In his editorial of this journal’s Special English Issue from 2011, Libor Musil showed deep concerns about “both the lack of attention to the ‘methods and processes’ of help through social work” and “inadequate focus on ‘clients’ of Czech and Slovak social work” in general. According to him social workers should “know the difficulties which their clients experience” and be able to use adequate “knowledge, methods and techniques to deal with all problems that they encounter” (p.2).

Therefore - as editor of the Special English Issue 2014 - I’m very pleased to be able to present articles to the national and international social work community, which cover the whole range of perspectives within social work and thus give readers the opportunity to choose between articles according to their special interests and needs. Social work as science, practice and profession is manifold, and our contributors within this issue are able to demonstrate that despite their very specialized perspectives, they all belong to the huge community of social work theory and practice. Consequently it’s important that readers of these texts try to identify the different starting points and respective argumentations.

We, as the community of both scientists and practitioners in social work, should always be aware of the fact that social work is not one-dimensional, is not a harmonic unity, but - because it is scientifically based - accepts concurrent paradigms and argumentations. So - only if we are able to identify the different perspectives and interests, a controversial debate about the possibilities and restrictions of each argumentation will be possible. And this debate could help us to fulfil our mission and to come closer towards a critical, reflective and knowledge based practice.

So let me shortly characterize the different articles:

In a methodologically directed article “Reading social work” the English author Malcom Payne reminds us about the importance of reading historical and contemporary theoretical and descriptive texts for a better understanding of social work contexts. As especially students and practitioners increasingly need to perceive texts in a very quick and superficial way, (e.g. via the internet, through Wikipedia, etc., it is important to remind them that “homiletics provides a technology for interpretation of both surface and hidden events and texts”.

Three client-oriented articles from Magda Frišaufová on “Research Accounts of Female Drug Use and their Implications for Social Work”, from Kateřina Glumbíková on “The Situation of Single Grandmothers with a Child...
in Substitute Family Care in Asylum Houses in the Moravian–Silesian Region” and from Soňa Lovašová on “Client Violence in Social Work Practice: Conflict Styles of Victims” give us a very deep and intensive insight into the life and problem situations of selected social work clients. At the same time they remind us that social worker should have an in depth understanding of their clients’ situation. Moreover the willingness to learn from clients seems to be one of the major tasks of each social worker who feels committed “to act with and not upon people” (Paolo Freire).

With a very much practice-oriented article on “The participatory approach in low-threshold centres for children and youth” Anna Krchňavá shows that important social work values, as e.g. participation, co-partnership, shared decision-making, etc. should - if we want them to be successful - be strengthened very early in life. So social workers should learn the methods we can use to include our clients into decision making from the beginning. No matter how the life situation of clients might be influenced or restricted, the task of a social worker is always to help them to fully achieve integration and personal, social and legal acceptance.

The importance and use of the reference discipline of social policy for social work is shown by the article from Aneta Hašková and Tomáš Waloszek on “Substitute Family Care in the Context of Social Policy of the Czech Republic”. Social work procedures and methods are strongly influenced by national legal frameworks and regional cultures. Even if social workers have to respect and refer to these different frameworks, they can learn more about the different impacts of policies by starting to compare these influences with the situation in other countries.

Especially with the growing influence of right wing parties across Europe on services for immigrants and the specific role of social work herein should receive more attention even in countries with a smaller immigrant population. Roman Baláž and Daniel Topinka tell us on the “Analysis of the Regional Distribution of Social Services for Immigrants” within their sociologically oriented analysis that the extent of social work institutions and organisations is highly depending on a public dialogue which decides if politicians and citizens can or cannot see a specific need. Finally, it is the article of Kirstin Bromberg about “Becoming a Professional. Improving Social Action through Letter Writing in Social Work Education”, which reminds teachers and lecturers in social work that in order to improve social work education and training and to help students to go in to a deeper reflexion it is not sufficient to only talk about and verbally discuss social work practice. Students should very early learn to express their arguments and conclusions by the possibility of letter writing. More then oral conversations, this method gives us the opportunity of “slow thinking” and thus helps us to avoid “cognitive illusion” as well as “mental laziness” or “self-exhaustion” (D. Kahnemann).

I am persuaded that this Special Issue 2015 holds an interesting selection of articles for national and international scientists and practitioners, showing the broad range of social work practice and social work science. I hope that you, as the reader, gain new insight, information and questions – leading to further discussion and argumentation for a vivid social work science, practice and profession.

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