



IPA Action Programme 2017



Supporting Modernisation and Deinstitutionalisation of the Social Services

Contract No.: 2019/405775

ANALYSIS OF THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT AND CHALLENGES: DELIVERY AND FINANCING OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Skopje, 2021



This project is funded by the
European Union

The project is implemented by EPTISA
in consortium with CARE





SUPPORTING MODERNIZATION AND DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES



“Supporting modernization and de- institutionalization of social services”
Europe Aid/139649/DH/SER/MK
Project financed by the European Union

**ANALYSIS OF THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION
IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT AND CHALLENGES:
DELIVERY AND FINANCING OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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Skopje, 2021

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Implementing Consortium:	EPTISA in consortium with CARE
Project Name:	Supporting Modernization and De-Institutionalization of the Social Services
Reference No.:	EuropeAid/139649/DH/SER/MK
Contract:	2019/405-775
Project Duration:	2nd May 2019 – 2nd May 2022

Project Name:	Supporting Modernization and De-Institutionalisation of the Social Services
Reference No:	EuropeAid/139649/DH/SER/MK
Contracting Authority:	European Union Delegation to the R. North Macedonia
Beneficiary:	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP)
Consultant:	Consortium: EPTISA - CARE
Document:	ANALYSIS OF THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT AND CHALLENGES: DELIVERY AND FINANCING OF SOCIAL SERVICES.
Project activity:	Activity 2.6. Elaboration of sustainable financing models of social protection services according to user needs
Project output #:	Output 41 – Research and Analysis of opportunities offered by the Law on Social Protection and recommendations on the Financing System

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSW:	Center for Social Work
EC:	Employment Center
ESA:	Employment Service Agency
GMA:	Guaranteed minimal assistance
IMCSW:	Inter-municipal Center for Social Work
ISP:	Institution for social protection
IOFSP:	Institution for out-of-family social protection
ISA:	Institute for Social Activities
LSP:	Law on Social Protection
MLSP:	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
PI:	Public institution
PFA:	Permanent financial assistance
PCA:	Personal care allowance
SFA:	Social financial assistance
MSPC:	Municipal social protection councils
SPCPR:	Social protection council of the planned regions



INTRODUCTION

The new Law on Social Protection (LSP) was adopted in 2019 as part of a social reform process aimed at introducing considerable improvements in line with the key strategic goals within the social protection system. The main aspects of regulation in the LSP focus on types, procedures and realization of social protection activities, the system, organization and institutional framework of social protection, as well as cadres, financing and oversight and other issues of importance for realization of social protection. Social protection activities are provided through exercising the rights to financial assistance and provision of social services. Social protection is also realized through measures in tax policy, employment, scholarship policy, housing, family protection, child protection, health care, education and upbringing, and other areas in accordance with the law.

The new LSP introduced many systemic changes which are reasonably interlinked in the text and provide form unhindered accomplishment of the key ongoing processes in social protection, such as deinstitutionalization, decentralization and pluralization.

The text of the new LSP provided for precise definitions of the key terms used within the social protection system, defined contemporary user-oriented social protection principles and clear division of responsibilities of relevant stakeholders at all levels and areas of action.

The main changes in the LSP related to the rights to financial assistance, namely in terms of scope, types, amounts and eligibility criteria. Also, the law introduced modifications in the classification and types of social services, as well as manner, scope, procedures and standards for social services delivery. These changes were accompanied by adequate alterations in the institutional framework on central and local level and modalities of financing of social services delivery.

Licensing of service-providers was introduced for the first time which enabled further development of pluralization and possibilities for increased involvement of non-state actors in social services delivery. Likewise, changes were made relative to the system of licensing and continuing professional education of professionals engaged in the social protection field.

In addition, significant changes were anticipated in terms of the methods and approaches used in professional work, specifically, case management and supervision. This entailed changes in the provisions for internal organization and systematization of the working places in social protection institutions.



The social reform process despite changes in the LSP included subsequent changes in the Law on child protection and enactment of a new Law on social security for older people.

This analysis aims to identify impact and challenges related to the above changes and in general implementation of the new LSP, with focus on delivery and financing of social services. The analysis was conducted by using qualitative methodological approach. The following techniques were applied:

- Content analysis of relevant data: laws, bylaws, statistical data, reports etc.;
- Expert interviews with representatives from relevant institutions (MLSP and ISA);
- Expert interviews with representatives from service providers (SOS Children's Village Macedonia, Red Cross, Republic Center – Poraka, Happy Childhood and Humanost).



1. KEY NOVELTIES IN THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EXPECTED IMPACT

The process of preparation of the new LSP was guided by the key strategic goals of the Republic of North Macedonia for development of the social protection system set in the National Program for Development of the Social Protection System 2011-2021:

- Redefining the financial assistance system in the direction of: improved targeting, more efficient administration and linkages with other systems, primarily with the employment system.
- Increasing the quality of social services and creating conditions for reducing dependence on institutional protection by developing alternative forms of protection.
- Continuation of the processes of decentralization, pluralization and deinstitutionalization in social protection.
- Internal reorganization of social protection institutions for optimal utilization of available capacities and improvement of professional work.
- Professional work improvement in terms of enhanced participation of beneficiaries, involvement in planning and decision making, strengthening and maximization of beneficiary's potentials.

In addition, the process of preparation of the new LSP was led by the principles of good governance: transparency, accountability and liability, predictability and sustainability, continuity, effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility and availability, participation, equal treatment and non-discrimination.

The process was quite challenging in the first place, as it required almost a complete rewriting of the actual text of the law. This was done in order to provide more clear, precise and readable text with provisions more adequately structured in new chapters and subchapters. Having in mind that the LSP is a systemic law with a broad coverage linked to many other laws in different domains (education, health, family, child protection, crime, migration etc.), the task was quite ambitious. Namely, social protection as an area that encompasses multiple domains of policies and involves various actors at many levels is regulated by a substantial primary and secondary legislation. The status, rights, obligations and responsibilities of public bodies and other non-state providers of social services are regulated by several laws and by-laws: Law on organization and operation of the state administrative bodies,



Law on local self-government, Law on institutions, Law on associations and foundations, Law on disability organizations, Law on administrative servants, Law on employees in public sector, Law on general administrative procedure, etc.

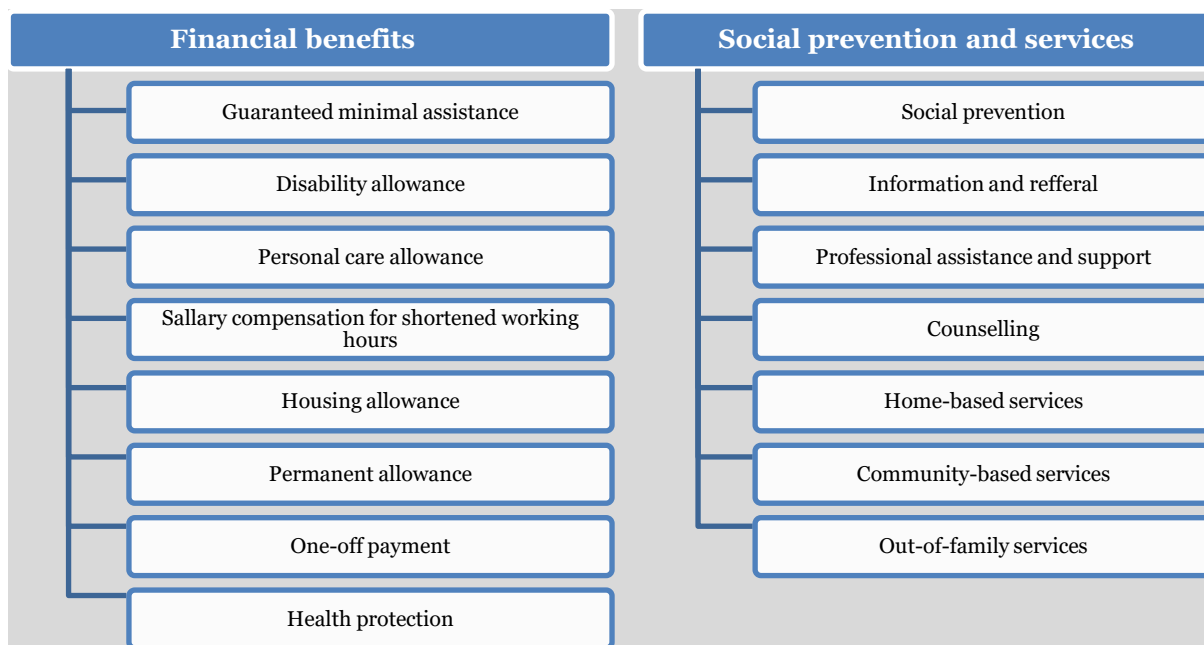
Despite the initial consideration to prepare two separate laws (for social services and financial benefits), this idea was abandoned, and the whole material was regulated in a single act. At the end of the process, the new LSP introduced novelties in many domains and aspects, of which the most crucial ones and their expected impact will be pointed out further (in order following the text of the new LSP).

1.1. General provisions

- A new, more comprehensive definition of social protection was provided and the goals of social protection revised based on the latest global trends in social protection.
- A glossary of key social protection terms was incorporated (such as: social risk, social problem, household, single parent, older person, disabled person etc.). This was important because previously, in the absence of a glossary of terms, in practice different interpretations were present that led to confusion, ill-implementation of legal provisions and consequences upon users and their equality under the law.
- A new chapter of social protection contemporary principles was introduced, defining key principles which are to serve as gatekeepers for user rights and practical guidelines for social protection professionals: equal treatment and non-discrimination; participation; individualization; user empowerment; privacy; respect of the interests and rights of the users; best interest; least restrictive environment; confidentiality; openness and transparency; social justice; and subsidiarity.
- The responsibilities of the key carriers in the social protection system (Government, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, municipalities, the city of Skopje and municipalities in the city of Skopje) previously dispersed throughout the text of the law, were grouped in a separate chapter of the new LSP, amended, extended and clearly defined. In addition, this contributed to the clearer insight into their mutual relations, obligations and responsibilities and disabled overlapping and negative conflict of jurisdiction.
- The social protection continues to be provided through realization of the rights to financial assistance and provision of social services which were considerably reformed (see Review 1).



Review 1: Types of financial benefits and services according to the LSP



1.2. Social financial benefits

- There were considerable changes in the financial benefits scheme. The most important change was the reduction of the previously existing fragmentation of financial benefits. This was a product of frequent ad-hoc and non-systemic introduction of new financial benefits based on the actual demands, political decisions and influences and lobbying by different interest groups.
- Several new financial benefits were introduced: guaranteed minimal assistance (joined social financial assistance and permanent care from the previous law); disability allowance (joined several separate disability benefits: mobility, blindness etc.) and permanent allowance (incorporated parents as caregivers of a child with disability).
- In addition to the new financial benefits, there was also a revision of the already existing benefits in the previous law, such as: personal care allowance, housing benefit, salary compensation for reduced working hours and one-off payments.
- Part of the benefits from the previous law (i.e. for a person who had status of a child without parent and parental care) were transferred in the Law on child protection.
- The changes in the financial benefits scheme were of major importance as they contributed to:



- Considerable increase in the amounts of the benefits, most visible with the guaranteed minimal assistance.
- Extension of the access to financial benefits for certain user groups (such as people with intellectual disabilities and parents - caregivers).
- Enhancing the user activation dimension of financial benefits through establishment of direct and shared responsibilities for individual planning and case management between CSW and ESA.
- Reduction of the financial benefits dependency (i.e. through introduction of provisions for exiting the scheme in case the beneficiary refuses to participate in active measures twice in a row).

1.3. Social services

- Previous classification of social services as institutional and non-institutional services was replaced with a new classification: home-based, community-based and out-of-family services, depending on the place where beneficiary receives the service (Review 2).

Review 2: Classification of social services according to the LSP

Type of social service		
1.	Information and referral services	
2.	Professional assistance and support services	
3.	Counselling services	
4.	Home-based services	
	<i>Home assistance and care service</i>	
	<i>Personal assistance service</i>	
5.	Community-based services	
	<i>Daily services</i>	Day care service
		Rehabilitation and reintegration service
		Resocialization service
	<i>Temporary services</i>	Temporary stay service
		Respite service
		Half-way house
6.	Out-of-family services	
	<i>Assisted living</i>	
	<i>Foster care</i>	General
		Specialized
		Temporary
		Urgent
		Kinship
	<i>Placement in institution</i>	



- Social prevention was strongly emphasized and activities and measures to be taken for preventive action were extended.
- The services of information and referral, professional assistance and support and counselling were regulated and clearly defined as separate social services.
- In terms of the home-based services, personal assistance was regulated as regular social service (previously implemented as program activity). Both personal assistance and home assistance and care were in more detail regulated which generated basic preconditions for their practical implementation.
- As to the community-based services, the services for rehabilitation, reintegration and resocialization were amended with the respite care and half-way house as new social services. In addition, the socially vulnerable groups (drug addicts, sexual workers, alcohol addicts and gambling addicts) were recognized and given an increased access to a broader set of services.
- Out-of-family services were enriched with the nursing care residential services for chronically and terminally ill beneficiaries. This provided for the possibility to encourage development of socio-medical services and to further extend access to social services for different beneficiary groups. The introduction of the kinship care for the first time in our social protection system enabled utilization of best possible caring environment for the beneficiary in a family of his/her relatives. The previously poor regulation of some out-of-family services (such as supported living, group homes vs. placement in institutions) was improved and upgraded.
- In general, all social services were redefined, the list of potential beneficiaries was more appropriately developed and the entry criteria were more precisely defined.
- The main advantages of the reform changes in the domain of social services relate to: introduction of the functional capacity assessment of the beneficiary as eligibility criteria (such as for home assistance and care and personal assistance); promotion of the possibilities for establishment of joint social, health and educational services; enhancing the legal provisions for integrated social services delivery; and creating an environment for enhanced focus on development and utilization of home and community-based services as alternatives to out-of-family services.



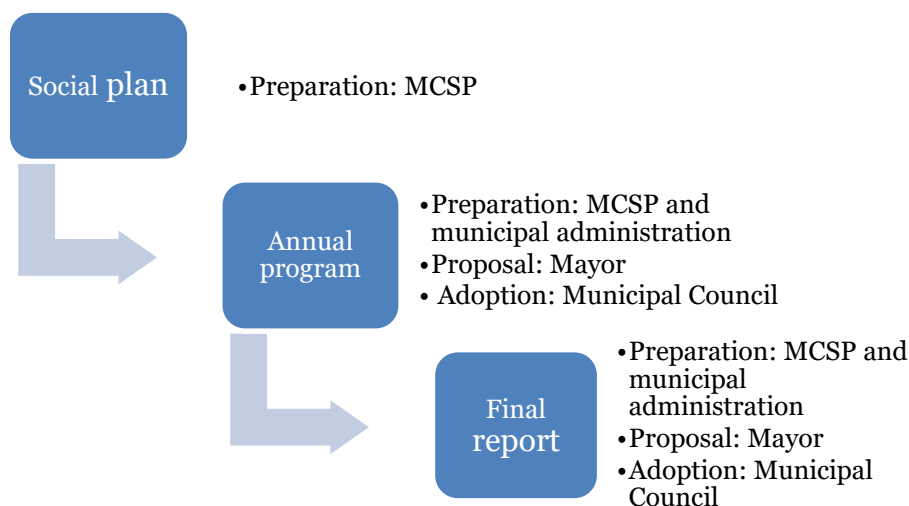
1.4. Institutional framework

1.4.1. Carriers of social protection

- The main carriers of social protection with the new LSP remain the same: the Republic and the municipality, the City of Skopje and the municipalities of the City of Skopje. They perform social protection activities through direct establishment of social protection institutions or transfer of social protection activities to associations and other legal and natural persons. In the latter case, their mutual rights and obligations are arranged with administrative contracts.
- The Government and the Ministry of labor and social policy remain the key institutions responsible for social policy making and implementation of policies on national level.
- Municipalities gain more considerable role in strategic policy planning and service delivery through establishment of municipal social protection councils (MSPC) and social protection councils of planned regions (SPCPR). The new LSP anticipates these councils to be established as multi-sectoral bodies at local and regional level.
- The new role of municipalities in social protection involves in-depth mapping of social problems and vulnerable groups in the municipality, analysis of the capacities and available social services in the municipality, as well as determining specific goals for development of social services. These obligatory strategic planning activities are part of the process of preparation of the Social plan of each municipality to be used as a basis for development of the Annual program for social protection (see Review 3).
- The municipalities in each planning region establish Social protection councils of planned regions for the purpose of planning and development of the network of social services in the region. At least once a year, the Regional Council submits a proposal to the Ministry on the need to develop social services in the planning region, the types and manner of establishment of these services. The Ministry plans the annual funding for social services based on the submitted proposals.
- The novelties related to local and regional strategic planning are expected to reduce the centralization in social services planning, introduce the bottom-up approach in the development of social services and increase the role and influence of local actors in identification and development of services to meet local social protection needs.



Review 3: Strategic planning process on local level



1.4.2. Network and licensing of social services providers

- With the new LSP the terminology and distinction between authorized and licensed service providers is introduced for the first time. The Ministry determines the network of authorized social service providers that consists of public social protection institutions and other authorized providers of social services with whom the Ministry or the municipality has entered into an administrative contract for provision of social services (associations, other domestic and foreign legal entities) as well as natural persons with which the Center for Social Work has entered into an administrative contract. Outside the network, social services are provided by associations and other legal entities and natural persons who had received a license for performing social protection (license).
- One of the key novelties in the new LSP is the introduction of an obligation of service providers to obtain work permit (license) to perform social protection activities. This means that service providers must fulfill specific norms and standards to be allowed to deliver social services. To this end, a Licensing commission is established within the MLSP which administers the whole licensing procedure.
- The MLSP establishes and manages a data base of all licensed service providers in the country according to the type of social services, available at the MLSP web page.



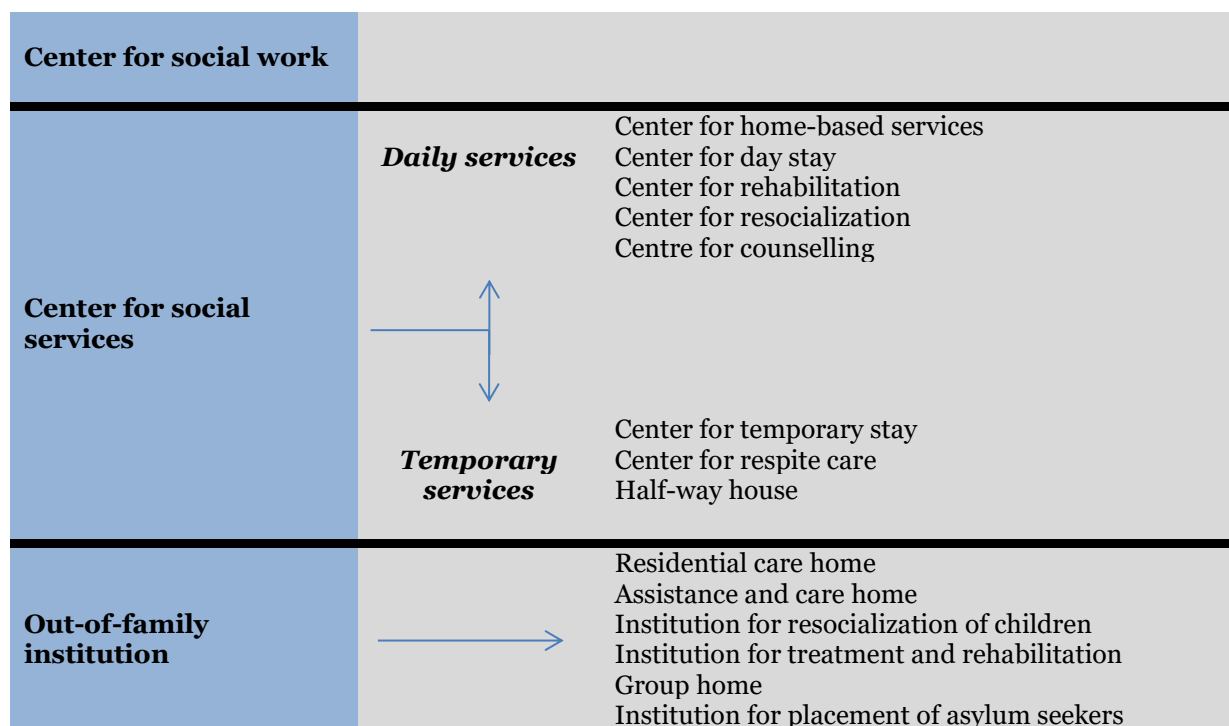
- The process of licensing and development of network of social service providers (including authorized non-state providers) is expected to lead to: equalization of public and private service providers in delivery of publicly funded social services; raising the quality of the delivered social services; overcoming the previous disorder and ambiguity in the delivery of social services etc.

1.4.3. Social service providers

- In the new LSP social service providers are listed in a single article: Institute for social activities, center for support of foster families, social protection institutions, foster families, associations and natural persons.
- In addition to the changes in responsibilities, organization, working methods and evaluation of the service providers previously recognized in the law, the new LSP introduces one new institution – center for support of foster families for promotion of foster care, preparation, assessment and training of future foster families and provision of support to the existing foster families. Given the importance of foster care for the process of deinstitutionalization, it is expected that establishment of such centers will support and advance this process.
- A new classification of the social protection institutions was adopted: center for social work, out-of-family social protection institution and center for social services. This was done following the newly established classification of social services (see Review 4)



Review 4: Social protection institutions



- The organizational forms for provision of social services are regulated by the Law on Institutions as *lex generalis* for all public services. In this respect, there are no considerable changes related to establishment, organization and management of these institutions. Some adjustments were made to overcome identified weaknesses in the implementation of provisions from the previous law.
- The responsibilities of the centers for social work as public institutions with public authorization in the text of the new LSP were more precisely and in more detail elaborated and extended. This update was done in order for the CSWs to be able to more efficiently and effectively respond to citizens' social protection needs and latest challenges. Provisions are introduced to strengthen the cooperation linkages with the local authorities in terms of the obligation to implement social protection programs and other acts adopted and financed by the municipalities, to participate in the work of the local and regional councils for social protection and to be involved in the preparation of the local social plans.
- For the first time in the new LSP there is a clear distinction between organizational forms for delivery of social services in the home and in the community on one hand, and out-of-family social services, on the other.



Namely, the term “center for social services” was introduced as organizational form for delivery of daily or temporary services in the home and in the community. This entailed distinct regulative changes related to establishment and organization of the services based on their type and character.

- Associations and natural persons were recognized as service providers in the previous law, but in the new LSP their involvement in the system is more fully and comprehensively regulated in line with the endeavors to promote pluralization. For some social services, associations were liberated from having to establish a social protection institution for delivery of services (except for the services of: placement in institution, group home, institution for treatment and rehabilitation).

1.5. Financing of social services

- The main sources of financing of social protection activities remain the same. Still dominant model of financing is through the central budget based on the Annual program for realization of social protection activities. Other sources are: budgets of the municipalities (as optional and non-obligatory); participation of users and other persons obliged to provide for users' maintenance on the basis of other regulations; charging services, gifts, legacies and other sources in accordance with the law. Charging for a service is made depending on the type of services used and material conditions of the user and his/her family.
- Funding of associations for performing social protection activities is also provided from other state sources based on the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games and the Law on Associations and Foundations (the Program for Financing Program Activities of Associations and Foundations by the Government).
- In general, the spirit of the law is to provide increased involvement of municipalities, associations and private entities as service providers, to reduce the role of the state as a direct service provider, and to support pluralization through public financing of services provision. This is expected to be achieved through service purchasing from non-state providers through service contracting based on determined prices of services. The new LSP anticipates the prices of services to be determined by the MLSP based on a methodology for service prices formed depending on the standards and norms for each concrete social service.



- Significant changes relate to introduction of three types of grants (public calls) as financing mechanisms for social services delivery: for municipalities, for associations and for innovative social services.
- It is stipulated grants for financing social services by municipalities to be announced annually, specifying the concrete terms and procedures for application, selection and implementation of the service. As mentioned before, social services to be financed annually are determined following the bottom-up approach on regional and local level. Funding for social services provided by municipalities should be equally distributed per planning regions in a same or a higher amount of the granted funds for the same purposes in the previous year. This provision is important as it should provide for sustainability and continuity in the delivery of services. Advantage in selecting services to be financially supported is given to applications that anticipate service provision through inter-municipal cooperation, cooperation with licensed service providers, inter-agency cooperation and provided co-financing. This will contribute to development of services by mutual cooperation of local and regional actors, development of new providers specifically for this purpose, as well as to effective utilization of the available resources. The municipalities may grant own funds for provision of social services to licensed associations or other private service providers through announcing public calls. This provision is to ensure open competition and avoiding subjective preferences of service providers.
- Public financing through grants for social services delivered by associations existed before adoption of the new LSP. Aware of the weaknesses in implementation of this type of public financing, the new LSP attempts to regulate in more detail the whole procedure by adopting more precise secondary legislation. The intention of the new LSP regarding financing of social services for associations is to achieve more substantial funding, more balanced and transparent distribution of funds and greater precision in funding criteria. Grants for financing social services by associations should be published annually specifying the concrete terms and procedures for application, selection and implementation of the service. Also, advantage is given to applications for social services delivered through partnerships, inter-sectoral cooperation and provided co-financing.
- Novelty in financing social services is introduction of the grants for innovative and interventional social services delivered by municipalities, associations and



private service providers. This is expected to enable in-crisis, ad-hock and early meeting of social protection needs of citizens in specific situations.

1.6. Cadres

- Provisions related to social protection cadres in the text of the new LSP were adjusted to the systemic Law for public service employees and specificities of the social protection domain.
- New LSP introduces changes in the categories of the working places in social protection institutions, based on the needs to upgrade the practice with contemporary work approaches and methods. Namely, the posts of supervisor, case manager and triage officer were incorporated for the first time.
- Considerable novelties were introduced in the sphere of licensing of professionals. The previous one general license for social protection is replaced with three new types of licenses: general (for professional work in CSW and for professional work in other service providers); special (for case management); and specialized (for foster care education, supervision and counselling and therapy).
- Within the professionals' licensing process, the possibility to value and recognize professional activities other than training and theoretical and practical exam (publications, projects, conferences etc.) was also introduced for the first time.
- The pluralization of training providers was enabled. For that purpose, the LSP anticipates establishment of a Commission for approval of programs for continuing professional education responsible to announce public calls for training providers and administer the selection process. This is expected to lead towards breaking the monopoly of the ISA as a single training provider for all social protection professionals in the country. Given the limited capacities and resources of ISA, this novelty should positively impact the quality of the training and provide diversification of contents and training programs.

1.7. User perspective

- The new LSP introduced several provisions that should contribute to the increased user choice, involvement in planning and implementation of social services and safeguard of user's rights.



- Unlike previously, the user is entitled to choose a preferred social service provider from the list of registered authorized providers, if available.
- In addition, user involvement and participation in services planning is provided through compulsory requirements of social service providers to establish User councils. One member of the Steering committee of the social protection institution is proposed by the User Council.
- To safeguard the user rights, ensure professional treatment and respect of ethical standards in social protection, the new LSP anticipates establishment of an Ethical board within the ISA. This body acts upon complaints and information related to unethical behavior of professional workers when dealing with service uses, which are in conflict with the Professional ethical codex. Based on the analysis of data in each case, the Ethical board may propose revocation of the professional worker license.

2. CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

The novelties in the new LSP presented a considerable step towards fulfillment of the strategic goals in the domain of social protection. This is especially true when it comes to financial benefits and setting the basis for development of alternative forms of social services to residential care. With the new types of social services anticipated within the law, the basis for facilitating the process of deinstitutionalization, increasing the quality of social services and providing conditions for reduced dependence on institutional protection, was created.

The introduction of the network of licensed and authorized service providers created conditions for plural delivery of social services. However, the new LSP did not provide for restructuring of the institutional framework of the social protection system to separate administration of the rights to financial assistance and provision of social services. On the contrary, the social protection reform did not encourage for external and internal reorganization of social protection institutions for the optimal utilization of available capacities and improvement of professional work. As a result, the situation in the CSWs remains almost the same as prior to the reform, with key obstacles related to limited numbers of CSWs to cover the whole territory of the country, high dependency from the central government, political influences, still heavy administrative burden and lack of appropriate staff. The introduction of the



case management approach in such conditions in CSWs further complicated the already unfavorable situation.

Regarding the process of decentralization of social protection, the new LSP slightly contributed in this respect especially with the introduction of municipal and regional councils for social protection as well as with the grants for financing local/regional delivery of social services. Although there is regulation in place for functional decentralization, there are still no legal grounds for obligatory delivery of social services by municipalities, which results in no effective decentralization at the moment. This is especially due to the lack of will for fiscal decentralization and sustainable sources for financing local social services delivery. Local offices for administration of financial benefits, as dispersed units of the CSWs were opened, but it had no significant relevance for the process of decentralization.

2.1. General provisions

Putting an emphasis on the general provisions in the new text of the LSP considerably facilitates the actual implementation of the LSP, as it provides more clearer and precise definitions, responsibilities of key carriers, glossary of terms and guiding principles. This provided for equal application of the legal provisions among CSWs and equal treatment of social protection beneficiaries.

Still, the application of some of the key social protection principles is questionable. This is due to lack of human, technical and infrastructural resources in social protection institutions, as well as lack of practice, willingness and awareness to abide by these principles. The application of these principles is related to disturbing the work commodity of professionals and changing their mind-set, which means that the process will most probably take a while.

2.2. Financial benefits

Social reforms redefined the financial assistance system in the direction of: improved targeting, increased amounts, as well as more efficient linkages with other systems, primarily with the employment system.

As visible in Table 1 below, the number of beneficiaries of GMA introduced with the new LSP (previously permanent and social financial assistance) has only slightly increased, but the total amount paid for this financial benefit has considerably increased. Although the coverage is similar to the one prior to the new LSP, the increased amounts of GMA have obviously contributed to improvement of



the situation of beneficiaries. GMA has also served as a safety net for socially vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic, visible in the rise of beneficiaries in November 2020 compared to November 2019.

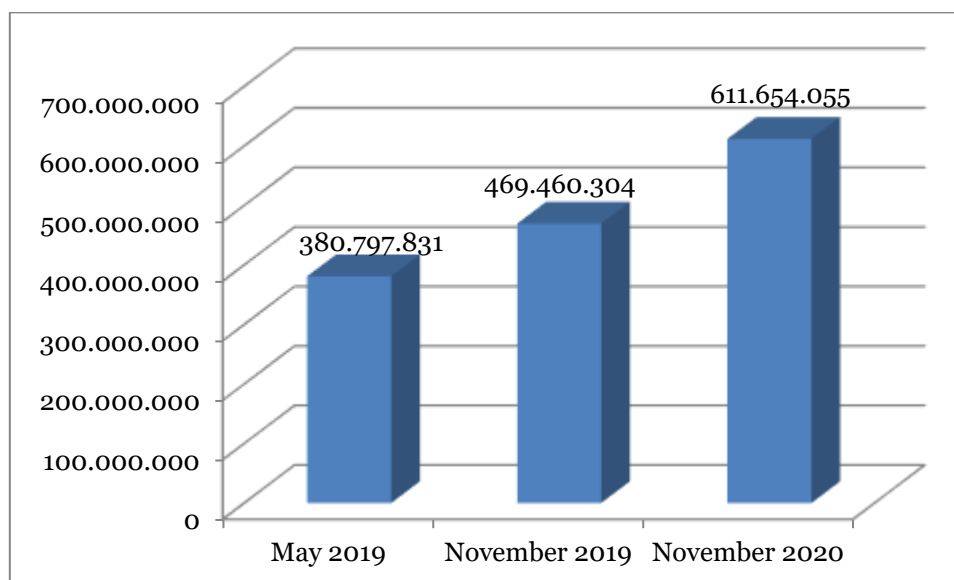
The enactment of the Law on social security for older people also provided for financial certainty for a considerable number of older people without pension coverage or other sources of income (7.591 older people in November 2020).

Table 1: Number of beneficiaries and amounts for financial benefits (2019-2020)

Type of FB	2019 (May)		2019 (November)		2020 (November)	
	No. of beneficiaries	Amount	No. of beneficiaries	Amount	No. of beneficiaries	Amount
Permanent FA	6.904	37.730.306	73	476.065	5	27.094
Social FA	21.929	68.585.873	19	69.126	/	/
GMA	/	/	26.139	198.493.551	31.001	253.002.156
Personal CA	40.050	190.216.683	40.607	190.397.486	42.928	214.108.939
Mobility/ Blindness (Disability Allowance)	11.125	69.543.511	11.013	67.915.771	10.334	66.817.689
Social security for older people	/	/	3.327	35.589.743	7.591	63.326.355

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

Overall, the above conclusions may also be confirmed by the analysis of expenditures for all financial benefits prior and after implementation of the new LSP (see Graph 1 below). Namely, these expenditures had increased from 380.797.831mkd in May 2019 (payments for April 2019), to 469.460.304mkd in November 2019 (payments for October 2019, without payments for persons with status of a child without parents and parental care up to 18 years of age).

**Graph 1: Total expenditures for social financial benefits (2019-2020)**

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

Considerable impact is also evident from the changes in the Law on child protection. Specifically, with the relaxing of the eligibility criteria for child allowances, the number of beneficiaries significantly and continuously increases (from 2.430 prior to the social reform, to 18.809 beneficiaries in November 2020). The introduction of the educational allowance (CCT) as a regular benefit for children from primary and secondary schools was an important novelty in the social reform process (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of beneficiaries and amounts for child benefits (2019-2020)

Type of FB	2019 (May)		2019 (November)		2020 (November)	
	No. of beneficiaries	Amount	No. of beneficiaries	Amount	No. of beneficiaries	Amount
CA	2.430	5.404.628	12.249	18.811.733	18.809	33.110.462
SA	6.444	38.703.481	6.537	37.721.777	6.053	35.418.255
Third child A	28.116	295.921.960	29.013	248.389.981	27.256	237.259.468
Single payments	628	3.215.897	1.179	14.540.680	1.229	15.794.491
EA-studying	/	/	99	2.353.018	113	2.725.685
EA- CCT	/	/	722	1.868.100	16.591 (December 2020)	39.041.610 (December 2020)

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021



Still, there are several implementation challenges related to the financial benefits yet to be overcome:

- Eligibility criteria for the guaranteed minimum assistance (GMA) and the child allowance (CA) such as income over the past three months and the ownership of property act as bottlenecks, hindering access for people at risk.
- Activation of GMA beneficiaries is still insufficient, requiring enhanced profiling and training offers.
- Lack of streamlined/unified disability assessment, which although underway for many years, still makes the access to disability benefits (i.e. disability allowance, personal care allowance, special allowance) a complex and long process.
- Take-up and timely access to benefits among most vulnerable and marginalized remains a significant issue.
- Application of integrated case management approach in cooperation between CSWs and ECs still faces obstacles.

2.3. Social services

During social reform process, social services were given particular attention having in mind that this sector has been underdeveloped and neglected for years back. This was done with an intention to facilitate and enhance the development of social services. Still, a couple of years following the adoption of the new LSP, there are many challenges yet to be tackled, predominantly related to reduction of the state role, financing, deinstitutionalization, standardization and monitoring of the service delivery, and alike.

Development of secondary legislation is of key importance for the development of the social services sector. Following the adoption of the new LSP the process of secondary regulation has been initiated. This most specifically applies to preparation of bylaws for rights to financial assistance as well as norms and standards for social services delivery. In order to increase the quality of social services delivery, secondary legislation related to social services prescribes provisions that providers have to abide by, in terms of: space, equipment, cadres, financial and material resources' planning, non-discriminatory policies and internal procedures for evaluation of services and assessment of users' satisfaction.

Up to today, the bylaws for the following services based on the new LSP had been put in force: home assistance and care, personal assistance, counselling,



supported living, daily services, temporary stay services, foster care and respite care (See Review 5).

Review 5: List of rulebooks according to the current status

Type of social service	Subtypes	Adopted (based on the new LSP)	In preparation (based on the new LSP)	Rulebook based on the previous LSP in use
Home-based services	Home assistance and care	√		
	Personal assistance	√		
Community daily services	Day care	√		
	Rehabilitation and reintegration			
	Resocialization			
	Counseling	√		
Community temporary services	Temporary stay	√		
	Respite care	√		
	Half-way house		√	
Out-of-family services	Supported living	√		
	Foster care	√		
	Residential placement*		√	√

* Rulebook for treatment and rehabilitation of persons with disability, persons with addictions problems and other marginalized groups was adopted in December 2019.

Development of secondary legislation for social services delivery based on the new LSP is important process as it creates a basis for obtaining minimum quality of care, contributes to improved delivery of services, facilitates the involvement of providers in social services planning and delivery and safeguards service users and their rights. As visible from the above Review 5, rulebooks for some social services are yet to be prepared which is an obstacle to the implementation of the provisions foreseen in the new LSP. Therefore, this process should be enhanced and resources of the MLSP and ISA be utilized for its accelerated finalization.

Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of all social services, as well as quality of care standards are not in place, while professional oversight of the delivery of these services by the ISA is insufficient.

Further in the text, the current situation and challenges related to the delivery of social services from the main groups will be discussed.

2.3.1. Traditional social services

Although the new LSP precisely defines and extends social prevention activities, in practice these are seriously neglected. Financial resources for social



prevention activities are not given priority and are not provided for in annual planning of the activities of CSWs, and as a result, implementation of these activities is scarce and ad-hock with no considerable impact. The same also applies to other social protection institutions.

The situation is similar regarding counselling services. Although there are counselling units in CSWs, they are only formally established and lack specialized cadres. Some counselling services are available by private and non-governmental organizations, but their entry into the system of social protection as licensed service providers is hampered due to the delay in developing secondary legislation and regulating financing methodology and procedures.

As to the traditional services of information and referral, professional assistance and support, they continue to be implemented routinely and most often as part of the delivery of other social services. With the introduction of the working position of a triage officer within the CSWs, it is expected that the information and referral services will be upgraded.

2.3.2. Home-based services

Home-based services were the first subjected to bylaws regulation following the adoption of the new LSP. Rulebooks regarding standards, norms, scope and manner of delivery of both home assistance and care and personal assistance were adopted by the end of 2019. This created conditions for timely licensing of service providers. Currently, 4 service providers are registered for home-based services, of which 3 for personal assistance and 1 for both personal assistance and home assistance and care. This number of service providers is insignificant, given the rise in the demand for home-based services and the need to provide for full coverage of the whole territory of the country (Review 6). This is also confirmed by the fact that most of the municipalities applied for home-based service to the MLSP's grants call for development of local social services announced in 2020.

The personal assistance is delivered as contracted social service for users referred by the CSW, which means that it is publicly funded, while home assistance and care is delivered through direct payments from beneficiaries, contracting with some municipalities and as project-based service.

The major challenge of limited access to home-based services for specific categories of users remains. Namely, personal assistance is currently targeting only persons with severe and profound physical disabilities and completely blind persons from 18-65 years of age.



Review 6: Home-based services per providers, type and number of beneficiaries

	Service provider/municipality	Social service	No. of users
1.	Association for support and development Humanost - Skopje	Personal assistance	9
2.	Association for promotion and development of an inclusive society Inkluziva - Kumanovo	Personal assistance	37
3.	Red Cross of RNM	Personal assistance	
3.1.	Red Cross of the city of Skopje	Personal assistance	167
3.2.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Bitola	Personal assistance	50
3.3.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Struga	Personal assistance	50
3.4.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Strumica	Personal assistance	133
3.5.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Gostivar	Personal assistance	67
3.6.	Red Cross of RNM – Kumanovo	Personal assistance	17
3.7.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Negotino	Personal assistance	67
3.8.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Veles	Personal assistance	67
4.	Association for European social inclusion Esi Nelis - Skopje	Personal assistance	6 (10-20)
5.	Association for support and development Humanost - Skopje	Home assistance and care	60 - 90
6.	Red Cross of RNM	Home assistance and care	
6.1.	Red Cross of RNM – MO Strumica	Home assistance and care	60
6.2.	Red Cross of RNM – Red Cross of the city of Skopje	Home assistance and care	60

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, December 2020

Since 2012, home-based services (home assistance for frail, older and disabled persons) have also been delivered through the OKR Program managed by UNDP and financed through the Operational Employment Plans of ESA with 20% participation by municipalities. Since 2012, 63 municipalities have been involved in the delivery of this service.

Overall, all preconditions for delivery of home based services are in place. Prices for these services are also determined on annual basis (calculated hourly per user). Further development of these services according to the demands and on continuing basis, as well as more substantial increase in public financing for the service through contracting, are still remaining challenges.

2.3.3. Community-based services

Community-based services in the country are predominantly represented through the day-care centers for persons with disabilities (35 day-care centers for children with disabilities and 8 day-care centers for adults with disabilities). There is



no significant coverage of other socially vulnerable groups with day-care services. There are only 2 day-care centers for children in the streets located in Skopje and 10 clubs for older people. The existing clubs for older people are not recognized in the new text of the LSP which is problematic in terms of licensing and financing of their activities. This is also the case with other social services that are operational in practice, but not present in the restrictive classification of social services in the law (preventive centers, socio-educational centers, youth centers etc.).

Temporary services are also underrepresented. Namely, there are only 14 centers for temporary stay, of which 1 for homeless persons, 1 for victims of trafficking, 1 therapeutic community and 9 for victims of family violence (see Review 7). There are also 4 intervention centers for homeless persons in Skopje, Struga, Bitola and Strumica, but these are also not recognized as a separate social service with the LSP. Same applies to similar temporary stay services for different socially vulnerable groups (i.e. crisis centers for mentally disabled and other users in imminent risk) which are not visible in the new classification of social services.

The above situation of incomplete regulation of all types of social services reflects service providers in several ways: inability to register as licensed service provider, unclear rules to enter into contracting with the state or municipalities as authorized service provider, unsecure quality of services delivery due to absence of standards and norms, reduced interest for development of these services, hampered conditions for control, evaluation and monitoring of the service delivery.

Review 7: Temporary stay services per type and number of users

	Center for temporary stay (December, 2020)	No. of users
1.	Center for temporary stay of homeless persons	50
2.	Therapeutic community for addicts	24
3.	Center for human trafficking victims - Skopje	5
4.	Center for victims of family violence	
4.1.	CSW Skopje	80
4.2.	CSW Kochani	10
4.3.	CSW Bitola	4
4.4.	CSW Sveti Nikole	10
4.5.	CSW Ohrid	5
4.6.	CSW Veles	4
4.7.	Center for victims of family violence – Skopje (managed by an NGO, financially supported by MLSP)	35
4.8.	Center for interventive placement of victims of family violence 24-48 hours – Skopje (managed by an NGO, financially supported by MLSP)	58



	Center for temporary stay (December, 2020)	No. of users
4.9.	Center for victims of family violence - Strumica	16

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, December 2020

2.3.4. Out-of-family services

During the social reforms period in the last several years the process of deinstitutionalization has been intensified. Following the guidelines set in the National strategy for deinstitutionalization 2018-2027 - Timjanik, considerable steps towards substitute care and humanization of the living conditions of users have been made based on transformation plans. The process of transfer of users and transformation of large institutions is still ongoing.

So far, major residential institutions for children had already been transformed into small group homes as organizational units (Children's home "11 October" – Skopje, Home for newborns and small children – Bitola, Public Institution for children with up-bringing and behavioral problems). Since 2017, 180 children under residential care had been transferred into alternative care services (small group homes, supported living units and foster care). In the Institute for protection and rehabilitation - Banja BANSKO there are no more children left. The process of transformation is not taking place only in the Institute for rehabilitation of children and youth – Topansko Pole. Further residential placement of children had been banned, while foster care is more significantly being used as alternative care form for children in need of placement.

The process of deinstitutionalization is being implemented in the Special institute – Demir Kapija through establishment of supported living units for disabled children and adults – 1 in Goresnica, 1 in D. Kapija, 3 in Negotino and 2 in Skopje, serving a total of around 30 users. Of the 7 supported living units, 3 are for disabled children, 4 for disabled adults. There are only 2 professional workers (social worker, psychologist, special educator) employed to cover 4 supported living units, and 4-5 caregivers in 1 unit. Part of the employees in the units is transferred from the Special institute - D. Kapija. The plan is to transform the Special institute - D. Kapija as integrated service provider of the following services: supported living, respite care and temporary placement of vulnerable groups during crisis situations and natural disasters.

Supported living is also provided for people with intellectual disabilities in Skopje and Negotino, and for children without parents and parental care 14+ years of



age, by associations licensed as social service providers (Poraka – Negotino and SOS Children’s Village Macedonia). They deliver these services based on administrative contract signed with the MLSP which covers the expenses for provision of the service (see Review 8 below).

Review 8: Out-of-family service providers per organizational units and number of users

	Out-of-family social service providers	Organizational units	Number of users
1.	Children’s home “11 October” - Skopje	4	20
2.	Home for newborns and small children – Bitola	5	28
3.	Public Institution for Children with up-bringing and behavioral problems	7 (5+2)	30
4.	Small group home for children without parents and parental care – Berovo and Shtip	2	10
5.	Small group home for children with up-bringing problems – Kavadarci	1	5
6.	Supported living units for children 14+ years of age - SOS Childrens Village Skopje	4	28
7.	Supported living units for disabled persons – Skopje	1	44
8.	Supported living units for disabled persons – Negotino	1	43
9.	Supported living units for disabled children and adults – 7 units	7	30
10.	Supported living units for disabled children and adults – under jurisdiction of Institute for Protection and Rehabilitation Banja BANSKO		15
11.	Special Institute - D. Kapija	1	170
12.	Institute for Protection and Rehabilitation - Banja BANSKO	1	48
13.	Institute for Rehabilitation of Children and Youth – Topansko Pole	1	29
14.	Private residential homes for older people	33	1410
15.	Public residential homes for older people	4	609
16.	Municipal residential homes for older people (Berovo)	1	29
17.	Foster care families	214	387
18.	Kinship care families	79	107

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy and Institute for social activities, December 2020

However, the delivery of out-of-family social services faces numerous challenges, yet to be overcome:

- The process of deinstitutionalization predominantly focuses on children and disabled persons;



- Available out-of-family social services for older people are not sufficient to cover the needs, there is uneven geographical distribution, while existing state residential care institutions are massive, for large numbers of users which affects the quality of care provided;
- There is a limited number of small group homes and supported living units given the demand for these services;
- The established small group homes and supported living units are often placed in rented facilities which may cause uncertainty and disrupt the continuity of the social service delivery. Also, rented facilities often require additional adaptation to suit the needs of users;
- There is evident lack of staff in the small group homes and supported living units, unregulated work status of part of the staff (i.e. caregivers), as well as lack of focus on counseling and therapeutic approaches in the professional work with users;
- The integration of service users in the community and gaining uninterrupted access to health and educational services for people with disabilities is sometimes limited;
- Foster care services which are more intensively being used as alternative to residential placement are not adequately enhanced and improved, which in turn negatively affects quality of care;
- There are lots of unsolved issues related to sustainability, price, continuity, development planning and alike, related to delivery of out-of-family services by non-state providers when contracting with the state;
- Integrated social services have been developed in initial phase, while combined socio-medical services are not developed at all;
- The rulebook for out-of-family services is not yet adopted (except for the supported living service and institution for treatment and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, persons with problems of addiction and other marginalized groups), which is an obstacle for service providers due to the current absence of standards and norms for these services.

2.4. Institutional framework

2.4.1. Carriers of social protection

Although the legal framework that clearly defines jurisdiction of key carriers of social protection is in place, remaining challenges relate to the organization and



capacities of the MLSP and municipalities for implementation of their responsibilities.

The MLSP as a key institution for policy making, planning and oversight of social protection activities faces several weaknesses: inappropriate internal organization per sectors; uneven distribution of employees per sectors; non-compliance of the working places systematization act and the actual number and structure of employees; insufficient human resources within the sectors directly responsible for social protection; inappropriate structure of employees per type and degree of education within the sector for social protection; lack of employees with nomo-technical knowledge required for performing MLSP regulatory function; lack of human capacities within the sector for social inspection etc.

The above situation affects the quality and effectiveness of the MLSP in performing its legal responsibilities, which is especially significant for the ongoing implementation of the social reform process in terms of policy making, development of secondary legislation, supporting the social protection institutions and alike. In addition, given the reduced role of the state in the delivery of social services, these shortcomings may affect the implementation of key strategic paths, oversight of service providers and quality of services in general.

The new LSP was an attempt to strengthen the role of municipalities in social protection, but this process slowly advances for several reasons: most of the municipalities are not yet involved in continuous direct provision of social services for the local population; there is a lack of approach for social services delivery tailored to the specifics of the municipality; due to the limited financial resources for different municipal responsibilities, significant number of municipalities do not recognize social protection as one of the key domains of crucial local importance and public interest; some municipalities are still facing financing instability; there are significant differences between municipalities in terms of their social protection capacities etc.

In general, certain progress in developing social protection activities is noticeable mainly in urban, larger municipalities, while dominant social protection involvement is through financial assistance for vulnerable population groups. As for social services, they are most often project – based and realized in cooperation with local associations. However, most of the municipalities do not yet possess appropriate administrative structure for development of social protection activities. Social issues are often treated as non-obligatory activity, due to which there are no considerable investments in building human and infrastructural capacities for this



purpose. In some municipalities officials responsible for social protection activities invest individual efforts, on their own initiative, but without proper support by the municipal authorities. There are no separate social protection sectors/units in all municipalities. Where such units exist, there is a lack of appropriate professional cadres. Most often, only one civil servant is responsible for social protection, while simultaneously being responsible for other domains such as education, health or child protection. In a limited number of municipalities there are social workers employed, some of them being transferred to working places other than social protection.

It is expected that some of the above weaknesses will be overcome with the newest legal obligations of municipalities in the domain of social protection. The establishment of municipal and regional social protection councils and preparation of local social plans should enable larger involvement of municipalities in social protection sphere through identification of local social situation, planning, financing and implementation of needed social services. Nevertheless, this process is still ongoing and slow. Having in mind its importance, following the adoption of the new LSP it has been supported and facilitated by UNDP and EPTISA (IPA Project for Deinstitutionalization). Within these projects, pilot municipalities have been supported in the establishment of local councils for social protection and preparation of local social plans.

As to the process of development of regional planning and delivery of social services, this is yet to be initiated and implemented. Since regional councils for social protection are not yet established, it impacts the whole process of bottom-up planning and financing of social services anticipated with the LSP.

2.4.2. Network and licensing of social service providers

One of the most important novelties in the LSP was the establishment of a system for licensing of social service providers. To this end, a Licensing commission was established within the MLSP which administers the whole licensing procedure. Correspondingly, secondary legislation was developed. The process of licensing is ongoing, although the COVID 19 pandemic slowed it down and distracted the functioning of the Licensing commission.

Following the licensing of service providers, all licensed service providers are entered into an electronic registry which is currently available on the MLSP webpage. So far, 12 service providers are registered in the data-base, of which 4 for



home-based services, 2 for community-based services, 6 out-of-family services (last updated: June, 2020).

Overall, the network of social service providers is not yet developed. The users' referral to use services by authorized service providers is not sufficiently taking place. It is expected that this referral will start once all previous activities are completed (development of the network, financing of licensed service providers, service contracting).

2.4.3. Social service providers

According to the new regulation social service providers are: Institute for social activities, center for support of foster families, social protection institutions, foster families, citizen's associations and natural persons.

The Institute for social activities keeps the responsibilities from the previous text of the LSP as a key institution for advancement of social protection. Its responsibilities are amended with supervision of professional work in social protection institutions and employment centers. The ISA is clearly assigned with important responsibilities in many areas: analysis and research of social problems, oversight and supervision of professional work, licensing of professionals, continuing professional education, development of professional standards etc. These responsibilities define ISA as administrative organization, and not as social service provider, as it is defined in the new LSP. Given the small number of employees in the ISA and the lack of staff with proper qualifications in terms of education and experience, ISA is facing serious challenges to fulfil its legal obligations.

Although the new LSP anticipates establishment of centers for support of foster families, no such center has been established so far. There are activities in place for opening such centers in Skopje and Bitola.

The key institution for social protection – CSW, remains a public institution with public authorization to decide upon citizen's rights in administrative procedure. Additionally, it serves as a direct service provider through: information, referral, counselling and daily and temporary community-based services. CSWs currently face many challenges related to their work organization and professional cadres, which will be discussed in the Cadres chapter below.

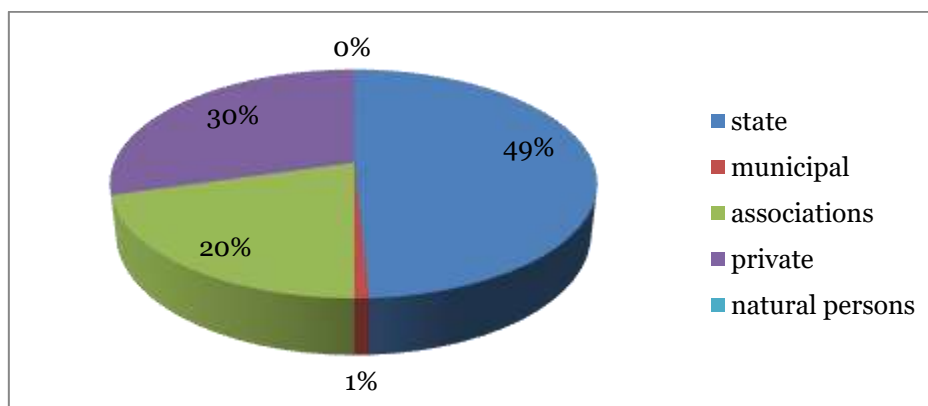
Dominant social service providers so far are the day care centers, mostly for persons with disabilities. With the new LSP daily centers and temporary stay centers gain a status of centers for social services which entails differences in manner and



procedures for establishment, organization and cadres compared to social protection institutions for out-of-family social services.

In general, the network of service providers is underdeveloped, while public services remain dominant, as visible in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Structure of social service providers



Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, December 2020

Home-based services are delivered by associations. With community-based services there is a mix of public and non-governmental service providers. As to the private sector involvement, it is almost exclusively dedicated to out-of-family social services for older people. There is only 1 municipal service provider for out-of-family care for older people and 1 private service provider registered as rehabilitation center for community-based services (See Review 9 below). There are no natural persons registered as social services providers.

**Review 9: Social service providers per status**

Type of service	Organizational form	Public	Municipal	Associations	Private	Natural persons
HOME-BASED SERVICES	Center for social services in the home (home assistance and care)					
	Center for social services in the home (personal assistance)			12		
DAILY COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES	Day care center	35		8		
	Rehabilitation center				1	
	Resocialization center	2		1		
	Counselling center					
TEMPORARY COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES	Center for temporary stay	7		4	1	
	Respite care center					
	Half-way house					
OUT-OF-FAMILY SERVICES	Home for older people	4	1		33	
	Home for children without parents and parental care (Organizational units – small group homes, Bitola, Skopje)	2				
	Home for assistance and care					
	Institution for resocialization of children - Skopje	1				
	Institution for treatment and rehabilitation (D. Kapija with SLU, T. Pole, B. BANSKO with SLU, Pokrov Strumica)	3			1	
	Group home for children without parents and parental care – Berovo, Shtip	2				
	Group home for children at risk - Kavadarci	1				
	Institution for asylum seekers - Skopje	1				
	Supported living for persons with disabilities – Poraka Negotino	1				
	Supported living for children 14+ years of age SOS (4SLU) - Skopje	1				
	Other _____					
	TOTAL		60	1	25	36

Source: Institute for social activities, Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

2.5. Financing of social services**2.5.1. State financing of social protection activities**

Sources for financing social protection are provided from: the state budget, the budgets of the municipalities (as optional and non-obligatory); participation of



users and other persons obliged to provide for their maintenance on the basis of other regulations; charging services, gifts, legacies and other sources in accordance with the law. Charging for a service is made depending on the type of services used and material conditions of the user and his/her family.

Main source of financing of social protection activities is the state budget. Each year, based on the Program for realization of social protection, funds for all social protection activities are determined. For 2021, a total of 9.333.624.000 mkd are planned. Review 10 below shows in more detail planned funds for different budget items.

Review 10: Planned state budget for social protection for 2021

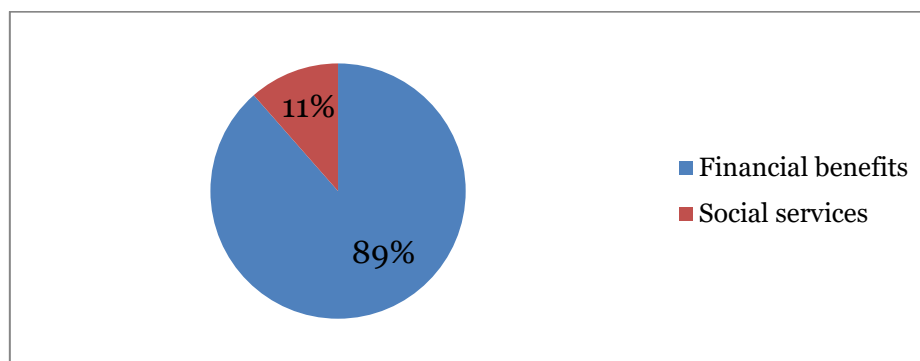
Budget items	Amount in mkd
1. CSW and ISA	564.515.000
2. Community-based services (daily and temporary stay)	87.746.000
3. Institutions for social protection	247.758.000
4. Building, equipping and maintenance of social protection facilities	31.100.000
5. Deinstitutionalization and social services	246.235.000
6. Improvement of social services (World bank loan)	421.800.000
7. Social protection financial benefits (including social security for older people)	6.263.470.000
8. Allowances for civil disabled persons	61.000.000
9. Allowances for refugees and asylum seekers	10.000.000
10. COVID-19 measures (World bank loan for GMA)	1.400.000.000
Total budget	9.333.624.000

Source: Program for realization of social protection for 2021, MLSP

As evident from Graph 3 below, dominant share of the budget goes for financing of social financial benefits - 89%, versus only 11% for financing of social services (without the budget for CSW, ISA and social protection facilities). Despite the fact that in the recent year there is an increased focus on social services development, actual funding set aside to support this development is still not sufficient.



Graph 3: Share of total state budget for financial benefits and social services



Source: Program for realization of social protection for 2021, MLSP

In addition to the funds determined with the Annual program for social protection, significant funds from state resources are provided on the basis of the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games and the Law on Associations and Foundations, i.e. the Program for Financing Program Activities of Associations and Foundations by the Government. For 2021, based on the Decision for distribution of funds from games of chance and entertainment games, a total of 70.000.000mkd is provided.

2.5.2. Modalities for financing social services

There are several modalities for financing social services in place: grants, subsidies and contracting.

The new LSP anticipates 3 types of grants: for municipalities, for associations and for innovative and interventive social services.

The development of social services through grants for financing municipalities and innovative social services was initiated within the Project for improvement of social services financed by World Bank loan. In 2020 a public call for applications was announced. By the end of 2020, 19 applications for provision of social services by municipalities in partnership with associations and 5 applications for innovative social services were approved for funding. Of the 19 applications to be implemented in 24 municipalities, 16 are for home assistance and care, 1 day care center for older people, 1 day care center for children with disabilities and 1 center for rehabilitation and reintegration of children with disabilities. Applicants receive financial support for establishment of the service up to 30.000 euro and are obliged to establish the



service and obtain adequate license within the first 6 months. The total committed budget for establishment and delivery of the social services for the 19 approved applications for municipalities is 2.7 million euro. Currently, service providers are in the phase of establishment and licensing. In 2021 a new call for municipalities will be announced.

Based on the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games, the funds realized on all grounds from the organization of these games are used for financing the national disability organizations, their unions and their association, associations of citizens for combating domestic violence and for Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia. The amount of funds is determined at 50% of the total income from games of chance and entertainment games determined in the previous calendar year, but not less than 60 million mkd and not more than 120 million mkd.

The allocation of funds is made by the state with a decision based on a Program submitted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The Ministry prepares the Program on the basis of submitted projects, which specify the amount of funds and the purpose for their utilization.

Contracting for social services delivery takes place every year for specific social services. In 2021 the MLSP plans to contract licensed service providers for the following services: supported living, personal assistance and treatment and rehabilitation in a therapeutic community. So far, MLSP has contracted a small number of service providers: SOS Children's village (for supported living for children 14+ years of age and foster care for children without parents and parental care), Poraka – Negotino (for supported living of persons with disabilities), Humanost, Red Cross and Inkluziva (for personal assistance), Pokrov Strumica (for therapeutic community) (See Review 11). The annual amount granted to service providers based on signed contract is calculated based on the number of users and the price for the concrete service determined in the Decision for determination of the prices of social services which is prepared annually based on the Methodology for determination of prices of services. The contracts are signed and renewed every year on the basis of announced public call.



Review 11: State funds allocated to associations for social services delivery

Association	Type of service	Amount granted in mkd
1. SOS Children's Village – Macedonia	Foster care	8.972.856
	Supported living	8.687.280
2. Poraka - Negotino Неготино“ - Неготино	Supported living	22.453.565
3. Red Cross of the RNM	Personal assistance	23.436.727
4. Inkluziva – Kumanovo	Personal assistance	4.333.626
5. Pokrov – Strumica	Placement in institution for treatment and rehabilitation for persons with addiction problems	3.559.148

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

Current modalities of financing face numerous challenges:

- Annual funding through grants, subsidies and public calls creates uncertainty with the service provider in terms of sustainability and continuity of service provision, restricts greater investment in infrastructure and human resources, and leaves space for political and other influences and lobbying. This model of financing of associations is suitable in an initial phase of development of plural delivery of social services as a first step in bridging the gap between the existing needs for social services and the capacities of non-state social service providers.
- Grants, given their project-based and time-limited nature, are not effective mechanisms to support ongoing services. They can be used as mechanisms for support of innovative ideas and promotion of innovative and interventive services. Also, grants are more susceptible to budget cuts than other funding mechanisms. Therefore, civil society organizations that rely solely on funding through grants endeavor to uphold funding through other different forms.
- Bearing in mind the amount of funds allocated for financing of disability organizations and Red Cross organizations, there is a need to reconsider this type of subsidized funding for organizations. The subsidy is a model that is less favored from the point of view of transparency and accountability in the spending of public funds, the lack of free and fair competition, and the effectiveness of measures to secure "best value for money". In addition, over time, one category of civil society organizations is put in "privileged" position as they receive almost unconditional funding by the government. Newly formed civil society organizations cannot access the same level of funding, and



the subsidy becomes an obstacle to fair and transparent support. Some of these organizations are nominated as partners of the state in various advisory bodies related to social policy. In this way, the state receives desirable partners representing the interests of its target groups.

- The diverse financing of the public social protection institutions through transfer of budget sources based on the expenses in the previous year, results in unequal treatment with non-state service providers which are financed per capita.
- Although there is a Decision for determination of the prices of social services which is prepared annually based on the Methodology for determination of prices of services, it is limited to the home-based social services, day care services, out-of-family services (supported living, foster care, treatment and rehabilitation) and professional assistance and support in a center for support of foster families. The existing situation of not determined prices for some social services is partially due to the lack of secondary legislation.
- Within the Methodology for determination of prices of services based on the norms and standards for social service provision, the elements used to determine prices (human resources, goods and services, facilities) are not comprehensive and need revision.
- The prices of some social services are negatively affected by the inadequately determined norms and standards for human resources, one of the key elements in determination of the price of the services. For example, for provision of the supported living services with 24 hours support, the bylaw anticipates only one professional and three caregivers for a unit comprised of up to five people with disabilities. This reduces the price of the service and financial support for interested service providers, which reflects the quality of the service, as well as continuous and undisturbed delivery of the service.

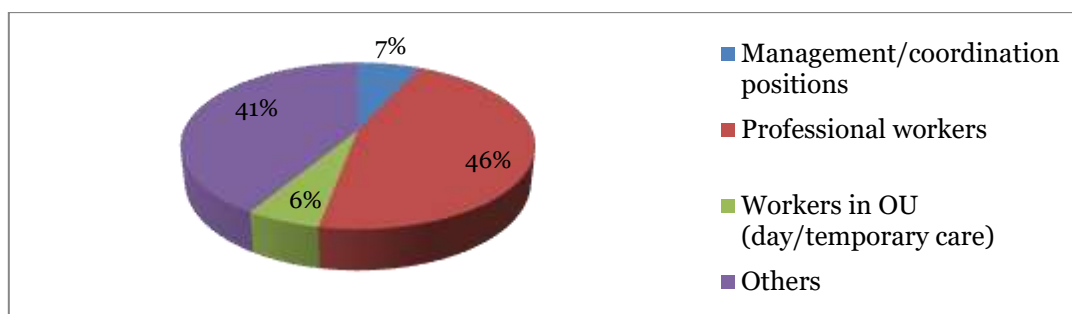
2.6. Cadres

Human resources management in social protection institutions in terms of number, structure and educational profile of staff is a long-lasting problem. This especially refers to the CSWs as key social protection institutions. Currently, in the CSWs there are 538 employed professional workers. A total of 67 professional workers are engaged in the organizational units of the CSWs (day and temporary stay centers) and 80 employees on management/coordination positions (directors, heads of departments, coordinators). In addition, there are 482 workers employed in the



CSWs as assisting professionals, administrative workers and assisting technical workers (134 of whom are data-entry officers). Analysis of the structure of employees shows that the number of professional workers is insufficient (538 or 46%) and represents less than half of the total number of employees in CSWs (see Graph 4).

Graph 4: Structure of employees in the CSWs



Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

With changes in the categories of working positions in the CSWs (category A – professional workers), a process of subsequent reforms has been initiated. The key novelty was the introduction of 3 new working positions - supervisor, triage officer and case manager. There are 29 triage workers and 255 case managers in all CSWs. Only the position of the supervisor has not yet been introduced. This is due to the fact that there is no supervision training taking place and special licensing for supervision has not been issued yet (see Review 12). In addition, changes in working positions have not been followed by adequate changes in the internal organization of the CSW. The division of the CSWs in 3 sectors (financial benefits, social services and administrative/technical) is no longer justified as case managers remained dispersed in both sectors (either in the sector for financial benefits, or in the social services sector) although they have same responsibilities.



Review 12: Working places in CSWs and number of employed professional workers

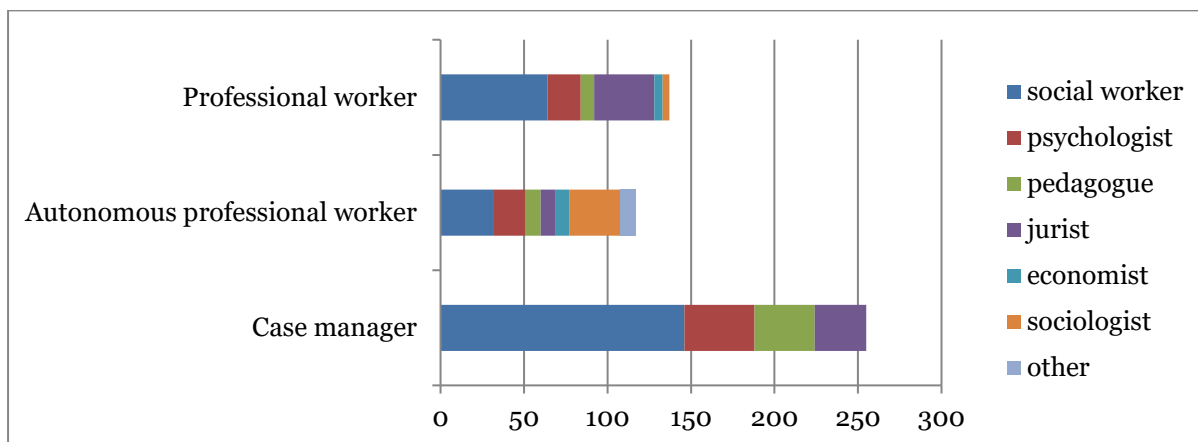
	Working places in CSWs	No. of employees
1.	Director	30
2.	Head of department	36
3.	Coordinator	13
4.	Triage officer	29
5.	Case manager	255
5.1.	- Social worker	146
5.2.	- Psychologist	42
5.3.	- Pedagogue	36
5.4.	- Jurist	31
6.	Autonomous professional worker	69
6.1.	- Social worker	32
6.2.	- Psychologist	19
6.3.	- Pedagogue	9
6.4.	- Jurist	9
7.	Professional worker – level V	128
7.1.	- Social worker	64
7.2.	- Psychologist	20
7.3.	- Pedagogue	8
7.4.	- Jurist	36
8.	Autonomous professional worker	48
8.1.	- Economist	8
8.2.	- Sociologist	31
8.3.	- Other	9
9.	Professional worker – level V	9
9.1.	- Economist	5
9.2.	- Sociologist	4
9.3.	- Other	
10.	Supervisor	/
	Total (professional workers – service providers, 4-10)	538

Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2021

Social workers as key educational profile in CSWs are under-represented. Graph 5 shows that social workers are present with less than half of the employees in CSWs for the 3 key working positions: case managers, autonomous professional workers and professional workers.



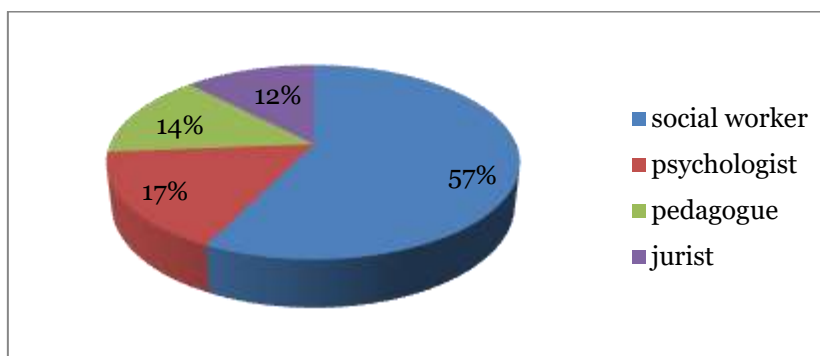
Graph 5: Structure of professional workers per educational profile



Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

The structure of employees in CSWs per profiles shows that most of the case managers (146) are social workers. Additional professional workers – psychologists, jurists and pedagogues (109) are assigned to serve as case managers due to lack of social workers in the CSWs (Graph 6).

Graph 6: Structure of case managers per educational profile



Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2021

Case management is being gradually introduced as a work approach in the CSWs. To this end, training for integrated case management was delivered for professional workers from CSWs and ECs, in the course of 2018 and 2019.

Case management application within the CSWs faces many challenges: resistance by the professionals used to work per categories of users; not developed training modules for case management; lack of coordination with the employment



centers; not initiated special licensing process for case managers; inconvenient structure of the employees in the CSWs etc.

Given the diverse and partially inadequate educational structure of employees in social protection institutions, licensing of professionals has been facing numerous challenges since adoption of the new LSP. The LSP anticipates 3 types of licenses: general (for professional work in CSW and for professional work in other service providers); special (for case management); and specialized (for foster care education, supervision and counselling and therapy). However, currently only general licensing is being administered. This licensing process is directly related and conditioned with the development of adequate training modules. Moreover, the LSP anticipates changes in the delivery of training modules as part of the novelties in the area of continuing education of professionals. A Commission for approval of programs for continuing professional education has been established within ISA and started functioning. However, the MLSP has not yet developed secondary legislation on criteria for approval of programs for continuing professional education, criteria and procedures for approval of the programs, form and contents of the approved programs, form and contents of the list of group of programs, areas and points for continuing professional education, as well as form and contents of the certificate for completed education per approved program. MLSP is still not setting aside funds for delivery of continuing professional education to training providers other than ISA. As a result of this, currently there are no preconditions for the Commission to initiate the process of approval of these programs, while training is still provided solely by the ISA.

2.7. User perspective

The user perspective and involvement in social protection has been emphasized during the reform process. However, the actual impact of the legal provisions regarding users' enhanced participation, involvement in planning and decision making, user choice, as well as protection of their rights is not sufficient. User choice of available service providers anticipated with the New LSP, has been limited due to the scarcely developed network of registered service providers and lack of capacities in the existing ones. This was partially due to the Covid 19 pandemic which has limited direct contacts between users and service providers.

User councils in social service providers had been established and members appointed to serve in the Steering committees of the service providers, as their legal



obligation. However, this was done formally mostly to fulfill legal obligations with no visible effects of user participation in these bodies yet.

In terms of the protection of the rights of beneficiaries an Ethical board had been established within the ISA that has already started functioning and the Codex of professional ethics has been amended. Nonetheless, the scope of activities of the Ethical board has been narrow due to small number of complaints. This is result of the absence of activities to properly inform users of social protection about their rights, manner and procedures to submit complaints.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the impact from the implementation of the new LSP shows that there are considerable steps made towards achieving social protection strategic goals. However, in the following period the need remains for further improvements, responding to the current issues and challenges and continuous adaptation to the emerging circumstances in the field of social protection. Recommendations for actions to be taken will be presented in several chapters focusing on the institutional framework, social services delivery and financing and user involvement.

3.1. Institutional framework

3.1.1. Ministry of labor and social policy

- Revision of the act on internal organization and systematization of work places for the purposes of policy making, strategic planning, appropriate and more effective organizational structure for implementation of policies.
- Reorganization of the units within the Sector for social protection in the direction of its adjustment to the new institutional setup for administering the rights to financial assistance and provision of social services.
- Revision of the Act for systematization of work places and determining appropriate educational profile for each work place.
- Enhancement of the Social protection sector with appropriate structure of employees, with emphasis on employees who poses nomo-technical knowledge for performing MLSP's regulatory function.
- Strengthening the Sector for social inspection with human capacities.



3.1.2. Institute for social activities

- Transformation of the status of ISA from service provider to administrative organization as a state administration body in which case ISA regulation will be in accordance with the Law on organization and operation of the state administration bodies.
- Enhancement of human capacities with staff who holds appropriate educational profile and experience.
- Developing responsibilities of the ISA in the domain of supervision, monitoring and evaluation of social services.
- Improvement of ISA's activities related to the functioning of the Ethical board.

3.1.3. Municipalities

- Enhancement of the role of municipalities in social services provision through gradual implementation of functional and fiscal decentralization;
- Intensify the activities of the established Municipal social protection councils;
- Supporting Municipal social protection councils in the development of local social plans and harmonization with the annual municipal budget planning;
- Supporting the establishment of regional councils and their activities related to regional planning and delivery of social services;
- Strengthening the administrative capacities of the municipalities for social protection through changes in the acts for internal organization and establishment of social protection departments, defining special work places in the act on systematization of work places and compulsory employment of social worker and jurist within the department for social protection.
- Following the process of decentralization and transfer of the responsibilities of the centers for social work on local level, introduction of monitoring and evaluation competences to the social protection sectors within the municipal administration.

3.1.4. Centers for social work

- Division of the responsibilities of the CSWs for administration of financial benefits and social services in two separate institutions:



- 1) National agency for administration of social financial benefits with regional and local de-concentrated units, acting upon the Law on social protection, Law on child protection, Law for social security of older people.
 - 2) Center for Social Work as public institution with public authorization for social prevention, counselling and social services, acting upon the Law on Social Protection, Family Law, Law on Justice for Children, Law on prevention and protection from violence against women and family violence and other relevant laws.
- Reorganization of the CSWs through amendments in the act for internal organization aimed at establishing four separate sectors: Social prevention and counselling sector (primary, secondary and tertiary), Marriage and family sector, Social protection sector for children, adults and older persons and the Sector for monitoring, evaluation, administrative and technical affairs.
 - Following profiles are proposed to be employed per sectors: Social prevention and counseling sector - psychologist and social worker; Marriage and family sector - social worker, psychologist, pedagogue and jurist; Social protection sector for children, adults and older persons - social worker, psychologist, pedagogue, jurist; Sector for monitoring, evaluation, administrative and technical-auxiliary affairs – social worker, jurist, sociologist and economist.
 - Establishment of CSWs in each municipality and gradual preparation for transfer of responsibilities to local level (functional, administrative and fiscal decentralization).
 - Changes in the functions of the CSWs as direct service providers (daily and temporary care services should not be organizational units of the CSWs).
 - Strengthening of cadres in CSWs with specialized training for counselling, supervision and case management.
 - Assigning only social workers to serve as case managers.
 - Case management approach applied in practical work in CSWs should not be linked to obtaining a case management license, but with the educational profile and length of service.
 - Change in the classification of working positions in CSWs (autonomous professional workers should also serve as case managers).



3.2. Social services

3.2.1. Social services delivery

1) Traditional services

- Social prevention should be enhanced as a function of the CSW and other social protection institutions through provision of financial resources for this purpose in annual budget planning, inter-sectoral cooperation with other institutions and organizations, local and regional councils for social protection, enhancing field and voluntary work, organization of users in self-help groups etc.
- Counselling services should be improved through investments in training of staff for different counselling and therapeutic approaches and initiation of the process of specialized licensing for counseling and therapeutic work.
- Existing non-state providers of counselling and therapeutic services should be licensed and used by social protection institutions as authorized service providers to deliver these services in complex cases through referral.

2) Home, community and out-of-family based services

- The network of licensed service providers for home-based services should be further developed and more evenly geographically dispersed.
- The list of home-based services should be extended to encompass other services: home adaptation services, meals on wheels, accompanying services etc.
- The social service - home assistance and care should be allowed to be delivered as two separate services.
- The network of community-based services should be further developed to include other types of services, other than daily centers and to target other socially vulnerable groups, other than people with disabilities.
- The list of community-based services should be extended to encompass other services: preventive centers, socio-educational centers, clubs, youth centers, crisis centers etc.
- The process of deinstitutionalization should be further intensified, with specific focus on selection of the appropriate social service for the users transferred from large institutions (supported living is not a social service appropriate for all categories of users).
- The process of deinstitutionalization should be also directed towards transfer of users to alternative social services (home and community – based) other than small group homes, foster care and supported living.



- The process of deinstitutionalization should also encompass older people for whom residential care in massive public institutions is still dominantly present.
- Supported living should be redefined as a social service at 3 levels: assisted living, supported living and independent living with support, which should also target older people as users.
- The practice of establishment of out-of-family services in rented facilities should be avoided.
- The professional work in out-of-family services related to individual, group and family work, counselling and therapy should be enhanced and staff properly trained for this purpose.
- The foster care services should be improved through more appropriate selection of foster families, more adequate training, support, oversight, monitoring and evaluation of the service. For this purpose, the process of establishment of centers for support of foster care should be finalized.
- The list of out-of-family services should be extended to encompass other services: nursing homes, homes for palliative and terminal care, specialized group homes etc.
- The development of the secondary legislation for all out-of-family services should be finalized.
- Secondary legislation regarding staff requirements for out-of-family services should be revised adequate to the type and purpose of the service as defined in the law.

3) General recommendations for all social services

- All social services should be revised in terms of purpose, contents, scope and eligible categories of users.
- Integrated, preventive, socio-educational and socio-medical services should be more intensively developed.
- The eligibility for using social services should not be determined based on the category of users, but on the assessment of the functional capacity of the user for performing basic and instrumental activities of daily living.
- Social services for resocialization, reintegration, rehabilitation for most socially vulnerable groups (children and adults – drug, alcohol and gambling addicts, sex workers, children in risk and in conflict with the law etc.) should be more intensively developed.
- Supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the social services delivery should be introduced and adequate mechanisms and instruments adopted for this purpose.



- Quality standards should be developed for all social services.

3.2.2. Social services financing

- State financing for social services delivery should considerably increase.
- Distribution of state funding should be based on prioritization of social services that are most required and ensuring more equal geographical coverage.
- Bottom-up approach should be used when determining social services to be state financed (following the legal provisions for strategic planning of social protection activities by the municipal and regional social protections councils).
- Financing of social services by municipalities should be recognized as investment in activities of public importance for the local population and consequently and adequately increased.
- Determination of prices for all social services in the Annual decision.
- Development of standards and norms in the secondary legislation for all social services as a prerequisite for price determination.
- Secondary legislation regarding user participation and co-financing of social services should be developed based on the new LSP.
- Development of more advanced modalities of financing social services delivery that will help overcome shortcomings in the annual funding through subsidies and grants.
- Entering into administrative contracts with non-state providers should be made for longer periods of service delivery to provide for sustainability and continuity of the service provision.
- Equalization of the prices for social services delivery per capita for the state and non-state providers.
- The elements used for determination of the prices of social services in the Methodology should be adequately extended and revised.
- The subsidized funding for disability organizations based on the Law on games of chance and entertainment games should be more transparent, inclusive, enriched with new services and followed by enhanced monitoring mechanisms.
- Following the development of the network of social service providers and exiting the initial stage of the plural delivery of services, existing financing through grants and subsidies should be gradually upgraded with other mechanisms for financing, such as: long-term partnerships, social contracting, third party payments, vouchers etc.



- Revision of the financial benefits in terms of introducing options for the beneficiaries to use (fully or partially) the amount of the benefit for particular social service.
- As available sources for financing the activities of the CSWs (following the process of functional and administrative decentralization) according to the Law on financing of local self-government units, the following may be used: own sources of income, grants from the state budget and loans. Grants should be determined as:
 - Earmarked grant intended for financing a specific activity related to the social-protective activity of the municipality;
 - Capital grant intended for financing municipal projects for capital investments in social protection.
 - Block grants for financing social protection activities determined in the Law on local self-government through specific programs based on the methodology for determining criteria for allocation of block grants.

3.3. User involvement

- The application of the key principles of social protection defined in the LSP should be enhanced through raising the awareness among professionals of the importance of these principles and provision of necessary conditions in the working place for their application.
- User choice should in future be more commonly used in professional work and promoted, as new social services emerge and the list of authorized and licensed service providers develops.
- The process of development of individual plans should be more participative, user tailored, less formal and continuously reviewed and revised.
- Despite the formal establishment of user councils in social protection institutions and participation of user representatives in steering committees, their active involvement in these bodies should be supported and encouraged.
- Service users should be informed about their rights and the manner and procedures to submit complaints and encouraged to communicate informally with the Ethical board in cases of concern and need.
- Social protection institutions should encourage users and provide actual assistance for their organization in self-help groups.



- All processes and activities related to implementation of social protection in the country should be user-oriented and guided by the principles of good governance.



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