

What is going to happen to social work practice during the economic crisis

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Social work practice in Greece has been deeply affected by the policies chosen to manage economic and social crisis, which cause growth of unemployment, inequality, poverty, racism and social disorganization. Health, insurance and welfare provision has collapsed under the acute pressure of the public cost reduction, and the massive youth immigration has weakened the traditional "family based" welfare. The impact is harder on those who are already living in poverty, youth, women, immigrants and on the elderly. Uncertainty, insecurity, sudden-complete overthrow of living conditions and prospects and lost of dignity have severely threaten health, mental health and daily social functioning of the biggest part of population. This paper discusses the data of semi-structured interviews with 20 hospital social workers, conducted in May 2013, focusing on what is going on in public health and mental health sector, during the economic crisis. Responders underline an increase of urgent needs of specific vulnerable groups, mainly youth and homeless, the patients' low motivation and expectations for preventive and timely treatment. Social work practice has been reoriented in order to deal with urgent requirements and needs, complex problems, and high risk situations without resources to refer to and lack of interdisciplinary support, due to the services and staff reduction. Brief clinical interventions in crisis situations, depression, anger, attempts of suicide, individual and collective trauma and group work aiming to prove coping methods and solidarity might be responsive to patients, while their own close contact to social work networks like "the action on radical and critical practice" looks to protect them from burnout.

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