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SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION AT LOCAL LEVEL

Volume of Monitoring Reports



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Monitoring of the Action Plan of the Municipal Social Work Centre in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016

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Table of contents

Foreword	7
Monitoring Report on the Social Protection Programme of the Municipality of Veles	9
Monitoring of the Action Plan of the Municipal Social Work Centre in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016	24
Monitoring Report on the Social Protection Programme of the Municipality of Probistip	39

Foreword

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Volume before you contains the total of 3 monitoring reports drafted within the framework of the call for proposals for the implementation of monitoring of the social protection programme (operational and action plans) of the local self-government units of Veles, Kumanov and Probistip.

The publication of the present volume of monitoring reports is a part of the project “Promoting Social Inclusion through Effective Use of EU Funding”, which is financially supported by the European Union and is implemented by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje (IDSCS), Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) and the Organisation of Women of the Municipality of Sveti Nikole (OŽOSV). In view of the full implementation of the activities in the selected municipalities, the Project has entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation with the municipality of Probistip.

The overall topic addressed by the studies concerns the monitoring of the social protection programmes (operational and action plans) of the municipalities of Veles, Kumanovo and Probistip. The reports are structured as public policy documents, thus they suggest practical recommendations for improvement of the identified deficiencies in the implementation of the social protection programmes, which may be particularly useful to the public policy makers and the decision makers at local level.

The representative of the civil society organizations that implemented this activity in accordance with the “Methodology for monitoring of municipal social inclusion action plans”, developed within the frames of the present project, used a combination of research methods, in particular: desk and field research. Furthermore, the representatives of the civil society organizations formulated their recommendations taking into account the experience and knowledge acquired during the study visit to Slovenia, which had been organized within the frames of the present project.

We hope that the available documents, brought together in a volume such as the present one, shall be of particular interest for both the professional and the general public, as well as for the policy makers and decision makers, who should seek inspiration and guidelines for their future activities in the

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

findings and recommendations contained therein.

Zoran Nechev,

Project Coordinator of the project “Promoting Social Inclusion through Effective Use of EU Funding”

Monitoring Report on the Social Protection Programme of the Municipality of Veles

Authors: Daliborka Zlateva and Aleksandra Boskova

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU – *European Union*

MLSP – *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy*

SWC – *Social Work Centre*

SIA – *Sector for Internal Affairs*

ZELS – *Association of Units of Local Self-Government*

APCP – *Association of People with Cerebral Palsy*

OW – *Organization of Women*

LAPPWD – *Local Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities*

LYS – *Local Youth Strategy*

CEO – *Commission for Equal Opportunities*

INTRODUCTION

Today we are living in modern civilized societies where the Governments are operating transparently and are accessible for the citizens. The public policy is a tool that serves the civil society and, as such, it has to be improved continuously in order to achieve their wider and more efficient and effective implementation.

The Republic of Macedonia, from the time it gained its independence in 1991 until the present day, has been undertaking activities to develop a reliable and functional social protection system that will be able to respond to the emerging needs of the beneficiaries. The country, being a member of the Council of Europe, shares the commitments to provide an adequate level of social protection, in particular to the citizens belonging to the most vulnerable categories. In this regard, the establishment of the directions for the development of social protection and the implementation of the reform processes are directly conditioned by the obligations and standards laid

down in the European Social Charter and its additional protocols.

The establishment of a modern social protection system that will be able to address the challenges of the new age is also in line with the clearly defined objective of the Republic of Macedonia to become a Member State of the European Union.

Social protection is designated as an activity in the public interest. It is defined as a system of measures, activities and policies aimed at preventing and overcoming the basic social risks to which the citizens are exposed in the course of their lives, reduction of poverty and social exclusion, and strengthening the individual's capacity for self-protection.

The Republic of Macedonia has been focused, over the past period, on creating a stable normative framework that would ensure efficient protection of the social rights of the citizens and put into practice the constitutional commitment of the Republic of Macedonia as a social welfare state.

The civil society is fully exercising its freedom, as well as its responsibility, to engage actively in the promotion of such opportunities for participation in processes of public policy implementation in the country. By monitoring, analyzing, criticizing, and offering suggestions relating to the public policy implementation, it raises the extent of the democratic approach to common living.

The present monitoring report analyses the implementation of the Programme of activities of the municipality of Veles in the field of social protection. The municipality of Veles is the first municipality in Macedonia which has developed a Social Protection Programme in 2008, which makes it one of the more successful municipalities in the country. The Programme is adopted by the Council of the municipality of Veles, and there are several commissions operating within the municipality – Commission for Social Activities, Commission for culture, education, social welfare and gender equality.

The municipality of Veles was established as a separate local self-government unit in 2005. According to the 2002 population census, the municipality has 55,108 inhabitants. The municipality of Veles has its own flag and coat of arms, anthem and mascot. The municipality of Veles includes 28 settlements.

The 2017 Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles allocates funds for activities that are categorized in seven areas. The total planned budget for 2017 amounts to MKD 6,580.000. The programme includes the following areas: 1) Social support to the community, 2) Child-friendly municipality, 3) Persons with disabilities, 4) Inter-institutional cooperation, 5) Gender equality, 6) Care for the elderly, and 7) Inter-municipal cooperation and investments.

METHODOLOGY

The present report is a result of the monitoring of the Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles. The Council of the municipality of Veles was the first one to adopt a Social Protection Programme in 2008. The 2017 Programme covers the following fields of action by virtue of financial support: Social support to the community, Child-friendly municipality, Persons with disabilities, Inter-institutional cooperation, Gender equality, Care for the elderly, and Inter-municipal cooperation and investments.

The monitoring was carried out by reviewing documents of public character: Report on the operation of the Local Council for Prevention of Child Delinquency of the municipality of Veles in 2015, the Local Youth Strategy of the municipality of Veles 2017-2021, Local Gender Equality Action Plan 2013-2016, Strategy for providing care for the elderly “The third age”, Local Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities in the municipality of Veles 2016-2020, A Narrative Report – 2016 Plan of Operations of the Equal Opportunities Commission within the Council of the municipality of Veles.

The Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles is a strategic document, and its greatest advantage is the fact that all activities planned therein are to be implemented jointly by the civil society organizations and the relevant institutions. This contributes greatly to strengthening the dialogue between the state and the civil society, with enhanced participation of the citizens in the development of the public policies in the municipality of Veles.

The present research was carried out using a combination of desk and field research. It included techniques of surveying and organizing interviews with relevant officials of the institutions working in the field of social protection.

In the first phase of the monitoring process we analyzed the Action Plan of the municipality of Veles. Then we carried out a desk research of the existing institutions and organizations in the field of social protection. In accordance with the data and information gathered, we developed a questionnaire to be used to obtain relevant information on the implementation of the Programme's activities in the field of social protection.

In the second phase we made a field visit to the relevant institutions and organizations and carried out structured interviews with the officials of those institutions and organizations. We interviewed 13 representatives, 8 institutions and 10 civil society organizations.

We performed a qualitative analysis, which helped us gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes themselves and their practical implementation. The findings in this report seek to contribute to the future improvement and strengthening of the programmes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

The first area covered by the Programme is the Social support to the community with a budget allocation in the amount of MKD 1,450,000. This area includes six domains where the municipality of Veles offers its cooperation. The first domain provides for Financial assistance to members of disadvantaged families. 100 citizens received support through the Commission awarding funds for disbursement of one-time cash assistance benefits. The municipality, in cooperation and coordination with the Social Work Centres (SWC) grants cash benefits to the most disadvantaged citizens in need of such assistance. The second domain concerns the procurement of social packages. By virtue of this measure, the municipality provided financial support and food packages to fifteen families which had been assessed, in cooperation with SWC Veles, to have the greatest need for such assistance at the relevant time.

Support to victims of domestic violence is a domain covered jointly by the municipality of Veles and the Social Work Centre. Without revealing the identity of the recipient, and in line with the guidelines provided by the SWC, the municipality pays the funds to a bank account. The municipality of Veles currently does not have shelter centre facilities where it can provide care for the victims of family violence and offer them professional help on the premises of the centre itself. This is a challenge for the municipality and the

civil society, which could cooperate in this field in the future and contribute to strengthening this aspect of social protection by opening shelter centres. The Organization of Women of the municipality of Veles operates an SOS hotline for the victims of domestic violence and runs the project Social Patrol Work in order to detect and assist the victims of domestic violence and other forms of human rights violations. The Organization of Women of Veles, in cooperation with SIA Veles and SWC Veles, has been working for more than four years on the problems relating to the victims of gender-based violence. It has developed a free legal assistance service, and, if necessary, the victims of violence are referred to the shelter centre in Skopje.

The Programme provides for Support to members of marginalized groups (persons receiving addiction treatment, homeless people, former convicts, etc.). The municipality of Veles does not have premises that it may dedicate for provision of care for homeless people, where they can receive a hot meal, maintain their hygiene and receive other similar services. However, despite this lack, the municipality is providing premises to offer temporary shelter to the homeless in circumstances of extremely bad weather. The Social Work Centre is maintaining a database of the homeless people and is taking action in this domain in cooperation with the municipality.

Within the Programme, the municipality of Veles also supports the Roma Decade in cooperation with the MLSP, the civil society sector and the municipal public institution - kindergarten "Dimce Mircev" Veles. In the past six years 25 children of the Roma population have been provided with free transport and care in the kindergarten. This project raised an initiative for greater inclusion of the Roma children in the preschool institutions at local level.

In the field of community social protection the municipality plans and implements activities and allocates fund for the Implementation of the programme of the Municipal Council for prevention of child delinquency and the LESC (Local Economic and Social Council). The local council for prevention of child delinquency has been established by a Decision of the Council of the municipality of Veles and has 20 members. Its composition includes three Council members, representatives of institutions and facilities working with children, representatives of all municipal primary and secondary schools, SIA Veles – Unit for prevention, Court of First

Instance Veles and the Public Prosecutor's Office, SWC, "Dimce Mircev" kindergarten, as well as representatives of the municipal administration. This Council is operating under an Annual Programme. Each member has been delegated specific tasks and activities. At the end of the year, it submits an Annual report on the implemented activities. Its scope of operations includes the identification of local issues and risk factors and undertaking measures for prevention and protection against asocial and antisocial behavior in children. It has implemented diverse educational activities in the schools, organized a visit to the Youth Correctional Facility in Veles for the highschool students in the third and fourth year, it implemented activities aiming at the proper use of internet and the liability for its abuse, activities for prevention of child marriages, sports activities, attending a courtroom trial, joint activities with the non-governmental sector and the Red Cross in Veles, scouts and rescue services, in order to provide them guidelines how to properly manage their free time, and many other activities.

The Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles does not include the Local Youth Strategy 2017-2021. However, the latter strategic document has been developed and aims to improve the overall living conditions for the youth in the municipality of Veles. The priorities within the scope of this Strategy are the youth participation, youth information, local youth work, education, employment and support prior to employment, culture, sports, health and quality of life. The LYS is implemented in cooperation with public institutions, the business community and the civil society.

The implementing party of the activities for development and implementation of the Local Youth Strategy is the Youth Council of the municipality of Veles, which is an advisory body of the municipality of Veles and seeks to represent the interests of the youth in this municipality. The Youth Council is also monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. It is composed of nine members, aged 15-30, representing different organizations, the chairperson and his/her deputy are elected from the ranks of the members. The Youth Council is obliged to draft, at the start of the year, an Annual Programme of Operations, which should be aligned with the Strategy, and it drafts a Report on its operation at the end of the year. The Programme and the Annual Report are presented before the Council of the municipality of Veles.

The second area addressed by the Social Protection Programme is Child-friendly municipality, with a total budget allocation of MKD 600,000. This area, too, covers six domains. The municipality of Veles and the SWC Veles share the competencies in the domain of Support to children without parents and parental care. They provide financial support to the high-school graduates who reside at the Home for Children Without Parents “11th October” in Skopje and are residents of the municipality of Veles. In September, at the beginning of the school year, they provide support in the form of cash benefits for procurement of school supplies. Furthermore, in cooperation with the schools, the municipality and the SWC also implement the Support to gifted and talented children in disadvantaged families. This activity is carried out throughout the year, and the funds are paid to the transaction account of the beneficiary.

For the first time, the Programme of the municipality of Veles allocated funds for activities relating to street children. This activity, too, is implemented in cooperation with SWC Veles. SWC Veles is maintaining records on the street children, but there are still no civil society organizations working in this field in the town and there is no shelter and care centre. There are activities such as New Year’s gifts for children without parents and parental care and children with special needs planned in December every year. These activities are implemented by the municipality of Veles, SWC Veles and the CSOs. The Mayor is distributing the Christmas presents by visiting the Daycare centre for persons with special needs in Veles, visiting and socializing with the members of APCP Veles, etc.

The third domain includes activities relating to the persons with disabilities and has a budget allocation of MKD 1,730,000. As a matter of fact, the municipality of Veles is a trailblazer when it comes to the development of the Local Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (LAPPWD). It is a strategic document aimed at strengthening the process of social inclusion and de-institutionalization of persons with disabilities. The development of the LAPPWD draws on the National strategy for equalization of the rights of persons with disabilities and the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The first LAPPWD was drafted in 2007 by the Association of People with Cerebral Palsy in Veles and is the first such strategic plan for persons with disabilities in Southeast Europe. The Plan has been updated in 2012 and 2016. The LAPPWD was drafted and reviewed with the participation of civil society organizations working with persons with special

needs, other non-governmental organizations, local level institutions, the business community, media and the municipal administration.

A number of activities aimed at raising the public awareness of the local population for the observance of the rights of persons with disabilities have been implemented under this strategic document. Such activities include advocacy and lobbying with the public and private sector for enforcement of the legal provisions and standards concerning the persons with disabilities. The educational sector has been animated through active participation of the parents in trainings, engagement of all students (students with special needs and students from the regular population) in various project activities, etc. This document is regularly planning and realizing the objectives relating to the facilitation of the access to the physical environment by the persons with disabilities. In terms of the adaptation of the space, the town has built several access ramps, placed signs for parking places reserved for persons with disabilities, and installed elevators in a primary school and in the town library. Braille printers have been provided with the assistance of the municipality, and the first books for blind people, i.e. people with impaired sight have already been printed. One of the priority areas laid down in the LAPPWD is the employment of persons with special needs. The municipality of Veles can boast of high rate of employment among persons with disabilities in the local businesses, which are well aware of the legal framework for employment of persons with disabilities and which, mostly by using the opportunity to register as sheltered workshops, cooperate well with the local associations of persons with disabilities. With assistance from the municipality, the non-governmental organizations APCP – Veles and Mobility Veles provided two motorized wheelchairs and a hydraulic lift for the persons with disabilities. The municipality of Veles is supporting the summer rehabilitation of persons with special needs and a Home visit and therapy service for the persons with disabilities within the framework of activities of the APCP - Veles.

In the field of Prevention of addiction diseases, in accordance with the Programme of the municipality of Veles, the municipality is organizing public debates in cooperation with SIA Veles. Other activities in this area, which are also laid down in the Annual Programmes of the schools, include lectures in all primary and secondary schools.

The fourth area of the Social Protection Programme concerns

Interinstitutional cooperation. In this regard, the municipality of Veles is involved as a partner in projects such as: Open social protection days, We care for a proper home, Internship and employmen of persons with disabilities, etc. In regard to these and other issues, it cooperates regularly with the educational institutions, the Social Work Centre, SIA Veles – Unit for Prevention, Public Health Institut, civil society organizations and the Red Cross branch in Veles. The Programme allocates a budget of MKD 200,000.00 for this area of the Programme.

Gender equality is the fifth area covered by the Social Protection Programme. The activities in this area are grouped in three domains: Activities under the Gender Equality Operational Plan, Regional Cooperation for Promotion of Gender Equality and Local Network Cooperation (in accordance with the proposals made by the civil society organizations). The total budget allocated for this area amounts to MKD 400,000.

The Local Strategy for Gender Equality 2013 - 2020 is a strategic document of the municipality of Veles aimed at promoting the equal opportunities for women and men in the overall societal life. This document is based on the National Strategy for Gender Equality. In accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, the Strategy includes a Local Action Plan for Gender Equality. The Strategy is developed for a period of eight years, while the Action plan is adopted every three years, and it provides the basis for the development of Annual Operational Plans that set forth activities to be realized under the municipality's Annual Operational Programme. The Operational Plan represents an Annual Operational Programme. The Gender Equality Strategy, the Action Plan and the Operational Plan are enacted by the Council of the municipality of Veles. The priorities identified in the Gender Equality Strategy are: decision-making processes, human rights, healthcare, social policy, education, economic strengthening, gender-based violence and media.

The Commission for Equal Opportunities was established in 2003 in accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities. The CEO is responsible for the monitoring and coordination of the implementation of action and operations plans under the Strategy. The Comission for Equal Opportunities is a standing body within the Council of the municipality of Veles, established by the council members and composed of five members - two men and

three women. Veles is the first municipality in R. Macedonia which allocates funding for this area within the Social Protection Programme.

Since 2015, the implementation of the Operational Plan has been delegated to the Organization of Women of the municipality of Veles. The funds allocated to this area are transferred quarterly to OW Veles, thus enabling the implementation of the planned activities. OW Veles is obliged to submit narrative and financial reports on its operations and the activities it has implemented under the Annual Programme. The report is presented before the Council of the municipality of Veles. The delegation of the powers for implementation of the annual programme in the field of gender equality has been assessed as successful practice and ZELS as a positive example. In particular, the municipality had signed a contract with OW Veles in a public and transparent procedure and extended such cooperation by virtue of an annex to the contract.

The sixth area concerns Care for elderly and has a total budget of MKD 800,000. The Association of Pensioners – Veles has developed the Strategy for the elderly in accordance with the EU guidelines and recommendations, but in the spirit of the National Strategy for Elderly Persons of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in cooperation with the municipality of Veles and the Youth Council within the municipality of Veles. In December 2016 the municipality enacted a Decision on the adoption of the Strategy “Care for the Elderly – the Third Age” for the period 2017-2021. It is a strategic document aimed at improving the life of the elderly persons in the municipality of Veles. The responsible parties for the implementation of the strategy are the municipality of Veles and the Association of Pensioners – Veles, as well as the civil society organizations and the youth branches of the Red Cross in the primary and secondary schools. The Association of Pensioners with Disabilities is also involved in the implementation of the Strategy. By virtue of this document, the pensioners with low income, families with a lot of children and families of persons with special needs are receiving one-time cash assistance benefits. The Strategy also provides for financial support of up to 30% of the costs of spa-climate rehabilitation for those pensioners with income less than MKD 13,000. The elderly and the infirm are visited in their homes, preventive actions are being taken by maintaining personal contacts with solitary persons, and the municipality organizes healthcare, education and consultation services. At the same time, it funds events of cultural-leisure and sports nature. The Associaton,

in addition to the territory of the municipality of Veles, is also active in the municipalities of Gradsko and Caska. The Association of Pensions runs several daycare centres where the elderly can socialize, play interactive games, organize debates and attend various lectures. Such daycare centres have been opened in all major settlements in Veles, Gradsko, Bogomila and Caska, but also cover minor settlements such as Ivankovci and Otovica. The Programme allocates funds for establishing Daycare centres for the elderly, or which one should be built in Basino Selo in the course of 2017.

The Red Cross office in Veles implemented a project to provide services to visit the elderly in their homes. The project was implemented in the period from October 2011 to the end of February 2017. The future of this service is uncertain because the necessary funding for 2017 still have not been fully secured. We have received this information from the Red Cross office in the municipality of Veles.

For the first time, in 2017 the Social Protection Programme is planning and implementing Intermunicipal Cooperation activities. The Programme allocates a budget of MKD 550,000,00 for this area. The municipality of Veles and other municipalities in the Vardar Planning Region participate in partnership projects in the field of social protection. Furthermore, they invest in the development and support to innovative forms of social protection.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The municipality of Veles was the first municipality in Macedonia to develop and successfully implement a Social Protection Programme. The programme has been adopted for the first time in 2008 by the Council of the municipality of Veles and is funded from the budget of the municipality. The programme covers several areas and all categories of citizens in need of social support. It addresses problems identified in children, victims of domestic violence, members of marginalized groups, the Roma population, gender equality, persons with disabilities and the elderly. In 2017 the Programme introduced for the first time activities relating to street children.

A positive feature of the Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles is the fact that all activities per specific areas are implemented jointly by the institutions and the civil society organizations. This enhances the participation of the citizens in the public policy making

and the transparent management of the municipal budget. The Social Protection Programme and the manner of its implementation enable the direct identification of citizens' concerns and a direct approach to addressing such concerns.

The Council of the municipality of Veles has adopted for the first time, in 2015, a decision to delegate the competencies for the implementation of the Programme for Gender Equality to the Organization of Women of the municipality of Veles. This practice has been used successfully for three years and it sets a good example how the civil society organizations can participate in the implementation of the activities. This example should be followed by other civil society organizations working in the field of social protection, which could be delegated the competencies for implementation of other areas covered by the Social Protection Programme.

Social protection is an area that requires continual adjustment and adaptation, both of the needs of the beneficiaries and the actual capabilities of the system and the state. The social protection system, as a means of support to the citizens at social risk, should provide services that would make it possible not only to alleviate the consequences, but also to find a way out of the situation. This objective can be accomplished through a well developed network of service providers at central and local levels, as well as through active involvement of the municipalities and civil society organizations.

Slovenia has developed a good social welfare programme. The civil society organization there successfully provide social services at local level and this is a positive role model which could be emulated in Macedonia.

The monitoring of the Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles has yielded the following recommendations:

- decentralization of social protection at local level – the social protection policies at national level should be delegated to the local self-government units. The decentralization shall provide for a greater accountability of the local authorities for the realization of social protection of the citizens in the municipalities. In particular, the local communities are closer to the actual problems of the citizens belonging to the vulnerable categories. By deliberate planning, and utilizing the capacities of the municipal organizations, the civil

society and the business community can more easily and directly scan the needs of the citizens out in the field, the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of social protection in the past, and, by virtue of strategic documents, they can strengthen the capacities for more efficient action in the sphere of social protection;

- To enter into social contracts with the state - following the positive role models from the developed countries, we become increasingly aware of the benefits of the cooperation and joint operation of the state and the civil society organizations in the sphere of social protection. The social contract is a modern and effective form of political dialogue between the aforementioned entities. The aim of such contracts is to ensure the participation of the citizens in the development, implementation and the accountability for the societal life and, most importantly, in the development of social protection policies that are aligned with the articulated needs of the direct beneficiaries, i.e. the citizens. The services should be funded by participation from the state, local communities, business community and, in a small portion, by the beneficiaries.
- Delegated competencies to civil society organizations working in the field of social protection (such as the successful example of the Organization of Women of the municipality of Veles, described above in the present Report);
- Establishment of services by the local self-government units, by delegating the competencies to the civil society organizations working in the field of social protection. The services have many advantages, among which the direct service in the homes of the beneficiaries, which indicates non-institutional care for the citizens belonging to the vulnerable categories and enables their greater integration in the society. The services at local level shall identify and address the citizens' concerns more concretely and effectively and using a direct approach that shall, in turn, give the service a more humane dimension, which is ultimately a distinctive feature of any modern and developed society.

As regards the 2017 Social Protection Programme of the municipality of Veles, we believe that it leaves less space for activities and funding for

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

the marginalized groups of citizens such as: homeless persons, recovering addicts, former convicts, victims of domestic violence, street children and persons with special needs. Despite the strong efforts to support the citizens belonging to the vulnerable categories, achieving full wellbeing and integration into the community would require much greater efforts in terms of human resources and funding. The allocation of greater funds for the Social Protection Programme and the delegation of the activities to the CSOs shall strengthen the capacity for systemic interventions with the vulnerable categories of citizens, build a stronger network for prevention and transition away from social risk. This shall also strengthen the civil society organizations in terms of their mobility and delivery of services to the beneficiaries and thus contribute fully to the building of a stronger social protection system and dignified life.

Information sources

Documents

1. Programme for Social Protection Development 2011-2021 in the Republic of Macedonia
2. Report on the operation of the Local Council for Prevention of Child Delinquency of the municipality of Veles, 2015
3. Local Youth Strategy of the municipality of Veles, 2017-2021
4. Local Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities of the municipality of Veles, 2016-2020
5. Local Action Plan for Gender Equality, 2013-2016
6. Narrative report – Operational Plan of the Commission for Equal Opportunities within the Council of the municipality of Veles, 2016
7. Strategy for Care for the Elderly “The Third Age”

Web pages

<http://www.sobranie.mk/ustav-na-rm.nsp>

<http://zsd.gov.mk/>

<http://veles.gov.mk/veles3/>

<http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/>

Monitoring of the Action Plan of the Municipal Social Work Centre in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016

Authors: Vlado Ancev and Viktor Taleski

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GIZ - *German Association For International Cooperation*

IPA - *Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance*

PIIMSWC - *Public Institution Inter - municipal Social Work Centre Kumanovo*

NGO - *non-governmental organization*

MCSS - *Municipal Centre for Social Services*

CID - *Centre for Intercultural Dialogue*

Introduction

Various national strategies and programmes have been adopted in the Republic of Macedonia and they address groups currently or potentially at social risk, or specific topics related to social inclusion.

Many policies and measures for decentralization of the decision-making process in this area and for development of local plan have been implemented recently, and they include social services easily available to beneficiaries in accordance with their needs, as well as the needs of local communities.

An important segment in this process is the need for pluralization and diversification of social services providers, where apart from the local self-government, and important role is given to the CSOs through building partnerships at local level.

The Municipality of Kumanovo is the second largest municipality in Macedonia, following the capital Skopje. According to data from the last

census conducted by the State Statistical Office in 2002, Kumanovo has 105484 inhabitants. According to data of the State Electoral Commission for 2009, municipality of Kumanovo has 105.420, living in 45.367 registered household, and as ethnic composition regards, it is ethnically mixed community, with a majority of ethnic Macedonians (52.809), Albanian ethnic minority (27.290), Serbian (9.062) and Roma (4.256) ethnic community.¹

In 2015, in accordance with the Law on Social Protection, 2748 adults and 1308 minors were social welfare beneficiaries on the territory of the municipality.²

As regards the data from the Statistical overview by the State Statistical Office presented in the ‘Gender Assessment of Social Policies and Budgets at Local Level: Examples from Kumanovo, Strumica and Shtip’, following interpretation of the current situation with the social protection in the municipality of Kumanovo can be found:

“It is difficult to assess whether the coverage is sufficient, since they are no official data on the total number of people living in poverty in the Municipality of Kumanovo or the percentage of people needing a certain type of social assistance. If we make calculations based on certain indicators showing that 20% of the population lives in poverty, it can be assessed that more than 21.000 inhabitants, or approximately 9.000 families in the Municipality of Kumanovo need a certain type of social assistance... It indicates that there is a gap between the local needs and the existing national coverage of social assistance. The gap may be reduced by the municipality through its local social protection policies and through forms of assistance.”³

For the period from 2015-2017, the Municipality, that is, the Department for Social, Health and Child Protection adopted a Programme for Social Protection of the Municipality of Kumanovo 2015-2017, developed on the basis of the National Programme for Development of Social Protection

1 Data from the research report ‘Gender Assessment of Social Policies and Budgets at Local Level: Examples from Kumanovo, Strumica and Shtip’, p. 22

2 Statistical Overview: Population and Social Statistics - Social Protection of Children, Youth and Adults, 2015, pp. 40 and 42

3 ‘Gender Assessment of Social Policies and Budgets at Local Level: Examples from Kumanovo, Strumica and Shtip’, p. 22-23

2011-2021, following the objectives and priorities set in the national policies.

The local Programme encompasses parts of the National Programme, prioritizing the activities in accordance with the recommendations to the local authorities: decentralization, pluralization, de-institutionalization, social prevention and development of non-institutional services of social protection.⁴

In terms of listed priorities, the Municipality of Kumanovo has established a long-term relationship with the civil association 'Regional Centre for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities Poraka Nash', providing support to the daycare centre for persons with disabilities. The cooperation has been functioning for 10 years, and the municipality delegates some activities for protection of this vulnerable group, since there is no public institution in the municipality providing care for persons with disabilities over 18 years (there is no daycare centre in the municipality for persons over 18 years).

The Municipality of Kumanovo allocates approximately 22400000 MKD for social protection annually, which is about 5% of the municipal budget.

Municipal centre for social services - Kumanovo

Municipal Centre for Social Services (MCSS) was established with assistance and upon signing the memorandum between the Municipality of Kumanovo and German Association for International Cooperation - GIZ.

The aim of this project is to strengthen the social function of the municipality by identifying citizens' needs and care and assistance provided to persons, families and social groups affected by certain social risks.

The activities of the centre are as follows:

- Identification of needs of vulnerable groups on the territory of the municipality;
- Inform and advise citizens on possibilities to effectuate their

⁴ Programme for Social Protection of the Municipality of Kumanovo 2015-2017, published in the municipal Official Gazette no.14, 2014, p. 793

rights in the social protection area and benefits within the social protection system in the Republic of Macedonia;

- Provision and maintenance of multi-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation within the community;
- Organization of workshops and public debates to raise the awareness of vulnerable groups;
- Work in the Coordination body for social protection;
- Mapping vulnerable groups
- Mediation in realization of the Programme for Social, Health and Child Protection in the Municipality of Kumanovo;
- Cooperation with the CSOs in the social protection area, and
- Organization of charity events.

Methodology

In the period from January-February 2017, data were collected, using primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained by semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were obtained from existing research, analyses and statistical data.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from following institutions and organizations:

- Municipal centre for social services - Kumanovo,
- Public Institution Inter-municipal Social Protection Centre Kumanovo,
- Roma Community Centre Drom,
- Regional Centre for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities Poraka Nasha,
- Centre for Intercultural Dialogue CID⁵

5 The aforementioned institutions and organizations, through their representatives are

Results from the Monitoring of the Action Plan of the Municipal Social Work Centre in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016

Considering that the Operation Plan for implementation of the regional programme for social rights of vulnerable groups in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016 refers to the operation of the Municipal Centre for Social Services (MCSS), the research also focused on the operation of this centre.

The Centre started working on 01.06.2016 in the premises of the Municipality of Kumanovo and it employs three competent persons - a lawyer and two social workers.

The MCSS, as project of the Municipality of Kumanovo and GIZ will carry on for 18 months, and then the Municipality should take over the operation of the Centre. It means that the project will be fully handed over to the municipality in September 2017, but GIZ announced they may prolong their support after the expiry of this period, maybe for additional 12 months.

The budget of the MCSS is composed of the municipal budget and the donor, GIZ contribution, where both parties (the municipality and GIZ) participate.

The Centre provides free legal assistance to the citizens. Legal assistance refers to writing submissions (complaints, requests, law suits, etc.), but it does not include representation in court since the centre does not have competences for legal representation as part of the free legal assistance. Any person requiring free legal assistance by the MCSS has been registered by the employees. Their number for the period from June to December 2016 was 151 people.

In order to improve public awareness of the MCSS, a brochure was developed funded by the GIZ, printed in Macedonian and Albanian language and it has been disseminated in institutions, schools, NGOs, etc.

The Operational Plan for 2016 provides for mapping of the needs of

members of the Local Coordination Body for social protection within the MCSS.

citizens at social risk. Therefore, a database was designed with data gained from the municipality and other sources such as PIMCSW and RCC Drom.

One of the major activities in view of encouraging inter-sectoral cooperation is the establishment of Local Coordination Body for social protection. This body was established upon a decision dated on 9 November 2016. Prior to its establishment a training was delivered by the Institute of Social Affairs explaining how it should be established. So far, 4 local NGOs participate in its operation together with all relevant state institutions, and if required other NGOs would be involved and participate in this operation of this body. The objective of the body is to draft a programme for prevention against social risks at local level. A meeting was held in 2016 discussing the establishment of the body, and in 2017 activities should be intensified by creating working groups within the coordination body.

The operational plan of the MCSS for 2016 provided for a non-discrimination training, but the training was not delivered, and it was rescheduled for the current year. An animated movie against discrimination on various grounds was produced in 2016. It has not been broadcast yet, and it is planned for the forthcoming period.

The operational plan envisages participation of the MCSS in the EU IPA programme. So far, they have not completed project application, but internal training for completion of project applications was delivered.

The Centre drafts reports about its operation and submits them to the GIZ. Since the beginning of its operation, the Centre submitted one two-month report, and then the reports were submitted quarterly. The reports are internal and they are not available to the public.

Conclusions and recommendations

The conducted monitoring of the operational plan of the MCSS for 2016, it can be concluded that the plan has been mainly implemented. The fruitful cooperation between the MCSS, on one hand, and other stakeholders, mostly NGOs, on the other, contributes to the successful implementation of the plan.

As regards the future advancement and development of the cooperation and activities for social inclusion at local level, following recommendations

are issued:

- **Greater intensity of activities of the Local Coordination Body.** Having in mind that this body was established in November 2016, and only one introductory meeting was held by the end of the last year, it is necessary to intensify the meetings and to launch working groups in the course of the current year.
- **More intense field work in order to continue mapping activities of persons at social risk.** Mapping persons at social risk, and there should be more intense field activities considering that certain categories of persons at risk are not covered with administrative data available to the institutions.
- **More intense cooperation of the municipality with the local NGOs in view of development and application for joint projects.** Cooperation between the NGOs and the local self-governance is particularly important to policy-making process, as well as application at foreign donors, and such consideration is considered an advantage for gaining their funds. Following data needs to be mentioned here: IPA I mechanism provides for use an amount of 14.1 million euros in the social inclusion component, but only 6.2 million have been absorbed so far. (Source: National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire, revised 2016-2018).⁶
- **More intensive involvement of civil society organizations in the preparation of the annual action plan of MCSS, and their participation in planned activities.** Inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the area of social protection will contribute to realizing the priorities through their involvement in the action plans.
- **Establish regular (annual) evaluation of the operational plan of the Municipal Center for Social Services.** The goal of this practice will be to ascertain the conditions of the planned and implemented activities, and to contribute to raising the level of work.

6 NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR ADOPTION OF THE ACQUIS COMMUNITAIRE (NPAA)REVISED 2016 – 2018
http://www.sobranie.mk/content/Dokumenti%20RM-EU/EU/NPAA2016_00_NARATIVEN_17.03.2016.pdf

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1. Law on Local Self-Government, 'Official Gazette of the RM' No.5 of 29.01.2002
2. Law on Social Protection, 'Official Gazette of the RM' No.79 of 24 June 2009
3. National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire, revised 2016-2018
4. Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the National Program for Development of Social Protection, 2011-2021
5. Gender evaluation of social policies and budgets at local level in Kumanovo, Strumica and Stip HERA - Association for Health Education and Research in Skopje in October 2013
6. Republic of Macedonia, S,State Statistical Office, Social Protection of Children, Youth and Adults, 2015r.
7. Official newsletter of the Municipality of Kumanovo, year LIX Number 14 Kumanovo 14 December 2014 – Social Protection Programme 2015 – 2017

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

Monitoring matrix for the activities of the Municipal Centre for Social Services within the Operational Plan for implementation of the regional programme for social rights of vulnerable groups in the Municipality of Kumanovo for 2016

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	MANNERS OF ACTING	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA	STATUS OF ACTIVITIES	ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATOR	CAUSE FOR DEVIATION
Informational and educational and advisory assistance to citizens of the Municipality of Kumanovo	Free legal assistance	Number of users annually (number of registered persons who obtained FLA)	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities in progress	In the period from June to December 2016 151 person applied for legal aid to MCSS, and they received information and assistance in preparing submissions	
Preventive action (design of leaflets)	Preparation of material to promote the services and activities of the Municipal Center for Social Services	Information tools (brochures, appearances in the media, organizing events, etc.).	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities are realized in 2016	Printed brochures in Macedonian and Albanian language for MCSS disseminated in institutions, NGOs, etc.	

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	MANNERS OF ACTING	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA	STATUS OF ACTIVITIES	ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATOR	CAUSE FOR DEVIATION
	Developing knowledge and skills of individual population groups to deal with specific social risks	Number of held trainings, workshops, etc. Number of persons from vulnerable groups included in the activities	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities in progress	The MCSS in 2016 provided support to activities implemented by other organizations (ESA, NGOs) working on development of knowledge and skills of social risk group.	
Training on mapping socially vulnerable categories of citizens	Active participation in organized training for mapping the socially vulnerable groups of the employees of the MCSS - Kumanovo, PIIMSWC- Kumanovo and Drom	Training delivered	Interview with employees in MCSS, PIIMSWC, Drom	Activity realized in 2016	Training is held by the Institute of Social Affairs, in which participants were representatives of institutions and NGOs	

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	MANNERS OF ACTING	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA	STATUS OF ACTIVITIES	ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATOR	CAUSE FOR DEVIATION
Training on mapping social problems of vulnerable categories	Drawing up a map of the social structure of the population in the municipality of Kumanovo, based on data obtained from relevant institutions within the process of mapping	Training delivered	Interview with employees in MCSS, PIIMSWC, Drom	Activities in progress	Created database from three sources (MCSS, PIIMSWC, DROM)	
Support to NGOs	<p>Awareness activities regarding areas of activities of civil society organizations on the territory of Kumanovo</p> <p>Active participation in events that are organized by civil society organizations in order to exchange information in the field of social protection</p>	Number and description of joint activities with NGOs	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities in progress	Cooperation and contacts with NGOs and the municipality are continuous; however, no reciprocal participation in events organized by civil society organizations is recorded.	

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	MANNERS OF ACTING	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA	STATUS OF ACTIVITIES	ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATOR	CAUSE FOR DEVIATION
Training for establishment of Coordination Body	Active participation in the training for establishment of coordination body by the employees in the MCSS-Kumanovo	Training delivered	Interview with employees in MCSS, PIIMSWC, Drom, Poraka Nasha and CID	Activity realized in 2016	Training delivered by the Institute of Social Affairs for the establishment of a coordination body	
Establish a coordination body	Provision of effective communication and cooperation between institutions and sectors, etc. Stakeholders	Established coordination body	Interview with employees in MCSS, PIIMSWC, Drom, Poraka Nasha and CID	Activities in progress	A meeting was held which was attended by institutions and NGOs considering the establishment of a coordination body (further included Mz and UZ)	
	Organizing training for non-discrimination	Training delivered	Interview with employees in the MCSS			The training for non-discrimination is not held, but is planned to be held during 2017

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	MANNERS OF ACTING	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF DATA	STATUS OF ACTIVITIES	ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATOR	CAUSE FOR DEVIATION
Capacity building of the Municipal Centre for Social Services to use the additional funds from IPA	Participation in training, workshops and seminars aimed at educating employees in the MCSS for development of projects and application for IPA funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of attended trainings, workshops and seminars - Number of submitted project applications 	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities in progress	Internal training for development of project proposals for IPA is delivered	
Preparation of the two-month report on the operation of the Municipal Center for Social Services	Information on the realized activities in MCSS - Kumanovo	Number of drafted reports	Interview with employees in the MCSS	Activities in progress (regular quarterly report is being drafted)	Since the establishment of the MCSS, a two-month and a quarterly report have been drafted	

Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

Analysis and Monitoring Report of the Social Protection Programme of the Municipality of Probishtip

Authors: Kristina Hadzi-Vasileva, Fisnik Shabani

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

IDSCS - *Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje*

RM - *Republic of Macedonia*

LSU - *Local self-governance units*

MLSP - *Ministry Of Labour And Social Policy*

CSW - *Centre for Social Work*

EARM - *Employment Service Agency*

SIA - *Sector for Internal Affairs*

NGO - *Non-governmental organization*

UNDP - *United Nation Development Programme*

GIZ - *German Development Agency*

MPS - *Municipal primary school*

MSS - *Municipal secondary school*

Introduction

Social inclusion and social protection are two complementary terms. At the same time, they are complex issues and imply a set of social processes of the life in a community, such as economy, culture, public life, policies, etc.

Social inclusion and protection are concepts which speak about equality, union and inclusion of all social groups regardless of their race, ethnic or religious background, sex, age, place of living, etc. Among other things, they promote social values and improvement of the conditions in the community, aimed at strengthening the voice of the marginalized groups, minorities or poor and make sure they receive the place in the community they deserve, improved living conditions, access to labour market and equal rights and services.

Furthermore, social protection is a system of measures, activities and policies intended to prevent and overcome social risks to which people are exposed in their lifetime, to reduce the poverty and social exclusion and to strengthen their personal protection capacities.

In this context, any attempt to make the social protection theme a priority of public policies striving to improve the existing mechanisms or adopting new ones, needs to be based on a firm framework of quantitative and qualitative data. Considering the aforementioned, but within the limited period of time, the goal of the present analysis was to collect general data to assess the state-of-play in terms of developing and implementing the Social Protection Programme of the municipality, without any expectations to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the situation with the social protection in the municipality. The present analysis offers insight how the municipality develops, implements and monitors certain measures and approaches in the field of social protection.

The present analysis is a part of the project “Promotion of Social Inclusion through Effective Use of EU Funds” funded by the European Union implemented by the Institute for Democracy ‘Societas Civilis’ – Skopje (IDSCS) together with the Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) and Organization of Women from the municipality of Sveti Nikole (OWMSN).

Methodology

Analysis and monitoring of the social protection programme of the municipality of Probishtip was implemented based on a methodology developed particularly for this purpose, by implementing several steps and activities, such as use of primary and secondary sources of information. Secondary sources covered the analysis of relevant documents from the social protection field (desk research) while the primary sources focused on preparation and realization of interviews and focus-groups and final analysis of the findings from the previous activities.

Desk research

The goal of the desk research conducted by the expert team was to identify and investigate the state-of-play, that is, the key laws and documents at national and local level which are relevant and important to the social

protection.

The desk analysis focused on the key documents in the area of social protection at national level, such as the Law on Social Protection, Programme for Social Protection development 2011-2021, Law on Self-government of the RM, Law on Financing of the Local Self-government Units, National Strategy for Elderly Persons 2010-2020, National Strategy for reduction of poverty and social exclusion 2010-2020, National Strategy for equalization of the rights of disabled persons 2010-2018, National Strategy for equality and non-discrimination, etc.

The desk research also reviewed municipal documents which were the subject of the analysis, the Social Protection Programme, or action plans for social protection of the municipality of Probishtip for 2014, 2015 and 2016, the budget of the municipality, particularly provisions regulating parts of the social protection area in the last three years, as well as the annual reports on the realization of the Social Protection Action Plan for 2014, 2015 and 2016. The Rulebook for terms, criteria and manner of exercise of the right to one-off pecuniary assistance for social and other needs in the municipality of Probishtip was also reviewed.

Preparation and collection of data (interviews and focus groups)

In the period from 15 and 24 March 2017 6 interviews and 1 focus group were organized. Special questionnaires were drafted in order to conduct the interviews and focus groups. Interviews are semi-structural, i.e. realized directly (face-to-face) with managing authorities of key institutions in the area of social protection at local level, such representatives from municipal administration – Unit for public activities and Centre for Social Services in the municipality, Centre for Social Work, Employment Service Agency - Regional Employment Centre in Probishtip, as well as representatives from the education sector (kindergarten, primary and secondary school) in order to obtain professional opinion regarding the social protection in the municipality. Interview questions were prepared in such a manner to obtain responses in the key questions, such as manner for development of social protection programme, its relevance (whether the programme activities and goals were in compliance with the general policies and beneficiaries' needs), its effectiveness (whether the set goals were achieved), and its efficiency

(whether available resources are appropriate to meet the goals).

During the implementation of the desk analysis, a need to organize a focus group with representatives from various organizations and civil associations which work in the social protection area (Red cross, association of retired persons, association of persons with disabilities, representatives of education sector, business community, youth, etc.) was identified. The focus group was conducted in order to obtain relevant information on state-of-affairs of vulnerable groups of citizens, their access to rights and services, as well as other challenges they face, and any possible suggestions to improve the situation of the social protection at municipal level.

Obtained information and data from the interviews and focus group are included in the analysis and they assisted in formulating the key findings.

Drafting the report with conclusions and recommendations

The present report was drafted based on the collected data and their analysis and it contains the overall findings of all activities, as well as the relevant conclusions and recommendations. The initial findings were presented to the expert public and social protection beneficiaries in the municipality of Probishtip on a public event held on 6 March 2017. A presentation was developed to present the findings in a comprehensible manner to the participants at the event followed by a discussion. Opinions and views expressed at the event were incorporated in the final report, and the analysis was finalized as a final document. It is drafted in an electronic form and it shall be uploaded on the websites of implementing and partner organizations and it shall be shared with the public and relevant organizations and institutions. The report shall be submitted to the municipality of Probishtip to serve it for further creation of strategy and social protection policies at local level.

Data Analysis And Key Findings

Legal framework

Social protection is designated as an activity in the public interest⁷. It is defined as a system of measures, activities and policies aimed at preventing and overcoming the basic social risks to which the citizens are exposed in the course of their lives, reduction of poverty and social exclusion, and strengthening the individual's capacity for self-protection.

The Law on Social Protection⁸ regulates the social protection system and organization, rights to social protection, financing and exercise of rights to social protection in the Republic of Macedonia. This law also regulates the competences of the municipality in the field of social protection. Municipalities in Macedonia and the City of Skopje are competent to organize and deliver social protection at local level.

Apart from the Law on Social Protection, there is a set of laws further regulating social protection issues, such as the Law on Self-government of the Republic of Macedonia⁹ as a fundamental framework in the decentralization process and stipulates the competences of the municipalities, including social protection and children protection. Following the completion of the first phase of the decentralization process in the social protection in 2005, according to which care homes for elderly persons were transferred under municipality competences, in 2006 emphasis was put on the enforcement of municipality's legal obligation to organize and provide social protection in compliance with the specific social protection needs of their citizens¹⁰. The Law on Financing of the Local Self-Government Units¹¹ provides for the legal framework and terms and conditions for independent financial operation of the municipalities. This law stipulates the income sources for

7 National Programme for the Development of the Social Protection 2011-2021, MLSP 2010, Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 2010.

8 Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of RM, no. 79, 24 June 2009 and consolidated text from September 2015, MLSP. (<http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/ZSZ%20konsolidiran%20%20IX-2015.pdf>))

9 Law of Local Self-Governance, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 5/2002.

10 Programme for Social Needs of Citizens in the Social Protection Area for the Municipality of Strumica, Strumica, 31.08.2006.

11 Law on Financing of the Local Self-government Units, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 61, 2004.

the municipalities, as municipality's own incomes and transfers from the state budget and other funds. The Law on Protection and Prevention Against Discrimination¹² provides for prevention of discrimination in exercising citizens' rights and services regardless of their background and social status. Other laws important in the social protection area are the Labour Relations Act¹³ which regulates the relations between the employers and employees during the working process and it guarantees complaint execution of this process respecting the right of employees to freedom of labour, dignity and protection of workers' interests; the Law on Family¹⁴ regulating marital and family relations; the Law on Children Protection¹⁵ regulating the system and organization of child protection, as well as other laws regulating special social groups.

Documents regulating social protection at local level are: The Social Protection Programme of the municipality containing measures and activities for social protection of the citizens, then, the Strategy for Local Economic Development, and municipality Budget. Those documents provide for special projects or means for social protection. Social protection action plans are very important documents, too, according to which various activities are implemented in a year, as well as annual reports on the realization of the aforementioned documents.

Institutions competent for social protection and promotion of social area at national level are as follows: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLSG), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Education and Science (MES), Ministry of Health (MH), etc.

The Secretariat for Implementation of Framework Agreement (SIFA) has special competences, particularly in relation to promotion and protection of rights of ethnic communities.

Main bodies addressing social protection issues within the local

12 Law on protection and prevention against discrimination, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 44, 2014.

13 Labour Relations Act, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 167, 2015.

14 Law on Family, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 153, 2014.

15 Law on Protection of Children, Official Gazette of the RM, no. 23, 2013 and consolidated text of July 2016.

self-government are the LSE, regional centres for social work, regional employment centres, sector for internal affairs and Commission for equality between men and women.

Judiciary is also an important segment since it considers and decides upon numerous cases important for social aspects of people, families or society as a whole.

Apart from local public institutions, educational sector (kindergartens, schools, universities), healthcare sector, civil society and business community play an equally important role in the social protection area.

The Municipality of Probishtip is located in the Eastern planning region of the Republic of Macedonia, in the middle and lower part of the Zletovska River basin. It covers a territory of 318km² and it is located at 330 to 1,200 metres above sea level, with one urban and two suburban areas, as well as 33 smaller rural areas with 16,193 citizens according to the 2002 census, of which 8,248 are men, 7,945 are women, 10,816 live in the city and the others live in suburban and rural areas. 15,977 citizens (98.67%) of the total population in the municipality are ethnic Macedonians, and other belong to different ethnic groups.

Main economic activity in the municipality of Probishtip is mining, but lately, a number of enterprises delivering services such as transport, catering, healthcare and textile factories have been established, as well as food processing companies, dairies and bakeries.

Institutions in the area of social protection, culture, kindergartens, healthcare, primary, secondary and higher education, operate in the municipality.

Social Protection System at Municipal level

Pursuant to Law on Local Self-Governance and the Law on Social Protection, municipalities and social work centres are the implementers of the social inclusion at local level. Thus, municipalities and SWC partly overlap in their competences regarding social protection, however, SWC cover a larger scope and range of social vulnerable groups. Therefore,

municipalities are responsible for development of special social protection programmes, as well as for establishment of public institutions for social protection in accordance with the National social protection programme. Municipalities may, independently, from their own funds, finance social protection programmes for their citizens, beyond the level provided by the state. In this context, municipalities may establish public institutions for institutional and non-institutional protection, except social work centres and public correctional institutions for children and youth. It means that municipalities may establish day-care centres for: street children; drug and alcohol users; homeless persons; domestic violence victims; persons/ children with mental or physical disabilities; small group home and counseling centres. Within the institutional protection, the municipality may establish institutions for child care, in particular: children without parents and parental care; children with mental and physical disabilities; care home for elderly people. The municipality may also determine the manner for entitlement and provision of funds from the municipality budget for cash benefit for social housing for users of permanent financial assistance.

By the end of the current year social protection programmes for the following year are annually submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for consideration. Social protection programmes and action plans are adopted by the municipality Council. In this context, municipalities ensure the right to social protection for people at social risk, by implementing institutions and non-institutional forms of social protection, housing, education and public awareness rising.

Apart from the municipalities, the social work centres, as delegated institutions by the central government are competent to apply relevant measures, plans and programmes in the area of the social protection which complement the measures and activities of the local government. According to the Law on Social Protection, social work centres undertake measures through which social prevention, non-institutional and institutional protection and social welfare is delivered.

According to the said Law, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopts a National Strategy for social protection development stipulating goals, priorities and direction of the development of the social protection of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, with mid-term and

long-term measures for active social policy.

Furthermore, the Government adopts Annual Programme for the realization of social protection identifying the social protection areas, people's needs, social prevention and the manner and means for its realization.

Social Protection Programme in the municipality of Probishtip

Conducted analysis and monitoring found that the municipality of Probishtip partly owns the relevant social protection documents which are prescribed by law, and they are regularly developed by the municipal competent and professional services. Then, they are adopted and implemented by the mayor and the municipal council.

Action plans are the main documents developed and implemented by the municipality. Action plans are drafted and developed annually. Municipality does not have a special Social Protection Programme that would serve as a framework for development of action plans, that is, action plan is seen as a programme. Therefore, analysis of the state-of-play and specific goals towards the municipality strives to achieve as regards the development and implementation of social protection, is missing. The social protection action plan of the municipality of Probishtip is an annual plan providing for the implementation of various measures and activities addressing social and other needs of the citizens in the municipality, mainly regarding the provision of financial assistance to socially vulnerable persons and families of various categories, as well as delivery of preventive and educational activities and temporary employment of persons at social risk or social welfare beneficiaries. Thus, depending on the needs and priorities for a certain year, funds are provided for didactical materials for the Daycare Centre for children with special needs and the class of children with special needs in the MPS 'Braka Miladinovci' and first-year pupils in the municipal primary schools. Furthermore, financial assistance is provided to families with family members with special needs, foster families, social packages for persons at social risk, financial assistance-scholarship for best pupils, etc. Throughout the years, most of the funds for social protection programmes are allocated to persons at social risk, that is, it is known as a one-off financial assistance (lump sum) in the amount of MKD 200,000 a year.

Upon the proposal of the mayor, and based on the Law of Local Self-

Governance and the Statute of the Municipality of Probishtip, the municipal Council adopts a special Rulebook for the terms, criteria and manner of entitlement to one-off financial assistance. The Rulebook is mainly based on the categorization of socially disadvantaged people and groups as provided in the municipal social protection programme (action plan).

According to the Rulebook and municipal social protection action plan, the said one-off financial assistance is allocated solely upon citizens' request. Financial support is provided for different categories of people and groups (such as local communities, civil associations, initiative boards, sports clubs, etc.). They also partly include people at social risk, as well as victims of natural disasters, sick people, people with special needs, people exposed at social risk, social welfare beneficiaries, single parents, members of Council of the municipality in the event of disease or death, and other applicants who submit a request in accordance with the requirements and criteria set in the Rulebook.

Requests for granting one-off financial assistance are reviewed by the Commission for requests which operates within the municipality and they are approved by the Council of the Municipality. In the event of urgent requests, the Council authorizes the mayor of the municipality to decide within the amounts set in the Rulebook.

The total amount of the funds the municipality annually allocates to financial assistance to its citizens within the Social Protection Programme (Action plan) varies from year to year and it is approximately MKD 1 million. The greatest share of the funds (MKD 200,000) in the annual action plans for all three years (2014, 2015, 2016) are planned and spent for financial assistance that can be requested up to twice a year and to co-finance activities with donors (MKD 160,000 with GIZ). In 2014, major portion of the fund are planned for provision of school snack for socially disadvantaged pupils in municipal primary schools (MKD 115,000) and for provision of transport for children from rural areas (MKD 100,000), as well as provision of orthopedic checkups for newborns and infants (MKD 85,000). The same goes for 2015 as well. Obviously, a certain portion of the funds are provided by donors/projects and it can be a significant share, such as UN Development Programme (approximately MKD 500,000 a year for activities in 2016), and sometimes it is a lower share, such as GIZ support (approximately MKD 190,000 for 2014 and MKD 160,000 for 2015, a year).

Municipal programme indicates that the focus is put on children and people with disabilities, on the account of adults and elderly persons. At the same time, surprisingly, the programme includes finances for scholarships for gifted pupils and students (for all 3 years), because they are expected to be a part of the education programme, since it is not indicated that they are persons from vulnerable categories.

Finances and activities in the part of social protection provided under the municipal relevant documents (action plan, budget) mainly are realized between 50% and 70%. Certain deviations are noted almost in every assistance and support item offered by the municipality due to various reasons, such as failed public procurements, insufficient number of persons requesting assistance or scholarship, high price (cost) of planned service, etc.

Accordingly, as general research findings indicate, the municipality should take a more strategic approach in relation to its planning documents such as the Programme and action plans, by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the state-of-affairs of social protection, needs and priorities of citizens or target groups, and draft documents that will be based and oriented towards settling the identified problems. Thus, a proper and maximum utilization of the finances intended for social protection will be provided.

The sector for public activities, with the support of the Centre for social services and the municipality, is responsible for planning, as well as for implementing, the activities and measures foreseen within the social protection action plans. This sector covers education, social health protection and kindergartens.

The municipal centre for social services drafts annual report regarding the realization of the action plan, that is, foreseen activities and projects, and submits it to the Council of the Municipality of Probishtip for approval. This report contains descriptive information and data referring to planned and implemented activities by the municipal services, identifying key target groups, duration and their amount or value.

The Centre for Social Services in the Municipality of Probishtip was established in 2014 with the support of GIZ as a first centre of this type with a separate municipal office. Such centres in Macedonia were opened only in

municipalities of Kochani, Debar and Staro Nagorichane.

The municipal Centre for social services aims at providing information and counseling services to the citizens on exercise of their social protection rights, assistance and instructions for simplified access of citizens to competent authorities, manners of completing the appropriate documentation requesting any assistance, etc. The premises of the centre are located at the entrance in the municipal hall in order to provide easier access to citizens. Unfortunately, the access to this office is difficult for persons with special needs (in a wheelchair) because of the stairs and lack of neither accessible ramp, nor external elevator allowing access to the centre for those users. Nevertheless, the office generally functions well and it is maintained by the municipality within the sector for public activities.

Development and Realization of Social Protection Action Plans in the Municipality of Probishtip

Respondents that were part of the interviews, as well as the focus groups, possessed general knowledge from the social protection area and were informed about the processes undertaken at local level. They clearly identify and list most of the categories of persons or families at social risk or subjects to social protection.

Citizens generally recognize key institutions and organizations working in the field of social protection, but they are not well-informed on their role and competence, as well as what rights and services can be obtained from which institution. Therefore, public awareness for the importance of the social protection needs to be strengthened and public needs to be informed and educated about the possibilities offered by the municipality and the MLSP within the social protection area. This process may be initiated and facilitated directly by the municipality in cooperation with other institutions and organization where a system for providing regular information to the citizens and promotion of activities and projects implemented by the institutions and organizations in the course of their work, will be established.

Participants in the analysis and monitoring process were informed on the documents and policies at municipal level, regardless whether they were part of the work of the Social Work Centre or the Local Self-government unit.

As regards the development of strategic documents and policies, it should be pointed out that the documents developed by the Social Work Centre or the MLSP are based on laws and other acts adopted at central level or by the Parliament, and as such, they are not flexible regarding inclusion of citizens. On the other hand, Social Protection Programme of the Municipality of Probishtip can improve and develop cooperation with the civil sector, education, business community and other important stakeholders which contribute to development and creation of good policies and documents addressing this area.

Municipal administration or the sector for public activities undertakes regular visits to settlements and citizens, in cooperation with other institutions, in order to consult citizens about their problems and ask suggestions about issues in the social protection area.

Municipality consults part of the civil sector in the local decision-making process, policy-making or drafting municipal documents. In the past 2-3 years, a practice of informing and involving citizens and associations in the process of drafting social protection programme has been established, mainly through municipal forum, where various topics and suggestions, including social protection, are discussed. Associations are also ready and willing to be involved in a certain approach or access where the social protection issues will be discussed with all relevant stakeholders in a more focused manner, and local policies and municipal strategies will be drafted and tailored, in order to discuss and propose significant issues from the area of social protection at local level.

Therefore, it is necessary to work and develop a network of social services at local level, through enhanced cooperation between relevant local institutions and organizations, based on the real and objective assessment of the local population needs. NGOs, religious organizations, as well as the private sector still play minor role in shaping the local network of social services in accordance with citizens' needs. Bearing that in mind, partnership between public and private sector (profitable and non-for-profit) in order to provide better service delivery is still insufficiently applied in practice, although provisions of the Law on Social Protection provide for such partnership, and its implementation still needs to be further extended and strengthened.

As regards special bodies, Committee for Equal Opportunities and Committee deciding upon the one-off financial assistance operate in cooperation with the mayor and the municipal Council to realize their competences.

Division of competences between the central and local authorities is still a challenge. There is overlapping of several competences between the municipality and the MLSP, which poses a great problem to the citizens since they do not have correct information where to refer to regarding a certain service or right. It is important to specifically define competences at local and central level so that the municipality can develop adequate programmes and plans and means for social protection. On the other hand, competences at local and central level in the education area are much clearer defined and delegated.

One of the key challenges for the municipality is that it does not have its own database on the situation in the citizens' social protection area, as well as that the last national census was conducted in 2002. So far, the municipality uses information from the database of the SWC for its planning purposes.

Another challenge for the social protection at local level, that is, the municipality is the amount of the municipal budget, that is, the amount of funds that can be allocated to social protection. Total budget of the municipality of Probishtip in the past 3 years is approximately MKD 200 million a year, while approximately 1 million denars are allocated to social protection.

The Social Work Centre (SWC) in the municipality of Probishtip operates under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and it functions as a public institution authorized to pursue activities in the area of social protection. SWC operates its annual programme for work and one section of the programme is dedicated to the management and operation of the Daycare centre for persons with mental or physical disabilities in Probishtip. This institution is managed and operated by the Social Work Centre.

The ESARM office in Probishtip has already established institutional cooperation with the SWC in Probishtip, which goes beyond it, as cooperation between the MLSP and ESARM at national level.

The ESARM, the municipality of Probishtip and SWC are all focused

on improving the conditions of social welfare beneficiaries and socially disadvantaged persons through implementation of various measures for assistance, but mainly to provide employment or engagement for persons from vulnerable categories or social welfare beneficiaries regardless of the grounds for the vulnerability or marginalization or their background. Thus, the said institutions publish joint announcements for vacant positions for employment of persons with disabilities, or other measures for the business community intended to relieve or exempt them of taxes or payment of contributions in terms of benefits or subsidies if they employ socially disadvantaged persons.

However, a part of the issues are mainly local individual initiatives of employees or managers of such institutions and they are not formalized in a special joint document or programme for cooperation. Therefore, it is more than necessary to formalize the relations, communication and cooperation of key institutions at local level, as well as to form joint coordinative body among these institutions and other relevant stakeholders aimed at effective and enhanced collaboration in the social protection area. There have been similar proposals or initiative in the past years, for example, such practice exists within the SIA Probishtip and there is an advisory civil group for prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Manner of information and communication about social protection activities

Informing the public on the social protection issues in Probishtip is mainly through media, but part of the focus groups pointed out that they participated in several public debates and presentations on topics such as education and prevention of domestic violence, human trafficking, juvenile delinquency, etc. Organizers of such events are various institutions, civil associations or organizations such as the Red Cross, Social Works Centre, the municipality, than UNICEF, UNDP, Institute for Social Activities, Department for Prevention with the Sector for internal affairs and other stakeholders, depending on the topic of interest.

Other important source of information are websites of the MLSP, Employment Service Agency, the municipality or through direct contact with employees in the Social Works Centre, regional employment centre, and other major organization in the country and abroad. The visit of the

website¹⁶ of the municipality indicates that there is no sufficient information on services offered by the municipality centre, nor how beneficiaries can effectuate their rights. Some of the attending organizations or associations, as Association of Retired Persons, Association of Persons with Special Needs or the Red cross pointed out that they had regular communication and cooperation when implementing certain joint activities. This cooperation is frequently formalized by signing concrete memoranda for cooperation.

Focus group participants held various opinions, including that municipality does not have at its disposal a higher budget to finance NGOs that can become major partners and aides in the implementation of the activities. Some of the participants have been involved in the work of the working groups in developing the Programme (Action Plan) for Social Protection and Rulebook for Granting One-off financial assistance.

Cooperation for advancement of social protection rights and services at local level

According to participants in interviews and focus groups, main competent authorities in the social protection area are following institutions: local self-governance units, Social Work Centre, Red Cross, Healthcare institutions, police, education sector and the business community. Many of the participants point out that apart from the relevance of each particular institution, their interinstitutional cooperation (cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral) as well as the cooperation with other organizations, in order to treat all risks and developments in social protection area in the most efficient manner. It means that a need exist for more institutions to become involved and to cooperate for various target groups or social problems at the same time.

It also refers to policy-making processes and adoption of important documents, as well as development programmes for social protection, or realization of preventive and non-institutional forms of social protection in cooperation with other segments of the public sector, private sector and civil society organizations.

Several coordinative bodies or advisory groups of citizens have been established in the municipality of Probishtip, including the group against

¹⁶ www.probistip.gov.mk, visited on 05.03.2017.

domestic violence, or prevention of juvenile delinquency and alcohol abuse, where representatives of various institutions (police, municipality, health protection, education, etc.) participate. The advisory group of citizens for prevention of juvenile delinquency and alcohol abuse is established as a civil association or NGO with all necessary structures and it functions within the department for prevention in the SIA Probishtip.

Apart from those groups, there is an evident need to establish a major coordinative body that, in general, will address all issues and topics in the social protection area at local level. The coordinative body for social protection to be established and operating under the auspices of the municipality and it would bring together all relevant institutions and organizations at local level, starting from the municipality, the Social Work Centre, ESARM, education sector, business community, civil associations and organizations operating at the municipal level.

The CSOs and civil associations in the Municipality of Probishtip are not well developed to become leading implementers of larger activities, they do not have the sufficient human and financial resources at their disposal that will make them partners to institutions or to delegate them a portion of the social protection competences. There is an evident need to strengthen them with financial support for institutional enhancement to make them capable of following several positive examples and practices which confirm that there are organizations that succeed in managing their activities with a certain amount of financial means.

The analysis showed that cooperation between key institutions at local level, particularly the cooperation between the municipality and the Social Work Centre, as well as the regional employment center, kindergartens and schools, and the Red Cross can be assessed at high level. Within their possibilities and competences, they complement among themselves and they implement joint measures, activities and projects at the territory of the municipality. Some of the projects address community services, activities useful for the municipality, 'Proper Homes', 'Children for Children', as well as other initiatives and activities regarding prevention, education or humanitarian assistance to socially disadvantaged persons and families, as elderly people, vulnerable people, people with medical conditions or people with disabilities, and children. Municipality implements the said projects and activities in cooperation with the SWC, ESARM and UNDP.

On the other hand, part of the organizations such as the Red Cross and Association of Retired Persons, and other international organizations such as UNDP, GIZ, UNICEF, USAID and other, contribute by providing finances for projects and measures in the social protection area.

There are approximately 1000 beneficiaries of rights and services of social welfare or financial assistance on different grounds registered in the records of the Social Work Centre.

As the present analysis found based on the review of key documents, legal regulations and competences of institutions a non-formal cooperation among them has already been established in the Municipality of Probishtip. Several memoranda of cooperation have been signed between some of the institutions and organizations, but a joint platform or systematized approach to joint operation on the majority of the open questions relevant to the social protection at the level of municipality is missing. The existing communication and interinstitutional cooperation needs to be further formalized and intensified. At institutional level there is a room, possibilities and willingness to strengthen the communication and cooperation through formalization of relations in a single joint programme or document, as well as to establish a coordinative body for social protection at local level. This process, as key factor at local level may be led by the municipality with the support and in cooperation with other institutions and civil sector.

On the other hand, there is communication with the civil sector and the business community, but this communication is at a basic level, temporary and it depends on the initiative of a stakeholder. In this context, a practice of systematic and planned manner of cooperation should be created and established. Municipality, and other institutions and organizations already use certain inclusion mechanisms, such as forums in the community, public presentations and debates, meetings with the local population. These forms need to be further enhanced and prescribed in a separate programme run by the municipality, and all relevant factors at local level will active contribute.

Within the analysis and the monitoring of the social protection in the Municipality of Probishtip, the research team analyzed the possibilities for more serious cooperation that will allow more active participation of the nongovernmental sector or civil association in the realization of rights and services to social protection of citizens or their essential target groups,

that is, to undertake some of the competences from the institutions of the central or local government.

In general, opinions on this issue are diverse. Generally speaking, the idea is assessed as a very good one, and majority of the participants support it, but on the other hand there are certain dilemmas and problems. As a major problem, the dilemmas concern the capacities or capabilities of the civil sector in Probishtip to cope with such responsibility, both from the aspect of the required expertise and financial means. The assessment of the civil sector in the Municipality of Probishtip shows it to be underdeveloped and the number of active organizations is rather low. Those with a positive attitude towards the idea to delegate certain competences to this sector believe that this shortcoming may be eliminated by involving some major, already established civil society organizations active at national level in this process or reform of the social protection.

If this issue is considered from a different point of view, another problem would be the general lagging behind of the decentralization process in the country that would bring more competences and authorizations to the local authorities in terms of social protection, as well as to provide more funds for their implementation. Similar processes are successfully being implemented in several European countries, such as Germany or Slovenia.

In order to commence and successfully enforce this process of transferring certain competences in the field of social protection to the civil sector or organizations, crucial changes in the legal framework, legislation and other act are required. This process also requires significant amount of time, resources and planning.

If, in the future, the idea is accepted and fundamental possibilities for civil society organizations to adapt to this process are created, and the urgent need to build their capacity, to strengthen public awareness, special training and preparations, as well to provide financial assets would emerge.

Thus, some of the competences from the social protection area would be confided to CSOs depending on their mission, or area of their operation, as well the capacities and staffing they possess, and not to one, but to several organizations. The assessment showed that there are sufficient human resources or educated experts in the country, and there are many unemployed persons that may be engaged and contribute to the

implementation of this process.

This process will contribute to the development of the country itself, as well as its institutions, by relieving them of certain responsibilities. On the other hand, citizens would also be pleased since there would not too much paper and administration work of the processes and CSOs and civil associations will offer flexibility, responsibility and greater self-motivation to work with the target groups, since they would be their target groups and part of their mission and vision.

In future, planning of this system may be a topic for public discussion and consultation with the relevant stakeholders and civil society in order to achieve the best possible results. The idea may be realized as a pilot-project by the country, for example, with several organizations to see how it would function, or maybe the municipality may pilot certain activities with local organizations.

So far, no concrete initiative regarding the transfer and delegating of certain competences to the CSOs sector and organization has been launched in the municipality of Probishtip.

Monitoring and Follow-Up of the Social Protection Action Plans

Social protection action plans of the Municipality of Probishtip encompass several specific parts referring to the presentation of the main target groups covered in the plans, as well as risks and forms of acting. The plan lays over the activities, their objectives, deadlines and partners in charge of its realization. The anticipated finances per separate item regarding the activities and their sources are presented within the action plans. The budget for the municipal activities intended for social protection is mainly funded by municipality's own finances, but other means from foreign donations are available, too.

Municipality sets performance indicators within the annual action plans. Such indicators need to be further specified with correct information on the indicators assessed, as well the sources for verification of data. As regards the indicators, it is also important to appoint a person responsible for their monitoring and realization.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Republic of Macedonia possesses a solid national legal framework for social protection and a set of laws and other acts regulating the social protection area, but the division of competences between the central and local government remains a challenge
- At local level, Probishtip regularly submits the necessary documents for social protection based on the national policies and strategies for development of social protection. A comprehensive social protection programme is required to be developed in accordance with the conditions and needs at the municipal level. It is necessary to conduct analysis and map all social categories of citizens in order to recognize the specific needs on the most vulnerable groups, and then, based on those findings adequate social protection measures and mechanism will be developed in a form of action plans with clear objectives and performance indicators.
- At national level, it is necessary to conduct a census that will provide valid data and identification of priorities according to which the national and local social protection policies will be guided.
- At local level, a good interinstitutional communication has been established. It needs to be further formalized and intensified by adopting joint platform or programme, as well as by forming a coordinative body for social protection among the key stakeholders in the municipality.
- Within the key institutions, there are diverse opinions on the possibility to delegate some of the competences in the area of social protection to civil associations and organizations. Mainly, it is due to the fact that some local NGOs are not sufficiently developed. Greater involvement in the local process and investments in strengthening the capacities is required.
- Business sector is an important segment in the municipality, particularly due to their participation in various actions providing support to institutions, as well as the possibility to employ people at social risk. Therefore, institutions and organizations are expected to develop greater cooperation with the business community.

- Municipality allocates rather limited finances from its own budget (incomes of the municipality) to fund social protection, which need to be increased.
- Moreover, the current available finances allocated by the municipal budget are not fully utilized. In future, municipality needs to conduct improved analysis and planning of those funds at the beginning of the year.
- NGO sector in Probishtip is not well-developed to undertake more responsibilities regarding the development of social protection and to become a key partner to the institutions at local level. It is necessary to strengthen human and professional capacities of the NGOs as well as to provide them greater financial support.
- Generally speaking, citizens are informed on the social protection and local policies, but it is necessary to organize more informative campaigns in order to introduce them to the rights and services offered to them, as well as, to the competences of institutions, or where they can refer for certain questions.
- Social rights and services offered to the citizens from socially disadvantaged categories by the institutions, particularly the MLSP, and supported by municipal measures generally cover most of the target groups, but they can be improved or values can be added, and it is necessary to pay attention to development of several opportunities for support instead of one-off financial assistance or humanitarian aid.

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Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level

Volume of Monitoring Reports

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