: *Social work and care institutions*. In 1938 has been organised the first congress of social workers in Romania an event who brought together national and international professionals.

In fact the training programme of social workers has been organised with the direct support of sociological research undertaken by the Romanian Social Institute. This institute turned in to the Institute of Social Research. Keeping the good tradition of the social research, many branches have been set up all over the country. This process lead to a better understanding and rapid intervention in cases of social problems.

Despite those remarkable results of the social work school, the communist regime considered that the academic graduate and undergraduate social work training is useless producing useless professionals, therefore it has been totally eliminated in 1968. The social work profession has been practically dissolved. The specialised social assistance services system gradually degraded due to a chronic underdevelopment process. The social problems were solved at a administrative, bureaucratic level.

Thus we can explain why social work has been totally unprepared to meet the general requirements generated by the complex events of December 1989 and confront with the new problems of transition. In fact at that moment we did not have social work professionals under 40 years of age, prepared to undertake the new social challenges, ready to enter a system and participate in the training of future professionals. At the beginning of 1990, there were very few undergraduate social workers. The undergraduate social work professionals from the past continuously supported the student practice module using their experience. They have also participated to the design of the activities of the new social work system.

Starting with 1990 the problem of recreating the graduate social work profession has tackled also by sociologists, supported by a constant professional effort. For recreating the new social assistance academic profile two complementary aspects have been considered. On one hand is the use of the valuable tradition of the Romanian social work education between the two world wars: programmes, textbooks, the orientation for action research and for solving social problems, a coherent law of social services, etc. On the other hand, the present system selectively took over high quality models from Western countries. Thus social assistance education benefited from all the advantages of a new profession without any ideological burden of the past. The social work profession was based right from the beginning on the international top standards of the profession. The role of the social worker in the complex process of social reform required by transition is crucial.

You reminded the dramatic and sinuous fate of social work during the communist regime. What was the attitude of that regime towards social work?

Social work has had one of the most dramatic destinies during the socialist regime in Romania. The entire attitude of the regime towards social work proved a lack of structural understanding of its role and moreover a fundamental rejection of it.

After the Second World War, as a result of the exceptional activity of the sociological school co-ordinated by Prof. D. Gusti, a complex system of territorial social work has been created despite of the economical recession and communist rejection. This system was designed in order to register all the social problems of the potential beneficiaries (a map of social problems was designed) and a social worker was working for approximately 30.000 people. The system has been designed for rural areas and used as a main method of social diagnosis the social inquiry, interview and questionnaires. These instruments were applied to all the community social actors in order to create a realistic image of the social problems of the marginalised groups.

This system was about to be extended to rural areas. Social workers were trained during undergraduate courses, receiving a high quality theoretical and practical training, many time superior to many Western countries. In 1962 a two-volume textbook has been published: Social services and Methods and Techniques in social assistance by Ioan Matei si H. H. Stahl, one of the very few social work textbooks of the moment.

Despite all this, soon it became clear that the communist regime will no longer accept the social assistance system, due to the multiple and individualised problems revealed by it, problems that emphasised the social and human inefficiency of solving social problems. The individual problems were increasingly difficult to be solved on professional bases. Social work was regarded as an alien activity meant to interfere with the way social problems were tackled in the communist ideology. The courageous initiative of developing and strengthening the social assistance system has been ended by the brutal intervention of the communist regime aimed at dissolving the 4 years graduate course of social work training in 1952 and the 2 year undergraduate course in 1969.

In the same time the profession of social work has been erased from the register of the professions. On the other hand the community social assistance network has been abandoned. Thus, the social assistance activity reaching a

high professional level, has been replaced by bureaucracy and administrative activities. The only function of those activities was to distribute occasional material support to those who desperately need it.

The legal framework adopted between 1950-1970, excluded the system of social assistance. The system for organising, functioning and administration of social protection was strongly centralised leaving no room for local or non governmental initiatives. The Ministry of Health and Social Prevention and then the Ministry of Labour, have had as task to co-ordinate the social assistance and social protection activities, managing the allocated funds strictly from an administrative point of view.

The local administration have had very restricted powers such as distribution of emergency support. All this has had a double effect: on one hand the social assistance services have been reduced to minimum, on the other hand, the quality of professionals decreased, professionals been replaced by Clarks.

Paradoxically, this tough measure of complete elimination of the social assistance system has been taken in a period of relative liberalisation. Sociology as academic discipline has been rehabilitated in 1964 and starting with 1966 has been re-introduced as an academic discipline. This positive measure was not meant to last long: 10 years after the dissolution of social assistance we have witnessed the annihilation of sociology as a programme of professional training.

As you have already mentioned, in our country the social assistance has had a rich tradition, its history being closely related to the sociological school of D. Gusti. Can you remind our readers what were the beginnings of social assistance in Romania?

The first social work activities in Romania –like in any other countries- have been charitable having a pronounced religious character co-ordinated mostly by the church. Those activities were aimed at helping those at the margins of society: ill people, elderly, poor people, orphans, handicapped and beggars. This kind of actions helped building a human solidarity spirit so necessary to develop modern social services. Gradually the religious social care activities became structured as measures and normative legal acts, financed from the budget in specialised institutions.

After the unification of the Romanian Provinces in 1859 many legislative acts are being issued that stipulate concrete attributions for the social assistance services at villages and counties level.

The systematic intervention of the state in the social activities starts in 1920 with the creation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care and the Direction of Assistance. At local level there have been set up local offices. These offices use to deliver social services, the local coordination was done by the county committee. In 1930 a social services law has been adopted offering a very modern framework for that period. In rural areas care houses have been created and in urban areas, local offices.

After December 1989 you have personally being involved in the organising of the academic training for social workers, as the head of the first Social Work Department within the University of Bucharest. How do you see the education in this field?

The social and cultural profile of the social work profession has been accepted shortly after 1989. The motivation of young people for this profession increased gradually. Right from the beginning of 1990 the training of social work professionals started in Bucharest, Iasi, Cluj, Timisoara in relation to departments of sociology as a result of the demands of job markets. Currently there are 22 social work academic programmes and departments, mostly graduate courses (4 years).

In 1994 graduated the first group of social workers. In the same time the theological schools (orthodox, catholic, Baptist) all over the country introduce social work as a double specialisation. The curricula has been designed in the modern context of the requirements of the profession strongly connected to the social reality and keeping a balance between theory and practice.

This time too the sociologists contributed to the development of the curricula together with social workers from previous generations. Many international organisations and universities have contributed to the construction of the social work training. The special representative of UNICEF played a major role in promoting social assistance, starting with 1990, both through assisting the social work education and through providing and sustaining social assistance services for children in difficulty. Unicef has created centers of excellent practice and pilot social assistance centers.

The experience exchanges between Romania and European countries with a rich tradition in social work, the development of common academic programmes with great universities from Europe and USA, the mobility and exchange programmes for teachers and students, the creation of social work practice for social work students have contributed to introducing high quality professional standards in the training of social workers. Thus the Romanian school of social work benefited from the advantages of a totally new system of thinking free from the past ideological burden.

What is the dynamic of the social work system in then last years?

The difficulties of transition, accentuated by the low quality of the political strategies and social management, generated in the last years important degradation of the social work system. At governmental level there was no clear understanding of the responsibilities in the field of social assistance, till 2001, when the law of the national system of social assistance has been issued. The Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity had the responsibility for designing and co-ordinating the social policy and the social assistance activities. Unfortunately the rapid development of parallel independent bodies hindered the excise of this responsibility. The relation between central and local bodies remained undefined. The new local responsible actors did not have the support of the central bodies, and the central bodies did not have the tools for coordinate and financially assist them.

The pattern of the fragmented development of the social work system generated a coordination and authority vacuum. The activities of the ministries imply a governmental accountability regarding only major problems. Different bodies who have been created apart from the governmental system are vaguely subordinated to the government. The dispersion of the social assistance programmes in many organisms and ministries can be considered as having also some positive consequences for the system such as: the encouragement of important independent initiatives, the mobilisation of organisational and institutional resources and so on.

Still the negative consequences have important: the fragmentation of the system, the lack of coherence, the parallelism of the activities, the lack of co-ordination, the misuse of funding lead to the decrease in efficiency. The difficulties in co-operation between these bodies represented a significant

fact. Some painful points of this co-operation/ co-ordination have been favorably solved after long periods of time, under the pressure of major crisis. Many times the solutions that have been found were limited by compromises that expressed in fact a fight for power.

The development of the social assistance programmes after 1989 has had a specific direction. In the beginning there were two major options. One was to strongly develop the role of elaboration social policies and co-ordination of the social work department within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The second option was to explosively develop social programmes, without any minimum co-ordination.

The real evolution took unfortunately the second direction. In this case the co-operation and co-ordination of those bodies proved to be a problem without solution. The mutual suspicion and the overprotective actions for keeping the control over the system and resources were dominant. The lack of flexibility and the impossibility of financial transfers from a programme to another became a rule. This eliminated any possibility of financial flexibility. The inevitable result of this evolution pattern was the institutional impossibility of developing a coherent vision over the social work system.

Therefore we consider that a clear decision sustained by a strong political will regarding the creation of a comprehensive social work system is crucial for the future of welfare in Romania.

The limits of the actual system do not result from the limits of allocated resources, but also from the confusion in organising the coordination of social work activities under various ministries and bodies.

What do you think is necessary in the future in order to reform the system of social work?

I would mention only a few tendencies that could be in the future the base for the new configuration of the system:

- Introduction of new support programmes for those in difficulty or the development of programmes, which are now at an embryonic stage.
- The reconsideration and amplification of social programmes such a support offered by the minimum income guarantee law.
- The increase of the local autonomy and the diversification of the public social assistance services.
- The rapid development of community care services.

- The apparition and extension of a public system of specialised social work services focusing on families and communities.
- The apparition of new services such as probation
- The community development programmes will be sustained within local partnerships including partnerships with national and international NGOs.

What can you say about the financing mechanisms of the social assistance system?

I would like to mention that it is necessary to establish a global level of funding social work programmes thus distributing the financial resources at local level according to the needs. It is also necessary to have a strict control over the allocation procedures, maintaining a proportion between the resources that can be flexibly reoriented. The existence of such resources to be oriented towards priorities is a condition for developing a coherent innovative approach.

The decentralisation followed the opposite direction of the philosophy of the social assistance system that presumed the creation of a balance between allocation of resources for rural and urban areas in need. In the last years the simplistic decentralisation process lead to greater differences between social areas: poor areas became even poorer, due to the lack of local financial resources. The system can not allocate the entire amount for social assistance, can not cover the amount for maintaining abandoned children in institutions. The decentralisation system demanded the poor to help themselves without necessary resources.

The diversification of funding for social programmes represents an extremely important resource in designing a social assistance system. There are rigidities in promoting shared social programmes funded from different funds using flexible funds from other programmes when the needs of beneficiaries demand it. For instance the relation between the unemployment fund, the social solidarity fund and the fund for handicapped people is insufficiently co-ordinated. The co-ordination of funding allocated to social programmes is an extremely difficult problem to be solved in the near future.

On the other hand the level of funding within the social assistance system is according to a deficit in resources, therefore the development of it is hindered and delayed.

The allocation from the budget for social assistance are under-dimensioned due to three reasons:

1. *Compared to the needs.* In a period of transition, with high social costs the demands for social assistance are great. Thus the social assistance system is oversized.
2. *Compared to the requirements of the social assistance programmes.* The needs of the population are greater than the allocated resources and also the national social assistance programmes adopted by law cover only partially those needs, with very little money according to the law.
3. *Compared to the budget size.* From this perspective the evaluation is difficult. Some data suggest that there was a lack of political will regarding the support given by the state for developing social services. Taking in to account the expenses for social assistance as percentage of GPI after 1989, the budget allocations were substantially smaller than in other European countries in transition, excepting Albania and Bulgaria. The budget effort is even smaller compared to the countries of Western Europe.

What are the immediate consequences of this lack of funding for the system?

There are multiple consequences,. I would mention only the most important ones:

- The explosion of poverty in the last years, especially the growth of the extremely poor population due to the deficiencies in funding social assistance programmes to address their problems.
- The past financial assistance system (social benefits) has to be replaced with the Law of minimum income guaranteed, aimed at tackling the financial problems of the most disadvantaged segment of population. This system has been symbolically financed in the past, helping 10% from the population that it was aimed and designed to help. All the complementary programmes have been under-financed.
- The lack of development of social assistance for groups of people at high risk due to the lack of funding. Such people are regarded as an important target groups by the entire community: homeless, abused women and children, care leavers, etc.
- The fluctuations in funding available to the social work institutions. The decentralisation of funding began in 1997 brought a degradation of their

beneficiaries' situation. Data show that for instance in 1999, year marked by the scandal of institutions-the funding for them was in real terms, approximately 50% of the level of a year before.

- The almost continuous degrading trend of the level of social benefits. This case for child allowance gradually decreasing.
- There are situations when the antipoverty support did not ensure the minimal social "survival". There are families who despite the fact that they benefit from social benefits or other forms of support, are still socially excluded, entering an irreversible exclusion cycle: loss of house as a result of debts accumulation, severe health problems, lack of working capacity, lack of proper developing conditions for children.

The situation has been aggravated by the chronic deficit of normal opportunities for the growth of the living standard. This state of desperate frustration generated paradoxically a certain indifference towards the chronic poverty.

The community has been oriented towards a moral of labour and merit. It sustained only the contributive social programmes. Communities sustain all the benefits (especially the pensions), excepting the unemployment benefit. The social protection of employed people is in the center of public concern.

The mentality of the majority is practically opposed to the one that would sustain a minimum welfare state, characterised by the focus of resources on the most poor populations.

Don't you think that we need a new vision over the budgeting available for social assistance?

Of course this is an emergency need. Passing from an excessively centralised system to a chaotic decentralised one lead to a major crisis (like the crisis in 1999) of the national system of social assistance. The corrective measures have already been adopted or about to be adopted. There are some critical points still left insufficiently addressed such as:

- The distribution of the effort/type of budgeting between the national/county/local budgets. In this respect we must analyse who finances the rights for social assistance according to the law and who finances the emergency social assistance services. To place the financial responsibility on local authorities was in fact a form of cuts in the local budgets.

- The rules of financial budget transfers towards poor counties and localities have to create equal opportunities. In the last years the poorest areas have left on their own with the budgets for social assistance programmes. Such a policy lead to the aggravation of the inequities and imbalances, being against the principle of social solidarity.
- A more strict definition of the allocated resources for financial assistance according to the law, stipulated as social assistance rights.
- Funding of programmes has to be clarified in the future, especially the funding for pilot projects, social experiments, and dissemination programmes.
- A clearer definition of financial responsibilities has to be accompanied by description of the mechanisms of managing transfers. This has to be further developed by the new implementation methodology of the law of social assistance. In this respect it is an emergency to define the financial responsibilities in the field of social assistance through a special law and completely eliminate the last 10 years practice to modify the system through the laws of annual budgets. Such a practice is meant to generate a highly fluctuant, unpredictable and difficult to control system.

What can you tell us about the social work services?

There is still an organisational confusion regarding the social work services. We hope that the new law for social work will determine the issuing of a law for the public system of social assistance services.

There is no strategy for developing social assistance services yet, and no possibilities for establishing priorities. There are some services provided under the pressure of certain emergency, not as the result as establishing priorities. This is the case of the scandal of institutionalised children.

The complex problems receive a fragmented support in terms of services and the degree of involving professionals in service delivery is extremely inequitable, services use poor qualified staff.

What problems pose the training of human resources required by the social services system in our country?

In the present there are some difficulties in the system regarding human resources. I would mention the territorial distribution of social workers, the fact that many counties or towns have no professional social workers. On the

other hand, the great majority of trained social workers are still very young, graduating from “young schools”. In the same time in the system of existent institutions there are people who do not have an adequate training. Some of those have accumulated a valuable experience and are motivated for professional development. Thus it is highly important to have a national strategy for training professionals of the social assistance system able to work with efficiency. In some counties there were training modules for social workers. We have great doubts about those courses, because a short training based mainly on practical aspects can not ensure a necessary base of knowledge required by a social worker who has to deliver high diversified and qualitative services. There is the danger that the social worker activities to became routine. Therefore we think that the system of training undergraduate social workers combining distant learning with intensive theoretical and practical modules supervised by professionals offer a satisfactory possibility for training the staff already involved in delivering social services.

In the future the number of graduated social workers will correspond to the needs, thus the positions in the social services system to be taken by graduate professionals.

What are in you opinion the difficulties that social workers has to face today?

If we are to address this aspect, it necessary to start from the general profile of the social assistance system and from the real needs of those in difficulty, needs to be met by the activities undertaken by social workers.

The degree of normal organising and functioning of diverse forms of support is very unequal due to the fact that there is a lack of clear structure of the needs, of diagnose of the needs of those in difficulty. This leads to a problem in establishing priorities for social policies.

The system is still very fragmented and dominated of narrow interests. Some institutions are involved in a not exactly loyal competition for severely limited financial resources. On the other hand the social assistance system is characterised by the structural orientation inherited from the communist regime. The emphasis is on allocating social benefits to families with many children or in poverty and less on a system of public specialised social services.

Many social services are being initiated occasionally by nongovernmental agencies. Many of them are not developed by the public sector due to a lack of vision regarding their evolution. Community based services for families and children practically do not exist. The presence of social workers in schools, prisons or hospitals is mostly an exception.

Another aspect refers to the rapid decrease in the financial support of social assistance, while maintaining a vast and inefficient system of care institution. With all the fluctuations in funding these institutions and with some positive changes that took place in them after 1990, there are still great inequalities. The fundamental change of those social assistance institutions requires a reform of the entire social and cultural environment that made them possible.

The fragmentation of the social work system represents another critical point. At the end of the year 2000 there were many independent institutions having no co-ordination from the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, reducing the attributions of the Department of Social Assistance within the ministry. This ministry should have had an important role in co-ordinating the process of social assistance and protection. There was also a random and marginal co-operation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity with other ministries with responsibilities in social assistance: Ministry of Health and Family, Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, The National Agency for Protecting the rights of children and adoption, the State Secretary for People with Handicap.

The dispersion of many social work programmes between lots of public organisations is a positive aspect in principle but generated many difficulties regarding blockages in dissemination and community implementation. The decentralisation process has been chaotically done without any strategic preparation or clear methodology.

These are only few limits of the current social work system that are the result of the deficit in resources, confusion in organisation, lack of a legal framework adequate to realities, internal tensions between various governmental structures and organisations involved in social assistance.

Due to the dimensions and seriousness of social problems of transition, the social worker is doing things beyond his/her classical mission consisting of individual assistance for people in need, being forced to face problems of big groups of poor and marginalised people, problems that represent real challenges for our social workers.

Currently there is already an considerable number of young social work professionals. Which are their possibilities to find jobs within the network of services?

The social workers can find jobs within the social work network. I mention: the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the offices and direction of child and family protection (prevention of abandonment, family therapy, social inquiry); the offices of labour and unemployment, the placement centers for children, Ministry of Health and Family (hospitals, maternities, sanatorium), Ministry of Justice (prisons, rehabilitation centers, courts of justice, probation), the State Secretary for People with Handicap, The National Agency for protecting the Rights of Children and Adoption, Ministry of Internal Affairs, public administration and nongovernmental agencies.

Regarding the social services, we think that in the future there will be a considerable increase in their number according to the needs: child protection services, support and counseling services for unemployed people, home help and home care, services for drug and alcohol addicts, school counseling services, services of immigrants for homeless and street children.

In the complex process of social reform requested by the integration in the European and Atlantic structures, what do you think is the role of social worker?

In the modern society social work became a complex multidisciplinary high specialised activity. The social work profession evolved rapidly: from the social and psychological assistance of individuals in need to assisting groups, communities facing social problems and crisis. The social worker has a major role in raising the awareness regarding the rights and needs of marginalised people or groups in order to find solution for social intergration and inclusion.

The social worker provides those in difficulty with information and acces to specialised services, helping them to understand the legislation for social protection. This means in fact to create the compatibility between our system and other European systems.

On behalf of the readers of the first issue of Social Work Review, I thank you very much.