

SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE ECONOMIC CRISIS TIMES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

SUMMARY

The paper analyzes the impact of the global economic crisis in relation to social policy and social work, with a focus on experiences and conditions in Macedonia in the period from 2008 till 2012. During an economic crisis social policies are challenged through austerity measures which impact the employment possibilities, the living standard and particularly burden the conditions of those in poverty and social exclusion. Social work is also affected through the need to cater the existing social work clientele as well as to target new vulnerable groups, such as: retrenched workers, self-employed workers, unemployed graduates, the homeless and others who due to a lack of access to the labour market and income, are increasingly faced with social problems, such as deprivation, marginalization, domestic violence, etc. The analysis in this paper shows that although the social conditions (unemployment, poverty) in Macedonia have not deteriorated as a result of the economic crisis as in

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other European countries (i.e. Baltic countries, Spain), they show only a negligible improvement. The paper also focuses on anti-crisis measures, and gives an outline of main challenges in social policy and social work in Macedonia during the economic crisis.

INTRODUCTION

The global financial and economic crisis present since 2008 has triggered an additional set of welfare state challenges, such as demographic aging, atypical employments, social damping, etc., thus aggravating challenges already generated from the mid 90s onwards. Newly generated challenges in the European context may be seen in the increase of unemployment rates, the labor market segmentation, a rise in income poverty, as well as a growing emigration (Fraser and Marlier, 2011). The impact of the global economic crisis in Macedonia has not only added these new challenges, but has also reinforced previously existing national impediments, such as a large informal economy, a jobless growth and the low living standard. Effects of these challenges can be seen in the growth of categories of socially vulnerable population, but also in the change of social policy and social work trajectory and priorities.

MACEDONIAN “SOCIAL PROFILE” IN THE PERIOD OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Based on the official data regarding the labor market (from the Labor Force Surveys - LFS and the registered unemployment), it may be concluded that the impact of the economic crisis (along with other negative developments on the labor market) was most evident in 2009 and 2010, when there was an evident increase in the numbers of the registered unemployed, as well as only a negligible decrease in the unemployment rate. Before 2009 the official unemployment rate had been experiencing a continual decline of 3 to 4 percentage points, but in 2010 in comparison to 2009 the decline was only 0.62%.

Table 1 Trends on the labor market 2008-2012

| UNEMPLOYMENT (LFS + Registered) | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 (II) |
|----------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|---------------|
| Unemployment rate (LFS) | 33.8% | 32.2% | 32% | 31.4% | 31.2% |
| Numbers of newly registered unemployed | 2,508 | 2,708 | 1,837 | 1,523 (December) | 879 (July) |

Source: State Statistical Office and Employment Service Agency, 2008-2012

Empirical research realized in the first wave of the global economic crisis (FES, 2009) shows that during the global economic crisis (the period from October 2008 to September 2009) 19% of the respondents in the country experienced a job loss, among which the majority were people of the Albanian ethnic background. Most jobs were lost in the West region of Macedonia, involving mostly those with secondary education as well as households with the monthly income of up to MKD 10,000 (EUR 164).

Additional empirical research realized in September 2011 (Gerovska Mitev, 2012) indicated that 37.6% of all households in the nationally representative survey were excluded from the labour market (no employed household members). When the same research applied the EU approach to analyzing joblessness (the share of population aged 0 to 59 living in jobless households²), then the rate of exclusion from the labour market among households, or rate of jobless households was 17%. The profile of these households indicates that these are mainly concentrated in the Southwest region of Macedonia (31.9%), mainly belong to Roma ethnicity (55.5%), the predominant type are the households without children (35%) and the household head is mainly with only primary education (30%).

Long-term unemployment is a distinct characteristic of unemployment in the country, and it represents a serious problem for social exclusion, as the unemployment status lasts for 4 and more years. Eurostat data from 2009 show that the country's long-term unemployment at the time was at 26.3%, compared to 5.2% in Croatia, 3.5% in Turkey and 10.5% in Serbia. The comparison of long-term unemployment trends among the registered unemployed indicates that there is a persistence of the long-term unemployment, with the increase of 1.22 percentage points in the period 2009-2011. This implies that during the economic crisis the conditions of the long-term unemployed worsen, rendering their inclusion in the labour market impossible.

Table 2 Registered long-term unemployed 2009-2011

| Registered long-term unemployed (4 and more years) as % of all registered unemployed | September 2009 | September 2010 | September 2011 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 48.9% | 49.9% | 49.5% |

Source: Employment Service Agency, 2011

The majority of those who wait longest for their employment belong to the age group 30-34, and the majority of them are with secondary education, but are closely followed by those with primary and lower secondary education. The lack of

² Modified according to the age of the household head 0-59.

vocational skills needed on the labour market, lapses in job history, and the lack of competitiveness are some of the hurdles the long-term unemployed face with.

In addition to the problem of unemployment, the country is faced with the risk of a low living standard. Official data from the State Statistical Office indicate that the average monthly net wage per employee in June 2012 was MKD 20,651 (EUR 336) signaling a decrease of 2.21 % compared to the average net wage paid in July 2011³. Taking into consideration the structure of employees according to the net wage amount in 2011, 67.2% of the total population lived on wages below the national average. Also, in the same year 7% of the population lived below the statutory minimum wage of MKD 8,050 (EUR 131)⁴ monthly. Additionally, 2% of the employed do not receive their wages regularly. Although the wages have not experienced a decline during the period 2008-2012 (with the exception of the mid 2012), continually rising living costs (electricity, food, fuel, etc.) as well as prevailing low incomes, have contributed towards the persistence of the low living standard during the economic crisis.

The high unemployment rate and the low living standard also contribute to the persistently high poverty rate. Poverty trends between 2008 and 2011, although not measured using the European standards (i.e. according to expenditure), show that the greatest increase in poverty was experienced in 2009, when the national poverty rate increased by 2.4% in comparison to the previous year. This, to some extent can also be attributed to the global economic crisis, which contributed to lowering export possibilities, reduction of remittances and other sources of income of vulnerable categories. Despite a gradual decline in the next two years, the current poverty rate of 30.4% in 2011 is still high.

Table 3 Poverty rate trends 2008-2011 (relative poverty, measured as 70% of median equivalent expenditures)

| Year | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Poverty rate | 28.7% | 31.1% | 30.9% | 30.4% |

Source: State Statistical Office, Poverty news releases 2009-2011.

The national social profile portrayed through the above data implies that the economic crisis has intensified the existing social problems and worsened the position of the most vulnerable. These negative trends were addressed through a set of legislative and practical measures during the period 2008 -2012, some of which will be discussed in more detail below. Still it may be concluded, that in the

³ State Statistical Office News Release No. 4.1.12.62/ July 2012.

⁴ State Statistical Office (2012) Employees and net wages – status October 2011.

absence of new jobs creation and due to the lack of possibilities for employing the most vulnerable as a result of the low demand on the labor market, the gloomy social profile remains a significant impediment in the efforts to tackle the impacts of the global economic crisis.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Since the beginning of the crisis (end of 2008), the government has adopted five packages of anti-crisis measures. These measures were targeted towards general improvement of investments and protection of national products, and also included measures in the fields of construction and housing.

The first two packages, adopted in the period November-December 2008, mainly focused on writing off the debts of insolvent companies and announced plans to invest eight billion euros in public works. However, all these measures were not targeted towards the real losers in the economic crisis, implying that their effect was negligible. The third 'anti-crises' package, announced after the elections in April 2009 focused on more realistic measures. This package included: 1) budget rebalance, which was cut by 9% and adjusted according to the macro-economic projections of 1% GDP growth and 1% inflation rate for 2009; 2) credit support for firms and enterprises, through the European Investment Bank in the amount of 100 million euros; and 3) additional measures supporting firms and enterprises, including measures for simplifying the export of goods, reduction of costs etc. As the previous package, this one also did not include any direct social measures, nor did the announced economic measures have any indirect impact on most vulnerable groups in the society.

The first specific social anti-crisis measures directed towards vulnerable groups were announced in the beginning of September 2009, when the Government decided to adopt an Energy Poverty Action Plan. This measure provided each month a direct financial support to the most vulnerable population (recipients of social financial assistance), who cannot regularly pay the constantly increasing electricity bills. According to the Government, this social measure will amount to between 250 and 450 million denars (between 4 to 7 million euros) and is envisaged to include between 50,000 and 60,000 socially vulnerable households. However, taking into consideration the low amount of the subsidy (MKD 600 / EUR 10) per recipient per month, as well as difficulties in relation to its take-up (for the social assistance beneficiaries who cannot provide an official receipt/bill due to purchases from the informal market), its practical realization seems to lack a meaningful impact among those most vulnerable.

The second anti-crisis measure with a direct social impact was announced a few days after the Energy Poverty Action Plan. The measure called "SOS shops" involved governmental subsidization to beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance for buying products with a 30% discount. These shops were initially planned to be opened only in Skopje, and potentially in other cities depending on the interest of relevant businesses. Social assistance beneficiaries could buy discounted products up to the amount of the social assistance they receive, but not more than MKD 5,000 (EUR 81) per month. This measure was planned to include around 15,000 households that are beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance. Since there was very little interest among shop owners, the »SOS shops« project was gradually stopped. Unlike the first anti-crisis social measure, this one seems to target beneficiaries that are not directly affected by the crisis. Namely, according to the official data, the Skopje region seems to be least affected by the economic crisis. Hence, it would be more appropriate to direct this measure towards cities and regions where the majority of jobs were lost, and towards households which had employees in most affected industries.

More targeted aspects of the anti-crisis measures were those in the field of agriculture, one of which is directed at the unemployed (giving state-owned arable land for productive use to the unemployed living in rural places). This measure is supposed to serve as an incentive to reduce rural unemployment, however its effectiveness is hindered due to the lack of other incentives, such as training for the rural unemployed, or additional financial support for the unemployed to be able to work on the agricultural land. Finally, the agricultural workers have been a target group that has continually been supported through governmental subsidies since 2008. In 2009, an amount of 70 million euros was allocated for different kinds of subsidies aimed at agricultural workers. However, many of those living on small pieces of land (subsistence agriculture) were not able to benefit from these measures, due to preferences associated with these subsidies, such as favouring agricultural workers that are insured, i.e. registered.

The last package of eight socio-economic measures, introduced by the government in early June 2012, was aimed, among others, at supporting the living standard, costs, and employment opportunities for the most socially vulnerable population. Among others, they included: (i) employment incentives: a public works programme for 4,000 registered unemployed, a self-employment programme for 1,000 unemployed through loans for formalization of businesses, a traineeship programme for 1,000 young unemployed, and a programme providing social assistance beneficiaries (the estimated number of beneficiaries is up to 1,500) with arable land for agricultural use; (ii) the increase in anti-crisis social benefits: the increase of the energy poverty subsidy from MKD 600 to MKD 700 (from EUR 9.83

to EUR 11.47) per person (household) monthly; as well as (iii) support for children living in socially vulnerable families: a paid 7-day summer/winter vacation for children between 10 and 13 years of age; and vouchers for computers for students in socially vulnerable families (social assistance beneficiaries, children without parents and parental care).

These measures were welcomed by citizen organizations, whose members are main beneficiaries (pensioners clubs, youth organizations, etc.). Taking into consideration practical problems associated with some of these measures (which existed in the past, i.e. the subsidy for energy consumption), it may be said that they represent only a negligible response to the growing social and economic inequalities and exclusion in the country. Also, what is noticeable is that most of these measures are not a result of any systematic monitoring of the crisis, but rather extracted from the ongoing projects or plans previously envisaged by the Government.

In conclusion, it may be estimated that the governmental response to the global economic crisis was not directly targeted towards the main »losers« in this process. The undertaken measures were rarely focused on individuals or regions that were directly affected by the crisis. Even those few focused on the unemployed and other vulnerable groups were not created according to the comprehensive »crisis« assessments.

As already noted, the main weakness of the governmental approach towards tackling the economic crisis has been the lack of regular assessments of the impact of the crisis in the country (apart from the analysis of financial indicators), particularly in relation to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, there are no institutional bodies responsible for monitoring and evaluating the economic crisis. This prevented creation of more efficient and targeted policies and measures during the economic crisis. Among rare national agencies that produce month by month accessible evidence of statistical trends in relation to employment, unemployment and beneficiaries of services for active and passive employment measures is the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia. Although its data are provided according to the profile of beneficiaries (ethnicity, gender, location, duration of unemployment), the data are not cross-tabulated, thus offering little information on who the main categories at risk are. In addition, people not registered at the Agency (those in undeclared work, as well as those who lack registration/identification documents) cannot be included in the overall analysis.

The condition of poverty and social exclusion in the country was monitored on the basis of annual estimations by the State Statistical Office (poverty estimations based on the relative method), and there were no particular interventions or

additions in this respect, that could have improved such monitoring (i.e. time-frequency of published results, more in-depth focus, etc.). The lack of more direct monitoring of social effects of the economic crisis implies that governmental interventions were not based on a systematic and *ex ante* social impact assessment.

SOCIAL POLICIES AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The ongoing economic crisis has contributed towards a number of social policy challenges, both at the global, European as well as at the national level. As noted by Farnsworth and Irving (2010: 2), the current economic crisis gave way to a new age of the welfare state – the age of austerity. In a critical analysis of the credit crunch and social policy responses, Sinfield (2010: 11) emphasizes that while some have become more deprived and insecure and others better off, the governments have »exploited their rights and evaded their responsibilities«. Taking into consideration the large number of measures taken by different national governments to compensate private banks and on the other hand a lack of direct support to vulnerable categories of citizens during the crisis, this approach indeed represents one of the main shortcomings of the current welfare states. The third report from the Social Protection Committee (SPC) on the social consequences of the crisis for 2011 in the European Union, signal the »danger that the direct effects of the crisis, along with the austerity measures taken to address it, could interact with, and worsen, existing inequalities of income and access to services« (European Commission, 2012a: 50). Existing welfare arrangements during the crisis have been either reduced or their implementation was made impossible. The pivotal crisis example of Greece shows that the crisis had a huge effect on social transfers, particularly those based on generational solidarity. Hence, Greece had to adopt pension cuts on several occasions over the period 2010-2012, involving cuts in the total government expenditure on pensions, a decrease in generosity of pension benefits, as well as increasing and equalizing the retirement ages (European Commission, 2012b). Countries that have emphasized the active employment measures as a response to the economic crisis have been faced with issues of their implementation due to low job creation rates during the crisis. Additionally, spending on social welfare and social services has witnessed cuts in almost all Central and Eastern EU countries, as well as in some other more mature welfare systems, such as in Germany, France and the Netherlands. These involved cuts in heating and housing benefits in Romania, the Netherlands and Greece, cuts in the budget of the Austrian Public Employment Service, reduction of health expenditure in France, as well as consolidation of social spending on families and children in the Netherlands, Lithuania and France (European Commission, 2012a: 45).

Hence, the idea of the 'social policy as a productive factor' has been thoroughly shaken during the current economic crisis. Some, as Hemerijck (2011), are advocating a »social investment paradigm« based on a balance between budgetary discipline and social investment as complementary pillars and as a sustainable response to the economic downturns. However, such approaches, if based only on individual needs and neglecting the collective and community specifics, are also doomed to produce winners and losers and further increase the social gap in the society as a whole.

The experience in Macedonia in relation to social policy responses to the economic crisis shows mixed results. Apart from the previously described anti-crisis measures created directly as a response to the economic crisis, there were some legislative and practical measures that had been initiated and advocated before the crisis. During the period 2008-2012, a number of measures were adopted which impacted the overall social policy (principles, distribution, delivery). Social insurance contribution rates (for old age and disability, health and unemployment insurance) were reduced from 32% to 26.5% of the gross wage. Although this decrease envisaged a reduction of labor costs and creation of new employments, the unemployment rate still remained high and fixed above 30%. Throughout the crisis, the government has made access to the social assistance scheme more strict and rigorous. This can be concluded from the continual reduction of the number of social assistance recipients which declined from 57,587 beneficiaries in 2008 to 39,000 beneficiaries in 2012⁵. In 2010, the Government adopted the Law on Statutory Minimum Wage, which for the first time stipulated the minimum level of wages. Although this can be seen as a positive development, particularly during the economic crisis, taking into consideration its low amount, as well as its gradual introduction which will not incorporate the lowest paid workers for the next three years (i.e. textile workers), testifies about the continuity of a low living standard among a large number of population. On the positive side, it must be emphasized that wages, pensions and social transfers were not reduced in their nominal value. However, rising living costs make current incomes inadequate for maintaining a decent living standard for vulnerable categories of population, such as the unemployed, social assistance beneficiaries, pensioners with lowest pensions, as well as those in undeclared and subsistence temporary jobs.

⁵ Source: Administrative data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy on beneficiaries and amount of social assistance, 2008-2011.

SOCIAL WORK AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

As discussed by Schaffner Goldberg (2012) from the perspective of social workers, an extreme economic inequality is primarily a violation of social justice, with devastating effects, particularly on the social work clientele. The economic crisis has also contributed to creation of new vulnerable categories. As also pointed by Corell (2010: 290) those most affected by recent job and income losses include: »flexible'/migrant/undocumented foreign workforce; contract workers or overtime dependent workers; retrenched workers at the lower occupational rungs; agricultural sector workers and owners of small agricultural holdings; manufacturing sector workers, unemployed graduates, new entrants and under-skilled workers; self-employed, especially those severely affected by the ripple effects arising from the economic slowdown or recessionary conditions«. Social work practices aimed at tackling these new vulnerable categories as well as the existing social work clientele require a multidimensional approach, and, as indicated by Dominelli (Dominelli and Hackett, 2012), »linking global challenges and opportunities to locality specific ones that acknowledge the interdependency between these two realms and between people and their social and physical environments« (p. 449). According to Fraser (1997), risk as well as protective factors may be located on three levels: (1) the wider social context; (2) the level of local community and primary groups, such as family, friends; and (3) the individual level.

The appearance of social risks requires a change of the role and tasks of social workers. In Macedonia, in everyday social work, noticeable trends among clients include: discouragement, and questioning of the basic norms: employment and wages. The gap between the rich and the poor is further increasing. Hence, a legitimate question is: What is the role of the social worker during the economic crisis? What kind of support should social work provide during the economic crisis?

Social work is important not only in terms of adjustment to the economic crisis and mass unemployment. As a profession, the social work starting point is to promote welfare of individuals, through empowerment of capacities and resources of people, as well as improvement of conditions that limit human rights and quality of life. Social work strives towards elimination of poverty, discrimination and repression, having human beings, their perspectives and respect of people's differences as main fundamentals (CSWE, 2007). In this respect, taking into consideration rising economic and social vulnerabilities, social workers needs to adapt their approaches to respond to new risks and challenges faced by the social work clients.

According to the social work practice in Macedonia, dominant social risks in the period of the economic crisis include: unemployment, mental health problems, drug addiction, delinquency, long-term illness and age, social exclusion,

weakening of social ties, and promotion of the process of individualization. Also, social workers are dealing with clients who face multiple risks, and this chain of risks increases the vulnerability of individuals (e.g. the unemployed with mental health issues). In dealing with these new social risks social workers are faced with the need to constantly adapt and enhance their knowledge and skills. As indicated by Ajdukovic, (2008), social workers should empower clients to feel powerful and competent, but ways to empower professionals should also be acknowledged. In this respect, licensing of professional staff in social work centres and social protection institutions was introduced in Macedonia in 2011. This is expected to improve the quality of services as well as the level of professionalism in the work with clients. In addition, the process of supervision should constantly be undertaken by the Institute for Social Affairs. However, due to scarcity of financial resources, particularly during the crisis, supervision is not always realized. Hence, the goals of supervision are not achieved, and as noted by Jankovic (2008) without it there can be no improvement of services for social work clients.

SOCIAL WORK PROCESSES AND CHALLENGES

In Macedonia, some of the newer processes within the system of social protection include: pluralisation (welfare mix), decentralization and deinstitutionalization (Law on Social Welfare, 2004). Although they have been instituted since the mid 2000, their realization has been particularly enforced during the period of economic crisis. These processes, which also impact social work delivery, reduce the central role of the state and introduce a more significant participation of local and civil society, as well as more flexible non-institutional types of social provision.

Pluralisation enables provision of social services by local municipalities, but also private companies, associations of citizens as well as individuals. Due to a low fiscal capacity of many of the municipalities in Macedonia, innovative social work initiatives by the local municipalities are very few. Those that have introduced some changes focused on the creation of local strategies for tackling poverty and social exclusion, local plans for victims of family violence, additional funds for social assistance benefits, etc. In terms of provision of social services private companies have shown interest only in the domain of elderly care by founding many private homes for the elderly. However, these are mainly located in the capital city (with a lack of such facilities in smaller cities and communities), and are accessible only to those with higher pension incomes and savings.

Decentralisation of social services at the local level has brought a number of benefits, such as introduction of public works at the local level, an increase in

the number of pre-school facilities financed by different donors, the appearance of many day care centers for different vulnerable categories. However, the process of decentralisation is also faced with a number of risks, such as: a lack of decentralisation of social transfers, inadequate human resources in most of the municipalities, as well as a lack of systematic monitoring of local social needs and challenges.

Deinstitutionalisation has been practiced mainly in the domain of provision of non-residential services for persons with disabilities. This process of transformation is realized with different intensity, and on different levels, such as foster homes and small group homes. One of the main shortcomings of this process is a lack of adequately educated and trained staff to deal with problems of disabled people, particularly among those that have applied as foster families.

In realisation of these processes social work is faced with many challenges. As described by the International Federation of Social Workers (2006) »rapid changes in the society, the new forms of poverty (in-work poverty), demographic changes, the aging population, the process of migration, an access to basic needs and services is characterized by many criteria that further lead to stigmatization and discrimination of persons exposed to risks, a lack of adequate resources for those who need help and it leads to reactive instead of proactive practice and social work«.

In facing the social work challenges, we agree with the constructive and proactive approach. By being proactive, social workers particularly in times of an economic crisis may contribute through organizing actions against measures which are adopted, but are not beneficial for their clients, or the overall vulnerable population (e.g. closing of school facilities, introducing rigidities in social benefits systems, etc.). However, such a proactive approach in social work is faced with great risks, which in countries with a highly politicised public administration are even more pronounced resulting in the professional staff fearing for their job, and being unmotivated and afraid to take a more proactive stand and action.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the lack of a more concrete evidence of the impact of the economic crisis upon social policy and social work in Macedonia, this paper has tried to identify main challenges and main vulnerable categories, which arise during the period of an economic crisis and which are the target of the everyday social work practice. In this respect the paper has shown that despite a negligible decrease of unemployment throughout the period 2008-2012, the prevailing low living standard contributes towards high rates of poverty and material deprivation.

New vulnerable categories that have been identified in the social work practice include: the long term unemployed, the self-employed, people with mental health problems, people facing multiple social risks, homeless people, and so on. The governmental approach to tackling the economic crisis in Macedonia has been mainly focused on economic imperatives, i.e. improving the financial investments, keeping the current level of salaries and social transfers, as well as focusing on active employment measures. However, in the absence of a significant employment growth, some of these measures prove inapplicable in practice. In addition, social work challenges show that in dealing with new social risks, professionals need more authority and greater flexibility to provide services that can fit vulnerable categories.

The economic crisis may be seen as a threat but also as an opportunity to learn how to provide more flexible, more tailored /customized (not targeted) and more efficient services which respond to global challenges but also to local needs. Macedonia, unfortunately, still perceives the economic crisis mainly as a threat.

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SOCIJALNA POLITIKA I SOCIJALNI RAD U DOBA EKONOMSKE KRIZE U REPUBLICI MAKEDONIJI

SAŽETAK

Članak analizira utjecaj globalne ekonomske krize na socijalnu politiku i socijalni rad s naglaskom na iskustva i uvjete u Makedoniji u razdoblju od 2008. do 2012. Tijekom ekonomske krize veliki izazov za socijalne politike predstavljaju mjere štednje koje utječu na mogućnosti zapošljavanja, životni standard i osobito otežavaju uvjete siromašnih te socijalno isključenih skupina. Na socijalni rad utječe i potreba skrbi o postojećim korisnicima socijalnog rada uz istovremeno prepoznavanje novih osjetljivih grupa kao što su tehnološki viškovi, samozaposleni, nezaposleni visokoobrazovani građani, beskućnici i ostali koji se, zbog nemogućnosti uključivanja na tržište rada i zarađivanja prihoda, sve više suočavaju sa socijalnim problemima poput otpuštanja, marginalizacije, obiteljskog nasilja itd. Analize predstavljene u ovom članku pokazuju kako unatoč tome što se socijalni uvjeti (nezaposlenost, siromaštvo) u Makedoniji nisu pogoršali kao rezultat ekonomske krize kao u nekim drugim europskim zemljama (baltičke zemlje, Španjolska), oni pokazuju samo zanemariv napredak. Članak je usmjeren na protukrizne mjere te daje prikaz glavnih izazova socijalne politike i socijalnog rada u Makedoniji tijekom ekonomske krize.

Ključne riječi: socijalna politika, socijalni rad, ekonomska kriza, novi socijalni rizici, skupine socijalno ranjivih.

