

POLICY PAPER

Provision of social services by Civil Society Organisations in South East Europe

Year: 2015

Prepared under the project: “Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSO networks”

Reference:
EuropeAid/132438/C/ACT/Multi



This project is funded by
European Union

1. Introduction

The project “Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSO networks” (Social services in SEE), is being implemented by Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, e.V. Germany (ASB) in partnership with:

- » SOLIDAR Aisbl Belgium;
- » Local Initiative for Development Civil Society (LIR CD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- » Centre for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD) from Kosovo;
- » SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence (SOS Podgorica) from Montenegro;
- » Organisation for Civil Initiatives (OGI) from Croatia;
- » Educational Centre Leskovac (EDC) from Serbia;
- » Association of Students and Youth with Disabilities (ASYD) from FYR of Macedonia; and
- » ARSIS – Social Organization for the Support of Youth from Albania.

Social Policy Influencing in the framework of IRIS Network is committed to influencing social policies in the target countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, but also participating in the debate on social inclusion in Croatia and in general at the European level. National partners developed a separate policy papers for their respective target IPA country in the framework of a joint regional strategy. Strategy papers are in correspondence with EU accession process of the country and respective European strategies and programmes. Mentioned policy papers are the basic document and tool in the creation of the advocacy campaigns in targeted countries, focused on the improvement of the systems of provision of social services.

Main goal of this policy paper is to give overview of situation related to policy framework for development and provision of social services by civil society organisations in the region of South East Europe - Western Balkan, present situation in Croatia as one of the members of European Union, and compare with general situation and recommendations on EU level so to give guidelines for policy advocates from mentioned region in which area they should focus their work in order to convince a policy maker's staff to advocate changing course on a specific policy issue that are important for improving provision of social services.

Policy context in Western Balkan level

In countries of Western Balkan situation concerning social protection and development of social services is similar. Legal framework is developed, or is developing with the intention to create environment for decentralized provision and financing of social services, developed in line with the needs of beneficiaries. In all the countries, there is a need for improvement of policy framework in this area, particularly in context of making social services accessible for all vulnerable groups in need.

In **Albania** currently the governmental bodies are setting the new financial instruments, legal and administrative for a sustainable system of social service delivery. Government, in particular the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth has undertaken the Social Care Service Reform (2013-2016) and drafted the National Strategy on Social Inclusion 2015-2020. This strategy includes the National Action Plan respectively on Gender Equality, children, Youth, Women, Victims of domestic violence and trafficking of human beings, Roma and Egyptian citizens, the LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, elderly, HIV+ persons etc. The above measures aim to comply with the standards and criteria set by the European Union.

According to the National Cross-sector Strategy of Decentralisation and Local Government 2015-2020 (3), in the Republic of Albania the delivery of most social services will be decentralised and become a competence of the local government. There is the urge to further consolidate, clarify and divide the role between the central and local government¹. The state social services at central and the local level provide mostly residential care services. The standards in place are set only for the residential care centres. There are no defined standards for the: daily centres such as drop-in, multi-functional and community; and emergency transitory shelters. In Albania there is the National Centre of Licensing (NCL). The licensing by NCL related to the social services is issued for social centres of: Community care; Residential care. The procedure of licensing a CSO that provides daily services in a community care centre usually lasts four days after the file with set of documents has been submitted next to the NCL. The social service reform is lacking a holistic approach (reforming the system as whole instead of partial interventions) while the public service sector operates with limited resources.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** social protection is the responsibility of the entities. There is no one unique strategic framework for the development of social protection and there are no common policy in this area. Mainly, all of these laws have taken a definition of the concept of social protection from the previous Law on Social Protection of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the eighties last century. The Ministry of Civil Affairs at the state level has the coordination role and the mandate to coordinate the implementation of international regulations in this area including reporting to international institutions about the state of beneficiaries, their rights and allocations. The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees has jurisdiction in monitoring the implementation of human rights and the respect of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the implementation of international instruments in all areas of social policy.

The entities have their own social protection systems in accordance with their needs, resources and strategic commitments. They are completely independent and there is no obligation of mutual harmonization of measures and procedures in the process of exercising beneficiary rights and providing them social protection. Unlike that the Republic of Srpska has a unique management system throughout its territory, the level of the Federation of BiH is responsible for establishing the foundation of social protection and the Cantons governing direct implementation mechanisms. Due to this fact, we can talk about the existence of two separate systems of social protection in BiH, which are in many ways both similar and different. Brcko District as a separate administrative

¹ Policy paper: "Improving the social service delivery by enhancing the role Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Albania". Available at: <http://bit.ly/20Wlydd>

unit has special regulations in this area, although it has the size and importance as the local community but in the area of creation and implementation of policies acts as an entity.²

In Kosovo, the licensing of providers of social and family services and the licensing of legal entities and NGOs that provide social services, is a continuous process and based on the Law on Social and Family Services and other legal acts regulating the field of social services and family. The procedures for the registration and license the NGO are different in Kosovo, and all this procedures have their own criteria. Initially based on the law for the registrations of the NGO within Ministry of Public Services there are criteria which are mandatory to be fulfilled in order to receive the registration certificate and minimum staff for a NGO is 3 member. After the completion of all the procedures an NGO will receive the certificate and this NGO is able to start with the work. However, if NGO is dedicated to provide social services for children and adults, including victim of trafficking this NGO is obligatory to apply within Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to be licensees in order to provide such a services.

Ministry of labour and social welfare developed the criteria which are mandatory to be fulfilled in order to receive certificate of licensing. Initially the NGO staff is obligatory to have their own license certificate, and depend of the size of the number of the reception of the social services or geographic size also it is specified the number of the individuals within NGO. Ministry of labour and social welfare started with a process of licensing individual providers of social and family services, as well as legal entities and NGOs that provide social and family services, created preconditions solid for the advancement and development of delivery better quality of social services and family in Kosovo that would be competitive with the countries of the region and beyond. Providers of social services and family as well as legal entities and non-governmental organizations licensed so far will provide better services to persons and families in social need, always given direct implementation of the laws and regulations governing family services field and a code of ethics for social service providers and family.³

In **Macedonia**, The social protection system enables development of non-institutional protection for people in need of social services as well as people in social risk, to use the stated services, however, the process of decentralizing the social protection has not been finished yet, the decentralization of social services, particularly of non-institutional protection, i.e. developing social services locally is still an unresolved status in the Republic of Macedonia. Numerous national strategies exist like the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction, the National Strategy for the Elderly, the National Strategy on Demographic Ageing, the National Strategy on equalizing the rights of the disabled, in its frame aiming for social protection, yet, unfortunately, for the action plans and plans for conducting strategies the country has not allocated any budget assets, once again all work is reduced to project activities in certain areas in the civil society sector.

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as a leading institution which should provide and create conditions for developing social services i.e. services at local level along with the local self-government units have set a really extended deadline for these social services to start functioning locally. The civil society sector so far has offered social services within its power and possibilities and required conditions imposed by the country and the local self-government, reducing it to project activities and according to non-stipulated protocols to carry out the minimum standards required as social service providers. A service provider which offers quality and professional service is the one which follows certain standards and guarantees that the end user will be provided with social services in compliance with all standards. Development of staff licensing programs is also required regarding employees in the social services⁴

² Policy paper: "Development of social services at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Uj5Z5T>

³ Policy paper: "Victim Protection and Safety in Cases of Domestic Violence: a Whole Community Response in Kosovo". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Wz1aBB>

⁴ Policy paper: "From idea to initiatives to reform the public social services in Macedonia". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Wz1KPM>

In **Montenegro**, social protection system is founded by the *Law on social and child protection*. Providers of social welfare services, according to Article 13 of this Law, are: institutions for social and child protection, which can be public or private. Support for living in a family; counselling/therapy and social-educational services and placement in an institution or shelter may be procured through public procurement procedure, public call for applications for funds or public - private partnership, if there is a need for them and if they can be provided more efficiently by other service providers (Article 72). According to this law provider of social welfare service can be an organisation, entrepreneur, business company and physical person (Article 119).

The law defines the adoption of specific secondary legislation relevant to the development of social welfare services which regulate: licensing and accreditation, collections of data - keeping records, criteria for determining the price of social and child welfare service, participation of beneficiaries in the cost of services. Detailed conditions for the provision and use of services, norms and the minimum standards are prescribed by the rulebooks that define beneficiaries, standards, and capacity necessary for the provision of services (structure of skilled workers and professionals in relation to the number of clients); management of financial, administrative and technical tasks, and the system for registering of the beneficiaries. The procedure for issuance, renewal, suspension and revocation of a license of provider of social services and child protection is prescribed by Law on Social and Child Protection and it is conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.⁵

In **Serbia**, social protection system is defined by the following laws: *Law on Social Protection, Family Law, Law on Financial Support for Families and Law on Local Self-Government*. *Law on Social Protection* applies to the process of social welfare reform, which began in 2001 got a new legislative framework and a firm foothold for the further development and implementation of system solutions in all areas defined as priorities the reform of social protection systems. Legal solutions, among other things, encourages the process of de-institutionalization, the process of inclusion and protection of vulnerable groups in the least restrictive environment, promote services in the community and changing the position of service beneficiaries.

The law established a new concept of development of social protection which focussed on social services, changed the position of the beneficiary as an active participant in all processes relating to him and his best interest and the possibility of the participation of different social service providers in the provision of services. Jurisdiction in the establishment and financing of social protection is divided into the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia, autonomous provinces and local government. Law on Social Protection made possible that social service providers can be public, private or civil sector. According to the law, social protection, in situations when there is a need for them and they cannot provide social protection institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia, autonomous province, or local government, can be procured from the providers of social services through the public procurement of social services. This has opened the possibility that civil society organizations, which are intended to provide social protection, given the status of authorized providers of social services if they have a license to provide services in the framework of public procurement conclude an agreement with the customer about providing services.⁶

⁵ Policy paper: "Applicability of standards for the provision of social services by CSOs in Montenegro". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TkZF3n>

⁶ Policy paper: "Deinstitutionalization of persons with intellectual and mental disabilities in Serbia". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1RT2SWG>

Policy context at European Union level

Social protection systems in countries of European Union are designed to provide protection against the risks and needs associated with: unemployment, parental responsibilities, sickness and healthcare, invalidity, loss of a spouse or parent, old age, housing, and social exclusion. The main policy framework in the field of EU social protection is the *Europe 2020 strategy* and the open method of coordination for social protection and social inclusion (Social OMC), which aims to promote social cohesion and equality through adequate, accessible and financially sustainable social protection systems and social inclusion policies. Through the Social OMC – and in collaboration with the Social Protection Committee – the EU provides a framework for national strategy development for social protection and social investment, as well as for coordinating policies between EU countries on issues relating to: poverty and social exclusion, health care, long-term care, pensions.

The organisation of social services, including their quality regulation, is ultimately the responsibility of Member States. Indeed their approach is a product of their socio-cultural history, their welfare state model, economic performance etc. In turn, this means that the range of social services and their organisation varies greatly in the Member States so that different traditions and demands are accommodated. However, objectives and guidance are coordinated at the European level.⁷

In the EU, social services play a crucial role in improving quality of life and providing social protection. They include:

- » social security,
- » employment and training services,
- » social housing,
- » child care,
- » long-term care,
- » social assistance services.

These services are a vital means of meeting basic EU objectives such as social, economic and territorial cohesion, high employment, social inclusion and economic growth. In modernising social services to better respond to changing needs, societal challenges (for example population ageing) and financing constraints, national authorities are increasingly diversifying the ways in which these services are organised, provided and financed (eg increased decentralisation, outsourcing of certain tasks to private – profit or non-profit – providers).⁸

There is no general definition of “social services” in EU documents. However, the Commission Communication on social services of general interest of April 2006⁹ provides the following definition of two main categories of social services:

1. Statutory and complementary social security schemes, organised in various ways (mutual or occupational organisations), covering the main risks of life, such as those linked to health, ageing, occupational accidents, unemployment, retirement and disability;
2. Other essential services provided directly to the person. These services that play a preventive and social cohesion role consist of customised assistance to facilitate social inclusion and safeguard fundamental rights. They comprise, first of all, assistance for persons faced by personal challenges or crises (such as debt,

⁷ Achieving Excellence in Social Service Provision. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1O7caUe>

⁸ European Commission: Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion website. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TZ4a6X>

⁹ Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union, COM(2006) 177 final.

unemployment, drug addiction or family breakdown). Secondly, they include activities to ensure that the persons concerned are able to completely reintegrate into society (rehabilitation, language training for immigrants) and, in particular, the labour market (occupational training and reintegration). These services complement and support the role of families in caring for the youngest and oldest members of society in particular. Thirdly, these services include activities to integrate persons with long-term health or disability problems. Fourthly, they also include social housing, providing housing for disadvantaged citizens or socially less advantaged groups.

During past period, public authorities, service providers and users have asked for clarification of the legal framework, and after broad consultation process with the objective to help address this and answer the needs of public authorities, service providers and users, the Commission has developed *FAQs on the applicability of state aid and public procurement rules*¹⁰ and an interactive information service¹¹. The results of a consultation process to clarify the specificities of social services of general interest are contained in the 2007 *Communication on services of general interest (including social and health services)*¹². The Communication: lists several specific aims for social services; explains how these aims are reflected in the ways the services are organised, delivered and financed; proposes a strategy to clarify the applicable legal framework.

In November 2008, the Social Protection Committee adopted a report on the application of Community rules to social services of general interest, which assessed the strategy put in place by the Commission and made recommendations. The Commission published its first biennial report on social services of general interest in 2008¹³, giving an overall picture of these services in the EU. This report describes the socio-economic role of such services and the major economic and societal changes to which they have to adapt, looks at the way they adjust to evolving needs and constraints and considers how these changes affect the organisation, financing and provision of social services of general interest in terms of relevant Community rules.

In general, in the countries of European Union, **most social services are highly dependent on public funding**¹⁴, and it was concluded by *The Social Protection Committee* that consensus on the quality of social services in the present context when public authorities in the Member States are exposed to growing financial constraints will help policy-makers to prioritise investments that promote continuous development of both quality and cost-effectiveness of social service provision. With this in mind, **A voluntary Quality Framework for social services** was developed. This framework reflects the consensus within the Social Protection Committee following the Council conclusions of 8 June 2009 which invited the Member States and the European Commission to “continue the work within the Social Protection Committee on ... a voluntary Quality Framework for social services”. The implementation of this Quality Framework is voluntary. This Framework is flexible enough to be applied in the national, regional and local context in all the EU Member States and to a variety of social services. It aims to be compatible and complementary with existing national quality approaches in the sector.

For years **Croatia** has been developing different measures to ensure the quality of social services that are being provided to the most vulnerable members of society. But over the last decade the main focus has been put on the administrative, technical and human resources standards. In that regard, the standards regarding space, equipment, necessary working staff, etc have been regulated by different national laws, ordinances and regulations and technical standards have to be met before potential service providers can sign an agreement

¹⁰ Available at: <http://bit.ly/1P96xQc>

¹¹ Available at: <http://bit.ly/1X1ZXme>

¹² Available at: <http://bit.ly/1XUPsjS>

¹³ Report on social services of general interest (2008), EC. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5qJhO>

¹⁴ Biennial report on social services of general interest, SEC(2008) 2179 final of 2 July 2008, section 2.2.1. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1O79829>

with a government (or regional and local authorities in the case of social service provision).¹⁵ Article 196 st. 2 of the Law on Social Welfare (Official Gazette 157/13 and 152/14) defines that “Social services in the network are provided in accordance with the standards of quality of social services and guidelines for their implementation prescribed by the minister in charge of social welfare.”

During process of EU integration, in regards to social services, reform in Croatia was based on few components: reform of the education of the working staff; social planning on the regional and local level; reform of the Centres for social welfare and finally introduction and implementation of the quality standards in social services.

There is adopted *Rulebook on quality standards* (Official Gazette 143/14). Standards of quality of social services describe how quality social services should look like; Represent a baseline for monitoring and evaluation (measurement) the quality of social services; Encourage the development of the continuous quality improvement; Are oriented in a way that achieves the interaction of service providers and users of services and the quality of the service users and have a universal character. Inspection department inside the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is responsible for ensuring that technical quality standards are met and maintained.¹⁶ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Croatia developed a list of standards that consists of 15 general quality standards with indicators that are applied to all social services regardless of their nature, sector or organisational type of social service provider. In addition, quality standards consist of additional 10 standards, 5 for those providers that are providing social care outside family for children, and 5 for providers of social care outside family for adults. The standards of quality represent the minimum of quality that all social service providers have to be aligned with. Each standard has its own definition which expresses the highest level of importance that standard. Each standard is supported by a number of indicators that describe what needs to be seen and documented. Clarifications on the purpose of the standard is given that further clarifies the meaning of the standards.

There is a Department of quality management and professional development that provides support in the process of introducing quality standards.¹⁷

European Commission in 2014 has reported that Croatian healthcare system delivers reasonably good outcomes and, allowing for some regional variations, social services are considered to be sufficiently accessible. However, public pensions and the healthcare system are criticised for the significant pressure they impose on Croatia's public finances. For example, while public expenditure on health stood below the EU average at 6.6% of the GDP in 2011, this is nevertheless higher than in most Central and Eastern European Member States. As such, the Commission and the Council in their country-specific recommendations focus on strengthening the cost effectiveness of Croatia's health and social services¹⁸. In response to this recommendation, the SOLIDAR EU Strategy Group in Croatia deplores the lack of vision when it comes to access to healthcare and quality social services, specifically one that goes beyond a narrow focus on measures to improve the cost effectiveness of these services. The current logic underlying the reforms recommended by the European Institutions and followed by the Croatian government reflects a one-sided preoccupation with the budgetary situation in the country, while insufficient consideration is given to health and social services as a precondition for a robust and growing economy. Our Croatian Strategy Group calls for a more balanced approach when moving forward with these reforms, especially against the background of an economy that has been struggling in recent years¹⁹.

¹⁵ “Towards quality approach in social service provision in Croatia”, I. Čevra, D. Vukušić. Available at: <http://bit.ly/24lO3TA>

¹⁶ Social Welfare Act, no. 73/97, 27/01, 59/01, 82/01, 103/03, 44/06, 79/07.

¹⁷ Website: www.msppm.hr E-mail address: standardikvalitete@msppm.hr

¹⁸ 4 Council of the European Union (2014). Council Recommendation on the National Reform Programme 2014 of Croatia and delivering a Council opinion on the Convergence Programme of Croatia, 2014, 2014/C 247/10, 8 July 2014, p.55.

¹⁹ SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch 2015: Croatia. Available at: <http://bit.ly/25AR5Ga>

In general, Croatia has a complex and mature social protection system that covers all main social risks and reaches a large share of the population. However, the system is fragmented, costly to administer, and only a small share of its spending is targeted to the poorest. In order to improve the system, the Government, in partnership with the World Bank, in 2015 initiated a wide-ranging and complex set of reforms of the social protection system supported through the Social Protection Modernization Project, which will be implemented until 2018²⁰.

Know-how from Croatia, and other countries members of EU can be transferred to countries non-EU members through different programs and interventions of the European Commission. One of them is *Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation (SOCIEUX)* as a technical assistance facility, which has been set up by the European Commission's Directorate General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid - in order to support the efforts of partner countries to better design and manage their social protection systems. Its initial implementation period is 2013-2016. It is a demand-driven instrument, so partner countries submit requests for assistance in designing and delivering social protection systems, and can get support in all social protection areas, including social insurance, social assistance, access to basic social services, and monitoring and evaluations systems²¹.

²⁰ World Bank and Ministry of Social Policy and Youth – Working Together to Better Protect Croatia's Vulnerable Groups. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TYyude>

²¹ More information on SOCIEUX available at: <http://bit.ly/1TSq9zq>

Conclusions and Recommendations

Available data show that social services play an essential role in combating poverty and social exclusion.²² Across Western Balkan, and Europe in general, in varying degrees, processes of modernisation and technology development are changing the way social services are provided and the discussions about how to achieve quality. From available data it is noted that most of the countries in SEE have problems simply providing sufficient social services to all persons in need. Because of that, special focuses needs to be put on developing supportive policy framework for social service development and delivery, and promoting of partnership among all stakeholders is needed. Importance of CSOs providing services is recognized but yet not supported enough, and it is often neglected by government officials that third sector social service providers constitute a value for this sector as they express citizenship capacity and contribute to social inclusion and to the social cohesion of communities.²³

The main policy activities in area of social services in SEE should be focuses on developing framework that will govern the development and implementation of quality standards that would ensure that social services are holistic in its nature, have a focus on a beneficiaries and their needs, encourage partnership between beneficiaries and social service providers as well as the partnership between different stakeholders in social service sector, that services are effective and efficient.

This also means that social services should be managed well and directed towards results, and their quality needs to be regularly measured and improved where and when needed. This monitoring and evaluation process needs to include measuring of beneficiaries' satisfaction with the services.

Quality standards are dynamic system, and no provider should be satisfied with satisfying just minimum standards but further development of quality in social service provision should be encouraged.²⁴

It is important to have in mind fluctuation and migrations of citizens in SEE and importance of the cross-border element in provision of social services, in particular in the area of long-term care, but also services for victims of violence against women (domestic violence, trafficking, forced child marriages etc). This creates a need for a greater level of cooperation of all stakeholders involved – from governmental institutions, and civil society to private sector, but also seek for service comparability and transparency, as well as for new forms of protecting both users and workers.

Quality of the service is closely related to the skills and working conditions of workers in this sector²⁵, so it is important to identify skills, training requirements but also to work on the improvement of the working environment and better working condition and ensuring supervision and support for these workers, thus contributing to the further development of this sector.

CSOs working in the area of provision of social services should be directly included in national (optionally local or regional) legislation development related to social protection. In order to ensure that social services are

²² "How Social Services Help Mobilising the Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion. Background information", paper presented at the Ministerial Conference on "Social Services – A Tool for Mobilising the Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion" organised by the Czech EU Presidency, Prague, 22-23 April 2009.

²³ "A Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services", The Social Protection Committee. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5IRcA>

²⁴ "Towards quality approach in social service provision in Croatia", I.Čevra, D.Vukušić. Available at: <http://bit.ly/24IO3TA>

²⁵ "In addition to workers in public and private service providers (the latter being either for profit or not-for-profit entities), a number of volunteers (i.e. unpaid staff, generally contributing to the services) and informal carers (i.e. persons who provide unpaid care to an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner outside a professional or formal framework) are active in this sector. While these three categories of persons active in the social services sector cannot be mixed up, they all contribute in various ways to the delivery of high-quality social services". *Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services*

developed in the best possible manner, the revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with EU standards and requirements is needed in most of SEE countries.

In countries that are in the process of EU accession, it is important for CSO providing social services to follow EU negotiation process, and take part in consultations related to Enlargement process organised by the government and European Commission, including where possible active involvement in IPA programming, and giving contributions to European Commission Progress Report.

It is recommended to advocate for usage and annual reporting in line with **Social Protection Performance Monitor (SPPM) dashboard**, a tool which uses a set of key EU social indicators for monitoring developments in the social situation in the European Union.²⁶

It is highly recommended to promote and advocate for adoption of **Voluntary European Quality framework for social services** in all SEE countries.

In line with principles and recommendation from this Quality framework, it is important to advocate that the definition and delivery of a service must take into account the diversity of users, and to contribute to non-discrimination, to gender equality, to human health protection, to improving living standards and quality of life and to ensuring the creation of equal opportunities for all, therefore enhancing the capacity of individuals to fully participate in the society. Besides mentioned, in order to address the multiple needs of people as individuals, social services must be comprehensive and personalised, conceived and delivered in an integrated manner.²⁷

Non-profit providers as well as voluntary workers often play an important role in the delivery of social services, thereby expressing citizenship capacity and contributing to social inclusion, the social cohesion of local communities and to intergenerational solidarity, and is important to advocate that service providers need a large autonomy to address the variety and the evolving nature of social needs.

Contrary to intention of introducing more and more popular neo-liberal principles in social protection system, it is necessarily to advocate for legal framework that will ensure that these services are generally driven by the principle of solidarity and are in majority cases responsibility of governments and public financing, so as to ensure equality of access, independent of wealth or income.

In line with mentioned above, and recommendations from *Voluntary European Quality framework for social services*, set of quality tools needs to be developed that respect a common identification pattern in order to ensure cross-country comparability.

²⁶ Available at: <http://bit.ly/1RT2ZkS>

²⁷ "A Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services", The Social Protection Committee. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5lRcA>

Annex: Check list for advocates on quality principles for social service provision²⁸

From “A Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services”

I. Overarching quality principles for social service provision:

- » **Available:** access to a wide range of social services should be offered so as to provide users with an appropriate response to their needs as well as, when possible, with freedom of choice among services within the community, at a location which is most beneficial to the users and, where appropriate, to their families.
- » **Accessible:** social services should be easy to access by all those who may require them. Information and impartial advice about the range of available services and providers should be accessible to all users. People with disabilities should be ensured access to the physical environment in which the service provision takes place, to adequate transport from and to the place of service provision, as well as to information and communication (including information and communication technologies).
- » **Affordable:** social services should be provided to all the persons who need them (universal access) either free of charge or at a price which is affordable to the individual.
- » **Person-centred:** social services should address in a timely and flexible manner the changing needs of each individual with the aim of improving their quality of life as well as of ensuring equal opportunities. Social services should take into account the physical, intellectual and social environment of the users and should be respectful of their cultural specificities. Furthermore, they should be driven by the needs of the users and, when appropriate, of the related beneficiaries of the service provided.
- » **Comprehensive:** social services should be conceived and delivered in an integrated manner which reflects the multiple needs, capacities and preferences of the users and, when appropriate, their families and carers, and which aims to improve their wellbeing.
- » **Continuous:** social services should be organised so as to ensure continuity of service delivery for the duration of the need and, particularly when responding to developmental and long-term needs, according to a life-cycle approach that enables the users to rely on a continuous, uninterrupted range of services, from early interventions to support and follow up, while avoiding the negative impact of disruption of service.
- » **Outcome-oriented:** social services should be focused primarily on the benefits for the users, taking into account, when appropriate, the benefits for their families, informal carers and the community. Service delivery should be optimised on the basis of periodic evaluations which should inter alia channel into the organisation feedback from users and stakeholders.

II. Quality principles for the relationships between service providers and users:

- » **Respect for users' rights:** service providers should respect the fundamental rights and freedoms as outlined in national, European and international human rights instruments, as well as the dignity of the users. Moreover, they should promote and implement the users' rights in terms of equal opportunities, equal treatment, freedom of choice, self-determination, control of their own lives and respect for their private lives. Appropriate services should be provided without discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Physical, mental and financial abuse of vulnerable users should be prevented and adequately sanctioned.

²⁸ From “A Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services”, The Social Protection Committee. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5lRcA>

- » **Participation and empowerment:** service providers should encourage the active involvement of the users, and, when appropriate, of their families or trusted persons and of their informal carers in the decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. The service provision should empower users to define their personal needs and should aim to strengthen or maintain their capacities while retaining as much control as possible over their own lives.

III. Quality principles for the relationships between service providers, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders:

- » **Partnership:** The development of social service provision requires the active involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders from both the public and the private sectors: local authorities, service users, their families and informal carers, users' organisations, service providers and their representative organisations, social partners and civil society organisations operating in the local community. This partnership is essential for the creation of a continuum of social services that respond to local needs, for the effective use of resources and expertise, as well as for achieving social cohesion.
- » **Good governance:** Social services should operate on the basis of openness and transparency, respect for the European, national, regional and local legislation, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in relation to organisational, social and financial performance of service delivery. Service provision should be based on the coordination of the relevant public authorities, social partners and stakeholders in the design, proper financing (including resources prioritisation within the available budget) and delivery of the service.

IV. Quality principles for human and physical capital:

- » **Good working conditions and working environment/Investment in human capital:** Social services should be provided by skilled and competent workers under decent and stable working conditions¹² and according to a manageable workload. Workers' rights should be respected in particular with regard to the principles of confidentiality, deontology and professional autonomy inherent to social services relations. Adequate skills and a supporting environment should also be ensured to volunteers and informal carers.
- » **Adequate physical infrastructure:** Social services should be provided within adequate physical infrastructures respecting health and safety standards for users, workers and volunteers, accessibility standards following "Design for All" approaches as well as environmental requirements.

Literature

Policy paper: "Improving the social service delivery by enhancing the role Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Albania". Available at: <http://bit.ly/20Wlydd>

Policy paper: "Development of social services at the local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Uj5ZsT>

Policy paper: "Victim Protection and Safety in Cases of Domestic Violence: a Whole Community Response in Kosovo". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Wz1aBB>

Policy paper: "From idea to initiatives to reform the public social services in Macedonia". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1Wz1KPM>

Policy paper: "Applicability of standards for the provision of social services by CSOs in Montenegro". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TkZF3n>

Policy paper: "Deinstitutionalization of persons with intellectual and mental disabilities in Serbia". Available at: <http://bit.ly/1RT2SWG>

Achieving Excellence in Social Service Provision. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1O7caUe>

Biennial report on social services of general interest, SEC(2008) 2179 final of 2 July 2008, section 2.2.1. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1O79829>

"Towards quality approach in social service provision in Croatia", I.Čevra, D.Vukušić. Available at: <http://bit.ly/24IO3TA>

Standards of quality of social services with guidelines for their implementation, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Croatia

Ordinance on quality standards, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Croatia

European Commission: Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion website. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TZ4a6X>

Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: Social services of general interest in the European Union, COM(2006) 177 final.

Report on social services of general interest (2008), EC. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5qJhO>

Social Welfare Act, no. 73/97, 27/01, 59/01, 82/01, 103/03, 44/06, 79/07.

Website: www.mspm.hr E-mail address: standardikvalitete@mspm.hr

Council of the European Union (2014). Council Recommendation on the National Reform Programme 2014 of Croatia and delivering a Council opinion on the Convergence Programme of Croatia, 2014, 2014/C 247/10, 8 July 2014, p.55.

SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch 2015: Croatia. Available at: <http://bit.ly/25AR5Ga>

World Bank and Ministry of Social Policy and Youth – Working Together to Better Protect Croatia's Vulnerable Groups. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1TYYude>

SOCIEUX available at: <http://bit.ly/1TSq9zq>

"How Social Services Help Mobilising the Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion. Background information", paper presented at the Ministerial Conference on "Social Services – A Tool for Mobilising the Workforce and Strengthening Social Cohesion" organised by the Czech EU Presidency, Prague, 22-23 April 2009.

"Towards quality approach in social service provision in Croatia", I.Čevra, D.Vukušić. Available at: <http://bit.ly/24IO3TA>

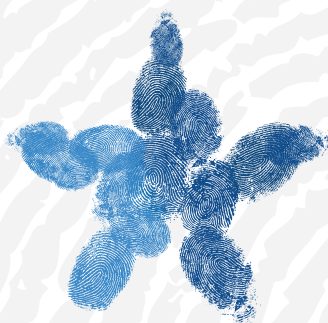
"A Voluntary European Quality framework for Social Services", The Social Protection Committee. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1t5IRcA>

IRIS NETWORK IS A UNIQUE REGIONAL NETWORK THAT BRINGS TOGETHER MORE THAN 150 CSOs, SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE. THE NETWORK IS BASED ON VISION OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECENT LIVING FOR ALL. THE NETWORK HAS BEEN CREATED TO ENSURE SOCIAL INCLUSION BY SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY SERVICES THROUGH SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL POLICIES.



Responsible editor:
Branislav VORKAPIĆ

Authors:
Aleksandra GLIGORVIĆ, Nenad KOPRIVICA



Contact us and keep in touch with our activities!

✉ iris@iris-see.eu

🐦 [/IRISsNetwork](https://twitter.com/IRISsNetwork)

📘 [/irissnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/irissnetwork)

www.iris-see.eu



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.