



International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

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The Hungarian Association of School Social Workers, MISZME Major Steps in the History of the Hungarian Professional Association

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I started my involvement with school social work at a small provincial town, Szekszárd, where I taught in the first school social work programme in 1989 (the year of the political transition in Hungary after the socialist era). Later I initiated the formation of The Hungarian Association of Social Workers. Then in 1998 an attempt to bring school social workers together in a specialist association was ineffective due to the small number of social workers working in schools and lack of a legislative mandate for the profession.

During the last two decades there has been some progress in developing school social work activity in Hungary. However by 2010 there are still fewer than 100 school social workers in Hungary (www.wikipedia.hu). Although the number of social workers in schools is so small, all present and former school social workers with significant experience in the field were invited in 2007 to take part in a national conference. These were mostly people who worked in special institutions as a result of their student fieldwork and their own lobbying activity. Among the 50 participants, 10 were social work lecturers. At this gathering, 22 people active as school social workers, social work professors and students determined to form the Hungarian Association of School Social Workers (MISZME - www.miszme.hu). It was founded on 30 November 2007 in order to provide a scientific and professional advocacy base for social workers who work in schools and to strengthen the legitimacy of the field.

The founding members agreed that school social work has an important role in society in promoting access to resources, supporting social cohesion, strengthening social inclusion in the schools and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation between all professionals in the schools.

School social workers can join the Association for an annual membership fee of 10 EUR (or 5 EUR for students). The fee for organizations such as schools or social service agencies is 20-30 EUR. Members can participate in the programmes of the association and take part in Association planning. The members are mostly from Székesfehérvár and Pécs in Hungary as these are the places where a school social work network system is already operating.

In Székesfehérvár, a city of 100,000 in central Hungary, the services mostly cover primary schools, while in Pécs, the fifth largest city in Hungary, secondary schools are involved. An article in this newsletter in January 2010 described the Pecs model. Workers are employed by non-governmental organizations, which have an important role in Hungary these days. From the professional point of view, both models rely on international resources such as social work literature to guide practice. Financing the service is a problem, as no legislative mandate exists for school social work as yet. Local lobbying and grant applications currently cover the costs of both models.

MIZME is involved with the following ongoing strategies in support of school social work.

- Conducted a survey of schools in 2008 in order to discover the need for school social work
- Developing new financial resources for school social work as a service
- Adopting school social work with the 2 model programs in Székesfehérvár and Pécs
- Designing a system to monitor school social work
- Developing a system for professional employment in school social work
- Negotiating the role of school social work with the Ministries of Education and Child Protection
- Developing an accredited post-BA course for school social workers
- Ensuring a professional research background for school social work
- Developing professional standards
- Promoting our international links, for example sharing knowledge with the International Network for School Social Work. We will also translate our web page into English.

These are the highlights of our professional School Social Work Association. Check out our website at www.miszme.hu which is still under development and will be translated into English. We are pleased to have connected to the International Network for School Social Work as an opportunity to enhance our own professionalism through such a partnership. We welcome input from colleagues in the international school social work community. We would especially appreciate the help and support of countries in the International Network that have the most experience. School social work associations from these countries could help us by providing best practice information, by helping us to expand school social work in Hungary and to enlarge what we have accomplished so far. We are determined also to hand on our good experiences with school social work to other Central and Eastern European countries.

