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HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN WEST AND EAST

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UNIT 2 HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN EUROPE

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Structure

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2.1 OBJECTIVES

Social work education began in Europe during the latter part of 19th century with the first school of Social Welfare training getting established in the Netherlands in 1899. As on date almost all countries have social work education in their Higher education system. By reading this unit, you will be able:

- To know about the history of Social Work in Europe
- To know the role and significance of the key contributors of Social Work in Europe
- To develop the understanding of professional Social Work education in Europe

2.2 INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to affix a date to the beginning of professional social work (Healy, 2001). In the countries where social work was first developed, helping activities began under a variety of auspices. It is obvious that social work has a number of ideological origins (Lorenz, 1994). Some suggest that it is the continuation of philanthropic and charitable traditions connected to the activities of various churches; others seek its roots in social movements, particularly in the labour movement and the women's movement. One must also keep in mind that social work was developed within different welfare regimes, in a variety of social and cultural environments (Leskošek, 2009) There have always been people who need assistance from others, but that assistance has not always been called 'social work' (Cree, 2008).

Cree (2008) traces the origins of such assistance to poverty and dates it to 1601, when the first Poor Law in England was passed. Churches and monasteries offered various forms of accommodation (almshouses, infirmaries and hospitals) to people without families who could not look after themselves. After the agrarian revolution, ecclesiastical institutions could no longer afford such forms of assistance and the responsibility was passed to the state. The state responded by dividing people into those who deserved help and those who did not ('good' and 'bad' poor). The undeserving were placed under supervision, punished, or imprisoned, while the 'good' poor (old people, the chronically ill, the blind, people with psychological health problems) received assistance from voluntary organisations. Leskošek (2009) argued that these ideas significantly

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