

**Final Report  
International Association of Schools of Social Work  
January 2015**

**Southeast Europe Academic Women's Leadership Initiative (SEE)**

This report is respectfully submitted to the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) documenting completion of the first phase of the project (SEE) with financial support from IASSW in the amount of \$4,000.

**Rationale and Purpose**

The Southeast Europe Academic Women's Leadership Initiative (SEE), is designed to develop leadership capacity among early career social work academics in Southeast Europe who will serve as future leaders in educational reform in the transitional countries of SEE.

**Project Goals**

As originally stated in the proposal to IASSW, the goals of the initiative are:

1. To prepare early career academic women in social work to assume leadership positions in promoting educational reform in the transitional countries of Southeast Europe;
2. To establish international connections among the participating women and US based social work educational programs for purposes of research collaboration, leadership mentoring, and curricular and organizational reform;
3. To foster the development of a regional network of participants for the purposes of sustainable collegial support, scholarly exchange, and teaching and service exchanges;
4. To support the long-term development of quality assurance in education that is culturally specific to the SEE and respectful of its many ethnicities, political divisions, and with understanding of its strong traditions established under the repressive totalitarian regimes of the latter half of the 20th Century.

**Project Outcomes**

Likewise, as stated in the initial proposal, the outcomes are as follows:

1. Preparation of women academics in social work who will assume leadership positions in the academy over the next 5-7 years – leading to a continuation

- of the education reform process over the coming two decades;
2. The establishment of an on-going mentoring program of SEE early career academics with selected faculty and institutions (social work programs) in the US;
  3. The establishment of the network of participants with a plan for continuous contact and information exchange in support of their professional growth and development and movement into leadership positions;
  4. The enhancement or establishment of collaborative research links between schools and their faculty.
  5. The establishment of faculty exchange programs for SEE doctoral students and faculty.

### **Implementation Process**

Implementation of the project began with the identification of the initial cohort and securing funding for year 1 of the initiative. Eight women attended the CSWE Annual Program Meeting in Tampa, Florida, with registration, air flights and accommodation funded by the project. CSWE offered a substantial discount on the registration as well as for the pre-conference workshops in which all of the women participated.

The CSWE experience was the first time that all but one (Macedonia) of the entire cohort of women were together as a group. They participated as noted in pre-conference Faculty Development Institutes, conducted a joint panel presentation about the project and higher education and gender disparities in each of their countries (a partnership presentation with the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD). In addition, they met in a specially arranged session with three editors-in-chiefs of top journals in the field (US and Europe) for a discussion about publishing. One woman did a presentation on her research in Slovenia (peer-reviewed competition). The group was recognized in various sessions at the APM – Global Commission, Partners in International Education Awards Ceremony, the Women’s Networking Breakfast, and the Hokenstad International Lecture. Individual women have begun to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with colleagues in the US. Books from the CSWE Press were made available to each of the women at no cost – 5 were going out of print and one was a recent publication of the woman’s choosing.

Depending on the amount of funding secured for 2015, the women will participate with financial support in the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) conference in Milan; several of the women already have funding secured from other sources that will enable their participation. A pre-

conference Symposium has been organized and will include participation of the women. See link <http://www.eassw.org/2015/additional-conference-events.html>

Finally, five of the women have proposals accepted for the European Conference for Social Work Research that will be held in Ljubljana, April 2015. Their participation will be partially supported by the Initiative.

In summary, the implementation process has been as follows:

- Cohort identified;
- Funding for Year 1 secured;
- Participation at the CSWE Annual Program Meeting, Tampa, Florida, 23-26 October 2014. Presentation on SEE at Partnership session with International Consortium of Social Development;
- Participation at the EASSW Conference in Milan, Italy, 29 June – 2 July 2015. Pre-conference symposium on women and academic leadership in SEE accepted by conference organizers;
- Participation at the recently organized European Social Work Research Association Conference (ESWRA) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, April 2015.

## **Participants**

The participants selected are listed below. A Resume Book was developed as a contribution from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota USA and distributed at CSWE to sponsors and others interested in the Initiative. It is provided as an attachment to this Report. Participants from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro are being identified to add to the current participant cohort. The name designation of AFP below refers to the woman being a participant in the Open Society Institute – Academic Fellowship Program.

Dr. Gordana Berc, University of Zagreb, Croatia (Kendall Fellowship)  
Dr. Ana M. Sobocan, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (Fulbright)  
Dr. Sanela Sadic, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFP and Kendall Fellowship))  
Dr. Sanela Basic, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFP)  
Dr. Vjollca Krasiniqi, University of Prishtina, Kosovo (AFP)  
Dr. Elona Dhembo, Tirana University, Albania (AFP)  
Dr. Erika Bejko, Tirana University, Albania (AFP)  
Dr. Suzana Boranova, University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Macedonia (Fulbright)  
Dr. Darja Zavirsek, University of Ljubljana, (as senior mentor in SEE)

## **Participant Criteria**

Selection criteria for the first cohort are as follows:

- 1) A strong interest in leadership;
- 2) A home base academic situation that is not especially favorable for this growth and development to take place without additional resources (human and financial);
- 3) The PhD degree already awarded;
- 4) A research/scholarly agenda in place; and
- 5) Current employment in the academy.

## **Sponsoring Organizations**

The grant from IASSW was one part of the total funding. Other funds were secured from the organizations/schools listed below:

- International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW)
- Katherine A Kendall Institute (KAKI) of CSWE
- Social Work Programs in the US:
  - University of Nevada – Reno;
  - University of Houston;
  - University of St. Thomas;
  - University of Southern California;
  - SUNY – Buffalo;
  - Boston College;
  - University of South Carolina;
  - University of Denver;
  - Catholic University of America;
  - Marywood University
- Private Educational Foundation (one to one match for total – up to \$10,000, contributed by Schools of Social Work).

## **The Future**

The Initiative has been highly successful in this, its first year. The Initiative will continue in the first half of 2015 with attendance at the EASSW and the ECSWR conferences and with the addition of several new participants to the cohort group. It is expected that the women will attend the CSWE APM in Denver, Colorado in October 2015. With these conferences, we hope to establish a more formal

mentoring mechanism than currently exists. In addition, the women are now reaching out to one another for peer reviews, speaking at events across their national borders, identifying possible opportunities for research collaboration, and in general, forming a collegial bond for ongoing support and cooperation. The goals for this year (2015) are as follows:

- Solidify and formalize mentoring relationships with colleagues in US and Europe;
- Build the network with additional opportunities for the participants, e.g., EASSW Milan, and ECSWR in Ljubljana in 2015;
- Secure funding for the second year of the initiative;
- Expand the cohort by 5 or 6 women, depending primarily on project funding; and extend an
- Open invitation to be a participating sponsor, mentor, or advisor to the initiative.

In its current form, this Initiative is thought to be highly transferrable to other parts of the world. It also could be reshaped to be more global around a particular theme that would bring early career academics together in relatively small groups for targeted interaction and collaboration. The advantage of the regional model is the close proximity of participants to one another; shorter travel distances make funding issues less difficult for sustained interaction, and leadership challenges have greater similarity at the regional level. In addition, collaborative research possibilities are increased through cross-boarder funding mechanisms and geographic proximity.

