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TÍTOL: NEW INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: FIELD ORGANIZATIONS, UNIVERSITY AND EUROPE

- Muro, Pilar.

Universitat Ramon Llull

Facultat d'Educació social i de Treball social de la Fundació Pere Tarrés.

C/ Santaló, 37. 08021 Barcelona / Spain)

pmuro@peretarres.org

- Rodríguez, Anna.

Universitat Ramon Llull

Facultat d'Educació social i de Treball social de la Fundació Pere Tarrés.

C/ Santaló, 37. 08021 Barcelona / Spain)

ARodriguez@peretarres.org

- Guzmán, Rayda.

Universitat Ramon Llull

Facultat d'Educació social i de Treball social de la Fundació Pere Tarrés.

C/ Santaló, 37. 08021 Barcelona / Spain)

RGuzman@peretarres.org

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1. RESUM:

En aquest treball es pretén exposar un projecte europeu amb el que es participa des de la Facultat d'Educació social i treball social de la Fundació Pere Tarrés (URL). El programa de intensiu europeu sobre **Qualitat alimentària i exclusió social** pretén relacionar dues disciplines diferents però complementàries que treballen amb col·lectius comuns, l'educació social i la dietètica i nutrició. L'objectiu d'aquest programa és desenvolupar noves estratègies i treball en equip multidisciplinar entre aquestes dues disciplines; el treball es centrarà a partir de l'anàlisi d'una realitat social concreta amb col·lectius en situació d'exclusió social. El treball en xarxa serà un pilar fonamental en aquest programa europeu.

ABSTRACT:

This paper presents the European intensive program on **Quality food intake and social exclusion**, from the Faculty of Social Education and Social Work Foundation Pere Tarrés (URL). This program aims to link two different but complementary disciplines that work with common groups, social education and dietetics. The objective of this program is to develop new strategies and multidisciplinary teamwork between these two disciplines, the work will develop from the analysis of social reality with specific groups at risk of social exclusion. The networking will be a cornerstone in this European program.

2. **KEYWORDS:** networking, social work and dietetics, knowledge tranference, intensive program

3. **ÀREA DE CONEIXEMENT:** Ciències Experimentals i de la Salut, Ciències Socials i Jurídiques

4. **ÀMBIT TEMÀTIC DEL CONGRÉS:** La internacionalització de la universitat

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5. MODALITAT DE PRESENTACIÓ: Comunicació pòster

6. DESENVOLUPAMENT:

a) Objectives

- a. To present Quality food intake & Social Exclusion IP in Faculty of Social Education and Social Work (Fundació Pere Tarres. Universitat Ramon Llull). Aims and outcomes.
- b. To describe and present networking between field organizations, University and Quality food intake & Social Exclusion (QFI&SE) Intensive Erasmus European Program.

b) Description:

An Intensive Program (IP) is a short program of study, funded by the European Commission Education and Training, which brings together students and teaching staff from higher education institutions of at least three participating countries.

The specific IP developed in the Faculty of Social Education and Social Work of Fundació Pere Tarrés (University of Ramon Llull), named “Quality Food Intake and Social Exclusion” is a proposal in association of five European universities (K.H. Kempen University College, Belgium (Coordinator), Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania; Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania; FH Joanneum University of Applied Sciences, Austria; University of Debrecen, Hungary; Universitat Ramon Llull, Spain and Universidad San Pablo CEU, Spain) and experts in Dietetics and Social Work and Social Education. There will be a total of 50 students and 12 lecturers from five different universities involved in this program.

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This IP is a three consecutive year-program (2012-2014) that gives both dietetics students and social work students the opportunity to share their academic experiences about people in need in a multidisciplinary context. The actors involved in the QFI&SE-IP want to open new perspectives on the effect of nutritional advice towards socially excluded or vulnerable groups in society. Both view-points have their benefits, logic and reasons. First, it is required to be able to approach clients with this situation from both ways when working together with students from social work and dietetics, because it is needed to understand the practice, the tasks and the vision behind each approach.

This IP is a unique opportunity to share knowledge and expertise, to develop a joint project in “*Quality Food Intake and Social Exclusion*”, allowing students to be active participants, and to keep on working in the investigation line study of healthy habits coordinated by Dr. Muro and already active in the Faculty. We believe that it is very interesting for dietetics students to learn how to approach specific target groups with social needs like children at risk, underprivileged people, homeless or elderly. Social work students learn how to take dietetic and nutritional aspects into account when working with people with these characteristics. The quality of food intake among vulnerable groups in society is important to Europe. In the area of overlap between social work and dietetics provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen cooperation among faculties, exchange teachers and students. Dietitians have to take into account social and contextual factors and, at the same time, social workers have to take into account the importance of nutritional healthy habits. Working together dietitians and social workers will have an added value. Cooperation between both disciplines will enhance nutritional conditions and social context and can leverage empowering processes among clients. Many nutrition problems, like

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obesities and elderly diabetes, have a social ground. By involving the view of a social worker, a new paradigm for behavioral change and prevention on the societal level can be created. When dieticians' look from a social work consciousness towards the aims they want to achieve with clients, it can shed new light on how to use their expertise in dietetics.

This project is only possible with the collaboration of field organizations. Five social organizations are involved in this IP, two related to children at risk, one organization that attend homeless people and another that is attending elderly with no resources. These field organizations were selected attending two criteria: social exclusion people attended in the organization and work on nutritional aspects like providing meals or food.

For each field work organization there will be a challenging situation for students. This methodology will be used for five workgroups; the approach of active learning based on everyday and real life challenge from a field work organization, is crucial to innovative practices in education. Participant observation is the methodology used to capture real life with people in need. Concrete documents and materials: competencies, a guidebook for students, module/syllabus texts, students' homework and project reports and a methodical guidebook for teachers with good practice models. Field visits, joined activities with field work organization, institutions, companies and clients. This ensures awareness raising, experiments with innovative approaches and participative practices with vulnerable groups in society. A guidebook for students and an explanation about of the topics and challenges for social work and dietitian will provide participants of the program to do the work group. These materials are done by teachers and coordinator of the IP involved.

These fields will be involved in two different moments, first when students from different countries and disciplines go to do participant observation one day; and the second moment will

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be when every work group students present their proposal from the field organization's challenge.

The IP of Quality food intake and social exclusion is an opportunity to do networking from university, social organizations and Europe. All actors gain expertise and develop good practices in areas of overlap like, concrete services like dismissal policies in leisure time or social service, meals on wheels services for elderly from public welfare, day care centres, joint client consultation; techniques of approaching and counselling specific socio-cultural groups like socially excluded, homeless, underprivileged and elderly; groups who usually have a rather disturbed nutritional balance. And finally, the actors gain also in structural methodologies and strategies for prevention and sensitivity on nutrition habits at a community or societal level. Especially in formulating and implementing policies regarding health care. Different actors are involved in this networking for this program; at a University level, the International Relations department and a specialist on nutrition and social work lecturer; five different fields organization who are attending social excluded people and other five universities from Europe involved in this **networking** in order to achieve good **knowledge transference**.

c) Outcomes:

Some of the expected general outcomes of the QFI&SE-IP are:

1. Development of good practice to approach and to counsel specific target groups in society.

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In this program, different challenges were proposed for each field organization related to nutritional education, how to improve it and think about social aspects related to eating, like social and communication skills, conviviality and so on. Some of the questions were launched in order to think about the specific times of the day to do educational intervention on nutritional and social aspects in the centers. Students should discuss about the kind of resources that exist for homeless/elderly/children at risk to prepare meals or to have access to food, and if they have the possibility to be responsible for their own nutrition and how they want to eat; what kind of professionals are involved in activities related to meals or food in the visited center? Students will have to think about why it is important to do nutritional and social education with homeless/elderly/children at risk and where and who has to do it. It may be interesting to share what social workers and dietitians think about their work together with these clients. What are the differences and similarities between these two professional figures? How do they work together as an interdisciplinary team? And finally, it was proposed to think about specific needs of people who are attended in this center and to compare them with the needs of homeless/elderly/children at risk in each country.

About how to improve nutritional education and social aspects, the suggestion was to think about the meal time in these centers since it is a good chance to empower homeless/elderly/children at risk in such moments, how to think about socialization during meal time as a chance to reinforce or to start social relationships and to improve communication skills. What do they consider the most important aspects of socialization with homeless/elderly/ children at risk? How would students promote social relationships, where, when and what professionals could do it?

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The last challenge was related to creating an activity about nutritional and social education that could be interesting for those target groups after doing the participant observation. They were asked to explain the educational goals involved in these activities and to improve them from a nutritional and social work perspective.

How have challenges been approached?

Different workgroups worked with different target groups; during the first days they had a visit to the field organization, using participant observation as a social work method. Then challenges and proposal of activities were organized for the centers, according to the observation (lacks and capacities of each center).

1. In day care centers for children at risk, the activities proposed by the student workgroups were related to the involvement of families in the nutritional educational process of children at the center. The objective was to organize workshops related to healthy food and sustainable eating habits and low income budget with the families.
2. In the case of excluded elderly people, the workgroup suggested to share the cooking time at the apartments so that the elderly could do the shopping and cooking together, to be aware of the products they buy, healthy habits, cooking, etc. And by doing this kind of activities together, clients would improve their conviviality, relationship and communitarian activities.
3. For the homeless center, the workgroup proposed to empower people to prepare their own meals, not only during the process but also in the growing and cultivating of a vegetable garden. The main proposal was to empower autonomy and to participate in a social activity.

The global aim of these activities could be summarized as: how to allow more autonomy, learn and know about healthy habits, think about the importance of basic nutritional knowledge and to

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empower excluded people and work for their reintegration into society. This exercise has been carried on at a social micro-level, but its main goal is to generalize this sort of research to similar centers.

Each workgroup was monitored by two couches from social work and dietitian.

2. Taking into account the political, economic, cultural and social context of the country when assessing malnutrition.

The project has been developed within five different political, economic, social and cultural realities (Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Lithuania and Spain) that suggest a need of studying deeper in this topic and to develop a new field of academic research. Field organizations are the starting point of said research, since they allow teachers, researchers and students to observe reality and to decide together with the clients which are their real needs and expectations related to healthy habits.

Field organizations, together with higher education institutions, are basic to raise awareness about sustainable food, food security, food sovereignty, hygienic habits, food waste and so on. For instance, food security is a concept widely used for developing countries, but it is relevant to be aware that it can be applied to any person and group, no matter where they are geographically located. According to the FAO World Summit (Rome, 1996), “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”, which, related to the target groups hereby studied, is of the goals of this research. From this point, social workers have the responsibility to improve this aspect with social excluded people.

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A good example of a center working on the basis of food security and food sovereignty is a social center which works for the social and labor integration of women and immigrants at risk of exclusion by the means of a restaurant and cuisine training. The whole group (50 students and 9 teachers/researchers) visited this center and the staff raised the topic of food sovereignty and food security related to migration. Trainees come from different regions of the world with specific cultural background, eating and hygienic habits, food access, etc. and most of these factors are abruptly changed when arriving to a new country with a new social, economic, political and cultural reality. From a nutritional point of view, the center works on the basis of food sovereignty, stressing on the vision of sustainability and autonomy in order to achieve three final goals: to use nutritious and accessible food, to optimize available resources (food, knowledge and cultural eating habits of the trainees together with the local habits) and to work for a quality multicultural, sustainable and healthy cuisine.

A last additional proposed challenge related to political, economic and social context is how institutional resources and social services work with the centers about healthy habits: what are the Catalan/Spanish policies that affect these centers? How do these centers should work on aspects related to nutritional education and food security? Do you know any other type of resources? What can Europe offer to these groups? Are there any European policies that support healthy habits with excluded people?

In the future, the *IP Quality Food Intake and Social Exclusion* will be held in Austria (2013) and Lithuania (2014), so the political, economic, cultural and social context will have to be considered again in order to be able to understand new realities and to optimize the existing resources, adapting them to the context of the centers and the clients.

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3. The competence to do participant observation, how to analyze and to act in a multidisciplinary way.

Participant observation can be considered as an interactive method of gathering information that requires the involvement of the observer in the events or social aspects he/she is observing. Participant observation implies, therefore, the domain of a number of social skills which must be added to any observer. It is a not simple practice which requires some learning that allows the researcher to play the dual role of observer and participant. However, the effort involved in this is compensated enough by the quality of information obtained with this procedure (Rodríguez, Gil y García, 1996).

This approach that places the researcher in the role of participant enables studied perceptions of reality that can be achieved without engaging in it effectively.

4. Dietetic students are aware of the ability of a system-oriented intervention and take the social context into account in daily practice.

In his work about interdisciplinary collaboration between social workers and dietitians in nutrition education programs for children at risk done in Israel, Shor, R. (2010) showed different results about this experience with both disciplines. Some of the barriers found by dietitians were: poor knowledge about family circumstances and the situation of poverty; the ambiguous role of social workers during the nutrition program, since that role was not clear at all for dietitians. Another barrier that was discussed for dietitians was related to the methodologies of social workers. On the other hand, some advantages of this interdisciplinary collaboration for dietitians

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were that they perceived social abilities to connect with families, and they also learned new methods of interventions with different target groups.

Besides the field visits and the work in groups, dietetic and nutrition students have learnt about social work with the following lectures:

Social work methodologies to address nutrition problems was a lecture about the role of the social worker in the development of healthy behavior in vulnerable groups. Furthermore, a workshop about empowerment by appreciate inquiring was also included in the program. Appreciative Inquiry is a methodology that brings out the best of an individual or an organization by encouraging dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams. Some of the most important points of empowerment are the helping relationship as the corner stone, changing behavior being a process, to render justice to the basic needs of clients and to protect and strength resilience.

General lectures for both social work and dietetics and nutrition students were related to *The area of overlap between social workers and dieticians*, which presented similarities and differences between the professions and how practitioners can build the bridge between dieticians and social worker paradigms. Other lecture given in this program was about the importance of *Interdisciplinary collaboration between social workers and dieticians in nutritional education programs for children at risk*, some questions about difficulties and advantages were suggested in this lecture at the beginning of the program.

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Social workers' perception (Shor, R; 2010) working with dietitians highlight several aspects as the incorporation of different perspectives from other discipline, the observation of new dynamics in family around mealtime and the learning about how to improve quality food intake.

During this program, besides the field visits and the work in groups, social work students have learnt about dietetics and nutrition by the following lectures:

Sustainable food system to fight poverty; the challenge for the future is to make sure that food needs are fulfilled for everyone, which implies an eco-efficient production and processing of healthy, sufficient and thus affordable food while minimizing losses; to make sure that the food is available or brought where people live and to make sure that people really have access to food. Other lecture was related to *The role of dieticians in addressing nutrition problems at a society level* that it was focus on structural working (as an opposite for individual client work) by means of prevention and awareness reassign on nutritional habits in culture. A proposal of the multidisciplinary implementation of nutrition policies and programs by dietitians and social workers was discussed and students explored different possibilities of learning from dietitians in counseling, and the approaches needed for social workers

Minimum budget and healthy living: a contradiction?; this lecture helped social workers to be conscious about how health is one of the fundamental requirements to enable people to participate in society, where our primary objective was to make healthy food accessible for disadvantaged families.

Through these lectures, social work students had the opportunity to learn more about nutrition.

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Bruner (1991) suggests that interdisciplinary collaboration is an effective interpersonal process that facilitates the achievement of goals that cannot be reached when individual professionals act on their own. Bronstein (2003) explained a model of interdisciplinary collaboration with four components: Interdependence, understood as a collaborative practice and work as a team where the expertise and knowledge from different disciplines can be a good advantage. Newly created professional activities are another component of this model, where activities maximize the expertise of each collaborator with collaborative acts and proposal of new programs. The collective ownership of goals is a component related to sharing responsibilities during the whole process, from Design, Definition Development and Achievement of goals; for Bornstein (2003), this component is basic for a successful collaboration. And the last aspect on this model is the reflection on the process, thinking about their working relationship and process, strengthen collaborative relationships and effectiveness and to incorporate self-evaluation.

c. Research in different disciplines and different countries.

After this international experience between different countries and disciplines, both researchers and students have realized that a deeper study between these two disciplines is required in order to create a new networking method and to offer a better social and nutritional service to the clients.

7. Intercultural teams and work.

What is culture? What is appearance and what reality? What is “normal” for whom? Is the concept of time the same for all? What is the meaning of “authority” or “innovation”? How can we make sure that every member understood the common goal of the group?

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After the celebration of the IP, all staff involved in the program realized about the importance of previous preparation of faculty and administrative staff and students in intercultural and international competences. It is essential not to forget that, in a global academic and professional world, the international dimension involves not only the staff working at the international department, but that it is a transverse dimension which must be considered from the very beginning and during the whole process of any transcultural project.

Although students were provided with theoretic materials on social work in different European countries, some students and staff of the group suffered several confusions due to cultural misunderstandings that could have been solved with previous training on intercultural teamwork. Regarding this aspect, the team working in the program agreed on the need:

To search for academic materials, experiences and activities developed and carried on by the countries we are working with in order to be aware of the different realities and contexts.

To fit the expectations to the reality at each context.

To do research about intercultural and international competences and to define certain criteria for international programs and projects.

To share experiences with other universities from an international approach.

To train students on international and intercultural competences so as to allow them to successfully work in multicultural and international teams.

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The International Relations Department at our Faculty is already working in the design and standardization of these criteria in order to allow internationalization to become a real transverse area at the university.

The most important output of the QFI&SE IP consists of solutions to the challenge of good dietetic counseling among social work people in need. On the first place, we develop and promote methodologies for a good quality of food intake among vulnerable groups in society that enables clients to fully develop their potential in society. Secondly, we show that a strong multidisciplinary approach facilitates the production of integrated services created together with several professions and fashioned together with the client.

Another relevant aspect of these expected results is sharing with field organizations some new approach to nutritional education with social excluded people and has the opportunity of sharing knowledge from theory and practice, working together. And finally, it's expected to evidence the networking done with field organizations, universities and European society.

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