Social Services for Migrants in Serbia

First regional week – Central European Social Policy and Social Work Network
November 25-29, 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia
Natalija Perišić, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Department of Social Policy and Social Work
E-mail: natalija.perisic@fpn.bg.ac.rs

Introduction

- Migration as a reaction to inequalities in general.
- Migration from the MENA region has had serious consequences.
- The focus is on the migration / migrant "crisis" and the role of Serbia's social services in the provision of welfare for migrants.
- Context:
  - public discourse, naming and blaming;
  - the impact of the candidacy to the EU;
  - transit position;
  - the economic, social and political situation in the country.
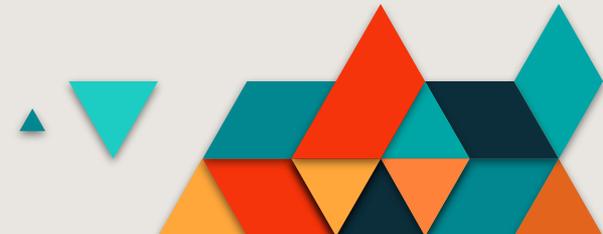
Structure of the presentation

1. **Theoretical part:** social rights

2. **Background information:** transit through Serbia

3. **Social services:** provisions for migrants

4. **Conclusion:** obstacles and opportunities

Methodology

1. Qualitative content analysis:
   - normative documents
   1. regulating state policy
   2. rules books
   3. national and international reports
2. Semi-structured interviews
   - 10 interviews with practitioners performing managing and professional roles in the public and civil sectors
3. Observations
   - camps and informal meeting point for migrants

Theoretical framework (1)

- *Citizenship and Social Class* by Thomas Humphrey Marshall
-Welfare as a citizenship
-Three elements of the rights: civil, political and social:

> "the first refers broadly to guarantees of individual liberty and equality before the law; the second to political enfranchisement – the right to vote and to seek political office; the third, a good deal less specific than the other two, comprises a 'modicum of economic welfare and security' and the 'right to share to the full in the social heritage and life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society'. The first of these rights is basically inherent in legal institutions, the second in political institutions and the third in social services".

- Responsibility of the state and community towards their citizens
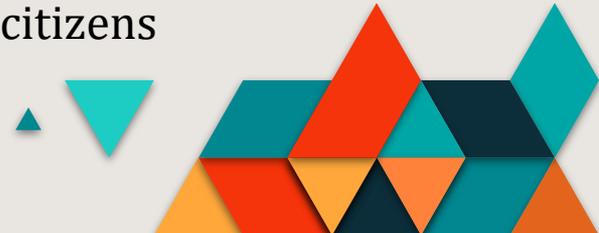
Theoretical framework (2)

-The constrained development of social rights
-Dilemmas about the enforcement of social rights
-Embodiment of citizenship
-Inclusion of citizen and exclusion of non-citizens

> "non-citizens, non-belonging, legally non-existent – caught in the mysterious 'no man's land' at the level of survival, marginalized, without any powers and without access to the institutions in the country of their stay; they are in the shadow of citizenship" (McMaster, 2009, p. 160).

-Fluid, postmodern identities vs. national ones
-"Othering" of migrants.

Theoretical framework (3)

-Welfare state contributes to and reinforces the division between citizens and non-citizens:

> "Welfare states in particular can only function properly when the dividing line between insiders and outsiders is crystal clear, because anyone who contributes to one is also a potential beneficiary, and vice versa. Redistributive measures always take place from those who are better off to those who are less well-off *within* a given society and *within* one and the same system" (Entzinger, 2007, p. 119).

-Critiques of the welfare state

-Morally restrictive and ethically open interpretations of social rights.

-Paradigm of diversity within the welfare state.

Background facts (1)

-The prevailing migration characteristic of Serbia is emigration.
-However, the immigration was prominent as of the 1990s.
-Challenges after 2000.
-Transit migration from the MENA region

- a new development from 2009;
- peak from September 2015 to March 2016
- EU – Turkey Deal

- Currently, the reduced number, albeit the prolonged stay.
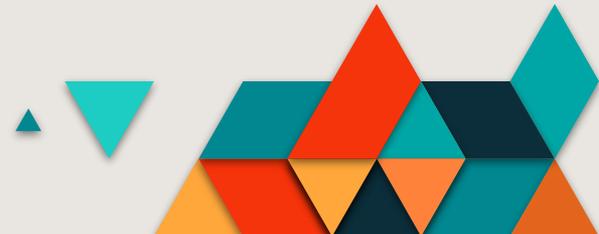
Background facts (2)

Year	Number of persons
2009	275
2010	520
2011	3134
2012	2723
2013	5065
2014	16500
2015	579518

Public sector – stakeholders and activities

1.The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia

      Established a total of 17 transit, reception and asylum centres throughout the country

      About 87% of migrants was accommodated in the Commissariat's centres of the total capacity of 6,000 beds.

      Renting private houses by the Commissariat.

      Informal meeting points.

2. Centres for Social Work

      The rights of foreign citizens "in need of social welfare" to social welfare benefits.

3. Shelters for unaccompanied children
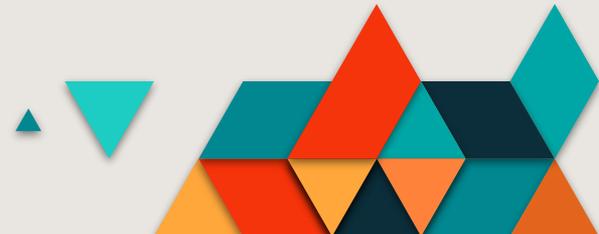
Civil sector – stakeholders and activities

-The urgent assistance
-Medical aid
-Legal support and advocacy
-Psychosocial support
-Child protection
-Educational support
-Supporting public sector

Challenges ahead of social services (1)

-Micro-level challenges: functioning of social services
- Accommodation offered by the Commissariat
- Under-represented as clients of Centres for Social Work
- Lack of clear and consistent instructions on professional procedures and competencies
- Communication and interpretation services
- Culturally competent practice
- Mental health services and psychiatric care
- Integration services

Challenges ahead of social services (2)

-Meso-level challenges: cooperation between the sectors
- The "division" of tasks
- On an equal footing activities
- Cooperation at the level and national levels.
- The main problems relate to the implementation of the Law on Asylum, accommodation and registration of asylum seekers.

Challenges ahead of social services (3)

-Macro-level challenges: national welfare state

- Modest and limited resources
- National welfare state – a transition loser?
- Prevention and inclusion – ongoing challenges
- Austerity measures
- Underfinanced social services
- Overburdened professionals
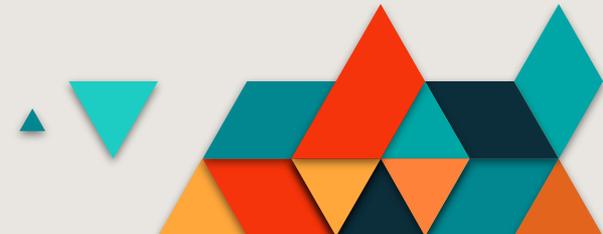
Conclusion

-Despite the concerns, the situation is not discouraging.
- Prevalence of short-term measures vs long-term measures.
-The future roles of the public vs. civil sector.
-Research into functions, ideologies, motives and roles of the sectors.
-The quality of services for migrants.
-The support to migrant families.