

SOCEDU 2022 Conference Report

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In the post-Covid situation, international meetings on campus were made possible in a presentational way, including in the promotion and development of scholarship, research, and education in social pedagogy. Thus, on 16 June 2022, the **International Scientific Conference SOCEDU 2022**, entitled *Retrospectives, Present and Perspectives of Social Pedagogy*, could take place at the Faculty of Education of the University of Trnava in Trnava. The conference was held on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the modern University of Trnava and the 20th anniversary of the existence of an independent study programme of social pedagogy and education at the Department of Educational Studies.



Figure 1: Founders of the SPV study programme prof. Emília Kratochvílová (left) and prof. Blanka Kudláčová (Head of the Department of Educational Studies).

The meeting took place in a hybrid form in view of the previous events. Some of the participants who were not able to attend due to distance or quarantine arrangements joined through an online platform.

The main objectives of the conference were:

- *to establish a tradition of organizing a conference that would develop the field of social pedagogy in theoretical and practical terms,*
- *to promote cooperation between professionals,*
- *to disseminate knowledge from the theory and practice of the Trnava school of social pedagogy and to compare it with invited participants from other schools of social pedagogy and countries.*

During the **first year of the conference**, the organisers decided, among other things, to present the creation and development of a unique study programme in Social Pedagogy

and Education (SPV), which has no analogue in Slovakia or in other European countries, thanks to the synergistic combination of the competences of pedagogical and professional staff in a single graduate profile. Social pedagogy is closely intertwined with leisure time pedagogy, which allows students to acquire more study competences for the performance of their future profession, e.g., to implement inclusion in the field of non-formal education.



Figure 2: The conference took place shortly after the end of the pandemic measures in a hybrid form.

The conference also created a platform for the exchange of experiences between representatives from the academic environment, with social pedagogues from practice and with the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, with which the Department of Educational Studies signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in 2020. A significant proportion of the practitioners were the graduates of the SPV study programme who successfully progressed into various spheres of educational activity, e.g., as social pedagogues in schools, school counselling centres, and leisure centres, in the field of social protection of children in the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and in the municipal police.



Figure 3: Conference participants – students, graduates, practitioners, educators.

The conference programme was designed to give participants the opportunity to choose academically or practically oriented sessions, and for students there were “living books” – stories of professionals from educational practice.

Of representatives from the departments offering study programmes with a focus on social pedagogy in Slovakia and the Czech Republic were invited to the event, which made it possible to observe the research focus of individual departments and to compare the development of the study programme and its future direction at individual universities.

At the same time, the international conference provided a space, through plenary speeches, to search for answers to questions such as:

- *On the platform of which theoretical concepts has social pedagogy been developing in Central Europe?*
- *How is the current transformation of the education and counselling system in Slovakia taking place?*
- *What has been the development so far, and what are the perspectives of the host school of social pedagogy in Trnava?*

Further presentations by active participants brought some interesting and stimulating inspirations in the afternoon sessions. The contents can be found [in the conference abstract book \(2022\)](#), and some of the papers directly reflected the current post-pandemic situation from the perspective of social pedagogy.

For example, in Session 1, in which academics and representatives of the various universities discussed the latest trends being applied in the science, research and teaching of future social pedagogues, the presentations included:

- *the implementation of action research at the University of Ostrava (Czech Republic),*
- *the use of self-experience groups through applied improvisation at Masaryk University in Brno (Czech Republic),*
- *reflection and comparison of undergraduate social pedagogical training in the Slovak Republic and in selected Scandinavian countries at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (Slovak Republic),*
- *new trends in practical training of social pedagogues in the school of social pedagogy at the University of Trnava in Trnava (Slovak Republic).*

The conference, which focused not only on the development and current situation of social pedagogy in the Slovak-Czech environment, also featured presentations that sought answers to the field of social pedagogical perspectives, especially in the area of planetary social pedagogy, the use of new teaching strategies, or the validation of new research and diagnostic tools. Therefore, after the conference, the social pedagogues from the Department of Educational Studies finally decided, in collaboration with the invited presenters, to produce an edited book entitled [Story of Social Pedagogy](#). Development, Current *The State and Future of Social Pedagogy in the Slovak-Czech Environment (2022)*, was published by Typi Universitatis Tyrnaviensis publishing house of the University of Trnava in Trnava and can be ordered from the VEDA publishing house.

In the second session, in which university lecturers and practitioners took part in discussions, the following themes resonated in particular:

- *virtual threats in Generation Z and related new challenges for social educators today,*
- *supporting the professional activities of the social pedagogue in different spheres of educational practice,*
- *opportunities for the social pedagogue in the early care of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds,*
- *the possibilities of therapeutic work with children and youth at risk in the context of social pedagogy, etc.*

All papers and presentations from this session have already been posted [on the conference website](#) and are also published in the form of [electronic proceedings](#) with a title identical to the conference title and on the faculty website, and where a recording of the meeting with “[the living library](#)” is also included.

In the third session, in which social pedagogues working in practice exchanged their experiences, they presented practical examples from specific spheres in the application of the profession, e.g. in school as members of a support team, at the Office of Social Affairs and Family, in a leisure centre, in a civic association or community centres, and in the performance of social pedagogical activities, such as in the provision of crisis intervention, in the provision of social protection, in the application of play therapy, in the implementation of an intervention or development programme, or in the validation of a manual for aspiring social pedagogues. From the presented examples of good practice, the SOCEDU editorial team created a methodological manual entitled [Handbook \(not only\) for Social Pedagogues](#) in printed and electronic form.

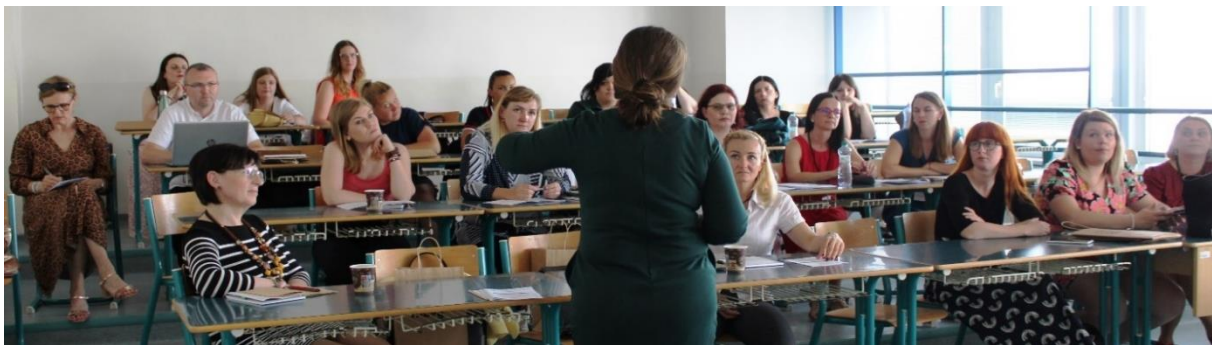


Figure 4: Practitioners' session.

After a long period of social isolation, the conference provided an opportunity for participants to meet in person, to establish cooperation and to create valuable outputs that represent inspiring resources for the scientific, research, professional and practical activities of the community of social pedagogues working in the Slovak and Czech environment.