

# COMPETENCE PROFILE



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# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL EDUCATION WORK

*"Social Educators are professionals who work with children, youths, adults and the elderly. The populations include vulnerable persons and/or communities who are in need of socio-educational and rehabilitation actions. The names of these professionals vary from country to country according to the field of action, which can include health interventions. In that case, these professionals are called social and health educators. Social and health educators practise in a variety of settings through individual actions, residential institutions and community-based programmes, while respecting professional ethics. They practise a broad range of roles including direct care, training, supervision and leadership positions, consultation and research in the socio-educational and health field".*

1 Social education is based on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on the Rights of the Child, and presupposes a fundamental understanding of the integrity and value of each single human being, irrespective of race, gender, age, beliefs and social, economical and intellectual status in society.

2 Social education deals with excluded and marginalised people of all ages – from children to the elderly. Social educational work is the answer to many of the community's integration problems – particularly those arising from social and educational situations of need. This is done in a special way, meaning that the

contents and character change according to the social, cultural and educational situations of need created by the community. Social educators work with children, adolescents and people with disabilities. They also work with adults – especially those at particular risk: the mentally disordered, alcohol or drug abusers, homeless people, etc.

3 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, protection, advocacy, development of non-exclusive life space treatment, etc. The goal is to achieve

full sociability and active citizenship for all. A fundamental perspective in social educational work is solidarity with vulnerable and marginalised groups.

4 Social education is a profession characterised by great dynamics and adaptability. The profession is determined by a variety of humanistic values and its practice is based on a range of relevant social science disciplines such as pedagogical theory, developmental psychology, social psychology, ethics, anthropology, cultural sociology, criminology and sociology. In addition, there are a number of subjects and areas at play, such as administration, management and welfare, political conditions, as well as law, communication, activity, knowledge about marginalisation processes (poverty, network, economy, etc.) and culture among other subjects.

5 In general terms, there are multiple methods of social education and these can 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 addresses values such as democratisation, participation in communities and autonomy. The goal is an empowered person who is capable of understanding and acting in the community using their own insight, knowledge and skills. However, a common feature of social education is that the



interpersonal process is the essential tool. In principle, the tools of the social educator are their own body and mind. This puts substantial demands on the social educators to be able to define content, relationships, dynamics and intervention methods.

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**6** Social educators should be trained professionals who assist the individual person in fulfilling and meeting his or her needs and goals.

**This implies for instance:**

- Helping a person develop to such an extent that they become able to solve their own or shared problems.
- Enhancing the individual's self-determination and ability to adapt and develop.



# EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING FOR SOCIAL EDUCATORS

## EDUCATION

**7** Social educational work involves intervention in other people's conditions of life and requires a solid basic education as well as training in order to carry out this task in a professional and appropriate manner. The training models are based on cultural traditions in every part of the world and can change from one culture to another. However, it should be accepted that social educators must undergo some kind of education, mentoring, tutoring or formal training before practising. In western cultures, social educators should – as other professionals who work with and care for human beings – have graduation at postsecondary level of 3 – 4 years of full-time study. The educational programme should be recognised and approved by the national authorities and qualify the individual for social educational work. Furthermore, the educational programme should be recognised by the national profession association(s) as qualifying the individual for social educational work.

**8** Education should take place at universities or colleges of a similar level and training centres recognised by the national authorities as providers of basic education for social educators. The educational programme should ensure that the foundation

of knowledge reflects the professional competences for social educators quoted in the 4th section of this document. Furthermore, the educational programme should ensure that the most recent national and international research and intervention methods are included in the training.

**9** Training and practice in the field should be an integrated part of any training programme. The educational, social and healthcare institutions within the field should work closely together on this training/practice.

### Continuing and further education

**10** 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 so that the gained knowledge and experience will be of advantage to the basic education.

**11** The responsible authorities and social educational workplaces must ensure that social educators receive continued on-the-job training in order to improve social educational practice.

# COMPETENCES

## FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCES

**12** **Holistic approach:** A social educator sees the whole person. It demands a certain professionalism and insight to see behind the diagnosis, disability, etc. and make the change happen in cooperation with the individual. Social educators are trained to observe the individual and reflect on their own practice and the context.



**13** **Empowerment:** Social educators believe in the individual's potential for development. They look at resources instead of obstacles and thereby co-create a new experience, narrative and understanding of the individual's opportunities.

**14** **Cooperation:** Social educators work closely with other professions, e.g. social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, teachers. Social educators are good at interdisciplinary work and contribute constructively to work communities. Social educators ensure a holistic approach with the individual at the centre.





## PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL COMPETENCES

**15** The relationship with the person who needs support is central to the work of all social educators. The personal side is about being able to work professionally on relationships. It is the tool that helps the child/youth/adult connect. It is this connection that allows the social educator to intervene and bring about change in another person's life.

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**16** The relationship is not symmetrical. The social educator should be able to relate personally and professionally to any child/adult, whereas the child/adult is not obliged to relate to the social educator in the same way. It is also a relationship of power and the social educator must therefore be conscious of his or her fundamental human view and work professionally and with awareness of the power at play.

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES

**17** Most social education work is dependent on a collaboration with a number of involved parties: the child, youth, adult, colleagues, users, parents, relatives and other professional groups and authorities.

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**18** Collaboration is a fundamental part of the social educator's work. A constructive collaboration

where conflicts are managed and used in a constructive way are crucial to the wellbeing of the child/user, to professionalism and to the educator's safety and psychological working environment. Therefore, social educators should have the competences to solve, handle and use conflicts in a constructive way.

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**19** In relation to the child, adult, parents and/or relatives, the social educator must master special communicative competences theoretically as well as practically and methodologically. The communication must also be targeted at the receivers' social codes, language, etc. The social educator should be able to counsel and guide parents and relatives.

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## **20** Social and communicative competences include:

- Working in interdisciplinary teams on a wide range of tasks and having knowledge of group dynamics.
- Knowing about other professions, their professional terminology and ethics.
- Collaborating with parents and relatives.
- Using methods for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Communicating at many levels and mastering various communication tools.

- Understanding and using various methods of conflict management.
- Analysing problems and situations based on experience with and approved knowledge about various psychological and socially conditioned problems.
- Counselling and guidance including knowledge about and being able to use various counselling techniques.

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCES

**21** Organisational competencies enable the social educator to plan and carry out social pedagogical activities and initiate processes based on the social pedagogical relationship in order to achieve a professionally motivated aim.

#### Social educators should be able to:

- Define goals, plan, initiate, co-ordinate and evaluate social educational activities targeted at individuals as well as groups.
- Steer towards jobs, education, health care, etc.
- Have knowledge of administrative routines, IT, documentation and manage meetings with colleagues, parents, relatives and other professionals, etc.
- Have knowledge of relevant systems for evaluation and documentation of their work.

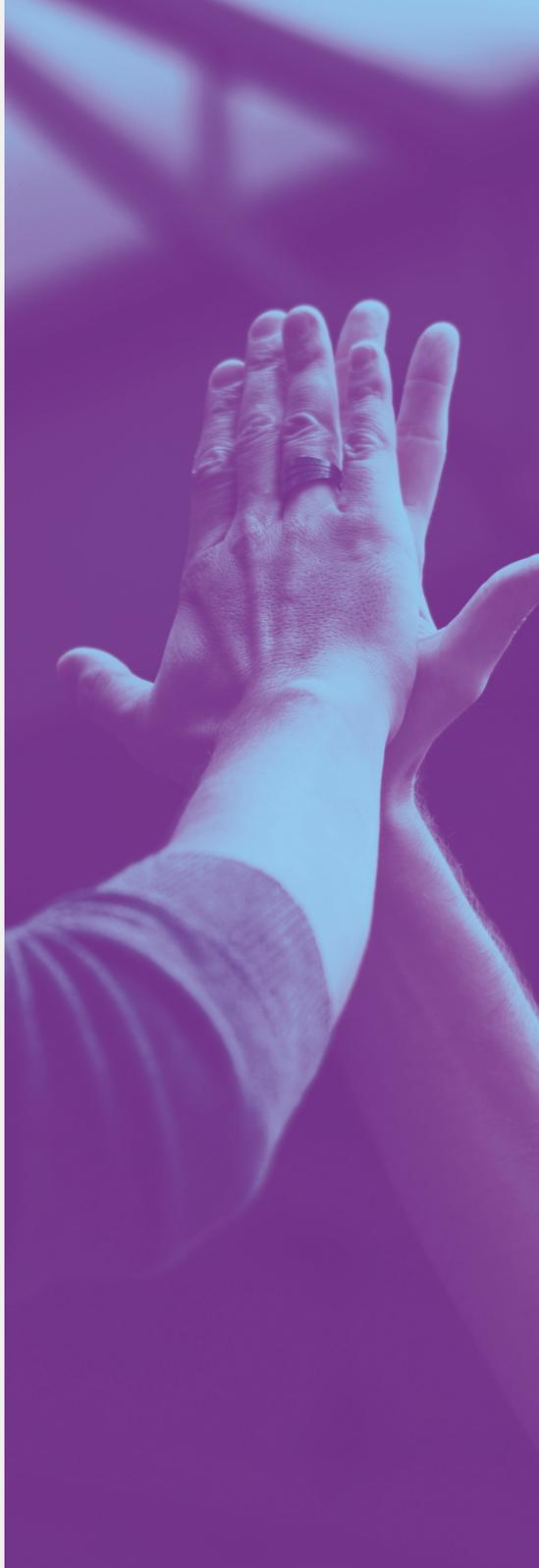
### DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING COMPETENCES

**22** The field, tasks, challenges and problems associated with social educational work change in both character and extent along with the development in society and shifts in political priorities. Alongside this, new knowledge is developed about social educational work and its character, as well as the effects and side effects of applied practice and methods that should be included in developing the practice.

#### The social educator must be ready for change and be able to use development tools including:

- Being able to develop and improve his or her professional competences and theoretical basis through continuing and further education, improvement of competences, development projects, supervision, etc.
- Being able to seek and gain new knowledge and skills continuously and being able to transform these into practice.

- Being able to systematically gather, document, generalise and use experience in performance and development of the social educational work (experience-based development) both alone and in collaboration with others.
- Being able to critically reflect on and assess one's own work either alone or in collaboration with others.
- Being able to include analyses, development and research results in the performance and development of social educational work and its knowledge foundation (knowledge-based development)





## Conventions and documents relevant to social education:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
- Paris 1948,

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms  
- Rome 1950,

European Social Charter - Turin 1961, and subsequent additions

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - New York 1989,

International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol ratified in 2009

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000,

European Charter of the rights and responsibilities of the elderly and in need of long-term care and assistance of 2010,

Lanzarote Convention of the Council of Europe on the protection of minors against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Istanbul Convention 2011 on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

