

The Impact of Modern Trends in the Social Work and Social Care in the Republic of Macedonia

PhD. Biljana Nackovska – Veljkovikj

nackovska@gmail.com

Abstract

Social care is an organised network of institutional and non-institutional facilities designed to meet the needs of citizens. The reforms that are taking place in social protection are influenced by modern trends in social work, expressed through decentralization, de-institutionalization, pluralism, strengthening of civil society and the possibility of providing private services, affecting and enriching the content of social work. These change the relationship to the client's position and improve the professionalism of social worker. Changes in social policy, resulting from diverting from central to local level, influence and give direction to the overall social activity. The paper describes the three components thereof (areas): the state of social work and social protection in the Republic of Macedonia, rights and services in the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia and research part. Starting from the assumption that modern trends affect reforms in the social protection system of the Republic of Macedonia, this paper aims to determine the state of social protection in the Republic of Macedonia. The aim is to gain knowledge about the situation and the changes occurring in the social institutions of public character, influenced by modern trends. Also this paper makes analysis of the legislation in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of social protection. Ultimate goals of the implementation of reforms in the social protection are the welfare of the beneficiary, improving the quality of work and professional development of social workers.

Keywords: social work, social care, reforms, decentralisation, de-institutionalisation, pluralisation, rights and services in the social protection.

Introduction

Internationalisation and globalisation do not avoid any country in the world, and this continuous process is also reflected in the Republic of Macedonia, which is a signatory of several international conventions declarations, charters and strategic documents. Hence, the state social policy implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is in line with European trends and values, based on which a number of laws, regulations, national strategies and programs have been developed and implemented. New trends in social work cause changes in the organizational structure, management and activities, i. e. changes in the socio-structural and personal orientations methodical action of social work.

The state of social work and social protection in the Republic of Macedonia

Development trends in modern social work are connected with the establishment of specialised services for social activities that employ large number of professionals from different profiles, such as social workers, pedagogues, psychologists, lawyers and others. In the Republic of Macedonia, besides the institutions of closed type, intended for certain categories of beneficiaries depending on age and social problem, the only institutions of open type operating in the area of social protection are the Centres for social work.

Social work has its application in various areas, but when it comes to social work in the Republic of Macedonia and beyond, it is often understood as social protection, an area in which the social work is formed and has the oldest tradition. Hence the most frequently used working method is social work with an individual and family. Also in the literature, the social protection is often pointed out as a primary social work, therefore when talking about social work, primarily meant is the area of social protection and the mention working method.

The state ensures the social protection and security of citizens, according to the principles of social justice, but also it provides special care and protection of the family. Humanism, social justice and solidarity are fundamental values underlying the constitutional order of the Republic of Macedonia. According to constitutional provisions, the Law on social protection was adopted in 1997, undergoing several amendments and supplements, and represents the cornerstone of state laws on social protection in our country

The system of social protection is a complex system operating on the basis of interconnected sub-systems:

Sub-system of social protection conducted by the Centres for social work

Sub-system of non-institutional care, conducted by the Daily centres for protection of elderly and infirm persons, adults at social risk and persons with disabilities

Sub-system of institutional care conducted by the Institutions for accommodation of persons at social risk

Sub-system of financial assistance that guarantees the necessary means for the persons at risk and is implemented through the Centres for social work. (Amicin, 2004)

The Republic of Macedonia as a signatory of a number of international declarations, agreements and conventions is obliged to ensure respect and realisation of the fundamental human rights and freedoms and realisation of social rights of every citizen in the country. The principles of social solidarity, the principle of assistance, the principle of authorisation and various principle related to the management (adequate administration, equal treatment, legal security, trust in administrative bodies) are implemented in the Law on Social Protection (1997). The reforms in the social protection system consist of retaining the good practices and introducing new principles, such as pluralism in the social protection, social inclusion and decentralisation of the supply in the social protection.

Pluralism in the social protection means creating conditions for various entities to provide certain services in the social protection. According to the Law on Social Protection of 2007, article 47 paragraph 5, besides the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, that is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, other physical and legal entities and the local self-government units may establish institutions for social protection. Also, this Law regulates the participation of the non-governmental sector in social services provision. The amendments to the Law on social protection in 2004, provide an opportunity for all interested civil organizations in the field of social protection to be registered in the register kept by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), and implement a part of the programmes for social protection. In addition to associations, certain individuals have the opportunity to carry out certain activities in the field of social protection as a professional activity. This enables self-employment of persons who meet the criteria for performing activities of social protection, in cooperation with the competent Centres for Social Work. In this regard Pejkovski points to the need to create legal and systematic basis for developing social entrepreneurship, whereas potential forms of social enterprises would be: social enterprises, NGOs, cooperatives or social cooperatives, foundations and trusts, religious and humanitarian organizations (Pejkovski 2014).

The principle of decentralisation means planning and implementing social policy at local level according to the needs and possibilities of the specific local community. (Amicin, 2004) Decentralisation process in the area of social protection in our country started in 2004 and is implemented through a transfer of certain institutions for social protection into competence of the municipalities and also inclusion of the local self-government in the identification of the needs for social protection for the citizens from its area. Namely, when it comes to the planning of the activities for decentralised social protection, then the policy is specific and corresponds exactly to the needs and interests of the citizens who participate in it. Therefore, the municipalities have a responsibility to prepare development programmes for the specific needs for social protection for the citizens of their areas. The objective of the programmes is to determine the exposure of citizens to social risks, to determine the number of beneficiaries in the system of social protection, rights and services of social protection being used, the availability of social services and institutions to the citizens and the possibilities of the municipality to carry out specific measures to reduce and mitigate the situation. Within the program, and depending on funding provided by the municipality, the immediate care for citizens can be achieved through the establishment of appropriate institutions or the development of non-institutional forms of social protection.

Social inclusion implies inclusion of vulnerable groups in social and economic life, building human capital and increase the potential of people at risk. (Amicin, 2004). The process of deinstitutionalisation of the social protection system in our country is carried out by taking measures and activities for the promotion of alternative forms of social services, expanding the opportunities for assistance and support to the beneficiaries and their families by providing social protection in the place of residence of the person and his/her biological family. In this regard, apart from the possibility of using cash benefits in accordance with the beneficiary needs, other forms of social inclusion of people who need assistance and support from the community are being constantly developed.

Rights and services in the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia

The Law on Social Protection regulates the system and organization of social protection, the right to social protection, funding and procedures for exercising the right to social protection. Social protection is a system of measures, activities and policies for preventing and overcoming basic social risks to which citizens are exposed throughout life, reducing poverty and social exclusion and strengthening its capacity for its own protection. Social risks include: health risks (illness, injury and disability), old age and aging, single parent family, risks of unemployment, loss of income support on the basis of job, risks of poverty and other kinds of social exclusion.

The social protection is an activity of public interest. On the basis of rights to social protection, and under conditions stipulated by the Law on Social Protection from 2009, measures are undertaken through which social prevention, non-institutional and institutional protection and financial assistance for social protection are realised.

The system and organisation of social protection consist of the institutions, measures, activities and forms that are realised within the realisation of citizens' rights in the area of social protection. The Government determines the network of public institutions for social protection. Social protection is accomplished through professional work in institutions for social protection, implementation of development programmes, professional development of staff depending on the user needs and international standards, monitoring the conditions and work planning, record-keeping, as well as conducting surveillance and research in this area. The public servants in the public institution for social protection are personally responsible for the performance of duties and tasks in the workplace. The Law on Public Servants of 2013 except the violations committed by a public official in a public institution for social protection also considers disrespect for the Code of experts in social protection institutions (adopted by the Commission for licensing) or failure to provide the social protection of the person in social risk, as disciplinary offense.

By determining measures and activities for social prevention (Articles 24 and 25 of the Law on Social Protection, 2009), the occurrence of social risks is prevented, early detection and early treatment of citizens exposed to social risk is done. The aim of social prevention is to overcome or mitigate the adverse effects of exposure to social risks. Measures to prevent social risks for the citizen, family or group of people, are implemented in particular through education and counselling, development of forms of self-help, voluntary work with personal engagement, as well as through implementation of other methods that suit the needs of the beneficiaries of social protection.

According to Article 26 of the Law on Social Protection (2009), non-institutional care is provided in or through the Centre for Social Work and covers: the right of first social service of social protection, assistance to an individual, assistance to family, home care and assistance to an individual and family, daily and temporary care to help an individual or family, placement in a foster family, placement in a small group home and organized supported living. Institutional care includes the right to training for working-production activity and the right to accommodation in an institution for social protection (Article 41). The right to accommodation in an institution of social protection is provided to: children without parents and parental care until being enabled for independent life and work, and latest until the completion of secondary education, if there are no possibilities to provide care and education otherwise; children with educational and social problems, ignored, neglected, abused and financially insecure; children victims of domestic violence, with disorderly conduct; pregnant women a month before delivery and single parents with a child up to three months of age; people with moderate and severe mental disabilities sent to training for employment and productive activity; people with profound mental disabilities and people with permanent physical disability who need permanent care, the elderly, adults with physical disabilities and mental disabilities who are unable to take care of themselves, and who due to the and family situation are unable to provide protection otherwise; and asylum seekers.

According to Article 132 of the Law on Social Protection of 2009, institutional care is performed by the institutions for: accommodation for infants and young children without parents and parental care until the age of three; orphans and children without parental care over three years of age and youth; children and youth with educational and social problems; children and youth with behavioural problems; children and youth with moderate and severe mental disabilities; children and youth with physical disabilities; elderly, adults with physical disabilities; people with mental disabilities; and asylum seekers. Institutions for non-institutional social protection are: centres for social work; daily centres and clubs for elderly and adults; daily centres for street children; daily centres for people who use or abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors; daily centres for people who abuse alcohol or are being treated for alcohol addiction; centres for homeless persons; centres for persons - victims of domestic violence; centres for persons - victims of trafficking; daily centres for people with mental or physical disabilities; centres for assistance at home; centres for social rehabilitation of persons abusing drugs and other psychotropic substances and precursors, i. e. therapeutic community; small group homes and counselling centres.

With the amendments to the Law on social protection in 2011 and 2013, the right to financial assistance for social protection includes: social financial assistance, permanent financial assistance, financial assistance to a person who until the age of 18 years had the status of a child without parents and parental care, financial assistance to a mother who gave birth to a fourth child, financial assistance to foster, allowance for assistance and care by another person, one-off financial assistance and assistance in kind, salary compensation for reduced working hours for care of a child with physical or mental disabilities, financial assistance for social housing, right to health care and allowance for blindness, mobility and deafness.

Research

In order to determine the impact of modern trends in social work on the reforms in the social protection system of the Republic of Macedonia, research was conducted in 2014 and it included interviews with experts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Institute for Social Affairs and the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy and surveyed of 100 social workers employed in eight centres for social work in the Republic of Macedonia. The research was conducted as a part of the doctoral dissertation "Ethical profile of the social worker and modern trends in the social work".¹

Combined qualitative-quantitative methodology was applied. The research method is exploratory, and in that context, the applied research techniques were: survey questionnaire, interview and content analysis. Data processing used mainly statistical methods, while analytic-synthetic method, comparative method and the method of generalisation were used in the theoretical analysis. Social workers were included in the research as research unit. The research sample has been combined with intended and random choice. The research was conducted in eight towns in the Republic of Macedonia, considered to be typical representatives of the basic regions (Eastern, Western, Central and the City of Skopje) – Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Tetovo, Veles, Kumanovo, Ohrid and Strumica, which represents an intended sample of territorial units and then a total of 100 social workers were chosen at random (from all eight municipalities), employed in public social institutions, and they represent the final sample that was surveyed. The choice in these towns for the survey was designed to cover all the regions of the Republic of Macedonia and include the larger Centres for social work. Also, expert interviews were conducted with employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Institute for Social Affairs and the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy. Interviewed employees were selected at random, and a random sample was institutions that employ interviewed.

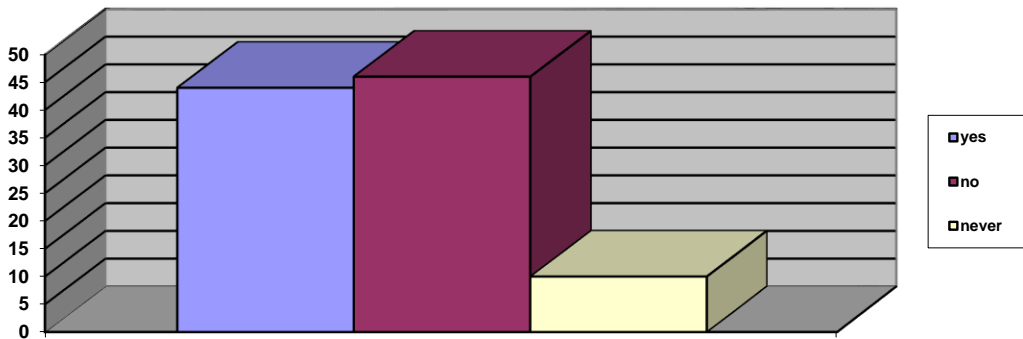
Following the analysis and comparison of theoretical scientific materials, legislation and survey results, it can be concluded that they largely coincide, and baseline assumptions are confirmed. Namely, from the conducted research, it can be concluded that the research results fully confirm the hypothesis that modern trends affect the reforms in the social protection system of the Republic of Macedonia.

The purpose of the questions in this section is to get knowledge about the changes happening in the public social institutions under influence of the modern trends.

¹ The research was conducted as a part of the doctoral dissertation "Ethical profile of the social worker and modern trends in the social work" of Blijana Nackovska – Veljkovikj, defended on 29.02.2016 at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" Skopje.

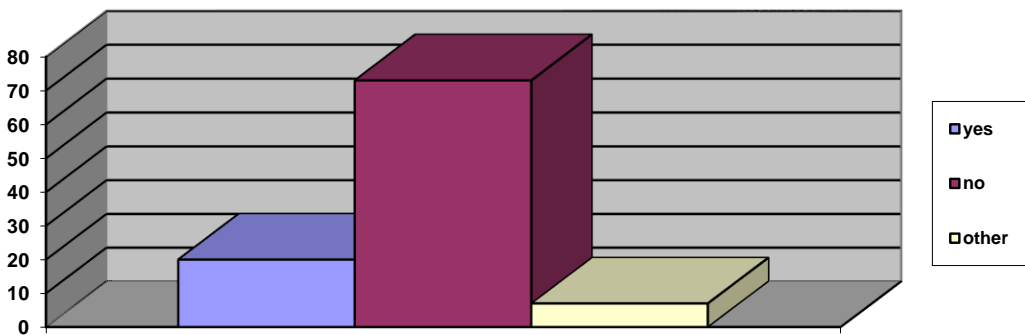
Overview no. 1 About the possibility of providing private services in the area of social protection, 83% of the social workers think it would be a good reform, which should be carried out by experts, but they point out that such services should be provided in counselling offices. According to them in this way would increase competitiveness, service quality and efficiency. 17% of social workers do not know what effect private services would cause.

Chart no. 1 Answers of the social workers on the cooperation of the social workers with the non-governmental (NGO) sector



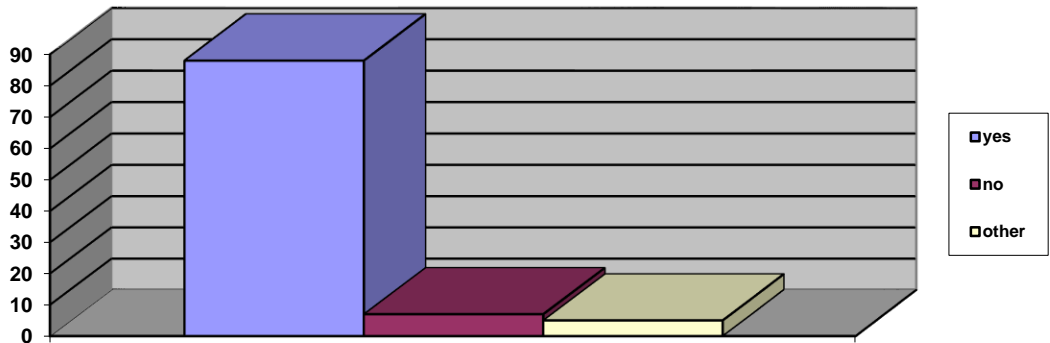
As for the cooperation of social workers with the NGO sector, the analysis of the data shows almost equal fragmentation among respondents, significant number of the social workers (44) cooperate with the NGO sector and almost the same number (46) do not have such cooperation, and 10 had no answer.

Chart no. 2 Cooperation of the social workers with colleagues the other Centres for social Work or organisations/agencies of social character from other countries



Data in Chart no. 2 show low level of international cooperation of the social workers. Only 20 social workers, compared to 73, have established direct international cooperation with social workers from other countries, and 7 did not answer the question.

Chart no. 3 Effects of the reforms in the system of social protection



As to welfare reform - decentralisation, deinstitutionalisation, pluralism and the possibility of providing private services for social protection, the data in Chart 3 clearly indicate that they positively influence practical social work, and which was answered by 88 social workers. Only 8 respondents believe that reforms do not have a positive impact, and 2 did not answer this question

When asked about the influence of the decentralisation, deinstitutionalisation and pluralism in the social work, the interviewed experts emphasised the following:

Decentralisation of the social work is a response to the local needs; hence the processes of adoption of laws and by-laws in our country are aimed at its implementation. In these processes, a smaller number of municipalities are in the third and final phase of decentralisation, a significant part in the second stage, and there are municipalities where decentralisation is the first stage. The fiscal and functional decentralisation has not yet been implemented in full, which in turn, according to experts interviewed, limits the opportunities for development and implementation of programmes and measures at local level. They also identify a problem in many municipalities which are not staffed and in their organisational and structural set up have not provided special units and posts for professionals in the field of social work. With the decentralisation as a step forward, each local community should take care of their citizens, and provide support to people who need social protection.

Deinstitutionalisation has also commenced. As pointed out by the interviewees, some beneficiaries already have the opportunity to use non-institutional services. Such is the case with the accommodation of some of the persons with disabilities from the Special Institution Demir Kapija, in residential communities intended for their independent living. As for pluralism in the social work, experts share the view that in our country it is necessary to support the private social work, which has not yet been elaborated. For example, for some of the services that can be provided privately, there is no price list and the work cannot start. According to them, the private social work would enable the overall improvement of quality of service.

In addition, some experts emphasise that non-governmental organisations should be mandatory involved in the implementation of policies and measures in the field of social protection, but those that meet certain programme standards for quality of managing processes and cases and at the same time to be registered, monitored and evaluated by relevant state institutions.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the results it can be concluded that social workers (surveyed respondents) and interviewed experts share the view that the private social work, pluralisation, decentralisation and deinstitutionalisation of social work positively

reflect on the practical social work. However, it can be concluded that social workers are generally open to the changes in social work, but the main role for their full implementation into practical social work remains with the state.

As for the cooperation of social workers with non-governmental organisations and their involvement in the implementation of policies and measures in the field of social protection, it can be concluded that it is not satisfactory. It speaks of the closeness of the institutions and not in favour of promotion of overall social activity. The same situation can be stated in terms of international cooperation in the field of social work, which in our country is realised through the MLSP. In this regard, as pointed out by the interviewed experts, there is a need to reorganise the way of work and to allow direct communication and exchange of experiences of social workers with international institutions, and also to improve and intensify cooperation through joint development and implementation of programmes and projects in the field of social work and social protection.

Bibliography

- Amicin, G. (2004) *Social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.
- Bornarova, S. (2008) *Modern trends in the social protection and in the social work*. Skopje: Makedonska riznica – Kumanovo.
- Glazer, N. (2009) *The limits of the social policy*. Skopje: Prosvetno delo.
- Ife, J. (2009) *Human rights and social work*. Skopje: Akademski pečat.
- Law on equal opportunities of men and women* (2006). Official gazette of RM, 66/06. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on child protection* (2013). Official gazette of RM, 23/13. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on public servants* (2010). Official gazette of RM, 52/10. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on social protection* (1997). Official gazette of RM, 50/97. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on amendments and supplements of the law on social protection* (2000). Official gazette of RM, 16/00. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on amendments and supplements of the law on social protection* (2003). Official gazette of RM, 17/03. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on social protection* (2009) Official gazette of RM, 79/09. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on amendments and supplements of the law on social protection* (2011). Official gazette of RM, 36/11. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on amendments and supplements of the law on social protection* (2013). Official gazette of RM, 187/13. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on social protection – consolidated text* (2013) Official gazette of RM, 148/13. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Law on prevention and protection against discrimination* (2010). Official gazette of RM, 50/10. Skopje: Assembly of R. Macedonia.
- Midgley, J., (2012) *Social welfare in global context*. Skopje: Ars lamina.
- Nackovska – Veljkovikj, B., (2016) *Ethic profile of the social worker and modern trends in the social work*. (PhD thesis defended at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje)

National programme for social protection development 2011-2020. (2011) Skopje: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

National programme for elderly 2010-2020. (2010) Skopje: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

National strategy for reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia 2010-2020. (2010) Skopje: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

National strategy for deinstitutionalization in the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia 2008-2018. (2008) Skopje: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Pejkovski, J. (2008) *Social development.* Skopje: University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" and Faculty of Philosophy.

Pejkovski, J. (2014) *Social entrepreneurship.* Skopje: University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" and Faculty of Philosophy.