

The *Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit (DBSH)* (German Professional Association for Social Work - DBSH), is a **nationally and internationally recognized** professional association and representative body for social work as a profession in Germany, representing its members in matters of occupational policy. The DBSH is simultaneously also the specific trade union for the *members of the profession* and, as such, a member of the German Civil Service Association, »dbb«. Organized in it are ca. 6,000 *members of the profession* such as, for example, social workers, social education workers, educators, remedial teachers.

Besides the option of personal membership, the DBSH also serves associations of professional groups in social work (legal members) as a corresponding **umbrella organization** for the profession of social work.

The DBSH has already advocated binding ethical principles in society in the 1990s. The focus is on three basic ethical principles of the greatest importance: respect for the autonomy of people, justice and solidarity. Social work is a human rights profession for ethical reasons. The DBSH has developed professional ethics for itself that are based on ethical theories and the attendant ethical principles for the profession, and published them in 2015. **All members recognize the professional ethics of the DBSH as binding within their specialized activities.**

The federal organization of the DBSH is structured as a general association by way of its institutional political representatives. At the same time, the DBSH is also organized on a local level by way of Länder associations reflecting the federal provinces. The DBSH has established functional areas for the specialized work in a great variety of action fields. The status groups of women, seniors and youths are provided with own representations within the DBSH.

To the outside, the DBSH is a subject-related and social policy member serving various functions in a great number of specialized organizations in social work such as, for example, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the German Association for Public and Private Welfare (DV), the Child and Youth Welfare Association (AGJ), and the FBTS, the national representative body of the social work departments and faculties of state and church universities in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Just as multi-layered is the DBSH's understanding of the tasks and competences of social work and the *members of the profession* employed in it:

- (1) Social work is a service for individuals, groups and communities in situations that render support, encouragement and accompaniment meaningful. Social workers understand themselves as experts in the mediation of help.
- (2) »Helping« as a profession is required where other resources (jobs, material aids, social standards, self-help) are not available or fail to reach their recipients. The *members of the profession* employed in social work understand themselves as experts in the mediation between the lifeworld of people and the system of societal structures and standards.
- (3) Social workers understand themselves as experts in researching the mutual influences between lifeworld and system. They contribute to the development of theories, strategies and methods for influencing all levels.
- (4) Social work trusts in the power of people to shape their own lives. It sides with people who come up against societal framework conditions. Social workers understand themselves as experts in accompanying the further development of a social society.
- (5) Social work encourages self-determined and also political action. *Members of the profession* engaged in social work understand themselves as experts in encouraging, forming and activating the groups it caters to.

The DBSH champions the humanization of living conditions and inclusion of all people in the life of society. It sees social work tasked with a special responsibility. To enable this responsibility to be fulfilled, the DBSH wants more competences for the employed *members of the profession*, greater acceptance of social practice, the establishment of required key competences and quality standards for social work's spheres of action, statutory regulations for the occupation to ensure that *members of the profession* are deployed in social work's spheres of action, an improvement and upgrading of the research and training at (technical) colleges and universities, and a societal status of social work that is commensurate with its actual achievements.

The DBSH fulfils its tasks on the basis of its quality principles, its professional ethics and the maxims of professional ethics, its key competences in social work, its occupational outlines for social workers and social educators (diploma, bachelor and master), and its occupational profile for probationary services. The DBSH has included the training-related demands in its basic demands for generalist basic studies.

Quality has a central role to play for the DBSH. The DBSH has therefore developed own quality standards and a quality description for social professional consultancy. To maintain the quality, the DBSH has established its own »Professional social work register of the DBSH« (BSA) that serves the quality assurance of members in keeping with the requirements profile. The »Professional social work register of the DBSH« is similarly engaged in creating a basis for the enforcement of statutory regulations for the profession.

Essential content-related positions form the basis of the declarations of the DBSH: the social policy declaration of the DBSH (Saarbrücken Declaration), the publication on »Solidarity«, the occupational

policy declaration (Heidelberg Declaration) and the declaration on professional ethics (Berlin Declaration).

To raise awareness within the profession as well as society, the DBSH is starting various social policy campaigns. With its “Red Card” campaign, the DBSH is simultaneously engaged in occupational and social policy campaigns.

The information of members, the expert audience and interested parties is ensured by the magazine »Forum SOZIAL« published by the DBSH, the »Internet portal«, and the use of »social media«.

The **FSA** Support Organization for Social Work was established to support the DBSH. The **FSA** is a non-profit society for supporting social work by means of conferences, training proposals and meetings.

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