

## **Mapping Social Work Across Ten Countries: Structure, Intervention, Identity, Resistance and Challenges**

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In recent years, as a result of an emerging global consciousness and rising attention given to international social work development and collaboration, the importance of comparative research within social work has been recognized. Social work is an evolving and contextually driven profession that is deeply embedded within our global world and the role of social work is thus often dictated by the systems that it tries to serve; influenced by international, local and professional values, as well as social, economic and political themes. Understanding the structuring, functioning and organization of the profession within various country contexts is critical in order to formulate knowledge around its overall impact, successes and challenges, allowing social workers to learn from one another and build consolidation within the profession. Within this paper, the social work profession is mapped out in ten EU and non-EU country contexts, reflecting on its structure, identity, resistance and challenges. The data stems from an exploratory and qualitative International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (FP7-PEOPLE-2011-IRSES). It presents insights into the changes, challenges and current status of the profession across different contexts, reflecting on its values; role and tasks; training and education; employment opportunities; statutory and preventative interventions; regulatory frameworks; accountability and professional discretion; and nature of the professions relationship, links and partnerships with the state and the third sector. The authors recognize that although the profession is globally on the rise, it is also experiencing significant challenges with regard to neoliberal socioeconomic policies; the implementation of austerity measures and welfare reform; as well as the changing role and expectations for social service providers as a result of business management ideals. Key insights, conclusions and recommendations for future research are presented.