

Title: *Professional Development of Qualified Romanian Social Workers: Challenges and Opportunities*

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From a legal perspective, Romanian employers have a responsibility for social workers' professional development and the obligation to offer them access to specialized training under certain conditions. The National College of Social Workers of Romania, as a regulatory body for the profession, is responsible with the accreditation of social work continuing professional training providers, while, at the same time, it can design its own specific modules in accordance with the requirements of the social work profession. The goal of the paper is to identify and analyse the challenges facing social workers in terms of post-qualifying professional development, according to their needs as practitioners.

We conducted 74 semi-structured interviews with Romanian social workers at different career levels, working in various areas of practice (i.e. child protection, health, disability, the elderly, local social services). Recruitment was carried out through snowball sampling using key informants.

The findings indicated a high need for supervised practice at the workplace, especially for the newly qualified social workers. The lack of supervision in many organizational environments leads to the situation of social workers relying on theoretical and practical knowledge acquired during their undergraduate studies and, sometimes, on the informal support from their more experienced colleagues.

Senior social workers seem more interested in specific post-qualifying professional training which would enable them to improve their everyday practice, having higher expectations from prospective trainers than entry-level social workers. Many social workers identify their overcrowded workloads and financial constraints as barriers to attending professional trainings. We can stress that these obstacles might limit social workers' career development opportunities by hindering the possibility to consolidate their competences in specialised contexts according to their beneficiaries' needs or to organisational requirements.