



Social services for the vulnerable population: the case of public sector in the Republic of Serbia

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Reframing social policy in European and national context

- Minimum income protection programmes as a safeguard against low income and poverty in Europe
 - Reframing minimum income support in the Post-Yugoslav space:
 - 1) Internal policy factors
 - Socialist legacy in designing policies in the field of poverty and social inequalities
 - Widespread poverty, high unemployment and labour market changes
 - 2) External policy challenges
 - European integration process – new concepts and paradigms
 - Influence of international organizations
- Global economic and migration crisis

Presentation goals

To gain deeper knowledge about design and implementation of social services provided to the poor and socially excluded population in the Republic of Serbia within minimum income support.

Description and analysis of:

- Public sector policies, programs and instruments in reducing poverty and social inequalities in the historical perspective in the Republic of Serbia
- The role of the public sector and correlation with other social security sectors in providing social services
- Characteristics and outcomes of social services implementation

1. The role of the public sector in combating poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Serbia: *making room for social services*

- The basics of policy development in the field of poverty and social inequalities in the Republic of Serbia until 2000
- Strategic framework and objectives in the fight against social exclusion and the poverty reduction since 2000
 - Overcoming the limited role of the public sector in the socialist system
 - Planning of the optimal functioning of the cash benefits and introduction of social inclusion concept in public policies
 - Triangle decentralization - privatization – deinstitutionalization as the basis for the development of social services
- Normative and Institutional Framework for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion - Transforming Post-2000 Welfare Programs


2. Social services within the current minimum income support in the Republic of Serbia

Minimum income support programs in the Republic of Serbia

Cash benefits	Social services	Rights related to social assistance beneficiary status
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. financial social assistance (The Social Protection Law, 2011)2. one-off financial assistance (The Social Protection Law, 2011)3. child allowance (The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, 2009)4. regressing the costs of the preschool placement of children from financially disadvantaged families (The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, 2009)5. additional rights provided by local self-government in the form of financial support or in-kind assistance	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. accommodation services in a shelter2. drop-in shelter3. day care services for adults and seniors4. social housing services in sheltered conditions5. social entrepreneurship services6. counseling services7. activation service8. additional social services provided by local social service providers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the right to acquire the status of a vulnerable consumer (Regulation on energy protected customer, that is, at risk customer of thermal energy, 2015)2. the right to health care without payment of participation (Health Insurance Act, 2016)3. the right to activation measures (Regulation on social inclusion measures of financial social assistance beneficiaries, 2014)

3. Characteristics of social services implementation in the Republic of Serbia

- Social services are defined by the Law on Social Protection (2011)
- Rulebook specifies what the purpose of each service is, the user population and the activities undertaken within the framework of the service provision
- Access to social protection services is provided by the Center for Social Work by issuing referral to the beneficiary, whereby this procedure can be initiated ex officio or upon the request of the beneficiary



Implementation problems in focus in the triad of the Center for Social Work, the National Employment Service and local governments

- Implementation problems arising from design of support:
 - Assessment and planning services are not provided to the minimum support beneficiaries
 - No detailed standards of service provision have been set for counseling-therapy and social-educational services, as well as for the activation service
- Implementation problems arising from administrative practice:
 - Weak link between minimum income support programs and inclusive labour markets
 - Poor referral to community services and poor cooperation with local actors
 - Weak and unequal distribution of social services in the national context

4. Public sector efficiency and effectiveness assessments are unfavourable

- limited impact on poverty reduction
- absolute poverty is constantly present
- total of 25.5% (1.79 million) of the population of the Republic of Serbia is at risk of poverty, 19.5% (1.37 million) are extremely materially deprived and 15.7% live in households with very low work intensity (1.01 million) (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2018)
- limited access to social services
- Low take up of social services (Mihajlović Babić, 2019)
- Insufficient development and distribution (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2016)

Absolute poverty trend in the Republic of Serbia, 2006-2014

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012.	2013.	2014.
% of the population	8,8	8,3	6,1	6,9	9,2	6,8	8,8	8,6	8,9

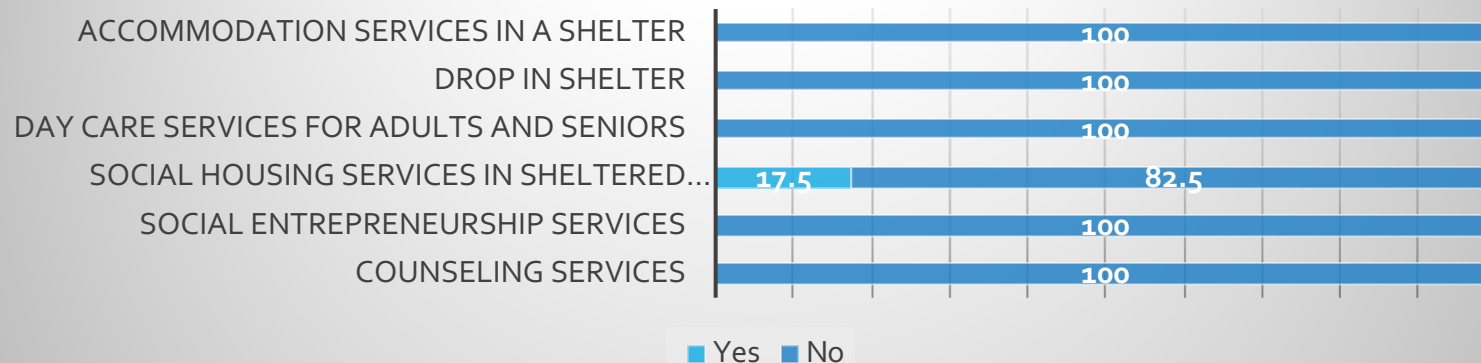
Source: Government of the Republic of Serbia (2016). *Employment and Social Reform Program in the European Union Accession Process*. Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, p. 7.

People at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion in the Republic of Serbia, 2013-2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
% of the population	42	42,6	41,7	38,5	36,7
In thousands	3,005	3,036	2,955	2,709	2,564

Eurostat (2019). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. [sdg_01_10].

Take up of social services by financial social assistance beneficiaries in the City of Belgrade, 2019



Conclusion

- During the first decade of the 2000s number of social services increased, but in 2011 some services were introduced into the normative acts for the first time
- Nevertheless, certain social services are not fully designed by subordinate regulations that would ensure their (standardized) implementation
- Services for vulnerable groups are poorly developed and, if they exist, potential users are rarely referred to them
- The public sector has designed housing support services (as well as reception centers), but there is still lack of services in the area of labor market integration, as well as counseling services aimed at overcoming the difficulties and challenges of living in poverty and social exclusion

Literature

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