

THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF SOCIAL EDUCATORS

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



International association of social educators





1. **Background and purpose**
2. **A short introduction to social educational work**
3. **Requirements of education and practice and training of social educators**
4. **Professional competences for social educators**
 - 4.1. **FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCES**
 - 4.1.1. Competences of intervening
 - 4.1.2. Competences of evaluating
 - 4.1.3. Competences of reflecting
 - 4.2. **CENTRAL COMPETENCES**
 - 4.2.1. Personal and relational competences
 - 4.2.2. Social and communicative competences
 - 4.2.3. Organisational competences
 - 4.2.4. System competences
 - 4.2.5. Development and learning competences
 - 4.2.6. Competences generated by the professional practice
 - 4.2.6.1. Theoretical knowledge and methodological competences
 - 4.2.6.2. Competence of the conduct of the profession
 - 4.2.6.3. Cultural competences
 - 4.2.6.4. Creative competences
5. **Demand for Ethical Basis**
 - 5.1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE ETHICAL GUIDELINES**
 - 5.2. **PRINCIPLES OF THE ETHICAL GUIDELINES**
6. **The Declaration of Montevideo**

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This document about the professional competences of social educators is based on the document of the European Bureau of the International Association of Social Educators: "A Common Platform for Social Educators in Europe" (AIEJI Europe, January 2005). After a specific regulation for the freedom of movement of European Union workers, in year 2003, the AIEJI European Bureau thought that it was the time for all European professional associations to start working together. The main purpose was, complying with the specific regulation of the referred law, to establish a set of criteria of the required level of competences for the practice of the social educator profession.

The first steps were taken on a first symposium where the participating associations realised that they were working in the same reference areas and developing the same tasks. From then on, the professional competences of the European social educators were written and endorsed by

all participating associations in a second meeting in January 2005.

After further editing, the material was published with the title "A Common Platform for Social Educators in Europe".

The document was presented at AIEJI's world congress in November 2005 and the participants expressed great interest in the document. Further, the document was discussed at AIEJI's board meeting in May 2006, and the board decided to send out the document for consultation in AIEJI's regions. The idea was to create a global common platform for social educators. On this background the board has decided to publish this document: "The professional competences of social educators – a conceptual framework".

The purpose is not to come up with a final definition of social education but to give inspiration both to the individual social educator, the social educational work places and social educators as

a profession at national level to develop and discuss their profession. It means too that the board welcomes contributions from individuals as well as agencies and national associations about the professional basis of social educators. "The professional competences of social educators" is meant to be a framework for our common and continuing discussions about and development of our professional basis.

The document is to be read with the Declaration of Montevideo from the XVI World Congress of AIEJI (chapter 6 in this document).

Benny Andersen, President
International Association of Social Educators



2. A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL EDUCATIONAL WORK

Social educational work has its historical roots in work with children and young people. The profession comprises education and conditions of childhood and adolescence in a broad sense, and in some particular contexts it includes treatment. Today, social educational aid targets disabled children, adolescents and adults as well as adults at particular risk: the mentally disordered, alcohol or drug abusers, homeless people etc. Social educational work is constantly developing with regard to the various forms of measures, target groups, methods etc.

Social education is characterised as a special strategy that contributes to the integration of the community. It is the answer of the community to some of its integration problems □ not all of them, but those arising from social and educational situations of need. Social education deals with excluded and marginalised people in a special way, and this means that the contents and

character change according to the social, cultural and educational situations of need that are created by the community.

Social education can be defined as: The theory about how psychological, social and material conditions and various value orientations encourage or prevent the general development and growth, life quality and welfare of the individual or the group.

A fundamental element in social educational work is to facilitate integration and prevent marginalisation and social exclusion. This is done in a social interaction process in order to support and help exposed individuals and groups at risk so that they may develop their own resources in a changing community.

In social education the practitioners engage in an activity and use themselves in order to support and enhance the user's development together with the user. Social education is an inter-

tional action. It is the result of conscious deliberations that are converted into a planned and target-oriented process. The interventional character of social education means that, based on professional deliberations, objectives for other people's development and lives are defined. This is why the profession is based on a set of ethical values as well.

Social educational work is understood as a process of social actions in relation to individuals and various groups of individuals. The methods are multidimensional and include: Care, education, intervention, treatment, development of non-exclusive life space treatment etc. The goal is full sociability and citizenship to all.

SOCIAL EDUCATION

- Care
- Education (learning)
- Treatment
- Intervention
- Protection
- Development of non-exclusive life space

FULL CITIZENSHIP





The goal of full sociability and citizenship to all also means that the social educators are obliged to identify and oppose the exclusion mechanisms of society and communicate their knowledge of these exclusion mechanisms to the public authorities.

Social education is based on UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and presupposes a



fundamental understanding of the integrity and value of each single human being, irrespective of race, gender, age, belief, social and economical and intellectual status in the society.

The goal and content of social education range from the recreation of the culture of everyday life on the one side and on the other the creation of the individual's own culture.



Social education is a profession with great dynamics and adaptability. It is not anchored in or committed to a specific scientific tradition. The professional knowledge that is a part of the social educational practice has been defined by various sciences. Nowadays the profession is determined by a variety of humanistic and social science disciplines such as developmental psychology, social psychology, ethics, anthropology, cul-



tural sociology and sociology. In addition there are a number of subjects and areas such as administration, management and welfare political conditions, as well as communication, activity and culture subjects. This professional knowledge allows social educators to connect the critical analysis with constructive actions.

Thus, social education is rooted in the humanities. It is based on several disciplines and has an integrating view of knowledge as a central principle. The competency of social educators may be characterised as a synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The social educational college programmes include both theoretical and practical subjects and thereby become a connecting link between theory and practice.

Social educational work takes place in direct contact with children, young people and adults often over a long period of time. The contact is not limited to a particular time of the day. This implies that a social educator has relatively few users and thus establishes a thorough knowledge of the individual user. Not least the extent of the direct contact gives the social educator the opportunity to enter into close and intimate relations that are continuous and stable.

The trained social educator is supposed to assist the individual person in fulfilling and meeting his or her needs and targets. This implies for instance:

- Assisting persons in developing to such an extent that they become able to solve their own or shared problems.
- Enhancing the individual person's ability to determine and to adapt and develop.

In general terms the methods of social education are multiple and may be described as efforts that combine the needs of the target groups with the purpose of the social educational work. The educational perspective focuses on the user and aims at values such as democratisation, self-determination and autonomy. The ideal is the empowered¹ person who is capable of understanding and acting in the community by means of his own insight, knowledge and skills.

¹ Empowered refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It involves an increase of the authority and power of the individual on his/her own resources and on the decisions that affect his/her life.

A common feature of social education is, however, that the interpersonal process is the essential tool. In principle, the tools of the social educator are her own body and mind. This puts substantial demands on the social educators to be able to define contents, relationships, dynamics and methods.

Social educators do not just work on the basis of various theories and multiple methods. The development of the social educational work may also be viewed by means of the development of methods, because the methods of the profession cannot be isolated as mere techniques. It would be more correct to say that the methods of the profession correspond to a certain historical period's understanding of the relation between the individual and society.

The fact that social educational work is an interpersonal relationship and that the educational process is a social relation between the participating social educators and children, young people or adults, demands that the social educator is capable of committing herself to her work.

Social educators must commit themselves; otherwise they cannot establish confidential relationships and genuine contacts with other persons.

Social education as a profession is constituted by a particular combination of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and commitment. Besides being obliged to continue to work with the integration of marginalised groups and individuals

- social educators are obliged also to identify and oppose the exclusion mechanisms of society.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF EDUCATION AND PRACTICE AND TRAINING OF SOCIAL EDUCATORS

As social educational work is about and intervenes in other people's conditions of life, social educators must have solid basic education and training in order to carry out this task in a professionally proper manner. Social educators should therefore as other professionals who work with people have graduation at post-secondary level of 3 to 4 years of full-time study. The education should be recognised and approved by the national authorities and qualifying for social educational work. Further, the education should be recognised by the national profession association(s) as qualifying for social educational work.

The education should take place at universities or colleges of similar level recognised by the national authorities as providers of the basic

education for social educators. The education should ensure that the knowledge foundation reflects the professional competences for social educators quoted in the 4th section of this document. Further, the education should ensure that the most recent national and international research is included in the training.

The educational institution should be engaged in relevant development and experimental projects relating to the work field, and be an active partner in the work to include the practice field in this activity. One part of the students' training should be in such development projects.

Training and practice in the work field should be an integrated part of the programme. The edu-

cational institution and the practice field should work together on this training/practice.

A publicly recognised system of continuing and further education for social educators should be linked to the profession. This system should be related to the basic education in order that the gained knowledge and experience will be of advantage to the basic education.

The responsible authorities and the social educational work places are responsible that social educators currently receive continued and further education in order to improve the social educational practice.

Training and/or practice should be so comprehensive that the student will both gain a realistic impression of the organisation and tasks of the work field and challenge himself in the practical work.

This training and/or practice should be approved so that the student may continue or finish his education.

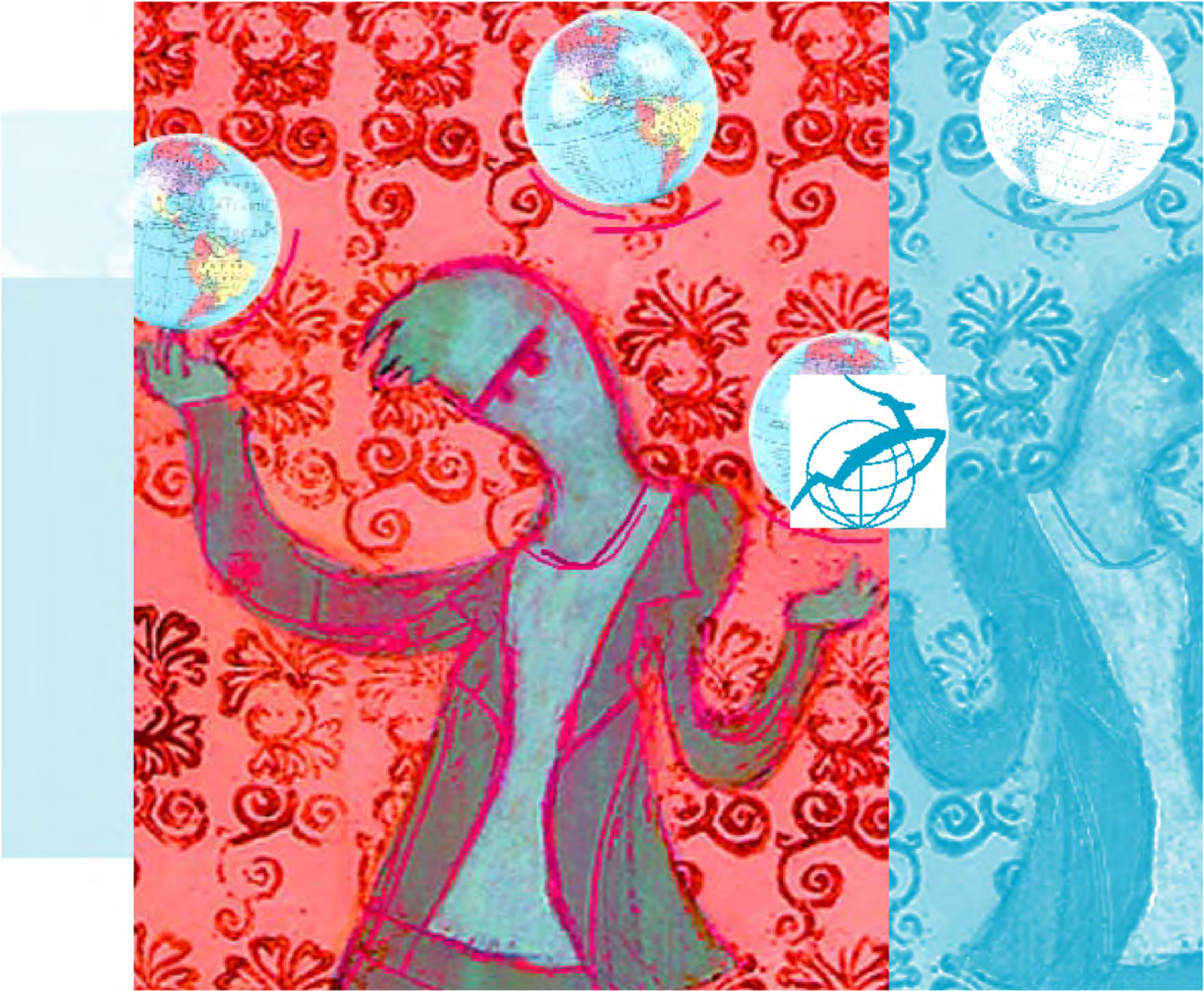
4. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES FOR SOCIAL EDUCATORS

In the following text the term competences should be understood as the social educator's potential of action relating to a certain task, situation or context □ i.e. the social educational work □ which comprises knowledge and skills, intellectual, manual and social skills as well as attitudes and motivation.

Generally speaking there are two dimensions in the competence profile of social educators. One

dimension indicates various levels for how the social educator should be able to act, intervene and reflect in various practice contexts.

The second dimension regards the central competences derived from perspectives and conditions for social-educational work.



4. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES

4.1. Fundamental Competences

The complexity of the professional practice involves different action levels, that demand as well, from the Social Educators, the handling of the following competences:

4.1.1 Competence of intervening

We think, among other things, that the social educator should be able to act directly in the actual situation in relation to the needs and wishes of the child/youth/adult in a suitable way and with a not too long time of reflection. The action may be motivated in intuition or non-linguistic knowledge, but also in theoretical or experiencebased knowledge. To put it more simply: the social educator should be able to act under compulsion to act.

4.1.2 Competence of evaluating

This second competence includes that the social educator should be able to plan, organise and reflect in relation to future actions and interventions. The social educator should be able to qualify his planning and reflection by including

theory and knowledge, but also by including reflection about his own or others' practice. The social educator should be able to assess the connection between intention, action and result.

4.1.3 Competence of reflecting

The social educator with colleagues and other professional persons should be able to reflect about professional problem fields to ensure a common professional understanding and development of the profession. The reflections should be communicated to professionals as well as the public.

4.2. Central competences

4.2.1 Personal and relational competences

The fundamental conditions for social education constitute the framework for social educators' competence profile. The relation to the person who need support is central in all social educational work. Social educational work is a relation between social educator and the one who needs support. These two poles of the relation constitute and are constituted by the relation.

Therefore, personal and relational competences are crucial in all social educational work.

During the past years the personal aspect has gained a far more central position in working life in general. Personal competences such as commitment, motivation, attitudes and "heart" are in demand and requested far more now than before by managers and "users". However, to the social educator who "works with people" the question of personal commitment to the work has another aspect to it: the personal relation to the child/youth/adult where educational human view,

background, moral and ethics are included and expressed.

The personal side of the professionalism is about being able to work professionally with relations. It is the instrument which creates the contact to the child/youth/adult, the sensitive registration of it, the interpretation of it, the processing and the modification of it. It is this contact which makes important finger prints that effects that the educator has anything to do with the child/youth/adult and that makes the social educator at all capable of intervening in another person's life.

The relation is not symmetric. The social educator should be able to relate personally and professionally to any child/user, whereas the child/user is not in the same way obliged to relate to the educator. It is also a relation of power, which may be destructive if not used in a constructive way. Not least because of this the social educator must be conscious of his fundamental human view, own norms and values.

To engage professionally with one's own personality demands a great deal of inclusiveness, a high degree of professional focus on the needs of the child/user, professional ethics and moral and last but not least, the ability to separate private relations from professional relations. This demands a great deal of empathy, conscientiousness, ethical reflections, extroversion, accommodation, and sense of responsibility, and a great deal of professional insight.

4.2.2 Social and communicative competences

Social educational work is not a solo performance. To a great extent it is dependent on and carried out in collaboration with a great number of involved parties: the child, the youth, the adult, colleagues, users, parents, relatives, other professional groups and authorities etc. The social educators must therefore also possess social and communicative competences.

Most social educational work at all levels take place in teams of colleagues or groups. This preconditions that educators are able to collaborate

with and take part in teams of colleagues. However, part of the educator's social and communicative competences is that the educator should be able to act in a field where there is not always harmony and agreement about aims, means and methods. It may be between colleagues, in relation to child/user, in relation to parents and relatives, in relation to social authorities or in relation to the political system.

Collaboration is a fundamental part of the social educator's work. A constructive collaboration where also conflicts are handled and used in a constructive way are crucial for both the well-being of the child/user, the professionalism and the educator's psychological working environment. Therefore, social educators should have competences to solve, handle and use conflicts in a constructive way. This is done on the basis of their knowledge of methods to handle conflicts, collaboration forms, group dynamics, work psychology, etc.

In relation to parents, relatives and of course not least the children/users, the social educator must

master special communicative competences, theoretically as well as practically and methodologically in order to exchange messages and views targeted precisely at the recipient and his social codes, language and background and □ or perhaps especially □ when it comes to difficult conversations.

A great deal of social educational work takes place in interdisciplinary collaboration. Therefore, social educators should be able to work in interdisciplinary teams. They should be able to use the professional terminology in interdisciplinary connections and have knowledge about other professional groups' professionalism and terminology.

Besides, social educators should be able to collaborate with authorities, administrations and relatives. This also demands considerable social and communicative competences and an adjustment of the social educational terminology in relation to the collaboration partner.

Last, but not least, the social educator should be able to counsel and guide parents and relatives.

Thus, the social educator should be able to take on the special role as counsellor and recognise the relation of power of this role. This demands strong communicative competences and knowledge and mastering of counselling and guidance techniques.

Thus the social educator should be able to:

- Work in teams of colleagues and have knowledge of teambuilding techniques and group dynamics.
- Work in interdisciplinary teams with a wide range of tasks.
- Have knowledge about other professions, their professional terminology and ethics.
- Collaborate with parents and relatives.
- Use methods for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Communicate at many levels, including mastering of various communication instruments.
- Have knowledge about and be able to use various methods of conflict handling.
- Analyse problems and “weird” situations on

the basis of experience with and approved knowledge about various psychologically and socially conditioned problems.

- Counsel and guide, including knowledge about and be able to use various counselling techniques.

4.2.3 Organisational competences

However, relations are not just relations for the sake of the relation. They have a purpose and an aim motivated by the educational task to educate, develop, culture and master life towards which social education, its actions (planned as well as not planned) and activities are targeted. This requires both professional and organisational competence and competence to reflect and act. These make the social educator able to in a targeted way here and now and over time plan and implement social educational activities and processes based on the social educational relation, to reach a professionally motivated aim.

The social educator's organisational competences have to do with administration, management and development of the social educational

work place and to have the organisation and the social educational work function planned and systematically. The social educator should be able to plan and implement social educational activities and processes as well as document and assess these as well as the social educational visions, aims and methods.

Thus, the social educator should be able to within the general framework- independently and in collaboration with other others to:

- Define aims for, plan, structure and systematise the total educational practice of the institution and the social educational work including the educationally physical and psychological framework
- Define aims for, plan, initiate, structure, implement, co-ordinate and evaluate major and minor tasks, social educational activities, processes, projects and development projects targeted at individuals as well as groups
- Take responsibility for own actions and decisions and be able to motivate them based on professionalism and experience

- Adjust and implement personal as well collective counselling and guidance to parents, relatives, colleagues and other professional groups.

The core of social educational work and thus of the social educator's competences is the child/youth/adult and his needs. However, the social educational work also implies □ far more now than before □ administrative tasks and participation in meetings.

Thus the social educators must also have knowledge of administrative routines that are general for the social educational work place, e.g. IT, documentation, evaluation, management of meetings with colleagues, parents, relatives and other professional groups.

4.2.4 System competences

The community, the public system, the political agenda, parents, relatives and other professional groups, and indeed the social educator's own moral, ethics and professionalism, constitute the fundamental conditions for the work to a great

extent. It is under these conditions the social educator has to function, act, negotiate and carry out his social task. System competences cover the complex of competences that, among other things, make the social educator able to act under these conditions. The social educational work is a social task. The social needs, changes and shifting political agendas together with the public and private system of which the social educational work place is part, set the framework for the social educator's work, its contents and status. On the one hand the social educator has to support and guide the user/child in relation to the "system". On the other hand the social educator has to administer the community expectations and demands to these groups. The social educator must also help improve and develop frameworks and conditions for these groups.

As mentioned above the social educational work place does not just live its own isolated life. It is a social institutionalisation and thus part of a major organisation, which sets up the general framework for the social educational activities.

The social educator should have knowledge about and be able to relate to and act in the context of which the work place is part and must thus:

- Have thorough knowledge of and be able to plan the work within the framework of the legislation, rules and agreements which constitute the general framework of the social educator's work.
- Have knowledge of and based on his profession be able to act in the public and private administration, including known chains of decision and commands.
- Have understanding of organisations and administrative systems, the management of these systems and be able to meet present and future demands on public and private enterprises for documentation, assessment and quality insurance.
- Have a knowledge of relevant systems for evaluation and documentation of social educational work.
- Have thorough insight into and be able to participate as authoritative professional per-

son in the creation of the dialogue and negotiation about decisions of local authorities, which constitute the local framework for the social educational work. It may for instance be child/youth policy, staff policy, and labour market and family policy.

- Be able to act in relation to the fact that social education □ as a mostly public activity □ also has great interest and attention from the public. Thus the social educator must also be able to take part in the current social debate about the social educational work and its impact on the community.

4.2.5 Development and learning competences

The increased expectations and demands from the public authority for documentation, assessment, quality ensuring and interdisciplinary collaboration may on the one hand help qualify the educational work. On the other hand it demands time and resources which are taken in many cases from the direct interpersonal relation with the user. This does not always easily go along with parents' and relatives' demand and request

that the social educator spends as much time with and gives as much educational attention as possible to the user. The competences deriving from this may be summarised as partly system competences partly development- and learning competences.

The object field, tasks, challenges and problems of the social educational work change both in character and extent along with the development in society and changes in the political priorities. Add to this an increasing demand for assessment, documentation and efficiency. Along with this, research is carried out and new knowledge is developed about social educational work and its character and the effects and side effects of applied practice and methods which should be included in the development of practice.

All this calls for a need for current development of solutions and working methods and not least a current and continuing development of the competences, so that the social educator possesses the necessary competences for the current tasks at any time.

The social educator must be ready for change and possess a development instrument, including to:

- Be able to develop and improve his professional competences and theoretical basis through continuing and further education, improvement of competences, development projects, supervision by colleagues etc.
- Be able to seek and gain new knowledge and skills continuously and be able to transform it to practice.
- Have knowledge about systematic, strategic and adequate competence improvement and be able to participate in the planning of it and take part in it.
- Be able to take part in informal as well as formal learning processes.
- Alone and together with others to systematically gather, document, generalise and use experience in performance and development of the social educational work (experience based development).
- Be able to critically reflect on and assess own work alone or together with others.
- Be able to include analyses, development and

research results in the performance and development of the social educational work and its knowledge foundation (knowledge based development).

- Be able to contribute to and take part in analyses and development activities in relation to own work.

4.2.6 Competences generated by the professional practice

Add to this different opinions from other professional groups on how the educators should perform and administer their educational profession so that it supports their work with the child/ youth/ adult in the best possible way. However, besides this □ and just as important □ the self-understanding, ethics, moral and norms of the profession also set up a framework for the educators' work and relation to children/youths/ adults and other collaboration partners. The competences deriving from this may be summarised as competences generated by the professional practice.

The personal and relational competences, the social and communicative competences, system

competences, the organisational competences and development and learning competences should also be supplemented with actual competences generated by the professional practice in order to altogether constitute the basis, so that the daily social educational work functions and is carried out in a professionally and ethically safe way.

These competences include:

4.2.6.1 THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE AND METHODOLOGICAL COMPETENCES

Today social education is well developing and building its own and independent system of concepts, although it is not fully framed in a univocal theory. This work in progress gets normative and descriptive elements from our professional practice combined with elements from pedagogy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy etc. Social educational practice thus implies social educational expertise and professionalism, theoretical and practical knowledge, methods and instruments.

Social educators should thus:

- Be familiar with the basic, generally recognised and predominant educational and social educational theories
- Be able to seek and acquire the prevalent adequate and relevant educational, psychological, sociological, anthropological etc. theories and include them in the work
- Be able to acquire and use adequate and recognised methods in the work □ e.g. group work, outreach work etc.
- Be able to reason his actions and activities on the basis of recognised theories and methods
- Be able to contribute to generating knowledge on the basis of recognised descriptions, reflections about and experience from social educational work.

4.2.6.2 COMPETENCE OF THE CONDUCT OF THE PROFESSION

Apart from theoretical and practical knowledge about methods, the self-understanding, norms, ethics and moral of the profession are crucial for the social educational professionalism. This

entails a set of profession competences that are necessary for the conduct of the social education profession. The social educator's competences of the conduct of the profession are among other things:

- Mastering the terminology and concepts of the profession and take part in the creation of it.
- Being able to internalise and influence the ethics and moral of the profession.
- Being able to take part in debates and draft documents, agreements etc. with a basis in the social educational profession.
- Having knowledge of terminology, concepts and ethical foundation of close professions.

4.2.6.3 CULTURAL COMPETENCES

The social educator's professionalism also includes cultural competences. These are knowledge about and understanding and inclusiveness as regards different cultures and cultural values. The social educator should be able to use his cultural competence together with the children/youths/adults as regards understanding of the individual person's values and reasons to be able

to contribute to the development of their cultural competences and with regard to communicating social and cultural values to the persons.

The social educator's cultural competence thus has several dimensions:

- A fruitful relation to the child/user depends on the fact that the social educator knows and recognises that cultural values help form and set up the framework for the child/youth/adult's access to other people and about the way he or she relates to and behaves in the community.
- Knowledge about or competence to acquire knowledge about and understanding for different cultures and their values.
- Consciousness about and ability to relate to the culture in which the institution and the social educational practice are included and which they communicate. Thus they are forwarded to the child/youth/adult as a part of the social educational development and life-mastering task.

4.2.6.4 CREATIVE COMPETENCES

The social educator must master forms of expression and skills within creativity, movement and music that can be developing, activating, initiating or creative and which are used as an integrated part of the social educational work with the individual child/youth/adult's emotional, social, linguistic and intellectual development.

Further, the social educator should be part of a collaboration with the child/youth/adult about how to acquire and develop his/hers own forms of expression and extension of creative horizon in a social and cultural context.

5. DEMAND FOR ETHICAL BASIS

The professional work of social educators is based on humanistic and democratic values. Social educators endorse equality and respect towards all persons and pay special attention to individual needs. They respect and protect their clients' rights to privacy and autonomy. Social educators use their professional expertise to improve the living conditions and quality of life of their clients. Respect, care and empathy for their clients and their families, solidarity with vulnerable groups, the battle against poverty and strife for social justice form the foundation of the profession of social educators.



5.1 Objectives of the Ethical Guidelines

5.1.1 Enhance ethical awareness of actions within the field of social education.

5.1.2 Enhance best practice and professional performance in accordance with universally acknowledged principles and criteria determined by the second symposium of the European Association of Social Educators.

5.1.3 Stimulate societal interest in and draw attention to the ethical foundation of social education.

5.1.4 Develop a professional identity among social educators independent of their countries of origin.

5.1.5 Encourage and guide ethical reflection and discussion among social educators.

5.2 Principles of the Ethical Guidelines

5.2.1 Social educators respect the declarations and documents of the United Nations and other internationally acknowledged human rights organizations that call for respect and protection of freedom, equality, dignity and autonomy of all human beings. Social educators conscientiously

perform their duties irrespective of nationality, ethnic background, religion, colour, gender or individual abilities.

5.2.2 Social educators work in full co-operation with their clients/users to facilitate and enhance

the potential of all individuals to cope with and be in control of their lives. Empowerment, guided by dignity and respect, is an essential element in the professional practice of social educators.

5.2.3 Social educators maintain confidentiality regarding personal information of clients. Professional confidentiality shall protect clients/users' rights to control personal information. Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between social educators and their clients. All personal information shall be recorded and stored in such a way that access is protected. If personal information is to be used for educational or informational purposes, permission must be obtained from the client and/or the family and anonymity must be preserved if requested. Exemption from professional confidentiality must be justified in terms of higher priority and reinforced by official agencies.

5.2.4 Social educators maintain high professional standards. This includes professional knowl-

edge, ethical reflection and the quality of daily work. Social educators are fully responsible for their own actions irrespective of alleged demands from a superior authority. Social educators respect personal autonomy of their clients/users and oppose any use of coercion that is not founded on law and regulations, or is ethically unjustified.

5.2.5 Social educators accept professional accountability in line with their education. They strive to provide service that meets the strictest professional demands. Social educators are responsible for maintaining their professional knowledge.

5.2.6 Social educators treat co-workers with respect and strive to protect the honour and interests of the profession and the wider community. A comprehensive and well co-ordinated service system will rely on positive relationships between staff and service users. Social educators shall exhibit respect and trust towards other professionals, co-workers and administrative officers within

their network. They look to other specialists for assistance if needed, recognise the expertise of other professionals and use their own expertise to advise others.

5.2.7 Social educators carry responsibility for calling attention to conditions, which create social problems and may lead to social exclusion or unacceptable living conditions.

5.2.8 At times it may be necessary that Social Educators lobby politicians or the media directly in order to propose best practice for positive social change. In all public appearances it must be made clear whether one acts independently or on behalf of one's profession/employment. Social educators adhere to their professional code of ethics and the principle of personal accountability.

5.2.9 These principles and values are not to be viewed as constituting a complete description of acceptable professional practices of social educators.



6. THE DECLARATION OF MONTEVIDEO

The Declaration of Montevideo from the XVI World Congress of AIEJI state that:

1. We reaffirm and confirm the existence of the field of Social Education as a specific task oriented to ensure the rights of the people we work for, which requires our permanent commitment at the ethical, technical, scientific and political levels.
2. To accomplish this commitment, the role of the Social Educator must be consolidated, as well as the integration in work teams and group organisation.
3. This task requires Social Educators with a good initial and permanent training.
4. This training must emphasise practice, with a permanent critical analysis.

5. We see the importance of the systematisation of the professional practice as a way to contribute to the training, professional improvement -which is a right of the users of the social education-, and the approach of our political-pedagogical purposes in this process.

6. We reaffirm that ethics must be a permanent reference, collectively conceived and carried out with the critical participation of the subjects.

7. Social Educators renew our commitment with democracy and social justice, defend our cultural heritage and the rights of all human beings. We are convinced that another world is possible.

Montevideo, 18th November 2005



AIEJI is an international association of social educators. The purpose of the association is to emphasize and promote the philosophy of social education and its uniqueness in being actively involved in partnership with clients, working with them, not only individually but in groups, families, communities, in the milieu, towards the devel-

opment of their strengths and in resolving personal, social, and community difficulties. You can become a member as an individual, as an agency or as an association. Read more about AIEJI on www.aieji.net where you also can apply for membership.