Studies

Respect for Diversity and Multiculturalism in the Historical Transformations of Social Work Professional Ethics

Andrej Mátel, Andrea Preissová Krejčí

Abstract:
Within the modern history of social work, certain developmental periods in its professional ethics can be distinguished. In the theoretical introduction of this contribution, we explore selected ethical values and principles – namely, anti-discrimination, multiculturalism, and respect for diversity. These principles have become integral to the ethically sensitive practice of social work. The research section of this contribution presents a methodological overview of a qualitative content analysis of selected social work ethical codes. This analysis emphasises the historical transformations of these ethical principles within international, Czech, and Slovak contexts. The research findings offer insights that could inform the innovation of the Czech and Slovak ethical code of social work in the areas studied.

Keywords:
ethics, ethical code, social work, multiculturalism, respect for diversity

Introduction and Methodology

Social work is one of the relatively young helping professions and academic disciplines that are value-based. These values and the ethical principles derived from them are usually declared in codes of ethics. Their formulation is usually process-driven by professional organisations, whether at the national or international level. In this process, not only academics and experts in professional ethics play an important role, but also practising social workers are actively involved in the drafting or revising and approving the code of ethics. National and international codes of ethics are then the result of a broad debate and represent a consensus set of ethical values, principles, and tenets that form the ethos of the profession. In examining selected ethical topics, they therefore represent an important research sample representing a consensual state of ethical perception and expectations of ethically responsible behaviour. The research subject of this paper is one of the central ethical principles of contemporary social work, which is respect for

diversity, in conjunction with the ethical principle of anti-discrimination and the social construct known as multiculturalism. The aim of this paper is to identify the historical transformations of the understanding of the ethical principle of respect for diversity and its related ethical values, principles, and the phenomenon of multiculturalism in the modern history of social work. By this we understand the history since the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when social work was formed as an independent profession, field of , and scientific activity. From the geographical point of view, the object of our research is primarily the global context of social work and the Czech-Slovak, or Czech and Slovak socio-cultural area. However, since from a historical point of view both global and Czech-Slovak development was strongly influenced by American social work, we have included it in the object of our research. We have used the methods of historical research in its postmodern understanding and content analysis of source documents and selected secondary literature. The aim of historical research is not to describe one single truth based only on the researcher's interpretations of the materials studied, but to provide the reader with another interpretation and another perspective on the area, topic, or time period under study.[1]

We use a qualitative content analysis of selected codes of ethics over the last 35 years, examining the historical shifts of these ethical principles in the international, Czech and Slovak contexts. We were guided through the basic steps of content analysis of texts by Philipp Mayring,[2] and among the four methodological approaches to its implementation, we chose the method of discourse analysis,[3] which combines a focus on the search for regularities appearing in the formation of psychological and social reality in written and spoken language. Thus, we focus on the patterns of meaning-making and understanding shared in society (and their ideological implications) in professional social work ethics.

In periodising the developmental periods of professional ethics of social work, we drew on the work of the American expert on professional ethics Reamer,[4] but taking into account the Czech-Slovak historical and cultural context.[5] In terms of the structure of the paper, we will briefly present a terminological and theoretical introduction to the central themes, followed by the results of the investigation in different periods and a discussion with implications for practice.

Results

Terminological and theoretical background

The central term of the paper is *respect for diversity*. The term respect is closely linked to the modern concept of human dignity and human rights. Human rights ethics is one of the most widely accepted and applied ethical theories of our time. Conceptually, the universal rights of the person began to be discussed especially in the 17th and 18th centuries within the framework of the so-called modern school of natural rights, but the era of human rights reached its peak

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1   Marie Špiláčková, *Česká sociální práce v letech 1968-1989* (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, 2016).

2   Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative content analysis: theoretical foundation, basic procedures and software solution* (Klagenfurt: 2014).

3   Kateřina Zábrodská and Magda Petrjánošová, Metody diskurzivní analýzy, in *Kvalitativní analýza textů: čtyři přístupy*, ed. Tomáš Řiháček, Ivo Čermák, and Roman Hytych (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013).

4   Frederic G. Reamer, *Ethical Standards in Social Work* (Washington, DC: NASW, 1998). Frederic G. Reamer, *Social Work Values and Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Frederic G. Reamer, 'The Evolution of Social Work Ethics: Bearing Witness', *Advances in Social Work,* 15, no. 1 (2014): 163–181.

5   Andrej Mátel, 'Etické míľniky profesionalizácie sociálnej práce (americká, československá a slovenská perspektíva)', *Sociální práca / Sociálna práca* 21, no. 6 (2021): 43–61. Andrej Mátel, *Dilemy rešpektovania ľudskej dôstojnosti a ľudských práv v sociálnej práci a v sociálnych službách* (Bratislava: Spoločnosť pre rozvoj sociálnej práce, 2022).

after the Second World War. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights[6] requires member states to respect the declared human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Declaration derives individual rights from human dignity and recognises the right of every individual to exercise his rights without discrimination. Discrimination is understood as negative judgement and unfair treatment of people based on identifiable characteristics (e.g., race, age, ethnicity, gender, sex, religion, etc.), usually without a rational basis. In the context of respect for dignity and human rights, it is therefore important to stress that these are the rights of every human being, without distinction. Therefore, the requirement of equal treatment, non-discrimination, and anti-discrimination is an integral part of human rights documents and codes of ethics. Anti-discrimination approaches can be considered as stand-alone theoretical concepts of social work or as an integral part of anti-oppressive approaches.[7] While non-discrimination or anti-discrimination is a negative linguistic expression of what should not be the content of action or what needs to be fought against, the linguistic expression of *respect for diversity* is a positive expression with the assumption of understanding the meaning and contribution of the difference of other persons, groups, communities, etc.

The 'second generation' of human rights includes, alongside economic and social rights, cultural rights. This is confirmed by the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966). Culture in the broadest understanding of social sciences is understood as a specific human way of organisation, realisation and development of activities, objectified in the results of physical and mental work.[8] The above authors state that culture as a separate lexical unit was made independent by the German historian and jurist Samuel von Pufendorf in the 17th century. He included in it all human creations – social institutions, language, science, morals, habits of dress and living. Nowadays, culture can include everything that human civilisation has created, i.e., material creations (dwellings, tools, clothing, etc.) and spiritual creations (art, religion, morals, traditions, etc.). It can also be understood as the totality of certain manifestations of people's behaviour, i.e., the culture of a certain community, characterised by traditions, customs, communication norms, value system, etc.[9] Murphy defines it as a whole system of meanings, values and social norms, which are followed by members of a given society and passed on to the next generations through socialisation.[10] The author stresses that cultures are not based on absolutes, they are the result of human activity and thought. Therefore, they are changeable. Despite the fact that those that subscribe to cultures regard them as valuable and enduring, they are, like their originators, mortal. According to Linton, no culture is 100 percent (or even 20 percent) purely free from the influence of the outside world.[11] Human progress is the creation of all societies, past and present, and all cultures are hybrid. From a global perspective, some countries are composed of many cultures due to the history and origins of their inhabitants, thus multicultural in nature. In other states, the population, but also the cultural composition of the population, is changing as a result of migration.[12]

Etymologically, multiculturalism refers to the co-existence of diverse cultures or varied cultural

6   United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf.
7   Malcolm Payne, *Modern social Work Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmilan, 2015); Peter Brnula et al., *Úvod do teórii sociálnej práce* (Bratislava: Iris, 2015).
8   Cf. Matejů Soukup in Petrusek, Miloslav et al. *Velký sociologický slovník* (Praha: Karolinum, 1996), 547.
9   Jana Pecníková, *Úvod do štúdia kultúr(y)* (Banská Bystrica: DALI-BB, 2020).
10   Robert F. Murphy, *Úvod do kulturní a sociální antropologie* (Praha: Slon, 2010), 32.
11   In Murphy, *Úvod.*
12   Lucie Macková, Jaromír Harmáček, and Zdeněk Opršal, 'Determinants of international migration from developing countries to Czechia and Slovakia', *Ekonomický časopis* 67, no. 9 (2019): 931–952.

groups in a society. According to Cichá, the project of multiculturalism has been known since the second half of the 1960s, when efforts for political recognition of various minority (racial, ethnic, sexual, etc.) groups began to grow in the USA, Canada, and Australia[13]. It is not possible to understand it as a homogeneous movement in terms of opinion; we find many currents of thought that have been taking shape since its beginning. A common factor is their polemic with other ideological concepts, especially liberalism and nationalism, which they believe lead to assimilation on the one hand and segregation on the other, not integration, which multiculturalism considers the optimal third way. The direction that is considered to be a certain standard form of multiculturalism and has been generally accepted uncritically in the Czech Republic since the 1990s for the needs of the educational process is referred to as pluralistic or differential multiculturalism, which is based on the idea of natural and insurmountable boundaries between groups.[14] Its key motive is the belief according to which it is possible to explain the actions of an individual, but also to assess them on the basis of knowledge of the history and cultural practices of the group of which the individual is a part.[15] In comparison, we contrast so-called critical multiculturalism, which 'calls for a fundamental reconstruction of the conceptual, political and practical tools developed under the label of multiculturalism'.[16] This trend, which focuses on issues related to power, domination, privileged versus marginal status of different groups, the formation of racial, class, and gender inequalities, etc.,[17] has not yet been reflected in the Czech environment. Critical multiculturalism seeks to expand critical dialogue across group boundaries and also within groups,[18] and thus emphasizes an individual approach. It is a transcultural approach that focuses more on the search for common themes and the use of cooperative strategies.[19] In the present paper, we do not understand multiculturalism primarily as a political trend, but as an ideological (philosophical) outlook that emphasises the benefits of cultural diversity for the individual, society, and the state. It is important for persons themselves, as well as members of society, to know one's own cultural identity and at the same time to learn about different cultures, especially, but not only, their contributions and strengths. Knowledge is the basis for respect, and respect for the differences of others.

Moralistic period

In terms of the periodisation of ethical milestones in the development of modern social work, the first period is the so-called moralistic period. According to Reamer,[20] its origins fall between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when social work was formulated, literally inaugurated, as a distinct profession and field of education by the 1930s. In the Czechoslovak environment, it extends back to 1948, when the so-called February coup d'état took place and the communist government took over. During this period, the first social work organisations were already established (e.g., the American Association of Social Workers in 1921, and the Organization of Social Workers

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13 Andrea Preissová Krejčí, Martina Cichá, and Lenka Gulová, *Jinakost, předsudky, multikulturalismus: Možnosti a limity multikulturní výchovy* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2012); cf. Pavel Barša, *Politická teorie multikulturalismu* (Brno: CDK, 2003).
14 Pavel Barša and Andrea Baršová, 'Integrační politiky: mezi asimilací a multikulturalismem', in *Výchova k toleranci a proti rasismu: Multikulturní výchova v praxi*, ed. Tatiana Šišková (Praha: Portál, 2008), 48–58.
15 Dana Moree et al., *Než začneme s multikulturní výchovou: od skupinových konceptů k osobnostnímu přístupu* (Praha: Člověk v tísni, 2008).
16 Marek Jakoubek, Tomáš Hirt et al., *Soudobé spory o multikulturalismus a politiku identit* (Plzeň: Nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, 2005), 13.
17 Stephen May and Christine E., Sleeter, *Critical Multiculturalism* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Shirley R., Steinberg, *Diversity and Multiculturalism: A Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).
18 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Etnicita a nacionalismus. Antropologické perspektivy* (Praha: Slon, 2012), 241.
19 Moree et al., *Než začneme s multikulturní výchovou*.
20 Reamer, *Ethical Standards*; Reamer, 'The Evolution', 163–181.

in Czechoslovakia in 1929). However, national codes of ethics had not yet emerged during this period. An experimental outline of the first 'code of ethics' for social work was published by Mary E. Richmond in 1920.[21] It emphasised the values of individual attitude, dignity, as well as justice and equality. Since Richmond contributed greatly to the professionalisation of social work due to her scientific and theoretical basis and description of the first social work method (*case work*), as well as her international influence, we briefly analyse her work in the field we are studying. In diagnosing the causes of social case, family and marital crises, Richmond's *Social Diagnosis* (1917) encouraged social workers to 'first study the differences, if any, in racial, national, and community background, with the resulting differences of custom, convention, religion, and education'.[22] It was the disregard for diversity by the actors in a social case, or their family relations, that she considered the most fruitful causes of trouble. Standardised diagnostic questions in the area of Marriage and Family Life included 'Are husband and wife from the same community and class? Are they related? In what degree? Are they of different races, religions, or nationalities? Of widely different ages?'[23] In order for social workers to be able to work with them, she pointed out several ethical principles and moral requirements for their work. These include working without prejudice against persons who are different in terms of their social or class status, race, religion, or nationality. In the work cited above, she states that 'there is always a risk that one's personal likes and dislikes may influence judgement'.[24] The social case worker needs to learn to set them aside. Ideas about the need to respect difference(s) were developed by Richmond in *What is social case work?*[25] She regarded difference as 'characteristic of personality as of the tone colours in an orchestra, but the differences between personalities, no two of which are alike, also resemble those of orchestral instruments in that they are attuned and related differences'.[26] The philosophical and value base is the idea of equal rights to equal opportunity, referring to the framers of the American Constitution's assertion that all men were created free and equal.[27] According to Richmond, in respecting the equality of people lies the diversity of their gifts and their fuller development. The astonishing diversity within every possible variety of social groups requires social workers not only to respect diverse personalities but also a considerable degree of skill for managing them. Richmond considered the status of women in industrial employment among the specific areas where equal opportunities were not consistently applied. Although Richmond focused mainly on individual differences, she also pointed out the importance of the different work of the helping professions (teachers, physicians, ministers, social workers).

The origins of social work in Czechoslovakia date back to the 1920s.[28] In this time, the first female graduates of the *Higher School of Social Care* in Prague, founded in 1918, started their first jobs. According to Brnula, Kodymová, and Michelová, Maria Krakešová-Došková made significant contributions to the systematic theoretical development of case work and can rightly be considered a pioneer of social work theory in Czechoslovakia.[29] In their groundbreaking work *Social Case* (1934), Maria Krakešová and her husband Jozef Krakeš state that the lack of moral values

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21   Reamer, *Social Work Values and Ethics.*
22   Mary E. Richmond, *Social diagnosis* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1917), 140.
23   Ibid., 388.
24   Ibid., 97.
25   Mary E., Richmond, *What is Social Case Work? An Introductory Description* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1922).
26   Ibid., 92.
27   In ibid., 151.
28   Brnula et al., *Úvod do teórií sociálnej práce.*
29   Peter Brnula, Pavla Kodymová, and Radka Michelová, *Marie Krakešová, priekopníčka teórie sociálnej práce v Československu* (Bratislava: Iris, 2014).

and the lack of moral education are the root causes of the emergence of social cases. However, they did not specifically address topics such as equal opportunities and respect for diversity, despite the fact that 'the Czechoslovak Republic that was established in 1918 was strongly ethnically heterogeneous'.[30] The ethics of the social work profession were addressed by several authors in the *Sociální pracovnice* journal, published by the aforementioned Organisation of Social Workers,[31] but the themes of our paper are outside the focus of Czechoslovak social work in this period.

During the socialist period (1948–1989), social work receded into the background, as the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic aimed to eliminate social issues through state-level social policy measures, such as mandatory employment and the criminalisation of unemployment and prostitution as forms of 'parasitism'. During this time, areas such as the social and legal protection of youth and social guardianship developed. However, state socialist paternalism and uniformity were in direct opposition to the value of diversity.

Period of identification of ethical values and principles

From the late 1930s and early 1940s to the 1960s, we can speak of a period of purposeful identification/definition of the profession's core values, principles, and mission in the field of professional ethics. Professional values of social work are the beliefs of the professional community about desirable goals and desirable behaviours of social workers that lead to these goals.[32] If there is agreement in the professional community with their choices, these tend to be the focus of the professional code of ethics for ethical principles and specific rules (norms, standards) of conduct. Professional social work organisations began to adopt and publish codes of ethics or ethical practice guides based on ethical values at this time. In the 1960s, social work practitioners turned their attention towards ethical constructs of *social justice and human rights*, of which non-discrimination became an integral part. In 1960, the American National Association of Social Workers (NASW) adopted a code of ethics stating that 'social work promotes the well-being of all without discrimination'.[33] It expects practitioners of the profession, among other things, to respect individual differences. The theme of non-discrimination is further developed in the 1967 revised NASW code: 'I will not discriminate because of race, colour, religion, age, sex, or national ancestry and in my job capacity will work to prevent and eliminate such discrimination in rendering service, in work assignments, and in employment practice'.[34] From an institutional perspective, it may be noted that since 1969, the Task Force on Minority Concerns has operated within the NASW.

The period of applied ethics and ethical decision-making

The period from the 1970s to the 1980s gradually started a period of interest in the broad field of applied and professional ethics in a number of disciplines such as medicine, nursing, psychology, law, criminal justice, journalism, management, etc.[35] Codes of ethics typically did not have legal or formal regulatory authority. The first *International Code of Ethics for the Professional Social Worker*, adopted by the General Meeting of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in 1976, was developed during this period. This international social work organisation,

30   Preissová Krejčí, Cichá, and Gulová, *Jinakost*, 16.
31   Cf. Wronská, 1937, in Pavla, Kodymová, *Historie české sociální práce v letech 1918-1948* (Praha: Karolinum, 2013).
32   Andrej Mátel, 'Hodnoty sociálnej práce', in *Vademecum sociálnej práce*, ed. Beáta Balogová and Eva Žiaková (Košice: FFUPJŠ, 2017), 32.
33   National Association of Social Workers, *NASW Code of Ethics* (Washington: NASW, 1960).
34   National Association of Social Workers, *Code of Ethics* (Washington: NASW, 1967).
35   Reamer, *Ethical Standards*; Reamer, 'The Evolution', 163–181.

founded in 1928, became, together with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the bearer of the global values of social work as declared through the Global Definition of Social Work and the International Code of Ethics for Social Work. The 1976 International Code of Ethics declared that '*every human being has a unique value, irrespective of origin, ethnicity, sex, age, beliefs, social and economical status or contribution to society*'.[36] The word discrimination is not yet used in the International Code. Among the ethical responsibilities in relation to clients, it states '*to recognize and respect the individual goals, responsibilities, and differences of clients*'.[37] Respect for diversity is thus, similarly to the moralistic period, understood more on an individual level due to the diverse clients with whom social workers work.

We can see a more significant position in American social work. By this, we understand social work in the USA and other countries under the umbrella of the NASW (National Association of Social Workers). The Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers in 1979 declared among the fundamental values of the social work profession the worth, dignity, and uniqueness of all persons. Regarding discrimination, the code moves from its negative expression to the active antidiscrimination actions of social workers who 'should act to prevent practices that are inhuman or discriminatory against any person or group of persons.'[38] The obligation of social workers to *prevent and eliminate discrimination* is emphasised also because of their ethical obligation to their workplace, employers, and employee organisations. In naming areas of potential discrimination, this code, in comparison with the 1967 code, also considers *sexual orientation, marital status, political belief, mental or physical handicap, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status*. In the area of ethical responsibility of social workers towards society, it specifically states that '*the social worker should promote conditions that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures which constitute American society*'.[39] In this case, it is helpful to note that since 1975, The National Committee on Minority Affairs (NCOMA) has been in the NASW as a follow-up to the activities of the Task Force on Minority Concerns.

In a global context, the 1994 IFSW and IASSW International Code of Ethics *The Ethics of Social Work, Principles and Standards*, which consisted of two separately identifiable documents, can also be placed in the period of applied ethics and ethical decision-making.[40] The text presents the basic ethical principles of the profession, recommends courses of action in ethical dilemmas, and addresses the ethical responsibilities of social workers to clients, colleagues, other persons, institutions, and the profession. For the first time at a global level, the code explicitly mentions respect for human rights by social workers. It affirms non-discriminatory behaviour, referring to gender instead of sex and disability instead of handicap with regard to potential areas of discrimination. Although the code declares that a number of ethical issues may not be universal due to cultural and socio-political differences in different countries, the topic of multiculturalism in the work of social workers is not explicitly addressed.

On the territory of Czechoslovakia after the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989, or since 1993 in the independent Czech and Slovak socio-cultural context, we can talk about the revitalisation of social work as an independent academic discipline and professional activity. From the point of view of professional ethics, we can combine the period of identification of ethical values and principles

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36   International Federation of Social Workers, 'International Code of Ethics for the Professional Social Worker', *International Social Work* 28, no. 3 (1985): 9–11.

37   Ibid.

38   Ibid.

39   National Association of Social Workers. *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*, Washington: NASW, 1979.

40   International Federation of Social Workers, *The ethics of social work: Principles and standards* (Geneva: IFSW, 1994).

with the period of applied ethics and ethical decision-making into one whole, and date it from the 1990s to the middle of the second decade of the 21st century. The 1994 IFSW International Code of Ethics played an important role in the process of professionalisation of both Czech and Slovak social work after the fall of communism. From an institutional point of view, the Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic, which had been operating as a civic association since 1990 and had become a member organisation of the IFSW, was important in the Czech Republic. In 1995, the *Code of Ethics of Social Workers of the Czech Republic*, created by this organisation, entered into force. Modelled on the international code of ethics, it contained general ethical principles and specific rules of ethical behaviour. The preamble of the code states that *social work is based on the values of democracy and human rights*. In connection with the social worker's respect for every human being, a commitment to non-discrimination is stated. However, gender-neutral language is not yet used in the text. Sexual orientation is mentioned among potential areas of discrimination. Regarding the topic of our paper, we would like to highlight the last sentence of the 1995 Czech Code of Ethics, which reads, '*the social worker works to improve conditions that increase the esteem and respect for the cultures created by humanity.*'[41] This is a kind of first declaration of a culturally sensitive approach in Czech social work, which is ideologically closer to the American code of ethics (or to a code from another Western country) rather than to the international trend of professional social work ethics. In this context, we can mention that in the Czech Republic a professional organisation, the Association of Social Work Educators, was founded in 1993, which has been striving to implement and enforce minimum standards of social work education from its inception. One of the 12 topics to be a compulsory part of social work education includes minority groups. Similar to the Czech Republic, the Association of Social Workers in Slovakia was founded in 1994 and became a member organisation of the IFSW. In 1997, it declared the *Code of Ethics for Social Workers of the Slovak Republic*, which was also based on the IFSW International Code of Ethics (1994).[42] Like the Czech Code of Ethics, it states that '*social work is a profession based on the values of democracy and human rights*'.[43] It did not explicitly address the themes of discrimination or cultural diversity.

Period of binding ethical standards and risk management

Reamer[44] dates this period from 1990, but this is more likely to be the case in the US or in a few other countries (e.g., UK, Canada, Australia) where social work regulation has occurred. This period of social work ethics is characterised by a significant proliferation of binding ethical standards to guide the professional practice of social workers and an increased interest in knowledge relating to professional negligence and malpractice. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the dating of this period shifted from the mid-2000s to 2010s.[45] In this period, the legislative regulation of social work in the Czech Republic occurred through Act No. 108/2006 Coll. on Social Services.[46] In Slovakia, social work was first regulated for the area of social protection of children

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41   Společnost sociálních pracovníků ČR, *Etický kodex sociálních pracovníků* ČR, 1995, accessed 20th May. 2024, https://dl1.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/627176/mod_folder/content/0/Etick%C3%A9%20kodexy/Eticky%20kodex%20soc.%20pracovniku%20CR_1995.doc?forcedownload=1.

42   IFSW, *The ethics of social work.*

43   Asociácia sociálnych pracovníkov na Slovensku, *Etický kódex sociálnych pracovníkov Slovenskej republiky* (Žilina: ASPS, 1997).

44   Reamer, 'The Evolution', 163–181.

45   Mátel, *Dilemy rešpektovania.*

46   Zákon č. 108/2006 Sb. *o sociálních službách.*

and social curatorship (Act No. 305/2005 Coll.)[47] and subsequently for the area of social services (Act No. 448/2008 Coll.).[48] In 2014, the Professional Act on Social Work was adopted (Act No. 219/2014 Coll.),[49] which made social work a regulated profession from 2015, with precisely defined qualification requirements for social work assistants (bachelor's degree in social work) and social workers (master's degree in social work).

In the area under study, we can note a shift in the American Code of Ethics of the NASW between 1990 and 1999. The 1990 code states, in the context of the core value of service, that 'the social worker should act to prevent practices that are inhumane or discriminatory against any person or group of persons'. According to this code, 'social workers should not only not engage in discriminatory behaviour or practice, but also not condone, facilitate or collaborate with any form of discrimination'.[50] Social workers have a special responsibility to prevent and eliminate discrimination in their workplaces. In the area of respect for the diversity of cultures, the text of the 1967 code is repeated. However, a significant change occurred in this area in 1996 when a substantially new NASW Code of Ethics was adopted. This states in its preamble that 'social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice'.[51] In terms of values, this is based on the values of human dignity and social justice, which are among the core values of the profession. Social workers are expected not only to be sensitive and respectful of the persons with whom they work, with respect to individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity, but also to promote actively sensitivity to the cultural and ethnic diversity of these persons.[52] In the ethical decision-making process, social workers should be aware of the client's and their own personal values, cultural and religious beliefs, and practices. They are expected to act proactively to prevent and eliminate domination, exploitation, and discrimination against any person, group, or class (NASW, 1996).[53] 'Cultural Competence and Social Diversity' is a specific article of this code affiliated to another core value of *competence*. It states that

> social workers should understand culture and its function in human behaviour and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures. Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.[54]

In addition, it states the need for social workers to be trained to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression based on diverse discriminatory criteria. With regard to the ethical responsibility of social workers to the larger society, it is stated that they

> should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for

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47   Zákon č. 305/2005 Z. z. o sociálnoprávnej ochrane detí a o sociálnej kuratele a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov.
48   Zákon č. 448/2008 Z. z. o sociálnych službách a o zmene a doplnení zákona č. 455/1991 Zb. o živnostenskom podnikaní (živnostenský zákon) v znení neskorších predpisov.
49   Zákon č. 219/2014 Z. z. o sociálnej práci a o podmienkach na výkon niektorých odborných činností v oblasti sociálnych vecí a rodiny a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov.
50   National Association of Social Workers, *NASW Code of Ethics* (Washington: NASW, 1990).
51   National Association of Social Workers, *NASW Code of Ethics* (Washington: NASW, 1996).
52   Ibid.
53   Ibid.
54   Ibid.

programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safe-guard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.[55]

NCOMA, which was renamed the National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity (NCORED) in 1996, has played a significant role in this process. Its goal is to create conditions that promote respect for the diversity of cultures, including equal opportunity in all NASW activities.

In a global context, an international code of ethics was revised and approved in 2004 under the title *Ethics in Social Work: Statement of Principles*. It incorporated the then-current global definition of social work, endorsed by the IFSW and IASSW in Montreal in 2000. According to this statement, the principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. Within the value of social justice, according to this code, social workers are supposed to challenge negative discrimination. Among the named potential areas of discrimination, *culture* is explicitly mentioned, and the broader term 'spiritual beliefs' is used instead of 'religion'. Within this value, it mentions another ethical principle, namely *to recognise diversity—social workers should recognise and respect ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking account of individual, group and community differences.*[56] Many national codes of ethics have been revised under the influence of this document. The Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic revised the older 1995 code and created the *Code of Ethics of the Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic*,[57] which is commonly understood and sometimes referred to as the *Code of Ethics of Social Workers of the Czech Republic*. In addition to the values of democracy and human rights mentioned in the older 1995 code, social justice was added as a value on which social work is based. The ethical interventions of social workers that relate to our topic include respect for the uniqueness of each person regardless of his or her origin, ethnicity, race or colour, mother tongue, age, gender, marital status, health status, sexual orientation, economic situation, or religious and political beliefs. At the same time, it is committed to improving social conditions and increasing social justice, i.e., it is proactive within society and is expected to be serious and respectful of the cultures that have shaped humanity. The code thus defines new areas of potential discrimination: gender and marital status, which were not in the older code.

In this period, we can also include the event where, at the international level, the IFSW and IASSW in Melbourne in 2014 endorsed a new global definition of social work. Compared to the previous 'Montreal definition', social work is understood not only as a practice-based profession but also as an academic discipline. In terms of ethics, the two principles of *human rights* and *social justice*, listed in reverse order, are affirmed. These are central to social work, as are *collective responsibility* and *respect for diversities*.[58] Given the topic of this paper, it is important to state that social work is underpinned not only by social work theories, social sciences, and humanities but also by indigenous knowledge. This term has been used in the global definition to highlight the importance of cultural knowledge and to emphasise that there is more to social work than just 'Western theoretical models'. The Melbourne definition recognises that Indigenous peoples in each region, country, or area carry their own values, ways of knowing, and transmitting their knowledge, making an invaluable contribution to the social work scientific knowledge base.

In Slovakia, the Slovak Chamber of Social Workers and Social Work Assistants was established

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55 Ibid.
56 International Federation of Social Workers, *Ethics in Social Work: Statement of Principles* (Geneva: IFSW, 2004).
57 Společnost sociálních pracovníků ČR, *Etický kodex Společnosti sociálních pracovníků ČR*, 2006, accessed 20th May 2024, https://www.socialnipracovnici.cz/ke-stazeni.
58 Mátel, 'Etické míľniky', 43–61.

by a professional law. Its competences include issuing and revising the Code of Ethics and issuing opinions on ethical issues of the profession. In 2015, the Chamber approved a new *Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Social Work Assistants*, which was among the first in the world to adopt the 'Melbourne Global Definition' of social work into its text. The Slovak Code of Ethics is binding for the members of the Chamber, and it has followed the ethical principles of the international code of ethics and has also mentioned national specifics, taking into account the first Slovak Code of Ethics from 1997. The area of non-discrimination is dealt with in the framework of the value of social justice. Among the potential areas of discrimination, origin, colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, and age are mentioned, but not culture. The expected actions of the social worker and social work assistant include 'contributing to the elimination of manifestations and causes of social injustice, discrimination, oppression and barriers that promote social exclusion'. In addition, 'they actively participate in creating working conditions in employer organisations that enable the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence in the workplace'.[59] The core value of human dignity also includes the social worker's and social work assistant's behaviour towards each person with dignity, respect, and consideration for individual differences, cultural, religious, national, and ethnic diversity, and integrity. The same ethical requirements are also applied to groups and communities.[60]

The digital period

According to Reamer,[61] the digital era began in the mid-2000s, or in the Czech Republic and Slovakia from the 2010s to the present.[62] A complex set of difficult issues related to the use of digital technologies and social networks has emerged. New ethical challenges in the digital age also affect the ethical principles and standards of the profession, which should be reflected in revised codes of ethics.

In American social work, the work of NCORED has resulted in the gradual development of the *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice*,[63] the content of which has also become an integral part of the NASW Code of Ethics in 2008, 2017, and its revisions in 2020 and 2021. After 2001, a discussion emerged among researchers in the United States regarding the extent to which it was intentional that the NASW Code of Ethics did not explicitly address human rights or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In their analysis of social work codes of ethics collected from the IFSW website, American researchers concluded in 2014 that five out of twenty countries did not explicitly mention 'human rights' in their documents, including the United States.[64] Susan Mapp et al. noted that there is a threatened 'erosion' of human rights in the United States, emphasising that it is essential for social workers to join their colleagues worldwide in understanding their role in promoting human rights. If social workers believe that they are expected to promote justice in the world, it is necessary that they ensure a human rights-based approach in social work practice.[65]

59   Slovenská komora sociálnych pracovníkov a asistentov sociálnej práce, *Etický kódex sociálneho pracovníka a asistenta sociálnej práce v SR* (Bratislava: SKSPaASP, 2015).

60   Slovenská komora sociálnych pracovníkov a asistentov sociálnej práce, *Etický kódex*.

61   Reamer, 'The Evolution', 163–181.

62   Mátel, *Dilemy rešpektovania*.

63   National Association of Social Workers, *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social work Practice* (Washington: NASW, 2015).

64   A. J. Keeney et al., 'Human rights and social work codes of ethics: An international analysis', *Journal of Social Welfare and Human Rights*, no. 2 (2014), 10, 13.

65   S Mapp et al., 'Social work is a human rights profession', *Social Work*, no. 64 (2019), 259–268.

The 2021 revision emphasises that social workers are not only to understand culture and its function in human behaviour and society, but also to *demonstrate this understanding*.[66] Social workers should demonstrate knowledge that guides practice with clients of diverse cultures and be able to demonstrate skills in delivering culturally informed services that empower marginalised individuals and groups. Social workers should demonstrate awareness and cultural humility through *critical self-reflection* (understanding one's own biases and engaging in self-correction), recognising clients as experts on their own culture, committing to lifelong learning, and holding institutions accountable for advancing cultural humility. Even the current Code of Ethics of the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) does not use the term 'human rights'. The text includes the term 'rights' three times, while the emphasis is shifted to the term and concept of 'human well-being', which appears nine times. 'Social work is the profession's dual focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society.'[67] In the context of social work education in the USA, we can mention the current Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards.[68] Among the nine social work competencies, there is also Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice. This follows Competency 2, which focuses on Advancing Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice. Educational institutions are expected to ensure that social workers can 'demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients…'[69]

In 2018, the IFSW and IASSW General Assemblies approved a new international code of ethics, a document called the *Statement of Ethical Principles*.[70] Its theoretical basis was the 'Melbourne definition' mentioned above. In the area of the principle of *promoting social justice*, it states that social workers challenge discrimination. The code names potential areas of discrimination quite broadly, leaving room for other, unnamed areas. Culture is named explicitly, as well as through its integral components such as ethnicity, language, race, family structure, religion, or spiritual beliefs. The code develops respect for diversity through one particular instrument, which is inclusive communities. These include, according to the code, 'respecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of societies, taking into account individual, family, group and community differences'.[71] In (community) social work practice, 'a welcoming and inclusive community is a community where its citizens and members feel safe, respected, and comfortable in being themselves and expressing all aspects of their identities. It is a place where each person shares a sense of belonging with its other members. It is home'.[72] In the code, social workers' commitment to building inclusive and responsible societies is seen as part of building solidarity and one of the practical aspects of the value of social justice. One specific ethical theme is also mentioned in the document in relation to different cultures and countries, which is the giving and receiving of small gifts in social work practice. With regard to cultural experience, local practice is to be regulated in national codes of ethics.

In the Czech Republic, the revised Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Members of the Professional Association of Social Workers in Social Services APSS was adopted and approved

66 National Association of Social Workers, *Code of Ethics* (Washington: NASW, 2021).
67 Ibid.
68 EPAS, 2022.
69 The Council on Social Work Education, *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (Alexandria: CSWE), 10.
70 International Federation of Social Workers, *Statement of Ethical Principles* (Geneva: IFSW, 2018).
71 International Federation of Social Workers, *Global social works statement of ethical principles*, 2018, https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/.
72 Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, *Welcoming Communities & Inclusive A Toolkit for Saskatchewan Communities*, accessed 20th July 2024, https://mcos.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/wic_toolkit_final_july_2017-1.pdf.

by the Presidium of the Association of Social Service Providers in 2017. The code is based on the current legislation of the Czech Republic and international conventions and in the preamble, which advocates the principles of social work ethics defined by the International Federation of Social Work, its principles, and the values of social work. It is closely related to the previous code of the Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic (2006).[73] In the framework of the ethical responsibility of the social worker towards the client, it states that they avoid any discrimination against the client and respects the client's belonging to social groups, nationality, and their ethnic and cultural diversity. The social worker's ethical responsibility towards the employer states that they prevent and eliminate discrimination and violence in the organisation. Within the framework of the ethical responsibility of the social worker towards the company, it mentions the text from the Czech Ethical Code of 1995 on respect for cultures, which we have mentioned above.[74] In addition, it advocates improving social conditions and increasing social justice (which was also the content of previous codes).

There are currently two main professional organisations for social workers in the Czech Republic: the Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic and the Association of Social Work Educators. The Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic is the first professional organisation of its kind in the Czech Republic; it raises awareness of the importance of social work, creates a supportive community, participates in the professionalisation of social work and is a member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), so it is not surprising that it has created the Code of Ethics for Social Workers of the Czech Republic.[75] The Association of Social Work Educators, on the other hand, focuses on education and academic development in the field, brings together educators and institutions that train future social workers, has not joined the IFSW, and did not author the Code of Ethics. The two organisations exist side by side to cover different aspects of the profession more effectively: from professional support and legislative issues to education and international cooperation.

In Slovakia, the Code of Ethics was revised in 2018 (approved in 2019), but it did not bring significant changes in the area we examined. The second revision of the *Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Social Work Assistants in Slovakia* in 2021[76] (Slovak Chamber, 2021a) responded to three major stimuli: first, the coronavirus pandemic; second, digital communication, which has become a common part of many social work services as a consequence of the pandemic; third, suggestions from chamber members regarding ethical issues of social work practice. It did not bring about specific changes in the area we examined. However, it has highlighted the need for an ethically sensitive approach not only in direct work with social work target groups, but also in the use of digital technologies and social media. The most recent, fourth revision of the Code of Ethics from November 2024 not only resulted in a change of the title to the Code of Ethics for the Practice of Social Work but also included culture and spiritual beliefs among potentially discriminatory areas. Social workers and social work assistants are committed to respecting the national, ethnic, and cultural diversity of individuals, groups, and communities (Slovak Chamber, 2024).[77]

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73 Společnost sociálních pracovníků ČR. *Etický kodex.*
74 Profesní svaz sociálních pracovníků v sociálních službách Asociace poskytovatelů sociálních služeb České republiky, *Etický kodex sociálních pracovníků a členů Profesního svazu sociálních pracovníků v sociálních službách APSS ČR,* accessed 2nd June 2024, https://profesni-svaz-socialnich-pracovniku.apsscr.cz/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Etick%C3%BD%20kodex.pdf.
75 Společnost sociálních pracovníků ČR. *Sociální práce* (2024).
76 Slovenská komora sociálnych pracovníkov a asistentov sociálnej práce, *Etický kódex sociálneho pracovníka a asistenta sociálnej práce v SR* (Bratislava: SKSPaASP, 2021).
77 Slovenská komora sociálnych pracovníkov a asistentov sociálnej práce, *Etický kódex výkonu sociálnej práce.* (Bratislava: SKSPaASP, 2024).

Discussion

The United States is not only one of the cradles of the emergence of modern social work, but also one of the countries with a great variety of cultures. Already in the moralistic period of the emergence of social work, Mary Richmond's work identified three areas of insight into the issues under study: first, from the perspective of clients, disregard for difference was seen as one of the possible causes of a social case that needed to be diagnosed; second, from the perspective of social workers, it is necessary to work without prejudice – what is important is their ability to identify possible sympathies and antipathies and then set aside all prejudices for the sake of equal treatment – respecting difference while doing so requires skills; third, from a theory per-spective, Richmond assumed the equality of all people based on natural rights and those declared in the U.S. Constitution. In 1960s American social work, social workers were expected to be nondiscriminatory towards clients, respectful of individual diversity, and actively influencing nondiscriminatory behaviour in the workplace. The theoretical basis for such an ethical approach is the concept of human rights and social justice. Even in the 1970s, social workers were expected to be active agents of social change. It was not enough for them not to engage in discriminatory behaviour themselves, but they were supposed to identify and prevent such behaviour. From the individual level of social work practice (the micro level), this role also moved to the group and societal level (the meso and macro levels); from the counselling-therapy model (paradigm) to the reform model (paradigm). In the 1990s, the ethical expectation of the American social worker was that they were agents of nondiscriminatory practice at all levels of professional and social life and bearers of cultural competence in terms of knowing, understanding, and using culturally responsive services. The editorial by Jeanne C. Marsh is significant:

> oppression and the intolerance of differences comes in all shapes and sizes and colours and sex-ualities, and if we believe in the ultimate goal of social work—the development of a socially and economically just society—then we incorporate multicultural competence into every social work activity, at the individual, organizational, and community levels.[78]

In the first two decades of the 21st century, *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* were gradually published in the United States. Similar to Richmond's empha-sis a century ago on the need for social workers to self-reflect in the face of bias, this is re-emerging as a basis for self-correction. With regard to cultural competence, it emphasises the need for con-tinuing education in this area and the need for social workers to demonstrate an understanding of the culture of the people they work with to be able to provide culturally informed services. It is also important to respect their own cultural expertise and to empower marginalised individuals and groups.

Global social work trends are identifiable from IFSW and IASSW activities and documents, par-ticularly global definitions of social work and international codes of ethics. In the 1990s, social workers were expected to respect the human rights of clients as part of ethical responsibility without discrimination and without the individual differences between them. Considering the shift in American social work, we can identify some caution in adopting a reform model of social work. This has been gradually accepted only in the first decade of the 21st century. Human dignity

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78   Jeanne C. Marsh, Social Work in a Multicultural Society, *Social Work* 49, no. 1 (2004): 5–6, https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/49.1.5.

(in conjunction with respect for human rights) and social justice were declared to be fundamental values of social work. Social workers should challenge discrimination and recognise and respect ethnic and cultural diversity. Monique Constance-Huggins puts into practice the requirements of critical race theory, where 'race' is one of the key forces fuelling growing differences in an increasingly diverse society that cannot be trivialised. If social workers are to remain committed to the task of promoting social justice, their education must move beyond a multicultural framework and embrace critical race theory (CRT). Multicultural social work should go beyond essentialist approaches that consider ethnocultural groups as homogeneous and detached from their socio-political context. A desirable attitude for a social worker is cultural agnosticism – not trusting any specific cultural form (social worker or client) to determine what is right, wrong or ultimately meaningful[79] (Walker and Staton, 2000). In the 2010s, the central principles of social work on a global scale include respect for diversity; the above-mentioned consider cultural sensitivity as an ethical principle. Social work is also supported by local knowledge. According to the current international code of ethics,[80] inclusive communities are a tool to strengthen respect for diversity. Hence, Konstantina Sklavou introduces the term/concept of intercultural social work. According to her, social work and multicultural reality go hand in hand, and intercultural social work creates a framework for setting up professional relations between the majority (often the host society) and minority groups.[81] The goal is to promote a more inclusive and supportive environment for diverse social work clients.

Czechoslovak social work followed American social work and its global trends from the 1920s but did not specifically address the topics of equal treatment, non-discrimination, and respect for differences. After the fall of communism, or from 1993 during the era of independence, Czech social work was revitalised and followed global trends in ethics. In addition to the emphasis on democracy as a value of social work, it was based on the value of human rights. Czech social workers were expected to respect every person without distinction, i.e., act in a non-discriminatory way. A new ethical aspiration expressed in the code of ethics in 1995 was that the social worker works to improve conditions that increase esteem and respect for the cultures created by humanity. The topic of minorities has become part of the minimum standards of education in social work. In the Czech Republic, there are long-term discussions about the need to update, or the creation of a new, binding code of ethics for social workers, which will sufficiently respond to global trends in social work ethics, as well as the current challenges of a multicultural society, taking into account the specific Czech culture and local knowledge. As part of the activities of the project 'Systemic support of the professional performance of social work' of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, a 'social work workbook' was published with the topic code of ethics as a tool for supporting the solution of ethical dilemmas of social work[82] (MPSV ČR, 2015). It repeatedly stated the need to complete the code of ethics for social workers, including selected priorities and recommendations. Among other topics, it mentioned the commitment of social workers to the promotion

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79 Robert Walker and Michele Staton, Multiculturalism in Social Work Ethics, *Journal of Social Work Education* 36, no. 3 (2000): 449–462, https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2000.10779021.
80 IFSW, *Statement of Ethical Principles*.
81 Konstanina A. Sklavou, 'Theoretical Approach to Intercultural Counseling through Social Work Practice', *Peer Reviewed Journal of Forensic & Genetic Sciences* 3, n. 4 (2019): 221–226.
82 Michal Opatrný, 'Etická dilemata vyplývající z odpovědnosti sociálních pracovníků k sobě samým a dilemata v nastavení hranic vůči klientům', in *Sešit sociální práce 4/2015* (Praha: MPSV ČR, 2015), 41–52.

of human rights, anti-discrimination and anti-oppressive practice.[83] The authors recommend adding the wording 'regardless of the mother tongue and the means of communication used' to the anti-discrimination criteria. According to Opatrný,[84] the Czech code of ethics could lead social workers to the responsibility of contradicting or actively opposing all forms of discriminatory practices and confronting oppressive practices towards clients. In 2017, the Professional Union of Social Workers in Social Services of the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic adopted its own code of ethics, as we mentioned above. The Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic initiated a broad discussion regarding the amendment of the code of ethics of the SSP ČR (2006) in 2023.

When revising or creating a new Czech code of ethics, *Research into Ethical Dilemmas of Values and Principles of Social Work* can be stimulating.[85] In 2019, 3,644 respondents, social workers or health care social workers took part in the quantitative survey. In the research quantitative analysis, workers consider human dignity and human rights (97% of respondents) as the most important values. The fight against discrimination appeared in the middle values (approx. 54.2%), while this was one of the most important values (ethical principles) for employees of non-profit organisations. Considering the types of facilities, it was surprising to find that this value was indicated by the fewest workers employed in departments of social and legal protection of children (46.6%). Workers in social services had the highest preference for this value (61.01%). Respect for diversity was one of the more frequently mentioned values (74%), overall, fourth out of nine. It was also among the most important values of employees of non-profit organisations. Regarding the types of facilities, the researchers found a higher preference for workers in asylum facilities and social services (92.31% and 82.07%) compared to workers in other facilities, while the lowest was for workers in prisons (64.35%). The difference was found in this value between social workers (73.98%) and health care social workers (66.67%).

The post-revolutionary development of independent Slovak social work was initially similar to the one in the Czech Republic, following global trends but ignoring issues related to cultural diversity. This trend could be related to the society-wide need to build one's own national identity after 1993, when the independent Slovak Republic was established. Within the framework of the value concept of human rights, the topic of respect reached at least the individual level of the work of social workers in the Code of Ethics in 1997. A significant shift occurred after the adoption of the Professional Act in 2014 and the approval of the new Slovak Code of Ethics in 2015. This directly responded to global trends in social work ethics. From the individual non-discriminatory level, it shifted the ethical expectations from the social worker to the institutional and social level. Diversity should be integral to the respect and esteem shown to every person. On the other hand, it is necessary to state certain deficits, which may give a space for the following change. First, among the potential areas of discrimination, *culture* should also be included in accordance with the international code of ethics. Second, within the framework of theory and education in social work, it is necessary to analyse and promote the concept of inclusive communities that respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Slovak society, taking into account current

83   Rad Bandit et al., 'Etický kodex jako nástroj podpory řešení etických dilemat sociální práce z hlediska různých pojetí sociální práce', in *Sešit sociální práce 4/2015* (Praha: MPSV ČR, 2015), 10–16.

84   Opatrný, 'Etická dilemata', 41–52.

85   Mirka Nečasová, Zděnka Dohnalová, and Robert Trbola, *Výzkum etických dilemat hodnot a principů sociální práce* (Praha: VÚPSV, v. v. i., 2020).

migration trends. This concept should be appropriately incorporated into the revised code of ethics. Third, a working group within the Professional Chamber and Association of Educators in Social Work should be created with the aim of preparing and developing standards for culturally sensitive social work practice, gradual and lifelong education of social workers and social work assistants in this area.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism is a highly relevant term that refers to cultural change associated with the phenomenon of migration (for economic or political reasons, repatriation of the population) or the coexistence of different social groups of various ethnic origin or cultural roots, i.e., the differentiation of the ethno-cultural composition of the population. In addressing the needs of various social groups, in promoting inclusion and understanding between clients from different cultural backgrounds, it is essential that social workers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide culturally sensitive and competent care. Social work in a multicultural society presents new challenges for practitioners. In order for social workers to orient themselves in the new situation, they are guided by the values and ethical principles declared in ethical codes. Among these, respect for cultural diversity and intercultural social work are gaining relevance. Above, we have analysed the historical transformations of professional ethics in social work, focusing on the principles of anti-oppressive measures, multiculturalism and respect for diversity. Within the lifelong education of social workers, developing the skills needed to work with minority groups has become one of the most pressing issues. The aim of our study was to summarise findings on innovations in ethical codes of social work with special attention to Czech and Slovak society, which reflect current social needs and the increasing complexity of multicultural interactions in the practice of social workers. Understanding these historical transformations is critical for developing responsive and culturally sensitive practice in social work today. Various factors interfere with the development of multicultural competences of social workers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Social work was created in the context of the history of the given socio-political isolationism of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the restrictive attitudes of society towards immigrants extend to the present. Social workers have long been trying to raise awareness of the needs of immigrants and, through international cooperation and the efforts of non-governmental organizations, to improve society's awareness of their situation. Moreover, changes in social work education after 1989 integrated new ideas and practices influenced by Western colleagues and the democratisation of society. By promoting social justice and acquiring cultural competences by social workers, the quality of care provided to clients from different backgrounds increases. Multicultural social work must therefore ensure and reflect social justice and equality for disadvantaged minority groups. Culturally competent practice is essentially respectful, empathetic, and effective social work.

Caritas
et veritas

Contact:
Prof. PhDr. ThDr. Andrej Mátel, PhD.
University of Presov
Faculty of Ortodox Theology
Department of Christian Anthropogy and Social Work
Masarykova 15, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia
Email: andrej.matel@unipo.sk

Andrea Preissová Krejčí, Ph.D.
Silesian University in Opava
Faculty of Public Policy in Opava
Institute of Public Administration and Social Policy
Bezručovo náměstí 885/14, 746 01 Opava, Czech Republic
Email: andrea.krejci@email.cz