The texts featured in this issue reflect some of the major recent lines of research in the field of social pedagogy. All the studies carried out, except for one that is limited to the Croatian space, refer to the Slovenian space. Social pedagogy comprises a broad field of identifying and researching social problems in society and represents a scientific discipline which tries to reduce the social exclusion of social groups at risk (the homeless people, the unemployed, children and youth with problems). Looking at it in the broadest sense, it could be said that social pedagogy is a scientific field that strives to attain greater social justice. Its contribution is precisely in the fact that it tries to contribute to better living conditions and to develop a greater coping with life in the aforementioned social groups at high risk. This also represents the focal and common theme of the contributions published.

The article by Špela Razpotnik and Bojan Dekleva titled »Homelessness and the Accessibility of the Health Care System« represents the first Slovenian research of this kind. The authors, on the basis of data obtained, show the deficiencies of the health care system for groups at risk and point to the need to change it in terms of lowering the entrance threshold to access health services and to create a more integral, individualized treatment of the individual groups of homeless people.

The second cluster of studies is about the research of children/youth and the various forms of risky behaviour. Within this framework special attention is paid to children/youth with behavioural and emotional
problems, who are due to various circumstances placed into specialized institutions such as juvenile home institutions and residential groups.

In the article titled »Changes in the Behaviour of School-aged Children: new old Educational Challenges« Helena Jeriček analyzes the changes in the behaviour of children/youth, experiencing school and the spreading of forbidden substances. In the research she particularly emphasizes the feeling of greater burdening of children/youth in school and a greater degree of violence especially present among girls, whereas in the features of forbidden substances consummation there are no basic changes among youth, except for the decrease in the use of canabis. The contribution by Matej Sande »The Use of Alkohol among Secondary School Students on Graduation Tours« is likewise centred on the alcohol use research at final secondary-school graduation excursions, which represents a specific and a widespread phenomenon of risky behaviour of youth. Prevention in order to lower the damaging consequences in this field represent a new challenge for social pedagogy.

Mitja Krajnčan presents the results of a research in the field of children and youth with bahavioural and emotional problems who are placed in the various residential institutions. He tries to ascertain the criteria that make the experts in the Centres of Social Work decide about the need to place a child/youth into a special institution. He comes to the conclusion that in Slovenia there are no clearcut criteria and models and pleads for more transparent criteria in this field and a greater participation of a child/youth and parents in this decision.

The contribution by Zdravka Poldruča and Dejana Bouillet is a Croatian view of social pedagogy and its future development. The authors research the various competences which are typical of the various fields of social pedagogy activity and on this basis postulate the scientific grounding and future development of social pedagogy in Croatia.

We believe that the existing social problems are not exclusively limited to the Slovenian space, although they do have certain specificities of this socio-cultural system: perhaps this is precisely what makes them interesting for the broader European space of social pedagogy. This issue in English aims exactly at this, namely to enable the broad professional community to gain access to the results of Slovenian research and to attain greater international connections and exchanges in this scientific field.

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