

EU-CHINA SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM PROJECT

COMPONENT 3

PROVIDING SERVICES FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES

VOLUME ON 2018 RESEARCH

TOPIC 3.3.2



Social Protection Reform Project
中国-欧盟社会保障改革项目

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BENEFICIARIES**

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Beijing November, 2018

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This publication has been edited by Gregory Mc Taggart.

This publication has been produced by the EU-China Social Protection Reform Project is co-funded jointly by the European Union and the Government of the People's Republic of China. The content is the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or Ministry of Civil Affairs, P.R. China.



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3.3.2 Providing Services to Social Assistance Beneficiaries

Assessment report

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ABBREVIATIONS:

BoCA=Civil Affairs Bureau

CDPF=Chinese Disabled Persons' Federation

Dibao=Minimum Subsistence Allowance Program

DSA=Department of Social Assistance

GPS=Government's Purchase of Services

GPAS=Government's Purchase of Assistance Services

HFPC=Health and Family Planning Commission

MoCA=Ministry of Civil Affairs

MOHRSS=Ministry of Human Resources & Social Security

PV=Philanthropic Venture

PPP=Public-Private-Partnership

NPO=Non-Profit Organizations

SF=Social Forces

SA=Social Assistance

SVG=Specific Vulnerable Groups

SASVG=Social Assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups

Sanwu=People with no ability to work, no source of income and no statutory guardians to provide for them

TPA=Targeted poverty alleviation

TEKUN= Special Vulnerable Groups

Wubao =The Five Guarantees in the Social Assistance Program



1. THE DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

1.1 The Definition of Social Services and Social Assistance Services

Social services are called "personal social services" in the UK, "human services" in the US and "welfare services" in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Personal social services are services provided for groups with special needs due to their personal or societal reasons, such as the elderly, people with physical and / or mental disabilities, children, etc. Since the 19th century, most social services have been provided by the government, the private sector and voluntary groups. American social services target children, families and some adults, such as the elderly, the mentally and / or the physically disabled. According to Kahn's classification, social services include the following three types: socialization and development-related services for individuals and families; treatment, assistance, rehabilitation and social protection services; and advisory and guidance services¹. These services are mostly undertaken by social workers. Before 1972, social services and financial aid were mingled in the United States. Social workers also participated in the financial qualification examination. The amendment to the Social Security Act of 1972 separated social services and social assistance. People who receive social assistance will be informed about related social services, and they also have the right to request the service, but the review on qualifying for financial aid is no longer undertaken by social workers². In the United Kingdom, the most obvious common characteristic of individuals receiving personal social services is poverty and deprivation¹.

Social services are mostly managed by the social services departments of local governments. As social service targets often have diverse demands at the same time, the division of departments adheres to the following principles. First of all, income is used as the criterion to distinguish the low-income groups that need Social Assistance. Secondly, the physical and the mental conditions are set as the standard, under which people are separated into two categories: those with physical disabilities and / or mental disorders and those without. Thirdly, age (the stage of development) is used as the criterion to distinguish children, adults and the elderly. In addition, gender is also used for differentiation. In order to avoid the repetition of service programs and to avoid confusing social assistance recipients, as long as people's income or assets are below the poverty line, they are the objects of social assistance, regardless of their physical and / or mental condition or their age. Children, adults and the elderly with physical disabilities and / or mental disorders, regardless of whether or not they are in a low-income household, can receive social assistance on account of their disabilities and / or disorders. These characteristics are considered prior to the standard of age. And so on. Many countries and regions adopt the family-centered service model, with a single window and integrated and consistent services, in order to address the service segmentation of one family due to their different demographic attributes.

At present, Social Assistance in China consists of a physical cash supply and related assistance services. In terms of assistance, there has been a shift from the primary satisfaction of material needs to a focus on the issue of power and poverty, trying hard to promote the social inclusion of the vulnerable. The methods of assistance have also gradually been diversified. In addition to the traditional method of cash payments, the role of social assistance in enhancing human resources and improving intergenerational poverty has been emphasized.

¹ Lin, W.Y. 2009. *Social Work Theory and Method*. Taipei: Wunan Publishing House.

² Zastrow, C. 1998. (Zhang, Y. Z. etc. translated). *Social welfare and social work*. Taipei: Hongye Company.



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According to the Temporary Measures for Social Assistance approved in 2014, Local Governments at or above the county level may buy specific Social Assistance services from social forces through commission, contract and purchasing. Local governments at or above the county level shall give full effect to the role of social service institutions and social workers and provide specialized services for social integration, capacity improvement and psychological counseling and so on. In 2015, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance issued the opinions on accelerating the development of social work in the field of social assistance, clarifying the content of social work services. They put forward that Governments needed to target to provide the following social work services according to the characteristics of social assistance and the needs of its recipients: (1) Provide the social integration services. These services can help people coordinate their relationship between family and society, eliminate social discrimination, reconstruct their social support networks, and promote their better adaptation to the community and society; (2) Provide capacity improvement services. These services can help recipients as well as their families change their ideas, explore their own potentials, learn a means for making a living and eliminate their dependence on assistance; (3) Provide psychological counseling services. These can help soothe a person's negative emotions and hostility, alleviate their psychological pressure, correct their bad behavior, change their negative views and adopt a positive and optimistic attitude. (4) Provide linkage services. These can help connect the recipients to a livelihood, to study, to employment, to medicare and to other governmental and social resources, organize other professional recourses and volunteers to provide services, and supplement government resources; (5) Provide communication services. These can help recipients to get a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the social assistance policies of the government, to give feedback to the government on the effect of, and any deficiency in, the policies in a timely and effective manner, and establish and improve the network that connects all sectors to improve the social assistance policies.

In terms of the definition of Social Assistance services, broadly speaking, it includes both the administrative management services and the professional services provided to recipients. In general social assistance services have covered several diversified and personalized services such as life support, psychological communication, spiritual consolation, resource coordination, ability improvement and social inclusion. Now this paper is going to respectively talk about the social assistance services provided by both the government and nongovernmental sectors. In conclusion, social assistance services are provided by the State and society to the most vulnerable groups who are not able to get themselves out of a difficult circumstance. Administrative management and professional services are included.

The Target Groups for Social Assistance Services

Regarding the target population of social assistance, the social assistance system was originally designed to guarantee the basic material needs of people in need (poor families). However, with the enrichment of social assistance, the target groups have been expanded to wider "vulnerable groups". The "vulnerable groups" covered by social assistance refer to those members of society who cannot get rid of the difficulties of life on their own, including the poor whose income is below the poverty line, losers in job market competition, those who cannot extricate themselves from natural or man-caused disasters, and members of society who are vulnerable due to physical reasons, age reasons and even policy discrimination. These target groups include poor families with dependent elderly, children, the disabled, the unemployed, and patients with major diseases, people suffering from addictions, homeless people, people who are imprisoned or on probation, people with a severe mental illness, etc. Services provided for these groups include daily care, education and



employment, medical rehabilitation, and some other social support services based on the different demands and problems of these poor families.

1.2 Social Assistance Services Provided by Government

The government provided social assistance services include the contents of social assistance services and the corresponding administrative services for the delivery of these services, including policy making, communication, implementation; finance coordination; verification, supervision, assessment of the information related to assistance and optimization of the social assistance service mechanisms. According to the "*Interim Measures on Social Assistance*" that began in May 2014, the programs of social assistance stipulated by law include *Dibao*, *Assistance to the Special Vulnerable Groups (Tekun)*, *Assistance to Disaster Victims*, *Medical Assistance*, *Education Assistance*, *Housing Assistance*, *Employment Assistance* and *Temporary Assistance*. According to the "*Interim Measures on Social Assistance*" promulgated by the Central Government, local governments have also formulated social assistance programs and management methods that suit the actual conditions in the region.

The related social assistance services can be classified into four categories as follows.

The first category is the basic services for social assistance beneficiaries, i.e. Assistance to Special Vulnerable Groups (Tekun). Based on the criteria for the recognition of Tekun, eligible people will gain the basic livelihood guarantee, care for those who are unable to look after themselves in their daily lives, disease treatment and funeral and burial services. The second is the basic medical and healthcare assistance for aid recipients. This is aimed at addressing illness-caused poverty. The third is the temporary assistance that meets the need of an emergency. When families or individuals find difficulty in maintaining their basic living due to unexpected events, accidental injury, serious illness or other special incidents, they may not be provided with other social assistance services immediately or are still struggling when they are receiving assistance. Under these circumstances, the temporary assistance meets their urgent need in the transitional stage. The last service is the disaster assistance that protects the basic livelihood of disaster victims. This assistance includes the necessary emergency assistance for disaster victims, temporary accommodation and home restoration and reconstruction.

1.3 Social Assistance Service Procurement from Social Forces

China has made various explorations in its governance framework of social assistance in order to improve the quality of social assistance management and to cope with the accompanying constraints of administrative ability, especially a lack of personnel. These explorations include many aspects, such as promoting the procurement of services from professional social forces, introducing private enterprises to provide social assistance services under the government's management, supporting and guiding social work organizations to engage in nursing, mental health care, social integration and other SA services. China has also made great efforts to coordinate and connect social assistance governance with various systems of social insurance, poverty alleviation and development and so on.

In an effort to improve the framework of social assistance, the Government advocates and encourages the engagement of social forces. These participants are mainly non-profit organizations (NPO), communities, enterprises and individuals, and their engagement is an important supplement



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to the Government's provision of public services. NPOs in China have been developing rapidly since the 1990s, and humanitarian assistance has always been playing a significant role in the cause of social charity. In 2013, the General Office of the State Council issued a guideline on the procurement of public services. With the rise of the procurement of services from a third party, a great number of NPOs have developed. As part of the service procurement, the purchase of social assistance services further highlights the significance of nongovernmental participants in the social assistance sector.

What role do nongovernmental participants play in social assistance? Their significance can be summarised as follows with references to the guideline on supporting the participation of nongovernmental sectors in social assistance formulated on the basis of the specific experience of the various regions in China and issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2015. First, they offer material assistance including cash and in-kind donations. Second, they engage in providing assistance services, including professional services to vulnerable groups such as old-age care, domestic services, social integration, capacity improvement, mental comfort, psychological counseling, resource sharing, skills training, employment assistance and so on. Third, they are involved in government affairs including discovering a person's need for social assistance and helping in their application, household checks, neighborhood visits, democratic appraisals, policy research, consulting and publicity, personnel training, data analysis, operation of information systems, performance evaluation, etc. Fourth, the nongovernmental sectors participate in the management and service provision for social assistance institutions. Specifically, they are active in the operation and the management of agencies for Social Assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups (SASVG) and provide nursing care, meals, security assurance, cleaning and other services. Also, they advocate that participants from the nongovernmental sectors should fully utilize their own flexibility. They support and guide various participants to explore other patterns of social assistance provision based on their direct participation in social assistance, the initiate social assistance programs, establish social assistance institutions and provide voluntary social assistance services, with the purpose of offering the prospect of an all-round, multidimensional engagement in social assistance for nongovernmental participants³.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN CHINA

2.1 The current situation of social assistance services in government departments

Since the founding of the modern China, it has experienced a transition from social relief to social assistance and has gradually achieved development from a basic livelihood security system into a comprehensive social assistance system. In 1993, Shanghai was the first city in China to establish a system of subsistence allowances. In 1997, other towns, cities and provinces started to establish this system. The Government implemented medical assistance in the rural and the urban areas in 2003 and 2005 respectively. The new Five-Guarantees Subsistence Program in the Rural Areas based on fiscal support was promoted in 2006. In 2007, the State Council issued a document that the system of subsistence allowances in the rural areas should be implemented all over the country. In 2011, China comprehensively advanced the construction of government subsidized housing. In 2014, the State Council issued the *Interim Measures for Social Assistance* (State Council Order No. 649), and constructed a social assistance system with Chinese characteristics that was based on the division of

³ Data from the website of the BOCA of Shandong province.
<http://www.sdmz.gov.cn/articles/ch00080/201610/157d38a3-ec7-46f1-a2fc-41211ee258f8.html>.



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labor and responsibility, connection, coordination, and a combination of governmental and social service providers⁴. The *Measures* specify that the content of China's social assistance system is an "8+1" model, that is a system of subsistence allowances, an assistance system for people living in poverty, an assistance system for people who have suffered disasters, a medical assistance system, an educational assistance system, a housing assistance system, an employment assistance system, a temporary assistance system and the participation of social forces⁵.

At the request of the State Council, the Measures integrated all kinds of social assistance systems that had been formulated and previously implemented. This is a sign of constructing a social assistance framework at the lawful level in China. Meanwhile, according to the *Measures*, it was necessary to promote the coordinated development of the social assistance system and to optimize the administrative services for social assistance from the following three perspectives:

Firstly, strengthen overall coordination. The *Measures* stipulate that People's Governments at or above county level should establish and improve the mechanism for coordinating the social assistance work led by the Government, initiated by the Civil Affairs Departments, coordinated with the relevant departments and involving the social forces. Through this coordinated mechanism, we can not only classify and implement all kinds of social assistance systems well, but also we can better study the development, connection and coordination of these systems and make them function better.

Secondly, realize the sharing of information resources. The *Measures* stipulate that People's Governments at or above county level should establish a social assistance management information system and achieve the interconnection and the sharing of resources relating to social assistance information. This way, efficiency and accuracy will be increased while costs will be decreased when auditing and determining the targets for assistance.

Thirdly, regulate the "one stop shop". The *Measures* stipulate that the People's Government of a town and sub-district office should set up offices that deal with the application for social assistance at the one place. People go to these offices and which are responsible for accepting an application. They are also supposed to deal with, or pass on, the application to other departments as soon as possible. In this way, those targeted for social assistance can get help in timely manner and a more convenient way.

At present, local government departments are actively optimizing social assistance services. The Ministry of Civil Affairs' Department of Social Assistance selected the top ten innovation in the social assistance service area from 78 project reporting units at city and county level organized by 22 provinces all over the country. Most of those recognized practices at the basic level focus on how to optimize the administrative services of government departments in the social assistance sphere, how to involve social forces, how to simplify procedures and how to promote recipients' satisfaction. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, for example, "created a new pattern of social assistance service, which meant receiving applications in one department and then dealing with it within all the relative departments. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Luocheng Mulao Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region carried out "the reform of the process of approving an application for the minimum livelihood guarantee online with the need for

⁴ Zheng, Gongcheng. 2016. Social Security Development Report in China [R]. Beijing: Renmin Publishing House. 2016. Pp 33.

⁵ Li, Yanan. 2017. Analysis on Social Assistance System in China [J]. Shanxi Youth. pp.14.



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paper”. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Dachuan District, Dazhou City in Sichuan Province, “explored the possibility of establishing a work mechanism for the social assistance big platform, with the purpose of ‘going to a beneficiary’s home to solve all their problems’”. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Shenhe District, Shenyang City in Liaoning Province “established a ‘four colours’ response mechanism to ‘assist people in urgent difficulty’ for those in need. The Civil Affairs Bureau of Beilin District, Xi’an City in Shaanxi Province “received applications in one department, assessed them comprehensively, provided assistance in their classification and strengthened the minimum livelihood guarantee”.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs issues a Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Social Service every year. It also issues a Quarterly Report on Social Service Statistics. In the report for the fourth quarter of 2017, it showed that the total expenditure on social assistance services in China was 246.35 billion yuan, which accounts for about 49.99% of the total social service expenditure of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Of the 246.35 billion, the expenditure on the minimum livelihood guarantee in urban areas was 62.46 billion yuan, the expenditure on the minimum livelihood guarantee in rural areas was 104.44 billion yuan, the expenditure on the support of people in extreme poverty in the rural areas was 27.1 billion yuan, that on medical assistance, including determinations by the Departments of Civil Affairs and medical assistance conducted by related departments was 34.88 billion yuan, and the expenditure on temporary assistance was 9.58 billion yuan⁶.

2.1.1 The content and the effects of the various kinds of social assistance services provided by Government departments

2.1.1.1 The coexistence of the improvement of the support level for special vulnerable groups and the relatively low rate of collective support

At present, the support to people in extreme poverty mainly consists of the support system of the five guarantees in the rural areas and the support system for the “three-no’s” recipients in the urban areas. The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ Department of Social Assistance issued the Notification of the Issuance of the Measures for the Identification of People in Extreme Poverty in October, 2016. This further regulated the identification of the people in extreme poverty. According to the Measures, the administrative services to support the people in extreme poverty consist of an application, an examination, the approval, its publicity and provision of support⁷.

The People’s Governments at village and township levels and the sub-district offices where applicants register their permanent residence are responsible for dealing with the application and examining its information. They shall investigate the applicants’ economic condition, their real life situation and whether they have children, parents or spouse to support through household surveys, visiting their neighborhood, writing inquiry letters, democratically appraising and checking information within 20 working days from the date that they accept the application. After that, they shall give their examination opinions. The Department of Civil Affairs at county level shall examine and approve the opinions, and the people’s government at the village and township level shall make the result public in the Government Open Affairs Column of the villages or the communities where the applicant lives. People in extreme poverty who are receiving social

⁶ Data retrieved from the website of MoCA. <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjjb/qgsj/2018/201803131510.html>

⁷ Data retrieved from MOCA. http://xxgk.mca.gov.cn:8081/new_gips/contentSearch?id=83969.



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assistance can choose to get collective support in the local agency or to get individual support at home.

Up to the end of 2017, the number of people in extreme poverty supported by the Government in the rural areas was 4.671 million, a drop of 5.9% from 2016. The different levels of the national budget paid 27.1 billion yuan to support people in extreme poverty, rising by 18.4% from the previous year. The support to persons receiving the “three-no’s” in urban area is also being pushed forward. Their number of recipients decreased from 193,000 at the end of 2015 to 68,000 in 2017. Generally, the system of support to people in extreme poverty is being improved, and support services to them are being promoted steadily, but some problems are in existence.

Firstly, as Table 1 shows, the system of the five guarantees in the rural areas operates steadily and the level of support is being improved. The system of support to those receiving the “three-no’s” in the urban areas is being promoted and the support service is being pushed forward. From 2007 to 2016, the number of recipients of the five guarantees was generally steady. It grew slowly before the twelfth five year plan, however, after the twelfth five year plan, it decreased gradually and finally stabilized at around five million. We have preliminarily guaranteed almost all the people in need of assistance⁸. Among them, the number receiving collective support grew from 1.38 million to 1.623 million while the number receiving individual support reduced from 3.933 million to 3.544 million. We can conclude that although there was some growth in collective support, its rate is still low because of traditional views and the lack of a fiscal fund.

Table 1: Scale of support system for Tekun people from 2007 to 2016

Year	The number of Sanwu recipients in urban area (mln)	The number of Wubao recipients in rural areas (mln)		
		Total	Collective support	Individual support
2007	-	5.313	1.38	3.933
2008	-	5.486	1.556	3.93
2009	-	5.534	1.718	3.816
2010	-	5.563	1.774	3.789
2011	0.193	5.51	1.845	3.665
2012	0.099	5.456	1.853	3.603

⁸ Wang, Xiuji. 2015. Research on the Backing of Social Security. Beijing, Society Publishing House in China. pp. 171.



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2013	0.086	5.372	1.835	3.538
2014	0.076	5.291	1.743	3.548
2015	0.068	5.167	1.623	3.544
2016	-	4.969	-	-

Source: Website of the Ministry of Civil Affairs⁹

Secondly, the Government has expanded the coverage of the public finances to include the five guarantees in rural areas. In addition the different levels of the national budget have constantly increased investment in the support to people in extreme poverty that is, from 7.093 billion yuan in 2008 to 22.89 billion in 2016, a growth rate of 223%. With the increase in the fiscal allocation, the level of the five guarantees in the rural areas has also improved. The standard of support is the lowest level of assistance that recipients can get, which is related to their living right. It is stipulated that the level of the five guarantees in China’s rural areas “shall not be lower than the average living standard of the local villagers” and that the standard shall be adjusted on a timely basis. We can see from Table 2 that up to the end of 2015, the level of collective support has grown from 1953 yuan per capita a year in 2007 to 6025.7 yuan per capita a year in 2015 while the level of individual support has grown from 1432 yuan per capita a year to 4490 yuan per capita a year which are growth rates of 208.5% and 213.6%, respectively. We can draw the conclusion that the level of the five guarantees in the rural areas is being improved, the support level, especially the collective support level can basically meet the needs of the people’s minimum livelihood in rural areas. Generally, however, the investment is obviously insufficient. Take the year of 2015 for example. Expenditure of the different levels of public finance given to support people in poverty accounts for only 0.12% of total expenditure¹⁰.

Table 2: Assistance standard and fiscal investment of the Wubao support system in the rural areas

Year	Collective support (yuan/year)	Individual support (yuan/year)	Fiscal investment (100 million yuan)
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⁹ Data collected from the website of MoCA, sorted from the social development statistical bulletin from 2007 to 2016 from the following websites: <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/200906/200906150317629.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201006/201006150814229.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201107/201107151705659.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201210/201210153625989.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201306/201306154747469.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201406/201406156561679.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201506/201506158324399.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201607/20160715001136.shtml>;
<http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201708/20170815005382.shtml>.

¹⁰ Ibid.



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2007	1953	1432	-
2008	2176.1	1624.4	70.93
2009	2587.49	1842.71	88
2010	2951.5	2102.1	98.1
2011	3399.7	2470.5	121.7
2012	4060.6	3008	145
2013	4685	3499	172.3
2014	5371	4006	189.8
2015	6025.7	4490.1	210
2016	-	-	228.9

Source: Extracted from the MoCA website

2.1.1.2 The coverage related to temporary assistance

The system of temporary assistance has been fully implemented. 11 Prefecture-level cities including Beijing, Nanjing of Jiangsu Province and 288 counties (cities, districts) have been designated as national pilot units of “assistance for urgent difficulties”. 63 poor counties have been designated as “central enterprises’ targeted counties”¹¹. Up to 2016, recipients of temporary assistance amounted to 8.77 billion yuan, and the average level of assistance was 1031.3 yuan per capita. Among those recipients, the number of non-local recipients is 244,000 persons.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly issued the Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving of the Temporary Assistance Work. This points out that the examination and approval procedures for temporary assistance should be first regulated and optimized according to the different types of assistance. For the assistance for urgent difficulties, timeliness is a priority, and the procedures can be simplified. Governments shall actively carry out “first assistance”, for example, simplify the examination of the applicants’ family’s economic situation, the democratic appraisal and publicity, and give them assistance directly. For the expenditure on temporary assistance, the procedures including the application, acceptance, auditing, examination and approval shall be strictly followed and each step shall be regulated.

What’s more, Local Governments shall set the classifying and grading standards for temporary assistance according to the local economic and social development. To assure timeliness, Local

¹¹ Data retrieved from <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/gk/jytabljggk/201510/20151000876568.shtml>.



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Governments shall comprehensively use assistance methods including the granting of temporary relief money, the granting of goods and the provision of referral services according to the recipients' situation. They shall make temporary assistance play an emergent, interim, connecting and supplementary role and constantly improve the efficiency of the assistance. Governments shall combine temporary assistance with the relevant systems, government assistance, charity assistance, material assistance and services, creating a composite package of assistance.

These rules are important measures by the Chinese Government to optimize the temporary assistance services. Through these efforts, the identification of recipients and the procedure for their examination and approval can be more optimal, assistance standards can be more scientific and assistance measures can be more diversified. Local governments have launched their own temporary assistance methods. Hangzhou Government, for example, issued the Notification of the Temporary Assistance Measures of Hangzhou in 2017¹². This points out that besides the provision of temporary assistance according to one's application, the government shall also proactively seek out those in need. If a villagers' committee, residential committee, a government at village or township level (sub-district offices) find that residents under their jurisdiction have some special cases, such as suffering from accidents and serious diseases, or if they have received some information from the relevant departments, non-governmental associations or individuals, they shall verify the situation quickly and help the families or individuals in need to apply for assistance. Governments shall investigate and check the situation and offer their audit opinions within four days after the date they accept the application. After the seven-day publicity, if there is no objection, they shall submit it to their Department of Civil Affairs at district or county (city) level for approval and the time for approval is no more than three working days. For urgent situations, the assistance shall be carried out within 24 hours and the report shall be submitted to the local Department of Civil Affairs. The notification specifies the Government's coordination mechanism and the departments' cooperation mechanism. It emphasizes that governments at village and township level (sub-district offices) shall establish windows that "receive applications at one department and deal with it jointly with all the relative departments" and optimize the procedure for acceptance, management, transfer and feedback. They shall strengthen the primary capacity building of temporary assistance by the means of governmental purchase of services. Charitable organizations, social work institutions, enterprises, public institutions and volunteer teams play an active role in some aspects of temporary assistance such as discovering recipients, providing professional services and raising donations towards the whole of society. Municipal and district finance provide 50% of the assistance budget respectively.

2.1.1.3 Imbalanced financial support of medical assistance in the urban and rural areas

The urban medical assistance system was established in 2005. There were two categories of recipients at that time. One group of recipients were those receiving the urban minimum livelihood guarantee who had not been enrolled in the Basic Medical Insurance System for Staff Members and Workers in Cities and Towns. The other was those who had been enrolled in the Basic Medical Insurance System for Staff Members and Workers in Cities and Towns but still had a heavy burden and people with special difficulties. In 2003, the rural medical assistance system was launched. The "Suggestions on Further Improving the Urban and Rural Area Medical Assistance System" stipulated that Government shall subsidize the cost of the urban residents' basic medical insurance and a new rural co-operative medical system for recipients of the minimum livelihood guarantee,

¹² www.hangzhou.gov.cn/art/2017/5/3/art_933542_6861547.html



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the five guarantees and persons in poverty. In addition Government shall also subsidize the basic medical costs for people who cannot afford them by themselves. Therefore, direct assistance and subsidizing the cost of urban residents' basic medical insurance and new rural co-operative medical system are two ways by which the medical assistance system are helping people in poverty to overcome their medical problems.

Table 3 shows that since 2009, the investment in the urban and the rural medical assistance system has been improved and the number of recipients has been increased. It has played an active role in relieving poor families' burden relating to medical treatment. Through the subsidising of medical assistance, a large number of poor families have been enrolled in the urban residents' basic medical insurance and the new rural co-operative medical system. With the development of the urban and the rural medical assistance systems, and through the process of deepening the reform of the medical and health system, members of poor families can enjoy fairer and more accessible medical treatment. However, there also exists some problems with the urban and the rural medical assistance system, that is, the level of direct assistance has not been obviously improved. First, the number of direct recipients of the urban and the rural medical assistance schemes is relatively small. The gap between the number of direct recipients and the number of people who were subsidized to be enrolled in the insurance system is growing wider and wider, making it difficult for medical assistance to play a role in helping the poor families to avoid heavy medical costs. Second, the increase in the fiscal investment in the urban and the rural medical assistance schemes differs markedly. Although the different levels of financial departments have allocated more money to medical assistance year by year, the investment is not systematized and it is unbalanced between the urban and the rural areas. Generally speaking, the urban and the rural medical assistance system are unstable and the investment between the urban and the rural areas is unbalanced.

Table 3: Implementation of medical assistance system in the urban and rural areas (2009-2015)

Year	Urban medical assistance			Rural medical assistance		
	Direct assistance (mln persons)	Subsidized insurance (mln persons)	Fiscal expenditure (mln yuan)	Direct assistance (mln persons)	Subsidized insurance (mln persons)	Fiscal expenditure (mln yuan)
2009	4.104	10.959	4120.43	7.299	40.591	6462.46
2010	4.601	14.613	4952.03	10.192	46.154	8348.10
2011	6.722	15.498	6764.08	14.7.8	48.253	11996.10
2012	6.899	13.871	7088.02	14.8.8	44.904	13291.05
2013	-	14.901	-	-	48.687	-
2014	-	17.019	-	-	50.217	-
2015	-	16.661	-	-	45.4.9	-

Source: extracted from the website of MoCA



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Local governments have issued their medical assistance measures. For example, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Medical Assistance Measures were implemented in 2015. They stipulate that the Department of Civil Affairs shall cooperate with the Department of Human Resources and Social Security to set up a unified medical assistance settlement system, which combines the urban and the rural residents' basic medical insurance, the urban and the rural residents' serious disease insurance, commercial insurance and urgent medical assistance. With this system, the basic medical insurance, the serious disease insurance and medical costs can gradually be settled synchronously in designated medical institutions. Those designated institutions shall strengthen the management of the "one-stop" medical assistance windows, provide services such as examination, medical treatments, settlement, for recipients in accordance with the regulations and accept the regular oversight of the Civil Affairs Department, the Health and Family Planning Department and the Human Resources and Social Security Department.

2.2 The current situation in respect of social assistance services delivered by social forces

For a long time, the pattern of "strong government and weak society" has been a characteristic of Chinese society, but in recent years, the need for social development has promoted the transformation of the governance mode. In the past, only the government was active in governance, but now multiple bodies besides the Government are also playing their role. This is becoming a trend in society. The same is true in the field of social assistance services. In 2016, the "Charity Law" was implemented in China. The law is designed to develop charitable causes, promote the culture of charity and standardize charitable activities, as well as to protect the rights and the interests of charitable organizations, donors, volunteers, beneficiaries and others who work in the field of charity, while promoting social progress and distributing the fruits of social development. This law applies to natural persons, legal persons and other organizations carrying out charitable activities and related activities. Charitable activities in this law refers to the following public interest activities such as helping the poor and the needy, assisting the elderly, orphans, the ill, the disabled, and providing special care; alleviating losses incurred by natural disasters, accidents, public health incidents and other emergencies etc. According to the "Blue Book of Social Organizations: Report on Social Organizations in China" issued in 2018, the number of social organizations in China has risen from 702,000 in 2016 to 803,000 by the end of 2017, registering an increase of 14.3% and growing at its fastest pace in the latest decade. The top 10 provinces in terms of the total amount of social organizations are Jiangsu, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shandong, Jiangsu, Hubei, Hunan, Henan, Hebei and Anhui. Among them, the figure for Jiangsu Province accounts for more than one tenth of the total number of social organizations. From the perspective of the total amount of donations, the value of donations from the Ministry of Civil Affairs had always exceeded that from social organizations up to 2008, but that was reversed from 2009, according to the data on the total amount of donations shown in the Chinese statistical yearbook¹³. In 2015, social donation of RMB 4.42 billion worth was given to MoCA, and for social organizations, the donations reached RMB 61.03 billion. The social forces involved in social assistance include enterprises and institutions, social organizations, village (resident) organizations and individuals (e.g. professional social workers, volunteers), etc.. Their social assistance includes not only material donations, but also professional services and administrative work related to social assistance as well as the management and operations of the relevant institutions, etc., among which the latter three are closer to the service category. The Government and the social forces have their respective advantages and

¹³ Data from the National Statistical Bureau Annual Report of Chinese Statistics 2017.
<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2017/index.htm>



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disadvantages in the delivery of services, which will inevitably lead to cooperation. The engagement of social services by social forces supplements that of the government in those areas where the governmental function is not able to provide them.

2.2.1 Engagement by social forces

2.2.1.1 Traditional social organizations and enterprises

From the perspective of the social assistance entities, they are diversified, and the participation of the social forces varies significantly. There are several ways that social forces participate in social assistance in China. First, the Government pays for the social assistance services provided by various social organizations through procurement or venture philanthropy. Second, various publicly funded and private foundations are directly involved in the provision of social assistance to vulnerable groups with funds from the Government's allocation, corporate or social donations and other sources of funding. Among them, publicly funded foundations, with official support, are the main source, including the Hope Project, the Happiness Project and the Spring Buds Plan launched by the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), the China Population Welfare Foundation (CPWF) and the China Children and Teenagers' Fund (CCTF). Besides, publicly funded -foundations initiated by civil society such as the Amity Foundation are also active in The Most Beautiful Village Doctors, or *Zuimei Cunyi*(最美村医), a project for developing medical care in the rural areas, Actions for Ten Thousand, or "Ewan Xingdong" (*E 万行动*) a global engagement program for assisting 10,000 orphans and other poverty alleviation projects. Third, social organizations or volunteer groups from grassroots communities are involved in the delivery of social assistance. Rooted in the grassroots community, these organizations serve the community and provide a vehicle for the transformation of Government functions, operating benevolent supermarkets or forming female volunteer teams rooted at the grass-roots level. Fourth, some enterprises, with sense of social responsibility, directly participate in social assistance services or provide financial support to the social assistance programs launched by social organizations¹⁴. Hence one can see that the entities of social forces for social assistance involve enterprises, official and non-official social organizations (including publicly funded foundations, non-enterprise private units, community and grass-roots social organizations with nonofficial registration) and individuals.

Box 1: VSR poverty map developed by the Center of Social Survey and Data Analysis

The VSR poverty map system was developed by the Center of Social Survey and Data Research to build the first service platform for poverty alleviation and help "targetted poverty alleviation". The overall product logic of the VSR poverty map system is static, dynamic, useful and "more than useful".

(1) In terms of "static", it builds a map of "poverty". Based on the machine learning that can learn and accurately identify poverty-stricken areas, and a multidimensional poverty index system on the basis of objective data, it can regularly publish rankings and poverty alleviation needs in the poor regions of China;

(2) In terms of "dynamic", it can realize the monitoring of the temporal and spatial evolution of poverty and resources and predict the trends in a dynamic way, using GIS and real-time data to build "Poverty Online" and "Cloud Platforms for poverty alleviation".

¹⁴ Xiao Sha.2010. The Participation of Social Organizations in Social Assistance. Journal of Pudong College of China. vol.5. pp. 164 - 168.

(3) In terms of "useful", based on the virtual database of reality and combined with the poverty measure and spatial analysis, it connects to poor households and provides targeted services for poverty alleviation as the first of its kind at the micro level.

(4) In terms of "more than useful", with typical examples of poverty alleviation based on the "poverty map" system as templates, it combines experience from domestic and foreign cases and cases from the various regions in China. It is applied nationwide, and cooperation has been established, with maximum effort and the highest professional standards to help achieve the 2020 goal of poverty elimination. After that, the system will be updated into VSR social reality platform to develop our society.

VSR poverty maps can provide services for government agencies, relevant social organizations and charitable groups for poverty alleviation and industry chain enterprises and related scientific research institutes for poverty alleviation. These services include the poverty (economy/societal/environment) grade evaluation service, the poverty data services, the poverty alleviation planning, the think tank services for feature industries, recommendation services for volunteer activities, project promotion and investment services.



2.2.1.2 Community foundations

In terms of innovation and exploration in its grassroots community governance, China began to make explorations of community foundations in 2008. Since then, the municipal governments in Shenzhen, Shanghai, Nanjing, Chengdu and other cities have formulated policies in succession to promote the development of local community foundations. Since 2015, China's community foundations have developed rapidly. According to the data from the website of the China Foundation Center, the total number of community foundations has reached 103 by May 2017. In 2017, the State Council issued the "State Council's Opinions on the Strengthening and the Perfecting of the Governance of Urban and Rural Communities", clearly putting forward that China should continuously broaden fund-raising channels for community governance in the urban and the rural areas and encourage the investment of non-governmental capital into community



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governance through charitable donations, the establishment of community foundations and other approaches. By the end of 2017, the number of foundations named by the community had reached 130, with Guangdong and Shanghai accounting for over 80% of the total. The number of community foundations had reached 72 in Shanghai by the end of 2017, and they have covered streets and towns in Putuo District, Hongkou District, Xuhui District and Yangpu District, accounting for approximately one third of all streets and towns in Shanghai. Among more than 100 community foundations, most were established with governmental funds. Our research on these community foundations found that the offering of social assistance to people trapped in poverty was registered as the scope of affairs for the majority of the community foundations but they actually served households living on the margins of minimum subsistence but ineligible for Dibao as well as community residents living in poverty due to illness or other reasons.

Box 2: Community foundations in Nanjing participating in Social Assistance

Nanjing Municipal Department of Civil Affairs issued the “Plan on Promoting the Development of Social Funds (or Foundations) (Tentative) in Nanjing” in 2015, carrying forward the development of community foundations. By the end of 2017, more than 10 community foundations had registered in Nanjing, which are located in Qixia District, Jiangning District, Yuhuatai District and Pukou District. According to our previous research, services for diseases, education and the young had become the social assistance areas that the community foundations in Nanjing were focussing upon. The community foundations in Nanjing serve groups in difficulty that have not been covered by the existing social assistance policies or lack sufficient social assistance, including people with a serious illness, with a severe disability, who are close to poverty or are leading a hard life due to policies or other factors.

In addition to cash assistance, the social organizations in these districts also design projects to provide social assistance services to vulnerable groups, such as lunch for the old-aged, comprehensive community services for the old-aged, the system of mutual help in community based on "Time Bank" and the pilot project for the standardization of home-based care chain services launched by Yaofangmen (姚坊门) Charitable Foundation in Qixia district. Lezhu (乐助) Community Charity Foundation in Qixia Street has introduced two social organizations to provide community rehabilitation services for the disabled and to start a project for vulnerable children. Community charity foundations in Nanjing have mainly three modes of delivery of services. One, community foundations provide social assistance directly, understanding the economic difficulties of groups in need through visits or daily work of civil affairs and providing cash for them. Two, as financial sponsors, these foundations support social organizations to design projects for vulnerable groups and to provide specialized services, and they will evaluate the performance of the social organizations when these projects come to an end. Third, as a resource platform, these foundations can connect enterprises or public donations with projects launched by social organizations.

2.2.1.3 Social Enterprises

A classic case of social enterprises in the sector of social assistance is Grameen Bank, established by Muhammad Yunus, which has been introduced into China's social assistance for poverty alleviation. Six branches of China's Grameen Bank has been set up in Jiangsu, Yunnan, Henan and



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Shenzhen to promote microcredit to address poverty in the rural areas. Launched by the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, CFPA Microfinance is a welfare program focusing on the rural market, which provides multiple-aspect tailored services for microcredit, insurance, financing, electronic business, etc. for low-income groups in the rural areas that cannot fully enjoy the traditional services of financial institutions and help them to develop their industry and to increase their income. The pattern of social enterprises to provide social assistance emphasizes both material assistance and ability improvement. They not only provide funds for social assistance but also enable recipients with the ability to work to achieve their potential and their creativity and become independent, achieving the goal of self-assistance and mutual aid and promoting social inclusion. The participation of social enterprises in social assistance can create fair and favorable working conditions and employment opportunities, and reduce the moral risks arising from traditional social assistance such as welfare dependency¹⁵.

Box 3: The microcredit project launched by CFPA Microfinance Management Co., Ltd.

As a social enterprise transformed from a NGO, pursuing the maximization of social benefits is the gene of CFPA Microfinance. It follows and advocates the international management principle of double bottom lines and always emphasizes both financial performance and social performance. It has made social performance management a corporate strategy, devoting itself to developing the enterprise into a specialized microfinance institution which is beneficial to society. Its work on social performance management conforms to the international general practice and centers on the governance of social performance management, inclusive finance, customer protection of human resources and social, with the concept of social performance permeating each part of its business operation.

2.2.2 The engagement of social forces in social assistance

From the perspective of recipients of social assistance, we can get a clear picture of what are the specific contributions of social forces in the field of social assistance. Government departments pay more attention to social assistance policy making, standard setting, the construction of the social assistance administrative system and the delivery of social assistance services. The involvement of the social forces is more elastic and flexible, meeting the diversified needs of the more special and various groups. The social assistance services provided by Government departments are in the form of cash assistance and in-kind assistance, supplemented by services in education, housing, medical care, etc. Social forces also provide social assistance in the form of cash and materials, but their social assistance focus is more on education and training, medical rehabilitation, psychological counseling, legal aid, career counselling, social support and social integration. In terms of the features of social assistance services, there are also differences between the roles of Government departments and social forces. The former's social assistance is large in scale, single in type, stable in

¹⁵ Xu & Gao. 2012. Social Enterprise: A new social assistance approach? Civil Affairs of China. Vol. 6. Pp. 13 - 15.



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form and complicated in procedure with a long-term cycle while the latter's social assistance focus is small, diverse, simple in procedure with a short-term cycle and involving multiple resources.

For social assistance provided by the Government or social forces, economic poverty is the primary criterion in terms of the recognition of eligible recipients. In terms of how to identify the people that they will assist, besides self-reporting and self-application, social forces also need to take the initiative to seek out the the groups that are in need of help and then provide the social assistance according to their needs, such as family and child welfare services, medical care, rehabilitation services, services for the elderly, the disabled, teenagers and offenders all targeted at groups trapped in poverty. Next, we will discuss social assistance services provided by social forces to the different groups.

2.2.2.1 Social assistance services for the families in need

A family is the basic unit of social assistance and the social services provided to families in need is also an important professional field of social work. At present, comprehensive family service centers have been set up in Hong Kong. They cover every region and have set up departments of family resources, family support departments and family counselling departments to provide the corresponding support to families in need. Comprehensive family services in mainland China have been piloted in Shenzhen and Guangzhou, and are still in the early stages of development.

In 2015, in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, the first professional organization to provide social assistance to special groups in difficulty — the Jinjiang District Social Care Center — was established. It aims to build a network system of social assistance that engages social forces and professional institutions. The center serves special groups in difficulty whose incomes exceed the minimum standard of living in Chengdu, but whose families are in difficulty because of illness or other reasons. Jinjiang District Social Care Center is entrusted to be managed by the Center of the Social Workers in Chengdu through the governmental purchasing of services. It has rooms for donations, studio rooms for social organizations and other multi-function rooms. Usually, more than 10 full-time social workers provide consultations to enterprises, groups and persons from all sectors, and receive visitors in difficulty and in need of social assistance. Jinjiang District Social Care Center collects and records the information of special groups in difficulty in Jinjiang District, establishes a basic information database and social assistance project pools for them, and masters their general situation in a dynamic way. It also releases specific assistance information to the public in a timely and accurate manner, providing strong support for targeted donations and tailored assistance by the social forces. It mobilizes the social forces to engage in social assistance projects and provides services on social assistance like project planning, organization, implementation, evaluation and others. In accordance with the classification of social assistance and following requests for tailored services, it has launched the program "Caring Package Plan 360" (360 爱心包计划, the Development Plan for special families in a difficulty livelihood, the support plan for students in special poverty, the nutrition plan for special children in poverty, the health plan for special families in poverty and so on. These programs and plans effectively integrate all kinds of social assistance resources, information resources and mutual social assistance resources, stimulate the maximising of efforts by social forces, and bring social forces into full play as a major player and provide tailored services, with direct and targeted support as the major approach and according to the needs of the specific groups and individuals.



2.2.2.2 Social assistance services for children

Children are the hope for the future development of our society and are also a vulnerable group. Due to this duality, social assistance for children has always been the focus of the social security system. The object of social assistance for children is usually referred to as children in difficulties. According to Opinions on Strengthen the Guarantees for Children in Difficulties issued by the State Council in 2016, children in difficulties include children who have a difficulty to maintain livelihood, unable to go to a doctor, unable to be enrolled in school, etc. due to family poverty, children who have difficulties in rehabilitation, gaining care and social integration as a result of their disability, and children who face the threat and encroachment on their right to personal security such as abuse, abandonment, accidental harm and illegal encroachment because of a lack of family care or improper care¹⁶.

In the construction of a national welfare system, the Government plays a leading role in social assistance for children. Since the “Hope Project”(希望工程) was launched at the end of the 1980s, the passion of the social forces has been evoked to participate in the delivery of social assistance for children. With the support of charity institutions and of social organizations policies for children's survival and their development have been provided good opportunities to develop both in their quantity and quality. In 2013, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the “Announcement on the Launching of the Pilot Program for the Construction of a Moderately Inclusive Child Welfare System”. In the announcement, it was highlighted how pointed importance it was for professional service for children to be developed. The important role that the social organizations play in the child welfare system was recognised.

Most social assistance projects for children are designed based on the social issues that exist and are aimed at the survival, the safety, the education and the development of children. On the whole, the relevant social service organizations have a greater number of evident advantages in terms of providing social assistance to children. On the one hand, since services for children are complex and professional, involving a variety of disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, sociology and social work, these organizations can provide professional services by recruiting professionals and making flexible use of, and integrating, expert resources. On the other hand, social assistance for children requires a long and lasting process. All preventions and any direct intervention needs careful participation. Ordinary administrative services from the Government have difficulty in satisfying these two aspects. In 2014, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued “Opinions on the Establishment of a Guiding Mechanism for Children's Welfare”, encouraging the social forces to provide individualized children's social assistance. In the document, the Departments of Civil Affairs at all levels are required to guide the social forces, especially charitable organizations, to explore the provision of social assistance for de facto unattended children, disabled children, children with a major disease, children with a rare disease, street children, migrant children, orphaned children and children in poverty-stricken families¹⁷.

One typical example of the engagement of the social forces in social assistance can be found in the area of homeless children. The traditional role of social assistance bodies define their role as law enforcers with the appropriate response being to send the homeless children back to their home

¹⁶ Data retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-06/16/content_5082800.html.

¹⁷ Data from

http://pxzx.bcsa.edu.cn/train_portal/newsdetail.do?type=402881e456a0652c0156a0cdba220030&id=47fcd79138d544ba82bbe8d45bd41d52



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village as their role is that of law enforcement. The model has often been criticized, for it is not conducive to the sound development of a child. In the field of helping homeless children, the social assistance departments has collaborated with the social forces in an increasing number of regions. In the initial stages of finding children who are eligible for social assistance, the social forces are more likely to find street children and offer social assistance to them when compared to the passive mode of the government departments. In the provision of social assistance services, traditional social assistance departments have introduced professional children's services. They purchase social assistance in the following ways. First, they hire professional social workers. Some domestic social assistance management organisations have employed professionals to work in providing social assistance to street children who are sent back home by social work institutions and to receive social assistance for abandoned children. They can effectively introduce ideas and methods in the field of professional social work. Second, they purchase projects related to social work services. The traditional social assistance institutions sponsor social assistance projects under which professional social workers provide the social assistance to the street children. Third, the government will pay for care services for homeless children from social work institutions. With the participation of or they dominance by professional services, the system of child social assistance system can be improved and become more humanistic and more conducive to the long-term development of children.

Secondly, the social assistance for children with a major disease has also received interventions from the social forces. China's national health care system is still at the level of providing a basic guarantee, and social assistance from public welfare charities is a significant supplementary resource for a child's medical treatment. The Ministry of Civil Affairs has pointed out that efforts need to be made to establish a framework for medical assistance for children, a framework for disease treatment, for basic medical insurance reimbursement, for government medical assistance and for enabling the assistance of NGOs¹⁸. According to the incomplete statistic from the Association of Social Assistance for Children with Major Disease, eight-three NGOs carried out more than 160 social assistance projects for children with a major disease. These covered more than ten types of disease that required high-cost medical treatment such as congenital heart disease, leukemia and uremia with an annual expenditure of more than 1 billion yuan. In the field of social assistance for children with a major disease, a huge amount of funds and services have been accumulated in society, but at the same time, there are problems such as insufficient information sharing and an over-concentration of resources for a single disease¹⁹.

Thirdly, children in difficulties can be assisted by constructing community support networks. Especially for those in cities, the community reserves a huge amount of resources, including not only various human resources from neighborhood residents but also from companies, schools, hospitals, residents' committees and other organizations. Extending social assistance for children in difficulties into the community and making use of the available resources can help children practically and make the process of seeking help more convenient and more efficient and establish community support networks and safety nets with the community as the carrier. At the same time, community support can reduce social exclusion, protect children's rights, and play a preventative role²⁰. For children in rural areas whose parents don't live with them, it can also have the same

¹⁸ Data from MOCA.
http://pxzx.bcsa.edu.cn/train_portal/newsdetail.do?type=402881e456a0652e0156a0cdba220030&id=47fed79138d544ba82bbe8d45bd41d52

¹⁹ Data from <http://health.people.com.cn/n1/2016/1111/c398004-28852557.html>.

²⁰ Jiang Wei & Xue Zaixing. 2013. From Agency Assistance to Community Based Homeless Child Protection. Social



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preventative role and protective effect in that it forms a social support network in the neighborhood, the village committees and other autonomous organizations and institutions for protecting children. However, the problem is a relative lack of resources in rural areas.

Fourthly, social organizations can do the case tracking of children in difficulties. Some organizations have established a database of children in difficulties, and communicate, and compare, this with the information from that information provided by government departments. By doing this, they revise and improve the social assistance plan for each child in a timely manner and provide dynamic assistance. For children with special needs, they will provide individualized services and services of psychological consultation and personal ability enhancement. At the same time, the methods of case tracking can strengthen the basic support at the family level. Children may be at high risk because of poor family's finances, inappropriate behaviour by guardians and or a lack of proper care and guidance from parents. At present, by using the principles of family counselling, many organizations have used the methods of social work to go deeply into families, to improve parents' parenting ability, and to improve the environment under which a child can develop.

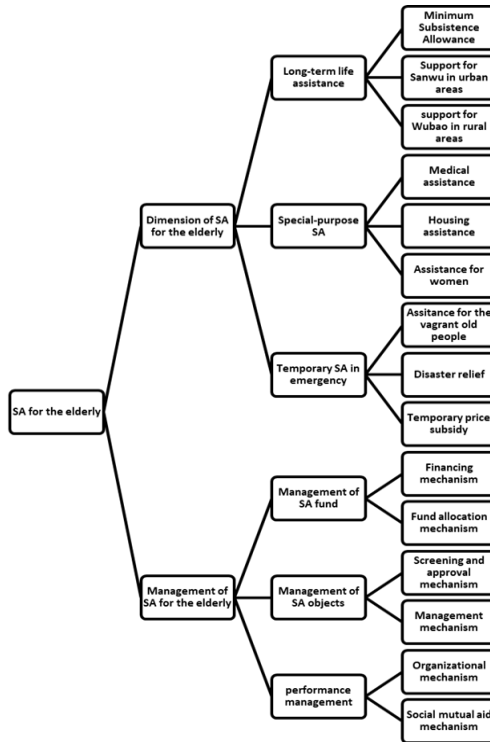
2.2.2.3 Social assistance services for elderly

In respect of social assistance for the elderly, poverty is still the primary standard for recognizing who is eligible to receive social assistance. Social assistance for the elderly is classified into three categories, i.e. long-term life assistance, special-purpose social assistance and temporary social assistance in an emergency. Among them, long-term life assistance refers to the system composed of the Minimum Subsistence Allowance Program (Dibao), support for the Sanwu people in the urban areas and support for those receiving Wubao in the rural areas. Special-purpose social assistance consists of medical assistance, housing assistance, assistance for women, etc. Temporary assistance in an emergency includes social assistance for elderly vagrants and beggars, disaster assistance and other temporary assistance related to accidents. The social forces are involved in the provision of social assistance for the elderly, and they rely on specialized social organizations to carry out the professional social assistance programs can achieve a better effect. For example, through delegation by the Government's, social assistance can inject long-term assistance into the life of the elderly, and provide assistance for women and other special-purpose social assistance recipients who require professional services²¹.

Work and Management. 13 (2), 27 - 32.

²¹ Hou Xueyuan et al. 2017. Research on Social Assistance for the Elderly. Social Policy Research. Vol.4. pp 82 - 98.

Figure 1: Social assistance system for the elderly



Source: Hou Xueyuan et al., 2017

Social assistance for the elderly consists of material assistance and service assistance that meets the necessary needs of the elderly. Under the lead of the Government, social forces offer services to the elderly, as well as offering the necessary social assistance for those who fail to meet the standards of the social assistance system but who are in fact in poverty or on the edge of poverty. China has entered into an era of aging and there is an imbalance between the urban and the rural areas in terms of economic and social development, such as rural hollowness. There are also great differences between the urban and the rural areas in terms of social assistance for the elderly.

In the urban areas, resources are relatively abundant in the community, which provides a good environment for the development of social organizations. In respect of the need to establish a home-based care service system, the Government has purchased a large amount of services for the elderly, and promoted many social organizations to provide these services. This has become an indispensable part of the civil society work for the elderly. These resources for the elderly are also used in their social assistance. First of all, social organizations, with the local community as a platform, spontaneously carry out activities or projects for public welfare, and organize volunteers to directly provide the relevant social assistance services to the elderly who are in poverty in the community. Second, through funding by the government, social organizations provide free home-



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based care to the elderly who are in poverty, or they undertake the services for the elderly from institutions and provide care services with the nature of social assistance to them. Third, the community can develop the cultural atmosphere of respecting the elderly, cultivating community volunteerism, launching relevant projects like Time Banks and forming a virtuous circle of mutual assistance in the community.

In many rural areas, the loss of the labor force is serious. This makes the proportion of self-cared for elderly larger. Especially for the elderly people who are weak in their self-care ability, they still work and take care of themselves when receiving material assistance. In terms of social assistance services, most rural communities lag behind the cities in community development and the development of social organizations. Therefore, the social assistance services from these two aspects are relatively small in their quantity. However, for the rural areas, a regional subculture can be formed in the relatively isolated regions. The consciousness of collectivism enables most rural residents to generally agree on the principle of mutual benefit, and people can provide personalized care and help for one another on the basis of their geographic advantages and their consanguinity. This form of mutual assistance among villagers has become an important source of social assistance in addition to the support provided by the Government. In addition, the village committee, as an autonomous organization, becomes the link between the Government and the villagers, and shares a great responsibility for the social assistance for the elderly in their region.

2.2.2.4 Social assistance services for the disabled

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), persons with disabilities include persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory damage. In China, the disabled are determined mainly based on social dysfunction, that is, the degree of disability is determined on the level of disability, and the disabled are provided with the relevant guarantee services and appropriate social assistance services. Since 2010, the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) has issued guidelines and clearly pointed out that the authorities should encourage social organizations, enterprises and private capital to participate in the public services for the disabled. In 2014, in the "Guidance on the Promotion of the Development of Social Organizations for Disabled Persons" issued by the China Disabled Persons' Federation and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, it is recognized that the social organizations for disabled persons have made a great contribution to protecting the legitimate rights and interests of disabled persons, improving the public service system for the disabled, promoting the development of the cause of disabled persons, and achieving the goal of enabling the disabled to work with satisfaction and lead a happy life. However, at the same time, the Guidance points out that, due to the limited understanding, the unsound system and mechanisms, insufficient support and underperforming management and others, social organizations for the disabled remain small in quantity and in scale, provide services of various qualities and are in need of being given full play²².

Due to the social dysfunction of the disabled, social assistance for this group of citizens is multifaceted. According to the relevant guidance of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the provision of social assistance services for the disabled needs to encourage the involvement of the social organizations who can cover basic life care, medical rehabilitation, education, employment, nursery, poverty alleviation, legal aid, culture and sports, barrier-free infrastructure, social work, etc. The Government's demand for buying social services determines the types of social assistance offered to

²² Data from the website of the Social Organizations in China. <http://www.chinanpo.gov.cn/3501/86914/preindex.html>



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the disabled by the social forces. At present, the purchase of services by the government is simple in its structure, focusing on the existence needs but ignoring the developmental needs²³. That is to say, attention is paid to the daily care services that are relevant to day care and home care services, but in terms of the needs related to employment, mental health, and entertainment that promote the physical and the mental health of disabled persons, these are not fully satisfied.

What is noteworthy is that, for the disabled with certain work capacity, providing jobs is the best way form of social assistance for them. A job can not only become their source of finance but also become a source of respect and self-value. In terms of social assistance for the disabled, social forces, therefore, not only provide direct services, but also accept the disabled into their labor force as seen in an increasing number of enterprises. Especially for some social enterprises, the government will give effective guidance through preferential tax and other preference policies.

2.2.2.5 Social assistance services for other special groups

When recognizing whether a person is eligible for social assistance, economic poverty is the most basic recognition criteria. However, there are many special marginalized groups in society, groups in poverty in terms of rights, and groups whose development is restricted by conditions. Some are actually in difficulties but are not even covered by the traditional social assistance system. These groups include offenders, bereaved families, urban homeless people, low-income migrant workers, AIDS patients, female victims of domestic violence, etc. The social assistance for these groups provided by the social forces is more significant given the absence of adequate social assistance being provided by the Government.

Social assistance services for offenders

The social assistance services for offenders are mainly targeted at the people under community correction and the people released upon completion of their term of imprisonment or reeducation through labor (Two Classes). According to Document No.5 issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, importance needs to be attached to the possible difficulties of some of the Two Classes in finding jobs and maintaining their livelihood due to infirmity, sickness, or lack of skills for earning a living. These may lead citizens in the Two Classes to commit crimes again, and therefore do harm to social harmony and stability. To provide social assistance for the Two Classes is an important and urgent task to maintain social stability and build a harmonious socialist society. In 2016, four governmental departments including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the “Opinions on the Participation of Social Organizations in Social Assistance and Education for Persons Released upon Completion of their Term of Imprisonment” (the Opinions), pointing out these social assistance services are ones that social organizations can be actively involved in. With the development of social work for corrections in China, some regions have already formed a cooperative model between social organizations and the judicial departments, devoted to providing psychological counseling, job placement, support for starting an enterprise and tracking services for the relevant groups²⁴.

According to the Opinions, the social assistance services to be provided by the social forces are as follows. First, social forces can gather information like personal information, the performance of the

²³ Peng & Jiang. 2017. Study of Government Procurement in the Field of Assistance for the Disabled Population. *Journal of Technological Venture*. Vol.3. pp. 127 - 129.

²⁴ Data from the Xinhua website. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-10/27/c_1119794715.html.



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released person and their family, the background of this group from the justice departments and administration departments, formulate a personalized plan of social assistance and education, and make preparations for the work. Second, the social forces can adopt a variety of methods to spread knowledge of the situation and the policies and promote education on compliance with the law, social morality, family virtues and personal morality. Third, the social forces can provide education and training services for increasing the released person's social adaptability, such as interpersonal relationship guidance and community public welfare activities, and provide social adaptability assistance. Fourth, the social forces can provide psychological education services, such as psychological prediction, psychological assessment, psychological consultation and treatment, to help the released persons to get out of the shadows and to cultivate a sound and normal personality. Fifth, for the released persons who meet the criteria for social assistance, they introduce social assistance policies and application conditions, procedures, etc., to them. Social organizations assist the relevant departments in providing legal assistance to qualified persons. By mobilizing individuals and their organization's resources, social forces can provide assistance services for those released who are leading a difficult life. Sixth, for persons who have been released who have difficulties in finding a job but have the ability to work and want to work, and their relatives, the social forces recommend jobs and provide vocational skills training. Also they help them handle their industrial and commercial registration and implement policies of tax reduction and the credit support policy, in accordance with the policies relevant to employment and entrepreneurship.

Social assistance services to parents who have lost their only child

Families that have lost their only child, refers to families where the parents have lost their only child, can no longer give birth to a child and are no longer able to have children and are unwilling to adopt children. The phenomenon of "lost child parents" is a social problem arising from the one-child policy in place since the 1980s. "Lost child parents" also suffer from the dual dilemma of pension pressures and loneliness. Since 2013, to address the problem of lost child parents, China has put in place social assistance for special families under the family planning policy. Since 2014, the monthly subsidies paid to lost child parents have been increased, and a mechanism has been established for the dynamic increase of the subsidy. The problem, however, is that the needs of the parents who have lost their only child go far beyond money and that mental services are a key part of assisting the families who have lost their only child. In a study of 290 elderly persons who have lost their only child in Hefei, Anhui province, the empirical research results show that most of these elderly persons are isolated from others and the community. Their social interaction and social support is still confined to being between husband and wife. Also, their social behavior and social memory remain in the past when they lived with their only children, and their inner psychological memory is further impacted by their self-identification disorder. As a result, spiritual consolation and counseling services for these parents are the main social assistance for them. The objective of this is to help the lost parents regain their hope for life, to strengthen their social support and promote their integration into society²⁵.

In addition to the government's relevant measures, social forces also participate in social assistance services for this group. The forms of the services are as follows. First, lost child parents spontaneously form self-assistance groups, such as the Stars Port Care Services Center in Shanghai (上海星星港关爱服务中心), Heart-to-Heart Home Project (连心家园) in Wuhan, etc.

²⁵ Fang Shuguang, 2013. The reconstruction of the social relations of the elderly parents who have lost their only child, Population and Development, Vol.5, pp 89 - 94



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Second, the social organizations with the participation or the leadership of social workers and psychological consultants provide professional services, and some regions have also started the mechanism of the government purchasing these services. In 2012, for example, in Wuxing District in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, a special project - Warm-heart Home project was carried out in this pilot area to help the Lost Child Parents as a special trial project of the home-based care services for the elderly (暖心家园工程). Third, led by the government, the community organizes volunteers to provide the related services, create a caring atmosphere, and form social support networks, such as Cuncaoxin (寸草心) volunteer groups in Baixia District in Nanjing.

Social assistance services for college students in poverty

College education is a level above the compulsory education system, so the difficulties in college enrollment, college life and student development caused by poverty are still an existing problem. Direct aid to poor college students is beyond the traditional social assistance system, but the government and the social forces have made a lot of efforts to support these students. The State has alleviated the economic difficulties of poor college students by the means of economic social assistance such as reform of the cost of a college education and financial aid policies for poor students. The participation of the social forces in social assistance for poor college students tends to be diversified, which also reflects the essence of "service".

As a typical case, Taoxinbo Educational Foundation provides financial support to college students from the rural areas. On the one hand, Taoxinbo Educational Foundation has cooperated with 22 colleges in Jiangsu Province that have a higher percentage of poor students and limited school resources to set up the Boli Student Grant (伯黎助学金). On the other hand, Taoxinbo Educational Foundation has made use of its resource advantage and has established a service and a support system for people starting an enterprise. The system encourages and supports students to return to their hometown and start trading and service enterprises, so as to support the development of their hometown. Through mentoring and entrepreneurship programs, the foundation provides resources such as social networks, training, mentoring, and funding to help students to start their own business. At the same time, the foundation encourages students to form a self-organized student association with the purpose of helping themselves, helping others. It is called the Boli Student Association (伯黎学社). The Boli Student Association, as a platform, promotes "the developmental education social assistance model", and carries out projects in five areas, i.e. economic empowerment, academic empowerment, psychological empowerment, empowerment of practical skills and entrepreneurship empowerment. This can cultivate and improve their all-round abilities, helping them to develop talents, succeed in their business and become a decent individual. This comprehensive model of funding and training pays attention to both the basic and the developmental needs and has become a typical aid service for poor college students²⁶.

The foundation has a set of evaluation indicators that includes three areas to identify the recipients. The first part is the quantitative evaluation index system of a family's economic situation of the foundation, accounting for 70% of the assessment. The second part is the democratic review, which is organized by the departments and accounts for 20% of the assessment. The third part is the comprehensive grade from the school, accounting for 10% of the assessment. The result is the sum of the three parts. In principle, students with high scores are given priority to receiving financial aid. The primary indicators of the family's finance include these categories: children of martyrs, orphans,

²⁶ Data from the website of the Taoxinbo Education Foundation. www.tspef.org/category/gywm/jjhj.



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the regions that students come from (15 points), the conditions of family members (40 points), the family income (45 points) and additional items (e.g. students' health conditions and families that have suffered natural disasters, etc.).

From 2007 to 2018, the foundation funded 7,566 poverty-stricken college students, with 23,496 recipients and 128,063,945 yuan in donations. The number of financial aid recipients in 2017-2018 reached 4,540, of whom 2,983 were males or 65.7%, whilst 1,557 were females, accounting for 34.3%.

In addition to the above groups, there are other special groups, such as AIDS patients, urban unemployed groups and so on. Social organizations can, based on the actual needs for social assistance provide social assistance services and bring their flexibility and autonomy into full play in a timely manner through the accurate positioning of special purpose projects. Especially for the vulnerable groups that are not covered by the social security system, or have already been covered but cannot get sufficient social assistance, social assistance from the social forces is a good supplement, and can introduce innovation to the work of social assistance. Social organizations play a role in the innovation and development of social assistance and one of the keys is that they can widely use non-state-owned assets and organize human resources, money and material resources so that civil society can be involved in public social welfare.

2.2.3 Funds for the social assistance services provided by the social forces

Funds for social forces' participation in social assistance services are mainly from the following three sources.

2.2.3.1 Social donations

One of the major sources of funds for the social forces to participate in social assistance services is public donations. They are built on a voluntary basis and are conducted through non-compulsory means such as personal income transfers and personal resource donations. They are effected through fundraising, voluntary donations, public funding and other charity methods to redistribute social resources and social wealth. This source of funds effectively compensates for the limited investment in government social assistance funds. According to the 2017 Philanthropic Blue Book of China, the actual amount of cash and material donations received by charities in 2015 was 121.5 billion yuan, plus national voluntary service donations to the value of 41.4 billion yuan and lottery public welfare funds totalling 97.9 billion yuan. The total value of social charity reached 260.8 billion yuan. In 2016, total social donations were expected to reach 134.6 billion yuan. Among them, the total donations received via the foundation system was estimated to be 48.9 billion yuan; the amount of system donations for charitable organizations was estimated to be 34.8 billion yuan; the amount of social donations and donations received by the civil affairs system was 7.083 billion yuan; the amount of donation received by private non-enterprise units and social organizations was estimated to be 19.4 billion yuan, and the amount of donations received by other types of donors was about 24.4 billion yuan. The total amount of social donations in 2016 plus the national volunteer service hours was worth 49.565 billion yuan, totaling 184.2 billion yuan. In 2016, the total number of Chinese lottery sales reached 394.64 billion yuan and the for the lottery public welfare fund raised 103.9 billion yuan. Taking the Lottery Charity Fund into consideration, the total value of China's total social public welfare in 2016 was 288.1 billion yuan. Compared with 2015, the total growth rate in social donations was 10.7%; the total value of volunteer service donation



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hours increased by 19.6%; the total growth rate of lottery public welfare funds raised was 5.8%, and the growth rate of total value of public welfare benefits was 10.5%. At the same time, online donations have become a charity gold mine. From September 7 to September 9, 2016, 6.77 million people donated 305 million yuan through the “9 September” public non to for profit platform, with an average donation of 45.05 yuan per person.

2.2.3.2 Financial support by the Government

The funds for social forces to participate in social assistance are also partly provided from the Government’s revenue, and the transfer of payments is completed by the way of the Government purchasing public services. With the popularity of the Government procurement service model, social organizations continue to undertake an increasing number of projects concerning the people’s livelihood. In this process, the cultivation and capacity building of social organizations has become the key to improving the efficiency of using the funds, and also of affecting the scale of the Government’s financial investment.

2.2.3.3 Money from the Welfare Lottery

In addition to the Government procuring services through its revenues, some local governments rely on social welfare ventures to support the social organizations through the welfare lottery. For example, the Shanghai Municipal Department of Civil Affairs launched its “Venture Philanthropy” in 2009. It granted welfare lottery funds of 10 million yuan and entrusted the social organization “Non-Profit Incubation” to support the social organizations with the aim of providing social services to children and adolescents, the elderly, people with disabilities, community residents and the impoverished. Since then, the local civil affairs departments have followed the model of promoting the development of the local venture philanthropy. The charity event organized by the Municipal Department of Civil Affairs in Guangzhou was funded by the Guangzhou Welfare Lottery Fund and has been successfully held for four years. According to the statistics, in the fourth Guangzhou social organization venture philanthropy launched in 2017, a total of 376 public welfare venture programs were proposed. After expert review and public notification, 165 philanthropic venture programs received a total of 22.4 million yuan from the welfare lottery funds, of which 63 were for services to the elderly, 14 were for disability services, 35 were for youth services, 16 were for the poor and 37 were for other public welfare services, covering 11 districts. In addition to this financial support, other government departments and civil organizations such as the Women’s Federation and the Communist Youth League have also launched various activities of venture philanthropy.

2.2.3.4 Income from marketized operations

Funds for social organizations to participate in social assistance also come from the operating income for these organizations. A small number of social organizations can rely on service fees to obtain income, and then put this income into their social assistance activities. Especially for the emerging social enterprises in the field of public welfare, their operational mode is to use marketized operational income to achieve their social goals.



3. THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIAL FORCES IN THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

3.1 The Role of the Government and the Social Forces in Social Assistance Services

For a long time, social assistance services in China have faced the problem that the government and NGO's have headed in different directions. There is no effective convergence between the two, and there is no mechanism for their coordination and integration²⁷. With the clear goal of the Government's reform to "modernize the national governance system and its governance capabilities", the "*Interim Measures on Social Assistance*" encourage social forces to participate in social assistance and proposes the establishment and the perfecting the mechanism for and the institutional channels to allow social organizations to participate in the assistance of people in difficulty. Although the institutionalized integration mechanism will not be accomplished overnight, the cooperative relationship and the cooperation path between the Government and the social forces has already become clear.

3.1.1 The Role of the Government

As the primary player in the national welfare system, the Government should always bear the major responsibilities in social assistance. In respect of the cooperation between the Government and the social forces, the Government is first and foremost the leader and the planner. It decides on the overall framework and prioritises the social assistance planning. It formulates the relevant policies to attract social forces, and guides and cultivates the available social forces. Secondly, as the major provider of resources, the Government should provide give enough financial support to social assistance. Thirdly, the Government is the one who makes the rules and it is necessary to establish a scientific and standardized social assistance administration system. Fourthly, when it comes to the purchasing of services, the Government should fulfill the role of supervisor.

Li Liguo, the Minister of Civil Affairs, clearly pointed out in his statement, "To help the social forces to participate in social assistance work, the Ministry of Civil Affairs will do four things. The first is to perfect the preferential policies for social forces to participate in social assistance, for example providing financial subsidies, tax incentives, fee reductions, etc. The second is to encourage the government to purchase social assistance services from the social forces, transferring social assistance service, which are suitable for the social forces to provide across to the social forces through commissioning, contracting and procurement, etc. The third is to establish and perfect the working mechanism for social assistance agencies and the social forces to check the information and to release projects in social assistance service, forming an organic combination of government and nongovernmental services. The fourth is to nurture subjects, actively cultivating the social organizations which can participate in social assistance work and providing social assistance services and improving their abilities²⁸."

²⁷ Zhou Pei. 2017. Innovation of the Models and Mechanisms of Social Assistance under the Cooperatives Governance Perspective. Journal of Jianghuai. Vol.1, pp 121 - 126.

²⁸ Data from <http://m.chinanews.com/s/gn/2014/02-28/870501.html>.



3.1.2 The Role of the Social forces

Social organizations play the following roles in their social assistance during their cooperation with the Government. First, social organizations are the integrators of resources. In addition to the financial support of the Party and Government, social organizations can mobilize private resources, develop the huge economic potential for charitable donations, and integrate the human resources of the community networks. Secondly, social organizations are the providers of services. Under the background of the Government Procurement Service social organizations that are qualified and capable of undertaking public service can get subsidies for the projects by bidding for them and then providing services to the beneficiaries. Thirdly, social organizations provide services that complement the Government's social assistance services. Through the integration of resources, they can make up for the inadequacy of the coverage of social assistance services and the level being too low.

Various types of enterprises provide material support for social assistance services through compulsory taxation and voluntary donations. At the same time, according to the *"Opinions on Actively Implementing the Government Procurement Service to Strengthen the Capacity of Grassroots' Social Assistance Services"* issued by four ministries and commissions such as the Ministry of Civil Affairs, social organizations are not the only option for the Government to purchase services. "Eligible social forces like social organizations, institutional legal entities, enterprises, institutions, etc., can all participate in the competition for, and undertake, social assistance services."

3.2 The Mechanisms for the Cooperation Between the Government and the Social Forces in Providing Social Assistance Services

3.2.1 Government Procurement Service (GPS)

The Government Procurement Service means that the Government buys the public service which it originally undertook itself from the social organizations, the enterprises and the institutions through open bidding or directed entrustment etc., in order to improve the quality of the supply of public services and the efficiency of the use of financial funds, to improve the social governance structure, and meet the diversified and individualized demands of the public.

In 2017, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the *"Opinions on Actively Implementing the Government Purchasing Service to Strengthen the Capacity of Grassroots' Social Assistance Services"*, clarifying the main body for the purchasing and the undertaking of social assistance services, and standardizing the content of the services purchased: "The social assistance services purchased from the social forces mainly consist of transactional work and service work. The transactional work mainly refers to work such as beneficiary investigation, means testing, business training, policy advocacy, performance evaluation when dealing with the Dibao, assistance to the Special Vulnerable Groups (Tekun), medical assistance, temporary assistance, etc. Service work mainly refers to services such as care and nursing, rehabilitation training, medical care, social inclusion, ability improvement, psychological communication, and resource coordination to the social assistance beneficiaries". At the same time, the Government will establish a standardized purchasing process with project selection, information release, supervision of the organizations that



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provide services and performance evaluation as the main contents²⁹. At this point, "Strengthening the Governmental Purchase of Social Assistance Services" has been listed as an important task for all the provinces' social assistance work in 2018.

Box 4: The Bureau of Civil Affairs of Xihu District, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, “introduces social organizations to conduct means testing and building an active, diversified and accurate social assistance system”

How to spend the government's social assistance funds on really needy families? How to help families in need to get cash, physical help, and other help? How to close the loopholes and avoid fostering a free-ride and welfare dependency? These are the key issues of social assistance work and the difficult points in the Civil Affairs' work at the grassroots level.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the Government's social assistance administrative services, the Bureau of Civil Affairs of Xihu District in Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, through the government's purchasing of third-party service, carried out the means testing service for the social assistance applicants within the region and has achieved significant results. The first is the concept of innovation, introducing a third-party to do the means testing for social assistance. In accordance with the spirit of the relevant documents and in conjunction with the actual situation, a plan for the government to purchase its means testing service will be formulated.

Through a comprehensive assessment, the “Zhejiang Home Inns Social Work Service Center” (hereinafter referred to as “Home Inn”), which has focused on providing civil affairs information for more than 10 years and which has a deep understanding of civil affairs policies, has been selected to undertake the means testing work. A one-year service contract is pre-signed and the price is set at 200 yuan per household. It is reconciled according to the actual number of households surveyed and the actual cost incurred, with a provisional payment of 100,000 yuan. The source of funding is from the Government's finance.

The second is management innovation i.e. carrying out joint visits, and developing the means testing workflow. Three agencies, including the district Bureau of Civil Affairs, social organizations (Home Inn) and the community, jointly conducted home visits, researched and tracked the service processes of the various beneficiary populations, facilitated multiple parties to participate in symposiums, and fully absorbed the opinions of all parties on the means testing process. Then they repeatedly discussed and developed a standardized process for the surveyors from social organizations that would do the means testing.

The third is technological innovation and its application on mobile terminals. This is a very convenient tool for means testing. It combines well with the “*At most run for once*” reform in Zhejiang Province, and lets social organizations play their role in technology and become familiar with social assistance policies. Xihu District developed mobile applications and channels to allow people in need to apply at home. The Bureau of Civil Affairs staff can supervise the whole process of the means testing, which include the submission of applications, conducting the means testing, and generating the report, through the mobile port.

²⁹ Data from Website of Central Government of China. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-09/27/content_5227951.html.



The fourth is service innovation. The establishment of the "Happiness Cloud" platform makes diversified social assistance possible. Xihu District together with the Home Inn launched the "Happiness Cloud" public benefit platform, meeting the demand for service demand through the online platform. Then the system will automatically match service personnel, and Home Inn will follow up the means testing in time, meeting the various service needs of the people in difficulty. The platform has integrated nearly 20 service enterprises, 523 volunteers and 3 social organizations, and has set up the corresponding support systems. The service time of the volunteers can be converted into public interest points, which can be redeemed for items in the

3.2.2. The Public Private Partnership Model

The PPP model refers to the government and social forces' cooperation model (Public-Private-Partnership). Based on revenue sharing rules that have been publicly agreed such as franchise rights, reasonable pricing, and financial subsidies, the Government introduces social forces as participants in the public welfare projects' investments and operations such as urban infrastructure. PPF is characterized by benefit sharing and risk sharing, giving full play to the advantages of both parties and improving the quality and supply and the efficiency of public goods or services³⁰. The concept of the PPP model and the GPS are often confusing, but unlike the traditional GPS, the PPP model is not limited by the Government's procurement catalogue and there is social capital participation from the source of the funds. The sources that the social forces gain as investment returns include user fees and government payments. In non-operational projects such as social assistance, the lack of a "user fees" basis requires "government payments" to recover the investment costs³¹.

The PPP model is in the ascendancy in China, but there are fewer attempts in the field of non-operational social assistance. In July 2015, Hefei in Anhui Province launched the first domestic family assistance program using the PPP model. It was called "Lezhu Evergreen" and its special fund was the special fund for assistance jointly funded by Changqing Street and Anhui Lebang Charitable Foundation. This project integrated various social resources into a four-in-one social assistance model which is "Government + Foundation + Social Workers + Volunteers"³². In 2016, the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Perfecting the Assistance and Support System for the *Tekun People*" to encourage the use of the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model, and the adaptation of methods such as public-private and private-government to support the construction of support service agencies. However, most social forces which are investing in public service infrastructure construction aim to make profits rather than provide charitable assistance. The profitability issue has become a difficult point in non-operational projects which are run under the PPP model. Therefore, in the field of social assistance, the government and the social forces' cooperation model is bound to experience a long process of exploration.

3.2.3 Philanthropic Venture

Philanthropic venture (PV) is a method of applying the means of venture investment in business to social organizations. As far as the main body is concerned, the subjects of philanthropic venture are

³⁰ Data from website of Government Procurement. <http://www.ccgp.gov.cn/specialtopic/pppz/>

³¹ Data from website of Chinese Financial News. http://www.cfen.com.cn/dzb/dzb/page_5/201707/t20170713_2648620.html

³² Data from website of government and social capital cooperative study center. <http://www.pppcenter.org.cn/xydt/xyxw/201507/200932UFW.html>



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more diversified. The government, enterprises, private funds and foundations, etc., are all the initiators of philanthropic venture. At present, it is highly esteemed by local governments at all levels in China. According to the collection of public information (as of January 1, 2016), there were 85 regions (including 8 provinces and municipalities under the Central Government, 25 prefecture-level cities, 27 districts and counties, and 14 streets) that have carried out PV activities. This number is increasing. In some cities with relatively more financial resources, philanthropic venture has become a budget item in the local government's on-going expenditures, and additional investments are made year after year³³. In the PV projects, social assistance services provided by social organizations are one of their important supporting areas.

Box 5: The Bureau of Civil Affairs (BoCA) of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province, “creates four major projects to encourage and guide the social forces in their participation in Social Assistance”

The Bureau of Civil Affairs of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province has taken advantage of the private economy, private capital, and nongovernmental organizations to create four major projects to guide the social forces to broadly participate in social assistance and to improve the level of the services provided.

The first is to establish "Funds" projects and improve the guarantee mechanism. It used financial funds arranged by the government to “leverage” the social donation funds. By separately setting out “emergency” funds, arranging for the use of welfare lottery funds, integrating the poverty alleviation funds, and guiding the social charity donations that are “partially funded by the Government, civilian charities and society”, the City has raised 38.93 million yuan to establish 11 county-level "emergency" funds and a municipal "emergency" fund.

The second is to carry out “City-wide Discovery” projects and to improve the active discovery of those in need of the social assistance mechanism. Through the 96345 social service hotline, television, newspapers and other media, .caring stations (爱心驿站) and other grassroots assistance institutions, the Bureau of Civil Affairs of Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province calls for the whole city to participate in the "City-wide Discovery" campaign to help the needy, with the intention to establish and to improve the active discovery of those in need of the social assistance mechanism. Thus, the Government's social assistance service SA service has made the shift from depending on people to make an application to actively seeking out applicants.

The third is to implement the ".caring station" project, perfect the mechanism for the social forces to participate in social assistance and establish ".caring stations" in the community and in villages (residential). To date the City has built a total of 155 .caring stations. By using the caring stations there are channels for the exchange of information and communication between the Government and society.

The fourth is to carry out the “Social Worker Intervention” project and perfect the mechanism of diversified social assistance. Depending on the characteristics of the necessary social work, social workers can provide pre-intervention services, during the event intervention assistance, and post-event tracking impact mechanisms for the beneficiary population.

³³ Li Jian, 2017.



In practice and implementation, the Wenzhou Bureau of Civil Affairs has formed an effective assistance system characterized by the with Government leading, department collaboration, and both social organization and public participation. It has done a "subtraction" in alleviating the administrative pressure on the grassroots level, an "addition" in the social governance and social construction as well as a "multiplicative" in guaranteeing the interests of the people in need, and has achieved a multiparty win-win and benefit position.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF REGIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

4.1 Pilot Experiences of the Government in Purchasing Social Assistance Services

In 2012, Department of Social Assistance (DSA) of the Ministry of Civil Affairs initiated with the support of UNICEF and after all provinces and cities across the country had submitted a plan for pilot areas in civil administration systems, Zhangjiagang in Jiangsu, Wuhu in Anhui and Qingyang District in Chengdu were selected as pilot areas to expand the connotation of social assistance services after a comprehensive evaluation of their application plan.

Social Assistance services in Zhangjiagang are government dominated. In the absence of social organizations, the Government supports the growth of social organizations through targeted purchases, and the number of social organizations has gradually increased. Social Assistance services are mainly targeted at children and adolescents in poor families. At the same time, it benefits persons who are unsettled in urban life and single mothers.. It also uses professional methods such as group work, individual cases, community work, etc. to carry out social assistance services involving the daily care of poor families and children, improving their abilities and social inclusion.

The SA services in Wuhu are government dominated as well. Starfish Social Worker Service (海星社工服务中心) and various voluntary organizations are actively involved in social assistance services and they have become the mainstay of service suppliers in the areas of cash help and service supply. The assistance service is mainly targeted at the elderly. It covers the construction of an information-based pension platform and the provision of daily cares service for the elderly. It provides home-based senior citizens with a multi-field home service to fill the gaps in home-based care services for the elderly poor. At the same time, Wuhu's social assistance service has opened up new ways. It has extensively mobilized and used the power of social groups and volunteers to participate in assistance services like helping students, the elderly, and the disabled. It has achieved the economies of scale in volunteer services and cultivated a number of outstanding volunteer groups in the social assistance sphere.

After the Qingyang District of Chengdu became a pilot area, it first conducted a thorough survey on the poor groups and the marginalized groups in the district and completed the *"Baseline Survey Report on the Pilot Projects on Connotation Expansion of the Social Assistance Service in Qingyang District"*. According to the needs of the vulnerable groups and to meet their great demand for the care of the elderly, for the care for children in difficulty, for employment and for medical rehabilitation, the Government, social organizations and volunteers will provide assistance to children, the elderly, the disabled and women in the form of cash and services. The service



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provided includes community care and domestic services for the elderly and the handicapped, childcare services and learning accompanying activities for children, skills training and job introductions for landless women. The assistance services provided by Qingyang District includes basic daily care services, development services for building the capabilities of groups of the poor and inclusion services to promote the sense of belonging and identity of the vulnerable groups. Qingyang District has formed district-level service project database through philanthropic venture and the participation of universities. They have included the social assistance service expenses into their public finance budget. In 2012, the assistance service expenses reached nearly 40 million yuan. These were used to optimize the service centres in districts, streets and communities and to purchase services from social organizations.³⁴

Through the assessment of the "*Pilot Projects on Expanding the Connotation of Social Assistance Service*" jointly conducted by the Department of Social Assistance of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and UNICEF in Zhangjiagang City of Jiangsu Province, Wuhu City of Anhui Province and Qingyang District of Chengdu City, the regional pilot experiences were summarized by the assessment team as follow. The first was to establish a government led and socially involved management system. The second is that social assistance services can be provided in the form of a project system. The third is to push forward with the reform of social assistance services in the direction of specialization, informatization, and coordination³⁵.

Table 4: Overview on Regional Pilot Projects in SA service

Pilot City	Providers	Target Population	Methods	Content of Service	Type of service	Standardization
Zhangjiagang	Government Social Organizations	Children New Citizens Women	Cash Service	Childcare service Youth Development Plan Psychological assistance	Daily-care service Ability Development service Inclusion service	Building a project library included the funds into public finance budget
Wuhu	Government Social Organizations Volunteers	The elderly The disabled Patients Labor force Orphans	Cash Service	Accompany Psychological assistance Household service Community Employment	Daily-care service Ability development service	Low

³⁴ Ma Yanli. 2015. Contents and Mechanism of the Social Assistance Services [D]. Thesis for a Masters Degree at Nanjing University.

³⁵ Lin Mingang. 2015. Reflections on the Government's purchase of Social Assistance Services. Administration Reform. Vol.8 pp 24 - 27.



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Qingyang District, Chengdu	Government	Children	Cash Service	Community care	Daily-care service	Building a project library included the funds into the public finance budget
	Social Organizations	The elderly The disabled		Household service Childcare service	Ability Development service	
	Volunteers	Women		Training and employment of the disabled family asset-building	Inclusion service	

Source: Ma Yanli, 2015

4.2 Charitable Forces Particiation in Social Assistance Services (Beijing case)

In order to implement the "Interim Measures On Social Assistance", the "Several Regulations for Promoting Philanthropy in Beijing" and other regulations, and to give full play to the important role of charitable forces in building the social assistance system, the Beijing Bureau of Civil Affairs issued the "Opinions on the Participation of the Charitable Forces in Social Assistance" (issued by Beijing Bureau of Civil Affairs and the Charity Association in 2014, No. 397)³⁶. The proposal puts forward a plan to establish an interactive mechanism, information sharing mechanism, coordination mechanism with overall consideration and a guidance and support mechanism, to give full play to the unique advantages of the charitable forces. It also says that it is important to strengthen policy guidance, improve the assistance platform, perfect the operating mechanism, integrate charity resources, encourage and guide the charitable forces such as charitable organizations, enterprises, and caring people to actively participate in social assistance services, forming an effective supplement to the Government's assistance. Those who cannot be covered by the Government's assistance resources and its assistance policies, and those who have not yet emerged from their difficulties after the government's assistance, will be transferred across to charitable assistance channels on the basis of the consent of the legal guardian and the authorized agent. Then the basic information on these people will be collected and submitted in accordance with the required formats. According to the difficulty and the need of the target groups, the proposal puts forward steps to guide and coordinate the charitable forces in the region to carry out assistance activities such as money and other material assistance, psychological services, legal aid, and other volunteer services. Also, it mentions the need to mobilize local enterprises, institutions, and caring people to provide assistance or to encourage mutual assistance among the residents. The demand for charitable assistance that cannot be provided by this level of charitable forces, can be declared according to the level of the street (township), district (county), city and then will be implemented.

The *Opinions* proposes to establish special funds for charitable assistance at the municipal and district (county) levels relying on charitable organizations, and to actively guide social funds to participate in charitable assistance by providing a stable source of funds for the charitable forces' participation in social assistance. It supports the establishment of public-raised foundations with the main purpose of serving districts and counties, and encourages the streets (townships) and communities (villages) to set up special funds for charitable assistance under the district/county public-raised foundation, so that the charitable assistance funds can be deployed and managed at

³⁶ Data from http://mzj.beijing.gov.cn/news/root/gfxwj_csgz/2015-05/113239.shtml



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different levels. Also, public-raised foundations can raise funds from the public for charity projects or assistance cases. At the same time, the *Opinions* requires that departments at all levels should fully understand the charitable resources such as charitable organizations, enterprises, institutions, and caring people within their administrative area. Under the premise of voluntary participation, the departments at all levels should collect and organize the information of charitable resources in the region, conduct the overall coordination, and establish a charitable resources database at the level of city, district (county), street (township). Then they should produce a manual for the charitable assistance resources, displaying the name of the charitable organization they belong to, the scale, conditions and standards for receiving assistance, procedures for assistance etc. and this will also provide a solid foundation for effective communication between the suppliers and recipients of the charitable assistance.

The Bureau of Civil Affairs is responsible for establishing and managing the city's charitable information platform at all levels. Departments at all levels are responsible for the daily maintenance of the platform's accounts and the management of the information on the charitable assistance.

The experience of Beijing's in introducing charitable forces' participation into social assistance can be summarized as the following points which can be used for reference by other regions.

Firstly, all districts and counties in Beijing actively cultivate and develop grassroots' charitable organizations to carry out assistance so that they can realize the benefits of charitable resources and meet the needs of the people in difficulty through the community charitable assistance program. As of the end of 2015, the total net assets of the Foundations nationwide were 120.4 billion yuan. The net assets of the Foundation in Beijing were 37,825.43 million yuan, ranking it first in the country. These assets were far higher than those of the second-ranked Jiangsu Province. This also laid the financial foundation for Beijing's charitable assistance.

Second is the introduction of professional social workers to provide targeted assistance services. Beijing has established and improved the five major mechanisms of social assistance services, such as the discovery of those in need and their reporting and their evaluation, undertaking, referral, and coordination. It has embedded social work services into the existing social assistance hardship assistance and other work systems, It is timely and effectively meeting the needs of the target populations who need policy help. Through the Government Purchasing Service, social service agencies can be introduced to social assistance and service areas can be spread across every street and township. In this way the problem of a lack of manpower will be solved. Also, Beijing has established a social assistance team of "full-time staff + professional social workers" to carry out home visits, publicity, assessment of the levels of difficulty and needs, making assistance plans, developing case services and resource coordination, improving the specialization, refinement, and personalization of its social assistance services.

Thirdly, to establish an effective link between charitable assistance and temporary assistance. Temporary assistance has the characteristics of responsiveness, flexibility, low regularity, and small-scale. The approval procedures are too cumbersome and have limited effects. To some extent, temporary assistance needs to be supplemented through charitable assistance. The assistances from the charity associations are important supplements to the Government's social assistance. The problem of the fact that many government projects cannot be reimbursed or are difficult to be reimbursed by the Government can be solved by charitable assistances. In emergencies, charitable organizations can make up for the lack of sufficiency of the Government's assistance funds. At the



same time Beijing emphasizes the establishment of the charity project brands. Through the division of labor and professional service among the charitable organizations, professional service brands in the charity industry are formed to provide assistance. For example, the Beijing Spring Children's Assistance Fund has formed a project brand such as "Small Flower Care Project—Home for Babies" (小花关爱项目—小婴儿之家). It provides excellent services for the children of poor families, orphans and children with congenital diseases and medical assistance, including medical assistance, special care and early rehabilitation intervention services.

The fourth is to establish a working mechanism and coordination mechanism for charity assistances. Beijing has established a mechanism for active discovery of people in difficulty, giving full play to the role of community service and the role of social organizations, charitable workers, volunteers, and community residents' committees, because they are familiar with the people's situation. The establishment of philanthropic resource library and assistance information platforms at all levels provides a mechanism for the resource coordination between government departments, vulnerable groups and social organizations³⁷.

4.3 A New Model in Nanjing for the Acceptance of Social Assistance Service - “General Management”

There is a problem of the low-level window lines, the low efficiency of the transfer, and the low service capacity in the acceptance of grassroots' social assistance services. To further optimize its social assistance services, Nanjing Bureau of Civil Affairs of Jiangsu Province summarized its previous experiences with the construction of social assistance service centers. Based on this, a new round of pilot reforms of the social assistance acceptance model was launched. The public services that were formerly in charge of the Bureau of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security the Health and Family Planning Commission and the Chinese Disabled Persons' Federation were consolidated, and all social assistance issues were centralized in the assistance service center for their resolution.

By “one-stop shop”, the service center provides the general administration service of social assistance. The Yaohua Street in Qixia District of Nanjing, has combed 134 services. The Dongshan Street in Jiangning District can provide 127 one-stop services and has truly realized the “one-stop shop” concept for social assistance. After systematic training and on the job training, each window staff member has become a "general social worker". At the same time, "in location consultations" and "out of location consultations" were combined to provide "an agent in business", "an assistance in business", "online handling" and other humanized social assistance services.

One-stop handling has expedited the reform of the social assistance examination and approval process. The classification management of the examination and approval matters will create a scientific process, perfect the long-term mechanism and organize the examination and approval procedures for social assistance into specific services, reducing the number of links and improving the efficiency of the work.

A network of joint office operations has achieved online interaction for social assistance. To build a “one network” service, the entire staff of the streets, the townships and the community “sinks” the

³⁷ Gao Jinhua. 2018. Experiences, The Problems and Suggestions for Philanthropic Participation in Social Assistance in Beijing. Vol.3. pp. 30 - 32



grid, “dividing the fields of responsibility, clarifying the person who is responsible and fulfilling the responsibility”, comprehensively arranging, combing and collecting people’s livelihood appeals, to get through the “last one kilometer” in the long-distance run of receiving social assistance services. Through the “integrated” management, the service management model of “Township Acceptance, Village Neighborhood Coordination, Group Service” has been established, and a vertical and horizontal social assistance network has been formed. At the same time, the grassroots units are encouraged to establish a big data platform integrating the “people, things, places, and feelings” in the districts and streets, to effect data sharing and supervision under the unified management portal interface.

A set of systems has been established in respect of the standards for governmental social assistance services. The “One-stop handling” general administrative platform facilitates the business of people in difficulty, and the levels of work efficiency and of service satisfaction have been dramatically improved. After the implementation of the pilot streets, the number of government service workers has been reduced by more than 70%, the time residents spend on social assistance saved by more than 84%, the work efficiency increased by more than 77%, and the space needed for government services saved by more than 85%.

5. REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN CHINA

5.1 The Coexistence of Excessive Assistance and Inadequate Assistance

Dibao is the core of the current social security system in China, and the government supplements all kinds of special assistance systems using it as the basis. Once a person is labeled with “Dibao”, it often means that they enjoy special assistance programs such as education, medical care, and housing. On the one hand, it may bring about a risk of excessive welfare provision. On the other hand, the one-size-fits-all approach means that the target populations who need “potentially urgent assistance” are excluded from the policy³⁸. Taking old-age security of the elderly as an example, there are great differences within the elderly group. The pensions of urban employees have risen by as much as 10% for 11 consecutive years. In 2015, the nationwide pension for a retired worker has exceeded 2000 yuan per month, and their basic livelihood has been well guaranteed. At the same time, the basic pension for rural residents is only 70 yuan per month. Although it is has been begun from scratch, it is basically equivalent to nothing. The elderly in the system have a stable and good source of pensions. Among them, a small number of the elderly have even higher pensions. At the same time, the elderly in the rural areas, whose meager pension income is far from adequate for a basic livelihood, have to do heavy manual work.

5.2 Integrating the Targetted Poverty Alleviation Program and Social Assistance Services

After establishing the policy goal of building an all-round, moderately prosperous society by 2020, the Targetted Poverty Alleviation program (TPA) has created a wave of poverty alleviation projects in the poverty-stricken rural areas of China. Targetted Poverty Alleviation and Social Assistance are the two major programs in China's anti-poverty system. However, the two units are different in the bodies responsible for them and in their operating mechanisms. However, their policy systems and

³⁸ Hou Xueyuan (侯学元) et al. 2017. Research on Social Assistance for the Elderly. Social Policy Research. Vol. 4. pp. 4: 82 - 98



targeted populations are overlapping, making social assistance and targeted poverty alleviation both fall into policy fragmentation. This problem not only reduces the efficiency of the public service, but also results in the fact that the overlapping parts of the two programs has actually caused the “excessive assistance” referred to in the previous article, which has made the social assistance service deviate from its original purpose of being “socially fair”³⁹. Therefore, how to effectively link and integrate the poverty alleviation policies with the social assistance systems in the context of the Targetted Poverty Alleviation program is currently worthy of discussion. For the recipients of assistance, TPA and SA have the same goal and that is “liberating the people from poverty”. There are also similarities in terms of the means by which economic assistance and the construction of development conditions proceed. The coexistence of the two is not inconsistent. The core of this issue is to eliminate the overlapping parts through information communication and the establishment of a mechanism for co-construction and co-governance.

5.3 The Unbalanced Development of Social Assistance Services in the Urban and Rural Areas

Before the reform and the opening up in the 1990’s, China’s social assistance system was divided between the urban and the rural areas. After the reform and the opening up, especially after the 1990s, the dual urban-rural economic system was gradually broken and the many systems of social assistance were also being integrated. However, as of now, the urban-rural gap still exists (Zhang, 2017). In terms of the institutional arrangements, there still exists a distinction between the urban and the rural areas in a number of systems including Dibao, Tekun, and housing assistance. From the perspective of the numbers of the target population, the number of the rural population in need is far higher than that in the cities. From the perspective of regional development, there is a wide gap in the economic development among the eastern, central and western regions of China. And there are also significant differences in the establishment of projects and standards, the allocation of resources, and the management of services in the social assistance system. From the perspective of service provision, social organizations in the urban areas have developed faster and more maturely and they can become powerful helpers in the delivery of government social assistance services. However, the development of social organizations in the rural areas is lagging behind, lacking resources and organizations to implement programs.

5.4 The Linking Mechanism between the Institutional and Non-Institutional Assistance Services Needs to be Improved

Despite the existence of the Government Purchasing System, government assistance services and social assistance service soften go their own way. There is a lack of mechanisms for their communication and co-governance. Also, there are structural gaps between “institutional assistance” and “non-institutional assistance”. On the one hand, the assistance provided by the social forces is selective and is small in volume and cannot be matched with the huge, poverty-stricken population that is funded by the Government. Of course, this imbalance can only improve in the long-term. China has not yet established a sharable, data-based platform for managing the poor. The establishment of a platform for the management and storage of various types of special assistance information is very helpful for the effective and timely intervention of professional social workers. Social organizations can also use the information database to obtain accurate information of the

³⁹ Kuang Yalin. 2018. The Integrated Governance of Targeted Poverty Alleviation and Social Assistance. Journal of Huazhong Technology University (Social Sciences Version). Vol. 1. pp 117 - 124.



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recipients in need, to help to screen recipients, to assess their needs and to design assistance service program (Lin, 2017). At the same time, the communication mechanism for the equal cooperation between the Government and the social organizations has not yet been established. In the cooperation between the social organizations and the Government, the social organizations are usually playing the role of an executor instead of an advocator, consultant, and adviser. Thus between the Government and the social organizations, effective communication mechanisms are also needed throughout the entire process of social assistance.

5.5 The Lack of Social Organizations and Their Lack of Ability to Provide Social Assistance Services

From the “*Opinions on the Reforming of the Social Organization Management System to Promote the Healthy and Orderly Development of Social Organizations*” in 2016 and the “*Opinions on the Strengthening and Perfecting the Governance of the Urban and the Rural Community*” issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in 2017, by January 2018, the Ministry of Civil Affairs had printed the “*Opinions on the Cultivating and the Developing of Community Social Organizations*”. The cultivation of social organizations has become a clear policy goal. It is true that such a policy environment has brought opportunities for the development of social organizations. By the end of 2017, the number of the social organizations in China has exceeded 800,000. However, when the number of social organizations is linked to political performance, behind the huge numbers, there are many problems about the development and the quality of social organizations.

At present, many social organizations have poor autonomy and have a serious dependence on the resources provided by the Government. The Government is the largest resource backer for social organizations and plays a decisive role in the survival of the social organizations. However, social organizations nurtured by the Government often do not have long-term growth plans, lack professionalism, and tend to be bureaucratic⁴⁰. Privately-run funds and social organization incubators are still in their preliminary development phase. Therefore, of the more than 800,000 social organizations, there are very few that can provide professional and high-quality public services. In particular, as a service with a supportive nature, social assistance services have a profound impact on the recipients’ living conditions and their quality of life. Compared with the “bettered service”, the “timely service” property requires social organizations to provide high-quality and effective social assistance to the recipients.

5.6 The Development of Social Assistance Services is Still Insufficient

At present, China's SA system is built around Dibao and Tekun. For a long time, there has only been one social assistance method and the development of comprehensive assistance methods has lagged behind. The social assistance system is still based on assistance that allows a person to survive and the concept and the goal of social assistance is to maintain the basic survival of the recipients. However, the causes of poverty are diverse, such as social exclusion, psychological imbalance, social rights imbalance, and a lack of social capital. Single material assistances cannot effectively block the cause of poverty. They can only fulfill the role of providing compensation.

⁴⁰ Chen Youhua & Zhu Xibing. 2014. Incubation of Social Organizations in China. Journal of social science in Jiangsu. Vol 3. pp 90-95.



The two ways in which the “surviving assistance” and the “developing assistance” have their differences is like the differences between a “blood transfusion” and “hematopoiesis”. In recent years, with the rise of the Targeted Poverty Alleviation program, the indicators of poverty alleviation have made local governments pay attention to the withdrawal rate from Dibao. In respect of poverty alleviation, local governments have started to pay attention to the participation, recognition, and self-development ability of the recipients, but for the output of services, the offering of development assistance is still at the conceptual stage. Compared with the cash distribution program, services such as employment training and psychological counseling based on the situation and the needs of the target populations will be much more complex and require more manpower and material resources, which is a greater responsibility for the Government. At the same time, according to the above-mentioned problems relating to a lack of ability in the social organizations themselves, providing service like ability improvement and social inclusion for recipients is still in its infancy and research phase. A perfect service system requires a long process of development but it needs to provide institutional support for the development of the developing assistance services. It is not just enough to keep with the concepts of “encouragement” and “advocacy”.

5.7 The Lack of Evaluation and Supervision of the Government’s Purchasing of Social Assistance Services

In the course of its purchasing of service projects, the Government lacks a complete and scientific monitoring and evaluation system. This has led to many problems in the Government Purchasing Service and has also caused the relevant departments to face many difficulties in implementing the GPS policies. As a result, the effectiveness of the Government Purchasing Service has been greatly reduced and problems such as an incomplete supervision mechanism and lagging supervision methods have appeared. In the process of purchasing the services, due to the lack of a diversified, intelligent, and dynamic supervision system, the supervisors' powers cross over each other and they are prone to problems such as conflict and wrangling. On the one hand, the division of powers and responsibilities among the supervisory bodies is not clear and there is no accountability mechanism. On the other hand, the supervision of social powers is weak and there is no coordination and no linkage mechanism. As the main forces of social supervision, the media and the public lack effective channels for participation. At the same time, the people themselves lack the awareness and the ability to participate, resulting in the absence of social supervision. As a result, local governments have run into problems such as rent-seeking problems and corruption issues in the process of purchasing services (from the country, 2017).

At the same time, the Government Purchasing System system lacks a complete management of its dynamic assessment. The crux lies in the fact that the Government's supervision and management of service providers is only procedural. It only pays attention to the legitimacy of, and the compliance with, the purchasing process. It only supervises whether the “seller” acts in accordance with the regulations, rather than focussing on the quality of service provided by the “seller”⁴¹.

5.8 The Value of Social Assistance Services Needs to be Publicized and Promoted

The history of the Chinese tradition of providing poverty alleviation could be traced back thousands of years before Christ. Although it has played a certain positive function, but in the traditional

⁴¹ Du,2016, Research on the problem of the Government Purchasing Public Service. Cai Xun. Vol.21.



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concept, the person giving grace stands on a moral level, and there are also cases where the recipient is stigmatized. In the modern concept of social assistance, the assistance has become a kind of civil right and has legal and institutional guarantees. In particular, after converting the single material assistance to comprehensive assistance services, social assistances have, to a certain extent, absorbed the value of social work, and that is emphasizing the human values and dignity and recognizing human potential and rights.

However, the traditional value of social assistances is deeply rooted in the minds of some Chinese people, not only in the work of the main parties that implement the specific assistance, but also in the self-marginalized mentality of some of the recipients. Some Government offices and other organizations regard assistance recipients as the bottom population in social assistance work, treating social assistance work as a simple charity and a simple relief. Assistance behavior without full ethical care will place the vulnerable groups in an embarrassing position. This will in turn breed inferiority, depression and a self-denial psychology.

Therefore, it is the two parties of assistance that should make some changes. The assistance providers cannot simply regard the recipients as “beneficiaries” but the participants in social development. The fact is both parties are equal. Only this value can eliminate the social discrimination of the vulnerable groups, enhances their social rights and achieves the purpose of empowerment. The assistance recipients should take social assistance as their proper citizenship right and actively seek help when they need the help of social assistance services. At the same time, they should actively look at their own development rather than treating social assistance as a remedy for poverty. They should take improving their self-ability and getting out of poverty as their goal. As the body responsible for social assistance the government is obliged to horizontally and vertically spread these values, and at the same time publicize the policy of social assistance services, change the status of the information asymmetry and make the people in need actively put forward their appeals and obtain what they deserve.

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3.3.2 Providing Services for Social Assistance Beneficiaries

EU best practice report

Olivia Rusandu, EU-China SPRP expert



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ABBREVIATIONS:

AROPE = At risk of poverty and social exclusion;
AT = Austria;
BAPN = Belgian Anti-Poverty Network;
BE = Belgium;
BPAPSE = Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020;
BG = Bulgaria;
CNLE = French National Committee of Policies against Poverty and Social Exclusion;
CQC = Care Quality Commission;
CZ = Czech Republic;
DE = Germany;
DECCB= Diaconia of the Evangelical Church and Church of the Czech Brethren;
DG EMPL = EU Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion;
DK = Denmark;
EC = European Commission;
ECD = early childhood development;
EE = Estonia;
ES = Spain;
ESF = European Social Fund;
EU = European Union;
FI = Finland;
FR = France;
EL = Greece;
GLMHAN = Greater London Mental Health Advocacy Network;
HR = Croatia;
IE = Ireland;
ICT = Information technology;
IT = Italy;
ITPDV = Interdisciplinary Teams for Preventing Domestic Violence,
MLSJ = Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Justice
MoLSA = Czech Republic's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
MS = European Union Member States;
MT= Malta;
NAPSI = Romanian National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection;
NCSII = Bulgarian National Council on Social Inclusion Issues to the Council of Ministers;
NGO = non-governmental organisation;
NHS= (UK) National Health Service;



NL = the Netherlands;
PL = Poland;
PT = Portugal;
RO = Romania;
SCTs = Social Community Teams;
SE = Sweden;
SIP = Social Inclusion Project;
SPC = Social Protection Committee;
SK = Slovakia;
SSGI = Social service of general interest;
UK= United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Executive summary of the report

This EU Best Practices Report provides an analysis and an overview of the current trends in social services provision for social assistance beneficiaries in the European Union Member States, presenting and describing the social services provision process in several of the States and also a selection of EU Member States' best practices in several sub-topics of the broad social services area.

The topics selected by the author to be covered by the report were: social services' mapping, design and implementation of stakeholders' consultation platforms, integrated social services provision by multidisciplinary community teams of professionals, quality and excellence in social services, accreditation and licensing of social services and their providers, monitoring and evaluation of social services and social audit.

The report presents best practices in the social services sector from Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway) etc.

In conducting the analysis of the possible sub-topics to be included in the report and also of the wide range of EU Member States' best practices in social services provision, in order to select the best and most adequate ones to be presented, the author first looked at the findings and conclusions of Professor Tian Rong's report "3.3.2 Providing services for social assistance beneficiaries in China", aiming to touch upon the most important issues and needs of the Chinese social services system, by selecting the subtopics which could be of most interest for the Chinese context and also the most adequate and specific EU Member States' best practices, providing details on the approaches, methods and tools used by them to address those issues.

The report shows that the EU Member States have developed similar tools and interventions in order to address common problems such as: multiple disadvantages and vulnerabilities, poverty prevention or fighting, etc. Some of the main interventions which proved to be useful are the integrated approach in addressing people's vulnerabilities, by multidisciplinary teams of professionals in the various areas, the evaluation or broad nationwide picture of the state-of-play of services delivered at community level, the quality standards frameworks, meant to ensure that quality services are delivered to the most in need who because of their disadvantages find it difficult to express their needs and desires and to demand that their rights are respected, the inspection or social audit system and ICT systems supporting professionals in data collection, sharing, processing, performing cost-benefit analysis etc.



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The report concludes that there is no perfect social services' system and that EU Member States have developed their own systems according to their historical past, national context and culture, in many ways, from research and testing, trial and error, piloting exercises, reform measures, strategies and action plans, best practices exchanges, adapting, innovating etc. in order to respond best to their needs. Nevertheless, presenting those systems may be very useful for Chinese policy makers in reforming China's social services' system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social services systems across Europe share a common purpose: to protect people against the risks related to unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, old age frailty, care needs, housing needs etc and to combat poverty and social exclusion and also several broad characteristics, including the commitment to employment, social protection for all citizens, a large role for “passive” transfers during non-employment (pensions, unemployment, disability, sickness, maternity etc.), social inclusion, residual safety nets (against poverty), education and training outside social protection etc. However they have also some significant differences, whose roots lie in the historical, political, economic, cultural background and the current context particularities of each country.

Nowadays, after years and years of evolution, reforms, best practices exchanges, expertise gathered from practice at the grassroots and also from consultations with academia, research institutes and international organisations, such as the World Bank, the European Union Member States' social assistance systems are organised on layers or levels:

- The Central Level (Government/ministry)- responsible for the strategic approach, policies, regulations, monitoring and evaluation,
- The Regional Level (or in some countries the province or county level) – responsible for coordination and for supporting the local public social assistance level,
- The Local Level (municipalities, towns, villages etc) – responsible for providing social services to the beneficiaries who are the vulnerable or/and disadvantaged persons.

Moreover, the national social assistance systems in Europe consist of two main components:

- **social benefits:**
 - **in cash payments-** which are financial measures that can be either universal (e.g. the state aid allowance for children aged 0-18 years old) or means-tested (e.g. Guaranteed Minimum Income, the equivalent of Dibao), addressed to the poor and disadvantaged people whose income is below the poverty line and who meet all the eligibility criteria and
 - **in kind social benefits-** which are money granted in the form of vouchers or coupons for the buying of food from the supermarket, or other types of non-cash money offered to beneficiaries and
- **social services** - which represent activities or set of activities provided in order to meet the social and special, individual, family or groups' needs to overcome difficult situations, prevent and combat the risk of social exclusion, increase the quality of life and promote social inclusion.

The social inclusion process can be looked at as a set of multidimensional measures and actions in social protection, employment, housing, education, health, information, communication, mobility,



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security, justice and culture areas, meant to combat social exclusion and ensure the active participation of people in all economic, social, cultural and political aspects of society.

Social benefits and social services may be delivered together, in a mix, when the personal situation of the person in need requires it (e.g. to poor people who are eligible to receive means-tested in cash benefits but who also have other vulnerabilities which can be best addressed by the provision of the necessary social services for them, such as: not having a job, a house, a good health condition, not being able to take care of their daily routine: hygiene, meals' cooking, shopping etc) or they may be delivered separately (e.g. dependent elderly, who don't have a family member to care for them, and who are above the poverty line, will only receive the social services needed to ensure their proper care and quality of life or people suffering from addictions etc.). As a general approach, social services come first, and where they are not enough they are complemented by social benefits.

Social services are of general interest and they can be organised in various forms and structures, according to the specific activities of the social services provision process and the particular needs of each category of beneficiary.

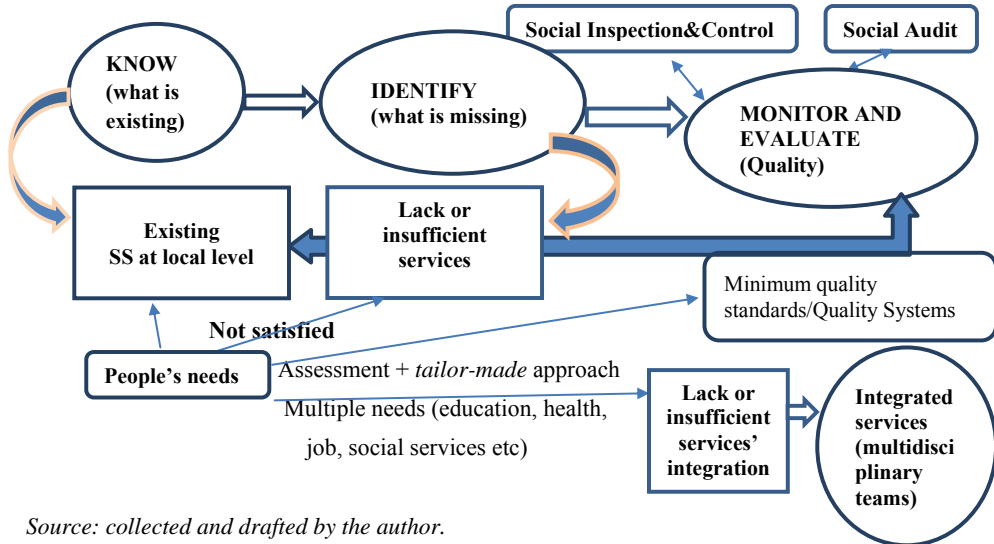
Social services are pro-active and require an integrated approach to the needs of the individual as a whole, in relation with his/her socio-economic situation, health condition, level of education, his/her social environment, family and social relations.

Social services' classification can be done based on various criteria, such as:

- **purpose/goal** (assistance and support services for ensuring the basic living needs of the person, personal care services, recovering/rehabilitation, social (re)insertion etc.)
- **categories of beneficiaries** targeted (social services for children, families, people with disabilities, poor, frail or dependent elderly, victims of domestic violence, people suffering from addictions, homeless people, human trafficking victims, people who are convicted and/or imprisoned, people on probation, people with severe mental illness, people in remote and isolated communities, long term unemployed etc.);
- **assistance regime** (residential or non-residential: day care centres, social canteens, social ambulances, mobile units delivering food or assistance to homeless people etc.);
- **place of assistance** (at beneficiaries' home, in day care or residential centres, at the social service provider's premises, in the community);
- **legal status of the social services provider** (public or private: NGO, charity, religious organisation, company, social economy entity etc.).

The present Report was drafted in response to the issues and needs of the Chinese social services' system as identified in professor Rong Tian, EU-China SPRP expert's, Assessment Report and in a practical manner, based on the following logical principles described in the figure below.

Figure 1: The logic for selecting the sub-topics to be addressed in the current report



Source: collected and drafted by the author.

The logic of this Report (which is also the approach used by EU Member States) is that by starting from knowing people’s needs policy makers can assess what it is (the existing and functional social services, by number and types of services, number and type of beneficiaries) which cover the vulnerable people’s needs) and what is missing (or is insufficiently developed to meet all vulnerable people’s needs).

Then, knowing the vulnerable people’s needs and the existing social services, policy makers are generally interested in how a social service is provided, if it is qualitative enough, if it meets the minimum quality criteria or not (criteria which are essential for beneficiaries, such as: does it treat the beneficiary well? does it inform the beneficiary of his/her rights? are the living conditions decent? are the meals good and healthy? etc.).

And the quality can be assessed, monitored and evaluated periodically, based on clear standards of quality regulated by the central Government, through social inspection and control and/or social audit.

Regarding the needs of the people in very poor and marginalised areas, who suffer from multiple vulnerabilities, they could be addressed by multidisciplinary community teams providing integrated social services, together with health and/or education and/or employment services etc in a made-to-measure or tailor - made approach. In social services a one-size-fits-all approach or a widespread national approach of giving a package of certain services to all vulnerable people can’t apply and give a good result, since each individual is unique, faces and copes with difficulties in his/her own way, differently than the others.

Therefore, the present Report will focus on presenting EU Member States’ best practices in:

1. Social services’ mapping (the territorial representation of existing social services with corresponding infrastructure and human resources, the need for social services and the infrastructure for their provision etc) and consultation platforms,



2. Integrated social services provision in poor, rural and marginalised areas (by multidisciplinary community teams),
3. Social services quality's monitoring and evaluation (including the minimum quality standards, social inspection and social audit).

2. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job.

In practical terms, that means⁴²:

- adequate income support together with help to get a job. This could be by linking out-of-work and in-work benefits and by helping people to access the benefits they are entitled to.
- inclusive labour markets – making it easier for people to join the work force, tackling in-work poverty, avoiding poverty traps and any disincentives to work.
- access to quality services helping people to participate actively in society, including getting back to work.

Although there is no common definition of **social services**, the European Commission, in its 2006 Communication on social services of general interest, has identified two main categories of social services:

- **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;
- **other essential services provided directly to the person**. These services play a preventative and social cohesion role and 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, 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.

Social services of general interest (SSGI) are a key component of the European social model. Although they have no legal recognition, they are referenced to in a series of official documents from the European Institutions. According to the EC, DG EMPL, **Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)** are services provided directly to a person in need of support, care, training, counselling, empowerment, and play a preventative and socially cohesive role. Examples include old people's homes, long-term care, adult education and child care services, as well as services for homeless people and migrants. These social, health and education services are provided by public

⁴² Source: European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1059&langId=en>



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authorities, commercial providers and not-for-profit NGOs. They are mainly financed by taxes and social security contributions.

Integrated social services are more social services provided together to the same individual, family or household according to his/her/their needs.

Integrated services are more services from various areas (health, education, social etc) provided together to the same individual, family or household according to his/her/their needs.

Social services' mapping is the action or process of representing territorially (usually using GIS maps) each social service with its particular geo-spatial location, address, contact number, its number of beneficiaries served or its capacity, etc.

Vulnerable or disadvantaged people are people who face a difficult situation in their life and are in need of help to overcome that difficulty e.g. poor people, people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, people with disabilities, dependent elderly, people with mental illnesses, victims of domestic violence, homeless people, victims of human trafficking, children, people who are or were imprisoned, people who suffer from addictions, the victims of terrorism etc.

Quality social services are social services which comply with the international and European (if they are delivered in Europe) human rights regulations and who fulfil at least the minimum standards of quality set up by national Governments and regulated by normative acts (laws, Government decisions, Ministerial Order etc.)

Social Inspection is the body which inspects the social services providers and issues recommendations, sanctions, fines etc. or the process of inspecting the social services providers in order to verify their compliance with the minimum quality standards.

Social Audit goes a step further from social inspection, having the role of monitoring the effects and the impact of social services delivery on the beneficiary, his/her family, his/her community etc. Social audit focuses very much on beneficiaries' opinions regarding the quality of the social services that they receive and it also aims at increasing the interaction and cooperation between the beneficiary and the social service provider, the community and the provider and also at increasing the level of citizen's active engagement in monitoring the social services delivered in their community. It audits decisions, actions, budgets, as well as decisional actors, representatives of the social services providers etc. Its main purpose is to provide an independent, transparent monitoring and evaluation of the social services provision and providers and issue recommendations, potential solutions to the issues identified, focusing on stimulating the social services provider to aim at improvement, achievement and performance in his/her domain.

3. THE CURRENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL SERVICES PROVISION IN EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES

Although each Member State has its own social services strategic approach, policy, way of implementation and delivery etc. broadly in the European Union, social services play a crucial role in preventing and combating poverty and social exclusion risks and improving vulnerable people's quality of life and the individual in need always comes first.

Social services in the majority of European Union Member States are generally delivered at local or community level, as close to the beneficiary as possible by the public sector (local public authorities) or the private sector (NGOs, charities, religious organisations, social economy entities etc.) whose



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staff is made up of professionals such as social assistants, social workers, nurses, kineto-therapists, psychologists etc.

As a general approach, in EU Member States social services come first and then the social benefits which are complementary. This is because the first ones have proven to be more efficient and effective in terms of the cost-benefit model and added value of the investment and the impact they produced on vulnerable people who became active and socially included. Thus there is also an indirect positive impact on the community, town or village, region and country who as a result of social services delivery have less citizens dependent on social assistance and more self-supporting, autonomous citizens.

The problem encountered by EU Member States as well, when placing the emphasis on the services and leaving benefits in cash only as complementary based on individual needs 'assessment, is the same as everywhere. Most of the vulnerable people would rather receive in cash benefits when they aren't aware of the impact that adequate, qualitative social services may have on their lives, their prosperity and wellbeing, once those services are efficiently helping them to acquire the necessary skills and/or education to (re)enter the labour market and the society as active and self-supporting, autonomous people. Moreover, in the EU, the social assistant at local level has also the role of case manager, assessing the socio-economic situation of the vulnerable person through social inquiry at the beneficiary's home and drafting an individual intervention plan (e.g. in Romania) or a contract signed between the beneficiary and the social assistant (e.g. in Belgium) to prevent, combat and/or solve the situation of difficulty which hinders the beneficiary from becoming active and socially included.

What EU Member States have now in place are well organized, and efficient approaches to social services. These are the result of many years or decades of facing various problems, experimenting with potential solutions to those problems, piloting, exchanging ideas and practices with other Member States, learning, evaluating the results (what works, what doesn't work) and trying new approaches and social innovative practices etc. However in social services, which are constantly changing, new problems arrive all the time (for example the integration of refugees into the labour markets and into society) and solutions must be provided to them. So generally speaking no system or practice is perfect. There is always room for improvement and social innovation.

In the majority of EU Member States, social services providers are registered, accredited by the Government or by independent bodies (as in the UK), monitored and evaluated periodically to ensure that they comply with the minimum quality requirements which are mandatory for all social services providers, both the public and the private ones.

In EU Member States, every citizen, especially the most disadvantaged, should be able to count on quality social services such as: early childhood education and care, long-term care for the elderly and for people with disabilities, social housing, support in everyday life activities etc.

Why is social services quality so important for the EU Member States?

High social services quality is a guarantee of the implementation of the fundamental rights for the vulnerable people, of non-discrimination and equal opportunities principles, of proper care, information and beneficiaries' involvement in the process of service delivery as active participants who may choose the types of services, their provider etc. It also ensures the enhancement of the physical, mental, cultural and social capacities of vulnerable individuals and increases their ability and chances to participate fully in society.



Moreover qualitative social services are a smart and sustainable investment (which can be more cost-effective, bring more value for money and added value than the in cash payments in terms of a vulnerable person's chances to integrate into the labour market, become socially included and exit the social assistance system). Accordingly interest had been growing for more than a decade among EU public authorities, services providers, users and other stakeholders in the debate on the quality of social services.

As a result, in 2010, the European Commission supported the development (within the Social Protection Committee) of a Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services (VEQFSS) which provides guidelines on how to set, monitor and evaluate quality standards. It refers in particular to the essential services provided directly to the person, considered by the Member State as being of general interest and subject to specific public service requirements. This, as well as the quality systems, models, frameworks and specific practices will be further described in section 4.4 of this report.

As stated in the EU Social Investment Package (SIP) and the European Pillar of Social Rights, social services help avoid personal challenges and crises, make people who are not in employment active again and enable them to cope with their personal challenges. SIP also stresses the role of high-quality, integrated and personalised services in developing people's skills and capabilities, improving their opportunities and helping them to use their potential to the full throughout their lives.

Moreover, another lesson that the EU Member States had learned is that some socially excluded individuals are always the hardest to reach, due to the fact that social exclusion has multiple roots which sometimes are intertwined in a mix (health problems, low level of education and social participation, lack of a job etc.). Given this, it reached the conclusion that it would be best for each individual to be approached in a made to measure, tailored manner and as a whole with all his/her problems and barriers preventing him/her to be socially included, preferably by a multidisciplinary team of professionals (social workers, medical personnel, education specialists etc.).

Thus, at EU Member State level, the interest in providing integrated social services has increased (i.e. one-stop-shops or community centres delivering all services of general interest, according to beneficiaries' needs) as it can solve multiple problems, prevent poverty and social exclusion. They can also improve both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the interventions and of the public and/or private spending. This approach has proved to have a positive impact on cutting costs, avoiding duplication or overlap, making it easier to pool information and knowledge, and facilitating the identification of needs and adapted responses. Many EU Member States' best practices had been identified in the field and will be presented in section 4.3. of the current Report.

4. EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES' BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL SERVICES PROVISION

4.1 The Social Services Provision Process in Romania

In terms of **the process of social services delivery, its precise steps and the social services provided for the main categories of vulnerable people**, one can find below the in-depth description of the example of **Romania**, for a good and clear understanding of what this process is all about.

Note: All these provisions are regulated by the National Law on Social Assistance no.292/2011 with subsequent amendments.



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Social services in Romania are provided upon the vulnerable person's or his/her legal representative's request addressed to the Public Social Assistance Service (a department of the local public authority) or directly to a social services provider. In the latter case a contract for services provision is signed between the beneficiary and the provider which has as well the obligation to inform in writing the local public authority where the beneficiary resides.

The actual provision of social services is based on a contract signed between the beneficiary and a social services provider that the beneficiary has chosen. The contract stipulates which services are to be provided, the rights and obligations of both parties and the payment conditions. The contract template is approved by Minister of Labour and Social Justice's order.

The social services provision process follows a set of mandatory steps:

1. **initial evaluation** (aiming to identify the individual and the family needs, in order to be able to proceed to step 2 the necessary information must have been collected. In this step, the vulnerable person also receives free information on his/her social risks and social protection rights as well as the necessary counselling/advice to overcome their difficult situation. This step/phase may also include a more extensive social diagnosis of the community, if needed, and the drafting of a community services plan);
2. **drafting the intervention plan** (the plan is addressed to the person and, if needed to his/her family. It comprises the social assistance measures, respectively the services recommended for solving the difficult or social risk situation(s) identified, as well as the in cash social benefits that the person is entitled to);
3. **complex evaluation;**
4. **drafting the personalized (tailor-made/ fit-to-measure) plan of assistance and care;**
5. **implementation of the measures from the intervention plan and the personalized plan;**
6. **monitoring and evaluation of the services provided.**

Steps 1 and 2 are the responsibility of the social assistant from the Public Social Assistance Service of the local public authority.

When the initial evaluation in step 1 points towards special needs which, in order to be addressed, require the involvement of a multidisciplinary team (which uses its own standardized tools and procedures) or of other institutions, the complex evaluation from step 3 must be done. The complex evaluation of people with disabilities and the frail elderly aims to have a more in-depth assessment of the person's needs in order to be able to elaborate a strictly personalized support plan, containing all the measures and social services, education, medical, recovery, rehabilitation needed to facilitate his/her social (re)integration.

The complex evaluation process from step 3, mainly aims at evaluating the following:

- ✓ the physical, mental and sensorial capacities in order to establish the degree of disability, invalidity or dependence, as well as establishing the level of functional autonomy to perform activities of everyday life and to learn and adapt to an independent life as well as a profession or job;
- ✓ the person's family's capacity to ensure the necessary conditions for the raising, care and education of the child and to fulfil their maternal/paternal obligations;
- ✓ the physical and social environment where the person and/or family lives;



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- ✓ the degree of social integration;
- ✓ a person's potential to be involved in support actions, programs and services to overcome difficult situations;
- ✓ a person's perception of his/her own needs, vulnerabilities and consequences on their personal safety and security.

On the basis of the results of the complex assessment, special protection measures, personal care services and social assistance benefits or other social security benefits, as the case may be, are established.

Following the comprehensive assessment, an individualized care and assistance plan is drawn up which, in order to be effective and workable, must take into account issues relating to:

- ✓ the motivation of the person or his / her legal representative to ask the State authorities for assistance and care;
- ✓ the motivation of the person to participate actively in the recommended intervention programs, intervention measures and social services;
- ✓ the negative consequences for the person in the case of a failure to provide the necessary social services;
- ✓ the person's own perception of their functional capacity, performance and resources;
- ✓ the capacity of the informal network to provide social services;
- ✓ the support needs of formal and informal care and support staff;
- ✓ the existence of social services in the community, the way they can meet the needs of the person, as well as their accessibility by the beneficiary,

Based on the results of the complex assessment, the beneficiary is presented with the list of accredited providers of social services. They may cover all or part of the identified needs. The beneficiary has the right to freely choose from any accredited social service providers.

The provision of social services is based on the personalized plan of assistance and care developed by the social service provider with the agreement and participation of the beneficiary.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the social services provided, as well as to determine the continuation of the intervention or its discontinuance, the situation of the beneficiary shall be periodically reassessed under the conditions laid down by the special legislation.

In the case of personal care services provided at beneficiary's home, the granting thereof is planned and scheduled via daily, weekly or monthly visits, distributed at regular intervals. Personal care at home may be formal or informal:

- ✓ formal care is ensured by a qualified person, professionally certified, according to the law;
- ✓ informal care is provided by family members, friends, neighbours or other unqualified persons who take responsibility for the care of the person.

The dependent person who needs permanent assistance and / or supervision may benefit from daily home care, formal care for up to 8 hours / day, consecutive or assigned at regular intervals



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throughout the day or, by exception, for more than 8 hours / day, only under special conditions provided by the law.

A dependent person who needs permanent assistance and / or supervision and who has requested assistance in residential centres has priority if he/she does not have a family or his/her family cannot provide the necessary care for him/her.

Care services requiring assistance in performing the basic activities of daily life are provided by informal and volunteer carers and, in their absence, by formal carers.

Integrated social assistance measures for preventing and combating poverty and social exclusion are part of the general framework of the multidimensional actions of the social inclusion process. These provide opportunities and resources for the full participation of vulnerable persons in the economic, social and cultural life of society, as well in the decision-making process that concerns their lives and their access to fundamental rights.

In order to prevent and combat poverty and the risk of social exclusion, through the public policies that are initiated, the State ensures the access of vulnerable persons to certain fundamental rights, such as: the right to housing, social and medical assistance, education and employment. It establishes support measures according to the particular needs of people, families and disadvantaged groups.

Harmonization of the policies aimed at the knowledge, prevention and combating of situations causing poverty and the risk of social exclusion is carried out within the framework of the national mechanism for the promotion of social inclusion, established by law, with the participation of the central and local public administration authorities and representatives of civil society organizations.

Within the multidimensional actions of the social inclusion process there are included the activities in the field of social economy, oriented towards generating or ensuring employment for the poor and/or socially excluded persons.

Individuals and families who do not have the resources necessary to satisfy a minimum standard of living are entitled to social assistance benefits and social services. These are granted according to the identified needs of each person or family. The minimum standard of living is the amount expressed in lei that provides the basic needs such as food, clothing, personal hygiene, maintenance and sanitation of the home. It is calculated in relation to the poverty threshold according to the methodology used in the European Union Member States.

The social assistance benefits (in-cash payments) for the prevention and the combating of poverty and the risk of social exclusion are meant to provide the minimum financial means necessary for daily living. It also is designed to supplement the incomes or means of the person or family and they are means- tested.

The main categories of social services exclusively aimed at preventing and combating poverty and the risk of social exclusion are addressed to people and families without income or with a low income, homeless persons, victims of trafficking and persons deprived of their liberty. Families and single-income or low-income households can benefit from a diverse range of social services tailored to individual needs, such as counselling and information services, social inclusion / reintegration services, rehabilitation services and other similar services.

Social services for homeless people aim at providing fixed-term accommodation associated with the provision of counselling and reinsertion or social reintegration services in accordance with the identified individual's needs.



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The responsibility for setting up, organizing and managing social services for the homeless people belongs to the local public authorities.

For street children, for the elderly living alone or without children, and for persons with disabilities living on the streets, the local public authorities have the obligation to set up adequate social services adapted to their needs within their territory.

For people living on the street, local public authorities must organize emergency shelters for the winter season.

Social services for people living on the street can be organized as:

- ✓ mobile teams for street intervention or social ambulance services;
- ✓ night shelters or
- ✓ residential homes with fixed-term accommodation.

In order to prevent and counteract the risk that young people leaving the residential child protection institutions become homeless, and to promote their social integration, local public authorities may set up multifunctional centres that provide fixed-term accommodation.

For the people living on the street, social services are granted free of charge or, as the case may be, for a modest contribution from them. This amount is determined by the public or private social services provider.

People without income or with low incomes benefit from **meals provided by social canteens** (public social assistance units, with or without a legal status, set up, organized and managed by local public authorities as well as by private social services providers. The social canteens provide hot and cold meals, free of charge or for a fee, under the conditions stipulated by the special law.

Victims of human trafficking benefit from social services provided to facilitate their social reintegration / reinsertion. The social services provided to the victims of human trafficking are provided in an integrated manner with other protection measures provided by the special legislation and they are free of charge. Social services for victims of human trafficking can be:

- ✓ fixed-term residential care facilities providing assistance, care and protection;
- ✓ day care centres that mainly provide information, counselling, emotional and social support for social rehabilitation and reintegration;
- ✓ services provided in the community, consisting of emotional support, psychological counselling, legal counselling, professional orientation, social reinsertion etc.

Persons deprived of their liberty, who are in custody of the penitentiary system, in order to ensure their social reintegration, benefit free of charge of social services of educational, social and psychological counselling provided at the level of the detention centres, in an integrated manner with the educational, social assistance and psychological activities and programs, school education and professional or vocational training.

The provision of education, psychological counselling and social services within the detention facilities is carried out by their specialized staff, with the participation of probation counsellors or public or private social services providers. During the period of detention, the person deprived of their liberty may also receive advice on the access to social services existing in the community in which he / she will reside or live after being released.



Social services for the child and the family

A child has the right to protection and assistance for the full exercise of his / her rights, according to the law. Ensuring the growth and development of the child is the responsibility of the parents.

The exercise of rights and the fulfilment of parental obligations must ensure that the material and spiritual well-being of the child, in particular by caring for and maintaining personal relations with him/her and by ensuring his / her growth, education and care.

The child's parents have the right to receive specialized assistance for the child's care, growth and education, as well as to be informed about their rights and obligations.

The state ensures the protection of the child and guarantees that all his/her rights are respected, through the specific activity carried out by the public authorities with responsibilities in this area. The child shall have the right to benefit from social assistance measures, depending on his / her personal situation and the socio-economic situation of the family or dependents.

In order to fulfil their obligations towards the child, the central and local public authorities support the family by granting social assistance benefits as well as by providing social services.

The principle of the superior interest of the child prevails in all the actions and decisions concerning children, undertaken by the State, as well as by any natural or legal person, whether they are public or private. If the parent / legal representative uses the child to appeal to the public, requesting financial or material assistance, and if the child has been the victim of abuse / neglect / exploitation / trafficking exercised by the parent / legal representative, the public social assistance service organized under the subordination of the county council / local council, at the moment of finding out about the deed, shall take the necessary steps for the establishment of the special protection measures provided by the law.

Social assistance measures for the family are not granted to compensate for its specific tasks, but as a form of support aimed primarily at keeping the child in the family and overcoming a difficult situation, reconciling family life with work and encouraging employment.

Social assistance benefits (in cash) for the child and the family may be granted in the form of allowances or financial incentives, under the law.

The child and the family benefit from various social services, tailor-made/ made – to- measure to their precise identified needs and the difficulty of their situation.

Any child who is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her parents has the right to alternative protection consisting of the establishment of guardianship, special protection measures or adoption. Special protection is a placement measure and the provision of social services for the care and development of the child until they are 18 years old is accompanied by social assistance benefits provided by the law. Decisions to separate a child from their parents or to restrict the exercise of parental rights are necessarily preceded by social information and counselling, therapy and mediation services addressed at the parents. Young people who have benefited from special protection measures and do not have the possibility to return to their families, being in situations of social exclusion risk, may, upon request, continue to benefit from the provision of special protection measures for a specified period, under the conditions laid down by the special legislation. The special protection measures of the child shall be established under the individual's protection plan, drawn up, applied and monitored by the authorities / institutions authorized by the law.

A disabled child is entitled to support and care measures adapted to his / her needs and he/she and his / her parents benefits from social services aimed at facilitating the effective and non-



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discriminatory access of children with disabilities to education, training, medical assistance, job training, recreational activities, and any other activities that will enable them to fully integrate and to develop their personal development.

A disabled child is also entitled to personal care services established on the basis of the socio-psycho-medical assessment and the individual's need for assistance in carrying out their usual daily activities.

Social services in the field of child and family protection have as their main objective the support provided for the child's care, growth, development and education within the family. The main categories of social services provided are:

- services to prevent the separation of the child from the family;
- services for the reconciliation of family life and work;
- services for a child temporarily or permanently deprived of its parents;
- support services for families in difficulty.

These may be provided in social assistance institutions, e.g. day centres, residential centres, and at the family home, at the child carer's home or in the community.

The provision of social services for children in the special protection system is free of charge.

In the case of services for the reconciliation of family life and work and support services for families in difficulty as well as other social services for a child in the family, established by special law, the parents bear part of the expenses, paying a contribution determined by the level of the service cost per beneficiary and the level of income per family member. The amount of the contribution, the services provided, the obligations and the rights of the parties are included in the social services provision contract signed by the provider and the parent / legal representative of the child.

Social services for victims of domestic violence are provided for in an integrated system with the other measures of legal protection, health insurance, prevention, identification and sanctioning of acts of domestic violence, provided by the special legislation in this field.

The local public authorities are responsible for setting up, organizing, managing and providing social services aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence. In this respect, they also collaborate with other institutions and authorities with competence in this field, such as the police, departments of the Ministry of Health, educational institutions, etc. according to the law.

The social services in this field address the victims as well as their aggressors. The services can be organized in day centres and residential centres, with or without legal status, at local or county level.

The main categories of social services organized in temporary/ fixed-term residential centres are:

- Emergency reception centres for the victims of domestic violence;
- Recovery centres for the victims of domestic violence;
- Protected dwellings.

The main categories of social services organized in day centres are:

- counselling centres for the prevention and the combatting of domestic violence;
- centres for information and public awareness services.



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Social services for perpetrators of domestic violence are organized in day centres aiming at social rehabilitation and reintegration, by providing education, counselling and family mediation measures.

Social assistance for people with disabilities

Promoting and respecting the rights of persons with disabilities is an obligation for all authorities, legal entities and citizens.

The State, through the central and local public authorities, is responsible for ensuring their specific protection and social services in accordance with the particular needs of the persons with disabilities as well as according to their family and socio-economic situation.

On the basis of the principle of equal opportunities, the competent public authorities must ensure all necessary measures for persons with disabilities in order to:

- provide direct and unhindered access to education, health, employment, justice, as well as to all types of public services of general interest and social services;
- facilitate the active participation in the life of the community to which the person belongs and to society in general.

Under the protection of people with disabilities it is to a priority to ensure and facilitate access to habilitation / rehabilitation programs, medical devices for body defects or functional imparities as well as technical assistive equipment for facilitating everyday life, study and professional activities.

In order to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities, the public authorities have an obligation to include the special needs of this category of persons in all public policies, regional, county or local development strategies and programs, as well as in Government programs.

Persons with disabilities, according to their level of impairment of body functions and structures, environmental factors and their level of personal incapacity, fall into different disability categories, regulated by special laws. Depending on the degree of disability and, where appropriate, on family and their socio-economic difficulties, persons with disabilities shall receive allowances and facilities, as well as other forms of support in cash and in kind.

A person with disabilities is entitled to, based on the socio-psycho-medical evaluation, social services organized and granted under the law.

Social services for persons with disabilities are granted at home, in residential centres or in day-care centres, designed and tailored to the individual needs of the person.

The local public authorities have the responsibility to organize and finance or co-finance adequate social services to meet the special needs of care, assistance, education and training, recovery / rehabilitation, social insertion / reintegration of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the national strategies and annual action plans.

The local public authorities monitor the situation of all persons with disabilities who live in their territorial area. They take all necessary steps to facilitate their social reintegration into the community and their insertion into the labour market.

In order to ensure the continuity of the protection, assistance and care measures, the local public authorities establish specific measures to achieve the transition of a young child with disabilities from the child protection system into the system of protecting adults with disabilities.



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The socio-psycho-medical evaluation of a person with disabilities and the establishment of their personal care needs is carried out by specialized personnel within the assessment bodies established according to the law.

The personal care services at home or the recommendation for admission to a residential center are included in the Individual Rehabilitation and Social Integration Program which is drafted on the basis of the assessment of the person.

The disabled person benefits from home care services provided by formal or informal carers. Informal and formal carers shall benefit from the facilities and the support services regulated by the special legislation (according to Law no.448/2006 on protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities). The formal or informal carers benefit from free entrance to cultural, artistic and sports events when they accompany the person with a disability, if they own cars they also benefit from exemption from the national roads' use tax, the formal carers (personal assistants and professional personal assistants) benefit from a salary and all the rights of an employee plus free public transportation in the city and between localities.

A person with a severe disability, depending on the nature of the disability and the specifics of their care needs, can be assisted and cared for at home by a family member employed as a formal caregiver under the conditions stipulated by the law. The person with a disability may choose between a care allowance and the services provided by the formal carers.

Persons with disabilities who are in residential centres or their legal representatives, depending on their personal income, must pay a monthly care contribution, established under the law. Persons with disabilities who have no income and their legal representatives who have no income due to their maintenance or whose income does not allow the payment of the monthly contribution are assisted free of charge, the related costs being supported by the local or county public authorities' budgets.

In order to ensure the assessment, the orientation and the training of persons with disabilities, the central and local public authorities organize and develop integrated social services with specific employment incentive services and measures.

Social services for elderly

The elderly, depending on their personal, socio-economic, medical and physiological situations, may benefit from social assistance benefits in addition to social security benefits to cover the risks of old age.

The elderly person's family has an obligation to provide care and maintenance, but this is established in such a way as to affect the incomes considered to be the minimum needed for the everyday life needs of the person and of his / her spouse and children.

In the situation of a lone dependent, elderly person or one whose family can't partially or fully insure his/her care, the State intervenes by granting social benefits and social services adequate to the precise individual needs of the person.

In order to prevent, or combat, the temporary or permanent effects of situations that may affect their lives or may lead to the risk of social exclusion, the elderly are entitled to social services.

In the decision-making process regarding the development of social services for the elderly, the central and local public authorities consult the representative bodies of the elderly.



The local public authorities provide the elderly free of charge information and counselling services about their social rights.

In the process of providing social services, public and private providers are required to involve the elderly as well as their family or legal representative and to promote the intervention of members of the community and volunteers.

The local public authorities have the responsibility of identifying and evaluating the needs of the elderly, to organize, to plan and to ensure the financing or co-financing of social services, and the public and private social service providers are responsible for compliance with the quality standards. Dependent elderly persons benefit from personal care services granted in accordance with the degree of dependency and the individual needs of support, as well as the family situation and their income.

The elderly who have income have the obligation to pay a monthly contribution for the provision of personal care at home and for assistance and care in residential centres established by the local public authorities or private providers. If the elderly person has no income or can't fully pay the monthly contribution, the amount related to it or the difference up to the full value of the contribution is ensured by the legal representatives of the elderly according to their income level calculated per family member, in the amount stipulated by the law. The elderly who have no income or legal representatives/family do not owe monthly contributions. These are provided from the local budgets, within the limits decided by the local public authorities.

All the types of social services that can be provided in Romania are classified based on the fact that whether they do or do not provide accommodation and are regulated by the Government's Decision no. 867/2015 for the approval of the Classification of Social Services and the Framework Regulations for the Organization and Operation of Social Services. These came into force starting from 19 August 2016. These can be read as part of **Annex 1** to the current report.

4.2 Mapping Social Services and Consultation Platforms with stakeholders (Romania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, France)

4.2.1 Romania: The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice has implemented in 2016 –2018, in partnership with the National Institute for Economic Research, the project „*Implementing a System for Elaborating Public Policies in the Area of Social Inclusion at the level of MLSJ*” co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Through this project, a set of strategic planning instruments has been created (interactive maps on the territorial distribution of existing social services and their infrastructure and on the need for social services and corresponding infrastructure, on poverty – relative poverty rate and in-work poverty; a methodology for unitary data collection and analysis for data on existing and the needed social services and their corresponding infrastructure), in order to support a citizen-centered decisional process in the area of social services.

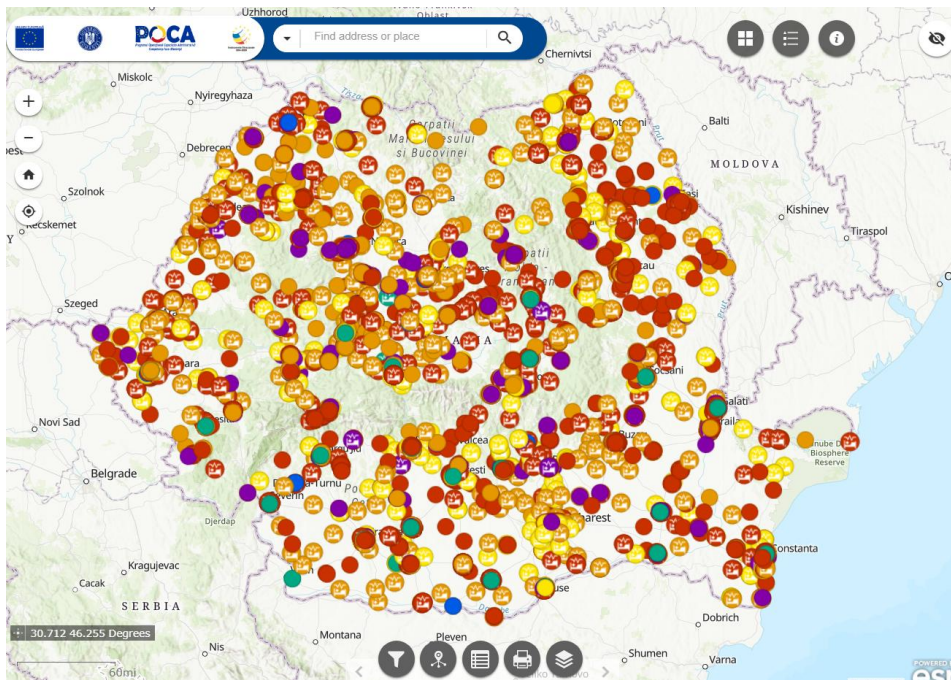
The IT system created within the project allows for the input, updating and analysis of the data on social services and their infrastructure, through the development of two IT modules, as follows:

✓ A geo-spatial module (PI-GIS) which integrates all the necessary functions for generating the following types of maps:

- social services and their infrastructure map;
- the need for social services and the corresponding infrastructure map;

- poverty map;
 - in-work poverty map.
- ✓ An IT module allowing for the input and analysis of the data on social services (PI-IASS), respectively the data from the MLSJ's Single Electronic Registry of Licensed Social Services, as well as other sets of data which will be collected through a Social Services Monitoring E-Form.

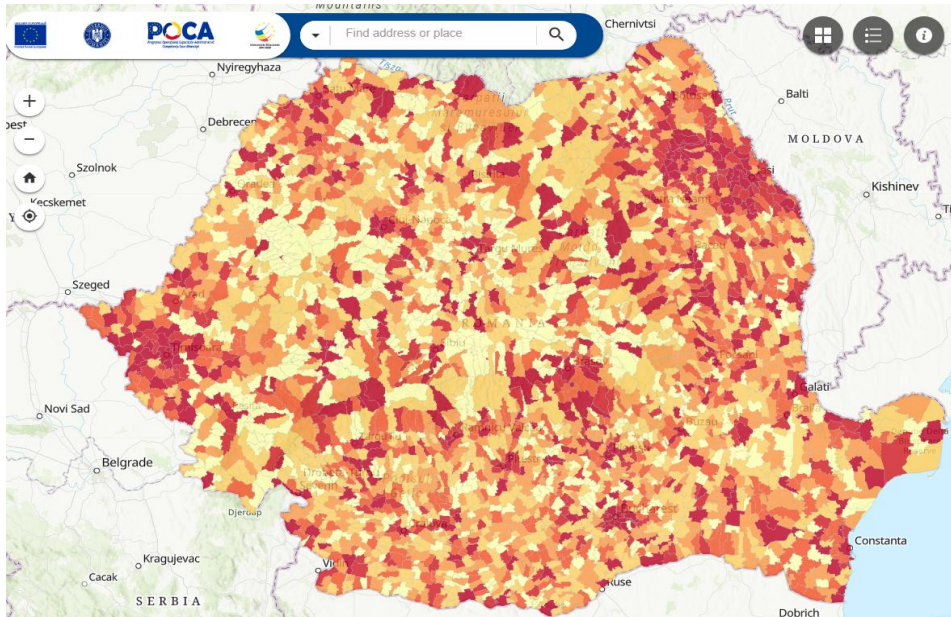
Figure 2: The map of the existing social services in Romania



Map's legend: Each dot on the map represents a social service provided (e.g. a residential home for elderly, a day care center etc) and each category of social services has a different colour code.

Source: Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, available at: www.servicii-sociale.ro

Figure 3: The need for social services in Romania



Map's legend: *The darker the colour in the map the higher the gap between the social services' needs and the social services provision in that area. So the areas coloured in dark red are the ones where the need for social services is less satisfied and the light yellow ones are the ones where the need for social services is most satisfied.*

Source: Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, available at: www.servicii-sociale.ro

4.2.2 UK: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is an executive non- departmental public body of the Department of Health and Social Care of the United Kingdom. It was established as a single, integrated regulator for England's health and adult social care services by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 to replace the previous bodies.

CQC has drafted and put in place a map of service ratings across England, where people in need, or everyone who is interested, can find a care home, hospital or family doctor using the interactive map. It can be zoomed in or out, or the search function can be used to search by location or postcode to view care homes and other social and health services in England).

Another UK best practice is the **mapping of mental health advocacy services in London**. The National Health Service (NHS) in London, as part of their Mental Health Strategy, wishing to find out if the services provided matched the needs, conducted a study in 2002.

The study aimed at mapping the provision of advocacy services and the service location and if those locations attracted the vulnerable people who needed those services.

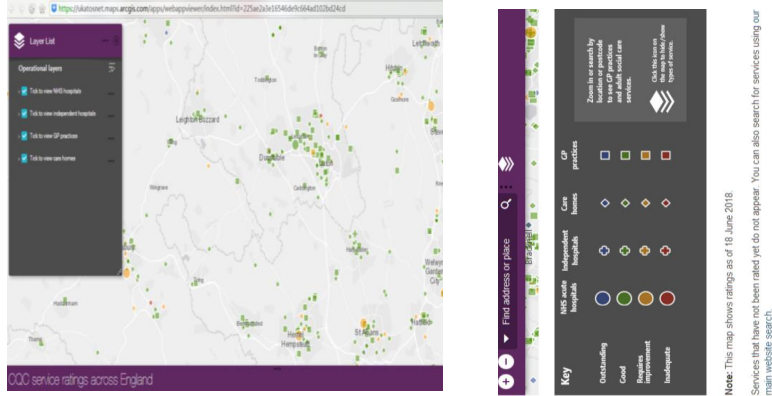
The NHS collected the data from social services providers via a survey, in cooperation with Greater London Mental Health Advocacy Network (GLMHAN) and other health and government bodies and also via interviews and focus groups with the service providers and the beneficiaries.

The social service mapping identified key data on funding, caseloads and service provision practices, as well as social service coverage, capacity, and funding stability.

This mapping project showed an even provision of mental health advocacy services across London but at local level, no one had the full range of specialist provision to cover the local need.

Thus, clear information on the status of mental health advocacy services in London, and on gaps in the existing advocacy provision were provided for beneficiaries, services providers etc⁴³.

Figure 4: CQC service ratings across England



Source: CQC's website

Another UK best practice is the one of the **Wiltshire City Council**, who created a Provision Map of services in their Primary Schools. Provision management is a strategic management approach which provides an 'at a glance' way of showing all the provisions that a school makes for the pupils of that school which are additional to, and different from, those which are offered through the school's differentiated curriculum.

The statutory framework for inclusion places clear responsibilities on schools and local authorities to monitor, evaluate and plan the development of educational provision for students' diverse needs, increase access for disadvantaged groups, secure the entitlement of all pupils and raise their achievement and standards.

In Wiltshire, it is both a means of tracking the provision for pupils with additional needs and a tool to describe good inclusive practice.

⁴³ Source: Foley, R., & Platzer, H. Place and provision: Mapping mental health advocacy services in London. Social Science & Medicine, (2006), doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.09.014. More details about this practice can be obtained from the authors: Ronan Foley: Tel.: +3531 708 6024; fax: +353 1 708 3573, e-mail addresses: ronan.foley@nuim.ie and H.Platzer: email address: h.platzer@bton.ac.uk



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An effective provision map gives a clear link between the provision and the pupils' progress. Special Educational Needs is part of the cycle of self-evaluation, school development planning and target setting.

The provision map also describes the provision the school will make each year for pupils with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. Ideally, it should reflect the targets set in the School Development (Improvement) Plan.

The benefits of creating a Provision Map, according to Wiltshire City Council (UK), are multiple, to name just a few:

- it audits how well provision matches need and recognises the gaps in provision,
- it ensures progression and age appropriate interventions,
- it identifies strengths in provision and areas for development,
- based on it one can estimate the cost provision in terms of resources, including human resources,
- it highlights the duplicated or ineffective use of resources,
- it may be used for accountability of the money spent,
- it informs parents, external agencies and inspectors of how resources are being used to meet needs,
- it supports schools in setting annual objectives;
- it records changes in provision.

Besides this type of territorial mapping of a broad range of social services provided, EU Member States have also developed, and are using on a regular basis, ICT platforms for consultation with all stakeholders. This is a very useful tool for conceiving, drafting and promoting social policies.

The EU Member States have reached the conclusion that involving a broad range of stakeholders leads to better, more evidence based and more consensual policies. It ensures a wider pool of knowledge for developing policies. It provides detailed and specific evidence from the ground on the impact of the existing policies that is often not available to policy makers at the national level and contributes to the early identification of new and emerging issues. Also, by involving stakeholders from the different policy domains and the different levels of governance, social inclusion goals are mainstreamed across all areas.

Besides mapping exercises to know the real situation in the field in social services provision and the coverage of vulnerable people's needs with adequate and sufficient social services and in order to **encourage and support the involvement of other stakeholders (NGOs, charities, local public authorities etc) in shaping social policies**, especially the policies to prevent and combat poverty and social exclusion, EU Member States have also developed **consultation platforms** with stakeholders, such as:

4.2.3 In Austria for the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection the participation of stakeholders, including NGOs and people experiencing poverty in the consultation processes on shaping social policies and conceiving the normative acts in the area is a top priority.

Building on a long stakeholders involvement history and its previous initiatives, it has created a national platform for poverty reduction (ÖPAP), which brings together representatives from including Ministries, provinces, municipalities, cities and towns, Statistics Austria and selected



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representatives from the scientific community, social partners such as Senior Citizens' Association, Senior Citizens, National Youth Council, NGOs and representatives of civil society (poverty conference, Caritas, Roma organisations, etc.) and people experiencing poverty.⁴⁴

4.2.4 In Bulgaria for the coordination, cooperation and consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of the policy in the field of social inclusion, the National Council on Social Inclusion Issues to the Council of Ministers (NCSII) was established in 2009, presided over by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, including deputy ministers from all responsible ministries (Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Regional Development, etc.) as well as other institutions, representatives of the National Association of the Municipalities, social partners, member organisations of the European networks, NGOs with proven experience in the area and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The Council meets at least twice a year.

People experiencing poverty and social exclusion do not participate personally in the sessions of the NCSII but are represented by the European Anti-Poverty Network – Bulgaria⁴⁵.

4.2.5 In the Czech Republic, since 2008, the Commission on Social Inclusion is the advisory, proactive and coordinating body of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in the area of social policy, with a focus on combating poverty and social exclusion. It facilitates the implementation of social inclusion policies and monitors and analyses strategic documents in this area, in particular fulfilling the goals of these documents.

The Commission has 45 members and involves all stakeholders involved in protecting the interests of people facing poverty and social exclusion (public administration, self-governing bodies, NGOs, academia, trade unions and employers' associations).

MoLSA in cooperation with the Commission on Social Inclusion had elaborated the Strategy for Social Inclusion 2014-2020⁴⁶.

4.2.6 Belgium: The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020 (BPAPSE) was established by the Federal Public Service for Social Integration to facilitate a structured dialogue with the different stakeholders with a wide range of expertise in order to better fight poverty.

The role of BPAPSE is to monitor the national situation in poverty and social exclusion and bring together all stakeholders. Its specific tasks are preparing policy proposals, content and information exchange, formulating suggestions, exploring themes, proposing actions and priorities. It also reports to the Interministerial Conference on Social Integration, in which all ministers with portfolios including poverty reduction participate.

Considerable efforts are made to involve people experiencing poverty in the work of the BPAPSE. Their participation is supported by the preparatory work undertaken by the Belgian Anti-Poverty Network (BAPN) and by the ongoing and in-depth work of the Service to Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion. Government resourcing to these organisations to support the

⁴⁴ Source: The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU 2020 - Synthesis Report produced by Hugh Frazer, from the National University of Ireland Maynooth for EC-DG EMPL, March 2014

⁴⁵ Ibidem

⁴⁶ Ibidem

participation of people experiencing poverty in policy discussions is an essential prerequisite for their meaningful participation.

In developing the Platform the organisers have tried to meet a series of essential pre-conditions in order to guarantee its efficient and effective functioning. These include setting the base of the work in a European framework, guaranteeing continuity and long term processes, investing in capacity building, empowering joint ownership, providing feedback, stimulating representativeness and covering the whole spectrum of social actors; ensuring public debate and open dialogue, offering strong and high-level political commitment⁴⁷.

4.2.7 In France the National Committee of Policies Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (CNLE) reports directly to the Prime Minister and is responsible for conducting studies on poverty and its consequences and making recommendations to the Government. Composed of 65 members, the committee includes a wide range of stakeholders: members of Parliament, representatives from local authorities, Ministries, social security organisations, NGOs etc.

An important initiative, which was instigated as an experiment by the CNLE in 2012, has been the setup of a college of people experiencing poverty or social exclusion, which was highly positive assessed. Members of the college are proposed by NGOs active in the field of social inclusion and assisted by referees from the NGOs.

In parallel, the CNLE has provided consultants to train those members in preparation for each CNLE plenary session.

Special attention has been given to funding and logistical issues to facilitate members' participation. Members of the college have been closely associated with the setting up, and the first assessment of, the national plan against poverty and for social inclusion⁴⁸.

Apart from mapping tools and consultation platforms, such as the ones described above, EU Member States have created Social Observatories (e.g. European Social Observatory – OSE from Belgium: <http://www.ose.be/EN/>, Observatory of Social Change from Italy, Territorial Observatory from Romania: <http://ot.mdrap.ro/website/maps/> etc.) with the aim of having adequate, accurate, standardized data collection respecting the sociological and statistical norms on social assistance, social inclusion, to produce timely analyses, research and scientific studies on different topics or specific sub-topics of interest for policy making in the area of social assistance.

4.3 Integrated Social Services Provision by Multidisciplinary Community Teams (Romania, Poland, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Malta, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain)

The integrated provision of social services or of social and other types of services (health, education etc), through one-stop shops and based on an individual needs assessment and a tailor-made approach, improves the cost efficiency and effectiveness of the social assistance system in general. It also has a positive effect and impact due to its capacity to tackle complex and multiple problems while ensuring increased take-up and coverage of social services.

⁴⁷ Source : “*The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU2020*“ by Josée Goris - PPS Social Integration, Belgium at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=1897&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=news>

⁴⁸ Source: The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU 2020 - Synthesis Report produced by Hugh Frazer, from the National University of Ireland Maynooth for EC-DG EMPL, March 2014



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4.3.1 Romania: A pilot project is being implemented consisting mainly of piloting a new and innovative approach to the provision of social services consisting of providing at the local level and in the community, integrated services (social services, health, education, employment) by multidisciplinary community teams, using the case management approach (the social assistant from the Public Social Assistance Service under the local council is the case manager).

The pilot project is being implemented in 139 poor and marginalised communities and its aim is to strengthen locally the Public Social Assistance Service's capacity to initiate, coordinate and implement social exclusion and marginalisation prevention and combating, by:

- setting up integrated multidisciplinary community teams (by recruiting, selecting, employing and paying for 4 years the team members: a social assistant, a community nurse, a school counsellor or mediator),
- developing specific and common working methodologies, instruments and tools,
- making the collaboration mechanism operative and functional,
- testing the above instruments and procedures and revising them periodically,
- developing an online tool/ application /platform for the integrated teams' exchange of practices,
- making the online tool/ application /platform intergratable with other ICT systems in Romania,
- training the team members on how to use the online tool/ application /platform,
- improving the competences and skills of the integrated team members by professional training,
- creating county units for the support and supervision of the integrated teams,
- the community teams applying an integrated approach, instruments and procedures developed in providing quality social services to those who are most disadvantaged
- evaluating the pilot, preparing recommendations and proposing the multiplication / scale up of the model created
- drafting legislation, normative or administrative Acts for the future implementation of the model.

4.3.2 Poland: The Barka Foundation was established in 1989 aiming to create the proper and adequate conditions for the empowerment of vulnerable people through social entrepreneurship, affordable housing, vocational training and labour market reintegration.

Barka's projects have been highly appreciated and they received an important number of valuable distinctions and awards, such as: Time Magazine European Heroes' Award (2003), World Habitat Award (2009), Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project⁴⁹, and the European Citizens' Prize/ European Civic Award (one of the most important awards for outstanding achievements of citizens and organisations in the EU, awarded annually by the European Parliament).

"Social integration centres" is an initiative of the Barka Foundation for mutual help, which has offered a second chance to vulnerable people, such as the long-term unemployed, the homeless, the poor, people suffering from addictions, ex-prisoners and people with mental disabilities, by providing them professional and technical training, education and social skills to integrate socially and on the labour market.

⁴⁹ Global Development Network Japan, www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/GDN/english/gdn/conference/conference08b.html



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Barka's activity is based on local initiatives and cooperation, bringing together beneficiaries, local authorities, civil society organisations, the private sector, housing associations, educational institutions and local labour offices.

Through its integrated system of support for education and social entrepreneurship, Barka has set up 100 partnerships in the communities and they are part of the Social Integration Centre Network and function as vocational training institutions to help the long-term unemployed reintegrate into the labour market. This system brings together 5.000 people each year (including people experiencing crisis, citizens, NGOs, national and local public authorities)⁵⁰.

4.3.3 The Netherlands: The Dutch Government implemented a decentralisation process in the social area, transferring social services to municipalities, since being in direct contact with people allows them to understand and assess the personal situations, needs and abilities and so they are best able to offer tailor-made solutions for each person, stimulate ownership, responsibility and a person's potential to find a sustainable solution.

As a result of the decentralisation process, tasks that were previously divided between different agencies have become the legal responsibility of a municipality (e.g. youth care, community shelters, labour participation, poverty, social inclusion and debt relief) and the municipalities became in charge of the assessment procedure and have been granted discretion over the type, level and duration of services to be provided in a given case. Given this situation, many municipalities set up Social Community Teams (SCTs), consisting of a broad range of professionals such as social workers, family coaches, health care, education or debt relief experts.

SCTs act at the community level, providing and coordinating services to people in need. Parties involved (in the team or as network of partners) are from the public and private sector (such as NGOs). SCTs function as single, central and easily approachable access point for the community (one-stop-shop) for all kind of issues on youth care, income, employment or health.

SCTs can be structured in various ways from one municipality to another and may evolve over time. Each SCT functions as a central access point, which is coordinated by one case manager.

SCTs assess the situation of an individual or family experiencing poverty from a holistic perspective, the role of, and examine the consequences of, poverty for other life-domains such as employment, (mental) health, housing and education. They work in collaboration with the person or family and consist of a wide range of relevant public and private actors, who cooperate to provide services in an integrated manner, including the multiple perspectives and expertise of professionals, academia, the target group and "*experts by experience*" meaning former vulnerable people.

The cooperation with civil society organisations enables a broader and faster outreach, as these organisations operate close to the people, conduct home visits and/or work at places visited by the target group (such as food banks which give free food packages to vulnerable people/families).

Moreover, the entire community supports SCTs. For example retailers are for instance often interested and willing to provide services in kind, sports facilities may offer free participation for poor children or financial institutions may encourage their employees to assist families with debts etc⁵¹.

4.3.4 Bulgaria: The Social Inclusion Project (SIP) is an integrated approach to early childhood development.

⁵⁰ More details can be found at: <http://barka.org.pl/node/115>

⁵¹ More details can be found at: <https://www.movisie.com/news/social-neighbourhood-teams-must-or-hype>



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The early childhood development (ECD) concept in Bulgaria focuses on the development of innovative integrated ECD services. This project was implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy between 2010 and 2015, with funds from the World Bank through a loan agreement.

The main objective of the project was to prevent social exclusion and reduce child poverty by ensuring that children from the vulnerable families are ready and properly prepared for school and by supporting their families to acquire parenting skills.

The project put in place a network of integrated ECD services in 66 municipalities which applies an innovative and cross-sectoral model to support children in early childhood and their families. The services focus on children from birth to 7 years and their families, providing integrated social and educational measures.

The project also created 1,867 new places in kindergartens and nurseries in 31 municipalities (184 places in nursery and 1,683 in kindergarten). In total there are more than 30,000 beneficiaries of SIP services, including children and their parents.

In 2015, the municipalities included in the project tested the school readiness of children from the vulnerable groups enrolled in kindergartens as a result of the project. The test results showed an 80% success rate.

The main innovative feature of SIP services is the fact that it provides collaboration between different professionals and in terms of the services provided: social, health and educational ones.

The services are divided into 2 groups based on the age of the children targeted:

- services for parents and families of children 0- 3 years (focuses mostly on the acquisition and development of parenting skills and supporting the parents in raising their children),
- services for children 3 - 7 years (focuses mostly on their inclusion into larger peer groups to promote socialisation and the development of skills to guarantee an equal start at school. Children attended a summer school and had the opportunity to build up or maintain the required cognitive and social skills for attending school. At the summer schools' educational elements were mixed with games and various activities to enrich their knowledge.

Successful results were achieved under the project: improved school readiness of children under 7 years from low-income backgrounds or with disabilities; improvements in child welfare (measured by the increased number of children under the age of seven from low-income and vulnerable families enrolled in mainstream kindergartens and preschool preparatory groups and the number of parents having completed parenting skills sessions); and the expanded coverage of child care services for children below the age of 7 years from vulnerable groups.

One of the most significant outcomes of the SIP is that while the concept was introduced by the government, the municipalities implemented it and transformed it into local policy based on the results achieved.

4.3.5 The Czech Republic: Rubicon is a centre for children and youth (6-26 years old) from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those with a migrant background, established by Diaconia of the Evangelical Church and Church of the Czech Brethren (DECCB) in 2004, to provide a 'safe space' for free where children and youth can come, spend time and socialise based on respect, understanding and trust.

At the centre, the 3 social workers provide special counselling, emotional support and guidance in order to empower the children and the young people and prepare them for the future.



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The main areas of engagement are social relationships (with partners or friends and within the family), education, addiction problems, discrimination, employment and poverty issues.

Additionally, the centre focuses on the acquisition of soft skills such as consensus-finding, voicing personal opinions, mutual understanding and avoiding aggression.

More than 100 young people participate in the project on a yearly basis. The centre also has a teacher coordinating a musical workshop.

The project has enabled a lot of children to make the transition from special to regular primary education. The funds are provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the municipality, the Ministry of Education, funds from regional authorities, the European Commission, the Council of the Government for Roma issues, and a Czech-Swiss partnership.

The funding available varies every year and thus the services are not all available every year.

The added value of this project is based on the fact that it helps and enables children from disadvantaged backgrounds to make the transition from special to regular primary education, increasing their chances of a better and higher education and better employment prospects in the future.⁵²

4.3.6 Finland: KVPS Tukena Ltd is a national service provider (with its origins in the civil society) which provides services all over the country in rural and urban areas.

Tukena provides and develops housing and support services: housing services, daytime activities and job coaching, respite and short break services, supported / independent living services and personal assistant services. It aims to support the good life of persons with intellectual disabilities, no matter where they live and what their support needs are.

Local authorities are responsible for organising and financing these services.

Tukena provides services in the remote areas through local units and mobile staff.

In general, persons with disabilities in the rural areas have entitlements to services as in urban areas. The principles for their provision is the same, but the availability of services is more limited.

Services are person-centered, no matter if they are group solutions or independent. Person-centeredness, abilities and collaboration with social networks is essential.

Tukena ensures the high level of skills, and competence, of the staff and training and development activities are planned based on local needs. This will ensure a good quality of service irrespective of the circumstances.

As Tukena provides social services in many rural areas this also provides good opportunities for the learning and sharing of good practices.

4.3.7 Latvia: Social assistance is regulated by the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance which defines social services and social assistance, the sharing of responsibilities between the State and the municipalities, the beneficiaries' rights and obligations, as well as the definition and the tasks of social workers, carers, rehabilitators and social assistance organisations, the types of services etc, as shown in the table below⁵³.

⁵² Further relevant information can be found at: www.diakonie.cz/en/

⁵³ Elīna Celmina (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia), Social Community Teams against Poverty - Country paper on social assistance system in Latvia, 2016, prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social



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According to the Law, municipalities must provide adequate social services and the necessary funding. They are also responsible for the setting up and managing the Municipal Social Services Authorities which must have at least 1 social assistant / social worker for every 1000 inhabitants.

Social partners and NGOs are the usual and regular partners of the Government and municipalities. This relationship had been formalised by a Cooperation Memorandum with the Cabinet of Ministers and contractual agreements with line ministries.

This partnership model is appreciated and used by the NGOs allowing them to get involved in the social policy's design, development and implementation.

Table 1: Responsibilities of the State and Municipalities in social services and social assistance

State responsibilities	Responsibilities of municipalities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational rehabilitation • Social care institutions for the mentally disabled and the blind • Social rehabilitation for misusers and abused children • Social rehabilitation for blind, deaf and persons with functional disorders • Technical aids • Social rehabilitation for victims of human trafficking • Support for children suffering from coeliac disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home care for all groups • Day-care centers for the elderly and the mentally disabled • Social care institutions for children and the elderly • Night shelters • Crisis centers • Serviced flats for special care • Social rehabilitation for alcohol and drug abusers and former prisoners • Special workshops for mentally disabled and blind

Source: Adapted by the author from Elīna Celmina (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia), Social Community Teams against Poverty - Country paper on the social assistance system in Latvia, 2016

Concerning social work, a medium-term policy was developed (“Strategy for Professional Social Work Development (2014-2020)”) aiming at the improvement of social work’s quality, providing accessibility and efficiency and the sustainable development of the social work area. It also aims at developing and implementing a common system where each person who goes to the municipal social service office will be undergo a complex in-depth assessment by a professional social worker and will receive targeted support for his/her social problems.

Moreover, an ESF project was developed to strengthen the municipalities’ social services management capacity by elaborating management assessment tools for evaluation of daily practices, defining the scope of social work, developing mechanisms of cooperation with other institutions and professionals, setting workload criteria, developing social workers’ wages policy, social workers’ trainings and supervisions as well as providing methodological support through conferences, thematic discussions, regular publications, methodological handbooks for social workers etc.

4.3.8 Poland⁵⁴: Social services provision is decentralised.

Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission © ÖSB Consulting, 2015

⁵⁴ Ewa Chylek (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy) & Sławomir Ciał (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship Office, Department of Social Policy) - Local and regional approach towards combating poverty and social exclusion in Poland,



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According to the Law on Social Assistance, the Government is responsible for setting the legal framework, defining standards for social services etc while the regional authorities control and supervise the compliance of the services provision with the standards and assess the conditions and efficiency of the social assistance in the region.

Local authorities are the key actors in identifying social issues and problems, drafting and implementing strategies integrating them into the general development strategy of the region, *poviat*, municipality or commune, implementing activities and delivering the services aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion.

Each commune/ municipality is required by law to set up a Social Assistance Centre to provide benefits and services (social work, care services, legal and psychological counselling etc.) by the social workers who also give advice and refer the vulnerable people to other services and institutions, if needed.

“Other organisational units of social assistance are:

- *Poviat* Centres for Family Support (at *poviat* level);
- Regional Social Policy Centres (at voivodeship level)”⁵⁵.

Even though local authorities are required to have, and to implement, local strategies for preventing and solving social problems, combating and fighting poverty and social exclusion, they decide what to write in the strategies, how to implement them and how to cooperate with other institutions or social partners. In fact, one of their key challenges is the cooperation with the Labour Offices.

Thus, at national level there have been developed a set of tools to facilitate this cooperation (social contracts or Programmes for Activation and Integration), but it is up to the local authorities to use them or not.

Only in the area of domestic violence, is there a national obligation to set up interdisciplinary bodies (ITPDV) in every commune, in order to coordinate in preventing and combating domestic violence.

One Polish best practice worth mentioning is the setup of an innovative and integrated approach to social problems, in the form of Interdisciplinary Teams in the Świętokrzyskie region, one of the most deprived regions of Poland with a 12% unemployment rate, low work intensity, a high “At risk of poverty and social exclusion” (AROPE) rate and a population of 1.2 million citizens. Its administration consists of three independent bodies: community, province and region plus a representative of the central government who have the supervision and control responsibility.

In 2009, in order to address complex social problems and needs, public bodies (representatives of central Government, self-government at province level, Church, Police, Court, Health and Education Institutions, Academia etc.) established Interdisciplinary Teams at the province level, acting based on a multilateral agreement between the local authorities and the Church.

Each team included representatives of Social Assistance Centres, Police, Education and Health Institutions, District Courts and the Catholic Church.

2016, Prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission, © ÖSB Consulting, 2015

⁵⁵ Ibidem



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The overall objectives were to establish cooperation between professionals to help people experiencing social issues, exchange practices and techniques in promoting social inclusion, activate individuals' internal resources to overcome difficulties and provide social policy makers with advice from the field.

4.3.9 Malta⁵⁶: The central government through the Ministry of the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) is responsible for social services and social policy in general (including family and child policy, social housing, disability, elderly and community care).

Local Government was established in 1993 and in 2002 the first "ACCESS" community-based family centre in Cottonera was established, followed by three more centres in disadvantaged localities, as *one-stop shops* providing support and multiple services in areas such as training, employment, childcare service, social work and community services. The aim was to combat poverty and social exclusion.

In 2014, as part of a successful pilot project, the centres became Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Centres, aiming at preventing and combatting poverty and social exclusion through an outreach, oriented and integrated approach at the grassroots level.

Following this initiative, Family Resource Centres and Regional Development Centres have been established at city level, as a one stop shop for the community, providing various types of support in order to engage and empower vulnerable people and create support networks in the community.

Moreover, the Government is more and more focusing on setting up community centres to focus on prevention and early intervention in social matters in the community and at grassroots level.

This approach, together with the use of multidisciplinary teams of professionals from the areas of social assistance (social workers, community workers), psychology (psychologists, counsellors etc) and other professionals, will support and facilitate the development of a support network of services and service providers in the community.

4.3.10 UK - England: The Troubled Families Program⁵⁷ was implemented between 2012 and 2015. It involved 150 local authorities and successfully supported over 116,000 families with multiple, complex problems. As a result of this program's implementation, children returned to school, youth crime rate and anti-social behaviour diminished. In more than 18,000 of the families, adults went back into the labour market. 150 local authorities across England signed up to deliver the new, expanded programme and to support up to an additional 400 000 families by 2020.

The programme supports families with multiple problems in at least two of the following areas: employment, financial problems, health issues, penal problems, education, domestic violence and children in need.

The nationally expanded program had its strategic objectives as follows:

- For families:

⁵⁶ Mary Grace Vella (University of Malta) & Darlene May Gauci (Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity)- Social Community Teams against Poverty- Comments Paper – Malta, 2016, prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission, © ÖSB Consulting, 2015

⁵⁷

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409682/Financial_Framework_for_the_Expanded_Troubled_Families_Programme_april_2015.pdf



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- To support and empower 400,000 families with multiple and complex problems to overcome difficulties by 2020,
 - To encourage all vulnerable families to work (work incentives).
- For services:
- To transform service provision in an integrated, whole-family approach,
 - To reduce families' dependency of social assistance.

And for taxpayers: to demonstrate that this approach is cost-effective.

This approach is a results-based one, and thus its incentive and benefit for local authorities consists in the fact that if they have supported a family in overcoming all their difficulties (e.g. mental health or alcohol or addiction problems, domestic violence, early school leaving etc), and they can prove it, they can claim the payment for this investment made in the vulnerable family from the Central Government.

The program also reduces the demand for costly services (police, accident and emergency admissions etc.) by making support more effective, accessible and addressing more adequately the family's needs in a sustainable manner. This also empowers individuals to become included in the labour market and in the society.

Local authorities also receive an annual Service Transformation Grant to transform their services, improve data collection and data sharing. This is a good investment since it is also used in the independent national evaluation of the program. To facilitate evidence-based service transformation, local authorities receive on-going feedback from program's independent evaluation and also use interactive dashboards that allow it to see trends before intervention, track the families post-intervention, and to compare their performance with their neighbours and the national average.

The evaluation process also includes a National Impact Study (based on the largest family matching exercise ever undertaken in England, combining more than 50 centrally held datasets with local data). This identifies the program's impact on areas such as crime, employment, child safeguarding, domestic abuse, education and health.



Romania: Integrated Social Services and Vocational Training for People with Disabilities

The project entitled “*Integrated social services and vocational training for people with disabilities*”, was financed by the European Social Fund 2007-2013. It is aimed at designing and implementing the CASPER system which assesses the skills, abilities and employment potential of people with disabilities in order to increase people with disabilities’ inclusion on the labour market and their life quality.

The project was implemented in a transnational partnership between MLSJ and three NGOs (ASSOC Baia Mare, Romania; Phoenix Speranța, Mediaș, Romania and Adapt Ability from the Netherlands).

The CASPER evaluation system is a complex and comprehensive assessment tool for people with disabilities aged 12-60 years, validated for the Romanian population and approved by the Romanian Psychologists’ College. It provides an in-depth assessment of a person with a disability’s skills and abilities and matches these with various job requirements, providing a recommendation for certain jobs.

The CASPER evaluation system has two components:

Component 1: Individual assessment (for each participant: education, occupational status etc.), based on 24 cognitive ability tests, 4 personality tests, 1 professional orientation/motivation questionnaire, 5 emotion and behaviour tests and the Ruward test battery with 19 tests assessing manual dexterity;

Component 2: Personnel assessment and selection (job’s psychological requirements, cognitive ability tests, personality assessments, professional orientation questionnaire, Ruward test battery for manual dexterity assessment, skills-job requirements matching tools and participant’s ranking for a job).

As a result of this project, 40 people with disabilities have been employed on the labour market, 100 people have been trained as specialists in vocational assessment for people with disabilities across the country and 140 people are licensed to use CASPER.

The project provided the CASPER tool for use at the local level by public and private social services providers thereby increasing people with a disability’s chances of professional orientation and employment.

In 2013 the project received the 'Ability Promotes' prize at the People with Disabilities National Gala.

Spain: A pilot project for the social and employment activation of young people at high risk of social exclusion was established aiming at activating young people (18 -23 years) at high risk of social exclusion socially and on the labour market, They are most vulnerable since they are no longer in education or they are poorly educated and also unprepared and far from the labour market. They are not covered by the social assistance system because they are ineligible. Most of them are immigrants or they have been cared and raised in a residential institutions.

The approach taken by the pilot was multidimensional and holistic, considering all the main problems of the vulnerable group mentioned above, that hinders their labour and social participation and addressing their needs by:

- An individual action plan - Each young person from the target group drafts a training/vocational path, signs an individual action plan including assessments and activities relating to employment, education, self-care and health, housing and administrative processes. This plan can be reviewed and modified. Necessary adjustments can be made if needed if new situations, problems or circumstances appear. During the activation process the individual receives personal accompaniment, counselling/guidance and support,
- Job training - The target group receives professional training and they are involved in educational activities in order to acquire the main social and technical skills needed, to familiarise themselves with cultural aspects, practical work and real job experiences, in order to become independent, responsible and autonomous citizens and employed people. The intervention provides personalised guidance, on-going counselling and a global and comprehensive approach to the personal situation,
- Financial support – Support for transport, food, clothes and access to permanent accommodation is provided during the training, for beneficiaries living in provisional shelters or temporary living arrangements,
- Networking and cooperation - The project is based on constructive cooperation between the State Employment Agency, the Regional Employment Agency, municipal services, civil society organisations, private companies, social services providers etc. to guarantee the success of the social interventions.

The pilot project approaches the individual's situation from a holistic perspective and social interventions are personalised, regular, flexible and continuous. They are carried out in a participatory and inclusive process that brings together the public and private and the social and political actors.

The intervention empowers young people and supports them in becoming independent, responsible, autonomous and ambitious.

4.4 Quality and Excellence in Social Services

4.4.1 Social Services Quality's Management Systems

In 2010, the European Commission through its Social Protection Committee (SPC) launched the **Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services (VEQFSS)**. It aims to develop a common understanding on the quality of social services in the EU by identifying the quality

principles that these services should fulfil and proposing a set of methodological guidelines to support public bodies in charge of organising and financing social services to develop specific tools for the definition, measurement and evaluation of social services' quality. VEQFSS was intended to serve as a reference for defining, assuring, monitoring the compliance with the quality principles, evaluating and improving the quality of social services in EU Member States. Its implementation is voluntary.⁵⁸

The detailed content of the VEQFSS and the quality principles, criteria and guidelines on the content of a methodology to develop quality tools are provided in **Annex 2** to the current report.

Moreover, some EU Member States require their social services private providers (NGOs) to implement quality management systems. For example, Germany, Spain, Slovenia, Austria and France impose upon social services private providers (e.g. NGOs) the implementation of these systems as a minimum standard to ensure the quality of social services provision⁵⁹.

The main quality management systems are **E-Qalin** and **EQUASS** that measure quality at the organisational level (e.g. staff, human resources practices, leadership, budget spending etc).

A. E-Qalin

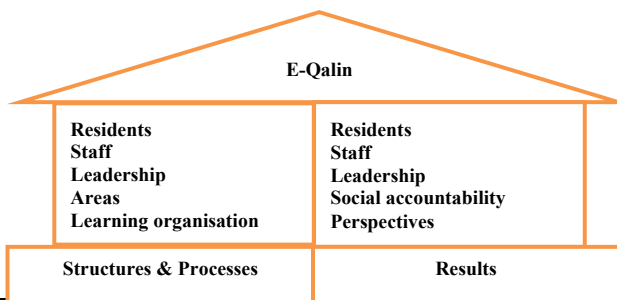
E-Qalin is a comprehensive, innovative, functional and dynamic, top-down approach quality management system, applied mainly in relation to elderly home care, care delivered in the community and social services for people with disabilities. It focuses on organisational development and the learning processes, involving social services' beneficiaries and their families, social services' staff and the stakeholders.

Its purpose is to help assess the performance and results of services and organisations in health and social care, focusing on the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

The system is based on the professional training of process managers and an organisation's self-evaluation by two process managers, a leadership group (consisting of the stakeholders) and specific evaluation groups, using 66 structure and processes criteria and 25 results criteria.

It is divided into two areas to facilitate a critical review of practice from five different perspectives: residents, staff, leadership, social context (organisational social responsibility) and winners' organisation (future oriented)⁶⁰.

Figure 5: E-Qalin system



⁵⁸ A Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services, SPC/2010/10/8 final

⁵⁹ OECD Health Policy Studies, A Good Life in Old Age? Monitoring and improving quality in long-term care.

⁶⁰ Nies H. et al., Quality Management and Quality Assurance in Long-Term Care-European Overview Paper, Vilans/European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, 2010.



Source: E-Qalin GmbH, <http://www.e-qalin.net/index.php?id=17&L=1>

"Structures and Processes" refers to tools, approaches, principles of organisation of the social services provider.

"Results" are represented by key performance indicators, and they are quantifiable.

E-Qalin is very popular among care providers in Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and Slovenia⁶¹.

B. EQUASS

European Quality in Social Services (EQUASS) is a European integrated social sector-specific quality management system, dedicated to social services providers who commit themselves to respecting the fundamental values and the principles of quality in the field. EQUASS certifies social services' providers compliance with the European quality principles and criteria, aiming to engage social services' providers in their continuous improvement and their pursuit of the delivery of quality services for beneficiaries.

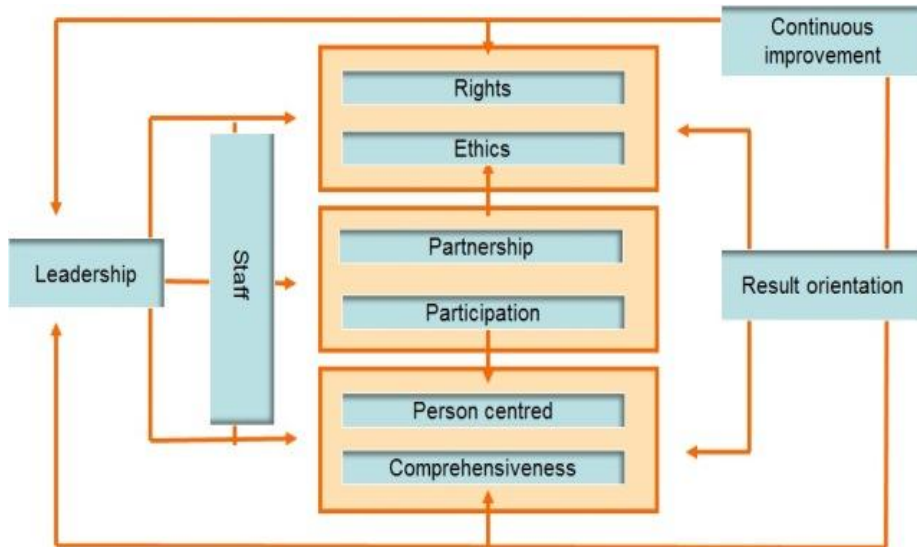
EQUASS is built on 10 quality principles reflecting the wishes of its European stakeholders (funders, social partners, beneficiaries' representatives and advocacy groups). There is a balance between efficiency and protecting beneficiaries' rights and a person centered approach, ensuring at the same time there is adequate professional training and development of the social services' provider's staff.

The **main values** behind the quality mark are:

- A client-focused approach,
- Awareness of the rights of social service's beneficiaries,
- Engaging beneficiaries' and empowering them,
- A Systematic quality of life improvement,
- Staff motivation,
- Efficient business management practices,
- Measuring and evaluating social services' outcomes and results
- Accountability of social services providers for their actions and their use of funds.

⁶¹ Frings S. et al., Study in the Framework of Progress Project, Best Quality (Benchmarking – European – Standards in Social Services – Transnationally), TU Dortmund University, Olsberg, Germany, 2010.

Figure 6: EQUASS' Framework - the 10 quality principles



Source: <https://www.equass.be/images/Documents/Marketing/Brochures/EQUASS-Brochure2017.pdf>

EQUASS certification offers a formal recognition of meeting the European quality requirements. EQUASS Assurance and EQUASS Excellence are based on the same Principles for Quality. EQUASS Assurance is the first recognition in providing quality services. It is certified after a period of 2 years implementation of the principles, based on compliance with 50 criteria that are based on the 10 quality principles in figure no.6 above. EQUASS Excellence certifies excellence in social services' provision, awarded for a period of 3 years to providers demonstrating achievements and continuous improvement on all 50 criteria based on the same 10 principles for quality from 3 different perspectives: approach, deployment and results.⁶²

EQUASS is supervised and supported by a network of external and internal stakeholders. The EQUASS Awarding Committee comprises key European actors in social services, such as social services' beneficiaries, social partners, social services' providers, policy makers and funders including the Council of Europe, the Business Disability Forum, the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities, the European Disability Forum, the European Network of Social Authorities, the European Platform for Rehabilitation, the European Social Insurance Platform, the European Federation of Older People and Rehabilitation International - Europe

As of October 2015, there are 450 certified organisations in 10 European countries, serving over 128,000 users, and employing over 24,500 staff members and 90 auditors. The areas in which the certified organisations are active include, among others:

- Social inclusion,

⁶² Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Quality_in_Social_Services



- Professional rehabilitation, coaching and counselling,
- Social enterprises, vocational training and adapted work for people with disabilities, or job placement into the open labour market,
- Occupational therapy, community and social centres,
- Physiotherapy,
- Independent Living,
- Early intervention and childcare,
- Youth care,
- Elderly care, and assisted living services,
- Services for homeless people.⁶³

In **Norway**, EQUASS Assurance is one of several quality labels that allow a disability service provider or social firm to get funding from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) in exchange for providing rehabilitation services. As a result of that endorsement, about 75% of the EQUASS Assurance certified organisations are located in Norway (as of 2013).

In **Portugal** and **Estonia**, social services providers' EQUASS applications were funded by the European Commission through the European Social Fund. It supported their capacity building and the costs of the EQUASS implementation by the social services providers.

In **Greece**, EQUASS was recognized as the most adaptive and appropriate system for Greek rehabilitation centres, health care etc. bringing many advantages and being efficient.

4.4.2 Member States' National Minimum Quality Standards for Social Services and their Accreditation and Licensing (Romania, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden)

EU Members States have also established specific national minimum quality standards, starting from the general principles described in the VEQFSS.

Romania: The national system of social services is based on accredited public and private providers and licensed social services based on minimum quality standards.

The legislative framework regulating the social services accreditation process and the social services licensing process consists of Law no.197/2012 on ensuring quality in social services, with subsequent amendments (presented in **Annex 3** to the current report) and the secondary legislation (Methodological Norms approved by the Government's Decision no. 118/2014 and the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice's Order no.424/2014 on approving the specific criteria for social services accreditation).

Tertiary legislation regulates the necessary standards, criteria and indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of quality in social services provision:

- Minimum Quality Standards for social services for the elderly, homeless people, young people living in the institutionalised system and other adults in difficulty, as well as social services provided in the community in an integrated manner and social canteens (MLSJ's Order no. 2126/2014, annexes 1-10, modified by MLSJ's Order no. 3123/2015),

⁶³ Ibidem



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-
- Minimum Quality Standards for social services for child protection (MLSJ's Order no. 31/2015, annexes 1 - 8),
 - Minimum Quality Standards for social services for people with disabilities (MLSJ's Order no 67/2015, annexes 1 - 4),
 - Minimum Quality Standards for social services for victims of domestic violence (MLSJ's Order no. 1343/2015, annexes 1 - 3).



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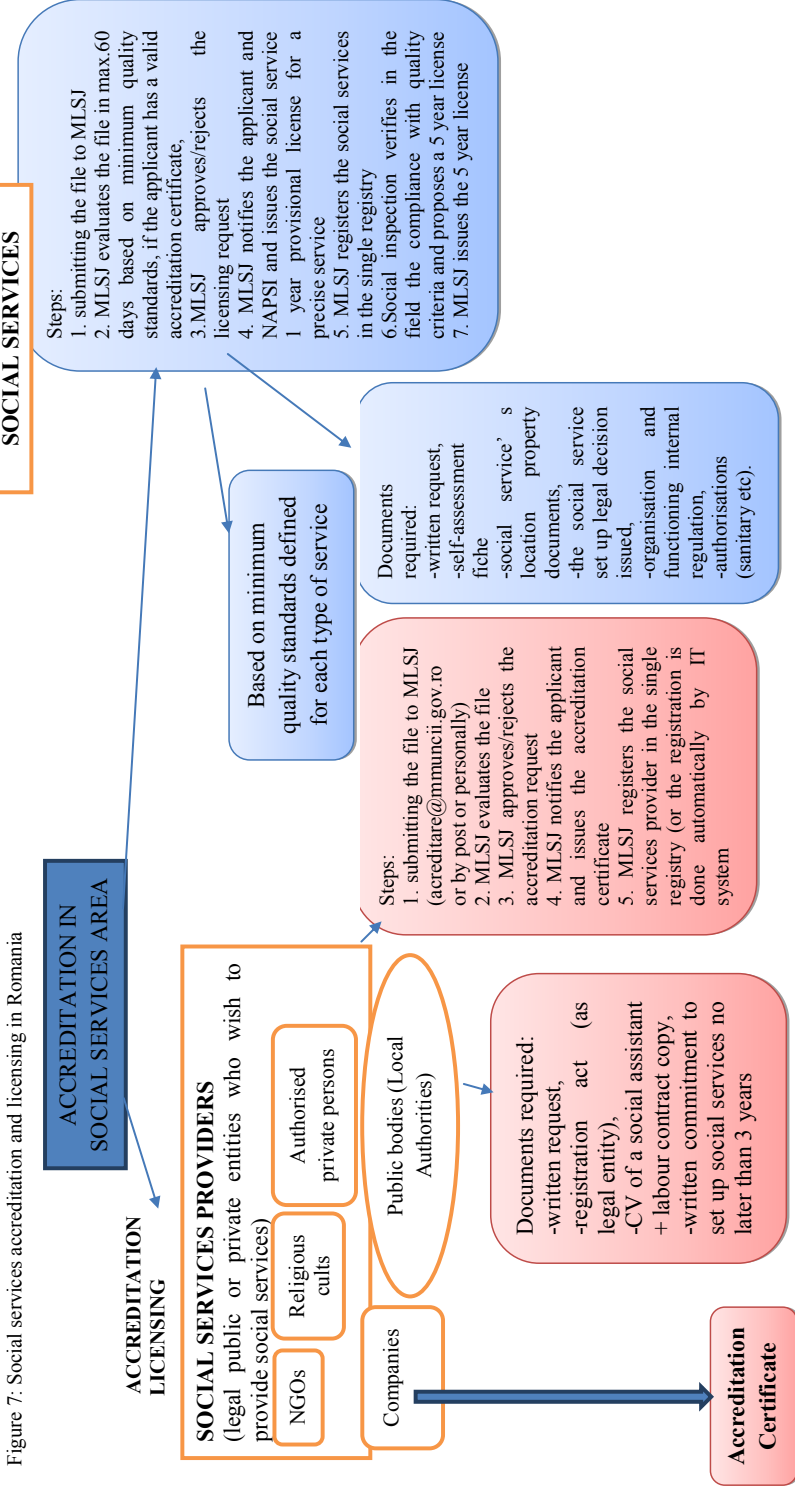


Figure 7: Social services accreditation and licensing in Romania

Quality assurance is centered on the beneficiaries, answering their needs and respecting their rights, aiming to:

- ensure, maintain and continuously improve the quality of social services;
- promote best practices, performance, as well as competition between the providers;
- facilitate the beneficiaries' access to quality social services;
- ensure equal and non-discriminatory treatment of the beneficiaries;
- ensure efficient management of public funds, as well as of human and material resources;
- respect for the principle of transparency regarding the quality of social services.

The minimum quality standards are mandatory for all providers (public and private ones) and mainly concern the following:

- the purpose of the social services and the specific nature of the activities carried on;
- the basic needs of the beneficiaries;
- the quality of life and the safety of the beneficiaries;
- the quality of management and the competence of the specialized personnel;
- the compliance with the economic and financial discipline.

The quality development of social services provision in the majority of EU Member States is similar to Romania's as shown in the 2010 peer review on "Achieving Excellence in Social Service Provision".

Italy: Since 2009, the Government has aimed for increased policy coordination by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, in order to prevent or overcome fragmentation. Italy has a Mediterranean social services system, relying more on the provision of social services by NGOs, charities, religious organisations (Catholic Church), providers of social services and mostly counting on the family members to take care of their relatives.

The system is a decentralised one, where the State level (Central Government) has legislative power only on regulating the national standards for service provision, the State budget and the coordination between regions. The Regional level (21 Regional Governments) has legislative powers on health and social policies and provides health services, while the municipality level (8100 municipalities) have regulatory, delivery and financing responsibilities for social services. They are also the main providers of social services from the public sector side, together with the private sector (NGOs, catholic church etc) and the families.

Thus, within a framework of collaboration and sharing with the Regional Governments, the Central Government is responsible for providing the financial resources for the system, setting up the general guidelines and strategies, and ensuring that all citizens receive adequate levels of care. On the other hand, the regional and local authorities plan and implement the health and social services, in accordance with the principle of subsidiary and according to the local needs and the applicable quality standards. The local authorities have Area Plans, consisting of social and health care initiatives, setting out health and social care targets and activities for developing and implementing integrated policies in this area⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ Italian Ministry of Labour - Combining choice, quality and equity in social services (2009)

Spain⁶⁵: As is the case in Italy, Spain has a Mediterranean model of social protection, where traditionally the family has the main role in care giving but due to socio-demographic changes the role of authorities has increased. Thus, various laws have extended the range of services in this area. These include: care at home, day centres, temporary residential homes, residential homes, telecare and financial aid to dependents and carers. The Autonomy and Dependency Care System (SAAD) guarantees the basic conditions for all. The Territorial Council of the Autonomy and Dependency Care System, formed by the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport and all the Autonomous Communities is responsible for coordinating the system. The levels of protection are:

- a) the minimum level - established by the Central State Administration,
- b) the level of protection agreed between the Central Government and the Administration of each autonomous community,
- c) any additional level established by each autonomous community.

Local Entities participate in the dependent persons care services' management, in accordance with the regulation of their autonomous community and they may also participate in the Territorial Council.

UK: Every care provider must be registered with the CQC and meet a number of requirements and standards imposed. CQC uses registration to check if care providers meet the legal requirements and the standards for quality and safety (if they're suitable, if they have enough trained and qualified staff, if the location of the care provision is adequate, if their policies, systems and procedures are effective and how is management making decisions. After the service has been registered, the CQC monitors it continuously to see how the services are being performed between inspections.

Sweden: In 2016, Sweden issued three national regulations for quality standards for elderly care:

1. "*Management system for systematic quality work*" states that all municipalities and private providers of elderly care shall adopt a formal quality management system, specifying procedures, activities etc,
2. "*Regulations for documentation*" stating how staff in the different care sectors should document their work,
3. "*Lex Sarah*" states the procedures and protocols on reporting and investigating incidents.

Another recommendation called "*The Basic competence of elderly care personnel*" suggests 10 desired competences which the staff working on elderly care should have (e.g. age - related diseases and function - preserving care etc).

4.4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Social Services' Quality (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, Norway, Sweden, Finland)

The Green Paper of the European Commission from 2001⁶⁶ defines the concept of social audit in a general way as the "systematic evaluation of an organisation's social impact in relation to standards and expectations and the ethical audit - non-financial ethics for an investment decision".

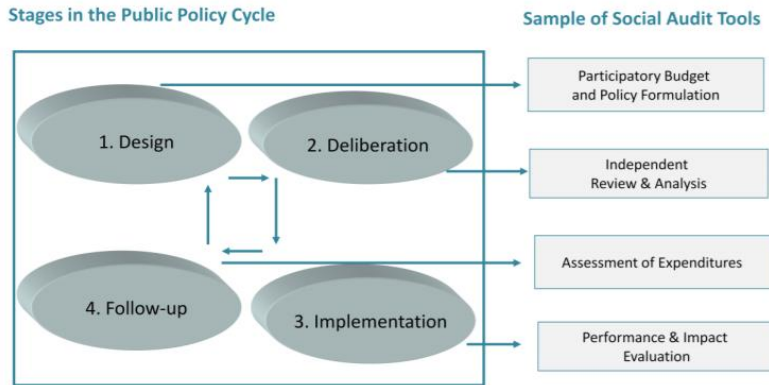
⁶⁵ Manuel Montero Rey - IMSERSO (Institute for Elderly and Social Services), Combining choice, quality and equity in social services (2009)

⁶⁶ GREEN PAPER - Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility. (2001)

The World Bank⁶⁷ mentions two cases in which social audit can be used:

- A social audit can be conducted at the national or local level, depending on the available resources and project objectives.
- Social audits can be utilized throughout project implementation and also during the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) phase to measure the progress and outcomes of public service delivery.

Figure 8: When can Social Audit be performed

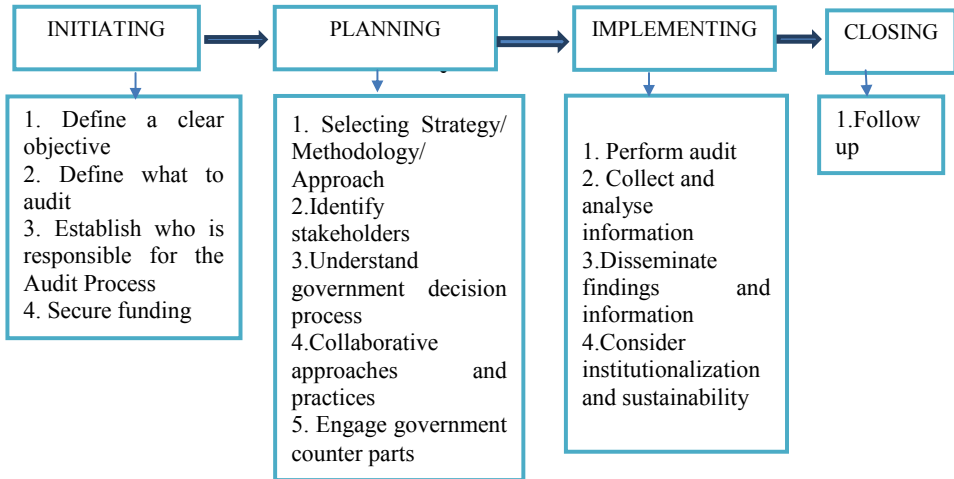


Source: Gerardo Berthin (2008)- UNDP: A practical guide to Social Audit as a participatory tool to strengthen democratic governance, transparency and accountability

As can be seen in Figure 8, a social audit can be performed at all levels (central, municipal, community etc.) in all the stages of public policy, from its design to deliberation, follow-up and implementation, by using different tools such as independent reviews and analysis of the proposed public policy, expense assessment etc. These tools will help to ensure that the public policy proposal chosen is the best one in terms of efficiency, results, impact, cost-benefit ratio etc. and that it ensures the best value for money and the highest impact. At national level, social audit can be complex, requiring constant and close cooperation of the central and the local authorities, private stakeholders and citizens.

⁶⁷ The World Bank Group - Social Accountability E-guide. Accessed at: https://saeguide.worldbank.org/sites/worldbank.org.saeguide/files/documents/2_Social%20Audit.pdf

Figure 2: Illustrative Step by Step Process of Social Audit⁶⁸



Source: Drafted by author, based on the information provided by Gerardo Berthin (2008)- UNDP: A practical guide to Social Audit as a participatory tool to strengthen democratic governance, transparency and accountability

Since France, UK and the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden and Finland) have the most advanced Social Audit arrangements, norms and procedures, they will be provided as the best practices in the following pages of the Report.

France has a centralized social services system with strong regional and local public providers. Their inspection and audit are the responsibility of the General Inspectorate for Social Affairs, while the National Authority for Health as part of a methodological approach in the certification process of social care and health services involves beneficiaries in this process.

UK has the most advanced system of quality assessment and control, through CQC which regulates the standards of quality for care and also monitors, inspects and regulates these services, by actively involving beneficiaries. Sweden and Finland as well have very good systems for the quality audit of elderly care based on self-reports, surveys and beneficiaries' involvement. On the other hand, Norway has the same advanced system of social audit, but for child welfare, through the AudTrain⁶⁹ procedure.

⁶⁸ Gerardo Berthin (2008)- UNDP: A practical guide to Social Audit as a participatory tool to strengthen democratic governance, transparency and accountability, available at: <http://www.undp-aciac.org/publications/ac/books/practicalguide-socialaudit-e.pdf>

⁶⁹ Eric Backer-Roed, Anniki Lai, *Procedure AudTrain - System based audit of child welfare*, available at: http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/audtrain/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/09/AudTrain_Procedure_and_glossary-EN.pdf

Finland is also an example of a decentralized system, empowering providers with a quality framework based on self-control. It offers guidance and actively involves patients in quality monitoring and evaluation.

UK- Scotland: The Care Commission has the responsibility for the regulation of a range of services providing care to children, adults and the elderly. In 2008, based on a set of national care standards, the criteria for assessing quality were grouped and organised into 4 quality themes: Care and Support, Environment, Staff, Leadership and Management. These are inspected and allocated grades by the inspectors on a six-point scale - Unsatisfactory, Weak, Adequate, Good, Very Good and Excellent.

UK-England: The Care Quality Commission⁷⁰, is a public body of the Department of Health and Social Care, established as the single regulator for England's health and adult care services by the Health and Social Care Act from 2008. Its role is to ensure that hospitals, care homes, dental and general practices (family doctors) and other care services provide safe, effective and high-quality care. It also sets the standards of quality and safety and registers care services that meet the standards.

By monitoring, inspecting and regulating care services the CQC ensures that providers meet the standards. In this process, the Commission's inspection team is also listening to, and acting on, the beneficiaries' experiences, involving the staff and the public and working in partnership with other organisations. CQC is carrying out in-depth investigations, making fair and transparent evidence-based judgements, taking appropriate action if services fail to meet the standards and publishing reports, including performance ratings to help people choose the right provider of care.

Usually the inspections are unannounced and they may be either scheduled or responsive (in case there is a suspicion about one or more of the providers) or themed (focus on specific standards of care or care services). Sometimes the inspectors are accompanied by other experts and current or former beneficiaries of the care. The inspection reports include **ratings**: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

During an inspection, the inspectors ask each of the questions below. These each have a further set of questions, called "key lines of enquiry".

Table 2: CQC's inspection's 5 questions

Question	Interpretation
Are they safe?	Safe: you are protected from abuse and avoidable harm.
Are they effective?	Effective: your care, treatment and support achieve good outcomes, help you to maintain a quality of life and are based on the best available evidence.
Are they caring?	Caring: the staff involves and treats you with compassion, kindness,

⁷⁰ <http://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us>



	dignity and respect.
Are they responsive to people's needs?	Responsive: services are organised so that they meet your needs.
Are they well-led?	Well-led: the leadership, management and governance of the organisation make sure it's providing high-quality care that's based around your individual needs, that it encourages learning and innovation, and that it promotes an open and fair culture.

Source: Care Quality Commission's website: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/>

If a problem regarding care services is discovered during the inspection, it takes action to protect people from harm and make sure that they receive care that meets the standards, holding providers and managers accountable for their failures. The CQC may issue fines and sanctions.

France: The social protection system is linked to the health care system. The Ministry of Solidarity and Health⁷¹ regulates and implements government policy on families, childhood, elderly and dependency. It is responsible for the organization of prevention and care. It also develops and implements anti-poverty programs. At regional level, state services are responsible for the organization and management of the health and medical-social system. Regional health agencies (ARS) adapt national policies to regional characteristics, coordinate prevention, care and support and ensure resources' management so as to allow equal access for all. Regional health programs (PRS) are composed of regional organization plans of care (SROS) of the city and its hospitals, as well as regional schemes of medical-social organization (SROMS) for the elderly or people with disabilities. Thus, the ARS set up an organization better anchored in the territories, with more effective support for health professionals and a more detailed assessment of patients' needs. In complementarity, the Regional Directorates of Youth, Sports and Social Cohesion (DRJSCS)⁷² - serve the most vulnerable populations (children, the elderly or people with disabilities).

At local level, under the ARS is primary care is organized. Its functioning is based on the coordination of care between all the actors.

The health and medical-social system consists of:

- City structures (where professionals work individually, in a group or in cooperation in a centre),
- Hospitals,
- Medico-social entities (including homes for the dependent elderly and people with disabilities).

Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales (IGAS)⁷³ is the Government's inter-ministerial unit which oversees all social services providers, both public and private, who receive public funds or donations, through audit and inspection.

⁷¹ <http://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/ministere/>

⁷² <http://drdjscs.gouv.fr/>

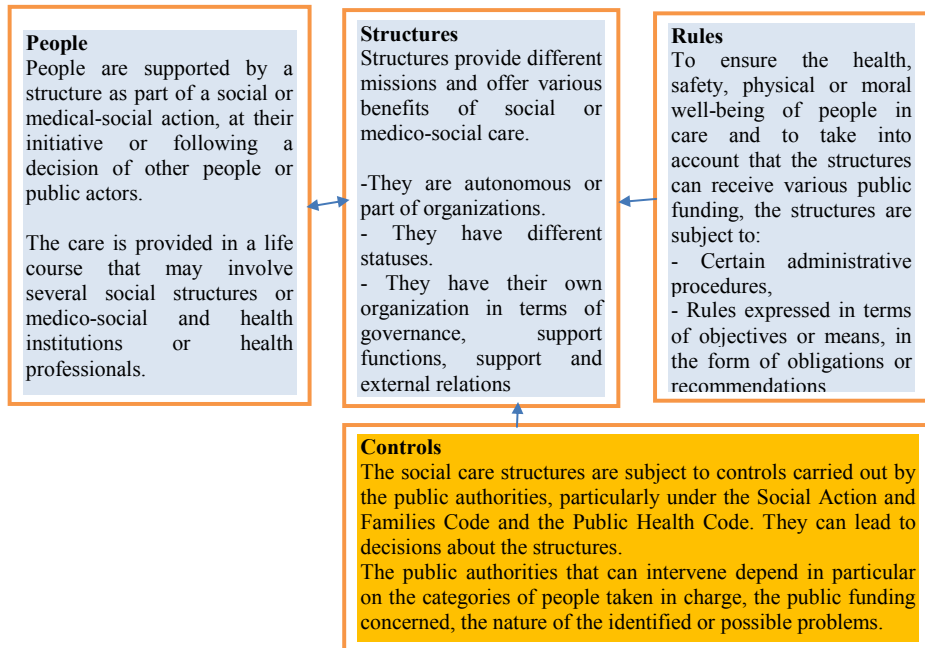
⁷³ <http://www.igas.gouv.fr/>

Table 3: The steps of IGAS' mission

1. Launch and framework	2. Investigation	3. Writing	4. Finalisation	5. Dissemination
<p>a. Letter of mission or activity program Designation of a mission team and a peer reviewer</p> <p>b. Discussion of the framing in peer committee (copairs)</p> <p>c. Framing meeting with management and validation</p>	<p>a. Documentary research, based on files, documents, analysis etc and on-site investigations (interviews, file review, data processing, etc.)</p> <p>b. Analysis, first syntheses, draft recommendations</p> <p>c. Discussion with the reviewer</p> <p>d. Pass in front of the peer committee if necessary (in case of a long mission)</p>	<p>a. Finalization of diagnosis and recommendations</p> <p>b. Writing of the report</p> <p>c. Discussion with the reviewer</p> <p>d. Presentation in front of the peer committee</p> <p>e. Possible adjustments</p>	<p>a. End of mission meeting with management</p> <p>b. If control: contradictory phase (provisional report, transmitted to the audited body for comments which will be included in the final report)</p>	<p>a. Transmission of the report to the sponsors and organizations concerned</p> <p>b. Answers to subsequent questions</p> <p>c. Reporting requests</p> <p>d. Possible on-line publication on the IGAS website</p>

Source: IGAS' website: <http://www.igas.gouv.fr/>

Figure 3: The social care provided by social or socio-medical entities and their control⁷⁴



Source: IGAS' website (<http://www.igas.gouv.fr/>)

The purpose of the control is to ensure that the services comply with all the standards imposed by law and with the applicable laws and regulations. It also makes recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the services.

Norway: There is a universal system for controlling public services delivered in accordance with the laws and regulations established by the Central Government. The same applies to child protection, social services etc. The central authority in the field of child protection is the Ministry of Children and Equality (BLD). It is responsible for developing the regulations and the guidelines. Each municipality must provide child protection services and they are responsible for the local implementation of the Child Welfare Act with the support of two Government agencies: the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) responsible for the law's interpretation and the commissioning and dissemination of research and the Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) responsible for the accreditation and management of child welfare institutions, the recruitment and the training of foster families etc.

Bufdir⁷⁵ is responsible for:

- services relating to: child welfare, family counselling, and adoption, violence, equality and non-discrimination,

⁷⁴ Guide available at: http://www.igas.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/RM2013-171P_-_Guide_methodologique.pdf

⁷⁵ https://bufdir.no/Barnevern/Fagstotte/Barnevernsinstitusjoner/Arlig_kontroll_av_barnevernsinstitusjoner_og_omsorgscentre

- the management of the State-funded child welfare and family counselling services,
- the operating care centres for unaccompanied and under 15 years old asylum-seekers,
- the management of Bufetat⁷⁶ which is organized in 5 regions providing State child and family protection services and specialized child welfare institutions, foster homes and home support services. Bufetat is responsible for ensuring the services' quality and for the accreditation of private and municipal child welfare entities which is mandatory. Private and municipal institutions and centres for parents and children are only legal once they are approved by Bufetat. After that Bufetat can verify compliance with the standards. Accreditation can be withdrawn if the conditions and standards are not longer being met. Quality requirements for child welfare institutions and care centres are regulated in the Child Welfare Act and in the regulations and clarifications of the Ministry of Children and Equality and Bufdir.

Controls must be conducted by the State, Municipal and private child welfare institutions and care centres. The County Governor (central level) is responsible for the supervision and monitoring of child welfare services at the municipalities' level (central, municipal and private), care centres for minors, for parents and children and other state services and measures.

Moreover, system-based audits⁷⁷ are additional to inspections. They focus on one or more of the beneficiaries (children). The audit contains the following steps:

I. Preparation - composing the audit team, selecting the audit's theme, operationalizing the requirements of the authorities, notifying the entity regarding the audit to be conducted, collecting the relevant documentation, drafting the audit plan and time schedule, reviewing the documentation, developing the checklists,

II. Execution - meetings, interviews, verifications, on-site inspection debriefing/ concluding meetings,

III. Reporting - drafting the audit report,

IV. Follow-up on any non-conformity.

The audit is conducted by a team having a leader and one or more auditors. They have access to technical assistance from professionals in the area(s) of the audit.

Sweden: At the central level, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs is responsible for developing the legislation on health care and social issues⁷⁸, as the basis for planning, funding and the provision of care services through the cooperation of 20 county councils and 290 municipalities.

County councils and municipalities are autonomous. They can define their local priorities and they are responsible for providing healthcare and social services for the elderly (home help services, community activities, nursing homes etc.). They are organised in the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), a cooperative national organisation.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW)⁷⁹, the central authority under the Ministry of Social Affairs, supports and exerts influence in: collecting, analysing and disseminating information, developing standards based on the legislation and the information

⁷⁶ https://www.bufdir.no/Kontakt/Om_Bufdir_og_Bufetat/Om_Bufdir/

⁷⁷ Eric Backer-Roed, Anniki Lai, AudTrain – system based audit of child welfare,

⁷⁸ Ibidem

⁷⁹ <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/omsocialstyrelsen>



collected, managing health data registers and the official statistics. NBHW develops national guidelines for care and treatment, quality and safety standards and issues regulations (mandatory) and general advice (strong recommendations) in respect of health, medical and social services. NBHW also establishes the necessary professional skills descriptions for health and social care staff.

The supervisory body for health, medical care as well as social services is the government agency, the Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO). It has two divisions in Stockholm and six regional offices outside of the capital⁸⁰.

It conducts supervision of elderly homes, residential care homes for children, young people and adults, dependency care and individual and family care in the social services.

In addition to inspection, IVO is responsible for examining permit applications by private service providers and issuing the permits that are required for certain privately provided services such as personal assistance and residential care homes for children and young people.

National auditing in respect of elderly care is carried out by NBHW and IVO and for childcare it is conducted by the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI), through the collection of data on quality indicators and user surveys, based on the national regulations and standards that they have set up.

To conduct its inspections, IVO uses inspection protocols on elderly care quality and on staff regulations (working hours etc).

Finland: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for regulating the social services sector and for supporting the development of social and health care services.

Social and health care services are provided by municipalities, with government support, and private providers. Municipalities are responsible for organising social welfare and health care. They can provide basic social and health care services alone, or in partnership with other municipalities or by contracting services from other municipalities or private providers.

The Regional State Administrative Agencies (regional Government) guide, monitor and evaluate the availability and quality of social services at the regional and local levels. They also accredit the private social services' providers in their region.

The National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health, Valvira, guides, monitors and manages the administration of licences for social and healthcare services, in cooperation with the six regional administrative agencies that have primary responsibility for supervising social care at the regional level. Valvira prepares national supervisory programs (elderly welfare, child welfare etc) in close cooperation with the regional agencies.

Valvira is a member of the European Social Network (ESN)⁸¹, the network for local public social services in Europe determined to provide quality public social services to all.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As shown in this report, in order to successfully prevent and combat social exclusion, some actions have proven to be essential. These include:

- a proper in-depth assessment of the beneficiary's situation and his/her vulnerabilities,

⁸⁰ <https://www.ivo.se/om-ivo/other-languages/english/>

⁸¹ <http://www.esn-eu.org/who-we-are/index.html> ESN is a network of over 125 member organisations in 33 countries which comprise national associations of directors, departments of social welfare of government, regions, counties and municipalities, funding and regulatory agencies, universities and other research and development organisations.

- a holistic, personalised, tailor-made approach to each vulnerable person or family,
- a mix of services (cash and/ or in-kind benefits as the case requires): social services, employment services, education, health etc. according to each beneficiary's own needs and a multidisciplinary approach,
- social services which are sufficient, well developed, qualitative, adequate, tailor-made and accessible for all. They should respond to the needs of each beneficiary and empower vulnerable people to overcome their difficulties and to stimulate and feed their ambition to become autonomous citizens, employees and/or entrepreneurs,
- a well-established, efficient and properly managed social services' system with shared responsibilities, a strong participative and modern leadership and enough skilled, trained, well paid and motivated professionals (human resources) to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries,
- enough financial, logistical and human resources invested in this system, in order to achieve positive results. They should include lifting people out of poverty, preventing them falling into poverty and/or overcoming their situation of difficulty. This is considered a cost-efficient and effective investment, which at the end of the day will save more money from the public and private budgets once the person is no longer vulnerable as a result of the services received with him/her no longer dependent on the social assistance system. Moreover, once the vulnerable person overcomes his or her difficulties and (re)enters the labour market, he/she will bring their own contribution by paying taxes which are collected as part of the State budget. In the end, the budget spent by public bodies on social services returns to the State budget, being in fact an investment in people's future,
- cooperation and shared responsibilities between the State, municipalities and civil society, NGOs, charities, religious organisations etc. Strong civil societies and NGOs in the European Union Member States have been developed over time, through State investment and funding based on mandatory targets to be achieved and results delivered,
- on-going learning and exchange of best practices (what worked, what failed, what was lacking etc).

As noticed from the best practices presented above, the EU Member States have developed similar tools and interventions in order to address their common problems such as: multiple disadvantages and vulnerabilities, poverty prevention or fighting, etc. Those interventions which have proven to be useful are:

- ✓ the integrated approach in addressing people's vulnerabilities, by multidisciplinary teams of professionals in various areas,
- ✓ an evaluation or a broad nationwide picture of the state-of-play of services delivered at the community level,
- ✓ the quality standards' frameworks, meant to ensure that quality services are delivered to the most in need who because of their disadvantages find it difficult to express their needs and desires and to demand that their rights are respected,
- ✓ a system to inspect or audit the social services, in order to make sure that they comply with the standards set up by the Central Authorities based on human rights' International and European regulations,
- ✓ ICT systems that support professionals in data collection, sharing, processing, performing cost-benefit analysis etc.

Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that there is no perfect social services' system. The EU Member States have developed their own systems according to their historical past,

national context and culture, in different ways based on *research and testing, trial and error, piloting exercises, reform measures, strategies and action plans, best practices exchanges, adapting, innovating* etc. in order to respond best to their needs.

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3.3.2 Providing Services for Social Assistance Beneficiaries

Policy recommendation report

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ABBREVIATIONS:

BoCA=Civil Affairs Bureau
Dibao=Minimum Subsistence Allowance Program
GPS=Government's Purchase of Services
MoCA=Ministry of Civil Affairs
PPP=Public-Private-Partnership
SA=Social Assistance
SVG=Specific Vulnerable Groups
SASVG=Social Assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups
Sanwu=People with no ability to work, no source of income and no statutory guardians to provide for them
TPA=Targeted poverty alleviation
TEKUN=Special Vulnerable Groups
Wubao=Five Guarantee in Chinese Pronouncing

1. SITUATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN CHINA

1.1 Policies on Social Assistance Services in China: Purchasing Professional Social Work Services from Society

The Chinese government and academic circles have been paying increasing attention to welfare services. The Central Government has put forward a strategy of building a service-oriented government, and at the same time strengthening the construction of the social service system to meet the growing needs of the population for social services. Scholars have also proposed that the delivery structure of "emphasizing social insurance and neglecting social services" cannot effectively solve many of the social problems caused by the market economy. Therefore, it is necessary to develop "the social service state" and a "service-oriented society" that focus on social services¹.

To promote the development of social assistance services, China has introduced a number of policies. According to the "*Measures on Social Assistance (Temporary)*", which took effect in 2014, local governments at or above the county level can purchase services from social forces by means of entrustment, contracting and procurement. In 2015, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued the opinions on developing social work in the field of social assistance further clarifying that the development of social work services in the field of social assistance is an inevitable requirement for building a modern social assistance system. Individual and social problems caused by the psychological behavior of social assistance recipients need to be involved in social work and agencies providing related services, building a new model of providing social assistance services that combine material capital support with psychosocial support, basic social assistance services with professional personalized services, government-led services and services from the social forces. These services include social integration services, capacity building services, resource mobilization services and advocacy services. According to the Opinions, social work service agencies and social workers in China will have been widely involved in social assistance by 2020 and

social assistance workers will have also generally employed professional ideas, knowledge and the methods of social work.

In 2017, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the opinions on implementing social assistance service procurement and strengthening the capacity of social assistance agencies at the grassroots level. The Ministry further proposed that social assistance services purchased from the social forces include two categories, i.e., routine work and service provision. The routine work mainly includes the targeting of social assistance recipients, the investigation into their family's livelihood, professional training, policy publicity, performance evaluation, etc. These are needed when handling the minimum subsistence allowance, social assistance for SA for Specific Vulnerable Groups, medical assistance, temporary assistance and other services. Service provision mainly refers to care and nursing, rehabilitation training, medical care, social integration, capacity improvement, psychological counseling, resource sharing and other services for social assistance recipients.

The promotion of this policy has included the following objectives: to attract the social forces to participate in social assistance provision, to establish a cooperation mechanism between the Government and civil society and to improve the social assistance service level through social work expertise. Social assistance in its practice is still in the initial stage of its development. The following part briefly introduces the current situation of social assistance services provided by the Government and the social forces of the cooperation between the Government and the social forces.

1.2 Progress and Problems of the Government's Basic Social Assistance Services: Steady Progress, Insufficient Investment and an Imbalance between the Urban and Rural Areas

The social assistance services provided by Government departments in China firstly refer to the basic social assistance services, namely the support for Specific Vulnerable Groups. They include the basic livelihood guarantee, care for those unable to look after themselves in their daily activities, the treatment of diseases and funeral and burial services. The second is the basic medical and healthcare assistance for social assistance recipients. This is aimed at addressing the illness-caused poverty. This type of social assistance service aims at the issue of poverty that is caused by illness and the return to poverty due to illness. The service guarantees that the recipients of medical assistance get the basic medical and health services. The third is the temporary assistance that meets the need of an emergency. When families or individuals have difficulty in maintaining their basic living needs due to unexpected events, accidental harm, serious illness or other special incidents, they may not be provided with other social assistance services immediately or they can still struggle even with the assistance. Under these circumstances, the temporary assistance meets their urgent need for the transitional stage. The last service is the disaster assistance that protects the basic livelihood of disaster victims. This assistance includes the necessary emergency assistance for disaster victims, temporary accommodation, restoration and reconstruction. Generally speaking, the work of offering services to Specific Vulnerable Groups has been steadily promoted and the relevant mechanisms and regulations have been gradually improved. By the end of 2017, 4.671 million Specific Vulnerable Group people in the rural areas were supported by the national social assistance program, down 5.9 per cent from the previous year. A total of 27.10 billion RMB was spent by Governments at all levels to provide social assistance to Specific

Vulnerable Groups in the rural areas. This was an increase of 18.4 per cent over the previous year. However, problems exist with the present mechanisms and regulations. From 2007 to 2016, the total number of people who received Wubao in rural areas was basically stable at around 5 million. Full coverage had been basically achieved. However, due to the influence of conservative values and insufficient financial funds, the proportion of the centralized provision remained low. Although the service level of Wubao is constantly improving, overall, the input of the money is obviously insufficient. Despite the continuous improvement of temporary and medical aid, the direct social assistance services are of a low level and the imbalance of the financial input between the urban and the rural areas remains.

1.3 Social Assistance Services from Social Organizations: The Starting Point - Deficiencies in their Organizational Capacity and their Level of Professionalism

For a long time, the pattern of “strong government and weak society” has been a characteristic of Chinese society, but in recent years, the need for social development has promoted the transformation of the governance mode. In the past, only the government was active in governance, but now multiple bodies are also playing their role in governance. This is becoming a trend in society. Under such circumstances, what is the current situation of the social assistance services provided by the social forces? At present, services targeted at the poor and provided by social assistance social organizations are gradually developing in China, including the welfare services for families and children, medical services, rehabilitation services, care services for the elderly, services for disabled groups, services for teenagers, and services for offenders. In addition to the traditional forms of social organizations such as foundations and social service agencies, the social enterprises and the community foundations that emerged in the recent years have also begun to enter the field of social assistance. However, the number, and the capacity, of the social service institutions in the field of social assistance are still insufficient, and the foundation for social work development is still relatively weak. This makes the coverage of social assistance services and its beneficiaries limited and the service work ineffective.

Step by step the cultivation of social organizations has become a clear policy goal, from the opinions on reforming the management system of social organizations, the promotion of the healthy and orderly development of social organizations in 2016, the opinions on strengthening and improving the governance of urban and rural communities issued by the State Council in 2017, to the opinions on vigorously cultivating and developing community social organizations issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2018. This environment provides opportunities for the social organizations. According to “*Blue Book of Social Organizations: Report on Social Organizations in China*” issued in 2018, the number of social organizations in China has risen from 702,000 in 2016 to 803,000 by the end of 2017, registering an increase of 14.3 per cent. It is growing at its fastest pace over the latest decade¹. However, when the number of social organizations is linked to government performance, there are many quality problems behind the large figures. At the same time, the development of the social organizations is characterized by a regional imbalance and an urban-rural imbalance. The overall number is still insufficient compared with the current economic development and their degree of specialization needs to be improved.

At present, 90 per cent¹ of the social organizations’ funds in China are derived from self-operation income. This financial situation is bound to discourage these organizations from investing in social assistance services. Because social assistance recipients are generally poor, it is difficult for them to pay for the services they need. Therefore, social organizations

entering the field of social assistance services mostly undertake the Government's work in providing services or participate in venture philanthropy to obtain resources. Many social organizations are heavily dependent on government resources, lacking the expertise needed for long-term planning and services and with poor autonomy. Of the 800,000 social organizations mentioned above, few can provide professional and quality public services. Social assistance services, as support service, have a profound impact on the livelihood and the quality of life of recipients. Compared with the services that are added to a well-off situation, just like icing on the cake, the timely-needed social assistance services have higher requirements for service quality for the social organizations.

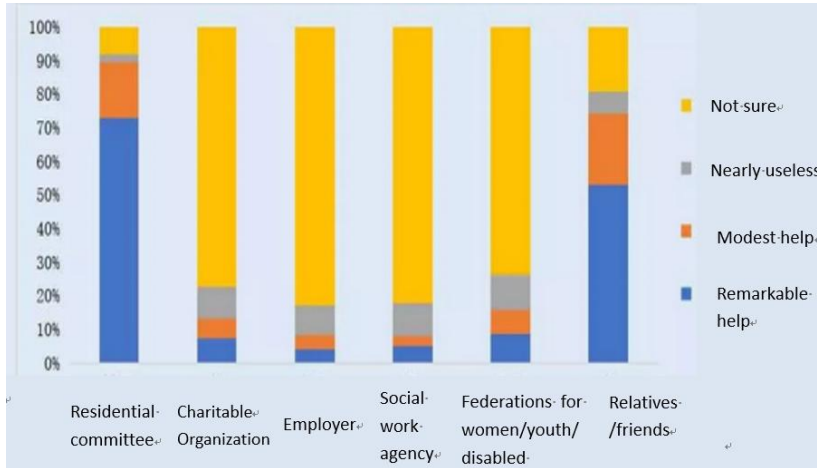
According to the data from the 2017 monitoring survey project of the economic status of low-income families provided by the Zhongmin Social Assistance Institute, the assistance programs provided by social forces to these low-income families mainly involve care in daily life, medical guarantees, children's schooling, arranging employment, assistance in completing an application, family care, disability rehabilitation, mental comfort and conflict mediation (see table 1)¹. Among them, the neighborhood committees and friends and family play the most important role in helping the low-income groups, while the role of organizations for workers, teenagers, women and the disabled, charitable organizations, employers as well as social work organizations are not significant. The social assistance provided to low-income groups should stimulate the role of these organizations, especially the functions of the institutions specialized in social work.

Table 1: Social Assistance programs for low-income families provided by the Social Forces

Items	Residents' committee/ village committee	Charitable organization	Employer	Social worker	Federation for women/ youth/the disabled	Relatives & friends
Daily life support	61.8	4.3	2.1	2.6	4.3	63.3
Health care	26.7	2.4	1	1.6	3.9	23
Children to school	13.9	1.3	0.5	0.7	1.3	14.8
Employment	8.1	0.3	3.7	0.8	0.4	4.6
Assistance Application Support	54.8	2.4	0.6	2.7	4.8	12.9
Family care	20.8	1.3	0.5	1.4	1.5	44
Rehabilitation for Disabled	12.3	1.3	0.3	0.7	3.9	8.8
Psychological comfort	40.7	3.2	1.9	2.7	4.8	39.4
Conflict mediation	27.5	0.5	0.7	0.6	1	17.8

Source: Zhongmin Social Assistance Research Center, 2018

Figure 1: Effectiveness of social support for low-income families



Source: Zhongmin Social Assistance Research Center, 2018

1.4 The Model of Cooperation between the Government and the Social Forces in Social Assistance Services

Currently, in the field of social assistance services, the cooperation between the government and the social forces in China is mainly based on the models of government procurement, public-private-partnership (PPP) and venture philanthropy. Government procurement means that the Government, through public bidding, directional entrustment or tendering, transfers the public service that is assumed by itself to social organizations, enterprises and institutions so as to improve the quality of public service supply, the efficiency of the use of financial funds and the social governance structure and to meet the diversified and personalized demands of the public.

In 2017, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the Opinions on “Implementing Social Assistance Service Procurement and Strengthening the Capacity of Social Assistance Agencies at the Grassroots Level”, clarifying the subjects to purchase and to undertake social assistance services, and standardizing the catalogs of services to be purchased. The social assistance services that can be purchased include two categories, i.e., routine work and service provision. The category “routine work” mainly includes the work such as the discovery of social assistance recipients, the investigation into the family’s livelihood, professional training, policy publicity, performance evaluation, etc.. These are all needed when handling the minimum subsistence allowance, the social assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups, medical assistance, temporary assistance and other services. Service provision mainly refers to the care and nursing, the rehabilitation training, the medical care, social integration, capacity improvement, psychological counseling, resource sharing and other services for social assistance recipients. At the same time, standardized procurement process shall be established, focusing on project selection, information release, the organizing of purchases, implementation and supervision, and performance evaluation¹. Therefore, to

vigorously promote social assistance service procurement was listed as an important task under the social assistance programs of all provinces in 2018.

Public-private-partnership (PPP) refers to the cooperation mode of the government and social forces. In this mode, the government, through the franchise rights, reasonable pricing and pre-announced and agreed rules including fiscal subsidy, introduces social capital to participate in the investment in, and the operation of, public welfare undertakings, such as urban infrastructure. The model is characterized as benefit sharing and risk-sharing, giving full play to the advantages of both sides and improving the supply quality and efficiency of public products or services¹. The PPP model is often confused with the concept of government-purchased services. However, unlike traditional service procurement, the PPP model is not restricted by the Government's procurement catalogue and involves social capital in the source of funds. The sources of investment return from social capital include payment methods such as user payments, feasibility gap subsidies and government payments. In non-operational projects such as social assistance, users do not need to pay for the services and the Government has to pay to recover the investment costs.

The use of the PPP model is increasing in China, but in the field of non-operational social assistance there are only a small number of attempts at present. In July 2015, the first domestic project was launched in Hefei, Anhui Province, based on the PPP model for families in need of help in China and known as Lezhuchangqing (乐助常青 in Chinese). It is a special fund jointly funded by the administrative department of Changqing Street and Lebang Charitable Foundation in Anhui. The project integrates various resources from civil society, and builds a social assistance model that brings together the Government, the foundations, social workers and volunteers¹. In the opinions "On Further Improving the Assistance and Support System for Specific Vulnerable Groups" issued by the State Council in 2016, the Government encourages the public to adopt the PPP model and use various operational methods (e.g. governmental construction with non-governmental operation, non-governmental construction with governmental support) to support the establishment of service agencies. However, most of the social capital invested in public service infrastructure is aimed at making a profit instead of doing charitable work and providing social assistance. Making a profit has become a difficult concept when adopting the PPP model in non-operational projects. Therefore, in the field of social assistance, the cooperative model of Government and social capital is bound to go through a long process of exploration.

Venture philanthropy is a method to apply the means of venture capital in business to organizations with a social purpose. From the perspective of the provider, the providers of venture philanthropy are diversified. The Government, enterprises, private funds and foundations are all the initiators of venture philanthropy. At present, venture philanthropy is highly regarded at the Local Government level. According to the collection of public information (up to January 1, 2016), 85 regions (including 8 provinces and municipalities, 25 prefectures and cities, 27 districts and counties and 14 streets) have launched venture philanthropy and the number is increasing. In some cities with more adequate budgets, venture philanthropy has become a continuous expenditure category in the budget of the Local Government and the expenditure continues to increase year on year. One of its important supporting projects is to support social organizations in providing social assistance services.

1.5 Lack of Assessment and Supervision of Social Assistance Service Programs

Currently, there is no effective supervision and evaluation system for social assistance services or for venture philanthropy projects in China. This leads to many problems in the cooperation between the Government and civil society. For example, the regulatory bodies have overlapping functions and responsibilities. The division of powers and responsibilities of the supervising body is not clear. At the same time, the supervision of NGPs is weak and there is no coordination mechanism. The main body of social supervision, the media and the public lack effective channels for participation, and the public itself lacks the awareness and ability to participate. This leads to the absence of social supervision. The current regulations do not solve the problems. As for the legality of the purchasing process, the evaluation focuses more on the output of the service rather than on the effectiveness of the service, focusing on whether or not the contractors provide the services according to the contract while neglecting the level of service quality provided by them.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES IN CHINA

2.1 The Social Care and Assistance System with Three-level Centers and Four-level Networks

In 2012, a pilot project was jointly launched by the social assistance department of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and UNICEF aimed at extending the work of social assistance services, covering Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu Province, Wuhu, Anhui Province and the Qingyang District in Chengdu, and was evaluated. The regional pilot experience can be summarized as the following: firstly, establishing a government-led management system with NGPs and secondly, providing social assistance services through projects and promoting the reform of specialization, informatization and coordination in the field of social assistance services.

The Department of Civil Affairs of Pixian County in Chengdu introduced the Peer Social Work Service Center in Chengdu, trying to establish a social care and assistance center in Pixian County and exploring the social assistance service system. In 2016, Pixian County's model was recognized by the Chengdu government. The whole city started to build social care and assistance centers in Chengdu, and extended them into all districts of the city. Up to January 2018, these centers have been involved in social assistance in many districts, cities and counties of Chengdu, and have undertaken services from the municipal care and assistance center, organizing and implementing the municipal social assistance services. So far, a social care and assistance system with three-level centers and four-level networks has been established in Chengdu. The municipal care and assistance center organizes and implements the municipal social care and assistance work, takes the responsibility for formulating the work norms and standards, and evaluates and supervises the project implementation. It also cultivates the talent team for social care and assistance, and actively guides, supports, supervises and manages all social organizations in the city to provide social care and assistance. Care and assistance centers at the district, city and county level form a database of Specifically Vulnerable Group and social assistance projects, and coordinate the social care and assistance resources of the district, city and county. They also provide work supervision and technical support. Care and assistance centers at the street and town levels evaluate the needs for front-line social assistance services and establish archives to form personalized social assistance programs and family social assistance programs. They also coordinate the resources within the system and link the social resources with the offices of

civil affairs. Care and assistance centers at the community (village) level uncover families with special difficulties, collect basic information, verify its authenticity, and report the relevant information to the administrative departments at the street level. Currently, professional social assistance services are based on the personalized needs of the families in difficulties, including psychological assistance, rehabilitation training, behavior correction, capacity improvement, rehabilitation training, care and company, etc. At the same time, professional assistance services also promote community neighborhood integration by coordinating family relationships and mobilizing public participation to pay attention to and support social assistance. This will establish a support system in families, communities and society for service recipients. In addition to service provision, the care service network also organizes public welfare workshops and trains the poor to make handmade, gourmet and creative products in the product sales platform, giving jobs to the poor and increasing their income. It aims to help people to achieve self-independence and fundamentally eliminate poverty. It also aims to stimulate the participation of all sectors in society and consolidate the charitable resources from civil society. Take the social care assistance centers in Pixian County as an example. In the past two years, twelve special funds were established based on district-level charity in Pixian County. They have raised 8.31 million RMB as well as various other aid worth 2.91 million RMB.

2.2 The Cultivation of Charitable Organizations at the Grass-roots Level and the Establishment of a Linkage Mechanism

All districts and counties in Beijing actively cultivate and develop grassroots charitable organizations to carry out assistance. They do this in order that they can realize the availability of charitable resources and meet the needs of people in difficulty through community charitable assistance. Professional social workers were introduced to provide a targeted assistance service. Beijing has established and improved the five major mechanisms of social assistance service, such as discovery of, and reporting on, those in need, evaluation, undertaking, referral, and coordination. It has embedded social work service in the existing social assistance program, hardship assistance, and other work systems, timely and effectively meeting the needs of the target population in addition to obtaining policy help. Through the Government Procurement Service, social service agencies can be introduced to social assistance and service areas can spread across every street and township. Then the problem of a lack of manpower will be solved. Also, Beijing has established a social assistance team of “full-time staff + professional social workers” to carry out home visits, publicity, assessment of the level of difficulty and needs, making assistance plans, developing case service and resource coordination and improving the specialization, refinement, and personalization of social assistance services.

Further, an effective link between charitable assistance and temporary assistance was established. Temporary assistance has the characteristics of a quick response, flexibility, low regularity, and small-scale. The approval procedures are too cumbersome and have limited effects. To some extent, temporary assistance needs to be supplemented by charitable assistance. The assistance from the charity associations are important supplements to the Government’s social assistance. The problem of the many government projects that cannot be reimbursed or are difficult to be reimbursed by the Government can be solved by charitable assistances. In emergencies charitable organizations can make up for the inadequacy of the Government's assistance funds. At the same time Beijing emphasizes the establishment of charity project brands. Through the division of labor and professional services of charitable organizations, professional service brands in the charity industry are formed to provide

assistance. A working mechanism and coordination mechanism for charity assistance was established as well. Beijing has established a mechanism for the active discovery of people in difficulty, giving full play to the role of community services and the role of social organizations, charitable workers, volunteers, and community residents' committees because they are familiar with the population's situation. The establishment of philanthropic resource libraries and assistance information platforms at all levels provides a mechanism for the resource coordination between Government departments, vulnerable groups and social organizations

2.3 Virtual Social Reality (VSR) Poverty Map

The VSR poverty map system was developed by the Center of Social Survey and Data Research to build the first service platform for poverty alleviation and help "targeted poverty alleviation". The overall product logic of the VSR poverty map system is static, dynamic, useful and "more than useful".

(1) In terms of "static", it builds a map of "poverty". Based on the AI that can learn and accurately identify poverty-stricken area, and multidimensional poverty index system on the basis of objective data, it can regularly publish rankings and poverty alleviation in the poorer regions of China;

(2) In terms of "dynamic", it can realize and monitor the temporal and spatial evolution of poverty and resources and predict the tendency in a dynamic way, using GIS and real-time data to build "Poverty Online" and "Cloud Platform" for poverty alleviation.

(3) In terms of "useful", based on the virtual database of reality and combined with the poverty measure and spatial analysis, it connects to poor households and provides targeted services for poverty alleviation as the first of its kind at the micro level.

(4) In terms of "more than useful", with typical examples of poverty alleviation based on the "poverty map" system as templates, it combines experiences from domestic and foreign cases and cases from the various regions in China. It is applied nationwide, and cooperation has been established, with maximum effort and the highest professional standards to help achieve the 2020 goal of poverty elimination. After that, the system will be updated into a VSR social reality platform to develop our society.

VSR poverty maps can provide services for government agencies, relevant social organizations and charitable groups with information on poverty alleviation and industry chain enterprises and related scientific research institutes for work on poverty alleviation. These services include the poverty (economy/society/environment) grade evaluation service, the poverty data services, the poverty alleviation planning, the think tank services for feature industries, recommendation services for volunteer activities, project promotion and investment services.

3. PRELIMINARY POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Experience in the field of social assistance services shows that effective responses to poverty and social exclusion require cash payments to provide income for the recipients and, more importantly, social services that meet the needs of recipients. It is more effective for social support to alleviate its challenges and difficulties through services, and to stimulate its potential and confidence to activate the job market. Because the service recipients are often in

multiple difficulties, the social assistance plan should be tailored and personalized, and the related services should be provided by cross-professional teams. Some of the EU countries use GIS technology to collect and sort out the social service information in the regions, which not only effectively avoids the chance of repeated service provision and facilitates beneficiaries in understanding the service information, it also helps the Government to carry out the social assistance service planning. At the same time, the improvement and guarantee of the overall social assistance effectiveness also depend on the Government and civil society's effective regulation of services. As for the current development of social assistance services in China, policy makers have begun to advocate service development and put forward the idea of individualized and integrated services. However, in practice, due to the lack of assistance service planning at the local administrative departments, among professional social service institutions and among social workers, the current development of social assistance services in China is disjointed, imbalanced and insufficient in its professionalism. With reference the experience of the EU, China can improve the system in the following ways to truly promote the development of social assistance services in China.

3.1 Top-down Policy Guidance and Financial Support

First of all, top-down policy and continuous financial guidance can help grassroots communities to cultivate professional workers in the field of social assistance and to build an integrated service delivery network based on the community. China can establish standards for social assistance services at the level of the Central Government and set up special funds to subsidize local social assistance services. Through the implementation of pilot projects, China will train grassroots social assistance service professionals, construct a community-based social assistance service network and establish a special fund for social assistance services.

Governments at all levels should increase their input into social assistance services, embed social assistance procurement into their budgets, establish a long-term and stable mechanism for financial input, and strengthen the Government's role in supervision. Social assistance procurement should, based on China's basic national conditions, give priority to ensuring the basic livelihood of vulnerable groups and meeting the population's most urgent needs. At present, most funds from Governments at all levels for venture philanthropy are supported by welfare lottery public welfare funds. Venture philanthropy should strengthen the support for social assistance service projects to timely respond to the urgent needs for social assistance from recipients.

3.2 Improving Social Assistance Service Workers

Grassroots communities should arrange social assistance service workers in communities according to a certain number of households and population ratio, and recruit professional social workers to undertake administrative management services, such as the examination and approval of social assistance, demand assessment, service tendering and supervision. To address the low degree of professionalism among community personnel, communities should improve the professional level of their management services through centralized training and further learning. In addition, the communities could employ permanent or temporary professional social workers through the government's procurement of services. The Government purchases the services from professional organizations of social workers and encourages institutions specialized in social work to enter into the field of social assistance services, so as to establish and improve the social assistance service standards and strengthen

the third-party evaluation of social assistance services, thus gradually forming the service brand of social assistance.

3.3 Formulating the Standards and Norms for Social Assistance Services

The Government should, flowing discussions with the public, issue social service standards suitable for China, and urge the grassroots' Government to formulate service-effect-oriented evaluation standards to facilitate supervision. China needs to establish a series of standards for the procurement, treatment and evaluation of social assistance services and train social assistance service workers at the grassroots level. The Central Government can also establish a quality standard framework for basic social assistance services. On the basis of this framework, grassroots Governments' can sign contracts with social service providers when procuring social assistance services, and supervise and evaluate the service providers. At present, as for the routine work and service provision in the field of social assistance, China is encouraging and fostering more social service agencies to undertake service work.

3.4 The Establishment of Integrative Family Service Centers, the Integration of Social Assistance Resources and the Promotion of a Coordination Mechanism

Starting from the complementary integration of social assistance service resources from all sectors, the Government can focus on the significant social assistance service problems that need to be solved for vulnerable groups, and explore the various forms of cross-sector collaboration in grassroots management. This will allow for the gathering of all participants in social assistance services and comprehensively enhance the capacity of social assistance support. On the other hand, the government should also perfect the service guidance mechanism, give full play to social work organizations and personnel's unique role in resource integration and professional guidance, and organize volunteers and other professionals to provide services for social assistance recipients SA, in order to further expand social participation in social work, expand the types of social assistance services that included, and better meet the diversified demand of social assistance recipients.

The Government should promote the integration of resources among the relevant departments involved in social assistance, clarify their responsibilities, and establish a cooperative mechanism to more effectively tackle poverty and social exclusion. At present, in view of the decentralization of resources in the field of social assistance and social services, integrative family service centers can be set up at the administrative level in streets. Family support, family counseling and family resource services can be provided within the center to assess the personalized needs of social assistance service recipients and integrate the service design and the service provision.

3.5 Establishing a Social Assistance Service Information Platform

In order to promote the professionalism of social work in the field of social assistance, China can use surveying and mapping technologies for reference in sorting out the service needs and the service supply information of each grassroots area. Specifically it can cultivate social organizations and social work talents that meet the needs of grassroots communities. It can also establish a national social assistance service information database, creating a social assistance service information sharing mechanism and providing the basis for decision-making, data query and the dynamic management of social assistance service procurement. Moreover, China can build various information management and docking platforms for special assistance, to ensure the effective and timely intervention of professional social workers. These platforms can also ensure that social organizations can use the information

base to obtain accurate information on recipients. This will help screen service beneficiaries, evaluate the requirements and the problems of recipients and design assistance services, etc.

3.6 Combining Social Assistance Services and Employment Support Services

The EU's social assistance projects are closely related to employment projects, and the positive inclusion policy is supported by the designed projects with three dimensions, i.e., income support, employment integration and service provision. These jointly address poverty and social exclusion. Hong Kong's social services for beneficiaries also focus on how to help them return to the job market. How to classify the social assistance services for those who are capable of work and for those who are not needs to be considered when developing China's subsequent social assistance service projects. Among them, it is important to provide employment support services for those who are able to work. At present, importance needs to be attached to determining how to integrate the social assistance work of the Departments of Civil Affairs with the employment support work of the Departments of Human Resources and Social Security, so as to provide effective services and employment integration support for the service recipients.

3.7 The Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Social Assistance Services

The development of social assistance services for the urban and the rural low-income groups is uneven. Compared with those in urban areas, social organizations and social work resources are under-developed in the rural areas. In rural areas, mutual assistance organizations formed by residents can be guided and promoted, thereby advocating and supporting mutual assistance services among residents. The employment integration of social assistance recipients in the rural areas can also be combined with the current rural revitalization in Chinese society.

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3.3.2 Providing Services for Social Assistance Beneficiaries

Best practices report and Policy recommendation report

France with comparative examples from another EU country (Croatia)

Camille Lambinon, EU-China SPRP expert



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Glossary:

Social welfare: Organized public or private social services for the assistance of disadvantaged groups.

Social services: Services provided by public, private or other organizations intended to aid disadvantaged, distressed or vulnerable persons or groups.

Poverty: Condition where people's basic needs for food, clothing and shelter are not being met.

Introduction to be inserted – to explain the aim of the report and definitions of key issues to be covered by the report

INTRODUCTION

This report was written in the framework of the EU-China Social Protection Reform Project as a result of an Expert mission. The overall purpose of the Project is to develop social equity and inclusiveness in China. One of the objectives of the mentioned mission, which took place in September 2018, was to prepare a report on standards in social assistance services based on the best practises from EU countries. In a first part, the following report describes the legal framework for social services in France and, in a second part, its evolution. The purpose of this report is to provide MoCA and other Chinese stakeholders with some information on relevant French and European best practises regarding social services reform.

1. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL SERVICES IN FRANCE

France has a strong legal framework for social welfare services aiming at combating poverty and social exclusion. The roots of this legal scheme lay in the principles which are at the core of the French Constitution such as equality, dignity for all and solidarity.

In France, social services include all the institutions, being public or private institutions, which are providing social work, which is the protection of people in a situation of fragility or vulnerability. A vulnerable situation can be related to poverty, to handicap, to young or old age or to social or linguistic isolation (*non-exhaustive list*). Despite of the fact that social services were born at the same time as health insurance and protection, their terminology originally did not include the reimbursement of health care expenses, work accidents or pensions which fell under the expression “social security”. Nowadays social literature and professionals from the social sphere tend to include social services in “social security” which reflects the interconnection of these two notions.

In France, social services developed from the 19th century with the industrial revolution. Back then many people from the countryside emigrated to cities in order to work in new industries. The traditional family and community support did not exist that extensively. Social protection

mechanisms started to emerge in order to replace them. After the second World War, social services developed increasingly and evolved to an ever changing social and economic national context. Social services are formalized and listed in the *code for social action and families*.¹

1.1 Standards in social services (administration and governance)

Social services in France are performed by a variety of public and private institutions.

The State is originally the first provider of social services through its local agencies which are centers for social action and are called *CAF (Caisses d'Allocation Familiale)*.

Since 1982, France is in a continuum process of decentralization which has led local authorities, mainly the 101 counties (“*départements*”) existing on the national territory to take over and to develop social services, mainly the ones for old people and for people with a handicap. The social support provided to beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum incomes is also ensured by the counties.

Besides, French associations play a very important role in the delivery of social services, as shown later in this report.

It is interesting to observe that the design and implementation of social services more and more include the participation of the targeted populations.

The idea behind this evolution is that transformative social intervention involves the empowerment of the destitute people and to treat them as citizens with rights, including rights to participate in the improvement and assessment of social services. More precisely, the participation of people who have been supported by a social worker in the design of social services is an increasing tendency in France and in Europe. More and more surveys are made in centers for social action in order to assess the level of satisfaction of users of social services. In order to be well representative of the general opinion, these polls need to include at least 1000 users (as it is usually the case for polls in other areas). If it can be difficult to evaluate the satisfaction of users regarding monetary benefits, it is however very useful to get feedback from beneficiaries regarding services, including the way they see their relationship with their social service provider. Indeed, it allows stakeholders to have their say on the quality and regularity of service delivery. This way, recipients of welfare programs engage in a form of active citizenship as they are not only anymore passive beneficiaries of services: they can challenge these services if they do not meet their expectations, which give them a more active and dynamic role into society. As an illustration, ‘Engagement with people who use services’ was one of the themes of the conference on social work which took place in Ireland in July 2018¹.

In France, the cornerstone of this “participatory movement” happened in 2002 when a law set up the obligation for social homes like old people homes to formally receive users’ suggestions and complaints of users, through for instance regular meetings with all stakeholders.

This movement extended to larger audiences as participatory practices are now seen as a key element of the processes deployed by French national and regional governments to ensure citizens' concerns are adequately addressed.

An interesting example of this trend to hear the voices of the destitute at a larger scale happened in September 2018 when the French President Macron met representatives of people living in a poverty situation or who had overcome it during a press conference in which he announced the new anti-poverty plan of the Government.

Another example of this participatory trend is the ongoing reform about social work and social work training institutions. In order to undertake this reform, the Parliament have worked together with many stakeholders coming from the social field. This process led to the preparation of the “Bourguignon report” (2015) which proposes modern, detailed and highly-documented reforms in social work.

1.2 French social institutions

Social services are traditionally taking place in institutions.

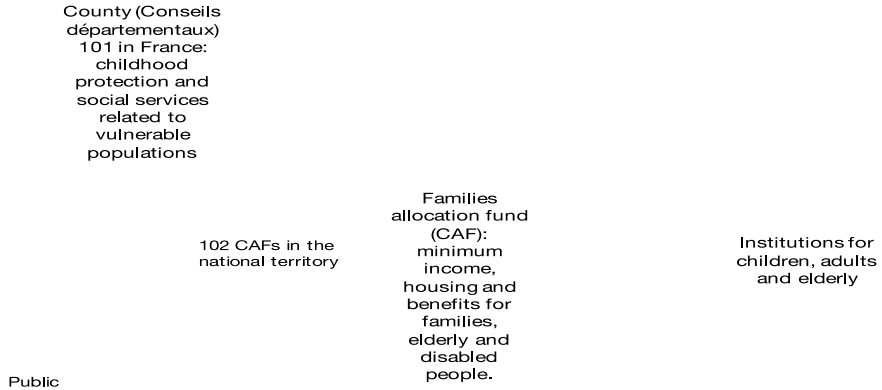
These institutions include homes for children, old people, people with a disability or for homeless people. In the recent years, France, like in other EU countries, has faced the arrival of a large number of migrants which has led to the urgent need for temporary housing solutions. This rather new situation has made public authorities and big caritative associations work hand-in-hand in order to build or convert buildings into adequate housing.

Other major institutions for delivery of social services are centers for social action and social local authorities. They usually offer social services together with in-cash benefits, despite of the fact that they are not always linked. Indeed, there can be in-cash benefits without a social service and there can be a social service without cash benefits.

The two graphs below describe the organisational social structures in France and in Croatia.



Social services providers in France



Social services providers in Croatia



In France, in the recent years, there has been a tendency to bring social services “outside the walls”. This means that many new home-based services have been created or encouraged through financial or human support. The purpose of this evolution is to leave people in their “natural environment”. One of the main challenges for governments is to find a balance between providing tailored home-based services for old people or with a handicap and supporting the higher costs that these home-based services entail. At the end, it is a political choice.

This “deinstitutionalization” tendency is the same in other EU countries. For instance, in Croatia, a lot of efforts have been made by the authorities to encourage families to become foster families.

Another illustration of bringing social services outside institutions is the development of “Community work” in France since the 1970’s. This type of social work initially held young people as a target group. The idea behind is that many left-out populations, such as young people, are not always informed about the social services that they are entitled to. The purpose of community work is to perform social work directly in the places where young people are used to go such as concerts, bars, streets. In these places, social workers get in contact with the adolescents or young adults and provide them with some information about access to employment, training, healthcare, etc. The same method was recently used in migrants’ camps. This method is a way for the authorities and for the associations to create a social relationship with some categories of populations who do not necessarily know the wide range of social services, especially the populations who could need them the most.

1.3 Qualifying conditions for accessing services by vulnerable groups

Social services are called universal in France which means that in theory anyone can access them, regardless of her or his social origin, gender, age and other social and cultural characteristics. Besides, France has developed targeting social mechanisms. For instance, in the recent years, with the migration crisis, many services supporting refugees have emerged in France which aim at ensuring a smooth and dynamic social integration of people entitled to asylum.

If universality means that no one can be discriminated from a social service on the basis of individual or cultural characteristics, access to social services is however submitted to qualifying conditions. These qualifying conditions depend on social services and are listed in the Code for social action and families. They are also easily accessible in the official website of French public administration¹. Examples of qualifying conditions for access to social services are shown in Appendix 1.

Qualifying conditions can be divided in two categories.

A first condition to access a specific social service is related to an event such as a birth or a divorce which will give you the possibility to receive social support in order to cope with this change in one’s life. One interesting new measure set up by a Paris-based center for social action was to automatically propose beneficiaries an appointment with a social worker when their IT database registers the death of a sibling. This example raises the question of the link between social action and IT systems which this report will address later on.

A second qualifying condition is related to access to a monetary right. For instance, in France, one is entitled to the guaranteed minimum income (*RSA*) when facing a challenging financial situation. The access to this monetary right is the condition – and to a certain extent an obligation, to receive certain social services such as socio-professional support. This support includes employment training and income-generating opportunities like providing various communication, financial and legal knowledge on how to start a business. Besides, beneficiaries are provided with subsidized childcare (“*crèche*”) so that they can more easily look for a job or develop some skills.

While France has made the obligation for beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income to follow employment training or life-long education, Croatia went further as in some regions, minimum income is provided under the condition that beneficiaries perform some utility work which are organized by municipalities. The idea underlying this strategy poverty reduction is to encourage citizenship practices.

Last research social literature has stressed out the importance of a linkage between monetary transfers and training and livelihood skills for adults facing poverty. This principle has spread out in France where in-cash benefits go more and more beyond the safety net approach and have started to incorporate elements aiming to increase beneficiaries’ capacity to be self-sufficient through training. A type of social service that has developed during the last years is financial education of beneficiaries, which purpose is to provide them with skills in managing their incomes and expenses. The purpose of these social interventions is to bring transformation and long-lasting changes in the lives of destitute people.

The new anti-poverty plan disclosed by the President Macron in September 2018 focuses on tackling the causes of poverty. It is planned for 4 years and its budget is 8 Billion Euros. Its two main measures are the following:

- Developing the access to pre-school facilities for children of modest families. Studies have shown that mixing children from various social origins is an efficient way to increase social and cultural “abilities” of poor children which later will help them to climb up the social ladder.
- Making education compulsory until 18 years old, as of 16 years old until now. Local social public organizations and schools will have increased human means to identify young people who have left school and to propose them further education or trainings.

These two important measures represent a “social investment” in children and adolescents. Their purpose is to act upon the roots of exclusion at an early stage. As the French President stressed out, only 9% of beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income find a job during an ongoing year. In order to increase this percentage, it was decided by the French Government to give extra-support to the prevention of poverty, in focusing on policies supporting young people.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH SOCIAL SERVICES

2.1 The specific role of NGOs in the delivery of social services

NGOs play a very important role in the delivery of social services. In France, they are 33 000 NGOs which represent between 55 and 75 % of the offer of social services, depending on the

types of institutions (handicap, childhood, old people, adults with difficulties).¹ 15 Million French people work in associations.¹

This role has increased during the last 20 years as the State, local public institutions and associations have developed formalized partnerships.

Several reasons explain this evolution.

First, NGOs are innovative and have the will to develop social experiments. They are close to citizens and able to identify promptly new social challenges. They often have intense links with local communities which will make the implementation of social projects more efficient.

An example of this partnership between the public and private social institutions is what is called “les chantiers d’insertion” (*inclusion programs*) which are programs aiming at supporting the economic inclusion of the poor. These programs are implemented by the biggest NGOs in France, such as Emmaüs or the Secours Catholique. The costs related to these programs are mainly funded by the State and by counties. An interesting element to be noted is that the financial participation of the State increases if the NGO implementing this program has good results in terms of rate of beneficiaries finding a job or following a training within this program.

It is interesting to remark that NGOs in France are strong and well-implanted. As an example, the NGO Secours Populaire gathers 80 000 volunteers nationwide. The total number of volunteers in NGOs in France is 15 Millions (out of a total population of 66 Millions). It is interesting to underline that half of the volunteers are volunteering in NGOs acting in the social field.

Another reason to the increasing role of NGOs in the social sphere is the deinstitutionalization of social services, which means that the State had the willingness to delegate some social services to associations, in exchange of adequate financial and human means. The advantages for the State are multiple. First, as written above, associations have a good knowledge of the field and are close to citizens which is an asset for designing and implementing social programs. Furthermore, this system gives flexibility to the State if it wants to reduce or develop certain services. In order for the stakeholders to achieve objectives in adequate conditions, formalized and contractual procedures have been developed. These procedures, called “tenders”, are meant to create standard and exhaustive mechanisms for social programs to be implemented in the most secured, transparent and adequate conditions. They describe target groups of social programs, purpose and content of social programs, all dedicated staff and costs and how the communication and the evaluation of the program will be made.

2.2 The evolution of social work in France

The International Association of Social Workers defines social work as a practise-based profession and academic discipline that promotes social change, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people¹. In France, law defines social work as a practise aiming at “enabling people to have access to human and social rights, to support their social inclusion and to exert their full citizenship”¹. Law requires a specific diploma in order to become a social worker. Various curricula exists depending on the type of social work one wants to exercise. Most of them correspond to a 3-year curriculum, a Bachelor level and a

State diploma. According to a legislation from August 2018, the five main categories of diploma are the following ones:¹

1. “Diplôme d’Assistant de Service Social”: This diploma brings competencies in supporting individuals to have access to their human and social rights.
2. “Diplôme d’Educateur Spécialisé”: This diploma brings competencies in supporting individuals with a handicap or a behaviour problem, mainly in the framework of institutions for adults and for children.
3. “Diplôme d’Educateur Technique Spécialisé”: This diploma brings competencies in social services for individuals with a handicap or a behaviour problem in relation to the exercise of a profession.
4. “Diplôme d’Educateur de Jeunes Enfants”: This diploma brings competencies in supporting personal development of children under 7, mainly in places where children are collectively taken care of (“crèches”).
5. “Diplôme de Conseillère en Economie Sociale Familiale” (1-year curriculum): This diploma brings qualification in helping families to run their daily expenses, including the prevention of endebtmnt.

A research has been launched in 2018¹ by the French Ministry for Solidarities and Health in order to assess the specific competencies which public and private employers are looking for when they recruit a social worker. The purpose of this important survey is to bring some further changes to social work curriculum so that professionals acquire skills in line with current social challenges and the evolution of society.

Like in many European countries, social workers in France are asking for a better recognition of their work and role in society. Their claims have been formalized in a very important report which was the fruit of research, meetings and interviews between politics and professionals from the social sphere. This report (“*Bourguignon report*”, 2015) insists on the necessity to go from a culture of managing rights and procedures by social workers to a culture of support and empowerment of social services’ users. For that purpose, social workers representatives expressed the need for more human resources means in order to be able to dedicate adequate time to social action. They also asked for simplification of mechanisms and for lightening administrative rules. These recommendations are more and more heard by the French decision-makers. As an illustration, the current French President has announced that a social revenue (“allocation sociale unique”) will be created. This new benefit would merge various current benefits into one benefit, offering beneficiaries a minimum income. The purpose of this new right is to create a more simple and transparent social welfare system.

2.3 The relation between social action and the development of IT in the social sphere

The link between social action and computerization is complex. On the one hand, it is claimed that IT dehumanizes social work and only the real encounter and exchange between a social worker and a beneficiary can bring substantial social support. In this regard, automatic online applications for cash-benefits are sometimes criticized. The argument supporting this criticism is that meetings with beneficiaries allow social workers to know them, their life situation as well as to assess whether some additional social action should be undertaken.

In Croatia, when a user comes to a center for social action and asks for a monetary right, social workers can more easily assess whether this potential beneficiary is facing other life challenges such as family violence. A direct contact between the beneficiary and the social

worker will make it possible for social workers to evaluate the overall situation of beneficiaries.

The importance of knowing beneficiaries explains why some specialists of social action are not in favor of automatized access to monetary rights, as this happened for a new in-cash benefit (*prime d'activité*) in France from 2016. This monetary right is provided when a beneficiary of the minimum guaranteed income finds a low-paid job. The whole application for this right is on-line. Relevant documents from the beneficiary are checked on a random basis. The evaluation of this new process is in progress.

However, the computerization of the social field, which is unavoidable, also has supporters. The main argument defending the development of IT systems in the social sphere is that it can tremendously support social services. In Croatia, new poverty indicators have been set up in the IT database of social workers. These new indicators allow social worker to have a complete set of questions which will give them information on the financial, socio-professional and housing situation of beneficiaries. These indicators will help social workers to assess a situation and, if needed, undertake targeted actions.

In France, a middle-term objective in social protection is to combine computerized data from the tax administration and the social administration in order for social benefits to be generated and paid on an automatic basis. This would remove a lot of administrative work from social institutions, allowing them to mainly focus on the essence of social work.

Policy recommendations report

On 26 and 27th September, 2018, representatives from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Component Leader 3 Ms Marzena Breza, 3 EU experts from Czech Republic and France (Mr Pavel Janecek, Mr Christian Moutier and Ms Camille Lambinon), Component 3 Assistant Ms Iwona Rogacka-Hu and an interpreter went for a mission in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hohhot City, Xincheng District. This Region one of the four pilot regions chosen for the EU-China Social Protection Reform Project. Other pilot regions are Jilin Province, Jiangsu Province and Sichuan Province.

This visit was the first mission in a pilot region with EU experts.

The purpose of this visit was for the Project to meet public officials from local authorities and to exchange about the situation in the social sphere, including the new procedures which have been recently implemented in social institutions in this pilot region.

After the mission, EU experts will prepare a report which will provide for policy recommendations based on the reports prepared by Chinese experts and on the visits and discussions held during this mission.

The following institutions were visited:

- 26th September afternoon: Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hohhot City, Xincheng District. This meeting included around 50 Chinese representatives. Ms Wu Honglian, Director of Xin Cheng District Civil Affairs Bureau in Hohhot, made a PowerPoint presentation where she focused on the last evolutions related to the management of dibao at the local level, on the delegation of powers to third parties

(NGOs) and on the computerization of social work. Based on this presentation, EU experts described the situation and challenges in these fields in their respective countries, including the evolution of the role of NGOs in France and their involvement in social services. While French NGOs play an increasing role in social services to targeted groups (old people, people with a handicap, children, migrants, etc.), they are not entitled to intervene in the management of the guaranteed minimum income. On the contrary, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has delegated the means-tests in potential dibao beneficiaries to NGOs which are usually called Third Parties or Social Forces.

- 27th September morning and afternoon:
 - o Visit of a nursery home: The mission visited a public institution for old people which were built in 2017. This institution has 200 beds. For the time being, there were only 36 residents who were all recipients of wubao. In the future, this institution will be open not only to wubao recipients. There are 8 nurses and 3 staff members apart from the staff who provides for direct care. A lot of outside activities such as gardening are proposed to the residents.
 - o A center for social welfare (in rural area): the mission has exchanged with one officer in charge of dibao. The discussion focused on the procedure for applying to and receiving dibao.
 - o A center for social welfare (in urban area): The delegation was described the approval procedure for dibao and the new mobile application used for statistics and for means-tests in households.

Pursuant to the findings of the mission in the pilot region, the following recommendations can be given:

1. Standardization and simplification of the decision-making process related to dibao

It is recommended to continue the standardization of dibao application and approval processes. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has started a large reform aiming and streamlining the granting process of dibao. In the past, the County Government and the City both had to approve the grant of dibao to an individual. Recently this decision-making process changed and now only the City is approving the grant of dibao. However, three different Directors still need to sign a decision which grants dibao which can slow down the whole process. Besides, the Democratic Evaluation Conference, which is composed of 9 members who are supposed to know well the overall situation of the person applying for dibao, also plays a role in the decision-making process. This process is problematic as the approval decision can depend on affinities between potential beneficiaries and the members of the Democratic Evaluation Conference and be therefore partial and biased. For these reasons, it is recommended to simplify even more the decision-making process by decreasing the number of people entitled to decide whether dibao should be granted. Furthermore, it is recommended to continue the standardization of qualifying conditions for receiving dibao in order to strengthen the rights of vulnerable populations.

2. Allocating appropriate means to centers for social welfare

In order to make the management of dibao in centers for social welfare more sustainable, it is recommended to increase the number of staff members in charge of dibao. In the rural center for social welfare, one person was in charge of processing all dibao applications.

Furthermore, in order to decrease the turn-over of the staff working in the social sphere, it is recommended to increase salaries of the staff. The salary of the person in charge of dibao in the rural center for social welfare was 1600 Yuans. In general, salaries of social workers in China are around 1500 Yuans. This rather low amount does not support staff stability nor the recruitment of a staff with an education in social work. To have a more well-educated staff will allow for a better assessment of needs of vulnerable populations.

3. Anonymisation of procedures in the management of social benefits

It is recommended to be cautious in making public dibao beneficiaries' names. Though there is a global tendency for more transparency in the economic and social fields, it is important not to stigmatize social recipients. In this pilot region, the disclosure of beneficiaries' names takes place at two different levels:

- After a first provisional decision approving dibao, the local authorities publish the potential beneficiary's name for 7 days in the vicinity of the beneficiary's home. Other citizens have the right to officially contest this provisional decision.
- In the second center for social welfare visited by the mission, electronic boards continuously show the names of dibao beneficiaries.

As disclosure of names can influence the decision-making process, anonymisation could be a way to standardize procedures. Besides, some social benefits are linked to a personal situation such as a handicap. By disclosing the names of recipients and the social benefit they receive, confidential information is also indirectly revealed. For these reasons, it is recommended to develop anonymisation processes in the management of social benefits.

4. Collection of data and development of statistics

It is recommended to further improve the mobile application used for means-tests and for statistics. Indeed, this mobile application has the potential to make procedures more standardized if some objective data about beneficiaries can be entered and processed by the software application. This information could include gender, age, education, characteristics of the household and housing conditions. The final data should have two purposes:

- Guiding social workers and empowered staff during means-tests in dibao beneficiaries' houses/flats.
- Strengthening statistics. This mobile application provides for some advanced statistical data. It is recommended to develop even further the statistical and analytical functionalities of this mobile application in order to be able to use this data to identify the social needs of populations in urban and rural areas and thereby develop adequate social services.

5. On-line accessibility to social benefits

The pilot region has developed a website where people can have information about the 8 existing in-cash benefits. It is recommended to consider the possibilities of communication with beneficiaries through modern communication methods, like web applications, in order to accelerate the process of providing services to beneficiaries and at the same time decrease the workload of social service providers. It would also partly sort out the issue of accessibility to

centers for social welfare, especially during winter time. Therefore it is recommended to consider setting up an online application system for in-cash benefits.

6. Strengthening the participation of beneficiaries in the definition of services in order to improve their effectiveness.

Following a national Chinese law that went into force in 2014, the Ministry for Civil Affairs is currently working on the preparation of a new law. It is recommended to strive to include centers for social welfare and the beneficiaries of social services in the creation and implementation of services in order to improve targeting and efficiency.

7. Reinforcing the legal and financial partnerships with Third Parties

As the pilot region has started an important process of delegating major tasks to Third Parties (NGOs), it is recommended to strengthen their financial and human capacities. In order to increase them, public authorities could plan to increase the duration of secured funding to Third Parties. This would make the work performed more sustainable as it would provide for increased visibility and time to reinforce the staff skills. Another way to support Third Parties would be to set up a legislation allowing tax-deduction for individuals and private companies giving money to Third Parties.

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Appendix

Examples of qualifying conditions for access to social services

Social services	Conditions
Access to crèches/kindergarden	Child being between 2 months and 3 years old
	Required vaccinations made
	Rate depending on the revenues of parents
Access to elderly home	Adult being more than 60 years old
	Lost autonomy at physical or psychological level
	Impossibility to stay at home
	Rate depending on families' revenues
Access to a type of institutions for people with a handicap	Psycho-motor or mental disability
	Continuous care needed
	No cost for residents

3.3.2 Standards in social assistance benefits and services - legal framework, stakeholders, implementation, governance and administration

Best Practices Report and Policy Recommendation Report

Disclaimer: This report is the sole responsibility of its author and does not engage in any way the responsibility of the European Union.

Christian Moutier, EU-China SPRP expert

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ABBREVIATIONS:

AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; BG = Bulgaria; CY = Cyprus; CZ = Czech Republic; DE = Germany; DK = Denmark; EE = Estonia; ES = Spain; FI = Finland; FR = France; EL = Greece; HU = Hungary; IE = Ireland; IT = Italy; LT = Lithuania; LU = Luxemburg; LV = Latvia; MT = Malta; NL = The Netherlands; PL = Poland; PT = Portugal; RO = Romania; SE = Sweden; SK = Slovakia; UK = United Kingdom

MIS = Minimum Income Standard

GMIS = Guaranteed Minimum Income Schemes

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN FRANCE

Although some types of social assistance appeared in France starting the late Middle Ages, the current system (Social Security system) appeared immediately after the Second World War.

The originality of the system is based on 6 features:

- Social protection has been divided into large groups called "schemes", commonly known as "risks". There is therefore a risk of "sickness, maternity", the risk of an "accident at work", the risk of "old age", the risk of "job loss" and support for families, the poor and special categories such as the disabled. In addition, a specific organization was created to gather all financial contributions, so that there is no mix with the State's taxes.

A special system was created for farmers (employers and employees) as the contributors could not finance it at the same level as in the other schemes. Basically, its organization is the same, but it receives a higher financial contribution from the State and from other schemes.

- The financing of these risks and supports was originally provided by contributions (a kind of tax deducted at source) as a percentage of wages and paid by both employees and employers. Non-employees paid lump sum contributions. Over time, since 1945, the state has contributed to financing either by earmarking specific fiscal resources (for example taxes on petroleum products) or by reimbursing the regimes for certain expenses (for instance, expenses for the disabled).
- Most of the social assistance program is decided by the National Parliament. Nonetheless, at national and local levels, the funds can decide upon the creation of additional services or benefits adapted to the local context. For this purpose, they receive special funding in proportion to the population that they cover.
- The management of the schemes is entrusted to the social partners (employees' unions and employers' groups).
- This risk is managed at the national level by a "national fund" which depends directly on the central government and which runs a network of "departmental funds".
- The departmental funds depend directly on their national fund and are independent from the administrative and political structures of the departments (A "department" is an administrative and political division of the State organization).

The fund in charge of “support for families, the poor and special categories” is the badly named “family allowance fund” for historical reasons. This report mainly focuses on this branch of the French Social Security System.

2. THE GLOBAL STRUCTURE OF THE FRENCH SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

At the national level, the Government (Ministry of Social Affairs) decides – depending on what the Parliament votes for, of course – on the laws and regulations in all fields of social protection. Still at the national level, 4 national funds lead the different branches of social protection, each of them leading a network of regional/local funds:

- The Pension Fund oversees the elderly and oversees a network of 20 regional funds.
- The Health Insurance Fund oversees health, maternity and accidents at work and oversees a network of 101 local funds.
- The Family Fund oversees families, children, disabled and poor people and oversees a network of 100 local funds.
- The Fund for Farmers oversees the entire protection of agricultural employees and employers and oversees a network of 35 regional funds.
- A national organization oversees the gathering all financial contributions (employers, employees, earmarked taxes and government reimbursements) and allocates to each branch (each national fund) the necessary funding.
- The national funds have created a global organization in charge of relations with the social partners (Unions) to guarantee equal treatment, work conditions, social rights etc. for the 146,000 employees who work in the Social Security system.
- Every 3 to 5 years, each national fund concludes an objectives and management agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This agreement sets, for each branch, the objectives to be achieved in the planned period, in terms of the results to be obtained, the management costs, the number of jobs, the quality of service and services to be implemented. Each national fund decides this agreement with each local or regional office within its network. An additional salary bonus is paid each year to employees according to the achievement of objectives.

3. THE IN-CASH BENEFITS¹

All persons living LEGALLY in France are entitled to receive the benefits, regardless of their nationality or status. The benefits specifically targeting children are just depending on the legal stay of the child in France and the real situation of the child (the main question is to know who is in charge of the child). Apart the legal stay in France, the system does not care whether the situation is legal or not, it only considers the situation of fact!

This approach is fundamental as it was decided in 1946, anticipating the deep changes in the French society throughout the last 70 years (for instance, 57% of the children born in France at the present time are born to unmarried parents). Globally, the French system presents 2 important periods:

- From 1945 to 1972: to support the population to have children and take care of them.
- Since 1972: to help the population to articulate family life and professional life.

No one can demonstrate that the first 30 years’ policy really influenced our demography. On the other hand, surveys and studies show that irrespective of the high female employment rate (+ or – 80%) the birth rate remains one of the highest in Europe (with Ireland and Sweden).

Nonetheless, the increase in the age of the conception of the “first child’s birth” (a little more than 30 years old) has become a source of concern.

In order to allow a better understanding of the different amounts of cash benefits described below, it is useful to place them in the overall context of France and the European Union.

Table 1: Standards of living in EUR

	Median standard of living (Purchasing Power Standard)	Average standard of living (Purchasing Power Standard)
Germany	21 180	23 910
Spain	15 330	17 560
France	20 620	24 010
Italy	16 210	18 250
Poland	10 850	12 290
United Kingdom	17 370	20 220
Euro zone	18 030	20 540
European Union - 28 members	16 450	18 770

The Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) is an artificial currency unit that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries. Thus, a PPS makes it possible to buy the same volume of goods and services in all the countries. This unit allows meaningful volume comparisons of the economic indicators across countries. The aggregates expressed in PPS are calculated by dividing the aggregates at the current prices and in the national currency by the respective purchasing power parities (PPPs).

*In 2016, the median income in France amounted 20 520 €. (Sources : Insee-DGFiP-Cnaf-Cnav-CCMSA, *enquêtes Revenus fiscaux et sociaux 2012 à 2016.*)*

The French in-cash benefit system covers 3 types of social issues and policies:

- ✓ Raising children benefits.
- ✓ Housing benefits.
- ✓ Income supplements for targeted populations.

3.1 Raising children benefits

There exist 7 different in-cash types of benefits aimed at helping families to raise their children.

3.1.1 Fosterling the young child

- **The bonus for birth or adoption (45,000 beneficiaries¹):** The bonus at birth or adoption is paid once for each birth if the pregnancy was declared in the first fourteen

weeks. In the case of adoption, to qualify for the bonus, the child or children must be under 20 years old. The bonus is means tested and paid 2 months after the birth or the adoption. The approximate amount is 920 € for a birth and 1890 € for adoption (for each child born or adopted).

- **The basic benefit (1,830,000 beneficiaries):** The basic allowance is a monthly benefit to cover the expenses related to the child's education. It is assigned to only one child at a time per family, except for multiple births or the adoption of multiple children at the same time. The child must be under 3 years of age, or under 20 if adopted. The benefit is paid from the month following the birth until the month before its third birthday. In case of adoption, the basic allowance is paid for three years from the date of arrival of the child. The benefit is means tested. The approximate amount is 184 €/month full rate; and 92 €/month partial rate.
- **The allowance for the free choice of the care mode of the child (731,000 beneficiaries/ maternal assistants, 59,000 beneficiaries / employed at home and 48,000 beneficiaries / structure):** This aid is paid for the care of one or more children:
 - ✓ by one or more approved maternal assistants working at home and / or at a maternal assistant's home;
 - ✓ home childcare possibly shared with another family.

In both cases, the Family Fund reimburses part of assistant's remuneration. The maximum amount repayable depends on the family's income. The fund also pays the social contributions:

- ✓ 100% for the employment of a certified maternal assistant;
- ✓ 50% for the use of home care up to the limit of € 448 for children under 3 years old and 224 € for children from 3 to 6 years old.

The allowance is also paid if the family uses an organization or a nursery to take care of the child. In this case the fund reimburses part of the monthly cost invoiced to the family. This benefit is also means tested.

- ✓ **The shared education benefit (478,000 beneficiaries):** The shared education benefit is available from the first child, if one of the parents ceases or reduces his / her professional activity to care for children under 3, or under 20 years old if they are adopted. To be eligible, the parent must have had a professional activity to validate at least eight quarters of old-age contributions:
 - ✓ in the last two years if you have just had your first child;
 - ✓ in the last four years if it is the second child;
 - ✓ in the last five years for the third child.

Some periods count as periods of work: sick leave, compensated maternity leave and paid vocational training. The duration of the payment depends on the number of children and the parents' situation.

Table 2: Family benefits scheme

Children	Parents living together	Single parent
1	In case of birth: 6 months PER parent. In case of adoption: 12 months following the child's arrival.	In case of birth: 12 months, within the first year of the child. In case of adoption: 12 months following the child's arrival.
2 and more	In case of birth: 24 months per parent, within the 3 years of the youngest child. In case of adoption: minimum 12 months following the child's arrival or until the child reaches 3 years.	In case of birth: Until the youngest child reaches 3 years. In case of adoption: minimum 12 months following the child's arrival or until the child reaches 3 years.

- In case of **total cessation of activity**:
 - € 400 per month;
- In case of **partial rate activity**:
 - 250 € per month for a working period **less than or equal to a half time**
 - 150 € per month for a working period **between 50% and 80%**.

3.1.2 Back to School allowance (2.9 million beneficiaries)

The Back to School allowance is paid to families whose resources do not exceed a certain ceiling. It is paid for children from 6 years old to 15. (In France, the age of compulsory schooling is 6 years old. Starting from the child's 16th birthday, the parents must deliver a certificate of school attendance.

Approximate amount:

CHILD AGE	AMOUNT
6 to 10 y.o.	370 €
11 to 14 y.o.	390 €
14 to 18 y.o.	400

3.1.3 Family support allowance (745,000 beneficiaries)

The Family Support Allowance is paid to raise a lone child deprived of the assistance of one or both parents, or to supplement a small amount of alimony paid. This benefit is intended for single people who are raising a child under 20 years. The other parent must have not paid - or only partially paid - for alimony for at least a month. The support can be paid even if no court decision has yet taken place. It is the obligation of the parents to maintain the livelihoods of their children. The benefit is paid for four months. To collect it for any longer period, the beneficiary must take steps to resolve their alimony.

If the other parent does not pay, not fully or not regularly, the alimony determined by the court order, in a divorce agreement by mutual consent issued by a notary or an enforceable title issued by the Fund, the Fund acts then in place of the beneficiary and on its behalf to recover it. It can put in place a procedure against the other parent to recover up to two years of unpaid alimony. In this case, and if the beneficiary lives alone, the benefit is paid as an advance. If the beneficiary lives in a relationship, the fund can also help to recover unpaid alimony.

If the other parent pays the support in full, but the amount is lower than that of the Family Support Allowance, the fund can pay a supplementary Family Support Allowance to reach this amount.

Approximate amount: 115 € per child, if the child is living with one parent; 153 €, if the child is hosted by another person.

3.1.4 Daily allowance for parental attendance (5,700 beneficiaries)

The daily parental allowance is designed for a parent who stops working to look after a child under 20 who has a serious illness or disability. It can also be granted if the child has been the victim of a serious accident requiring the presence of a person at his side.

The applicant must provide a detailed medical certificate stating the need for compulsory care and the continued presence of one of the parents with the child, as well as the foreseeable duration of his treatment. This certificate will be sent to the Health Insurance Medical Inspectorate, which will decide on the application submitted.

The Fund contributes free of charge to the Pension Fund for all daily parental allowance beneficiaries.

Approximate amount: The daily allowance amount is 43.58 € for a Couple and 51.77 € for a single person. If, in addition, the beneficiary supports expenses related to the state of the health of the child, a supplement, which amounts to 111.44 € per month, can be paid, under certain conditions. The benefit is paid monthly for six-month periods and is renewable. Its maximum duration is fixed at three years. The beneficiary receives the sum of the daily allowances which correspond to the number of days the beneficiary is absent from their professional activity. This number is limited to 22 days per month and 310 days for a period of three years.

3.1.5 Education allowance for disabled child (256,000 beneficiaries)

This benefit is dedicated to the parents of a child whose disability rate is at least equal to 80%. If the rate is between 50% and 79%, it can be paid if the child receives home care or a special education service, or if he or she goes to a special education institution.

"The Departmental Commission for the Rights and Independence of Persons with Disabilities" determines the disability rate. This Commission also decides on the allocation of the benefit and its complement. Families benefiting from the Education allowance for a disabled child can opt for a supplement of the AEEH (the French acronym of the name of the benefit = Allocation d'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé or Disabled Children's Education or for the benefit of compensation of the handicap paid by the departmental council.

If the claimant assumes sole responsibility for the disabled child and benefits from a supplement to the third-party benefit, he or she may be entitled to a special increase for single parents. If the child is placed in a boarding school with the full coverage of their living expenses, the beneficiary can receive the benefit for periods when they return home, such as holidays or weekends.

Approximate amount: The basic benefit amount is 131.81 € per month. This amount can be increased by an additional 100 € to 1120 €, depending on:

- ✓ the parents' reduction or cessation of their professional activity;
- ✓ hiring a paid third party;
- ✓ the amount of expenses related to the child's disability.

The Education allowance for disabled child and its supplement are paid for a period of one to five years, renewable, unless there is an aggravation in the rate of disability.

3.1.6 Family allowances (Starting the second child) – 4.8 million beneficiaries

The entire population with children is entitled to family allowances, regardless of the family's situation. However, the amount depends on the income. They are paid from the month following the birth or arrival of a SECOND child, then a third, etc. (adoption or another situation). For children aged 14 and over, starting the second child, the recipient may receive a bonus. A lump sum allowance is allocated to families that have raised 3 or more children and whose eldest child is 20 years old. For children living in an alternate residence, family allowances can be shared between parents.

Approximate amount: From the second child, the amount varies according to the number of children and the level of income. For a family of two, it amounts to 32.79 €, 65.59 € or 131.16 € depending on income.

Table 3: Family allowance

Number of dependent children in the family	Known income of the family		
	income slice 1	income slice 2	income slice 3
2	< or = 67 542 € Family Allowances = 131,16 € per month	< or = 90 026 € Family Allowances = 65,59 € per month	> 90 026 € Family Allowances = 32,79 € per month
3	< or = 73 170 € Family Allowances = 299,20 € per month	< or = 95 654 € Family Allowances = 149,60 € per month	> 95 654 € Family Allowances = 74,81 € per month

Per additional child	+ 5 628 € Family Allowances = 168,05 € per month	+ 5 628 € Family Allowances = 84,02 € per month	+ 5 628 € Family Allowances = 42,01 € per month
Bonus for children 14 y.o and more	65,59 € per month	32,79 € per month	16,40 € per month
Lump benefit	82,94 € per month	41,47 € per month	20,74 € per month

3.1.7 The family supplement (831,000 beneficiaries)

The family supplement is paid from the third birthday of the youngest child. Payment ends when the family has less than 3 children under 21 years old under their care.

This benefit is means tested.

Approximate amount: Regardless of the number of dependent children in the household, the same amount of family supplement is paid. Depending on the level of household income, this amount is 170 € per month or 260 € per month per month.

3.2 Housing supports

There are 3 types of allowances dedicated to housing:

- ✓ Personal housing assistance
- ✓ Family housing allowance
- ✓ Social housing allowance

Complementary aids supplement the housing benefits.

3.2.1 The Housing benefits (6.5 million beneficiaries)

The 3 types of allowances have a similar method of calculation but are based on substantially different scales. Moreover, they correspond to different historical periods:

- ✓ Family housing allowance was implemented in 1948 to facilitate housing and reconstruction after the Second World War. It is allocated to persons with dependent children and globally for all dwellings that do not fall under the 2 other allowances.
It is financed by the Family Fund.
- ✓ Social housing allowance was created in the late 1960s to address the increased need for support for people without children, students and the elderly. This benefit is financed by taxes (reimbursement by the Ministry of Finance)
- ✓ Personal housing assistance is the last stratum of the system and was created in the 80s. The award criteria are more stringent than for the first 2 allocations in that the housing must meet more stringent comfort standards. The achievement of these standards depends essentially on an agreement signed between the

owner of the house (public or private) and the State. This agreement allows the owner to either benefit from favorable conditions to build housing in accordance with the new standards, or to restore old housing in accordance with these standards. This benefit is financed both by the Family Fund and by the Government.

The benefits cover that part of the housing expense that the recipient is not “supposed” to be able to pay. For that, an algorithm gives the amount to be paid every month, considering the following variables:

- ✓ The annual income of all people living in the premises, excluding social benefits,
- ✓ The number of people living in the premises,
- ✓ The actual expenditure incurred by the beneficiary within the limit of a ceiling corresponding to the average cost of housing in the area. The housing benefits can be allocated for a rented premise as for an owned home. Of course, the housing cost varies depending on the region. There are 3 different ceilings considered: one for big cities (such as Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux), one for average size cities and one for rural areas.

As a result, there is no fixed scale and each household receives a specific amount.

If one of the people living in the household loses their income (unemployment, for example), a special deduction is made of its resources to take into account the new situation.

Housing must be decent, of a minimum comfort level and comply with the health and safety standards. Its surface must be at least equal to 9 m² for a single person; 16 m² for two people (+ 9 m² for each additional person). If these conditions are not met, the housing allowance may be granted by derogation.

3.2.2 The moving allowance

The moving allowance is for large, modest families who move when their family is growing. It is reserved for families of at least three children born or to be born, and who benefit from the allowance of family housing for the new housing. The move must take place between the first day of the calendar month following the end of the third month of pregnancy and the last day of the month preceding the second birthday of the last child.

The amount of the benefit is equal to the expenses incurred for the move, up to a limit of around 990 € per month for three dependent children (82 € per month per additional child).

3.2.3 The Home Improvement Loan

The tenant or owner of his principal residence can obtain a home improvement loan. It is a loan proposed to help recipients who undertake major work in their home: repair, improvement, sanitation, thermal insulation. Maintenance work (painting) is excluded. The loan amount can cover up to 80% of the planned expenses, up to a limit of about 1100 € per month. Its interest rate is 1%. It is refundable in 36 monthly installments. Half of the loan is paid upon signature of the contract upon presentation of the quote. The other half is paid upon completion of the work upon presentation of the invoice.

3.3 Income supplements

There are 3 benefits designed to provide or supplement income for certain categories of the population.

3.3.1 The Activity Bonus (3.2 million beneficiaries)

The Activity Bonus is designed for people over the age of 18 years, living in France in a stable manner and exercising a salaried or independent professional activity. They may be French or nationals of the European Economic Area or Switzerland. If they come from another country, they must have been in France regularly for at least five years or hold a residence permit. If they are students or apprentices, they are entitled to the Activity Bonus if they receive a salary at least equivalent to 78% of the French minimum wage (about 900 € per month) for at least three months.

The Activity Bonus is calculated based on the total income of household members (including social benefits). It differs according to the situation of each one. Its amount is identical for three months, except in case of separation. In this case, the rights are recalculated.

An individual increase may be granted to each person in activity whose income is greater than or equal to 50% of the monthly minimum wage in force in France. The Activity Bonus is not paid if the amount is less than 15 € per month.

Approximate maximum amounts:

Children or dependent of the household	Lone person	Person living in couple (married or not)
0	530 € per month	800 € per month
1	800 € per month	960 € per month
2	960 € per month	1120 € per month
Per additional child	215 € per month	215€ per month

3.3.2 The Active Solidarity Income (1.83 million beneficiaries)

Active Solidarity Income is intended for people over 25, stably living in France. They must be French or nationals of the European Economic Area, with a right to stay. Nationals of another country must have been in France on a regular basis for at least five years or hold a residence permit. They can't apply for Active Solidarity Income if they do not first claim their rights to all social benefits and other benefits (alimony, unemployment benefits, retirement, etc.). The right cannot be recognized when claimed by students.

Active Solidarity Income can be paid without any age requirement if the applicant is pregnant and already has at least one dependent child. To be eligible for Active Solidarity Income between the ages of 18 and 25 without children, the applicant must have been in a full-time occupation for at least two years out of the last three years.

The Active Solidarity Income is calculated based on the total income of the applicant and those of the household members (including social benefits). The amount of the Active Solidarity Income is identical for three months, except in the case of separation. In this case, the rights are recalculated.

All recipients must follow social and professional insertion programs led by social workers on behalf of the Departmental Council.

Approximate maximum amounts:

Children or dependent of the household	Lone person	Person living in couple (married or not)
0	550 € per month	830 € per month
1	830 € per month	990 € per month
2	990 € per month	1150 € per month
Per additional child	220 € per month	220 € per month

3.3.3 The Disabled Adults Benefit (1.13 million beneficiaries)

The allowance for adults with disabilities is dedicated to people with disabilities from the age of 20 and whose disability rate is at least 50%. The rate is determined by the Commission on the Rights and Autonomy of Disabled Persons.

If the applicant is engaged in a salaried professional activity in an ordinary environment, or is self-employed, the Disabled Adults Benefit entitlement is calculated each quarter according to the taxable resources collected during the last three months.

If the beneficiary of the full-rate Disabled Adults Benefit (or in addition to an old-age, disability or work-injury pension) and their disability rate is at least 80%, they can benefit from additional resources. The amount is about 180 € per month. Meeting several conditions are required: not having reached the legal retirement age, not exercising a professional activity, and not having received professional income for at least one year at the date of the application.

The bonus for independent living is automatically granted if the recipient receives a full-rate Disabled Adults Benefit (or in addition to an old-age pension, disability or a work accident annuity), that his disability rate is at least than 80% and does not carry out any professional activity. He must also live in an independent dwelling for which he receives housing assistance. Its amount is about 105 € per month per month.

Approximate amount:

- ✓ If the beneficiary has no declared income, he receives the maximum amount of Disabled Adults Benefit: approximately 820 € per month per month.
- ✓ If he reported income from activity, his Disabled Adults Benefit is calculated based on a portion of his income.
- ✓ If he receives a pension, he receives the difference between the amount of his pension and the maximum amount of Disabled Adults Benefit.

4. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even after studying the main reports written by the Chinese and the European experts and listening the Chinese professionals – both at national level (Beijing) and at regional level (Inner Mongolia – Hohhot) – the followings are very preliminary recommendations and proposals, as the People's Republic of China is immense, with regional economic and social disparities and a social culture quite different from the European social culture.

Nonetheless, some issues seem recurrent and mentioned by most of the experts and professionals.

Among them, 4 must be emphasized:

- ✓ The lack of a large and detailed database.
- ✓ The weakness or the inadequacy of the social work and its unclear link with the labor market.
- ✓ The need of stable targeted social assistance based on national rules and the too narrow dependence of the social benefits on the wealth of the region.
- ✓ The involvement of volunteers and NGOs.

4.1 The social assistance database

All social protection systems depend on the quality of the database they use. Its main purposes are:

- ✓ The storage of personal information, updating it and monitoring the history of situations.
- ✓ The computation of the rights and related actions (control, payment).
- ✓ The analysis of the data available for cohorts of the beneficiaries to study the social situations and phenomena in specific territorial areas (Actuarial).

The usefulness of a solid database is not just limited to its sole use, calculating fees and making payments. It is also used to control the accuracy of the rights and to limit the risk of fraud. In this respect, it must not only be enriched by the data provided by the beneficiaries but also by an exchange of information with the databases of other administrations (national, regional and local) such as the tax services, or even with private sector databases such as banks.

In this respect, the database set up in the Hohhot region of Inner Mongolia is a remarkable example of an effective and efficient tool. However, the size and large population of the People's Republic of China makes it particularly difficult to set up a single database.

We can therefore suggest an alternative proposal consisting of the creation of a unique database model developed at national level and adapted in each region. This model should include all the data needed to calculate the various rights and a comprehensive knowledge of the sociology of the population. Such a single model would allow the authorities and researchers to perform sophisticated analysis and sophisticated data cross-checks to study social phenomena, anticipate developments and propose adapted measures.

As far as the calculation itself is concerned, an alternative may be considered:

- ✓ Either each region develops its own calculation programs,

- ✓ Or the legislation is standardized and developed at the national level, and the calculation programs could be developed at the national level.

4.2 The weakness or the inadequacy of social work and its unclear link with the labor market

The brevity of the contacts with our Chinese colleagues did not allow for a deep analysis of the problems with social work in China. It appears, however, that the Chinese authorities are quite convinced that the mere payment of cash benefits is insufficient to allow for the real inclusion or social reinclusion of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable of populations.

First, there is a need to clarify the concepts: In Europe, there is usually a clear difference between the agents who study rights, control them and pay them, on the one hand, and those who are in charge of supporting the disadvantaged populations and who contribute to their social integration.

The first - who are called in France, for example, "technicians" - have a profile of lawyer. Most of them have been educated for two to four years at a university, most often in law. However, in view of the specificities of social law, its complexity and its extent, the social organizations themselves, for the most part, provide a solid alternate training. It is generally considered that a technician must be trained for a minimum of 2 years before becoming operational. These employees are specifically and exclusively assigned to rights' assessment tasks, database enrichment, calculation, user relations, control and the fight against fraud.

The latter hold a specific diploma, awarded after 4 to 5 years of study at the university (general case in Europe) or in specialized schools (in France). The training of these people covers psychology, sociology, social law, analysis and understanding of the social phenomena, including in their historical dimension and demography including the notion of statistical analysis. Nonetheless, there also exist less qualified social workers such as home helpers, educators of young children etc. Altogether, the number of social workers, in all categories, is estimated at 23 million across the whole of Europe.

These employees are specifically and exclusively in charge of the individualized accompaniment of people receiving cash assistance. They ensure links with the various administrations and NGOs that are likely to provide assistance to individuals, assess the capacity of people to enter the labor market in relation to employment services, provide support for situations such as domestic violence (women and children), abuse, extreme poverty.

In most European countries, these agents are subject to a duty of professional secrecy except when the information is required by a court.

They are highly qualified, reasonably well-paid people.

Nonetheless, the situation is still rather complicated. Let's take the French example:

In France, for example, there are 14 categories of professional graduates each focused on specific audiences or needs. A single professional is truly a generalist, able to address any of the public on any problem: the assistant(e) of social service. This is the history of this because originally at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were only social work graduates (1932). It was the only profession of social work. They were necessarily subject to

all tasks and functions even if they worked with auxiliaries. Educators appeared in the 1960s. They have massively invested in the field of education (Today they are 3 times more numerous than social workers). Finally, there is a lack of counselors in social and family education (who are also considered as professional general practitioners) in the field of child protection. Once further training in this field is undertaken, they can also be considered general social workers.

There are 13 state diplomas in the professional structure of social workers according to the different levels of study classified by level (V, IV, III, II and I) It is useful to recall them here:

- ✓ The state diploma of educational and social accompaniment (DEAES): It accompanies the everyday life of the elderly or handicapped in the activities of the daily life (to sleep, to get up, toilet, dressing, meals, displacements, etc.). It also has a role of encouragement and support for communication. The professional usually works in the homes of people who can not do the daily tasks alone (elderly people, families, people with disabilities, patients);
- ✓ The state diploma of family assistant (AF): The AF welcomes permanently to his home and his family the minors or young people aged 18 to 21 years. The reception can be organized under the protection of childhood or medico-social or therapeutic care;
- ✓ The State diploma of technician of the social and family intervention (TISF): TISF intervenes, at their place of living, with people who need help in particular circumstances (death of a parent, hospitalization, birth, long illness, disability, etc.). They support the family by taking care of the daily routine (housing maintenance, meal preparation, homework help) and supports parents in the education of their children;
- ✓ The state diploma of instructor educator (ME): The ME participates, in liaison with the other professionals of the specialized education, in the educational action and the organization of the daily life of children, adolescents or adults in difficulty or handicapped persons admitted to medico-social institutions;
- ✓ The State diploma of family mediator (MF): The MF accompanies people in the situation where there is breakdown or separation in the family in order to promote the reconstruction of the family bond and to help in the search of solutions answering the needs of each member of the family;

We then find the 3 emblematic professions of social work (Level III to be recognized as level II in 2018)

- ✓ State diploma of social service assistant (33,500 SSA) commonly called "social assistants": The SAS interacts with people facing family, professional, financial, academic or medical difficulties. They provide help and support, both psychological, socially and materially, to encourage them to find or regain autonomy and facilitate their social and professional integration.
- ✓ State diploma of specialized educator (97,900 ES): The ES contributes to the education of children and adolescents or to the support of adults with physical or psychological disabilities, behavioral disorders or who have problems interacting with society. They help people in difficulty to restore or preserve their autonomy, to develop the social capacities and integration. They also promote prevention actions;

- ✓ State diploma of counselor in the social economy (9,900 CESF): The CESF helps individuals, families and groups to solve their problems of daily life through information, technical advice or the organization of training and special education professions to a specific audience;
- ✓ The State Diploma of Early Childhood Educator (18,200 EJE): EJE provides reception and education functions for children aged 0 to 7 years old in relation to their parents. They assist them in the learning of autonomy and of social life;
- ✓ The State diploma of specialized technical educator (22,300 ETS): The ETS is at the same time an educator and a specialist of a professional technique who transmits to the persons for whom it has the responsibility. They specialize in the adaptation or vocational rehabilitation of young people or adults;

There are also certifications to provide management and leadership functions. These 25,900 professionals are also considered social workers.

- ✓ The certificate of aptitude for managerial functions and manager of a social intervention unit: The managers of a work unit supervise a team and directly engage the users. They drive the action as part of the service projects. Intermediaries between the management and teams, they are in an interface position in organizations;
- ✓ The certificate of aptitude for the functions of director of an establishment or of a social intervention service: The directors of an establishment or of a social intervention service must ensure to the users an individualized care of quality, to facilitate the expression, the satisfaction of needs, access to rights and the effective exercise of citizenship
- ✓ The State Diploma in Social Engineering: The holders of the diploma can lead the analysis of complex social issues taking into account the framework of social policies, organizational and territorial contexts, social, family and individual issues. In addition, they can design, implement, develop studies and conduct research based on multidisciplinary and participatory approaches and finally mobilizes, enrich, exploit the tools of observation and social watch. (<https://dubasque.org> – in French).

Thus, it is recommended that the Chinese authorities implement the following:

- ✓ Analyze and review the social workers curricula. The Chinese authorities most probably have a clear conception of social work. Depending on the field they are assigned to, social workers should have clear and detailed objectives to reach, procedures to follow and concrete results to obtain. Therefore, their basic education – and their vocational training throughout their careers - must be adapted, on the one hand, to the objectives assigned and, on the other hand, to the rapid evolution of social phenomena and problems.
- ✓ Include more efficiently social work in social protection. Contrary to popular belief in European countries for more than a century, it has become clear that benefits in cash are not sufficient to ensure the reintegration of people into society and allow them to acquire, or re-acquire, their autonomy.

As a result, most countries have adopted social support approaches to help people. These approaches are largely based on individual social work and the provision of services. For example, it is difficult to refer a person to employment if you do not know both their skills

and their potential abilities. Relevant services to enable people to know their potentials are often not easily accessible or even understood by a large part of the uneducated population. In this case, the role of the social worker will be to orient the person, to establish the links between him and the competent services, and to follow step by step his evolution¹.

- ✓ Make a clear split between the ones who are in charge of the people's rights and the ones who are in charge of helping people to reinstate social life and the society, including the job market. The skills required to manage the cash benefits of the population are very different from those required of social workers who individually support people in their integration and empowerment process.

The first - the technicians - are essentially specialists in social law, administrative procedures and relations with populations in difficulty.

The latter have skills in individual coaching. They have a global, general approach, and knowledge of the different services that can be mobilized to help the person. Their skills are essentially in the field of psychology, sociology, although it is essential that they have a solid knowledge of the procedures, the services available and the law.

4.3 The need of stable targeted social assistance based on national rules and the too narrow dependence of the social benefits on the wealth of the region

It seems that social regulation is essentially the responsibility of the regions and local authorities. This characteristic introduces strong disparities of the rights between the different regions. In addition, the financial capacities of each region strongly influence the setting up of in cash benefits and social services. Therefore, it seems clear that the poorest regions - whose populations are the most in difficulty - are also the regions with the most limited means to assist people.

It is therefore strongly recommended that:

- ✓ Basic social regulations should be put in place for the People's Republic of China as a whole, to guarantee the equivalent and just rights for the entire population of the Republic.
- ✓ An equalization system is set up to ensure that the poorest regions have the financial means to cover the social rights of their population. It goes without saying that the regions could retain the right to provide financial services and additional services according to their financial capacities.
- ✓ Social regulations established at the national level should be sufficiently flexible to allow for local adaptations. For example, based on international experience, there are two basic ways of addressing the issue of social minima:
 - A statistical approach based on the median income of the population as a whole. In Europe, the poverty line is set at 60% of the median income of the population of each country. Anyone with an income below this level is considered poor.
 - A more concrete approach, based on a "basket of the housewife", including everyday consumer goods (food, housing, heating, current consumption) and basic services (transport, health). This approach is common in Russia and the USA.

This model can also be refined by taking into account the local context: The heating needs are different in the north and south, the cost of housing differs depending on whether the person resides in the rural areas or in the city, the local production of food products is self-sufficient or highly dependent on distant suppliers.

4.4 The involvement of volunteers and NGOs

NGOs represent the engagement of civil society in the community. Most often they attract many people who feel concerned by their purpose (health, integration, homeless, lone women, lone children, disabled people).

Overall, there are 3 types of NGOs, depending on the sources of their funding:

- ✓ NGOs exclusively financed by the State where they are located. They are highly dependent on the policy orientations of governments, but when they achieve significant results, they are an excellent implementer of public policies initiated by governments.
- ✓ NGOs exclusively funded by their members and patrons. They have more autonomy but - most of the time - adapt to local contexts and participate in the resolution of problems that concern them.
- ✓ NGOs receiving mainly international funding. In most cases, they are mainly involved in international actions outside their country of origin.

The first 2 categories are excellent field relays, highly involved and, most often, very competent in their field of activity. They allow - through their field of activities and through their networks - to gather information and concrete experiences that allow a fine evaluation of social policies and their improvement. According to their ability to communicate and the financial means they allocate to communication, they are the ones who are most able to attract the support of civil society and citizens who are sensitive to different social issues. For example, in France, there are about 13 million people involved in associations, all categories combined (out of a population of about 66 million citizens).

REFERENCE:

- www.caf.fr
- <https://dubasque.org>



**3.3.2 Standards in social assistance benefits and services -
legal framework, stakeholders, implementation,
governance and administration**

Best Practices Report and Policy Recommendation Report
Czech Republic country brief

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ABBREVIATIONS:

- CZK – Czech crown (currency unit)
EU – European Union
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
LOCR – Labour Office of the Czech Republic
MoLSA – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
NGO – Non-governmental organization
OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

1. GENERAL SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic has a sound social protection system which brings excellent results in prevention of income poverty compared to other OECD and EU countries. In 2016, 9.7 % of the population (9.2 % in 2017) was under the poverty line whereas the EU average was 17.3 % in 2016. Total social protection expenditure is well below EU average (in 2015 19.0 % of GDP while the EU average was 28.6 % of GDP).

In the state budget, social expenditure amounted to 48.3 % of the total expenditure in 2016 (CZK 589.7 billion out of CZK 1,219.8 billion). This expenditure included contributory and non-contributory social benefits, unemployment benefits, social services, the related administration costs. However, public healthcare insurance is not part of the state budget.

After 1989, the Czech Republic underwent major political, economic and social changes, resulting – inter alia – in change from state-owned, planned economy to open market economy. Existing social protection systems had to be adapted to the market character of the economy and to other changes in the society.

There were two waves of such reforms, the first one between 1990 and 1995, the second in 2005 – 2006 with subsequent amendments adopted – inter alia – as a part of austerity measures during the crisis which started in 2008. Administration of the benefits underwent major changes around 2003 and 2011 – 2012. Social services were set on a new basis, including their administration, in 2006 with several subsequent changes made in the following years.

2. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

Non-contributory social assistance benefits are grouped in the following four major schemes:

- State Social Support (“Family Benefits”) established in 1995,
- Benefits for Persons with Disabilities – today scheme which replaced previous set of several benefits, was approved in 2011 and took effect in 2012,
- Assistance in Material Need established in 2006,

- Care Allowance (which is closely linked with social services) also established in 2006.

Benefits in those four schemes may be divided into two major groups – to improve the income of a household if its income is below specific thresholds or to cover specific need resulting from long-term unfavourable health status (either the need of care or need of special aids or to cover costs of transportation).

The Assistance in Material Need scheme is also the last safety net scheme and is aimed also at prevention of social exclusion or solution of such situation. It is therefore not limited to provision of benefits in cash but is linked with social work and services.

Table 1: Social Assistance Benefits

Scheme	Volume of paid benefits (millions CZK)			Number of benefits paid (thousands)		
	2016	2017	Year-on-year index	2016	2017	Year-on-year index
State Social Support	35 044.7	34 309.1	97.90 %	10 320.7	9 673.5	93.73 %
Assistance in Material Need	9 298.3	7 398.3	79.57 %	2 425.4	2 071.7	85.42 %
Benefits for Persons with Disabilities	2 012.8	1 973.7	98.06 %	2 746.2	2 829.5	103.03 %
Care Allowance	23 134.9	25 213.9	108.99 %	3 919.3	4 001.6	102.10 %
Total	69 490.7	68 894.9	99.14 %	19 411.6	18 576.3	95.69 %

Source: Data provided by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic

2.1 Major reforms of the system

In the area of non-contributory social benefits (social assistance benefits in cash), the Czech Republic has established new schemes after 1989. The State Social Support was established in 1995 and is the only scheme from 1990s to exist today. It has been amended since (e.g. foster care benefits were separated from the State Social Support to form a special scheme in 2012).

Second series of major reforms was implemented in 2005-2006 (effective since 1st January 2007). Major changes were establishment of a new scheme – Assistance in Material Need – which is a last safety net among the benefits in cash.

Second one was introduction of a new Act on Living and Subsistence Minimum (see Box 1), which brought about two newly defined and calculated thresholds used in the income and means test as well as for determination of the amount of some benefits in all the non-

contributory schemes. Later changes were connected – inter alia – with austerity measures. Income test has been introduced for some benefits, sometimes the decisive income was lowered so that less households were eligible for the benefit in question. In the Assistance in Material Need Scheme, several changes aimed at motivating the recipients or applicants to take up a job or to follow a regimen prescribed by the Labour Office (i.e. training, public work scheme etc.).

Box 1. Minimum income

Living and Subsistence Minimum Act of 2006

This act was approved after several years of research. The research led to several ideas used in the new regulation:

- Setting of a new Subsistence Minimum which is an amount corresponding with the very basic need of living (i.e. on the survival level) while the Living Minimum is a higher amount covering also some non-essential needs,
- Separation of the costs of housing from the Living Minimum and Subsistence Minimum. The reason was a high volatility of housing prices as well as great regional differences.
- Calculation of the living costs of low-income households based on a Family Accounts Statistics provided precise data for setting the amounts of Living and Subsistence Minimum (the amounts used in the law were very close to those suggested in the report).

Further changes in Living Minimum and Subsistence Minimum

Automatic indexation was terminated in 2008 to control state budget expenditure. Afterwards, the amounts have been changed by an ad hoc Government decision. Last indexation was made in 2012 and today amounts are estimated to be lower than real costs of the relevant needs. Indexation based on the increase of the costs of the relevant consumer basket (estimated increase by 11 %) is being considered currently.

2.2 Administration

Administration of social assistance benefits underwent several major changes. In 1990s, social assistance was administered by District Offices which were bodies of the central state administration. Following the reform of public administration, District Offices were abolished and their responsibilities were transferred either to the central government or to regional authorities and/or municipalities.

Afterwards, some benefits schemes were administered by Labour Offices (operating on the level of former districts and subordinate to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), other by municipalities.

However, for all the time, all the benefits, including those administered by municipalities, were paid from the state budget chapter of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Municipalities received budget transfers to cover the related expenditure.

In 2007, when a major social reform of 2006 came into force, the situation was the following:

- State Social Support was administered by Labour Offices, i.e. bodies of the state administration (one exception – in Prague, State Social Support was administered by the municipal authorities until 2008),
- Benefits for Persons with Disabilities - administered by municipalities (this scheme was replaced in 2012),

- newly introduced Assistance in Material Need was administered by municipalities,
- newly introduced Care Allowance was also administered by municipalities;

Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility still rested with the central government who set the policy, legislation, detailed methodology and covered the expenditure.

In 2007, a legal proposal was prepared with two aims:

- To create a single authority to replace 77 separate Labour Offices,
- To concentrate all social assistance benefit schemes administration under the new authority.

Because of the opposition of the regional leaders the proposal was withdrawn.

The split of the tasks between central government and self-government lasted till 2012. This situation had major disadvantages:

- Citizens had to visit different authorities to apply for social assistance benefits,
- Lack of coordination was perceived between the municipalities, regions and the Labour Offices,
- Despite methodological instructions by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), differences had developed in practice of 205 municipalities with broader competence and 77 Labour Offices,
- All appeals regarding social assistance benefits were decided upon by the Regional Authorities. This included also appeals against decisions taken by the Labour Offices who had to follow instruction issued by MoLSA as well as to respect decisions of the appellate bodies, i.e. the Regional Authorities.

2.2.1 Establishment of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic

In 2011, the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (LOCR or “Labour Office”) was established. LOCR replaced the Labour Offices. The Labour Office is a central authority subordinate to MoLSA with three levels of management:

- Headquarters (Directorate General) located in Prague,
- 14 Regional Branches (1 in each region),
- Contact Offices, numbering over 300, as the first-line offices.

Contact Offices differ in size, from several persons to several dozens.

Reasons for establishing the LOCR were the same as in the proposal from 2007 – creating a single central body with stronger vertical coordination and clear responsibilities thus solving the issues listed above, aligning with the regional level of public administration and also streamlining of the operational costs.

2.2.2 Concentration of social assistance benefits under the LOCR

Shortly after its establishment, on 1st January 2012, the Labour Office became the only authority responsible for social assistance benefits by transferring the relevant schemes –

Assistance in Material Needs, Care Allowance - from municipalities to the hands of the new authority.

At the same time, the scheme with benefits for persons with disabilities was thoroughly revised. Existing 7 benefits were replaced by two which led to a greater transparency of the scheme and decreased its complexity from the administrative point of view.

The reasons for centralising the social assistance benefits under the LOCR were to have only one body dealing with the four schemes (i.e. one-stop shop from the citizens' perspective), establish synergies and prevent overlapping of the benefits from different schemes, to have more unified practice in implementing the schemes and, again, to streamline the operational costs.

However, the reforms encountered serious problems which had to be solved in the following years:

- The Labour Office was understaffed. The eventually withdrawn proposal of 2007 estimated the staff of the new authority as 16,000 employees. In 2012, the Labour Office had about 8,000 employees. In total number, the number of employees remained the same despite the considerable broadening of the LOCR responsibilities. During the same time, the unemployment rate peaked (in 2011-2012) while in 2007 when the first proposal had been drafted, it had been low and decreasing further.
- In 2012, the Labour Office introduced new information system for all the social assistance benefits. The system was not functioning properly and the LOCR was on the brink of a collapse. In 2012, it managed to barely pay the benefits.

In 2014, gradual expansion of the staff began and reached 12,000 in 2017. The situation on the labour market improved significantly (unemployment is the lowest since 1990).

The employees of the Labour Office are public servants.

2.3 Coordination of social assistance benefits with other schemes and cooperation of LOCR with other administrative bodies

Those benefits that are based on long-term unfavourable health status are awarded regardless of income of the recipient and/or his household. Health status is being assessed in all cases by Medical Assessment Service (part of the Czech Social Security Administration).

Some benefits are income tested or even means tested. Sometimes, the income test is needed to assess the entitlement to the benefit, sometimes it is bound with some of the parameters of the benefit.

2.3.1 Income Test

Income decisive for an entitlement to state social support benefits includes, in particular, income from dependent activity (employment), income from entrepreneurship or self-employment, social security (sickness and pension insurance) benefits, unemployment benefit and similar income from abroad. Net income is taken into account in the decisive income. For some benefits, certain State Social Support benefits are also taken into account.

Nowadays, it is up to the applicant to prove his/her income by providing the documentation (contract, tax declaration, declaration of paid wages by the employer, evidence on paid

benefits from the Czech Social Security Administration). Nevertheless, the Labour Office is connected with the relevant authorities and is technically able to receive data from them via electronic means. However, the connection is used mainly to verify data provided by applicants.

Within the means test, it is assessed whether the applicant may increase his/her income by use of property and also claims, including the entitlements to other social benefits. In other words, such Assistance in Material Need benefit is awarded after all other social schemes, including State Social Support, have been checked and (if possible) used by the applicant.

The Labour Office is the only authority with mandate to decide on granting the benefit. However, other authorities are involved, mostly in providing data and assessment necessary for the decision.

Applications for benefits are handled by the contact points of one of the 14 Regional Branches of the Labour Office based on the residence of the person entitled to the benefit.

2.3.2 State Social Support

The benefits from this scheme are related to family. Income test is carried for three of the five benefits from the scheme (Child Allowance, Housing Allowance, Birth Grant).

For the Parental Allowance benefit, there is a special situation which involves the Czech Social Security Administration as the body responsible for Sickness insurance scheme. The Parental Allowance monthly amount can be set by the beneficiary, but the maximum monthly amount is determined by the amount of daily assessment base within the sickness insurance (which itself is derived from labour income or entrepreneurship income if the entrepreneur participates in sickness insurance scheme).

Box 2. Parental Allowance

Parental Allowance

Parental Allowance was introduced in 2001. The benefit is not income tested, i.e. each family may receive the benefit regardless its income. The aim of the benefit is to support the family member who cares of the child. There are only few situations when the benefit may be withdrawn, the parent may even work without losing the benefit.

Today, approximately 98 % of recipients are women. Parental Allowance is one of factors which caused that maternity has strong negative impact on employment rate of women with children and the gender pay gap (approx. 22 %). Two other main factors have been lack of childcare facilities, especially for children under 3 years of age and lack of flexible working arrangements or part-time jobs (5% share in total employment). Increasing the flexibility in drawing of the Parental Allowance (drawing was originally set for 3 years. Today, the recipient may chose the monthly amount until the total of CZK 220,000 is drawn, even in 7 months), as well as increase in tax reliefs and tax bonuses for children had little impact on employment of parents with small children as they were not accompanied by support to other relevant areas. The average time a parent spends outside the labour market is around 3 years. Total family support expenditure is not small, but is primarily focused on income support of the families (Parental Allowance, tax reliefs/bonuses). Redirecting some resources to development of childcare facilities and promotion of flexible jobs may improve employment of this group, especially in current labour market situation when there is an acute lack of workforce.

The situation of parents of small children is a clear example of how a well-meant and widely accepted support may lead to an inactivity trap and negative impact on families if it is not coordinated with other services (childcare facilities etc.) and specific employment support.

2.3.3 Benefits for Persons with Disabilities

Benefits in this scheme are awarded based on the assessment of health status of an applicant. This assessment is being performed by physicians of the Medical Assessment Service, which serves under the Czech Social Security Administration (the same service provides health status assessment with regard to disability pensions and also to determine the degree of dependence on care provided by another person with regard to Care Allowance). Therefore, the Czech Social Security Administration has crucial role in providing the data necessary for taking decision upon an application. However, the decision is taken by the Labour Office alone.

An income test is also carried out to determine the extent of contribution of a beneficiary of the Grant for Special Aid.

2.3.4 Care Allowance

Decisive for awarding the benefit as well as determining its monthly amount is an assessment carried out by the Medical Assessment Service of the Czech Social Security Administration. Based on the degree of dependence on care provided by another person (there are 10 areas and by the number of areas in which care by another person is needed, the degree of dependence is determined), which then determines the amount of the benefit.

The situation is the same as with Benefits for Persons with Disabilities – assessment by the Czech Social Security Administration is crucial for granting the benefit but the decision is taken by the Labour Office.

Income test with regard to this benefit is used with regard to applicants (or beneficiaries) with low income. If the income test and other criteria are met, the Care Allowance is increased by CZK 2,000 per month (EUR 76).

2.3.5 Assistance in Material Need

The aim of the scheme is a more complex and also more ambitious. This scheme is used only after all other schemes fail to solve applicant's situation. The assistance is provided in order to help the person in material need to overcome the situation and integrate again into the society.

The scheme includes motivational measures to make the beneficiaries actively seek solution of their material need situation. Means test is used to determine the entitlement for benefits. Apart from income test (which includes also State Social Support benefits), it is being assessed whether the applicant has property which can be used to increase income, or claims (including entitlement to social benefits in cash) he/she can use for the same purpose.

Labour or job-seeking activity is also monitored and cooperation with the labour market department of the relevant Regional Branch of the Labour Office is therefore established. Benefits may be decreased if the beneficiary or applicant who is registered as jobseeker does not follow the instructions of the labour market department (does not participate in re-training, does not accept a suitable job etc.).

For the Assistance in Material Need, special role is assigned to the municipalities (who were in charge of the whole scheme until 2012). If a person in material need does not have a decent housing, the relevant municipality is obliged to seek it within its territory. In some cases, the municipality may veto granting a Supplement for Housing benefit. This power has been expanded recently – a municipality may declare a part of its territory as a zone to whose residents no new Supplement for Housing may be awarded. However, some municipalities declared such a zone on their whole territory. This is still a new situation and the effects are still unknown, but it is a potential danger to the efforts towards social inclusion of the people affected by such decisions.

The municipalities are often (but not exclusively) those who organize the Public Work Service (unpaid work for the local community) which is required from Assistance in Material Need beneficiaries who receive the benefits for several months in a row. Failure to perform the service at least 20 hours a month results in a decrease in the benefit amount. On the other hand, serving more hours of this service leads to increase in the benefit amount.

2.3.6 Social Work within the Assistance in Material Need

Special role is given to social work within the Assistance in Material Need. The first step of the assistance is to carry out social review of the applicant to identify his/her needs and means at his/her disposal.

In this area, the role of municipalities is crucial and indispensable as the Labour Office capacity for social work is limited. Social work within assistance in material need may be

provided either by social workers who are employees of the LOCR or by municipality social workers. The only one part of social work which is exclusive is one type of social review which is carried out to verify the material need situation of the applicant (this may be done only by social workers of the LOCR).

The Act on Assistance in Material Need obliges the Labour Office and the municipalities to cooperate with each other in order to solve material need situations. The cooperation is set on case-by-case basis. Instruction issued by the MoLSA recommends case conference as the most suitable form of cooperation between the social workers of the LOCR and the municipalities. The municipalities' social workers have access to Unified Information System operated by the MoLSA. They can view certain documents in an Assistance in Material Need beneficiary's file and upload their reports (a standardised form is used for social review).

3. SOCIAL SERVICES

Before 2007, social services were based on legislation from 1988. The person using social services was rather a passive recipient with little influence on the provision of social services.

Conditions for establishment and a complex system of funding of social services favoured providers established by public administration, leaving limited resources and space for non-governmental providers. The system was biased towards keeping large institutional care facilities and neglected ambulatory and terrain types of services, mostly those services which are aimed at prevention of negative social phenomena.

Originally, the bodies bearing most of the responsibilities in this area were District Offices which were bodies on the lowest level of general central state administration. The District Offices were abolished in 2003 and social services were transferred mainly to the self-government - regional authorities and municipalities.

The roles of various stakeholders (regions, municipalities, the state, non-governmental organizations) were unclear and responsibilities were not set clearly. Also the philosophy of social services was still based in 1980s while the paradigm has changed since.

3.1 Social Services Act of 2006

The Act adopted in 2006 (effective since 1st January 2007) brought a thorough fundamental change of the social services system.

Social Services Act put emphasis on the idea that social services should help people to live a normal life - allow them to work, shop, attend school and places of faith, participate in leisure time activities, take care of themselves, their home, etc. The services aim to maintain the highest possible quality and dignity in their lives – possibly in the client's home and community or in environment as natural as possible. Preventative services and services provided in the ambulatory and terrain form were favoured and a policy of deinstitutionalization was adopted.

3.1.1 Client status of a beneficiary

First, it transformed the recipient of social services into a client. Client was given several ways to influence the services provided. A new benefit (Care Allowance) established by

Social Services Act, is being paid directly to the person in need of care by another person (depending on the level of dependence ascertained by specialised Medical Assessment Service operating within the Czech Social Security Administration) allowing him/her to freely chose who will provide the needed service.

Before 2007, the benefits for care were divided into several systems including social security. Moreover, some benefits were paid to the person receiving services (such as a special supplement to pension) while others were paid to the person providing care.

According to the Social Services Act, social services are always provided on the basis of a contract between a provider and a client.

Because the Social Services Act has given the main responsibilities to the bodies of the self-government, the attention paid (or neglect) to social services in the relevant region/municipality may have direct result in municipal of regional elections. This has strengthened the sense of ownership of local and regional political representation and gave another way to influence the availability and quality of social services to the residents.

3.1.2 Registration of providers

Conditions for registration of social service providers and for their funding were unified which enabled for development of non-governmental sector in this field. Registration was set as a requirement allowing for legal provision of services. If a provider provides more services, he must register each of them separately. Registration is carried out by the Regional Authorities. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs keeps a national registry of social services providers and provides the necessary IT platform and methodology.

3.1.3 Standards of quality

Social Services Act and accompanying regulations stipulated standards of quality setting minimum standards for each type of social services. Each provider of social services must guarantee the standards of quality each social service provided in order to be registered, i.e. enabled to provide such social service.

Inspection was also established with the power to inspect the quality of social services. Those steps were adopted to guarantee the quality of social services. At first, the inspection was carried out by Regional Authorities, later by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic. Since January 2015, inspection of services is performed directly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Setting the standards of quality and establishment of the inspection was another tool how to broaden the feedback from the clients who can lodge complaints if they think the service is not provided according to the law.

Social services include:

- Social counselling,
- Social care services,
- Social prevention services.

Services could be residential (the services include accommodation), ambulatory (the client visits the provider but is not accommodated there) and field services (they are provided in the client's natural environment).

Individual types of the services are listed in the Social Services Act. The Social Services Act also stipulates the rules of payments for the services (selected services are provided free of charge).

3.2 Roles of the stakeholders

With regard to the coordination of the system, the main actor is the regional authorities. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the main provider of funds through grants to the regions and social services providers. Under the umbrella of the MoLSA, the Labour Office pays Care Allowance to the clients who then use it to obtain social services. From the citizen's/client's perspective, the main partners are social services providers and the municipalities.

3.2.1 The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

The Ministry is responsible for drawing the relevant legislation and strategic documents in the field.

The MoLSA is responsible for a great part of funding of social services. It distributes state budget resources to the regions for the development of social services network and also awards specific grants (for example to support activities which cover more than one region) and launches projects to support social services provision or to pilot new methods.

The Ministry also sets the standards of quality (they are set by a MoLSA decree) and is in charge of social services inspection. The Ministry also keeps the national registry of social services providers. It also provides methodology in various aspects.

The Ministry is also responsible for the accreditation of training programmes for social workers and people working in social services sector.

MoLSA is a direct founder of 5 social services institutions.

3.2.2 The Labour Office of the Czech Republic

Awards and pays Care Allowance to persons dependent on care provided by another person. The purpose of the benefit is to obtain social services. Before 2015, the LOCR also carried out the inspection of social services.

3.2.3 Regions

Regional authorities are responsible for coordination of social services in the territory of their regions and safeguards accessibility of the services. They receive subsidies from the state budget which must be used only to that end. Regional Authorities then decide on awarding grants to social services providers.

Regional authorities are responsible for establishing and development of social services network in their territory. They are obliged to ascertain the needs for social services provision. They must cooperate with the municipalities, other regions and with the providers to mediate assistance to people and to act as intermediary between people and providers.

The regions must prepare and implement three-year plans of social services development in their territory. They are obliged to prepare such plans in cooperation with municipalities, providers of social services and also with the clients and with other stakeholders.

While the national registry is kept by the MoLSA, the regional authorities decide on the registration of a social service.

An amendment to the Social Services Act effective in 2015 gave the regions responsibility for financing of social services in their territory. A mechanism for providing grants from the state budget was put in place (each region is allocated a fixed part of the total amount).

Regions are founders of a large part of social services providers.

3.2.4 Municipalities

The 205 municipalities with broader competences have the following obligations set by the Social Services Act:

- Ascertain the need for social services in their territory,
- Warrant accessibility of information on possibilities of social services provision,
- Cooperate with other municipalities, regions and providers to assist people and to mediate contact between people and social services providers,
- Provide cooperation to the region during the preparation of a regional three-year plan of social services development.

The municipalities do not have the obligation to prepare three-year plans of social services development as regions do but many of them prepare such plans.

Municipalities are also often founders of social services providers.

3.3 Social services providers

Majority (61 %) of social services providers have been founded by NGOs and churches. They cooperate with municipalities and regions with regard to monitoring the situation and planning of the social services development.

The conditions for all providers are the same regardless the character of the founder. They must:

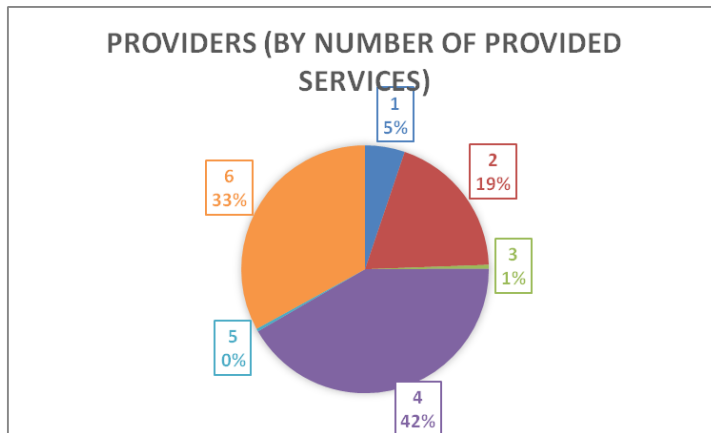
- Be registered (registration must be made for all of the services provided),
- Warrant the standards of quality,
- Provide social services on contractual basis,
- Allow inspection of social services provision.

A provider may receive grants from the MoLSA, region, municipality, the provider's founder, private donors and also payments for the provided services from the clients (client's contribution is limited by the law, some services must be provided free of charge).

Currently, there are 2194 providers in the Czech Republic who provide 5667 services in total.

Figure 1: Share of the main types of founders of providers of social services

1. 294 (5.19 %) by private entities,
2. 1090 (19.23 %) by churches,
3. 29 (0.51 %) by individuals,
4. 2364 (41.72 %) by non-governmental organizations,
5. 21 (0.37 %) by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,
6. 1869 (32.98 %) by regions and municipalities.



Source: Registry of Social Services Providers kept by MoLSA

It is also estimated, that 70 % or more of the volume of care services are being provided by informal caregivers (family members, neighbours) using the Care Allowance to cover the costs. This situation is allowed by the Social Services Act. Moreover, the act is also aimed at keeping people in their natural environment as possible. Such informal caregivers need not to be registered. The number of such informal caregivers is estimated to be between 250 and 300 thousand.

3.4 Funding of social services

Funding of social services comes from various sources. Nevertheless, the role of state budget is crucial. Resources from the state budget are being distributed through the budgetary chapter of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Ministry provides resources through three main channels:

- Grants provided to regions for development and maintenance of social services in their territory. Since 2015, the Social Services Act sets in its Annex a percentage share of the total resources for this purpose for each of the regions. Regions distribute those funds further to the providers. In 2016, the regions and municipalities received CZK 9.1 billion from the state budget through the MoLSA.
- Grants provided directly to social services providers within special grant schemes (to providers and services of nature covering more regions or the whole Czech Republic). In 2016, at least CZK 265 million was distributed by the MoLSA in this fashion.

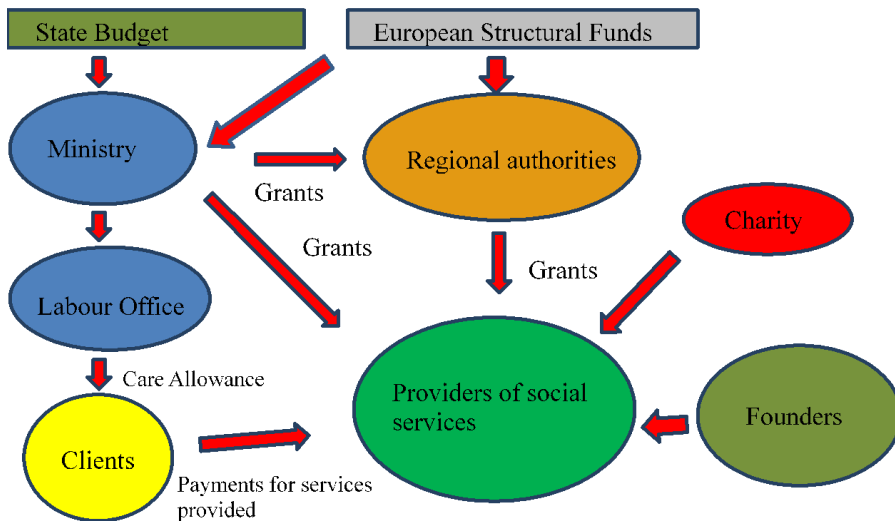
- The Labour Office of the Czech Republic pays the special benefit – Care Allowance – the aim of which is to allow the recipient to purchase necessary services. Care Allowance expenditure totalled to CZK 23.105 billion in 2016 and CZK 25.214 billion in 2017.

Providers receive further finances from the clients. Care Allowance is used for the social services themselves. If other services are also provided such as accommodation or meals, the client must pay him from his own money (pension or other income – however, the Social Services Act stipulates that those payments must leave the client a prescribed part of his/her income).

Another source of funding is from the regions from their own budgets. Founders of the social services providers also provide funding (many of those are regions and municipalities). The MoLSA as the founder of 5 social services institutes expends draws state budget resources for this purpose. Other sources may come from the charity (philanthropy).

There are also projects co-financed from the European structural funds (for example the European Social Fund), which provide funding to different stakeholders, be it the Ministry, regions, municipalities or providers. The projects are often aimed at deinstitutionalization of services and/or innovative methods.

Figure 2: Funding of social services



Source: author's compilation.

Regarding the three categories of social services, their share in expenditure was as follows (data from 2015):

- Social counselling 10 %,
- Social prevention services 33 %,

- Social care services 57 %.

Social care services are by definition more expensive as they mean longer use of the services with the rather long-term personal presence of the client in contrast with social counselling which may be provided using a phone etc.

4. CONCLUSION OF THE COUNTRY BRIEF

The Czech social assistance system has successfully made the transition from planned to market economy and is successful in preventing income poverty. Establishment of the Labour Office in 2011 and subsequent transfer of social assistance benefit schemes under its roof was a sound idea whose implementation, however, could have been better prepared. Nevertheless, the current arrangement enables for better targeting of social assistance benefits. In terms of administration, the main challenge is perhaps the procurement of a new, unified IT system. E-government features may also be used which are possible even now – so far, the applicant must provide necessary data including such data which the LOCR may obtain from other public administration authorities.

Some challenges have to be addressed, for instance the impact of maternity on employment of women and shortcomings in social housing policy (the number of socially excluded localities grew despite stagnation or even decrease in poverty rate). The solution is in the coordination of several policies. Close cooperation between the Labour Office and the municipalities has been set within the Assistance in Material Need but needs to be developed further to improve individual case management.

Social services sector experienced development after adoption of the Social Services Act in 2006. Setting the same conditions for all enabled for rapid development of providers founded by NGOs and churches which now provide over 60 % of the services. The Act also brought clear division of tasks among the stakeholders and enforceable standards. Several changes are being considered, but the basic principles of the Social Services Act have been proved. Scope for further improvement still lies in the area of deinstitutionalisation of care services. Persistent problem is the lack of social workers.

5. RESULTS OF THE MISSION ON 25TH – 28TH SEPTEMBER

5.1 Contents of the mission

The first part of the mission was held in Beijing (25th and 26th October). The first day was dedicated to discussion among the European and Chinese experts raised for the mission, especially upon the reports provided by the Chinese experts, Professor Gang Shuge from Beijing Academy of Social Science and Assistant Professor Tian Rong from Nanjing University.

The second day was divided into two parts – workshop with MoCA in the morning. In the afternoon, a training session was held with the MoCA officials and with representatives of the four pilot sites:

- Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hohhot City, Xincheng District,
- Jilin Province, Da'an City (county level),
- Jiangsu Province, Zhangjiagang City (county level),

- Sichuan Province, Dazhou City, Dachuan District.

Reports of Professor Gang and Assistant Professor Tian were presented as well as presentations by the European experts on the social assistance benefits in France (Mr. Christian Moutier), social services in France and in Croatia (Mrs Camille Lambinon) and social assistance benefits and services in the Czech Republic with focus on the administration and coordination among different stakeholders (Mr Pavel Janeček). Experience gained by the pilot sites was also presented and discussed. Several initiatives undertaken on the county, district or local level were presented.

The following two days included meetings and field visits in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. After a meeting with representatives of Hohhot and social assistance bodies, a care centre for the elderly was visited as well as social assistance local office in a rural area and a social assistance office in Hohhot proper.

5.2 Information obtained

From the meetings, reports and other available information, it is clear that China has introduced a comprehensive social assistance benefit system consisting of Dibao, Wubao and other schemes. While providing basic social protection to various groups of people, the system still faces several challenges.

Differences remain between the rural and urban social assistance in terms of coverage, level of the benefits and perhaps even the administration. Social assistance provision is also based on the Hukou system of residence. It may be provided outside one's place of Hukou only in few specific cases.

Administration of benefits is still fragmented which makes the system less accessible to the citizens who are not aware what assistance they may be entitled to and where to apply – there may be several institutions to be addressed.

However, efforts are being made in several places (examples were presented during the training session by the representatives of the four pilot sites of Component 3) to improve the situation and to streamline the administration. Somewhere, coordination led to creation of one-stop-shop (one window) which means that a potential applicant can get relevant information at one place or even apply for all social assistance benefits at one place. Information technologies are also being used to replace paperwork and to streamline the proceedings.

Progress is also being made in involving social forces in the social assistance provision. On the central level, several large organizations are active in promotion of welfare in China such as the All-China Women's Federation, youth federations etc. MoCA and other authorities are aware of the importance of social forces in social assistance and are seeking ways to develop this area. Nevertheless, the cooperation with non-governmental sector is still in the beginning.

Persisting is the issue of staff. The number of social workers was repeatedly to be said as insufficient and the authorities face a high rate of fluctuation of personnel. Qualification of social workers was also said to be a challenge.

5.3 Reform steps taken in Hohhot

In Hohhot, Xincheng District was selected to implement several reform measures to improve social assistance provision. The reforms aimed at streamlining of administration, use of IT, participation of social forces and other areas.

Social forces now share the responsibility for carrying out the means test of the applicants. This has already proved more effective. People from the applicant's locality are also involved in the decision-making – the decision is taken by a committee that includes the people from the locality as well as the social assistance staff from the relevant authorities.

The Chinese authorities make use of the recent information and communication technologies. The European experts involved in the activity had the opportunity to see a system used in Hohhot which has replaced the paperwork in the process of assessing claims for social assistance benefits. Standardized database enables for filling all the necessary information including photographs which may be used as evidence on the applicant's material situation. The application which is available for portable devices, enables for uploading data in the database and may also serve as a managerial tool using the statistical features. Initiatives such as that made in Hohhot may be also helpful elsewhere in China to make the proceedings more effective. It also offers one of the means to overcome the still present fragmentation of social assistance provision by data sharing between the relevant institutions.

Social assistance services are being developed by China. Elderly care centre which the European experts visited in the vicinity of Hohhot showed good planning in terms of the layout of the compounds and the interior of the buildings. With the capacity of 200 beds, the actual number of clients was 38. This is in contrast with the situation in Europe where the capacity is less than the demand and similar facilities tend to be full with long waiting periods of the applicants. The number of staff is low compared with similar facilities in European countries.

So far, the elderly care institution visited has served as residential facility. In Europe, such institutions provide broader range of services such as daily care centres, counselling, respite services etc.

6. PRELIMINARY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Development of Social assistance in general

In the EU, much of social assistance, be it benefits in cash or services, is regulated by national legislation and standards set on the national level. The debate in European countries is rather on the generosity of social assistance. In comparison with China, social assistance in terms of GDP percentage is more robust in the EU. The level of Dibaos is low compared with European countries. There is no clear division of responsibilities which leads to fragmentation at the lower levels of social assistance administration. This fragmentation has several effects:

- Inefficient use of resources, high administrative costs,
- System is complex and not transparent for the citizens, they are not aware of what they may apply for and where,

- There are overlaps in social assistance, i.e. different benefits covering basically the same need while other needs are not covered,
- Systems even within the same province or even city seem to be different place to place.

On one hand, this allows for multiple trials of innovative ways to administer social assistance, on the other hand, there are obvious disadvantages. On different levels, efforts has been undertaken to overcome the fragmentation. Examples from district or county levels were provided during the training and – in more detail – during the visit in Hohhot of streamlining which lead to creation of “one window” (“one-stop-shops”). Good examples of such efforts could be disseminated to serve as models for other district, cities and provinces.

It may be considered to appoint one single central government authority responsible for the general issue of social assistance administration. This does not necessarily mean that the chosen authority will carry out all social assistance work. It will be rather in charge of coordination efforts to streamline the administration.

Such a step would also enable for setting of some general standards which may help with streamlining of social assistance on the lower levels of administration. Such standards may include definition of a basic set of social assistance benefits, rules for procurement of social services or what facts must be ascertained during the means test. Such a step will also increase the transparency of social assistance scheme. The central standards are recommended to be set in a form of law as it is done in European countries.

6.2 Investing in Social services

European experts have repeatedly mentioned that focus on the income and benefits in cash is to be complemented with social work and social services. In Europe, this is the general approach, as cash benefits sometimes cannot solve the situation and may even become a part of the problem rather than the solution. People would sometimes prefer the services to the increase in income. Example is described above from the area of family support when benefits and tax reliefs were not accompanied with sufficient capacities of childcare facilities and promotion of flexible working arrangements. The resulting situation – that woman stay for 3 years at home with one child – has unfavourable impact on the labour market, especially on women employment.

Mutual help may also be promoted (even through some cash benefits, discounts etc.) to broaden the scope of possible provision of care and assistance as well. This may be helpful especially with regard to people who are in need of assistance but that need is not of the intensity requiring 24-hour care.

6.3 Skills improvement of Social assistance staff

Lack of staff and/or the qualification of the workers was repeatedly mentioned by the Chinese partners during the mission. This is also an obstacle to greater participation of non-governmental organizations or social forces as they also lack workers with experience and qualification in the field. In China, however, universities do have such courses, but the graduates seldom work for the social assistance authorities. Often mentioned fluctuation of the staff hints that the possible or current employees often chose a job they see as more attractive.

In this regard, it might be beneficial to take stock of existing study programs within the secondary and tertiary education in terms of their content and the profile of graduates. The specifics and needs of the Chinese social assistance systems could be included in the curricula.

Special attention could be given to training of those who are already working in the field, i.e. to provide the current workforce with skills it may be lacking in a serious of short-term, focused courses. Such courses would also be essential for the system of life-long learning of the social workers.

Staff fluctuation seems to be a challenge in social assistance which must be faced effectively. Otherwise, the upskilling of the workforce would fall short of the desired results. Perhaps an anonymous survey among the current staff (anonymous so that the workers would more freely to express their real views) or asking the leavers what is the reason for their leaving could reveal where is the potential to make working in social assistance field more attractive. Supposedly, low wages may be the one reason and that can hardly be solved without additional resources but if the leavers seek also other advantages which do not require substantial increase in costs, those may be seriously considered.

Given the process of population ageing in China, the need for social workers is likely to be more acute in the future, which is a feature shared with the European countries. Care sector in general will probably be one of the few sectors where the demand for workforce will increase in the decades to come in both relative and absolute terms in all industrialized countries. Participation of non-governmental sector and volunteers may alleviate some of the burden but it is to face the same challenge as NGOs will also need social workers to provide services that are needed. The volunteers will also need to gain at least the basic skills in social work area.

6.4 Increase participation of social forces/non-governmental sector

This is a developing sector and several ways of involvement of organizations outside the government are being pursued (example of the pilot site in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, is described above). However, non-governmental sector remains limited compared to the European Union. The European experience has showed that non-governmental sector is very important in social services provision but also in other areas. Non-governmental organizations of various sorts in Europe provide wide range of services, some of them almost exclusively. Local NGOs provide services tailored to local and individual needs and fill the gaps left by public authorities. The Czech experience showed that setting the same conditions for all social services providers regardless their founder status by adoption of the Social Services Act in 2006 opened space for rapid development of NGOs engagement. Nowadays, non-governmental organizations and church organizations provide more than 60 % of social services in the Czech Republic. Before that, the preference of organizations founded by public authorities resulted in focus on residential care services and neglect of other services which were often a less costly alternative of residential care, including services of prevention.

Issue of the assessment of the activities carried out by the non-governmental organizations has also been raised during the training session in Beijing. It was mentioned that Shanghai has system in place evaluating the contents of the activities implemented and that it could be inspiration for other places in China.

6.5 Better information dissemination

Professor Gang Shuge provided valuable insight into this important area of social assistance provision. From my point of view, information dissemination has four important components:

- First, the obvious and essential information flow from the public administration to the citizens so that they are aware of the existing social assistance schemes, the eligibility conditions for the benefits and services, the transparency of the system. Information could be available online and also in the form of brochures which may be received in the local offices. The information must be comprehensive and also simple enough to be understood. As seen during the pilot site visit, this has already been implemented at least at some places.
- Second, top-bottom information sharing which would provide the front-line authorities with up-to-date and complete information on the policies and regulations and their changes. This is also necessary for the front-line workers to be able to provide citizens with exact information.
- Third, bottom-top communication and information assessment. This basically means a mechanism for receiving feedback, its assessment and analysis. Feedback would include information received from the citizens (presumably, large part of such information would be queries and also complaints which – in their bulk – could hint at some deficiency of the system) as well as from the front-line offices. Higher up within the administration hierarchy, information from different areas may be compiled and assessed with the aim to identify possible issues which may be addressed.
- Fourth, information sharing between the different stakeholders. As the system is still fragmented, there are several institutions providing social assistance – in some places, their number may be higher than 10. This makes the system even more complex. Some sites have adopted policy of integrating the tasks under one authority, or to establish joint offices in order to create “one-stop-shop” or “one window” for the citizens. Even without organizational integration, at least information sharing is desirable for several reasons. Information sharing would decrease overlapping when different institutions pay benefits covering the same or similar need. The different offices may at least provide a citizen with information where he/she should apply for particular assistance. Closer integration of data on social assistance recipients would also provide the authority deciding on granting a benefit with information on other social assistance benefits received by an applicant. Such a feedback would be very useful for fine-tuning of the relevant regulations and practice.

One important aspect of information dissemination is the sharing of examples of good practice which may help in places where reforms are yet to be implemented in social assistance area.

6.6 Investing in IT use

Development of IT and proliferation of devices such as smartphones enables huge saving of costs and time when processing applications for benefits. Several pilot sites have already introduced such system, often along with establishment of the “one window”. The application used in Hohhot was well advanced.

However, there is no standard set for such applications and all the places which introduced such applications had to make separate procurements. Perhaps setting a central standard or a

procurement of one single platform which may be adapted to local specifics (and would enable addition of specific modules) could save much of the future costs of development of separate applications.

6.7 Reducing inactivity traps

As presented on various examples from the EU, social assistance schemes may include several inactivity traps. Avoiding them would often require complex coordination of several policies at once – social benefits, social work, employment policies, social services. For the able-bodied recipients, motivation measures could be put in place. When setting the level of benefits, minimum wage (if applicable) should be also taken into account along with the principle “to make work pay”. Specific attention may also be paid to low income earners, who may be eligible for some income-tested benefits as earning a small amount more in work may mean losing a higher amount of a benefit (one of the solutions may then lie in income tax reductions for low-income earners).

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