

Report of the International University Week (IUW) 2021

What challenges faces the field of social work in Europe? What professional standards did develop in the different workspaces?

These and many more questions are discussed within the **Socrates Network of European University Schools of Social Work (SocNet98)**. It was founded back in 1998 through Thomas Trenczek (EAH Jena) and Menno van Veen (Groningen). The highlight of this professional exchange is the **International University week (IUW)** which takes place every year at three different partner universities. Students and lecturers from 17 different SocNet-Partner Universities, out of 15 different countries, participate at the IUW (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, England, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Scotland, Sweden, Slovakia, Spain, Czechia).

In 2021, due to the Covid pandemic the IUW was conducted online. From the 19th to 22nd of April 2021 our university partners in Bremen (D), Helsinki/Turku (Fin) and Odense (DK), had hosted the video conference. At each venue about 100 participants from all partner universities have attended, as well as the groups of students and professors of the EAH Jena, department of Social Work

Bremen

This year's IUW in Bremen focused on „**child, youth welfare and child protection – current challenges and developments**“. We were supposed to discuss how the countries are handling this topic and look at differences and similarities between their different approaches. In addition, we talked about the polarity from help and control in the social work field. We put the focus on the protection and control in the child and youth welfare services as this was the main topic. In different workshops were those topics discussed and conducted. Furthermore, excursions were offered, which gave insights in all types of institutions from the youth and welfare service. Because of the pandemic-related restrictions, took the IUW online place. All workshops and excursions were organized via zoom, over a server which is hosted from Europe. The getting to know part was handled over the platform called “Discord”. This way the students could connect, despite the physical distance to each other. The online platform was also open for participants to have casual conversations in the evenings. Breakout sessions were used to comfortably get to know each other as well. The hosts prepared questions we could use as easy conversation starters.

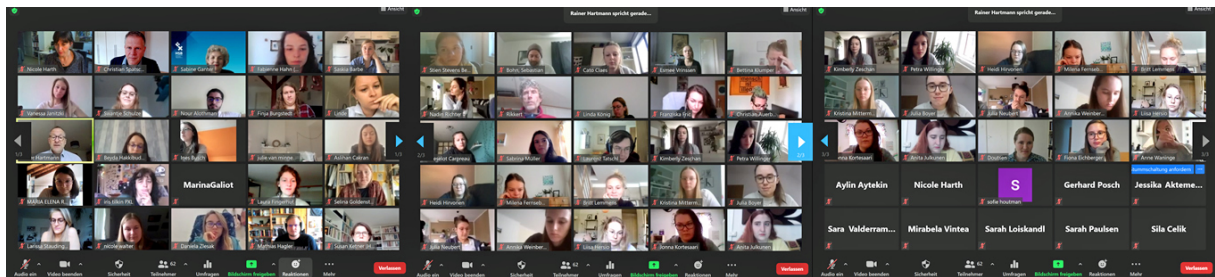


Foto: Veranstalter HS Bremen/Prof. Spatcheck [<https://www.iuw-hsbremen.de/>]

HUMAK (Turku)

The IUW in Turku was conducted over an online format as well. It meant, that all workshops, presentations and excursions for 116 participants from 13 different universities were realized via zoom. (over a server from Finland - Server CSC's FunetMiitti). The topic of the IUW in Turku **was „Courage and innovation in social and youth work**“ and included many different workshops from classis youth work and art therapeutic approaches in the work with children, migration social work and workshops about the procedures and methods of the conflict management. One focus was on the “courage and innovation in the youth social work.” One workshop was about the house for girls in Turku, another about the concept of the “Youth Guaranteehouse”, and there was also a workshop

called „Home sweet home? Not for everyone“. The discussions about the consequences from Covid with regard to the youth welfare system were important. Another point in the discussion was the missing appreciation of social workers. The participants tried to find perspectives, from which we can learn from and how we can handle things better in the future. To get to know each other, we used breakout sessions many times. We introduced us and asked each other questions. We gathered ideas for playing games for one afternoon. Also, to create a nice and unifying atmosphere a lecturer from HUMAK acted as DJ and was playing hits from the “Eurovision Song Contest” every morning and between the presentations as well.

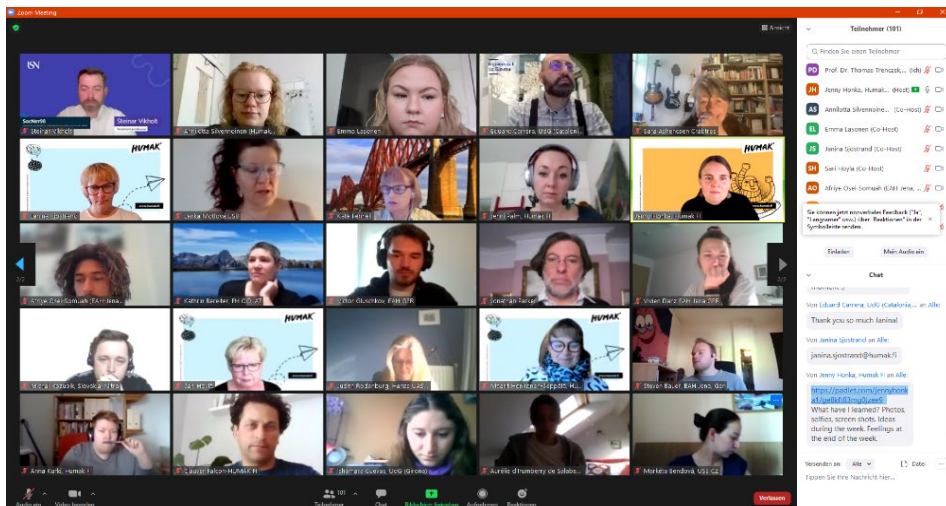


Foto: HUMAK;
Sari Jöylä

Odense

At the IUW in Odense students and lecturers from Denmark planned a diverse program as well. In this program the main subject was the **United Nations Social Development Goals (SDG)**. In the preparation were a couple other countries included as well. The key presentations were about the SDG in general and also about the Ærø, a small island in Denmark. We got an overview about the SDG and their significance for the community through different workshops. The focus was put on the social work and their own impact to the SDG, especially what affects the goals, concrete disparities and different social classes. The organizers gave their best, to create a feeling of community through the online format. They built peer-to-peer groups (4-5 people), which stayed in contact once a day between the other events. Also, a collective dinner was on the plan, where 5-7 people from different Universities could interact. The social highlight from the whole week was Wednesday evening. Students from the UCL prepared some online quizzes.



Foto: Universtiy College Odense,
Anne-Sofie Hedengran Vedel

Conclusion from all the 3 IUW-groups

Even if we could not meet at the Universities in person, we are glad the IUW took place in another way. It was interesting, informative and gave us a new perspective for social work and the challenges, other countries and justice systems have to face. The IUW hosts have organized an interesting and diverse program and have enabled a good exchange between the participants. We had the chance to experience something new and got to know other people, without “the need” not to travel this time (even we would have like to).

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