



Bulletin June 2009

**First ENSACT Joint European Conference
Dubrovnik, April 26-29**

“Social action in Europe: Different legacies and common challenges?”

The first Ensact Joint European Conference on April 26-29, 2009 was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia. With 725 participants from all over Europe, the conference was a great success.

ENSACT is a joint initiative of six organizations in an umbrella network for the social domain in Europe, under which the EASSW is a partner.

The the conference had three main themes:

1. Social conflict and reconstruction.
2. Individualization and social cohesion.
3. Personal engagement and professional accountability.

During the opening ceremony all presidents of ENSACT partner associations addressed the conference together with officials and representatives of Croatian authorities. Annamaria Campanini, President of EASSW, welcomed members and delegates to the conference in her opening speech, see below.

The first keynote speaker was Vlado Puljiz on the main theme of the conference; Social Action in Europe: Different Legacies and Common Challenges. The following day, three more key note speakers presented, connected to the three main themes of the conference:

Iain Ferguson: Social Conflicts and reconstruction.
Herbert Paulischin: Individualization and social cohesion
Sarah Banks: Personal engagement and professional accountability.

During the three days of the conference 23 symposia and 32 workshops were held, with inspiring discussions and debates. Some of the workshops and symposia were presented in other languages: Croatian, French and Spanish.

All presentations in workshops and symposia will be available at the Ensact website: www.ensact.eu/

On the first day, as well as the keynote speech and parallel workshop and symposia sessions, the poster session attracted many visitors to view the 25 posters.

On the second day, conference delegates had the option to participate in field visits in the region, following the three keynote presentations. Later in the day, international meetings were planned by the different organizations cooperating within ENSACT: FICE, IFSW, FESET and the General Assembly of the EASSW. In the General Assembly, six new Executive Committee members were chosen. See details on the EASSW website: www.eassw.org

A new initiative at this conference was the attendance by a large group of students some of whom received financial support from EASSW to attend the conference. The students presented the outcomes of their sessions during the closing ceremony. For the next conference, more service users will be invited to participate, some supported by bursaries from EASSW. Details will be available on the EASSW website.

After the closing ceremony on the third and final day of the conference, the venue for the next ENSACT conference was presented, which will be held in Brussels in Spring, 2011.

Opening Speech Annamaria Campanini

As President of EASSW I would like to express my satisfaction in the realization of this ENSACT congress. We worked hard, under the presidency of Christine Labonté, to constitute this umbrella organization, because we believe in the importance in developing synergies between teachers, professional and employers engaged in the social field.

I want to give special tank to Jan Agten, Vice President of EASSW, who did a great job in the steering committee and because of a printing error, his name does not appear in the abstract book.

Education is facing many challenges at different levels:

- We are handling changes in the structural system, due to the Bologna process, with lights and shadows for the professionalization process of social workers
- In the focus on competences and tuning curricula at European level, but also in the internationalization process to prepare students to understand and handle the effects of globalization.

Members of EASSW are also asked to reflect and implement our curricula and teaching methods to face urgent problems that are affecting our society today:

- The economic crisis and its impact on people's lives, especially the more vulnerable members of society
- The right wind of politics that is blowing in many countries with strong consequences on the increasing of neoliberal and managerial vision, accompanied by reduction of investments in social welfare, but also in political declarations that reflect a warning tendency towards xenophobic and islamaphobic attitudes and very often intolerance versus all forms of diversity.

How can we prepare social workers to be able to critically take a position in this context? To address the needs of the people at an individual and a community level, but also to direct their efforts in contributing to create services and influence social policy, to respond to the principles of human rights and social justice?

We expect that this Congress could offer a good platform to reflect on these topics together and to give us some useful ideas and suggestions to take back and discuss with our colleagues at home.

I want to remind you that we have planned our EASSW General Assembly, for Tuesday 28 April at 5.30 pm in the Mare Hall, where we would like to focus a discussion on how to create synergies between different regional associations and groups of interest in social work education, to better represent a voice for social work education in Europe. After this discussion, new members of the Board will be elected.

My thanks to the Croatian organizers (I know how difficult this role can be) and to everybody who travelled here to this Congress. Enjoy your Congress and enjoy wonderful Dubrovnik!

Annamaria Campanini
April 2009.