



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS  
OF SOCIAL WORK

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**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**FOR THE YEAR 2016 – 2020**

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**2016**

This document is based on the strategic session of EASSW Executive Committee, held on 26-27th of February 2016.

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## Introduction

The European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) is a European association of institutions of social work education, organizations supporting social work education and social work educators. The EASSW strategic action plan for the years 2016-2020 is the basis for the organization's strategy. The goal of the strategic plan is to define the implementation of the organization's mission, to promote the principles of the European social model and to pursue social work education's quality, development and growth. In the strategy the main focus lies on EASSW's development, in order to respond to the expectations of the members of the association and to implement the strategic objectives of the Bologna process. These are to promote quality of education, internationality and management development in schools of social work. The aim of developing a strategy is to help the organization to use opportunities for growth, to identify external challenges and to adapt to change. With these goals in mind, the development of the strategy included the PEST (political, economic, social, technological) environmental analysis and the organization's SWOT analysis. The drafting of the EASSW strategic plan for the years 2016-2020 has also been guided by the *United Nations' Human Rights Declaration*<sup>1</sup>, *The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*<sup>2</sup> and *EASSW constitution*.<sup>3</sup> The process has also complied with principles of transparency and cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG\\_3edition-2.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG_3edition-2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.eassw.org/constitution.html>

### ***European association of schools of social work (EASSW)***

EASSW is the official European Region of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). EASSW brings together about 300 different universities, schools and institutions supporting social work education from all over Europe. This Association represents and promotes the interests of social work education at the European level, and contributes to the academic and international development of social work, social work education and social welfare policies in Europe. EASSW strives to achieve its mission through such means as: the provision of a European forum on social work education; initiation of study courses; and representing the interests of European social work education. This is done in connection with the activities of other international bodies (governmental and non-governmental) and through the development of social work research. EASSW pursues social development and social justice by fostering cooperation, collegiality and interdependence among its members and beyond. It adheres to all United Nations' Declarations and Conventions on human rights, recognizing that respect for the inalienable rights of the individual is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. All members of EASSW are united in their obligation to the continuous pursuit of social justice and social development.

The organizational structure and strategic planning of EASSW is based on regulations inscribed in the organization's constitution. Membership of the European Association is composed of those who are engaged in social work education within the Council of Europe. Those that are not listed as members of the Council of Europe but have historical and cultural links with Europe and wish to join EASSW have an opportunity to do so. Membership of EASSW may be revoked if members do not follow the rules or Constitution of the organization. Members will be given an opportunity to defend their position following their receipt of a notice of time and place where they should to do it. Suspension or expulsion from EASSW will come into force if two-thirds of the countries that have a membership of the Executive Committee approve of the decision.

The functions of EASSW are carried out through the General Assembly and Executive Committee. The General Assembly is empowered to appoint, suspend and discharge the members of the Executive Committee, approve financial reports, amend the articles of association, dissolve the association (*The dissolution of the EASSW can take place only in a General Assembly convened especially for this purpose and shall require a two-thirds majority of the voting members present*) and decide in an appeal against expulsion from membership.

The Executive Committee is the governing body of EASSW. It is responsible for managing EASSW affairs and for the development and implementation of policy. The Executive Committee consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and no more than eleven additional Members. National Associations of Schools of Social Work and Sub regional Associations of Schools of Social Work are honorary members and can act as an advisory board to the Executive Committee and to the General Assembly.

All members of EASSW must act in accordance with the Constitution and resolutions of the organization. They must protect the interests of the EASSW to the best of their ability and pay their stipulated dues.

## European context of EASSW activities

### *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Common Social Challenges*

**The Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC)** sets down fundamental social objectives:

- proper social protection,
- promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions,
- dialogue between management and labour,
- development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment and combating exclusion.

Social Europe's overarching objective must be to create a more equal society: ending poverty and poverty wages, guaranteeing fundamental human rights and essential services, and guaranteeing income that enables every individual to live with dignity.

**The European Social Model (ETUC)** has identified five main elements:

- fundamental social rights including freedom of association, the right to strike, protection against unjustified dismissal, fair working conditions, equality and non-discrimination;
- social protection, delivered through highly developed universal systems, and wealth redistribution measures such as minimum income or progressive taxation;
- social dialogue with the right to conclude collective agreements, to workers' representation and consultation, and national and European Works Councils;
- social and employment regulation, covering health and safety, limits on working time, holidays, job protection and equal opportunities amongst others;
- state responsibility for full employment, for providing services of general interest and for economic and social cohesion.

Social Europe should offer a framework for helping people to come to terms with change and its consequences. In this context the formulation of social work and social work education standards in Europe has been a very complex process. The main reasons for developing the global standards of social work and social work education were as follows: to enable the International Association of Schools of Social Work (and its regional Associations including EASSW) to assist institutions for social work education that lacked resources to meet the guidelines and take into account the level of impact that globalization had upon social work practice and social work curricula.

The standards for global social work education and training were outlined in nine main fields: 1) standards regarding the school's core purpose or mission statement; 2) standards for program objectives and outcomes;

3) standards with regards to the program's curricula including fieldwork; 4) standards with regards to the core curricula; 5) standards with regards to professional staff; 6) standards with regard to social work students; 7) standards with regards to structure, administration, governance and resources; 8) standards with regards to cultural and ethnic diversity, and ethnic inclusiveness; and 9) standards with regards to social work values and ethical codes of conduct<sup>4</sup>.

Although, in theory the standards are clearly established, there are still a lot of challenges to be overcome in practice. The aim of EASSW is to engage European social work education institutions to contribute to the academic and international development of social work, social work education and social welfare, meeting the main principals of a social and equal Europe. These aspects should be also considered while developing strategy of EASSW.

### ***The European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process***

It is important to briefly discuss the main principles of the Bologna Process, because EASSW acts in the area of higher education and promotes the quality of education within its member schools. The Bologna Process is a voluntary higher education reform process with an objective to establish a European Higher Education Area. The process was named after the University of Bologna, where in 1999 the Bologna Declaration was initially signed by Education Ministers from 29 European countries and has since expanded to 47 member countries. The main aims of the Bologna Process were to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and make higher education systems compliant, enhance their international visibility and promote a European system of higher education on a worldwide scale in order to increase its international competitiveness. The vision of the Bologna Process was that in future students will be able to enjoy and choose from large variety of high quality courses and educational programs, and will benefit from education recognition systems. The main goals suggested by the Bologna Process were to foster student mobility and employability. It was decided to introduce a system based on undergraduate and post-graduate studies with easily readable degrees and to establish a system of academic credits.

In the past 16 years of the Bologna Process, all the main efforts of member countries have been targeted towards creating the EHEA. A lot of progress has been made in implementing the reforms, such as enabling students and graduates to move within the EHEA with recognition of their qualifications and periods of study. The EHEA has opened a dialogue with other regions of the world and is considered to be on the road to success.

Nonetheless, there are still several challenges that EHEA has to overcome. With EHEA facing new challenges such as increasing marginalization of young people, unemployment, demographic changes and the continuing

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<sup>4</sup> SEWPAUL.V & JONES.D.(2004).*Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*. Carfax Publishing



social and economic crisis, it is very important in the coming years that European countries collaborate with each other and address these challenges head on. Those challenges are also to be considered by EASSW in the global context of performance. In 2015 The Yerevan Communiqué laid out a renewed vision for higher education in the 47 countries of the EHEA, and the future of the Bologna process, through which compatibility of quality and standards in higher education across the EHEA is being strengthened. In this context, the role of schools providing a socially oriented curriculum is becoming very important..

During the last meeting in Yerevan in 2015, the Education Ministers from member countries once more highlighted the fundamental principles of EHEA and at the same time identified the main reforms that all member states have to undertake in the future to complete EHEA principles. One of the points of the collective ambition for the EHEA was identified as enhancing *the quality and relevance of learning and teaching*. It is planned to encourage and support higher education institutions and staff in promoting *pedagogical innovation* and fully exploiting the potential benefits of digital technologies for learning and teaching. In addition to quality, the other goal of EHEA became *fostering employability of graduates* throughout their working lives – creating new job profiles and growing possibilities for not only employment but for self-employment is a major goal of the EHEA. Another aim of EHEA is to make our *educational systems more inclusive*. While developing the strategy of EASSW all of these these principles were taken into consideration.

With populations becoming more diverse due to demographic change and migration it is necessary to support institutions that provide relevant learning activities for different types of learners, including lifelong learning. While teaching and learning have been put at the forefront of new EHEA vision, structural reforms remain one of the four key objectives, where degree structure, credits system, quality assurance standards and guidelines, as well as various forms of cooperation in mobility and joint degrees are still highlighted as the “foundations of the EHEA”.

In conclusion, the Bologna process, EHEA and reforms that have been implemented over the past 16 years enabled much progress in higher education in Europe. Internationally, institutions are becoming more active and capable of providing high quality education. Unfortunately, although, these achievements are significant, there is still a lot to be done. Higher education in some countries is still not easily accessible to all young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are still many underdeveloped areas, such as digital technologies and implementation of reforms at the national level in various countries. Currently EHEA has a key role in addressing these challenges, by encouraging cooperation between member countries, and maximizing opportunities through dialogue creation with partners from all around the globe.

## STRATEGY OF EASSW

### PEST ANALYSIS

The tool of PEST analysis was filled in by EASSW Executive committee members in order to determine the overall outlook of external and internal factors that commonly affect or might affect activities and performance of the organization. Ideas and remarks in the table that had similar meanings were joined together and ideas that were continuously repeated were deleted. The Pest analysis is divided into four spheres: political, economic, social, and technological which are interconnected.

Political factors	Economic factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bologna process</li> <li>• Political de-stabilization of Europe and structures of the European Union</li> <li>• Privatization process &amp; Impulse of the private sector in HEI by many national governments</li> <li>• Overemphasis on universities profitability</li> <li>• Measures used for university and research quality assessment</li> <li>• De-emphasis on social rights and overemphasis on economic growth</li> <li>• Legal instruments to deal with illegal actions (case of Turkey)</li> <li>• Initiatives could be limited by specific national legislation</li> <li>• Ideals which must be implemented following the ideals of social work may be limited by legal regulation in each country</li> <li>• Privatization of Higher Education and Social Welfare</li> <li>• Conflicts in and around Europe</li> <li>• Politics of Fear</li> <li>• Fortress Europe</li> <li>• Rise of far right extremism</li> <li>• Lack of easily assimilated international discourse on social work education (due to historically determined cultural differences in European countries)</li> <li>• Education of competent social work professionals is not a priority.</li> <li>• „Invisibility” of the needs of social work educators from the perspective of fundamental sciences</li> <li>• Increasing need of eco-social approach in social work education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing expenditures for higher education institutions (HEI)</li> <li>• Austerity and increasing inequality also in higher education</li> <li>• Decreasing percentage of Governmental funding for public Universities.</li> <li>• Reduction of public grants for university studies</li> <li>• Reduction of national investment in research programs for universities</li> <li>• Economic difficulties for members of EC to participate in the events organized by EASSW or costs related to the representation of EASSW</li> <li>• A strength of the economic situation is the savings of EASSW, which can be used as a good resource for various initiatives</li> <li>• The Number of students who are able to pay for their education (social work) in some countries might decrease, which in turn may impact the university’s ability to be a member of EASSW, as it can lead to exclusion</li> <li>• Prolonged Recession</li> <li>• Reduced budget for Higher Education and Research</li> <li>• Low wages related to the low status of the profession and general economic situation in some countries</li> <li>• Migration of competent researchers provided they have a chance to</li> <li>• Teacher’s/ researchers’ uncertainty about the future in the context of poor social security</li> <li>• Migration of potential social work students to wealthy countries and various difficulties in organizing Erasmus exchanges</li> <li>• Threat of a new economic crisis and austerity</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis determined by migration processes</li> <li>• Inequalities in social assurance within the EU</li> <li>• Lifelong learning policy</li> <li>• Neoliberalization of higher education (privatization and commercialization)</li> <li>• The way university departments' "success" is measured</li> </ul>	<p>policy both in HE and social work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of young people from HE</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing number of students</li> <li>• Increasing number of non EU students</li> <li>• Academic factors, such as valuing education less than research in the universities' policies</li> <li>• Students having to work part time to pay the cost of their university studies</li> <li>• New students profiles (culture, ethnic origin)</li> <li>• New students attitudes toward academic standards</li> <li>• Ageing of lecturers</li> <li>• Growing number of members of EASSW</li> <li>• Many countries would like to improve the education in social work but lack financial resources</li> <li>• Necessity to find the uniqueness of the association</li> <li>• The actions of the association may duplicate with other international associations in different ways</li> <li>• Ideals at the macro level may differ from the implemented actions at the micro level</li> <li>• Necessity to compile personal messages from represented countries of EC executive committee in their home countries, to make a list of "good practices" to encourage other members</li> <li>• Rise of xenophobia</li> <li>• Increased inequality and poverty across Europe</li> <li>• Ability to connect with traditional and emerging social movements</li> <li>• "Stigma" of the profession and professionals, low prestige; "stigma" of clients</li> <li>• Lack of tradition/legal procedures to initiate changes in some countries</li> <li>• Different focus on education by various countries due to differences in "basic" salient needs of society (wide spectrum - from long lasting poverty of local communities to the needs of refugees)</li> <li>• The need to be fluent in English and related difficulties in translating concepts and meanings</li> <li>• Increasing unemployment of young people, also of social workers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Technological factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of new social media</li> <li>• Increase of ICT in higher education and outside of it</li> <li>• Influence of smart phones</li> <li>• Potential of big data</li> <li>• Influence of over-information on learning processes</li> <li>• Social media gives a chance to spread information about the EASSW</li> <li>• The need to find personalized ways of encouraging members of the EASSW to participate in different initiatives using the Internet</li> <li>• Alternative methods of how to achieve education – distance learning challenges</li> <li>• Challenges and Opportunities that arise from distance and online programs</li> <li>• Influence of new and social media over traditional platforms (like academic journals and books) in disseminating information</li> <li>• Easy access to international SW educators' community (literature, projects, social networks, etc.)</li> <li>• Open source education</li> <li>• The blended learning concept, personalized learning: more flexibility of learning (place, time, international)</li> <li>• Increasing use of social media in social work practice</li> <li>• Our poor use of social media</li> <li>• Insufficient use of the potential of our website</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing labor market for social workers</li> <li>• Mobility, migration</li> <li>• Cultural, ethnic, religious diversity</li> <li>• Gender: double stress on women (most social workers are women): participation in the labor market while caring for their families (children, parents)</li> <li>• Double ageing: more elderly people, and people are living longer</li> <li>• The influence of EASSW as EC members to focus (more) on issues that are relevant for us and our countries</li> </ul>	
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The main factors identified by representatives of EASSW as influential to the organization's activities were increasing the quality of social work education and focusing on alternative methods of education. The main concerns outlined in the table were EASSW's inability to use the full potential of social media to spread information and the quickly changing international environment (changing labour market, changing number of students, emigration, refugees). In addition one of the most common concerns identified by representatives of EASSW were economic difficulties experienced in Europe (growing unemployment, reduced budget for higher education and low wages).

### ***SWOT analysis of EASSW***

SWOT analysis is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The aim of SWOT analysis is to identify both internal and external factors that will help to achieve the objective of the organization. A SWOT analysis is an integral part of a strategic planning process because it provides a good all-around view of the organisation's current and forward-looking situation. SWOT analysis is often used along with strategic planning and it forms one of the key critical success factors in a strategic planning process.

<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p><b>International network opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possibility to share insights (transfer knowledge)</li> <li>- Solidarity and inclusion of diversity</li> <li>- Overall organizational support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <p><b>Weaknesses related to conditions, work process and attitudes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overloaded personnel</li> <li>- Ineffective connection with our members</li> <li>- Lack of skills in developing realistic budget and defining resources</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characterized by learning and open attitude</li> <li>- Good reputation/branding</li> <li>- Stable financial performance</li> </ul> <p><b>Executive committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diverse expertise + experiences + language + competencies + motivation + enthusiasm of members of EC (related to sticking to the rules)</li> <li>- Transparency (no hidden agenda; secret meetings and power struggle) -&gt; openness in the membership body. Welcoming climate</li> <li>- Democratic organization.</li> <li>- High recognition among the members related to e.g. conferences</li> <li>- Historical background and tradition for collaboration</li> <li>- Extra Resources and facilities next to the budget among members</li> <li>- Variety of communication channels</li> <li>- Good connection and capacity to be active in different types of organizations /networks: Local, IASSW, ENSACT, INGD, social platform, research organizations.</li> <li>- Quite quick in reacting and responding to ideas, demands and needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough recognition from our member universities (not visible enough)</li> <li>- Lack of group work skills</li> <li>- Complex technological interaction (online exchange)</li> <li>- Lack of synergy and fragmentation of tasks</li> <li>- Lack of strategy in regional representation and European connection</li> <li>- No specific academic outputs</li> <li>- Role confusion between different organizations - EASSW-IASSW</li> <li>- Unclear job descriptions for the administrative function</li> <li>- Diverse interests based on national and personal background</li> <li>- White middle class EC</li> <li>- Lack of power, visibility and influence in the international context.</li> <li>- Lack of clear position of EC (different roles and various rights and duties)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bologna process forms a platform of activities</li> <li>• Lifelong learning strategy/ policy specifically Erasmus+ program creates a platform for cooperation</li> <li>• Change effect of crisis, importance of environmental changes</li> <li>• New multi-cultural student profiles to change social work education</li> <li>• Growing interest in becoming a member of</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political de-stabilization (we are living in a changing world, with various conflicts) - External threat: Lack of trust in European associations.</li> <li>• Privatization process (related to neo-liberalization) – Overloading academics with tasks - European Commission can be overloaded</li> <li>• Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) reflects privatization and economic de-regulations as a capacity to re-shape all social</li> </ul>

<p>EASSW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological factors creates opportunities such as blended education programs (international programs)</li> <li>• Qualified and talented students in terms of using technology, creative, international and research oriented</li> <li>• Increased number of PhD studies in Social Work</li> <li>• European cooperation opportunities, such as Erasmus and FSN Europe</li> <li>• Horizon 2020: Multi-disciplinarily that creates opportunities</li> <li>• Growing awareness about negative issues such as inequality and discrimination</li> <li>• Space for collaboration with other European, international organizations (e.g. UN) socio-politics, economy, policies</li> </ul>	<p>and economic sectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neo-liberalization of higher education/ managerialism -&gt; competition, quantitative evaluation, outputs and results.</li> <li>• Reduced budget for higher education and research (membership may decrease)</li> <li>• Growing international diversity of students two phases: radicalization of students (reaction to values and culture): (disagreement of values of EASSW) -&gt; the need to be fluent in English</li> <li>• Data protection and ownership of online materials (pedagogical and scientific material)</li> <li>• Lack of recognition of the profession</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge and experience within EASSW (EC)</li> <li>• De-regulation of profession and education of social work around Europe. Direct impact on all of Europe.</li> </ul>
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In EASSW the SWOT analysis main strengths were identified as connectedness to international actors and competences of members of the organization. Diverse capabilities and experiences of EASSW members together with high recognition between international actors were named as the core of the organization strengths. The weaknesses of the organization were identified as the lack of order and dysfunctional work conditions in the organization. The main weaknesses were named as an inability to prioritize, focus and clearly define the roles of internal structures of the EASSW (unclear job descriptions for administrative functions and lack of strategy).

External factors of the SWOT analysis were concentrated on opportunities and threats existing in the expanding European education system. The main opportunities for the future of the EASSW were named as international learning programs that would help to develop the discipline of social education and increase cooperation opportunities with other international organizations. Main threats were identified as instability in Europe (radicalization and conflicts) and lack of resources dedicated towards improving the higher education system, which resulted in overloading academics with tasks, reduced budgets for higher education and neo-liberalization of higher education (competition, quantitative evaluation).

## ***Mission and Vision statements***

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***EASSW's Mission*** is to promote social justice and develop high quality education, training and knowledge for social work practice, social services, and social welfare policies in Europe.

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### **Mission Statement**

The European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) is a European association of institutions of social work education, organizations supporting social work education and social work educators. In fulfilling its mission the EASSW adheres to all United Nations' Declarations and Conventions on human rights, recognizing that respect for the inalienable rights of the individual is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. Members of EASSW are united in their obligation to the continued pursuit of social justice and social development. In carrying out its mission EASSW fosters cooperation, collegiality, and interdependence among its members and with others.

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***EASSW Vision:*** Europe as a socially just region with the highest quality of social work education that promotes unity and nurtures diversity.

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### ***Core values***

EASSW's values derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and European Social Model are:

- 1. Critical thinking**
  - 2. Value of sharing**
  - 3. Diversity**
  - 4. Inclusion**
  - 5. Solidarity**
  - 6. Creativity**
  - 7. Learning and development**
  - 8. Transparency**
  - 9. Responsibility**
  - 10. Participation**
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## Key strategic objectives

Key Strategic Objectives	Measures
<p><b>I. To increase the number of SW school members and to activate the membership</b></p>	<p>I.1. To create the strategy for external and internal communication with potential and existing member schools.            I.2. To facilitate and activate the participation of present members.            I.3. To create a mechanism to find out the needs and expectations of members.            I.4. To strengthen the regional policy of EASSW by developing regional events and establishing regional correspondents. To create the Member's map.</p>
<p><b>II. To improve and strengthen the Knowledge of Social Work Education (SWEK)</b></p>	<p>II.1. To engage in the building of the new SWEK and increase dissemination of SWEK.            II.2. To increase the quality of the teaching and learning environment and involvement of teachers, students and other interest groups.            II.3. To encourage and support member schools to share experience, organize workshops, forums and international conferences.            II.4. To encourage publications on SW education.</p>
<p><b>III. To create, engage and promote the networking, visibility and influence of EASSW</b></p>	<p>III.1. To foster and promote collaboration with international organizations (ESWRA, ENSACT, IFSW Europe).            III.2. To foster and increase the partnership with other relevant European networks and external bodies/ organizations (including political).            III.3. To increase visibility and influence of the EASSW.</p>
<p><b>IV. To improve the internal organizational process and to increase the level of transparency</b></p>	<p>IV.1. To improve decision-making process within executive committee members.            IV. 2. To improve the internal communication.            IV.3. To develop rules and clear accountability of the EC task force groups            IV.4. To clarify roles, responsibilities and benefits of the EASSW EC members.</p>