

Marijana Kletečki Radović, Ph.D.
Assistant professor
E-mail: marijana.kletecki.radovic@pravo.hr

Olja Družić Ljubotina, Ph.D.
Assistant professor
E-mail: olja.druzic.ljubotina@pravo.hr

Jelena Ogresta, Ph.D.
Assistant professor
E-mail: jelena.ogresta@pravo.hr

University of Zagreb
Faculty of Law, Department of Social Work
Nazorova, 51, Zagreb, Croatia

SERVICE USERS INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH: HOMELESSNESS IN CROATIA

Promoting users' perspective has led to significant tendencies for user involvement in practice, education and research in social work. Putting an emphasis on understanding problems from the users' perspective in social work studies has increased as this approach allows substantial deepening of knowledge on the subject, more complete understanding of the studied phenomena and social context. Also, user involvement in research process allows the acknowledgment and use of individual user experience in the planning of effective practice models and ways to approach a certain social problem. This paper will show an example of homelessness study in Croatia, with an emphasis and a description homeless people were included in research process. Research conducted by three scientists, social workers from Department of Social Work. The study was conducted with the purpose to gain insight into the complete picture of the characteristics and status of homeless people, increase professional and public awareness and sensibility for needs and problems of this social group and creation of a database that can serve social policy creators in formulating concrete measures and services for the homeless. The main objective of the study was to identify determinants of the homeless people position in Croatia and gain a more complete understanding of the experience of life as homeless through personal experience of causes, needs and problems, employability and factors that are perceived necessary to get out of homelessness. The study used a mixed methods research where sequential exploratory design was applied. In first phase a quantitative research was conducted (N=266), in second phase a qualitative one (N=28). The aim of qualitative part of research was to get a more comprehensive understanding of life stories of people who experienced living in homelessness. Findings indicated that from the user's perspective it is a *much more invisible problem than it actually seems...*

Key words: researches in social work, users' perspective, homelessness