

**SURVEY ON PLANS FOR STUDIES  
IN SOCIAL EDUCATION FIELD IN EUROPE**

**A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROMOTION  
OF A COMMON EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**

**"IDENTIFICATION OF A EUROPEAN  
CORE CURRICULUM  
FOR THE SOCIAL EDUCATOR"**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The research on the European Qualifications Framework and the European professional card are given by Directive 2013/55/ EU.

By January 18, 2016 all Member States shall communicate to the Commission the list of the regulated professions, specifying the activities covered by each and a list of the different types of regulated education and training within their territory.

The Commission shall establish and maintain an open database regulated and available, containing an overview of the activities of each profession.

The European Commission will present a report based on the information provided by each Member States to the group of coordinators (2007/172/EC) in order to recognize the professional qualifications.

In light of the comments received, the Commission, by 18 January 2017, will provide the Parliament and the European Council with its findings and proposals for new initiatives.

The representatives of the professional organizations on an European level, as well as professional organizations on a national level or the competent authorities of at least one third of the Member States, may submit suggestions to the European Commission regarding the common framework of education.

## **PREFACE**

The project includes an initial contribution to develop a common framework for training of the social educators in Europe.

The social educator it's a profession no as much young as one might think, it appears more recently than its current codification.

The skills of the social educator, as they have been recognized in Europe, also represent the current knowledge, skills and attitudinal required competencies for the graduates students of the countries that joined the investigation.

Social education is a discipline that requires great dynamism, flexibility and adaptability. It is not anchored or tied to a specific scientific tradition; professional knowledge, which are part of the practice in the social education field, are drawn from various disciplines. Today the profession is based on various humanities and social sciences, such as developmental psychology, social psychology, ethics, anthropology, sociology and cultural sociology. In addition to these disciplines, it also refers to the disciplines which belong to other operating areas, such as administration, management and knowledge of the rules governing the welfare system, as well as communication, activity and cultural aspects. These professional skills allow social educators to connect the critical analysis to concrete and constructive actions.

Social education, as we have seen, it's rooted basically in the humanities. It is based on a number of disciplines and, as central principle, it has an integrated view of such knowledge. The responsibility of social educators is characterized by a synthesis of knowledge, skills and behaviors. The training programs for professional social educators include both theoretical and practical elements and educate the professionals to create a link between the theory and the practice.

A typical feature is that the instrument of social education is basically shaped by the interpersonal and relational process. In principle, the tools of the social educator are just the body and the mind. Thus the social educators are able to clarify the content, the relationships, the dynamics and the operational practices.

We reaffirm and demonstrate that, in the field of the Social Education, it exists an action specifically directed to ensure the exercise of rights for those who receive our actions: this requires our constant ethics, technical, scientific and political commitment (Declaration of Montevideo, Aieji 2005, <http://aieji.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Montevideo-declaration.pdf>).

Since the socio-educational work intervenes on the living conditions of other people, the social educators should have a solid base of training and knowledge in order to perform their duties with a professional approach. Even the social educators, like all professions working with people, have to conduct specific studies at post-secondary level of at least 3-4 years full time. Training must be recognized and regulated by national authorities and specify that enables the socio-educational work. In addition, such training should be recognized on a national level and should represent the professional category (if there is more than one). The training is to be conducted within the universities or within other schools on a same level, recognized and authorized as “training enabler”, which qualifies the social educators. The basic training must provide learning skills to the professional social educators, must guarantee them the most modern and recent research both on a national and international level, it must therefore be a solid education.

The training of social educators highlights a gap between the different countries studied, but it's common to all the aim to train competent professionals.

This document is the result of a team effort, the result of the ambitious project to bring together the best expertise and capacity in Europe in order to create a network of academics and professionals and define common quality standards for the Basic Training of social educators.

The partial membership of European Union member countries was motivated by the fact that the survey was an onerous task, made entirely on a voluntary basis and not all the associations representing this category had the necessary resources.

We hope that the results of the first phase of the project will raise the interest of the European Community, to whom we offer this first contribution, and from which we hope to receive feedback and support to continue the research.

## **THANKS**

Our thanks go to all the organizations that participate to the project collecting and recording data in the dedicated tool (standard format available on the platform FAD ANEP) and translating into English in order to allow comparative analysis through key words research common to the different curricula. Social educators from a wide range of educational backgrounds and countries have dedicated much of their time and their valuable skills to this work for free.

It was encouraging to see that the profession has many supporters, who work to improve basic education, so that the needs of people who need professional help are met to the fullest.

In particular, thanks to ANEP and his collaborators (S.Elena Molteni, project coordinator, Davide Barban and Giacomo Picco, authors of the statistical data), the European AIEJI for the symposium conducted on this topic (Zaragoza 4-6 April 2014), and thanks to the Governing Council AIEJI for believing in the project, for supporting and endorsing it.

## **ASSOCIATIONS MEMBERS OF THE PROJECT**

- AIEJI - International Association of Social Educators - [www.aieji.net](http://www.aieji.net)
- ANEP - National Association of Professional Educators - [www.anep.it](http://www.anep.it)
- APTSES - Associacao Dos Tecnicos Profissionais Superior De Educators - [www.apteses.pt](http://www.apteses.pt)
- CGCEES - Consejo General de Colegios de Educadoras Educadores y Sociales - [www.eduso.net](http://www.eduso.net)
- FO - Fellesorganisasjonen - [www.fo.no](http://www.fo.no)
- SL - Socialpaedagogernes Landsforbund - [www.sl.dk](http://www.sl.dk)

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### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT**

This project aims to identify the common elements essential in the training of the social educators and to analyze any differences in order to delineate the fundamental required skills of a social educator graduated and able to act safely and effectively.

The professional social educator sees its birth and growth in conjunction with the development of new visions and readings of the problems that people / groups face in their life.

Initially the figure of the social educator has been employed in rehabilitation facilities for "troubled youth" and within the facilities of rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, in closed facilities, not open to the social context, where the social educator began experimenting new ways of working to support the development of skills of people in the context of normal life and relationship. Sharing aspects of daily

life is, in fact, used as a specific intervention area, a real scenario, which seeks quickly roads and projects to expand the social context of action in order to support the right to social integration of subjects in the broadest sense of the term.

Giving citizenship to people confined to restrictions or accepted in contexts of rehabilitation it became later a career goal supported and accompanied by a vast cultural movement, in which the debate on the right to integration, segregation and stigma saw their validation office in numerous laws enacted since the Seventies, allowing professional practices of social educators to be recognized and validated. Today we can safely say that the social educator was a precursor of what we now call "bio-psycho-social approach" to the care of people and, on a services base, of what now it's now known as "socio-sanitary" integration.

Two key factors have led to the definition and development of the professional: the birth of specific training courses and the national and the international professional associations.

The International Conferences organized by AIEJI represent an important moment of sharing and planning of cultural depth of the themes appreciated by the social educators. They are held every four years; the last one was held from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 in Luxembourg, the next will be in Brazil in 2017.

AIEJI published:

- 2006 - "*The professional skills of social educators - a conceptual framework*". In it, as well as a brief introduction to the socio-educational work, they have been identified and developed standards for training, practice and skills of the social educator, its objectives and ethical guidelines;
- 2010 - "*Working with people with developmental disabilities*";
- 2011 - the Spanish Association of social educators (CGEES) has produced a survey on the profession of the social educator in the world;
- 2012 - AIEJI held a seminar to discuss the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to children placed outside the family. The seminar focused on how national laws address the issue of children's rights and the role of the professional as guarantor. The result is the document "*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Social Education - children placed outside of the family*";
- 2015 - "*The unaccompanied minor refugees*", the result of a survey conducted through interviews with social educators and service users. The first results of the survey were presented and discussed at the International Seminar organized by the ANEP and AIEJI in Rome in 2014, revived in Brazil and Finland in 2015.
- For the 2016-17 biennium there will be a publication on the subject of mental health, with a seminar that will still protagonist ANEP and the Italian company, which gave birth to the law Basaglia, thanks to which it comes to the final closure of the hospitals psychiatric and soon the closure of Judicial Psychiatric Hospitals.

Social educators are professionals with formal education, working with children, youth and adults. The target of their intervention are people and communities who are in need of socio-educational interventions. The social educators working in a variety of contexts, through individual actions, services and community-based programs in respect of professional ethics. They practice a wide range of roles, including direct assistance, training, supervision and leadership, advice and research in the socio-educational.

## 2.0 SURVEY

ANEP (National Association of Professional Educators - Italy) is a member of the Governing Council AIEJI (International Association of Social educator), which conducted an investigation into the Core Curriculum of the European Social Educator, starting with an analysis of university curricula active through the participation of EU Member States.

The investigation began in 2014 and the first results were presented at the III Symposium of Professional Associations of Social Educators in Europe (Zaragoza, 4-6 April 2014).

The following associations, ANEP, APTSES, CGCEES, FO, SL have participated actively in the survey, providing the requested contribution: data entry of data on the curricula for the courses for the social educators active in all the universities of their country in a standard format, with details of the educational disciplines divided by educational areas, translated into English, and related ECTS.

They have examined the training programs for the academic year 2012-13, except in the case of Denmark (2014-15), because they occurred large system changes, which had not to be ignored, to don't invalidate the investigation.

Within the competencies of social educators, we must consider two dimensions: the size of the "*core competencies*", which shows how the social educator needs to know how to act, intervene and reflect in various practice settings, and the size of the "*skills power*", which are derived from perspectives and conditions of work and social education.

The core competencies of the European social educators were shared and were the subject of a specific publication AIEJI "*The professional competences of social educators - a conceptual framework*" (2006), which we refer for further details on the Core Competence of the social educator.

Instead, the next survey would take a step further, seeking to identify the common points within the training curricula active in European Union member states, to promote the process of definition of the Core Curriculum of the European social educator.

### 2.1 The stages of the investigation

The research project ANEP-AIEJI aimed to identify common elements between the university courses at European level for social educators has been structured in several steps.

The first step was to gather all the curricula of Italian graduation courses. This allowed us to prepare a first grid Excel data collection. The same was used then for cataloging curriculum adopted in training Spanish university.

The second step involved a first comparison test between the two countries. Outcome was positive and presented at the *III Symposium of Professional Associations of Social Educators in Europe* (Zaragoza, 4-6 April 2014). The two training programs have several points in common: categorization of the teachings in areas (basic activities, characterizing and integrative activities, practical activities and final examination) and similarity in the names of the teachings.

The third step, which lasted 12 months, saw extend the search to other European countries which represents the reference population.

The fourth step involved analyzing data and reviewing the results through academics referee.

## **2.2 The research sample**

The final sample of the research consists of the following nations:

- DENMARK - was given a unique training program at the national level of 210 ECTS, declined in different curricula for each of the 6 degree programs surveyed. The teachings that make up the curriculum are divided into subgroups: basic activities, characterizing activities including also the final examination and practical activities;
- ITALY - has two university courses both 180 ECTS. The teachings that make up the curriculum are divided into subgroups: basic activities, characterizing activities, integrative activities, and other activities including also the final examination and practical activities. The graduate programs surveyed were 48 (L19 - class degree in education and training) and 13 (SNT2 - class of degrees in health professions rehabilitation);
- NORWAY - were reported two curriculum nationally both with a duration of 180 ECTS: Bachelor in Child Welfare (11 degree programs) and Bachelor in Social Education (12 degree programs). The teachings of the curriculum are divided by sub-categories: basic activities and characterizing activities including also practical activities and final examination;
- PORTUGAL - was given a unique training program at the national level of 180 ECTS, declined in different curricula for each of the 12 degree programs surveyed. The teachings that make up the curriculum are divided into subgroups: introductory sciences (basic activities), specialized sciences and integrative activities, other activities including also practical activities and final examination;
- SPAIN - was given a unique training program at the national level of 240 ECTS, declined in different curricula for each of the 27 degree programs surveyed. The teachings that make up the curriculum are divided into subgroups: basic activities, characterizing activities, integrative activities and other activities including the final examination and practice activities;

## **2.3 The objectives**

- promote the implementation of the Bologna process, to facilitate the mobility of professionals in Europe;
- promote the recent proposal for a European professional card.

## 2.4 The method of analysis

The analysis of the collected data was carried out through the use of the Excel program (ver. 2007). They have been carried out various operations:

- Make a grouping of the teachings, for each degree program, in the following common categories: basic activities, practical activities and final examination, other activities (including characterizing activities, integrative activities...);
- Comparison of various degree programs active in European countries that joined the investigation. Object of this analysis was the distribution of the teachings in subcategories above mentioned, going to locate a final graph that expresses the average of this development at European level. To develop the European framework overall it was thus made the calculation of the average distribution of percentage giving the same weight to each type of degree course census. The graphs of the basic curriculum developed for each type of degree course census was the result of a weighted average of data from different universities;
- Identify, in the language used for the compilation of the format by each country, of keywords within the teachings that allow to identify those most repeated. The original idea was to do so for each subcategory of teaching: not all contributions received subdivided teachings in this manner and therefore it was decided to locate them within the entire curriculum. The items related to *practical activities and final examinations* and the *activities* labeled as "optional" were excluded because not all the curriculum specified them. The analyzes were performed on all raw data rate and only in the final stage of processing the single European core curriculum has been created in the distribution percentages.

## 3.0 RESULTS

### 3.1 Identification teachings common (Chart 1)

It was performed a research aimed to identify common subjects. This procedure involved the comparison of terms identification among all the detected teachings. The first analysis was made with use of single words. If the teachings of "education" and "legislation" were used more words deemed of same meaning in matching these teaching areas. For the remaining activities, the research it was based on literal affinity among the identified terms.

The teachings found more frequently among the 3314 analyzed cases, containing the words: Sociology, Psychology, Law and Legislation, Education, Pedagogy. There are also associations of these words: EPD (Education and Pedagogy), EL (Education and Legislation), EPS (Education and Psychology), ES (Education and Sociology).



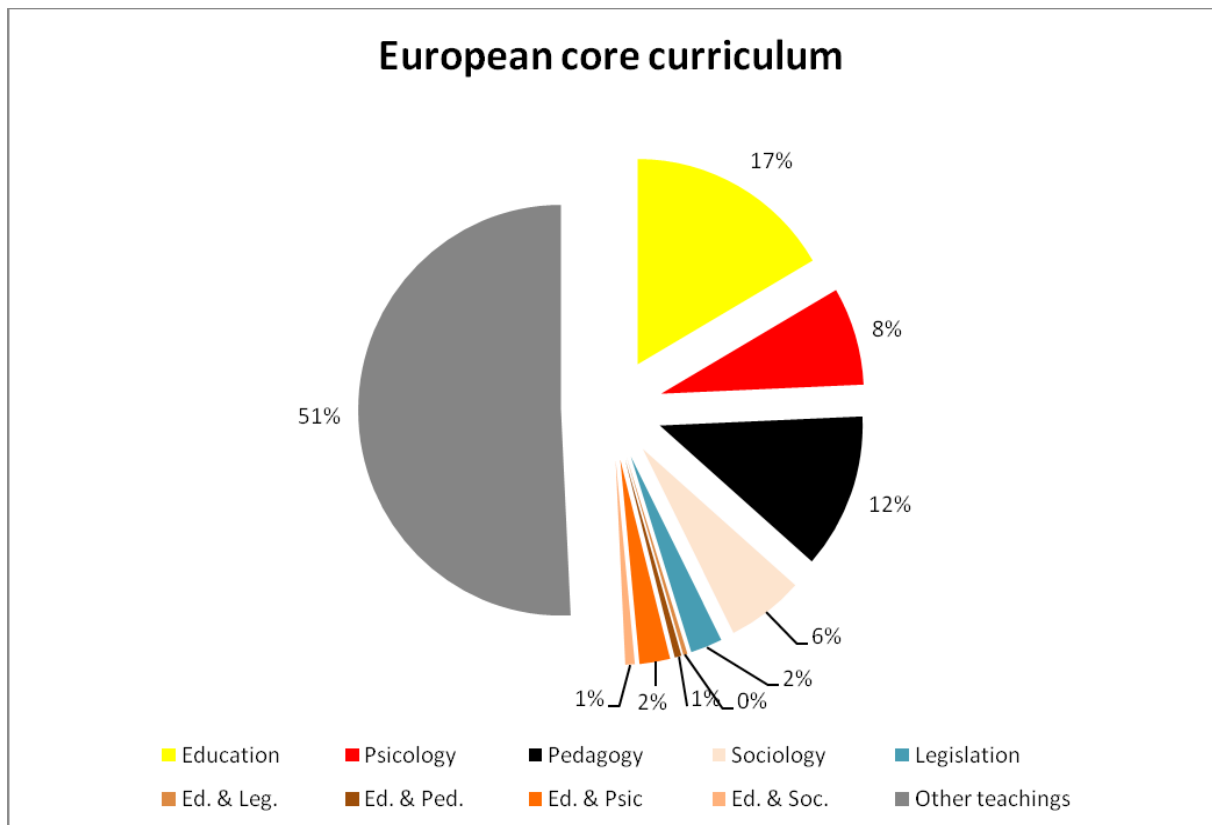


CHART 1

### 3.2 Comparison of the distribution of ECTS within countries divided by areas (chart from 2 to 9)

The countries that participated in the survey, as explained above, does not have the same system of sub-categorization of the teachings. It was decided to split the teachings of the five countries mentioned above in:

- basic activities
- practical activities and final examination
- other activities (including characterizing activities, integrative activities...)

Below there are the charts showing the average distribution, in each country, of the teachings according to the selected subcategories.

## Danish basic curriculum

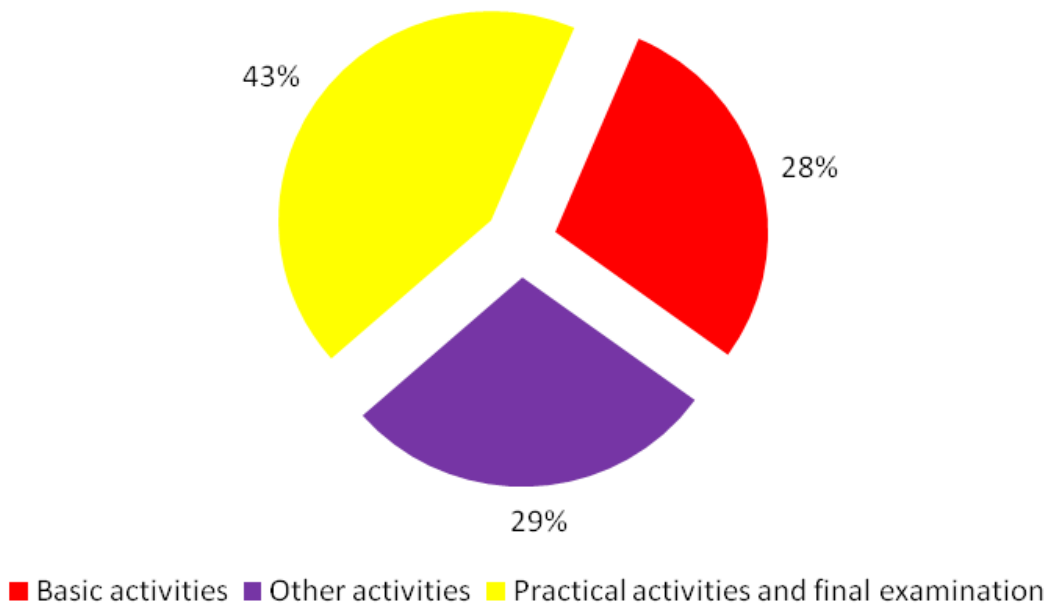


CHART 2

## Italian basic curriculum (SNT2)

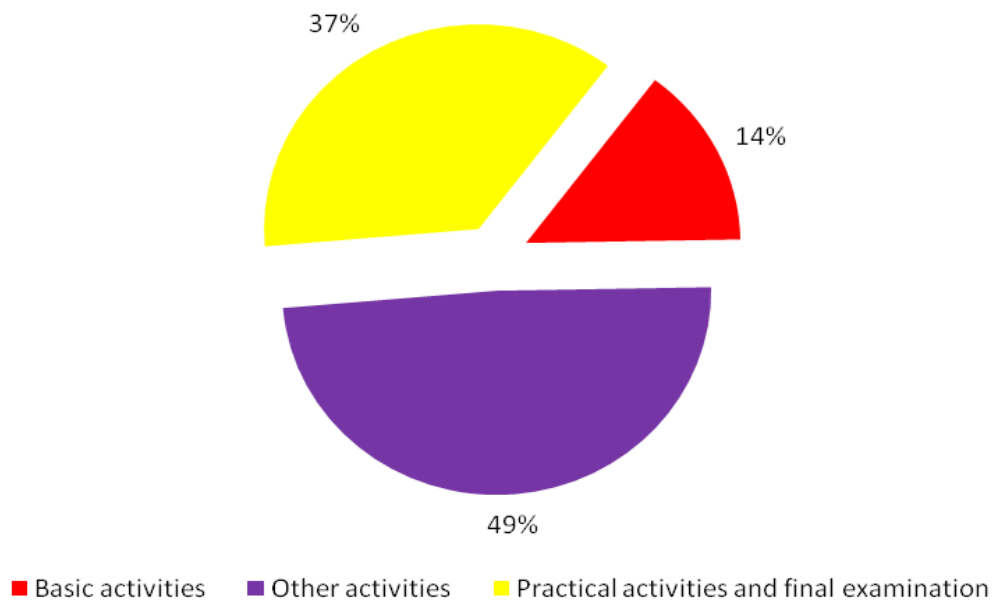


CHART 3

### Italian basic curriculum (L19)

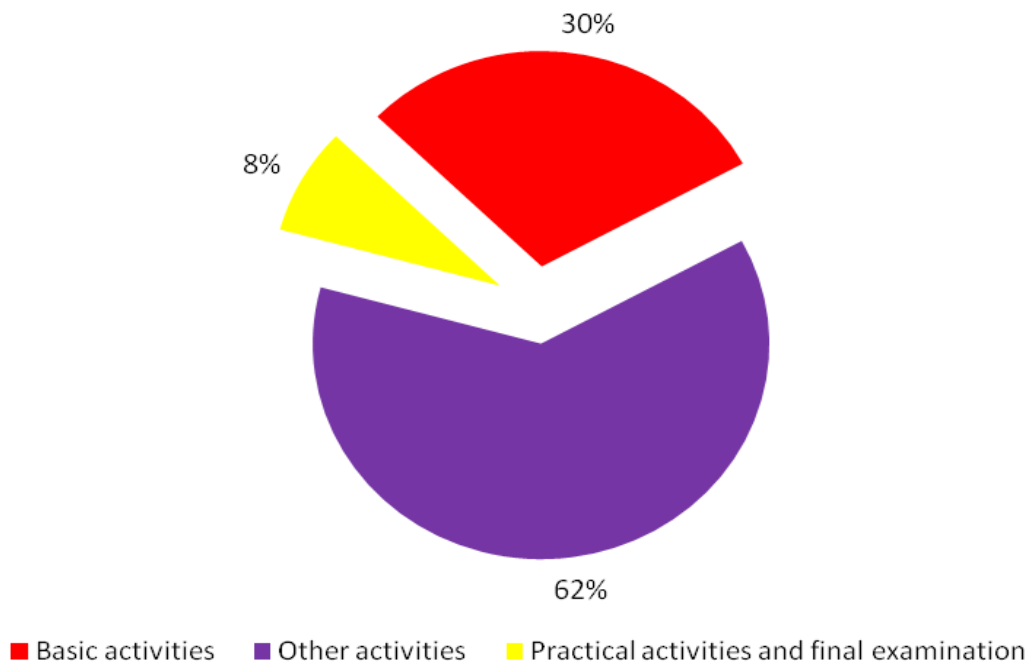


CHART 4

### Norway basic curriculum (Child Welfare)

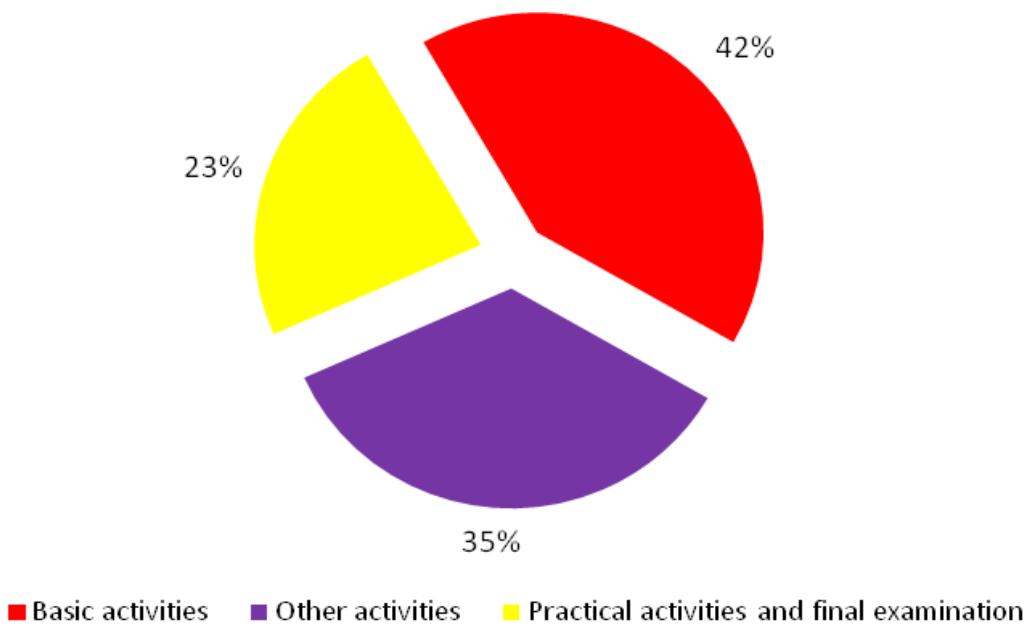


CHART 5

### Norway basic curriculum (Social Education)

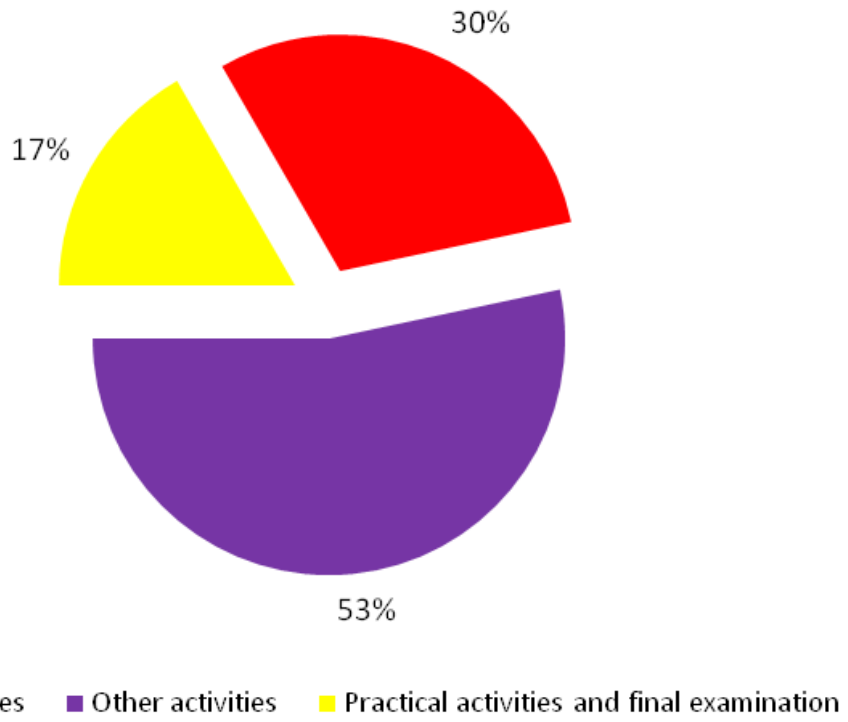


CHART 6

### Portuguese basic curriculum

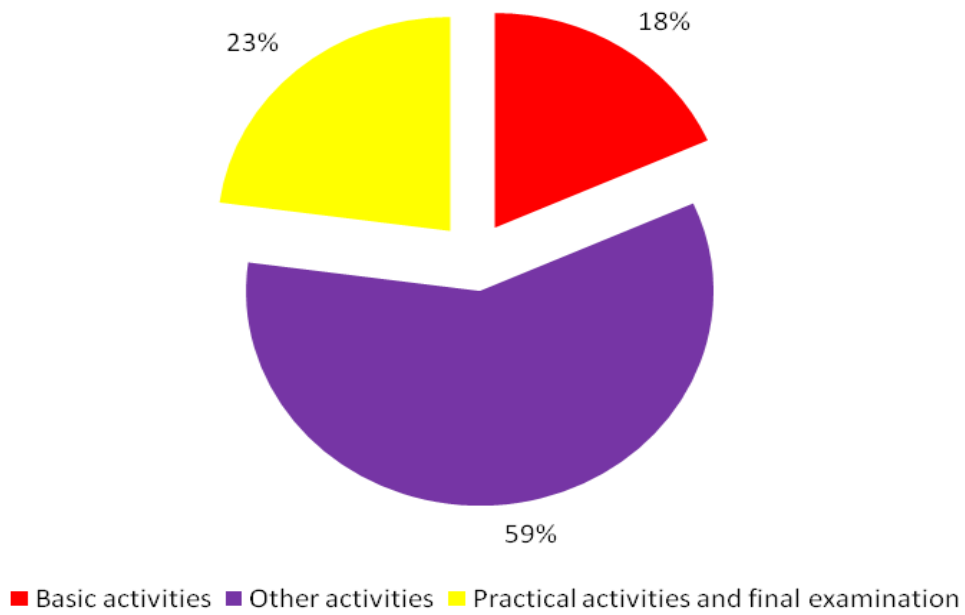


CHART 7

## Spanish basic curriculum

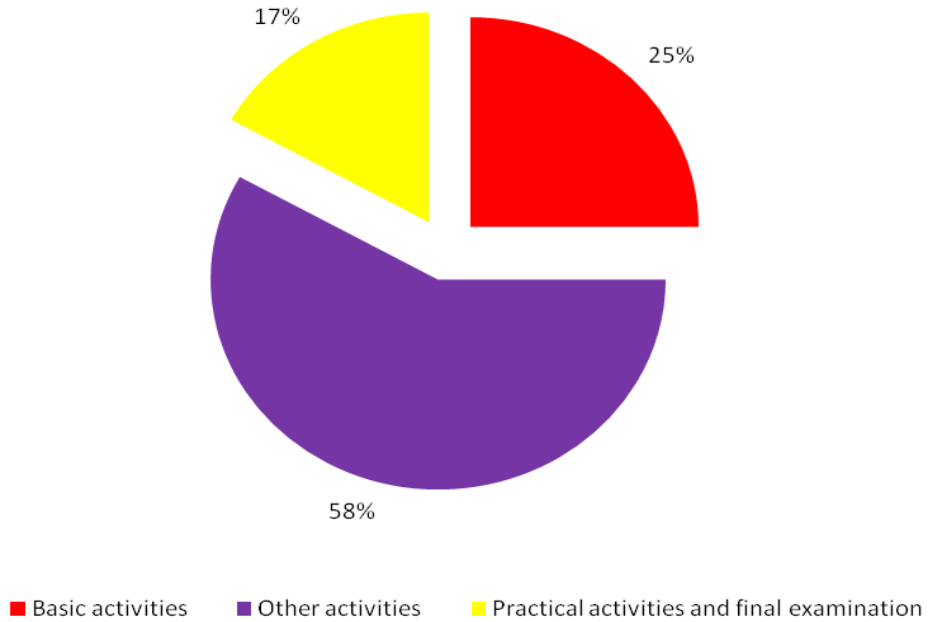


CHART 8

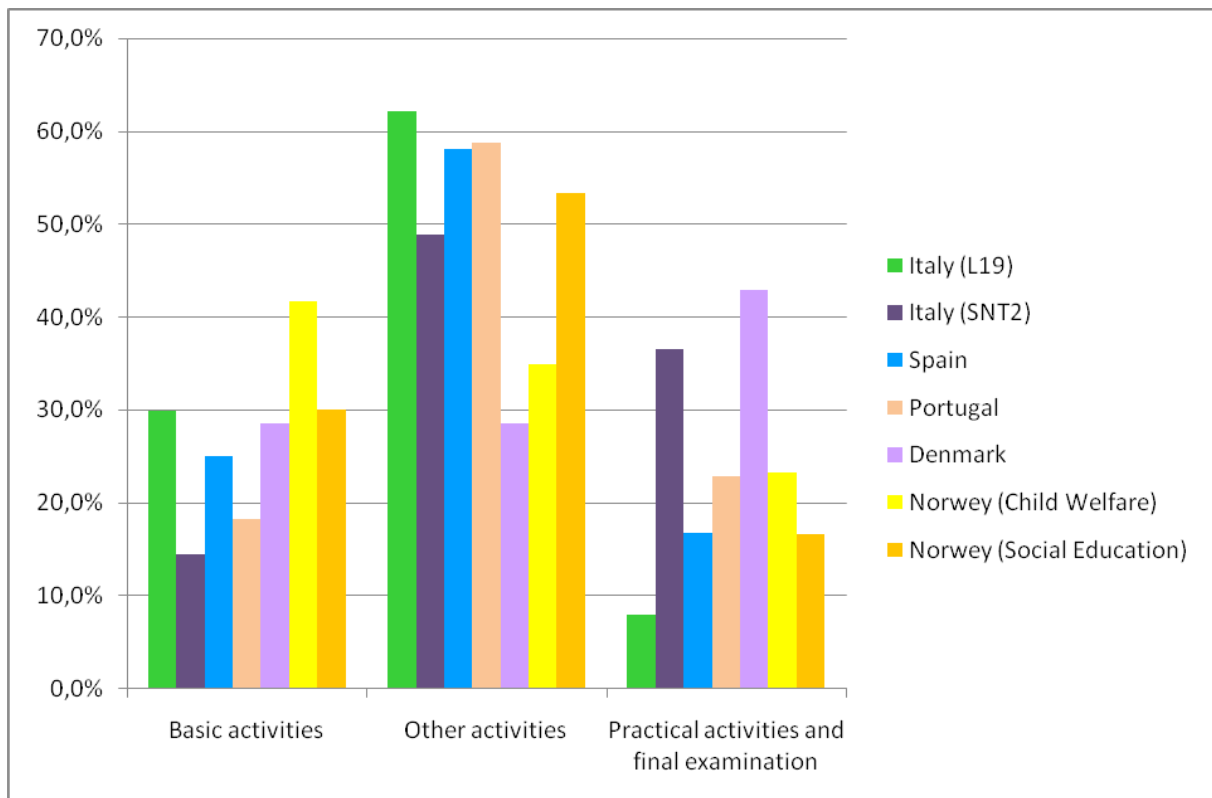


CHART 9

The average of total credits, in reference to the countries mentioned above, for the different degree programs is 193 ECTS, considering the same weight for each type of degree course.

Analysis of the results reported in pie charts, and finally with the comparison made by histograms we can highlight the following results:

- There is some difference in the distribution of the ECTS dedicated to the subcategory "*final examination and practical activities*" and "*other activities*" (the standard deviation is about 12%)
- The difference is smaller in regards of the analysis of the distribution of the ECTS assigned to *basic activities* (the standard deviation of the latter is 9%).

The curriculum for the European social educator, expressed as average of distribution percentage of each teachings curricula between identified subcategories, will then be so formed:

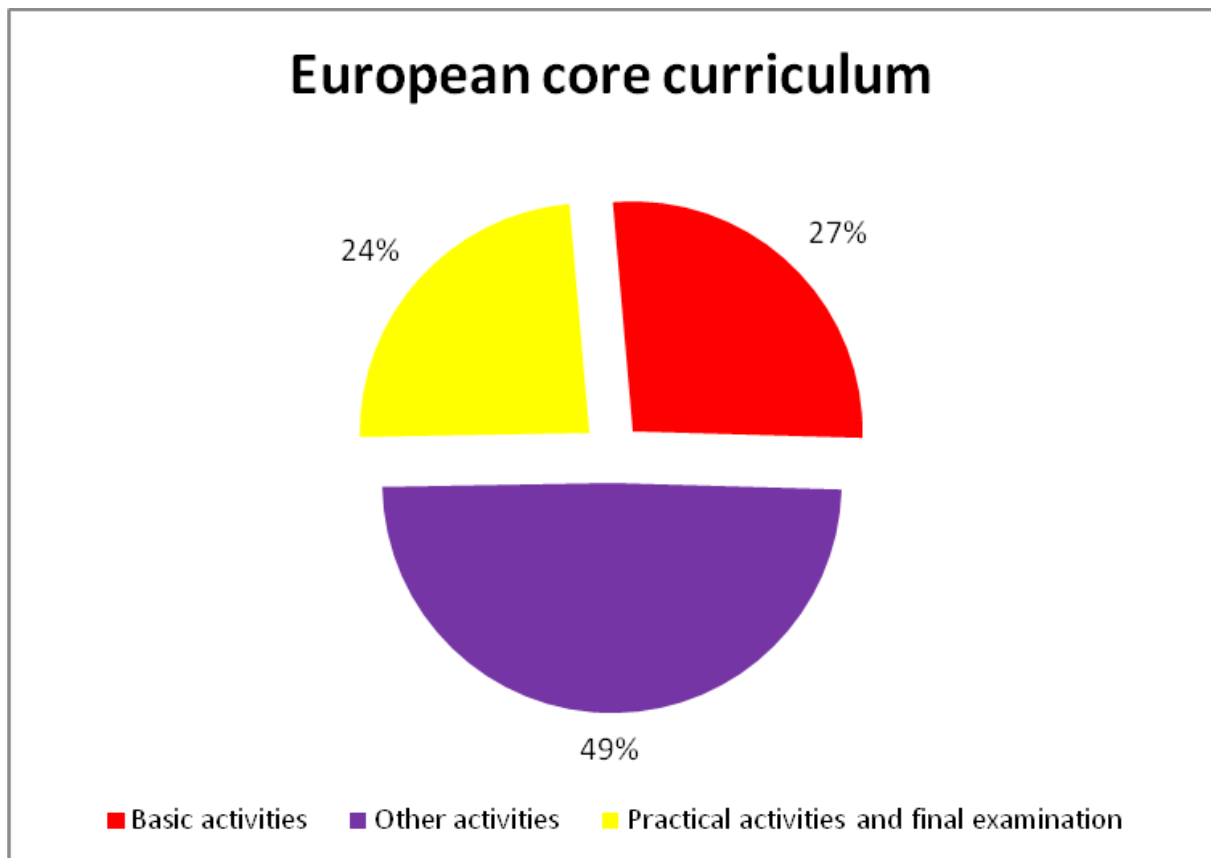


CHART 10

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- It have been identified terms that identify basic teachings and find themselves more frequently within the curricula collected: sociology, psychology, law or legislation, education, education. The teachings that contain within their denomination such words constitute 49% of the teachings analyzed. This means that are common to many degree courses in Europe.
- The result just exposed integrates the fact that there is a uniformity of credit distribution related to basic activities.
- The greater diversity in the distribution of the credits of "*final examination and practical activities*" and "*other activities*" could be due to the fact that a greater characterization of specific curriculum of each country in relation to the nature of the "*social educator*" profession in that country.
- On average, the duration of the degree course came closest to the path of 180 ECTS rather than at higher levels

In conclusion, it is confirmed the possibility to identify a unique curriculum that foresees a European curriculum for the social educator as follows:

- 27% of credits to dedicate to *basic activities*
- 73% of credits to spend on *other activities*: among them, there are also theoretical and especially practical activities. These assets are distributed according to the specific contexts in which professional social educators are going to work: minors, adults, the elderly, mental distress, disability, addictions.
- Within the theoretical subjects (*basic training and other activities*) half of the credits will cover courses common area of psychological, educational, legislative and educational. The remaining credits will instead be identified depending on the specificity of each country.

We believe this study will facilitate decision-making on the various strategies and work plans that the European Commission will have to face in the coming years.

We trust that the results of this survey will be used to better understand the richness of our profession in Europe.

We believe that it could be very useful and necessary to continue this research extending the field to other member states and identifying a greater level of detail. For this aim, we are able to identify together with the European Commission forms the necessary resources in order to support the investigation, ensure to reach all the Member States and more representative results.

## 5.0 SITOGRAPHY

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013L0055>

<http://aieji.net/publications/>

The professional competences of social educators. Conceptual framework (AIEJI 2006)

<http://aieji.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/A-conceptual-framework.pdf>

The profession of social educators in Europe. Comparative study (CGCEES 2011)

<http://aieji.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/The-Profession-of-Social-Education.pdf>

Declaration of Montevideo (AIEJI 2005)

<http://aieji.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Montevideo-declaration.pdf>

## **6.0 ATTACHMENTS**

Format data Denmark  
Format data Italy  
Format data Norway  
Format data Portugal  
Format data Spain

Milan, August 24, 2015

For ANEP

The President  
Maria Rita Venturini

For AIEJI

The President  
Benny Andersen