

Editorial

Editorial Board of the *Social Work Journal* (RTS)

At a historical moment shrouded in uncertainty, complexity and an apparent crisis of values affecting institutions, social relations and public policies alike, social work finds itself compelled to act with renewed intensity. Deeply rooted in ethical principles and oriented towards social justice, the profession cannot remain detached from the tensions of the present day. On the contrary, it is called upon to play an active role in the defence of human rights, the promotion of dignity and the construction of more inclusive and cohesive societies.

Ethical issues have always been at the heart of social work. They do not consist merely of a normative body of rules, but rather of a dynamic framework of reference that underscores decision-making in contexts that are often ambiguous and fraught with dilemmas. Professional practice requires a constant balancing act between respect for individuals' autonomy, particularly in situations such as intervention with persons in an irregular administrative situation, child protection or support for persons with limited decision-making capacity, and the protection of vulnerable groups and the fulfilment of social responsibility. This balance becomes particularly delicate in scenarios of growing inequality, in which interventions may have profound consequences for the lives of individuals and communities.

In this respect, the ethics of social work cannot be understood separately from the social and political context. Contemporary transformations shaped by inequalities of gender, class and origin –such as increasing precariousness, migratory flows, population ageing and new forms of exclusion arising from digitalisation– pose new challenges that require constant ethical reflection. The defence of rights is not an abstract exercise; rather, it is a daily practice involving the need to take a position in the face of situations of injustice and inequality, often under limited institutional conditions.

At the same time, the profession is confronted with a crisis of values affecting society as a whole. The primacy of individualism, reinforced by the neoliberal economic model, the commodification of social relations and the erosion of trust in institutions undermine the foundations of coexistence and solidarity. In the light of this context, the social commitment of social work professionals takes on a more relevant role than ever. This commitment, uncertain within institutional frameworks that are often restrictive and bureaucratic, entails not only rigorous technical intervention, but also a critical, reflective and transformative stance.

In essence, social work is a profession committed to social change. This entails going beyond the immediate response to needs in order to address the structural causes of inequalities. It also means giving a voice

to individuals and groups that are frequently rendered invisible, recognising them as active, resilient subjects and encouraging their active participation in the processes affecting their lives. This political dimension of social work, understood as action serving the common good and social justice, cannot be separated from its professional identity.

Within this framework, the role of social work in the construction of an inclusive society is fundamental. Inclusion is not limited to access to services or resources, it also involves recognising and valuing diversity in all its expressions. Building an inclusive society means creating spaces for coexistence in which differences are not a source of exclusion, but rather an opportunity to enrich the social fabric. Social work contributes to this goal by promoting practices that foster equity, participation and social cohesion.

Likewise, inclusion calls for bold, coherent public policies capable of assuring rights and opportunities for all individuals. Despite the limitations associated with professional overload and scarce resources, through its close connection with local communities and the everyday realities of people's lives, social work plays a key role in identifying needs, drawing up proposals and assessing social policies. This intermediary function between citizens and institutions is essential for progressing towards fairer and more inclusive welfare models.

Ultimately, social work today faces the challenge of reasserting its ethical calling and social commitment in a context of profound transformation. Responding to this challenge entails strengthening education and ethical reflection, consolidating forums for debate and promoting interdisciplinary work. Above all, however, it requires maintaining the belief that another society is possible: a society that embraces diversity, assures the wellbeing of all people and places human dignity at the heart of collective action. In times of change and uncertainty, social work continues to be a key element in progressing towards societies that are fairer, more inclusive and more humane.