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**Manifestation of Societal Attitude towards the Social Work Profession in
Lithuania and the Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis**

Master's thesis

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Certification on the Original Authorship of the Master Thesis

I confirm that the submitted master thesis *Manifestation of Societal Attitude towards the Social Work Profession in Lithuania and the Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis* is:

1. Performed independently and is not submitted for another course in the current or previous semesters.
2. Was not used in another institute/university in Lithuania and abroad.
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Summary of the Master's Thesis

The Master's Thesis "Manifestation of Societal Attitude towards the Social Work Profession in Lithuania and the Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis" performed theoretical analysis of professionalization of social work, by assessing characteristics of the content of professional activities of a social worker, his/ her abilities as manifestation of professional competence and value attitudes; the societal attitude towards the factors forming manifestation of the social work profession, revealing approaches of legal regulation.

Aiming to find out the societal attitude towards manifestation of the social work profession in both Lithuania and the Ukraine, a quantitative research method has been chosen, using a semi-standardised questionnaire. The research data analysis employed a non-parametric statistical method – Kruskal-Wallis test (it was aimed to reveal how the respondents attributed with different demographical variables tended to present their attitudes towards the social worker's profession emphasising the features of the structure of his/ her professional competence). The survey involved 416 respondents from Lithuania and 368 respondents from the Ukraine.

The hypotheses raised at the beginning of the research have been partly proven:

1. Society has no clear vision on what are the characteristics of the content of professional activities of a social worker.

The answers of the respondents suggest that they do not know what social work is; but understand where and with what kinds of people's groups the staff can work. They do not single out professional competences; however, they name the knowledge, abilities which are required for a social worker. They understand the values which are not attributed to general values but rather particularly oriented to a client, and know real material condition of a social worker, i.e. that this job is low paid.

2. Society unfavourably assesses the profession of a social worker.

We cannot unambiguously state that the respondents assess the profession of a social worker unfavourably because the research results revealed that this profession was needed and significant to society, and people would find out about this profession from mass media (press, television, the Internet etc.) which form the attitude towards this profession.

Key words: social work, professional activities, professional competence of a social worker, abilities, values, factors

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Major notions used in the Thesis

Ability – an expression of the content of competence (Gudžinskienė and Norvaišaitė, 2010).

Competence – a dynamic *composition of knowledge, abilities and value attitudes* helping to professionally, authoritatively solve something and enabling proper performance of activities (Kozlov et al., 2004).

Humanism – it is philosophy which underlines human dignity and value as well as individual's ability to realise himself/ herself (Jančaitytė, 2010).

Methodology of social work – grounds on the system of knowledge based on evidence obtained from research and assessment methods of practical activities, including narrower knowledge characteristic to particular contexts, too (International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Federation of Social Workers).

Philosophy of social constructivism – permanent construction of knowledge in social reality (Berge, P., Luckmann, Th., cited from Šapelytė, Rimeikytė, 2014).

Professional competence of a social worker – a complex formation which encompasses a broad spectrum of thinking, abilities and behaviour (Klokmanienė, Klokmanienė (2014).

Role of a profession – a way used by a worker to express himself/ herself in specific situations of support (Johnson, 2001).

Social policy – the whole of legal, organisational and economic measures. Only effective social policy ensuring sufficient social support provides preconditions to build a welfare state (Davulis, 2012).

Social work – a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

Social worker – a specialist whose work purpose is to enhance an individual's abilities to adjust to environment, to restore relationships with society helping him/ her integrate into society and stimulating individual's full-fledged social functioning (Kozlov et al., 2004).

System theory – much attention is paid to the changes in environment and analysis of its impact on an individual, strives to retain and develop relations among different systems of environment and individual, to involve an individual in various systems (Vaičekauskienė, 2009).

Values – a complex notion which encompasses various areas of individual's spiritual maturity, describes the highest meaning of the aims of individual's life as well as his/ her competence, expresses the inner world of an individual (Vasiliauskas, 2011).

Introduction

Relevance of the research. Processes of globalisation and rapid technological changes essentially alter the labour market because the map of professions changes fast. Nezelskis (2011) emphasises that, according to some calculations, more than 50 per cent of currently existing professions and specialities were not even known 30 years ago. The processes of changes of professions taking place in the world do not neglect Lithuania. In Lithuania, social work is developing under circumstances of paradigm shifting and rapid social development. Contemporary postmodern society faces unexpected things, chaotic events, diversity of attitudes, instability and risk. It has already become accustomed to characterise the present-day world as a continuously changing, bringing together various worldviews, attitudes and cultures, also requiring to continuously update skills and abilities to orient in this contradicting abundance. These features of postmodern society show the occurrence of another new society and the demand for another new social work (Kiaunytė, Puidokienė, 2011; Rimkus, 2015).

Social work was not acknowledged as a profession at once. Social work was established in Lithuania some more than 20 years ago. In the context of global development of social work, this is a very short period of time, though very significant both in the aspect the state and the general aspect of social work development. Since diversity and volume of social problems increase and social problems turn global, these become major challenges of societies which are lacking experience in solving them (Acienė, Mačiulskytė, Popova, 2015). Like any other profession, social work develops as a response to the demand for this profession, and uniqueness of this profession supposes that it is a social profession whose object is a man – an individual, a family, a group of people having difficulties or problems which should be solved. A social worker must feel the pulse of societal well-being, social integration, conditions to harmonious functioning of the man and environment; and, when the pulse becomes irregular, to provide social support meeting clients' (consumers' of services) needs. Largest endeavours have been focused for that purpose by social workers in the USA. This work was carried out on the voluntarily basis and much was contributed to give social work the status of a profession and further professionalization of this performance would continue (Kavaliauskienė, 2010). In Lithuania, social work is not a new social phenomenon; the profession of support to an individual has been developing and is being developed by an intensive shift of the social-educational paradigm, in a situation of social transformations; however, nowadays intensive professionalization of this phenomenon is going on. This process has always been and is slow. Living in the twenty-first century, we can observe how the world and its problems are becoming relevant to all. Therefore, the profession based on full-fledged support to an individual must adjust to the development of the world (Dirgėlienė, 2013; Mastianica, 2013; Ivanauskienė, Pakrijauskaitė, 2015).

Social relevance. In society, still there is no image on what are the limits of social worker's competences formed; therefore, social work is characterised quite unfavourably. A negative impact is rendered to social worker's prestige in society, constant facing with negative phenomena of life, undefined criteria for assessment of work results, large amounts of clients, overtime etc. (Kiaunytė, 2008). Influence of social work on society is low. Having compared different countries, quite high differences appear; they are determined by law, prevailing culture and economic opportunities of each of the countries. Wagner (2014, p. 15) states that "...public information means may make essential influence on processes of both formation of opinion and depiction of opinion images. This is a reciprocal process playing an essential role in using power." Contemporary society is marked with a sign of the processes of communication and globalisation: diversity of public communication forms, convergence of mass media means, pluralism of informational content, occurrence of global auditorium etc. A certain stereotype that mass media are that social institute which is most trusted has formed. According to Ališauskienė, Markauskaitė (2014), this means of information renders quite limited, stereotypical or negative information about the surrounding social reality, certain socio-cultural groups. Mass media and their various forms make a biggest influence in formation of the status of the profession and when anchoring it among other professions. In social reality, a person of postmodern culture is thrust in the world depicted by mass media. The latter depiction may be such influential that majority of society members even do not distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Therefore, mass media present information on appropriate phenomena aiming at their goals. In mass media, the social work profession is usually depicted by presenting ambiguous information, emphasising drawbacks of social workers and discrepancies; information is presented without considering the image of the social work profession being shaped, and information itself is insufficiently detailed and clear. Despite that, mass media publish articles which form the image of a social worker which becomes a stereotype. Societal attitude on the profession is being formed for decades, it does not change at once. And this negative colouring attributes the social work profession to the level of a modest profession. Having explored the Western social context, it is obvious that society without services of social work professionals is unimaginable. This profession is treated as a profession of a modern society. Its contribution is enormous everywhere; nevertheless, in Lithuania it is insufficiently or unclearly perceived (Pivorienė, J. Večerskytė, 2005; Varžinskienė, 2008; Bilbokaitė, 2010; Wagner, 2014; Kavaliauskienė, 2010 etc.).

Scientific relevance. A number of Lithuanian and foreign authors dealt with the social work profession in various aspects: relationships of social workers with government/ power/ authority in Lithuania, quality of social work were explored by Švedaitė, Gvaldaitė, Kašalynienė (2006,

2014); motivation of social workers was surveyed by Šinkūnienė, Katkonienė (2010); values of social workers were investigated by Ivanauskienė, Varžinskienė (2007); professional burnout was dealt with by Žalimienė (2014), Vaicekauskienė (2014), Kavaliauskienė, Balčiūnaitė (2014); professional activities, their perspectives were analysed in depth by Харабет и др. (2015), Овчарова (2015), Taljūnaitė, Pupliauskaitė (2013), Kavaliauskienė (2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013), Dunajevs (2009), Вишнеvский и др. (2011), Bagdonas (2001), Večkienė, Povilaikaitė (2005), Kiaunytė, Dirgėlienė (2005, 2008); professional stress was explored by Dirgėlienė (2008), Dirgėlienė, Večkienė (2009), Dirgėlienė (2013) etc. However, societal attitude towards the social work profession, as seen from the overview of scientific research works, has been little dealt with. Several Master's Theses were written on a similar topic (Valiukevičienė (2011) *Attitude of a Social Worker to a Stereotype of His/ Her Profession and Image in Lithuanian Mass Media*; Vaškūnaitė, R. (2012). *The Image of a Social Worker in Mass Media*; Petronytė, V. (2013) *Prestige of the Social Work Profession and Its Factors: A Viewpoint of Social Work Master's Students*). In this context, works by Varžinskienė (2008, 2009) and Pivorienė, Večerskytė (2005), Kavaliauskienė (2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014) are significant because they present societal (mass media), social workers' opinions on the theme under investigation.

Research problem. Various negative events taking place in Lithuania showed that the social worker's profession obtained a negative colouring if to compare with other professions. Observing information on this profession presented by mass media, an impression that society incompletely understands what functions are executed by representatives of this profession, what activities they are involved in and does society have sufficient information on social work at all appears. Therefore, this leads to formulation of several *problem questions* related to perception and assessment of social work as a profession:

1. Does society have sufficient information on the social worker's profession and its activities?
2. Does society assess the social work profession positively?

Hypotheses:

1. Society has no clear vision of what are the characteristics of the content of social worker's professional activities.
2. Society assesses the social worker's profession unfavourably.

Research object – manifestation of the attitude towards the social work profession.

Research aim – to reveal manifestation of societal attitude towards the social work profession in Lithuania and the Ukraine.

Research objectives:

1. To investigate the discourse of the social work profession assessing characteristics of the content of social worker's activities, abilities as manifestation of professional competence and value attitudes.
2. To analyse the factors forming manifestation of the societal attitude towards the social work profession, by revealing approaches of legal regulation.
3. To carry out an empirical research to reveal societal attitude towards manifestation of the social work profession in both Lithuania and the Ukraine.

Research methodology and methods:

1. *Theoretical analysis of documents, scientific literature* on the social work profession.
2. Using a *quantitative-type questionnaire*, societal attitude towards the social work profession has been surveyed.

Empirical data has been processed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 17.0) and Microsoft Excel software. The research data analysis employed a non-parametric statistical method – Kruskal-Wallis test (it was aimed to reveal how the respondents attributed with different demographical variables tended to present their attitudes towards the social worker's profession emphasising the features of the structure of his/ her professional competence) and narrative method.

The *methodological* background of this research consists of the following theories:

- The humanistic approach to a social worker treating him/ her not as a representative of a simple profession, not a person who strives to learn using methods of professional technologies but rather as an individual who has chosen social profession after listening to one's inner voice and aiming to grow, develop and involve into this process naturally through entire life style (Kavaliauskienė, 2010).
- Assumptions of the system theory of professions are related to characteristics of societal attitude due to the status of the profession. As Vaicekauskienė (2009) states, the system theory pays much attention to changes in environment and analysis of its impact on an individual, strives to retain and develop relations among different systems of environment and an individual, to involve an individual into various systems.
- According to the theory of social constructivism, the essence of which lies in permanent construction of knowledge in social reality, in social subjects, differently from the natural world, "reality" means social knowledge which determines our behaviour; however, we have different

views to it. People share their knowledge through various social processes taking place. In practical social life people confront with unique, unpredictable situations, and these problems are not obvious in advance (Berge, P., Luckmann, Th., cited from Šapelytė, Rimeikytė, 2014).

Stages of the research:

In the first stage of the scientific research (November 2015–May 2016), scientific literature on the concept of social work was analysed and characteristics of the content of social worker's activities as well as value attitudes were assessed revealing societal attitude towards the factors that form manifestation of the social work profession. Data search on legal regulation of the social work profession was carried out.

In the second stage (May–October 2016), grounding on analysis of scientific literature, *the instrument of quantitative-type research* was designed; it consisted of three diagnostic blocks: demographical, characteristics of the content of the social work professional activities and assessment of the attitude towards social work in the context of social policy. The research instrument included twenty closed-type questions and two open-type questions. The questionnaires were prepared the same for both Lithuania and the Ukraine.

In the third stage (November–December 2016), statistical analysis of obtained data and interpretation of the results were carried out, research hypotheses were checked, conclusions and discussion were formulated.

Research sample: The research sample was calculated on the ground of experience of the Public Opinion and Market Research Company *Factus* (T. Yamane, V. A. Jadov)¹, by carrying out quantitative research. The spreadsheet of the respondents enabled finding out what sample of participants was required to obtain representative data. The survey involved 416 respondents from Lithuania and 368 respondents from the Ukraine.

Practical significance of the research. Results of the performed research allow drawing assumptions that both Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents' lack of knowledge and information on this profession obstructs perception of significance of this profession in society. The performed research shows that not all respondents who took part in the survey understand what activities a social worker is involved in, what competences, abilities are required in work with various groups of clients (disabled people etc.); therefore, formulated research conclusions would enable the drawing of recommendations to the government, social departments which

¹ Public Opinion and Market Research Company *Factus* <http://www.factus.lt/main-calculator/>

perform provision of social services for the sake of broader and more profound presentation of this profession in society, by exposing success cases too; to institutions of higher education training specialists in this field.

Structure of the Master's Thesis. Master's Thesis consists of the Introduction, Part 1 – *Theoretical Interpretation of Professionalization of Social Work*, Part 2 — *Data of the Comparative Analysis of the Societal Attitude towards the Social Work Profession in Lithuania and the Ukraine*, Conclusions, Recommendations, Discussion, list of References and Appendix.

The paper includes 13 tables and 1 figure. The volume of the Thesis is 82 pages. 153 sources of literature have been used.

1. THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK

1.1. Analysis of the Concept of the Social Work Profession

1.1.1. The Discourse of the Social Work Profession

In contemporary society, work constitutes quite a large part, or sometimes even a major part, of individual's life. It is divided into socially defined professions which require formal education, preparation, emotional, physical, intellectual resources. Each profession focuses on a particular area of living: collects and develops knowledge, understanding, values, ideology, possibility for actions and evaluation of support provision (Ruškus, Kiaunytė, 2010; Mackelo, Drūteikienė, 2010).

The Dictionary of Terms² provides a definition of a profession as combinations of people's activities based on appropriate knowledge, abilities and skills, contributing them with preconditions for material provision and active involvement in societal life. Miniotienė (2008) characterises the concept of a profession as combinations of people's activities based on appropriate knowledge, abilities contributing them with preconditions for material provision and active involvement in the structures of societal life offering possibilities for individuals and their groups to create material and spiritual values, aiming to meet their needs and expectations for self-protection and professional self-expression. A profession is a specific personalised and institutionalised kind of activities (Laužackas, 2008, p. 25). A profession is something a little more than a job, it is a career for someone that wants to be part of society, who becomes competent in their chosen sector through training; maintains their skills through continuing professional development (CPD); and commits to behaving ethically, to protect the interests of the public.³

The profession of social work is a phenomenon of the twentieth century; nevertheless, the road to professionalism lasted for several centuries. The beginning of social care dates back to the sixteenth century. Social work was being formed under the influence of the ideas of the social movement of early philanthropy and Christian church. The first written sources mentioning charity activities date back as far as the time before Christ. The founding and establishment of Christianity was another important step. For many centuries, church managed the social area; and only in the nineteenth century it forwarded part of its social responsibility to new movements. Movements of charity organisations and community centres/ homes are treated as direct prototypes of professional social work (Pivorienė, 2004, Vareikytė, 2010, Заслонкина, 2015).

² Terminų žodynas [Dictionary of Terms], <http://e-terminai.lt/ekonomika/profesija>

³ What is a Profession? <http://www.totalprofessions.com/more-about-professions/what-is-a-profession>

Having proclaimed its Independence under complicated social and economic conditions, Lithuania has chosen a particular strategy – aiming to solve social problems to use the ways that were being developed in recent decades in many modernist states of high welfare, i.e. to create a stable system of social security (social welfare) and to professionally provide social services diminishing the impact of social problems and designing models for their prevention (Acienė et al. 2015).

Social work as activities performed by professionals continues existing for over a century; however, both practitioners and theorists, researchers of social work still are involved in discussions trying to give the same answer to a question: what social work is? (Švedaitė 2004; Bagdonas 2001). In the Dictionary of Social Security Terms⁴ (2003), social work is described as an organised provision of services to socially disadvantaged individuals, including destitute and elderly people, the disabled, children and the like. Pierson, Thomas (2010) characterise social work as paid professional activities aiming at helping people having serious problems in their lives by providing them with services of care and security as well as counselling and social support.

Works of Lithuanian and foreign researchers (Полищук, Янкович 2009; Pierson, 2011; Lyons et al. (2012); Cox, Pawar, 2013; Eidukevičiūtė, Večkienė 2014; Заслонкина, 2015; Максимов, 2015; Харабета и др., 2015) also present quite many definitions of social work. Some researchers (documents) describe social work in different ways. Some state that social work is a profession that provides support to an individual in various life situations; whereas others emphasise the enablement. Social work is a continuous search for more effective work methods determining larger changes, conditioned by social problems which cannot be solved by one system of a set of rules, the diversity (Rimkus and Žemgulienė, 2013).

Nevertheless, all the definitions deal with the major definition of social work which was formulated in 2000 by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), and the following definition was approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014: Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing⁵. The Law of Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania issued on 19 January 2006, No. X-493, Art. 20 (summary edition since 01-01-2016) presents the following

⁴ Socialinės apsaugos terminų žodynas [Dictionary of Social Security Terms] (2003).

⁵ The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>

definition of social work: “Social work means professional activities which enable people, families, communities and society to solve mutual relationship and social problems, stimulating social change, improving quality of life and enhancing solidarity as well as social justice.”⁶ Social work is a social profession encompassing three major components of interaction: a client, professional activities and a social worker. This is a broad, multi-dimensional, complex, emotionally tense performance. In each country, this profession is grounded on historical and cultural contexts of that particular state. These professional activities are influenced by changes taking place in society, political, economic and social spheres; therefore, due to these reasons, the concept of social work is difficult to present in a unified, global manner (Kavaliauskienė, 2005, 2010).

According to Bagdonas (2001, p. 10), multitude of definitions of social work does not allow presenting one common definition; therefore, the author states that “<...> every proposed statement may be the core of the definition of social work: identification, assessment and solution of a social problem; provision of social services; organisation and management of social services; interaction between staff and client; reaction to client’s need (anxiety); social therapy; alteration of client’s situation; prevention of social problems; counselling; mediation, alteration of interaction between environment (circumstances) and client; manipulation with circumstances; intervention in crises; socialisation and social integration; development of social skills; integration of knowledge (theory), skills (practice) and values (ethics) etc.” Berg-Weger (2013) puts it that the mission of social work is to meet people’s major needs, especially the needs of the people who are disadvantaged, oppressed and live in poverty. Dunajevs (2009) emphasises that social work can be perceived as a multi-dimensional phenomenon when social work representatives from different countries acting in different social, cultural, economic and academic environments emphasise mutual differences rather than similarities.

Various Lithuanian authors (Bagdonas, 2007; Kavaliauskienė, 2010; Vareikytė 2010; Kiaunytė, Puidokienė, 2011) hold it that the aim of social work is to provide support and take care of human’s existence within society to increase his/ her wellbeing; to improve and/ or return person’s ability to socially function striving to achieve meaningful living and gain satisfaction; to enable an individual and family to help themselves when solving arising social problems and striving for self-sufficiency. DuBoise, Miley (2008, p. 9) divide the aim of social work into several elements:

1. Enhance social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

⁶ The Law of Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, issued on 19 January 2006, Nr. X-493, Art. 20, new summary edition is valid since 01-01-2016 <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed068ca0125f11e4adf3c8c5d7681e73>

2. Link client systems with needed resources.
3. Improve the operation of the social service delivery network.
4. Promote social justice through development of social policy.

As Eidukevičiūtė, Večkienė (2014), Wagner (2014), Kavaliauskienė (2010) have it, social work, covering many problems, aims at conceptualising and solving them at the national policy and international levels by employing networking. And broad strivings of social work are linked to the history of social work and its double orientation: towards a man and society, i.e. towards the whole and an individual, aiming to achieve interaction and harmony between them. These are the activities that stimulate a change whose final aim means support in coordinating relationships among individuals, between individual and group, individual and socium and other. According to Ruškus, Kiaunytė (2010), in democratic society the purpose of a social worker is not to remove what does not meet the standards, but rather different – to foster diversity, to encourage people be themselves, not afraid of their uniqueness and teach to use it not only for their personal good, but also to contribute to society's welfare. In its essence, social work is dedicated to contribute to enhancement of stability and security in society. Gvaldaitė, Švedaitė (2005) emphasise that social work is a professional work which differs from other similar professions in five specific features:

1. An individual performing this job feels responsible for almost everything in person's life.
2. A profession of social work has no its own monopoly in society (staff work in medicine, education, police etc.).
3. Staff members solve day-to-day problems of clients; therefore, it is difficult to prove to society that such activities require professional competence and professional work methods.
4. Social work is dependent on the state social policy, public funding and administrative bureaucratic apparatus.
5. In contemporary society, social work support is institutionalised assistance provided by specialised organisations intended for this purpose (Gvaldaitė, Švedaitė, 2005, p. 11).

To sum up, social work exists for more than a century, and, as a profession, in each state it is grounded on historical and cultural contexts of that particular state as well as rendered in the framework of the state's political, economic and social system. Social work is a complex performance which is given a major task – to take care of disadvantaged and most needy in help citizens, to provide them with full-fledged social support and enable their self-sufficiency in surrounding environment. A major definition of social work has been formulated by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014: Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development,

social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

1.1.2. Characteristics of the Content of Social Worker's Professional Performance

A social worker is a creator of welfare, who does not always know how to ensure this welfare. By involving himself/ herself into the lives of people, he/ she ensures significant changes and does everything to make a client successfully function without him/ her. Working with clients, he/ she performs many *functions*: sets aims, analyses a particular situation, projects, plans, models and constructs, makes decisions, organises and implements them, communicates, educates and teaches, controls and assesses outcomes, reflects and corrects (Kozlov et al. 2004). Other authors (DuBoise, Miley 2008; Hepworth et al. 2010; Баранова, Зайцева, 2014; Maksimovas 2015) point out the following functions performed by a social worker: performance of social prediction and planning; psychological counselling, prevention; performance of a defender of human rights, arrangement, administering and coordination; performance of an activist of motivation, communication, control; management of resources and education. A social worker provides social support to clients of various ages: parentless children, children at social risk and their families, children with disabilities and their families, elderly people and their families, adults at social risk and their families, adults with disabilities and their families, ethnic minorities, refugees, other individuals or groups of those who cannot take care of themselves, community. A social worker performs direct and indirect intervention: directly carries out social work, organises provision of social services, organises and performs preventive social activities, collaborates with other specialists, community members.⁷

Grounding on these diverse abundant functions attributed to a social worker, the professional *roles* of a social worker are singled out. According to Johnson (2001), a role is a way used by a worker to express oneself through specific support situations. Teare, McPheeters (cited from Johnson, 2001) point out the following professional roles of social workers:

1. A communicating worker: identifies the need through communicating clients inside community or other institutions.
2. A mediator: enables individuals to access needed services by providing them information after assessment of their need and resources, includes contacts and monitoring.

⁷ Socialinio darbuotojo rengimo standartas [The Standard of the Social Worker Training] (2008).
<http://www.kpmc.lt/Skelbimai/31%20standartas/Socialinio%20darbuotojo.pdf>

3. A defender: helps clients to obtain services in situations when their requests are rejected; helps expanding provided services to individuals with specialised needs.
4. An assessor: collects information and assesses problems of a client and a community; also, foresees alternatives and plans actions.
5. A teacher: teaches facts and skills on how to solve problems.
6. A changer of behaviour: orients activities to the changing of a specific behaviour.
7. A mobiliser: helps to use resources, create new services or programmes.
8. A consultant: works with other professionals developing their skills and understanding.
9. A community planner: helps communities to plan means meeting individual's needs.
10. A service provider: provides support and takes care of individuals when problems are insolvable.
11. A data processor: collects and analyses data used in making decisions.
12. An administrator: plans and implements services and programmes.

Hepworth et al. (2010) suggest the variants of distribution of the roles as displayed in Fig. 1. Other theorists on social work (Žalimienė, 2003; Zastrow, 2010; Холостовой 2010; Cox, Pawar, 2013; Баранова, Зайцева 2014) support such distribution of the roles and additionally attribute other social worker's roles such as a spiritual leader, social therapist, psychologist, expert, activist, initiator, practitioner, relation builder, tester of income. In professional performance of a social worker, these roles are not separated; they usually are intertwined and a specialist must perform several roles of a social worker at once⁸. As Холостовой и др. (2014) hold it, roles of a social worker may vary from three-four to infinity; therefore, it is difficult to say which role is major or the most important because it depends on a type of professional performance.

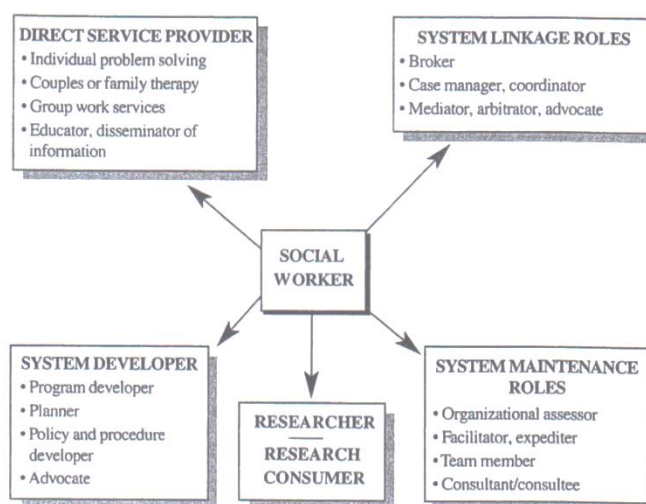


Fig. 1 Roles of a social worker, following Hepworth et al. (2010, p. 27)

⁸ Socialinio bendradarbiavimo modelis [Model of Social Collaboration] (SBM), (2009), p 175.

<http://esf.socmin.lt/katalogas/pdb/Produktai%5CVP1-1.3-SADM-02-K-01-074%20Socialinis%20bendradarbiavimas.pdf>

The Descriptor of Qualification Requirements for Social Workers (2006) also defines their professional performance, knowledge, skills and personal traits required to execute professional tasks. Therefore, the fundamental of performance of social workers consists of intensive contacts with various social groups of people and single individuals having problems which must be understood and addressed (Vaicekauskienė, 2014). This descriptor indicates that a social worker must be ready to execute the following activities: to assess and identify the person's, family's or community's need for help and to initiate its provision; to plan social services intended for a person, family or community; to organise social work and provision of social services to a person, family or community and assess social work with an individual. Žalimienė (2003, p. 103) and the Standard for the Training of a Social Worker (2008) present the areas of such performance where a social worker can implement his/ her professional abilities: identification of the need for social support, planning of social support, organisation and provision of social services, evaluation of efficiency of social work, improvement and development of professional performance of a social worker. Kozlov et al. (2004, p. 160) present three major *areas* of activities: analytical (research) work; management; provision of social and psychological support. Management and work related to provision of support to citizens poses specialised requirements to the specialist's competence of communication. Kavaliauskienė (2008) proposes that social work, in his/ her performance of significant and important functions, is like a public consciousness which constantly reminds society of various social pathologies, imperfection of a human and the world.

Summing up the functions, professional roles and activities of a social worker, one can state that the fundamental of performance of social workers consists of contacts with various social groups of people and single individuals having problems which must be understood and addressed. Different authors point out similar or identical functions (analyses a situation, projects, plans, models and constructs; performance of psychological counselling, prevention; defender of human rights; organisation, administering and coordination; motivation, communication, control; activist; resource management and education etc.) and professional roles which may vary from three-four to infinity; therefore, it cannot be emphasised which role is the most important or major because it depends on a type of worker's performance.

1.1.3. Social Worker's Abilities as Manifestation of Professional Competence

An individual is the necessary and most important condition for the profession. A substantial mastery of requirements for the profession, obtained required professional knowledge and abilities qualify an individual as a professional who is able to work in a certain field of activities. Quality of social work is largely influenced by a person who executes this work. A

human aspect is a subject of professional performance; a social worker is a key factor in professional performance (Kavaliauskienė, 2013).

A social worker is a specialist whose work purpose is to enhance the abilities of man's adjustment to the surrounding environment, to restore relations with a community helping to integrate into society and stimulating full-fledged social functioning of an individual. The profession of a social worker is acknowledged at an international level, and functions of this work must be performed by competent staff. The work of a social worker means professional performance requiring continuous development: besides specialised knowledge on social work, knowledge in other fields, continuous development of social work skills are needed as well. Aiming to define the requirements set to the specialist, usually a notion of competence is employed. This notion means the level of development of major factors of the profession: capacities and abilities ensuring achievement of a high level of productive performance (Kozlov et al., 2004). Under present-day conditions of rapid dynamic changes, when staff face a challenge to maintain their competitiveness, the demand for flexibility of human resources, i.e. ability to use not only internal but also external sources of competence, arises more often (Klokmanienė, Klokmanienė, 2014).

Competence is a dynamic *combination of knowledge, abilities and value attitudes* contributing to professional authoritative solution of some issues and enabling proper performance of activities. An individual who gained theoretical knowledge and practical experience is able to execute professional activities which condition his/ her career (Kazlov et al., 2004; Masalskienė, 2010; Makštutytė, Vaškevičiūtė, 2011; Bertulienė, 2013). Martišauskienė (cited from Gudžinskienė and Norvaišaitė, 2010) emphasises that the concepts of abilities and competences are usually equalled; however, these are not identical notions. Competences mean functional abilities to perform certain activities; *abilities mostly express the content of competence*. This is part of competence which is usually measureable, assessable. Gudžinskienė and Norvaišaitė (2010) hold it that abilities are usually noticed in the process of learning; however, they must be integrated into a certain field of activities which later develops a certain competence. In the *Description of the Procedure of Development of Professional Competence of Social Services Staff*⁹ approved by the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania issued on 13 February 2015, No. A1-75, professional competence of a social worker is described as a unity of knowledge, skills, abilities, value attitudes, motivation and disposition required for successful professional performance. Knowledge, abilities, communicative skills gained in the course of professional activities are important; therefore,

⁹ Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, issued on 13 February 2015, A1-75, Description of the Procedure of Development of Professional Competence of Social Services Staff

experience may be named as one of the elements of qualification. Each profession characterises competence in different ways; therefore, it is important to clearly define what combination of competences is required for a particular profession in a particular organisation (Mackelo, Drūteikienė, 2010; Gapšytė, Sniečkienė, 2011).

Professional competence of a social worker is the whole of his/ her personality, activities and communication which enables effective and highly professional solution of profession-related problems, performance of work, commitment. Social work means ambiguous, complex, emotionally tense activities setting specialised requirements to a specialist (Gudžinskienė, Norvaišaitė, 2010, Kozlov et al., 2004). Ruškus, Kiaunytė (2010) underline that it is not easy to name and standardise professional competences of a social worker. Recent social, moral and economic crisis in Lithuania made impact on conditions of social workers; changing society needs pose many challenges, require altered thinking, gain new skills, retain emotional balance (Šinkūnienė, Katkonienė, 2010). Society still has no formed image of what are the limits of social worker's competences. Therefore, social worker's competences as a research object raised interest to numerous researchers (Chin, May, 2015; Евгенъевич, 2015, Drisko, 2014; Wimpfheimer, Waldman, Hassan 2013; Guslov, 2011; Bessonova, Dobrosmyslova, 2012; Солодянкина, Ломаева, 2011, Mišanina, 2010 etc.).

On the ground of the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania issued on 17 April 2015, No. A1-220, "On the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania issued on 5 April 2006, No. A1-92, "On Amendment of "On Approval of the Description of the Procedure of Development of Competence of Social Services Area Staff and the Procedure of Accreditation of Social Workers"¹⁰, professional competence of a social worker consists of three parts: general, social work and special competences, and they are focused on these abilities (see Table 1).

Table 1

Competences of a social worker¹¹

Competences and their types	Characteristics
<i>I. General competences</i>	
1.1. Ability to communicate	Ability to exchange information. Ability to be interested, hear, detail and understand thoughts and experiences of other people. Ability to intelligibly and consistently narrate, defend own position. Ability to lead a mutually useful discussion, to socialise.
1.2. Ability to work together (collaboration)	Ability to work together with other people, to take an active part in formulating common aims. Awareness of personal tasks and assumption of responsibility for

¹⁰ Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, issued on 17 April 2015, No. A1-220, On Approval of the Amendment of the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, issued on 5 April 2006, No. A1-92, "On the Description of the Procedure of Development of Professional Competence of Social Services Staff and the Procedure of Accreditation of Social Workers. http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1025394&p_tr2=2

¹¹ Ibid.

	<p>them.</p> <p>Ability to timely ask for support for oneself and provide support to others.</p> <p>Ability to take an active part in making joint decisions.</p> <p>Ability to take a leader's stance, if needed, and assume responsibility for a joint result.</p>
1.3. Ability to plan	<p>Ability to analyse situations, plan activities (matters) and aims according to their importance.</p> <p>Ability to formulate aims meeting the tasks.</p>
1.4. Ability to act independently (autonomy)	<p>Ability to make decisions, to raise objectives and implement them.</p> <p>Ability to evaluate own performance, achieved outcomes.</p>
1.5. Ability to develop	<p>Ability to objectively assess personal characteristics, competences.</p> <p>Ability to estimate what should be improved.</p> <p>Ability to raise questions, learn, develop.</p>
<i>II. Professional competences in social work</i>	
2.1. Ability to analyse a situation (reflexivity)	<p>Ability to sensitively and carefully collect facts on a situation of individuals, groups or communities, to critically assess and compare them, to formulate appropriate assumptions and conclusions.</p> <p>Ability to not hurry to assess people, groups or communities grounding on earlier experience.</p> <p>Ability to understand and see separate phenomena and situations in local, regional, national and global contexts.</p>
2.2. Ability to perform intervention	<p>Ability to successfully help individuals, groups or communities by applying proper methods of intervention.</p> <p>Ability to build and enhance relationships among people, to successfully maintain and provide support.</p> <p>Ability to successfully counsel and teach.</p> <p>Ability to successfully enhance client's (individual's, group's or community's) ability to build and maintain his/ her autonomy (self-sufficient living).</p>
2.3. Ability to influence clients' social environment (individuals, groups or communities)	<p>Ability to successfully make influence on clients' social environment.</p> <p>Ability to properly represent, mediate or advocate clients' interests in groups, communities, society.</p> <p>Ability to help clients obtain needed services.</p>
<i>III. Specialised competences in social work</i>	
3.1. Ability to create safe and life-friendly environment for a client to grow	<p>Ability to create safe and life-friendly environment – safe, healthy, without violence, personal, educating and supporting – for a client to grow.</p>
3.2. Ability to develop and maintain client's skills of self-sufficient living	<p>Ability to successfully develop and support client's skills of self-sufficient living; step-by-step clients become able to live self-sufficiently, without leaning on others' support.</p>

Berg-Weger (2013) lists the following major professional competences of a social worker:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
2. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
3. Engage diversity and difference in practice
4. Advance human rights and social and economic justice
5. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
6. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment—understanding

7. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
8. Respond to contexts that shape practice
9. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work service

A study “Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards”¹² (2015) prepared by the US Council on Social Work Education maintains that social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being and distinguishes nine competences required for a social worker in his/ her professional performance:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Davletkaliev et al. (2015) hold it that these competences – communicative competence, special competence, organizational competence, analytical competence, reflexive competence, motivational-personal, individual competence, social competence – are important and needed in order to reach excellence in social work performance.

Klokmanienė, Klokmanienė (2014) characterise professional competence of a social worker as a complex formation which encompasses a broad spectrum of thinking, abilities and behaviour. The authors present the social workers’ competences related to the mastering of professional abilities and skills to solve the tasks faced by the profession: cognitive, project-based, constructive, communicative, organisational. Kiaunytė, Dirgelienė (2006, p. 26) single out five competences of a social worker on the ground of qualification requirements for social work staff: identification of the need; planning of support; provision of support; assessment of support and common organisational issues. Солодянкина, Ломаева (2011) formulate two major competences: inter-cultural and professional. The professional competence is divided into social technological, research, organisational-managerial and social project-based competences.

¹²Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2015), <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=81660>

Another group of scientists (Gevorgianienė, V., Kondrašovienė, L., Lazutka, R., Naujanienė, R., Švedaitė, B., Kupriūnienė, J., Žalimienė, L., 2011) focus much attention on social worker's general competences linking their content to the strategic aim of the European Union to build an active and dynamic welfare state and characterise them as a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills. Research carried out by these scientists in 2009–2010 shows what general competences are important to employers and social workers. Generalising the research data, scientists (researchers) pointed out several competences from the list of general competences which, to their mind, were the most significant to a social worker:

1. Ability to analyse and systematise.
2. Ability to organise and plan.
3. Oral and written communication in native language.
4. Command of a foreign language.
5. Ability to use information technologies.
6. Skills of information processing (ability to find and analyse information from different sources).
7. Ability to be critical and self-critical.
8. Interpersonal abilities.
9. Ability to work in international environment.
10. Ability to apply knowledge in practice.
11. Ability to learn.
12. Ability to adjust to new situations.
13. Leadership.
14. Understanding of cultures and customs of other cultures.
15. Ability to work independently.
16. Preparation of projects and their management.
17. Initiative and entrepreneurship.

As Vaicekauskienė (2007, p. 28) emphasises, “<...> the major and most common purpose of educational institutions training social workers is to prepare a specialist of social work who is able to form elements of social work and, grounding on gained professional competence and ethical values, to creatively apply theoretical knowledge and skills obtained during study period in practice of social work in constantly changing society. Referring to this general purpose of social work studies, social workers' professional perspectives, i.e. competences which unite such specialist perspectives as a perspective of competences of the problem relationships with individuals, micro-socium and macro-socium; a perspective of social-political, legal

competences; a perspective of the competence of prevention and administrative work; a perspective of value-ethical competence, are foreseen.

A newly issued descriptor of the study field of social workers, approved by the order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on 23 July 2015, No. V-820¹³, reads: “<...> social work based on a unique system of knowledge, principles and values aims at harmony between man and one’s environment. Studies must provide conditions for integration of knowledge, values and abilities.” The regulations do not use the term of competences, but rather speak of abilities (social, personal, specialised, scientific research) which are developed by a social worker-to-be. According to Klokmanienė, Klokmanienė, (2014), therefore, development of social workers’ competence must be one of the priority directions in creating integrated training systems based on qualification development, oriented towards the future.

Summing up the competences of social workers, we can state that competence is a complex formation encompassing a broad whole of thinking, knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation and disposition required for successful professional performance. Professional competence of a social worker is the whole of his/ her personality, activities and communication which facilitates effective and high professional level of solution of professional objectives, to perform the work, assumed responsibilities. Professional competence of a social worker consists of three parts: general, social work and specialised competence focused on abilities. Majority of the authors indicate the following key competences: ability to analyse and systematise information; ability to organise and plan own work; ability to socialise and communicate with clients, groups, organisations; ability to apply knowledge in practice; ability to follow provisions of professional ethics etc.

1.1.4. Value Attitudes of a Social Worker in the Context of Humanistic Philosophy

The beginnings of social work are humanistic and democratic ideals, its values are based on respect to man’s equality, value and dignity of every person (Kozlov et al., 2004, p. 64). Values exist in society of people only. Values single out people among other creatures, help to adjust to each other, to remain in a social space. Regarding aims and capabilities, both individual and different societies are characteristic of different value attitudes. This field is highly important because social workers are engaged with the most affected members of society, and often such person’s further life and its quality depend on social worker’s quality of performance, honesty, personal and professional values (Ivanauskienė, Varžinskienė, 2010). The authors underline that philosophical values which ground modern social work are the humanistic values which

¹³ LR ŠMM 2015 m. liepos 23 d. įsakymu Nr. V-820 Teisės aktų registras (Legislation Register), <https://www.e-ar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/14b1a890312011e5b1be8e104a145478>

unconditionally accept dignity, honesty and value of an individual. Values are treated as a complex notion which encompasses various areas of human's spiritual maturity, describes the meaning of man's highest aims and one's competence, expresses his/ her inner world (Vasiliauskas, 2011). Social worker's personal traits, *values*, humane attitudes towards man constitute a subjective fundamental of social work (Lepeškienė, Žuromskaja, 2012). As psychologists of the humanist field, Maslow and Rogers (cited from Vareikytė, 2010), suggest, values are inside an individual and they provide him/her the purposefulness in life; nevertheless, they must be revealed through one's behaviour, works. According to Kozlov (2004, p. 123), "values are more or less universally acknowledged standards of behaviour. ...Values are the fundamental for creation of social norms (freedom, equality, honour, social justice etc.)." Different authors (Berg-Weger, 2013; Lyons et al., 2012; Humphrey, 2011; Zastrow, 2010; Hepworth et al., 2010; Barsky, 2010; DuBois, 2008) name values as individual's beliefs on what a man should be and how should behave. These are attitudes, assumptions to certain phenomena which are acceptable to an individual. Values of social work have some philosophical colouring and reflect firm beliefs about people's rights to free choice and opportunities. Vyšniauskienė, Minkutė (2008) maintain that the term "value" may have both a very broad and a very narrow meaning: a wish, a desire, a moral commitment, a duty, and ideal and many other variants to choose from when something is given priority. Diversity of objects, social phenomena and ways to solve problems dominating in social work as well as ethical and value-related dilemmas arising because of it determine the demand for specialists to review their performance and personal traits as well as to critically assess them. Facing knowledge, values and skills, a social worker selects and applies them in a way that the endeavours to help usually become a unique masterpiece in practice (Kavaliauskienė, 2010).

According to Jonson (2001, p. 57), "values cannot be proven, they are not what is desired, tell what is given the priority, they encompass understanding of a desired behaviour of man and methods of support." Aiming at efficiency of support, not only social worker's skills, professional competence but also his/ her attitudes and values are important. Usually, social problems, their causes are attributed to inability of individuals to adjust themselves, treating them as individual disorders¹⁴.

Social work is a profession closely related to common human values; this link reveals an important dilemma of a postmodern worldview. It is hard to imagine a professional social worker who in different situations refers to different values, sometimes even mismatching

¹⁴ Socialinio bendradarbiavimo modelis (SBM) (2009). Metodinė priemonė socialiniams darbuotojams ir jų padėjėjams. [The Social Collaboration Model. Methodical Aid to Social Workers and Their Assistants]

(Rimkus, 2015). According to Rokeach (cited from Vyšniauskienė, Minkutė, 2008), values perform the following functions in individual's life:

- Values facilitate the choosing of a certain position on various questions or problems, are a starting point in making decisions in case of conflicts, helping an individual to choose from several alternatives;
- Values are the fundamental of comparative processes; the values are used as a certain example in estimating morality, competence or honesty, assessing oneself and others according to beliefs, behaviour etc.;
- Reflecting idealised types of behaviour or desired outcomes, values perform motivational functions and render certain forms of expression for individuals' needs;
- Values make impact on processing and perceiving social information.

Even though some authors identify values with beliefs, motives for actions, others equal them to norms, rules; nevertheless, all definitions of values are characteristic of one feature: a value is attributed to someone. It does not exist and does not manifest itself; it always proceeds in a certain relation, to be exact, when an individual performs a certain social role (Vyšniauskienė, Minkutė, 2008). Johnson (2001) points out the following types of values:

1. Ultimate (or final) values are the most abstract recognised by majority of people. These are freedom, value and dignity, justice etc.
2. Immediate (or direct) values are more specific, related to the final desired condition.
3. Instrumental values are those which direct towards appropriate behaviour and indicate the means to achieve the aim.

As the author maintains, there are several factors which determine human values; these are cultural heritage, values held by individuals or groups, an individual is related to or is keen on socialising with, personal experience, attitude towards an individual and the essence of individual's situation. The opening and acceptance of value attitudes is a long process undergoing an exceptional impact of society. By his/ her attitudes, a social worker usually exceeds the societal attitude, dominating stereotypes. On the other hand, a social worker is a member of the same society and its "product". He/ she may have taken stereotypical, insulting attitudes of society concerning social risk groups or individuals (Dirgėlienė, 2010). Practice of social work is based on the value system; it consists of individual values arranged according to importance. They are identified according to relative importance which is given by an individual to the values such as freedom, pleasure, self-esteem, honesty, obedience and equality. Social workers are engaged with people who have various problems and usually see weaknesses of these people. Johnson (2001) presents social worker's desired attitude towards an individual:

1. Social workers believe in an inborn human value and dignity.

2. Every individual has inborn abilities and strives for changes which would make one's life more complete.
3. Every individual is responsible for oneself and others as well as society.
4. One needs to belong to people.
5. There exist human needs which are characteristic to all; however, every individual is unique and differs from others (Johnson, 2001, p. 58).

Analysing the values of social work, Loewenberg and Dolgoff (cited from Ivanauskienė, Varžinskienė, 2010) define five values which should be followed by social workers in their practice: 1. Professional relationships of social workers are grounded on their respect to individual work and human dignity, and development of performance continues through reciprocal cooperation, acceptance, maintaining confidentiality and responsibility when solving conflicts. 2. Social workers respect human rights to choose, agree upon services and participation in a process of support. 3. Social workers help to humanise social institutions which would meet the needs of people better. 4. Social workers behave respectfully and accept various unique differences of the humankind. 5. Social workers are responsible for their ethical behaviour, quality of their practice, continuous development of knowledge and skills.

The Strategy of the Association of Schools of Social Work for the period 2016–2020 presents key values formulated on the ground of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Social Model: EASSW's values derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and European Social Model are: 1. Critical thinking; 2. Value of sharing; 3. Diversity; 4. Inclusion; 5. Solidarity; 6. Creativity; 7. Learning and development; 8. Transparency; 9. Responsibility; 10. Participation.¹⁵

The British Association of Social Workers¹⁶ divides values into three groups and points out the following principles of ethics:

1. Human rights – Upholding and promoting human dignity, and well-being; Respecting the right to self-determination; Promoting the right to participation; Treating each person as a whole; Identifying and developing strengths.
2. Social justice – Challenging discrimination; Recognising diversity; Distributing resources; Challenging unjust policies and practices; Working in solidarity.
3. Professional integrity – Upholding the values and reputation of the profession; Being trustworthy; Maintaining professional boundaries; Making considered professional judgements; Being professionally accountable.

In 1981, the National Association of Social Workers set ten values of its profession:

¹⁵ European Association of Schools of Social Work <http://www.eassw.org/global-social-work/2/gdsw-a-global-definition-of-social-work-.html>

¹⁶ British Association of Social Workers www.basw.co.uk/codeofethics

- To accept an individual as the most important in society;
- To retain confidentiality;
- To regard client's requests when providing new services;
- To separate personal feelings and needs from professional relations;
- To render knowledge and skills to others;
- To respect individual and group differences;
- To persistently try for the sake of a client despite disappointments;
- To acknowledge social justice and every society member's economic, physical and spiritual well-being;
- To be responsible for model personal and professional behaviour (Ivanauskienė, Varžinskienė, 2007).

Vyšniauskienė, Minkutė, (2008) emphasise that values perceived as human ideals, aims or norms and standards make influence on human behaviour. Their impact manifests when individually performing various social roles. They indicate a direction of social worker's and practitioner's daily work; therefore, they must be properly internalised and applied in practice. Following diverse values, a social worker decides how to behave in a particular situation. Practice of social activities changes due to various reasons: governmental attitudes, society pressure, initiative of social workers; varying values may initiate a change themselves, i.e. they may become an impulse for a change. Every day, social workers face especially difficult political, economic and moral problems. Solving a conflict of interests, they always must choose. And this choice often becomes very complicated (Vyšniauskienė, Minkutė, 2008).

Summing up, values are certain ideals, aims or beliefs. Values have a moral colouring because they reflect individual understanding of what is right, good or desired. Philosophical values grounding modern social work are humanistic values which unconditionally accept dignity, honesty and value of an individual. Professional relationships of social workers are based on their respect to individual work and human dignity, and development of performance is continued through reciprocal cooperation, acceptance, following confidentiality, honesty and responsibility when solving conflicts; social workers respect people's rights to choose, agree upon services and participation in a process of support; help to humanise social institutions which would meet people's needs better; behave respectfully and accept various unique differences of the humankind; social workers are responsible for their own ethical behaviour, quality of their practice, continuous development of knowledge and skills. Values are important for practice of a social worker, and, depending on a particular situation, a social worker personally chooses what value attitudes to follow.

1.2. Legal Regulation of Social Worker's Professional Performance

Social work is a profession whose one of the purposes is social justice. Since the social and economic context of society is changing, alteration of social security policy proceeds. Like in other countries, in Lithuania social policy tends towards restriction of social security measures by financing them from the state budget (Skučienė, 2015). Social policy is the whole of legal, organisational and economic measures dedicated to social defence of people of the state by providing them conditions to work, together in solidarity providing support to individuals who due to independent from them circumstances are not able to ensure necessary living conditions meeting acknowledged standards. As major EU strategic documents suggest (Lisbon Strategy, A New Strategy for Social Cohesion approved by the European Council etc.), social policy in the EU is an important prerequisite for economic growth (Davulis, 2012). Thus, social work is determined by social policy, and the latter is determined by social institutions, economic conditions and ideologies in the context of fostered historical past of society as well as prevailing social values. Support of a social work reaches only that person whose problems are listed in legal documents regulating social support, and only then if a person meets all set criteria necessary to receive support. Social reality is more complex than is defined in legal documents (Ruškus, Kiaunytė, 2010; Mačiulskytė, 2011).

In Lithuania, both provision of social services and social work are regulated by laws of the Republic of Lithuania, resolutions of the Government, orders of the Minister and various normative acts. *The Law of Social Services* (2006)¹⁷ of the Republic of Lithuania is a major legal act on social work regulating conditions of organisation, provision and reception of social services, principles of prescription and purchase of social services. The Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania has passed amendments to this law on 10 July 2014. The Law newly defined institutions of social care and social services, thus providing conditions to legal entities of all legal forms to provide social services; referring to the international practice has detailed the definition of social work, foresaw that social work is solely performed by social workers; set requirements for directors of social care institutions and social workers; reduced administrative burden for institutions of social care, families simplified conditions for obtaining a licence and distinguished less kinds of licences etc. Having approved the Law, resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, orders of the Minister Social Security and Labour as well as orders of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services have been corrected in detail regulating above-mentioned amendments.

¹⁷ The Law of Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania (2006).
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter2/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=270342&p_query=&p_tr2=, supplemented on 10 July 2014, No. XII-1014
<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed068ca0125f11e4adf3c8c5d7681e73>

Reacting to rapid development of social services and their increased diversity, it became important to systematise these services by dividing them into types; in 2000 a *Catalogue of Social Services*¹⁸ was prepared. In 2006, the Catalogue of Social Services was reviewed and approved anew. The catalogue presents classification of general and specialised social services, new kinds of general services, types of social service institutions as well as singles out institutions offering blended social services for different social groups of people on the basis of the same institution. In the catalogue of social services, both service receivers and providers-specialists are indicated. Composition, duration and location of every service are indicated next to each service offered.

Another document defining activities of a social worker is a decision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania “On the Conception of Social Support” approved in 2004; it indicates that social, economic, legal and organisational measures facilitate provision of the most needed living conditions for individuals who due to objective independent from them reasons are insufficiently capable of taking care of themselves. The Conception of Social Support assesses the condition of social support, its strategy and tactics of development etc.

Performance of staff working in the social services field is also regulated by the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; its purpose is to take part in implementation of the state policy of social services as well as to prepare and implement state social programmes, means and projects following the procedures set in laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania. The Department executes the functions related to accreditation of social workers and development of professional competence of staff working in the social services field. Social workers follow the Qualification Requirements for Social Workers and Assistants of Social Workers, descriptions of the Procedure of Development of Professional Qualification of Social Workers and Assistants of Social Workers as well as the Procedure of Accreditation of Social Workers which have been approved by the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour on 5 April 2006, No. A1-92, amended by the order issued on 17 April 2015, No. A1-220¹⁹, the order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of a Description of the Awarding of Qualification Categories of a Social Worker and a Senior Social Worker”²⁰, and the order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 11

¹⁸ The Law of Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania (2006).

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter2/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=270342&p_query=&p_tr2=, supplemented on 10 July 2014, No. XII-1014
<https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed068ca0125f11e4adf3c8c5d7681e73>

¹⁹ The order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour, issued on 5 April 2006, No. A1-92, amended by the law order on 17 April 2015, No. A1-220

²⁰ The order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of the Procedure of Awarding Qualification Categories to Social Workers and Senior Social Worker”
<http://www.sppd.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-copy/informacija-socialiniu-paslaugu-srities-darbuotojams/socialiniu-darbuotoju-atestacija/>

November 2015, No. V1-280, “On Amendment of the order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of a Description of the Awarding of Qualification Categories of a Social Worker and a Senior Social Worker”²¹, the order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 31 March 2016, No. V1-149, “On Amendment of the Order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of a Description of the Awarding of Qualification Categories of a Social Worker and a Senior Social Worker”²² which are needed for their direct performance and regulate the procedure of accreditation of social workers.

As Tidikis (2002), Prakapas (2007) emphasise, wanting to ensure better communication with clients, to act more efficiently and to educate them socially, social workers must ground on not only administrative, official normative requirements but also ethical guidelines, moral principles which would ensure and elevate communication to the level of generous moral relationships. The National Ethic Code of Social Workers is another document referred to in performance of social workers. The International Federation of Social Workers has approved The Ethics of Social Work – Principles and Standards²³ in 1994; this document must be followed when solving issues related to professional ethics and occurring in the process of performance. Grounding on this declaration, the Lithuanian Association of Social Workers prepared the *Lithuanian Ethics Code of Social Workers* in 1998 (Tidikis, 2002; Prakapas, 2007). Rimkus (2015) underlines that, like any other document regulating a particular field, the ethics code is an attempt to give one fit-for-all shape to the complex and multidimensional world. As the author states, this statement by no means strives to diminish or reject the code of ethics, just wishes to pay attention of social workers to reality of postmodern society and encourage them to critically assess any document regulating their performance.

Lithuanian Association for Social Work²⁴ promotes social worker’s activities; the Association was founded in 1993. The Association is a public organisation uniting specialists of social work from state, municipal, private and public institutions, researchers investigating social problems, lecturers training specialists of social work and social education, students and

²¹ The order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 11 November 2015, No. V1-280, “On Amendment of the Order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of the Procedure of Awarding Qualification Categories to Social Workers and Senior Social Worker”, http://www.sppd.lt/media/mce_filebrowser/2016/04/19/scan.pdf

²² The order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 31 March 2016, No. V1-149, “On Amendment of the Order of the Director of the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour issued on 10 March 2015, No. V1-34, “On Approval of the Procedure of Awarding Qualification Categories to Social Workers and Senior Social Worker”, <http://www.sppd.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-copy/informacija-socialiniu-paslaugu-srities-darbuotojams/socialiniu-darbuotoju-atestacija/>

²³ The ethics of social work—principles and standards, <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/3935>

²⁴ Lithuanian Association for Social Work, <http://www.socialinisdarbas.lt/lstda>

volunteers of social work. The purpose of the Association is to bring together social workers for joint activities, to coordinate activities of the members of the Association, to represent and defend their interests, to actively participate in formation of the social work profession and social policy, grounding its activities on principles of democracy, voluntarism.²⁵

The Ukraine is attributed to the block of countries which were not awarded the opportunity to avoid problems of social divide. In the Ukraine, the beginnings of the social work profession were laid by the joint EU project TACIC, involving the Ukraine, Finland and Holland, called “Social Work in the Ukraine”. In 1996–1998, on the ground of the outcomes of this project, Ministries of Labour and Social Policy started training professional specialists of social work (Харабета и др., 2015). As Gorbatiuk (2009) puts it, effective creation of the legal system of the state was the most important factor in improvement of social work in the Ukraine. In contemporary Ukraine, social work and security of citizens are regulated by more than 50 orders of the President of the Ukraine, decrees and decisions of ministers of the Ukraine, also orders of various ministries, legal acts of both international and national levels. The major document is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which focuses the main attention to enhancement of economic, social and cultural human rights. A major national law of the Ukraine is the Constitution²⁶; it ensures rights and freedoms to citizens of the state (Art. 46 ensures the right to social security). The law of the Ukraine “On Social Services” defines main organisational and legal fundamentals and diversity of provided social services. Single laws followed by social workers in the Ukraine define the procedure of state social support to citizens attributed to various categories: “On Security of Childhood”, “On State Social Support for the Families in Need”, “On State Social Support to the Disabled since Their Childhood and Disabled Children” etc. (Меляков А. В., Бульба В. Г., Поступная Е. В., 2013). The authors emphasise that in order to be eligible to perform social work, provide social services in the Ukraine, a social worker must have a licence for that (in Lithuania the licences are required for institutions); such licence has been approved by Ukrainian Ministries of Regulation Policy and Entrepreneurship, Labour and Social Policy, the State Committee of Ukrainian Affairs approved it in 2008 by the law “On Approval of the Licencing of Implementation of Professional Activities, Conditions of Social Services Field and Conditions for Implementation of Licencing of Professional Activities in the Field of Social Services”. This law also presents requirements qualification requirements for staff providing social services which, as the authors have it, are way too high (social work studies lasting for 5 years, a working social worker must have knowledge in psychology, pedagogy, medicine, laws, also to understand social-labour requirements etc.). Like in Lithuania,

²⁵ Lithuanian Association for Social Work, <http://www.lsda.lt/apie-mus>

²⁶ Конституція України, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80>

in the Ukraine, assessment (accreditation) of social workers is carried out aiming to increase the level of efficiency of professional performance. In the Ukraine, accreditation of social workers is carried out following the law passed on 12 January 2012, No. 4312-VI, “Professional Development of Staff”. Since 27 March 2013, No. 132/13 / 116-13, the Ministry of Social Policy of the Ukraine approved the procedure of accreditation which states that accreditation of a social worker must be periodically carried out once per three years.²⁷

Generalising we can state that social work is determined by the social policy being implemented in a particular state. In Lithuania, provision of social services and social work are regulated by laws of the Republic of Lithuania, decisions of the Government, orders of the Minister and various normative acts. *The Law of Social Services* of the Republic of Lithuania (2006) is a major legal document on social work regulating conditions of organisation, provision and reception of social services, principles of prescription and purchase of social services. The Ukrainian law “On Social Services” defines major organisational and legal fundamentals as well as diversity of provided social services. In both Lithuania and the Ukraine, social workers perform their functions following various laws which regulate their activities. In Lithuania, activities of social services staff are also regulated by the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; its purpose is to participate in implementation of the state policy of social services and to prepare and implement state social programmes, means and projects in the framework of the procedures set in laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.

1.3. Analysis of the Factors Shaping the Societal Attitude to the Social Work Profession

After restoration of Independence in Lithuania, surveys of public opinion and their results became an inseparable part of social life in Lithuania and other democratic countries. Public opinion is important for many reasons, and survey results are like a mirror reflecting both positive and negative diversity of opinions (Gaidys, 2009).

Povilūnas (2011) states that professions are the product of society which is becoming more modern and rational. Public opinion is one of the most significant factors determining the status of a profession. Society acknowledges competences of professionals, assesses their endeavours, ensures higher prestige and higher autonomy of performance. The opinion, its status on a particular profession is determined by certain *internal* and *external* factors. Mass media may be

²⁷ The Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy. Accreditation of staff of institutions: main rules, <http://www.lesovod.org.ua/node/18511>, <http://www.vobu.com.ua/rus/news/view/18504>

attributed to external factors. Varžinskienė (2008) emphasises that *mass media* make a largest impact on formation of the status of a profession and establishment of this profession among other professions. In mass media, the social work profession is usually depicted through rendering ambiguous information, underlining drawbacks of social workers and discrepancies, information is presented without considering about an image of the social work profession, and such information is insufficient and unclear. Public opinion on a profession undergoes formation for centuries, it does not change at once. Information presented by mass media enables drawing an assumption that society gives the power to social work and has high hopes, and if these hopes are not met and the power is not used social workers are accused and condemned. From the mentioned authors' point of view, the social work profession is presented as a profession having a negative aspect, usually searching for a sensation, without attempting to present positive examples which might represent the role of the social work profession in society best. Mass media, especially television, hold an enormous power to influence public life through examination of sensitive social issues; they not only directly inform citizens on events taking place in the country but also encourage state institutions to improve their work. One of the ways of communication between representatives of the social work profession and mass media is preparation of advertising whose purpose is to form public opinion by focusing attention on relevant issues of social life (Dobryninas, 2006; Александров, 2011).

Another external factor distinguished by the authors mentioned is the *Internet*. The virtual network is one of key and most spread sources of information in contemporary modern society. Anyone having access may upload information, express opinion on the Internet, and this information may not always be objective and true. On web sites social work is often characterised as a profession providing support, just "different" (Varžinskienė, 2008; Pivorienė, Večerskytė, 2005). The government and its social policy under implementation contribute to the formation of opinion regarding this profession. Kašalynienė (cited from Urbietytė, 2011) emphasises that after restoration of Independence, the field of social services was forwarded from one ministry to another, descriptions of work positions, qualification requirements have been altered, a non-governmental sector emerged, various decisions are being made; however, low salary, unsuitable work conditions, lack of staff in some geographical areas etc. are the criteria which also determine negative public opinion about this profession.

According to Kavaliauskienė (2013), attention prevailing in social work is mostly focused on the external, i.e. visible, side of the profession. The human aspect, i.e. a subject of professional performance, a social worker himself/ herself, is a very important factor in professional performance. As Jackson (cited from Pivorienė, Veičerskytė, 2005) holds it, they

are the ambassadors of their profession and it is important for the positive functioning of social work how they competently and clearly articulate their conception of social work.

To sum up, societal opinion on the social work profession is formed by both external and internal factors. External factors are: mass media (television, press) which usually depict the social work profession ambiguously, emphasising drawbacks of social workers and discrepancies; the Internet where anyone having access to it may express his/ her opinion and this opinion may not always be objective and true, the state social policy; internal factors are the following: positive/ negative attitude of social workers towards their profession shapes opinion on this profession.

A review of the scientific theoretical insights, it is possible to make the following generalizations:

To sum up, social work exists for more than a century, and, as a profession, in each state it is grounded on historical and cultural contexts of that particular state as well as rendered in the framework of the state's political, economic and social system. Social work is a complex performance which is given a major task – to take care of disadvantaged and most needy in help citizens, to provide them with full-fledged social support and enable their self-sufficiency in surrounding environment. A major definition of social work has been formulated by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014: Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Summing up the functions, professional roles and activities of a social worker, one can state that the fundamental of performance of social workers consists of contacts with various social groups of people and single individuals having problems which must be understood and addressed. Different authors point out similar or identical functions (analyses a situation, projects, plans, models and constructs; performance of psychological counselling, prevention; defender of human rights; organisation, administering and coordination; motivation, communication, control; activist; resource management and education etc.) and professional roles which may vary from three-four to infinity; therefore, it cannot be emphasised which role is the most important or major because it depends on a type of worker's performance.

Summing up the competences of social workers, we can state that competence is a complex formation encompassing a broad whole of thinking, knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation and disposition required for successful professional performance. Professional

competence of a social worker is the whole of his/ her personality, activities and communication which facilitates effective and high professional level of solution of professional objectives, to perform the work, assumed responsibilities. Professional competence of a social worker consists of three parts: general, social work and specialised competence focused on abilities. Majority of the authors indicate the following key competences: ability to analyse and systematise information; ability to organise and plan own work; ability to socialise and communicate with clients, groups, organisations; ability to apply knowledge in practice; ability to follow provisions of professional ethics etc.

Summing up, values are certain ideals, aims or beliefs. Values have a moral colouring because they reflect individual understanding of what is right, good or desired. Philosophical values grounding modern social work are humanistic values which unconditionally accept dignity, honesty and value of an individual. Professional relationships of social workers are based on their respect to individual work and human dignity, and development of performance is continued through reciprocal cooperation, acceptance, following confidentiality, honesty and responsibility when solving conflicts; social workers respect people's rights to choose, agree upon services and participation in a process of support; help to humanise social institutions which would meet people's needs better; behave respectfully and accept various unique differences of the humankind; social workers are responsible for their own ethical behaviour, quality of their practice, continuous development of knowledge and skills. Values are important for practice of a social worker, and, depending on a particular situation, a social worker personally chooses what value attitudes to follow.

Generalising we can state that social work is determined by the social policy being implemented in a particular state. In Lithuania, provision of social services and social work are regulated by laws of the Republic of Lithuania, decisions of the Government, orders of the Minister and various normative acts. *The Law of Social Services* of the Republic of Lithuania (2006) is a major legal document on social work regulating conditions of organisation, provision and reception of social services, principles of prescription and purchase of social services. The Ukrainian law "On Social Services" defines major organisational and legal fundamentals as well as diversity of provided social services. In both Lithuania and the Ukraine, social workers perform their functions following various laws which regulate their activities. In Lithuania, activities of social services staff are also regulated by the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; its purpose is to participate in implementation of the state policy of social services and to prepare and implement state social programmes, means and projects in the framework of the procedures set in laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania.

To sum up, societal opinion on the social work profession is formed by both external and internal factors. External factors are: mass media (television, press) which usually depict the social work profession ambiguously, emphasising drawbacks of social workers and discrepancies; the Internet where anyone having access to it may express his/ her opinion and this opinion may not always be objective and true, the state social policy; internal factors are the following: positive/ negative attitude of social workers towards their profession shapes opinion on this profession.

2. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIETAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION IN LITHUANIA AND THE UKRAINE

2.1. Research Methodology

To modern society, professional social work is of vital importance; nevertheless, the status of the social work profession, its recognition and influence on societal processes remains negative. Usually, social work makes no significant influence not only in society in a broader sense, but also in local communities or public sector institutions. According to some authors (Švedaitė-Sakalauskė, Gvaldaitė, Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, 2014), the social work profession is complex and still ambiguously assessed.

The joint declaration of the International Association of Schools of Social Work²⁸ (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers²⁹ (IFSW) proclaims: methodology of social work is grounded on the system of knowledge based on evidence obtained via exploration of practical activities and assessment methods, involving narrower knowledge characteristic to certain contexts, too. The theory of social work regards complexity of interaction between people and their environment and acknowledges people's ability to resist the influence as well as to change themselves under the influence of various factors, including bio-psychological ones. Research on social work is being increasingly perceived as a process which reveals a scientific applied area of social work. Payne (cited from Acienė, 2014) puts it that social work seemingly has no particular theories. They are constructed on the ground of other sciences, usually sociology and psychology.

To achieve the research aim, i.e. to reveal societal attitude towards the social work profession in Lithuania and the Ukraine, the following theories have been applied as a methodological research ground:

Humanistic approach to a social worker treating him/ her not as a representative of a simple profession, not as a person who strives to learn using the methods of professional technologies but rather as an individual who has chosen a social profession after having attentively listened to one's inner voice and aiming to grow, develop and involve into this process naturally through one's entire life style (Kavaliauskienė, 2010). According to Jančaitytė (2010), humanism is philosophy which underlines person's dignity and value as well as his/ her ability to realise himself/ herself. This is philosophy which acknowledges equality, development of inborn characteristics and abilities, revelation of personality, provision of favourable conditions for societal living. As Vitkauskaitė (2001) puts it, a social worker-professional

²⁸ International Association of Schools of Social Work, <https://www.iassw-aiets.org/>

²⁹ International Federation of Social Workers, <http://www.ifsw.org>

following the humanistic worldview should ground on certain attitudes: an object of social support is a personality; every person is unique; a man creates society and society creates a man; everyone has inborn potential capabilities to develop, self-realise himself/ herself in the future which is little dependent on that personality's past; a man is unconditionally valuable and, therefore, to be respected and valued as such; every person has the right to choose his/ her values, goals, to independently decide and be responsible for the decisions. From a social work standpoint, these attitudes are valuable because they meet the purpose of the profession, i.e. taking care of others, being together with the other, striving to express oneself through authentic revelation of obligations of the profession and in the course of execution of the duties. A social worker is not limited by some action technologies; on the contrary, he/ she may choose the most suitable ways of action meeting a particular problem or purpose, also providing an opportunity to realise oneself through the profession by establishing the values and ideals of social work, executing one's duty according to the highest criteria (Kavaliauskienė, 2010).

Analysing complex situations and encouraging individual, organisational, societal and cultural changes, professional social work applies *theories of development* of human behaviour and societal *systems* (Kozlovas, 2004, p. 72). Assumptions of the system theory concerning professions are related to the particularities of public opinion about the status of the profession. As Vaicekauskienė (2009) holds it, the system theory pays much attention to changes in the environment and analysis of its impact on an individual, strives to retain and develop links among different systems of environment and individual, to involve an individual in various systems. A. Abbott (cited from Varžinskienė 2008) singles out several factors in the system theory concerning professions which help a particular profession to anchor in the system of professions. Such factors can be both internal and external. Public opinion is one of major external factors; it can help form the status of the profession and make almost the biggest impact on it. Public opinion undergoes development throughout a decade or longer, it does not alter at once. The author emphasises that usually society retains the image of a profession which was seen first. In Lithuania, the situation for the social work profession is unfavourable. First of all, this is because low professional requirements were posed to social workers. A common practice was applied that if social workers were on demand in a particular institution, their work positions simply were re-named into social workers, but the staff remained the same; this resulted in oversimplification of social work performance. Another author, Parson (cited from Poviliūnas, 2011), emphasises that profession is a product of society which is becoming more modern and more rational. Universality of professional performance manifests through acknowledgement of a particular profession and specific competences. In order to become a representative of a certain profession, as Parson maintains, one should have formal training which, besides other subjects,

must encompass adequacy of the training from a standpoint of professional performance and assessment of the competence of prepared professionals, the culture of a certain profession must be formed and the skills required for professional performance must be ripened; also, full-fledged community of professionals must have institutional means in their disposition which would enable them to control that professional competences are used with responsibility. The author states that competences of a professional are universally acknowledged; and only then representatives of professions may implement their specific functions which they own in the eyes of the entire society. In the aspect of professional performance, professionals belonging to such an exceptional group and holding exclusive professional competences establish their associations which ensure the quality of professional services provided to society. In its turn, society acknowledges competences of professionals, assesses their endeavours and provides them opportunities to receive higher income, ensures higher prestige and broader autonomy for activities. A systemic point of view gives the profession a fundamental, and a social worker gets the ability to professionally and completely assess social phenomena, situations, resources, to plan decisions to gain new knowledge (Vitkauskaitė, 2001).

Moreover, the paper grounds on the branch of cognitive philosophy – philosophy of *social constructivism* whose essence lies in permanent construction of knowledge in social reality. The idea of social construction spread from works of Berger and Luckmann. They maintained that, differently from the natural world, in social subjects, “reality” is social knowledge which determines our behaviour, though we view it in indifferent ways. People share their knowledge since various social processes take place. In practical social life people confront with unique, unpredictable situations and the problems are not obvious in advance (Berge, P., Luckmann, Th., cited from Šapelytė, Rimeikytė, 2014). Another author, Westbrook (cited from Šapelytė, Rimeikytė, 2014), underlines that, in a perspective of constructivism, the process of social support and assistance is treated as an active process when people create (construct) knowledge relating complex and true-to-life situations to earlier obtained experience. According to the authors, reality is a product of social construction being impacted by cultural, historical, political and economic conditions. This means that person’s knowledge can change and vary depending on his/ her belonging to a certain cultural group, period etc. Social construction of knowledge changes as well depending on the conception of values, attitudes, traditions, norms of people belonging to different social and cultural groups. Gergen (cited from Bilbokaitė, Bilbokaitė, 2009) puts it that knowledge is being constructively stored in consciousness, and societal thinking is being step-by-step consciously directed towards a particular direction. Construction of knowledge has a clear social reality: mass media render recent and the most secret information on the processes taking place “here and now”. In society’s consciousness a certain opinion is

being built on phenomena they read about. If the latter does not coincide with their opinion they have, then an individual experiences conflict with social reality and may consider the perceived truth in a critical way and, after logical consideration, to reject or accept it, or do not consider and accept right away. In this research, opinion of the surveyed is perceived as a social process of their thought and action.

The questions on the social work profession submitted during the survey allow the respondents to construct meanings about known/ unknown or desired professional activities of a social worker.

2.2. Research Methods and Ethics

Norkus, Morkevičius (2011) state that empirical and applied research that largely spread throughout the latter 50–70 years in social sciences across the world has strongly enhanced attention of researchers dedicated to accuracy and strictness of research methods. According to the authors, back in 1892 a famous mathematician and founder of mathematical statistics, Karl Pearson acknowledged that the area of science was limitless and its material infinite because every group of natural phenomena, every phase of social life, every stage of development of the past and the future were scientific materials. Thus, the unity of all sciences consists of their *method*, but not their material. Usually this may be experience of practical work and its reflexion. Empirical research is another method to gain knowledge on social work practice.

Turner (cited from Gerulaitis, 2014) has it that any social research is carried out when having a clear, exact or implied, non-verbalised theoretical background, point of view to a phenomenon under investigation. Before the research starts, a theoretical approach is always developed aiming at clarity and accuracy. Thus, a researcher can ground on already existing theoretical models or, carrying out theoretical analysis, design own model. Theory is a model of reality characteristic to a particular discipline. Four interrelated notions are treated as basic in defining a particular theory: concepts, facts, hypotheses and principles.

Aiming to find out the societal attitude towards manifestation of the social work profession, the quantitative research method employing a semi-standardised questionnaire has been selected. Kozlov (2004, p. 96) emphasises that “<...> social theories cannot limit themselves with finding out only the qualitative side of social processes. They also investigate quantitative interrelations, and found social phenomena appear as a measure or as a qualitatively defined quantity.” Gaižauskaitė, Mikėnienė (2014) state that a survey is one of the most frequently employed methods of data collection in social sciences. This method can be used to survey societal attitude on various questions. On the one hand, it shows methodological reasonability and effectiveness of surveys as a strategy of data collection; on the other hand, an attitude that surveys

are an easily implemented method of data collection is faced. Various authors (Kardelis, 2016; Dikčius, 2011; Luobikienė, 2010; Valackienė, 2008) emphasise that the aim of survey questions is to know the phenomenon under investigation in detail and to obtain exhaustive information on the character of behaviour.

A questionnaire consists of formalised questions which aim at obtaining information from respondents. Such formalised questions are needed in order respondents could present information in the same way and it could be possible to compare their data (Dikčius, 2011). A questionnaire-based survey is employed when the subject of research consists of elements of public or individual consciousness: needs, interests, *attitudes*, moods, values, beliefs etc. According to a form of presentation of questions they are divided into open, closed and semi-closed type questions. When using a questionnaire-based survey, respondents themselves (in written) or on-line respond to presented questions of a questionnaire. The data is collected by using both on-line (an electronic questionnaire was designed on the web site at www.manoapklausait.lt) and paper versions of the questionnaire. Identical questionnaires of both variants were distributed to the respondents of both countries.

The research employed the nominal and rating (Likert-type) scales. The nominal scale was used to collect demographical data, whereas Likert-type rating scale was used to find out points of view of the research participants concerning the surveyed question. When applying this method, a research specialist presents a group of statements on a certain object. Statements may be both positive and negative. A respondent is asked to indicate the degree of his/ her agreement or disagreement with a particular statement in a three-point, four-point, five-point scale (the author chooses himself/ herself; in this case, a four-point scale was used, e.g. 1. *Strongly agree*. 2. *Agree*. 3. *Neither agree nor disagree*. 4. *Wouldn't like to agree*.). When analysing data of such scale, one respondent's answers to all statements are summed up and a mean, median, mode calculated. Such method of assessment of opinions allows assessing a general opinion of a respondent concerning certain objects and estimate which of them are assessed more positively. Advantage of this scale lies in its simplicity in design and use; the principle of its design is clear to respondents and it can be used in various surveys: via post, telephone, on-line etc.; however, its completion takes much time (Dikčius, 2011, Williams, Vogt, 2011, Bryman, 2012).

The research instrument was designed on the ground of operationalising of the research object, theoretical insights of various authors (Varžinskienė L., Kavaliauskienė, Vareikytė, Johson, Pivorienė etc.) and the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania "On Approval of the Descriptions of Qualification Requirements for Social Workers and Assistants of Social Workers, Procedure of Development of Professional

Qualification of Social Workers and Assistants of Social Workers and Procedure of Accreditation of Social Workers” approved on 5 April 2006, No. A1-92, amended in 2015.

The respondents were given anonymous questionnaires (Appendix 6). The questionnaire includes 21 closed-type questions and one open-type question. The questionnaires were identically prepared for both Lithuanian and Ukrainian people. The questionnaire consists of three diagnostic blocks which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Structure of the questionnaire design

Diagnostic block	Characteristics	Questions
Demographical	Questions related to age, gender, place of residence, education, marital status.	<i>1,2,3,4,5,6</i>
Characteristics of professional performance of social work	Knowledge of society concerning the social work profession.	<i>7,8,13</i>
	Societal attitude towards professional abilities, knowledge, values of a social worker.	<i>9,10,11,12</i>
Assessment of the attitude towards social work in the context of social policy	Assessment of necessity of the social work profession.	<i>14,15,16,17,20,21</i>
	The factors determining the status of the social work profession, according to the societal point of view.	<i>18,19,22</i>

The data of the questionnaire-based survey has been generalised by applying statistical methods, using Microsoft Excel, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 17) software. Descriptive statistics (means (M), standard deviations (SD), percentage (per cent), frequencies of characteristics) was used. The analysis used a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis T Test, calculating Chi-square (χ^2) criterion according to Pearson’s formula, df – number of the degree of freedom, Asymp.Sig. (2-sided) – criterion p-value ($p \geq 0.05$). The questionnaire included one open-type question which was generalised by performing narrative method. Narrative research associated with qualitative access and usually provides-form, flexible study process (Pukėnas, 2005; Creswell, 2007).

Answers to the questions have been obtained; they enable generalisation and estimation of conclusions of the research as well as develop a scientific discussion.

Selection of research participants. The research employed non-stochastic selection – convenience sampling. A sample formed by applying the non-stochastic selection method can be both representative and non-representative depending on the research aims and techniques used to form the sample. This method of selection means that random or easily accessible individuals, situations or documents are selected for research. For instance, a researcher chooses people from his/ her environment, e.g. neighbours, co-workers, for his/her survey or selects on the street by

surveying random passers-by³⁰. The research was carried out in June and October 2016 in Lithuania and the Ukraine.

Research sample. The research sample was calculated on the ground of experience of the Public Opinion and Market Research Company *Factus* (T. Yamane, V. A. Jadov)³¹, by carrying out quantitative research. The spreadsheet of the respondents enabled finding out what sample of participants was required to obtain representative data. The survey involved 416 respondents from Lithuania and 368 respondents from the Ukraine.

Research ethics. The research was carried out grounding on major principles of research ethics proposed by Kardelis (2016):

- To explain what respondents may take part in a research (survey).
- To consider how anonymity will be retained.
- To explain to the participants where the research results will be used.
- To find out if the respondents who took part in the survey wish to know the research results.

The respondents of the survey participated on a voluntarily basis, without forcing to fill in the questionnaires if they did not want. Anonymousness and confidentiality were guaranteed. The surveyed participants were informed about the research aim; the research purpose; who performed it, who would process data, for what purposes; who would read the questionnaires etc.

2.3 Definition of Research Extent

In order to reveal the attitude of Lithuanian and Ukrainian societies towards the manifestation of work performed by welfare officers, 416 respondents from Lithuania and 368 respondents from Ukraine were questioned during a quantitative research. The data on demographical details of the respondents has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Details of the respondents					
Criteria		Lithuania (N=416)		Ukraine (N=368)	
		Frequencies	Percentage	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Woman	339	81,5	277	75,3
	Men	77	18,5	91	24,7
Age	Less than 25 years	68	16,3	157	42,7
	26-35 years	76	18,3	106	28,8
	36-45 years	107	25,7	64	17,4
	46-55 years o	93	22,4	31	8,4
	56 and more	72	17,3	10	2,7

³⁰ Mokslo medis. [The Tree of Science], <http://www.mokslomedis.lt/pagrindiniai-kiemybiniai-ir-kokybiniai-duomenu-rinkimo-metodai/>

³¹ Yamane, T., Jadov, V.A. Viešosios nuomonės ir rinkos tyrimai.[Public Opinion and Market Research] Factus Dominus <http://www.factus.lt/main-calculator/>

Residence	City	263	63,2	292	79,3
	Town	102	24,5	40	10,9
	Rural area	51	12,3	36	9,8
Marital status	Married	252	60,6	156	42,4
	Divorced	49	11,8	26	7,1
	Widower	13	3,1	12	3,3
	Lonely	71	17,1	107	29,1
	Partnership	31	7,5	65	17,7
Minors	Yes	158	38	132	35,9
	Not	258	62	235	63,9
Education	Primary	4	1	1	0,3
	Secondary	64	15,4	43	11,7
	Vocational	40	9,6	25	6,8
	College	71	17,1	70	19
	Higher	237	57	227	61,7

The data from the table indicates the difference in gender factor among the respondents from both countries. The majority of the respondents are women - in Lithuania they account for 81.5 percent of the questioned, whereas in Ukraine – for 75.3 percent. Considering the relevant inequality between these two groups (variables), the gender factor has not been acknowledged in the research. The demographical data reveals the difference in age among Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents. Most respondents from Lithuania were aged between 36 and 45 or 46 and 55, whereas Ukrainian respondents were either less than 25 years old or between 26 and 35. One could claim that Ukrainian respondents were younger (71.5 percent account for being under 35) and single (29.1 percent) while Lithuanian respondents being elder and married (60.6 percent). The evidence from the research indicates that the questioned respondents from both countries had analogous level of education accounting for 74.1 percent with higher education among Lithuanian respondents and 80.7 percent – among Ukrainians. Moreover, the majority of the respondents dwelled in large cities. The analysis of the demographical data proves the extent of the research being relevant in order to generalise conclusions regarding the attitude of the societies towards the manifestation of work performed by welfare officers.

2.4 Presentation and Interpretation of Survey Results

A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis T Test has been used in order to analyse how the respondents with contrasting demographical variables tend to reveal their attitude towards the manifestation of work performed by a welfare officer. The results of the survey have been processed and analysed at significance level value $p \leq 0.05$. The significance level value (p) implies that suppositions of the respondents are statistically significant. The medians (M) are calculated with ANOVA test.

2.4.1 Society Attitude to Content of Professional Work Performed by Welfare Officers

In order to indicate the level of knowledge about social work the respondents from both Lithuania and Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as LT and UK) have, the diagnostic block on *Characteristics of Professional Performance in Social Work* has been analysed (see Table 4).

Table 4

Knowledge of Social Work Respondents from Lithuania and Ukraine Have

Structural parts	Lithuania (N=416)		Ukraine (N=368)	
	M	p≤0,05	M	p≤0,05
Social activities	2,35	0,32	1,79	0,135
Caring for the sick	2,09	0,37	2,53	0,063
House cleaning	2,78	0,319	1,97	0,296
Solution of different issues for socially insecure families	1,57	0,032	1,79	0,294
Charitable activities	2,68	0,049	1,74	0,707
Providing various services to abandoned and disabled people	1,68	0,993	1,72	0,032
Children's rights representation problem families	1,69	0,493	1,89	0,001

The data in Table 4 suggests that Lithuanian respondents regard social work as *house cleaning* (M=2.78) and *charitable activities* (M=2.68). Whereas the respondents from Ukraine claim that social work implies *caring for the sick* (M=2.53) and *house cleaning* (M=1.97). Few respondents mentioned activities that actually denote the field of social work such as solving issues of socially insecure families (LT M=1.57, UK M=1.79), providing various services to abandoned and disabled people (LT M=1.68, UK M=1.72), children's rights representation problem families (LT M=1.69, UK M=1.89). The comparison of the responses given by the respondents from both countries when asked to define the notion of social work implies that the respondents do not have a clearly delineated concept of social work and the functions they attribute to a welfare officer may also be performed by other professionals. Despite many scientific efforts to define *the notion of social work*, a generally accepted concept does not exist. Vareikyte (2010) claims that social work is a part of social support system aiming at solving social problems in order to achieve social justice in society as well as assisting a person or family in dealing with their social issues considering their abilities and involving them into the process without violating their human dignity and encouraging their responsibility based on cooperation among a person, family and society. The statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=53.685a$, $df=16$, $p=0.049$) confirms the fact that Lithuanian respondents regard social work as *charitable activities*.

Social work is not a highly-paying job; therefore, its reward is defined as a charity activity. Bagdonas (2011) would contract this opinion claiming that social work does not imply donations to poor. He denotes social work as a complex activity aiming at changes in lives of a person, family, certain social groups and society³²¹. The statistically significant difference in responses of Lithuanian respondents regarding *the solution of different issues for socially insecure families* ($\chi^2=4.619$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.032$) as well as in answers given by the respondents from Ukraine about *provision of various services to abandoned and disabled people* ($\chi^2=4.606$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.032$) and *children's rights representation problem families* ($\chi^2=11.009$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.001$) signifies that social work in the mentioned fields has been better promoted.

The questionnaire aspired to identify the institutions where a welfare officer could work. The respondents were asked to indicate several institutions from the list of *possibilities* (see Table 5). The majority of the respondents acknowledged the list of *possible* work places for a welfare officer. In fact, centres of social services were the most common choice among both Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents (LT 96.1 percent, UK 90.7 percent). The second most common choice was care centres for the disabled (LT 96.6 percent, UK 87.8 percent). The statistically significant difference also proves that all the institutions indicated in the list are suitable work places for social welfare officers: child care centres ($\chi^2=13.961$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.007$; UK $\chi^2=15.643$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.004$); care centres for the disabled ($\chi^2=20.203$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.000$); support centres (UK $\chi^2=11.825$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.019$). According to Хврабєт и др. (2015), the phenomenon of social work is quite multisided. Social workers deal with children and youngsters (in child care centres or schools) as well as

Table 5

Range of opinions given by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on possible place of work for welfare officers

Workplace	Lithuania (N=416)				Ukraine (N=368)			
	Accept	I do not have a clear view	I do not agree	p≤0,05	Accept	I do not have a clear view	I do not agree	p≤0,05
	Frequencies				Frequencies			
In hospital	330	55	31	0,242	282	61	25	0,083
At school	368	30	18	0,059	295	52	21	0,825
Nursing centres	380	25	11	0,073	285	73	10	0,252
Crisis centre	395	16	5	0,083	284	62	22	0,352
Care at home	395	13	8	0,386	284	54	30	0,004
Neighbourhoods	339	50	27	0,117	250	98	20	0,307
Local	290	72	54	0,296	229	110	29	0,291

³² Altruizmą keičia profesionalumas (2011). (Altruism alters professionalism), <http://www.veidas.lt/altruizma-keicia-profesionalumas>

governments								
Child care centres	392	17	7	0,007	314	48	6	0,155
Support centre	383	26	7	0,577	321	43	4	0,019
Dependency centre	385	25	6	0,629	300	57	11	0,114
Social Services centre	400	15	1	0,087	334	39	5	0,07
Care centres for the disabled	402	10	4	0,000	322	40	6	0,522

families (local governments, crisis centres, support centres), people with disabilities (care centres for the disabled, hospitals, care centres), senior persons (care centres, nursing centres, centres of social services), addicts (dependency centres, crisis centres), unemployed (crisis centres, local governments, support centres), etc. The statistically significant difference in the answers of the respondents confirms this fact.

The analysis of the research data has indicated other professionals being able to perform the duties of social workers (see Table 6). The respondents from both countries similarly chose the professionals who could perform the duties of social workers, to their opinion.

Table 6

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on professionals able to perform duties of social workers

Other professions	Lithuania (N=416)		Ukraine (N=368)	
	M	p<0,05	M	p<0,05
Health care professional	2,26	0,191	1,94	0,515
Psychologist	2,06	0,58	1,69	0,012
Educator	2,20	0,527	1,84	0,135
Manager	3,14	0,37	2,58	0,077
Police officer	2,78	0,047	2,28	0,697
Social pedagogue	1,61	0,215	1,54	0,001
Special educator	2,00	0,128	1,81	0,476
Public figure	2,77	0,607	2,11	0,972

The respondents from both countries chose *a manager* most often (LT M=3.14; UK M=2.58); they also thought that *a police officer* could implement the duties of social workers (LT M=2.78; UK M=2.28) as well as *a public figure* (LT M=2.77; UK M=2.11). The statistically significant difference in dwelling places of the respondents and the choice of a police officer ($\chi^2=6.118$, $df=2$, $p\leq 0.047$) suggests that many respondents found professional functions of a social worker and police officer complimentary as one of the services a police officer provides is assisting people experiencing difficulties. There is a statistically significant difference in the responses of Ukrainian respondents regarding their dwelling places and professional choice of *a psychologist* ($\chi^2=8.925$, $df=2$, $p\leq 0.012$) and *social pedagogue* ($\chi^2=13.876$, $df=2$, $p\leq 0.001$).

According to the scientists Leliugiene, Rupsiene and Giedraitiene (2006), professional duties of a social pedagogue and social worker are integral and complimentary.

To sum up, the conclusion could be drawn that neither Lithuanian or Ukrainian respondents can define the notion of social work clearly and can only indicate few distinctly specified functions of a professional operating in social work field, whereas the rest may be referred to other professionals. Lithuanian respondents chose functions of charity and housecleaning most often, whereas Ukrainian respondents were more likely to believe that welfare officers had to provide different services to abandoned and disabled people as well as to protect children's rights in dysfunctional families. The respondents from both countries found the list of *possible* work places for welfare officers acceptable referring to care centres for the disabled, centres of social services and care centres as well as support centres as the most common.

2.4.2. Public Attitude to Professional Skills, Knowledge and Values of Welfare Officers

Personality has been recognised as a subject of professional activity, however, its correlations with a professional field has not been emphasised properly as a profession gradually becomes the basic characteristics of a person as well as means to exist and reveal personal individuality. Personal characteristics have an impact on the process of work (Kavaliauskiene, 2013). The respondents were asked to identify the qualities a social worker should possess (see Table 7). The results imply that both Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents found two qualities necessary: they emphasised *emotionality* (LT M=2.55, UK M=2.16) and *stubbornness* (LT M=2.04, UK M=2.16) as essential personal qualities, therefore, referred to them as vitally important while working with *different* target groups (people with disabilities, addictions, unemployed, etc. The respondents from both countries also accented *altruism* as a relevant personal quality (LT M=1.99, UK M=1.84), which implies that unselfishness and willingness to assist others may also be referred to as one of the functions performed by a social worker.

Table 7

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on personal qualities of social workers

Personal qualities	Lithuania (N=416)			Ukraine (N=368)		
	(M)	SD	p≤0,05	(M)	SD	p≤0,05
Emotionality	2,55	1,11	0,869	2,16	1,27	0,202
Empathy	2,13	1,10	0,521	1,69	0,86	0,327
Stubbornness	2,04	0,91	0,226	2,16	1,27	0,532
Altruism	1,99	0,92	0,72	1,84	1,06	0,002
Having a sense of humour	1,93	0,85	0,58	1,67	0,80	0,28
Self-critical	1,89	0,88	0,779	1,98	1,10	0,461

Creativity	1,76	0,84	0,815	1,69	0,92	0,347
Friendliness	1,58	0,65	0,186	1,48	0,64	0,049
Presumption	1,53	0,79	0,444	1,83	1,10	0,005
Determination	1,48	0,63	0,026	1,66	0,97	0,046
Observation	1,47	0,61	0,058	1,58	0,79	0,005
Social intellect	1,46	0,64	0,083	1,46	0,76	0,07
Tactfulness	1,44	0,63	0,002	1,46	0,69	0,19
Sincerity	1,42	0,58	0,129	1,57	0,81	0,000
Tolerance	1,40	0,57	0,026	1,69	0,75	0,177
Communicability	1,37	0,55	0,002	1,45	0,63	0,064
Honesty	1,37	0,56	0,014	1,49	0,75	0,003
Patience	1,33	0,55	0,009	1,47	0,63	0,05
Dutifulness	1,31	0,51	0,009	1,58	0,89	0,000

Empathy is another characteristic indicated by Lithuanian respondents ($M=2.13$), however, Ukrainian respondents placed this quality into the sixth position out of nineteen given. This fact signifies that Ukrainian respondents did not find the ability to understand emotional or current situation of others important. However, Prakapas (2007) asserts that social work usually includes taking care of other people, devotion and commitment as well as approval, empathy, coherent communication, sincerity, tactfulness, ability to listen, etc. The respondents from both counties found the following qualities the least important: dutifulness (LT $M=3.13$; UK $M=1.58$), patience (LT $M=1.33$; UK $M=1.47$), honesty (LT $M=1.37$; UK $M=1.49$), communicability (LT $M=1.37$; UK $M=1.45$), tactfulness (LT $M=1.44$); tolerance (LT $M=1.40$) and social intellect (LT $M=1.46$; UK $M=1.46$). Nevertheless, the analysis of the data reveals that the statistically significant difference has been indicated particularly in these qualities both in the responses of Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents: patience ($\chi^2=6.897$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.009$), communicability ($\chi^2=9.445$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.002$), dutifulness ($\chi^2=8.466$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.004$), honesty ($\chi^2=6.053$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.014$), etc. Similar results may be observed in the responses of Ukrainian respondents: altruism ($\chi^2=9.509$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.002$), friendliness ($\chi^2=3.859$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.049$), patience ($\chi^2=3.844$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.05$), sincerity ($\chi^2=7.932$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.005$), dutifulness ($\chi^2=12.389$, $df=1$, $p\leq 0.000$), etc. The results of the survey declare that despite the fact that the respondents found irrelevant the cognition of selfness and other people through personal intercourse including tactful communication and patience or similar qualities, the statistically significant difference implies that the qualities mentioned afore are essential for persons acting in the field of social welfare. The survey accomplished by Вишнеvский и др. (2011) has shown that such characteristics as sincerity, friendliness, sympathy and altruism are vitally important in personalities of social workers.

The aim of the research was to identify the most significant competences (skills) necessary in the field of social work (see Table 8). The documents regulating work in social field state that competence consists of knowledge, skills and values. Gudzinskiene&Norvaisaite (2010) assert that skills may easily be observed in the process of learning; however, they have to be integrated in certain activities and gradually convert to a required competence. Professionals acquire certain skills after graduation from educational institutions as well as throughout the processes of self development and professional training.

Table 8

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on necessity of certain skills in social work

Skills	Lithuania (N=416)		Ukraine (N=368)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Entrepreneurship	2,56	0,96	2,17	1,19
Project development and management	2,30	0,93	2,03	1,12
Public activity	1,92	0,84	1,90	1,04
Negotiating skills	1,91	0,88	1,73	0,90
The ability to organize human and financial resources	1,90	0,74	1,99	1,04
Self-assessment and self-assessment	1,87	0,79	1,84	1,01
The ability to use information technology	1,77	0,75	1,72	0,90
Action research, analysis and evaluation	1,74	0,75	1,62	0,84
Information analysis	1,70	0,70	1,63	0,83
The ability to influence the social environment	1,69	0,73	1,67	0,88
Ability to work independently	1,52	0,67	1,64	0,93
The ability to create a safe and supportive environment	1,52	0,65	1,68	0,88
Quick orientation	1,48	0,60	1,53	0,82
Problem identification and resolution	1,47	0,63	1,58	0,84
Communication	1,44	0,63	1,47	0,71
The ability to apply the knowledge gained in practice	1,41	0,55	1,46	0,75
The ability to care for others	1,36	0,54	1,45	0,68

The respondent from both countries claim that a social worker needs many skills from the list of common competences, i.e. entrepreneurship (LT M=2.56, UK M=2.17), project development and management (LT M=2.30, UK M=2.03), the ability to organize human and financial resources (UK M=1.99) as well as public activities (LT M=1.92). Nevertheless, the respondents from both countries did not find some other professional competences decisive and the following skills may be attributed to the latter: negotiating skills; capacity to investigate, analyse and access processes; ability to influence social environment; capability to identify and solve problems as well as looking after the others. The present fact implies that the respondents did not consider what skills certain competences include, whereas they acknowledged the ability of a

welfare officer to realise their skills in practise. Common competencies assist in coherent cooperation with different professionals, therefore, should not be neglected.

According to Rimkus (2015), a contemporary professional from social welfare has to be a multiple-thinker and able to apply latest knowledge. Revision of personal experience and expertise as well as their critical evaluation assists in complying with developing reality and act in undefined situations. The respondents were asked what knowledge is required in professional life of a social worker (see Table 9). According to the results of the survey, both Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents considered *expertise in psychology* the most significant in professional education (LT 95.6 percent; UK 96.5 percent), which implies that psychological education is vitally important in social work as professionals deal with different social groups (people with disabilities, social inadequacy, the homeless, etc.).

Table 9

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on significance of professional expertise in social work

Knowledge	Lithuania	Ukraine	Lithuania	Ukraine	Lithuania	Ukraine	Lithuania	Ukraine	p≤0,05	
	Vocational		Secondary		College		Higher education			
	Accept									
	Percentage									
Legal	73,5	58,6	42,5	88	33,4	70	44,7	79,8	0,004	0,000
Psychological	89	98,4	95	100	100	91,4	100	94,7	0,000	0,096
Ethic	86	86,7	90	100	97,4	72,9	97,1	82,9	0,000	0,046
Cultural	84,4	81,4	85	84	91	81,4	90	81,5	0,022	0,005
Social policy	81,3	81,4	85	42	89,8	74,12	82,1	80,6	0,026	0,343
Philosophy	67,2	77,7	67,5	44	57,7	55,8	59	58,7	0,285	0,161
Sociology	90,7	95,4	85	96	78,2	81,2	71	80,1	0,076	0,129
Management	43,7	74,5	50	64	50	48,6	42	61,7	0,233	0,33

The analysis of the survey results has indicated a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards the importance of expertise in social work (LT $\chi^2=94.554$, $df=16$, $p\leq0.000$). The respondents with college emphasised ethic expertise (LT 90.7 percent, $\chi^2=79.146$, $df=16$, $p\leq0.000$; UK 87.5 percent, $\chi^2=31.719$, $df=20$, $p\leq0.046$). Tidikis (2002) assures that in order to convey more coherent communication with a client as well as act more efficiently and educate them, a social welfare professional is expected to follow not only administrative and officially normative requirements but ethic ones as well. The statistical significance (LT $\chi^2=23.300$, $df=16$, $p\leq0.022$; UK $\chi^2=40.292$, $df=20$, $p\leq0.005$) suggests *cultural expertise* being important. A social worker is expected to respect different cultures and be sensitive to cultural differences as well as take care and provide social support to all national, religious and cultural minorities. The

respondents also emphasised the importance of *legal knowledge* (LT $\chi^2=34.925$, $df=16$, $p\leq 0.004$; UK $\chi^2=53.012$, $df=20$, $p\leq 0.000$) and *expertise in social policy* (LT $\chi^2=28.645$, $df=16$, $p\leq 0.026$). Social policy is a total of legal, administrative and economic means. Only efficient social policy, which provides sufficient social security (unemployment benefits, nursing by a social worker in case of losing work or income, sick pay, disability pay, etc.), can precondition a state of welfare (Davulis, 2012).

Scientific resources define values as certain ideals, aims or beliefs; therefore, rightfulness and necessity of certain values are not easily determined as each person interprets them individually. Professional values are mostly attributed to professional field; hence, they vary as do the professions. Kavaliauskiene (2007) asserts that values of social workers constitute one of the most essential areas of professional competences. As welfare offices deal with people from socially sensitive groups, it is vitally important for them to continually nourish their professional values as well as enhance their personal and professional behaviour. The questionnaire contained a list of values defining the contents of communication between the client and welfare officer. There should be emphasised that assumptions of both Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents were very alike (see Table 10).

Table 10

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on professional values of welfare officer regarding their importance

Values	Lithuania (N=416)			Ukraine (N=368)		
	M	SD	$p\leq 0,05$	M	SD	$p\leq 0,05$
Choose	2,06	0,84	0,766	1,69	0,89	0,303
Individualisation	2,04	0,87	0,37	1,71	0,96	0,314
Empowerment	1,96	0,81	0,378	1,74	0,96	0,775
Acceptance	1,83	0,81	0,000	1,69	0,96	0,288
Controlled emotional involvement	1,81	0,79	0,951	1,62	0,89	0,022
Sharing knowledge	1,71	0,72	0,022	1,70	0,90	0,582
Social justice	1,51	0,67	0,107	1,56	0,82	0,195
Efforts to help the client	1,51	0,64	0,436	1,74	0,98	0,871
Confidentiality	1,46	0,74	0,04	1,43	0,78	0,488
Professional responsibility	1,44	0,61	0,171	1,42	0,69	0,174

The respondents from both countries emphasised that all the listed values are important, however, some of them are more significant. Lithuanian respondents found *choose* (LT M=2.06), *empowerment* (LT M=1.96) and *individualisation* (LT M=2.04) essential. Ukrainians justified Lithuanian choices, however, complimented the list with *efforts to help the client* (UK M=1.74). Despite the fact that the respondents considered the possibility of *choice* to operate freely in regards with a given situation as well as *individualisation* when a social worker is able to treat each client as an individual including *empowerment* (welfare officers cooperate with their clients, consider their strengths and transferable skills as well as their competences and

efficacies, assist them in finding power in themselves, other people also social, economical and political environment)³³ as important, the statistical significance has not been noticed. The analysis of the survey results with regards to the age of the respondents implies that the respondents from different countries distribute the values differently (Appendix 1). The results of the research have revealed the statistically significant difference in attitudes towards the values complying with differences in age of the respondents. Lithuanian respondents from two different age groups (46-55 years old and above 56) found the value of *knowledge sharing* important (LT M=1.79, M=1.83), which is verified by the statistically significant difference between the variables and age groups ($\chi^2=11.422$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.022$); therefore, one may assert that sharing professional knowledge with others as well as transferring personal experience is sensible and important to senior people. Ukrainian respondents from senior groups also emphasised the importance of this value (UK M=1.80), however, the statistically significant difference has not been identified in their case. Another value accentuated by two different age groups from Lithuania was the value of *acceptance* (aged 26-35 M=1.97; aged 46-55 M=1.99) which has been supported by the statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=20.161$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.000$). Ukrainian respondent of senior age also expected social workers to accept all people despite their social backgrounds or cultural differences (M=1.84, M=1.80). Lithuanian respondents did not find confidentiality very important, however, the importance of this value has been established by the statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=10.015$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.004$). As a value, confidentiality is mentioned on the list of 10 professional values issued by National Association of Social Workers in 1981. According to Dirgeliene (2010), performance of a social worker is conducted by Social Workers Code of Ethics (1998), which implies that the principle of confidentiality as denoting factor in idiosyncrasy of social work is one of the most important ones. In regards to the different age groups, Lithuanian respondents did not accentuate the following values: *social justice*, *professional responsibility* or *efforts to help the client*. Skuciene (2015) claims that social justice is the main philosophical value in social work, as it strengthens a welfare officer in protecting clients on macro level, supporting and encouraging both their individual and public social functioning. Aside from the afore mentioned values, in regards to the age groups, the respondents from both countries marked *empowerment* as an important value (LT aged 46-55 M=2.06, aged 36-45 M=1.98; UK aged 36-45 M=1.75, above 56 M=2.0). Ukrainian respondents from the youngest (under 25 M=1.80) and senior (above 56 M=1.80) groups accentuated the value of *efforts to help the client*, whereas among Lithuanian respondents this value was accentuated in the groups of young people (aged 26-35 M=1.57) and middle-aged (aged 46-55

³³ Wit white book (2014), http://www.witproject.eu/attachments/article/146/WIT_White%20Book%20LT.pdf

M=1.58). The value of *controlled emotional involvement* seemed to be important to Ukrainian respondents and this has been confirmed by the statistical difference ($\chi^2=11.476$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.022$). This implies that ability of controlling emotions is essential in order to take various decisions, access a given situation, cooperate with a client, etc. In regards to the age groups, the respondents from both countries agreed that afore mentioned values are important in communication or dealing with problems as well as establishing interpersonal relations.

To sum up, having analysed the awareness of the competences the respondents had, one may claim that the respondents did not differentiate between common and professional or special competences. They were only concerned about a social worker's ability to successfully realise their intentions in their professional field. Therefore, psychological preparation was found the most significant doing this job as a social worker deals with various groups of clients. Moreover, welfare officers were thought to be able to perform their duties better when they have solid ethic basics and good knowledge of different cultures when dealing with national, religious or cultural minorities. The respondents acknowledged the virtue of social work values and found them important in social field; however, the respondent of different age from both countries understood and recognized their virtue differently. *Individualization, choose and empowerment* were named as the most important values by the respondents. However, the results from different age groups showed and the statistical significance confirmed that Lithuanian respondents found values of *acceptance, knowledge sharing and confidentiality* more important, whereas the Ukrainians accentuated *controlled emotional involvement*. Moreover, in regards to different age, the respondents from neither country found *social justice, professional responsibility or efforts to help the client* very important. The respondents from both countries recognised the following personal qualities of a social worker as supreme: *emotionality, altruism and stubbornness*; whereas, such important characteristics as *patience, communicability, dutifulness, honesty and determination* were not named as essential for a social worker. Nevertheless, the statistically significant difference regarding different age groups and personal qualities allows assuming that these values are important for professionals from social welfare and similar fields.

2.4.3 Estimation of Job in Welfare Field in Context of Social Policy with Regards to Public Opinion

In order to determine the *estimation of a job in welfare field in the context of social policy*, the respondents were asked whether social work professionals are needed at all. The results in Table 11 show that the majority of the respondents (LT and UK) considered them requisite. Lithuanian respondents with high school education tended to address this profession as *difficult* and *dangerous* (M=2.31), which was confirmed by the statistically significant difference regarding the education of the respondents and the statement ($\chi^2=14.961$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.01$). Such

opinions of the respondents may have been influenced by recent events frequently observed in Lithuanian media (one of them was a social worker assassinated doing her job). Another statement marked by Lithuanian respondents was that this profession *is requisite and important* ($\chi^2=9.19$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.05$), however, *it does not require a special training* ($M=3.51$), which was confirmed by the statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=20.528$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.000$) with regards to education. On the contrary, Ukrainian respondents did not accentuate the latter. A lot of Lithuanian scientists working with future welfare professionals would contradict such an opinion. As indicated in the Conduct of Social Services (2006)³⁴³ complemented July 10, 2014 No. XII-1014, the right to perform the duties of a social worker is given to: 1) a person that has a qualification degree in social work (professional bachelor, bachelor or master); 2) a person that either has a qualification degree (professional bachelor, bachelor or master) in other fields and qualification of a social worker or accomplished a program of social studies or trainings for practical performance of social workers

Table 11

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on necessity of social workers

Proposition	Lithuania (N=416)					Ukraine (N=368)				
	Vocational	Secondary	College	Higher education	p<0,05	Vocational	Secondary	College	Higher education	p<0,05
	M					M				
Profession is in demand in the labour market	2,48	2,35	2,52	2,54	0,77	2,0	2,3	2,2	2,7	0,93
Profession is a difficult and dangerous	2,31	1,7	1,74	1,86	0,011	2,40	2,44	2,46	1,98	0,01
Profession is not requiring special training	3,38	2,85	3,38	3,51	0,00	3,02	3,08	2,79	2,89	0,64
The general public is requisite and important	1,53	1,55	1,7	1,54	0,05	1,84	1,68	1,83	1,63	0,48
This profession is not required	3,8	3,53	3,77	3,77	0,37	2,93	3,96	3,04	3,11	0,34

in accordance with the order directed by the Minister of Social Security and Labour; 3) a person that has a qualification degree (professional bachelor, bachelor or master) in social pedagogy or

³⁴ Socialinių paslaugų įstatymas.(Social Services Act), <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/ed068ca0125f11e4adf3c8c5d7681e73>

qualification of a social pedagogue providing this person will work with children and (or) with socially insecure families. The analysis of the data from questioning Ukrainian respondents showed that the almost all respondents from different educational groups (secondary M=2.44, vocational M=2.40, college M=2.46) implied this profession being *difficult and dangerous*, which was confirmed by the statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=12.968$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.011$). After accomplished a study, a group of scientists (Lazutka, Skuciene, Zalimiene, Vareikyte, Kazakeviciute, 2008) assumed that, in Lithuania and other EU countries, working in social welfare encounters heightened professional risks. There are different factors of professional risks in welfare field: dealing with people from different social environment and backgrounds, having social and mental dysfunctions, therefore social workers often encounter acts of aggression, violence and other professional threats.

The respondents were also asked whether the number of these professionals is sufficient (Appendix 2) and the answer in both countries was negative; however, many respondents (LT 37.5 percent, UK 32.8percent) doubted whether this number needs to be increased. This fact implies that the respondents expected qualitative services, and this may only be achieved by a certain quantity of professionals. According to the Minister of SWL, today, 766 welfare officers work in social field of different Lithuanian municipalities and the intention is to increase the number by 391 new positions. Ukraine also lacks welfare professionals as P. Rozenko (2015)³⁵, the Ukrainian Minister of Social Policy, promised to raise the number of social workers by 1.5 times, especially of those dealing with refugees.

Another question the respondents had to answer was about difficulties (or obstacles) a social worker encounters at work (Appendix 3). From the list of eleven statements, the respondents from both countries mostly emphasised the *lack of professional knowledge* (LT M=2.72; UK M=2.15) and *daily routine work* (LT M=5.59; UK M=2.17). This fact implies that despite their education knowing people and social situation they face is an important factor in order to accomplish their duties. Lithuanian respondents also marked *bad organisation of work* (M=2.44), whereas Ukrainian respondents accentuated that *limitation by existing rules* (M=2.11) and *insufficient culture in social work* (M=2.07) cause many difficulties while performing professional duties. Lithuanian respondents also found *insufficient culture in social work* (M=2.44) preventing from accomplishing duties well. This implies that the lack of interpersonal understanding, sensitivity, social skills, ability to analyse and accept criticism decides insufficient culture in social work.

³⁵ В Украине вырастет количество социальных работников (2015). *Главное новости аналитика* (The number of social workers will grow in Ukraine. Home News Analytics), <http://glavnoe.ua/news/n220823>

Moreover, the respondents were requested to express their opinion whether *the strategy Lithuanian/Ukrainian government pursues assists social workers in accomplishing their duties* (Appendix 4). The analysed data shows that the majority of the respondents (LT 65.4 percent; UK 69.8 percent) assumed that governments did not create satisfactory conditions for social workers and only few (LT 4.1 percent, UK 4.3 percent) stated that this field does not need amendments. The survey has shown that the respondents from both countries tended to expect changes in the field of social policy. Bagdonas (2011)³⁶ asserts that qualified professionals of social welfare have to participate in formation of social policy, which they do, in order to achieve systemic changes and insuring human rights.

The respondents also answered the question *what determines the status of professionals working in social field?* (see Table 12) and the analysis of the data showed that senior Lithuanian respondents (above the age of 56) tended to believe that the *government* was a decisive factor in determining the status of the professionals as well as formation of positive (or negative) attitude towards them (M=0.74), whereas the respondents under age of 25 thought that the internet was the

Table 12

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on factors determining status of social welfare professionals

Proposition	Lithuania (N=416)						Ukraine (N=368)					
	Less than 25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56 and more	p<0,05	Less than 25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56 and more	p<0,05
	M						M					
Government	0,65	0,53	0,53	0,63	0,74	0,35	0,57	1,51	0,83	0,74	0,3	0,08
Internet	0,54	0,49	0,49	0,34	0,28	0,01	0,55	1,33	0,80	0,29	0,3	0,016
Television	0,66	0,67	0,66	0,67	0,53	0,3	0,58	1,21	0,88	0,52	0,7	0,006
Press	0,62	0,55	0,54	0,51	0,56	0,73	0,47	0,5	0,5	0,55	0,6	0,851
Radio	0,28	0,29	0,32	0,33	0,28	0,91	0,25	0,31	0,38	0,1	0,5	0,073

determining factor (M=0.54). This has been confirmed by the statistically significant difference in regards to the age of the respondents: the younger the respondents the more often they accentuated the internet ($x^2=13.832$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.01$), which might be explained by the fact that they use the internet really frequently and the information they receive is from the internet. On the other hand, the senior respondents referred to press as to an informational source in politics ($x^2=10.315$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.035$). The internet (M=1.33; $x^2=12.208$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.016$) and television (M=1.21; $x^2=14.525$, $df=4$, $p\leq 0.006$) as factors mostly determining the status of professionals

³⁶ Altruizmą keičia profesionalumas (Altruism alters professionalism), <http://www.veidas.lt/altruizma-keicia-profesionalumas>

working in social field of their country were chosen by Ukrainian respondents of younger age (aged 26-35), whereas the radio was marked by senior respondents from both countries.

The most frequent answer of the respondents from both countries to the question *what social attitude the media contrives* (Appendix 5) was positive (LT 36.5 percent; UK 41.6 percent), however, many respondents also found it negative (LT 38 percent; UK 29.5 percent). This fact implies that the respondents received the information regarding welfare professionals from media means (press, television, internet, etc). This may also be supported by Varzinskiene (2009), who claims that one of the most important factors while discussing the issue of social work is the social attitude decided by different means of media in spite of being formed by professionals from that field. The attitudes in this sphere are influenced by journalistic editions and talk shows on TV as well as social media and professional literature meant for public use.

When asked whether the respondents happened to *use the services of social workers* and/or apply for their assistance in certain situations, the responses differed in regards to the country the respondents were from (see Table 13).

Table 13

Range of opinions by Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents on usage of services provided by welfare officers

	Did you have to use the services of a social worker?		Did you contact the social worker in case of problems?	
	Lithuania (N=416)	Ukraine (N=368)	Lithuania (N=416)	Ukraine (N=368)
	Percentage		Percentage	
Yes	18,3	21,2	78,6	38,9
No	81,7	78,8	21,4	61,1

The data in the table implies that Lithuanian respondents did not apply for the services of social workers (81.7 percent); nevertheless, they would consider the possibility in case they needed them (78.6 percent), whereas Ukrainian respondents stated the opposite. 78.6 percent of Ukrainian respondents had already sought the assistance of social workers; however, 61.1 percent would not consider such help needed if they had some issues. Such assertiveness implies that the needs of the respondents had not been met properly.

To sum up, one could state that work in the field of social welfare is demanding and dangerous as well as relevant and necessary but hardly requiring any special training. The respondents from both countries indicated the following difficulties/obstacles in this field: lack of professional knowledge and constant daily routine. Inadequate work management, limitation by existing rules as well as insufficient culture in social work were also noted by the respondents.

The questionnaire contained two open questions: *Would you apply for assistance of social worker in certain situations? If not, why?* and *In your opinion, what measures could be*

implemented in order to form more positive attitude towards a social worker? Narrative method was applied to analyse these questions, as narrative analysis is related to qualitative access and accurately depicts unstructured and flexible process of a research.

The analysis of the data revealed that *“there is no need”* for the majority of Ukrainian respondents to seek for the assistance of a social worker and they *“could solve their own problems”* in case they encountered them. They also accentuated *“inadequate competences of a social worker”* and *“mistrust in strangers”*. However, Lithuanian respondents chose the following answers more frequently: *“I do not expect a social worker to solve my personal problems. They may try to help but I do not think this could work”*; *“the number of social workers is not sufficient to help everybody in need”*; *“My family helps me to deal with my problems”*; *“I would not refer to a social worker similar to the one I have already referred to before as s/he lacked professional knowledge”*; etc. The responses of the respondents imply that they did not trust professionals from social field and tend to solve their problems on their own.

Another question aimed at revealing the actions to be taken in order to enhance the attitude towards social work. The manifestation of the results is that these actions should be taken by a government (a state). As stated by the respondents, the social policy both in Lithuania and Ukraine prevents social workers from performing their professional duties properly and certain areas lack incisiveness.

The respondents emphasised that duties and functions of a social worker are not decisively defined and this prevent them from providing their services properly. *“The responsibilities and duties have to be precisely defined”*, *“Work should be organized differently, job description needs clarifying”*, *“The system needs laws that would define duties and rights of social workers and would also empower them to solve problems in extreme situations”*, *“More possibilities at work”*.

Nevertheless, Kavaliauskiene (2010) notes that social workers are not limited by any schemes of performance, on the contrary, they can choose the most suitable ways of acting in regards to an encountered issue or goals and they are able to realise themselves at work consolidating the virtues and ideals of social work as well as fulfil their duties at the highest standards of their work.

However, the respondents from both countries mostly criticised the government, which (to their opinion) determines both the quality of social services provided and formation of positive attitude towards professionals from social welfare. *“Firstly, sufficient payment and more favourable laws are required, then, development of more positive attitude”*, *“The laws need to be changed and we also have to form positive attitude to this job”*, *“The payment has to increase”*, *“Social workers lack support”*, *“Performance and risks have to be paid properly. If a*

social worker feels appreciated and valued, the society will think alike”, “The payment should be higher”, “The raise of the payment would allow a dignified life”, “The government should improve working conditions, raise the pay and transform the social system fundamentally”, “The legislative framework has to be modified”, “Raise the pay of social workers”, “The legislative framework needs to be reconsidered first”, “First of all, the payment has to be adequate, which would incline and motivate a social worker to render efficient services”, “The professionals of this sphere need more acknowledgment from the government as well as better supply of means required at work”, “The state policy has to change”, “The development of social policy lacks strategy”.

The answers of the respondents imply the raise of payment being one of the measures to be taken. According to the Statistics Department of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2016, an average pay of a social worker was 578 Euros³⁷, whereas the payment in Ukraine depends on the area a welfare officer works in. The lowest salary was found in Zaporizhja region and it was 73.02 Euros, meanwhile, the highest average salary was paid in the region of Harkov – 248.28 Euros. An average pay for a social worker in Kyiv was 91.28 Euros³⁸. With the references to the results of the survey, one could claim that the payment is really low, which clarifies the decision of the respondents to regard this work as charity (see Table 4) given the dangers and risks welfare officers encounter.

The respondents assert that positive attitude towards these professionals may only be formed providing media announces not only the cases of failure in this field (negative information) but also cases of success (positive information). Media should also participate in persuading the society in necessity and expediency of this profession.

“Sharing good experience”, “More frequent provision of positive information”, “Public respect for these people doing such a difficult and efficient job as well as for their profession could be raised by means of media”, “Educating society”, “Announcing examples of positive results in social field and educating people”, “Diversity of attitude in press”, “Publicity of reached targets, passage of improved methods, demonstration of achieved results and productivity”, “More discussions regarding this profession, possibilities for communication with other professionals”, “Positive attention from media”, “More publicity on their work and positive influence on people with dysfunctions”, “Educating and informing the society through different means of media”, “The society needs to be informed properly as many people think that a social worker actually does the job of a social assistant”, “Control of the information available for the

³⁷ Oficialus statistikos portalas (Official Statistics portal), <http://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?portletFormName=visualization&hash=bfa1cb0e-fe9a-4b8e-b4cd-beeae99cf38>

³⁸ Обзор статистики зарплат профессии Социальный работник в Украине. (Overview The social worker in Ukraine statistics profession salaries), <http://ua.trud.com/salary/2/81316.html#chart-subLocationsAvgSalary>

society. Positive data in media”, “Reveal achieved results in the field of social welfare (TV announcements, press articles), elucidate cases of efficient performance and reached targets, exercise prevention from negative and pessimistic data where a social worker appears helpless“, „More positive precedents from this field in media“, „Education of the society during public events“.

However, other respondents claim that attitude towards professionals of social field is positive and no measures should be taken.

“The attitude towards a social worker is quite positive”, “The attitude towards a social worker has always been and will be positive”, “My attitude towards a social worker is not negative. In some cases this may vary, but on the whole it cannot be regarded as negative”, “The public opinion of these professionals is already positive”, “The attitude is already positive”, “Positive public attitude”.

The respondents emphasised that the positive attitude of the society towards the professionals of social field depends on qualification of social workers, their knowledge and competences attained throughout studies and trainings.

“Developing the quality of education for social workers”, “Professional training”, “An adequate education of professionals”, “A subject of social services and institutions at Ukrainian schools (in 11th -12th forms)”, “Enhancing the training of professionals”, “Accessibility of education”.

The majority of Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents assert that the changes should also be initiated by welfare officers themselves.

“More qualified professionals provide services of better quality”, “Social workers have to be certain of the expedience in their actions”, “Social workers should improve attractiveness of their profession”, “A social worker must act efficiently at work”, “Social workers themselves should accentuate positive and negative issues of their job”, “Norms of human morality”, “Raise their qualification”, “Proper realisation of professional duty”, “Clear performance”, “Accuracy at work”, “One has to be openhearted and eager to help people in trouble”, “Keep working”, “Consolidation of knowledge among welfare professionals”, “Do everything better”, “Culture development in social field”, “Be more attainable with people in order to help them realising that this is for their own sake”.

Bagdonas (2011)³⁹, the founder of the Social Work Department in Vilnius University, claims that social workers are commonly referred to as altruists while performing their duties quietly and angry egoists providing they start claiming rights of their clients and themselves. According to the scientist, social work is a continuous process, which requires multidisciplinary

³⁹ Altruizmą keičia profesionalumas (Altruism alters professionalism), <http://www.veidas.lt/altruizma-keicia-profesionalumas>

knowledge and ability to apply it in real practise while complying with high standards of ethics in social field and conduct of human moral values.

To sum up, the respondents tend to mistrust the professionals from social welfare and are more likely to solve their problems by themselves. The most significant changes should be initiated by states (governments) as they determine the quality and formation of positive attitude towards the professionals of this sphere, according to the respondents. The respondents believe that the social policy both in Lithuania and Ukraine does not enable professionals from social welfare field to exercise their duties efficiently and sufficiently, whereas, certain areas lack incisiveness. The majority of Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents assert that the changes should also be initiated by welfare officers themselves, moreover, media should not only announce cases of failure in this field (negative information) but also elucidate the cases of success (positive information). Media should also participate in persuading the society in necessity and expediency of this profession.

The empirical research can be done in the following generalizations:

To sum up, the conclusion could be drawn that neither Lithuanian or Ukrainian respondents can define the notion of social work clearly and can only indicate few distinctly specified functions of a professional operating in social work field, whereas the rest may be referred to other professionals. Lithuanian respondents chose functions of charity and housecleaning most often, whereas Ukrainian respondents were more likely to believe that welfare officers had to provide different services to abandoned and disabled people as well as to protect children's rights in dysfunctional families. The respondents from both countries found the list of *possible* work places for welfare officers acceptable referring to care centres for the disabled, centres of social services and care centres as well as support centres as the most common.

The respondents from both countries recognised the following personal qualities of a social worker as supreme: *emotionality, altruism* and *stubbornness*; whereas, such important characteristics as *patience, communicability, dutifulness, honesty* and *determination* were not named as essential for a social worker. Nevertheless, the statistically significant difference regarding different age groups and personal qualities allows assuming that these values are important for professionals from social welfare and similar fields.

To sum up, having analysed the awareness of the competences the respondents had, one may claim that the respondents did not differentiate between common and professional or special competences. They were only concerned about a social worker's ability to successfully realise their intentions in their professional field. Therefore, psychological preparation was found the most significant doing this job as a social worker deals with various groups of clients. Moreover,

welfare officers were thought to be able to perform their duties better when they have solid ethic basics and good knowledge of different cultures when dealing with national, religious or cultural minorities. The respondents acknowledged the virtue of social work values and found them important in social field; however, the respondent of different age from both countries understood and recognized their virtue differently. *Individualization, choice and empowerment* were named as the most important values by the respondents. However, the results from different age groups showed and the statistical significance confirmed that Lithuanian respondents found values of *acceptance, knowledge sharing and confidentiality* more important, whereas the Ukrainians accentuated *controlled emotional involvement*. Moreover, in regards to different age, the respondents from neither country found *social justice, professional responsibility or efforts to help the client* very important. The respondents from both countries recognised the following personal qualities of a social worker as supreme: *emotionality, altruism and stubbornness*; whereas, such important characteristics as *patience, communicability, dutifulness, honesty and determination* were not named as essential for a social worker. Nevertheless, the statistically significant difference regarding different age groups and personal qualities allows assuming that these values are important for professionals from social welfare and similar fields.

To sum up, the respondents tend to mistrust the professionals from social welfare and are more likely to solve their problems by themselves. The most significant changes should be initiated by states (governments) as they determine the quality and formation of positive attitude towards the professionals of this sphere, according to the respondents. The respondents believe that the social policy both in Lithuania and Ukraine does not enable professionals from social welfare field to exercise their duties efficiently and sufficiently, whereas, certain areas lack incisiveness. The majority of Lithuanian and Ukrainian respondents assert that the changes should also be initiated by welfare officers themselves, moreover, media should not only announce cases of failure in this field (negative information) but also elucidate the cases of success (positive information). Media should also participate in persuading the society in necessity and expediency of this profession.

Conclusions

After carrying out theoretical analysis, the following have been revealed:

1. Social work is a complex performance which undergoes a major task – to take care of the most vulnerable and needy citizens, to provide them with full-fledged social support and enable their self-sufficiency in surrounding environment. A major definition of social work has been formulated and presented in 2000 by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly. The basis of social workers' activities consists of contacts with various social groups of people and single individuals having problems, and the decisions on which professional role is the most important in work with different groups of people is impossible because it depends on the type of worker's performance. Professional competence of a social worker is the whole of his/ her personality, activities and communication which enables effective and highly professional solution of professional goals, to carry out the work, responsibilities; it is oriented towards the following abilities: ability to analyse and systematise information; ability to organise and plan own work; ability to socialise and communicate with clients, groups, organisations; ability to apply knowledge in practice; ability to follow provisions of professional ethics etc. Social work is grounded on humanistic values which unconditionally accept dignity, honesty and value of an individual. Values are important for the practice of a social worker; and a social worker personally chooses which value attitudes to follow depending on a particular situation.
2. Societal attitude on the social work profession is formed by both external and internal factors. Internal factors are positive/ negative attitudes of social workers themselves to their profession which forms opinion about this profession. External factors are the following: mass media (television, press); social policy being implemented by the Internet and government. Social work is determined by social policy being implemented in each country. In both Lithuania and the Ukraine, provision of social services and social work are regulated by laws, governmental decisions, minister's orders and various normative acts of these countries under investigation. In Lithuania, the *Law of Social Services* of the Republic of Lithuania is a major legal act regulating conditions of organisation, provision and reception of social services as well as principles of prescription and purchase of social services. The Ukrainian law *On Social Services* defines main organisational and legal fundamentals as well as diversity of provided social services.
3. On the ground of the performed empirical research, the following can be stated:

- Both in Lithuania and the Ukraine, respondents cannot exactly say what social work is; Lithuanian respondents give priority to charity and home clearing activities, whereas Ukrainian respondents emphasise that this means provision of various services to lonely and disabled people as well as representation of child rights in problematic families.
- Respondents of both countries give priority to such personal traits as *emotionality*, *altruism*, *stubbornness*, and such important social workers' personality traits as patience, communicability, dutifulness, honesty, determination etc. are indicated by the respondents as not very important.
- Respondents do not divide competences to general, professional or specialised. For them it is important that social workers would have such abilities which enable them to successfully realise themselves in professional activities. Respondents acknowledge the values of social work and treat them as important; however, respondents of both countries understand and single out different values as seen after comparing their age groups. According to age groups, Lithuanian respondents consider the following values as more important: *acceptance*, *sharing of knowledge and confidentiality*; whereas Ukrainian respondents emphasise *controlled emotional involvement*. To respondents' opinions, psychological preparation for this work is among most important ones because the staff must work with various groups of clients. Moreover, knowledge of ethical principles, cultural knowledge enable the workers to perform their duties better when working with various ethnical, religious and cultural minorities.
- Respondents emphasise that an attitude towards this difficult and hazardous, needed and significant, yet not requiring specialised preparation, profession is being formed by the government, the Internet and television, and single out the following difficulties that occur in executing their activities: *lack of professional knowledge*, *daily routine work*, *bad organisation of work*, *limitation by existing rules and insufficient culture of social work*; however, Ukrainian respondents would not use their services without trusting in competence of social workers.
- The most important actions concerning formation of a positive attitude should come from the side of the state (government). Social policy currently being implemented in both Lithuania and the Ukraine, as the respondents express, does not allow representatives of social work professions to perform their professional duties in a qualified and effective manner, they lack definiteness in certain areas, and this determines quality of the activities of provision of social services and formation of a positive attitude towards this profession. Mass media should present not only negative

information (cases) but also positive (success cases); also, to enlighten society on the purposefulness and necessity of this profession.

The hypotheses raised at the beginning of the paper have been partly proven:

1. Society has no clear vision on what are the characteristics of the content of professional activities of a social worker.

This hypothesis has been only partly proven. The answers of the respondents suggest that they do not know what social work is; but they understand where and with what kinds of people's groups the staff work. They do not single out professional competences; however, they name the knowledge, abilities which are required for a social worker. They understand the values which are not attributed to general values but rather particularly oriented to a client, and know real material condition of a social worker, i.e. that this job is low paid.

2. Society unfavourably assesses the profession of a social worker.

We cannot unambiguously state that the respondents assess the profession of a social worker unfavourably because the research results revealed that this profession was *needed* and *significant* to society, and people found out about this profession from mass media (press, television, the Internet etc.) which form the attitude towards this profession.

Recommendations

1. To institutions of higher education training social workers:
 - When training specialists of this field, to emphasise what group will be worked with after graduation and which competences will exactly be gained for the work with this particular group of clients (the disabled, families at risk, the homeless, refugees, children and youth etc.).
2. To heads of departments of social services:
 - To maintain close links with public information services to publicise success cases, not only to celebrate the professional day of a social worker, but also to emphasise daily activities.
3. To the government, those forming the strategy of social policy:
 - Review and differentiation of the salary fund according to the functions performed by a worker (foster home staff, visiting care provision staff, administrative staff).
 - To allocate financial means for creation of positive advertising of the social work profession which would encourage society change the formed attitude towards this profession.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of the empirical research on societal attitude towards the professional manifestation of a social worker has been carried out employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data of the quantitative research has been analysed by using Kruskal-Wallis test; the data of the qualitative research has been processed by the narrative method. The hypotheses raised in the course of the research have been partly proven.

Ideas expressed by Ališauskienė, Markauskaitė (2014), Wagner (2014) and other authors about mass media that make essential influence on both processes of formation of attitudes and depiction of opinion images have been proven. The means of information render quite limited, stereotypical or negative information on the surrounding reality, certain socio-cultural groups. Mass media, their various forms make the biggest impact on formation of the status of the profession and establishing it among other professions.

Another important aspect deals with the development of social workers' competences. Theoretical insights presented by Gudžinskienė and Norvaišaitė (2010), maintaining that abilities are usually noticed in the process of learning, but they must be integrated into a certain area of activities which later on develop to a particular competence, coincide with the research results revealing that the respondents would not like to address social workers for support due to the lack of their competence, the level of their preparation. Each profession describes competence in different ways; therefore it is important to clearly define what combination of competences is required for a particular profession in a particular organisation. Therefore, when training specialists of this field, there should more emphasis on what group will be worked with after graduation (especially with disabled people).

Social work is a profession whose one of the goals is social justice. Since the social and economic context of society is changing, the shift of social security policy proceeds as well. Like in other countries, in Lithuania social policy tends to restriction of social security measures by financing it from the state budget (Skučienė, 2015). Low salary, lack of flexibility and security, motivation (even though some answers of the respondents concerning flexibility contradict the opinions of researchers) restrict social workers to perform their professional duties in a qualified and effective manner, and this determines quality of the activities of provision of social work and formation of a positive attitude towards this profession. The government should review the normative number of social workers and possibly reduce the number of customers served.

This research shows that social work in both Lithuania and the Ukraine is a needed profession, just there is lack of more positive attention to this profession; therefore, mass media should publicise not only negative information (cases), but also positive information (success cases), also to enlighten society on purposefulness and necessity of this profession.

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Magistro darbo santrauka

Magistro darbe „Visuomenės požiūrio į socialinio darbo profesiją raiška Lietuvoje ir Ukrainoje: lyginamoji analizė“ atlikta socialinio darbo profesionalizacijos teorinė analizė, įvertinant socialinio darbuotojo profesinės veiklos turinio charakteristiką, gebėjimus kaip profesinės kompetencijos raišką ir vertybines nuostatas; išanalizuotas visuomenės požiūris į socialinio darbo profesijos raišką formuojančius veiksnius, atskleidžiant teisinio reglamentavimo prieigas.

Siekiant išsiaiškinti visuomenės požiūrį į socialinio darbo profesijos raišką Lietuvoje ir Ukrainoje buvo pasirinktas kiekybinis tyrimo metodas, naudojant pusiau standartizuotą anketą. Tyrimo duomenų analizei naudotas neparametrinės statistikos metodas – Kruskal Wallis testas (buvo siekiama atskleisti, kaip respondentai, pasižymintys skirtingais demografiniais kintamaisiais, linkę pateikti požiūrį į socialinio darbuotojo profesiją, akcentuojant jo kaip specialisto profesinės kompetencijos struktūros ypatumus). Tyrime dalyvavo 416 Lietuvos ir 368 Ukrainos respondentai.

Darbo pradžioje iškeltos hipotezės pasitvirtino iš dalies:

1. Visuomenė neturi aiškos vizijos, kokia socialinio darbuotojo profesinės veiklos turinio charakteristika.

Respondentų pateiktuose atsakymuose galima pamatyti, kad jie nežino kas yra socialinis darbas, bet supranta, kur gali dirbti ir su kokiomis asmenų grupėmis dirba. Neiškiria profesinių kompetencijų, tačiau įvardija tas žinias, gebėjimus kurie reikalingi socialiniams darbuotojui. Supranta vertybes, kurios nėra priskiriamos prie bendrųjų, bet konkrečiai orientuotos į klientą, ir žino realią socialinio darbuotojo materialinę padėtį, kad tai labai mažai apmokas darbas.

2. Visuomenė socialinio darbuotojo profesiją vertina nepalankiai.

Vienareikšmiškai teigti, kad respondentai nepalankiai vertina socialinio darbuotojo profesiją negalima, nes tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad ši profesija visuomenei *reikalinga ir reikšminga* ir apie šią profesiją sužino iš visuomenės informavimo priemonių (spauda, televizija, internetas ir t.t.), kuri ir formuoja požiūrį apie šią profesiją.

Esminiai žodžiai: socialinis darbas, profesinė veikla, socialinio darbuotojo profesinė kompetencija, gebėjimai, vertybės, veiksniai

APPENDIX