

POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS IN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

ANNEX 2:
OVERVIEW OF POLICIES AND MEASURES
IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR SUPPORTING
EDUCATION NEEDS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN



GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SERBIA



SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND POVERTY
REDUCTION UNIT



POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS: Providing Additional Support to Students from Vulnerable Groups in Pre-University Education

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INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of social welfare policies and measures in Serbia focusing on those relevant to support education of school age children from vulnerable groups, particularly poor and Roma families. The paper will look at the coverage, implementation and weaknesses of these measures and it will provide recommendations for their improvement.

This analysis has been done as a part of the study Providing Additional Support to Students from Vulnerable Groups in Pre-university Education, commissioned by UNICEF and SIPRU which covers policies and measures across different sectors, primarily in the education and social systems. A cross-sectoral overview of the key policy instruments (education and social systems) for the school age children from vulnerable groups/poor and Roma children jointly with the services provided by NGOs enables understanding of the effectiveness of the measures against education policy objectives and re-thinking of the measures aiming at providing recommendations for more coherence, better cross-sectoral coordination and more efficient use in responding to key state objectives in the area of education. Therefore, the paper is an integral part of the Study.

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK - SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

There are several Laws regulating area of social welfare system in Serbia.

1.1.1 Family Law

The Family Law, passed in 2005, regulates family relations, relations between child and parents, adoption, guardianship, fostering and introduces special measures against family violence. With this Law for the first time in Serbia, child rights are legally regulated and special legal proceedings are foreseen to ensure the exercise of those rights. Article 63 of the Family Law provides that each child shall have the right to education in accordance with its abilities, wishes and aptitudes and that a child aged 15, capable of reasoning, may decide which secondary school he/she will attend. In the section referring to the rights of parents (Article 68) it is stated that parents shall have the right and duty to take care of a child; child care shall imply protection, upbringing, education, representation, financial support and management of child's assets. Parents shall be entitled to receive complete information about their child from educational and health care institutions. Article 71 states that parents shall be obliged to provide elementary education to their child; as for the provision of further education, they shall be obliged to act in accordance with their full capacities. Moreover, parents shall have the right to provide education to their child which is in accordance with their religious and ethical beliefs.

Along with the Family Law, the two key laws, which define the design, architecture and measures and instruments of the social welfare system, **particularly poverty related policies** are the **Law on Social Welfare** (LSW, 2011) and the **Law on Financial Support to Families with Children** (LFSFC, 2002, 2005, 2009). These two Laws will be further briefly presented since they provide key pro-poor policy measures and instruments which are relevant for understanding support available for school age children from vulnerable families.

1.1.2 Social Welfare Law

Social care of the citizens most in need is regulated by the **Social Welfare Law** adopted in 2011. This is a new and modern law regulating social infrastructure and stakeholders in provision of quality social services and benefits, which replaced an outdated Law from 1991¹. The Law provides significant improvement into design and functioning of the social welfare system, but since many of the by-laws are not ready yet, *it is still not fully implemented and employed by all stakeholders*. The key innovations introduced by the Law relevant for this paper are the following:

¹ Official Gazette no. 36/91, 79/91 – changes and amendments 33/93, 53/93, 67/93, 67/93, 46/94, 48/, 52/96, 29/01, 84/04, 101/05, and 115/05).

- It is grounded on a **modern regulatory system**, with **licencing** (Art. 176-190) and **inspection** (Art 168-175) of social service providers against **national minimum standards** for social services. The regulatory system is supported by a **supervision function** by the newly set supervisor in the social institutions, CSW and in the Institute for Social Protection which is available to the social professionals and providers, both state and non-state.
- **Programme for improvement of the social welfare by the local self-government** (Art. 20) is introduced in the Law, which should be a basis for local social policy planning and local acts on extended rights. The provision of social services is secured also by **commissioning and contracting of the community-based social services** through an open and transparent procedure in line with the public procurement Law. The Law introduces **earmarked transfers from central level** (Art 207) to support the development of community-based social services in underdeveloped LSGs and/or in LSGs where residential institutions are being transformed and for development of innovative social services. The Rulebook on earmarked transfers has not been adopted yet.
- **Financial benefit scheme** - poverty related financial social assistance and carer allowance (Art 81-107) has been improved enabling higher coverage and higher amounts of benefits among particularly vulnerable categories of population. **Active inclusion** of the beneficiaries of financial social assistance is one of the innovations into the social system. It would enable pro-active approach in supporting individuals and families beneficiaries of financial social assistance to access adequate social services and activate them in solving life problems they face. Children clients of the financial support programme could be in a sustainable manner supported to return or stay in education system by referring them to available support services in the local community. The Rulebook on the active inclusion has not been adopted yet
- The Law strongly promotes inter-sectoral services provision and signing **inter-sectoral cooperation protocols** to support holistic approach to clients of social welfare system.

The Law groups the social services into the following categories (Art. 40):

1. **Assessment and planning services:** functional assessments of clients including condition, needs, strengths and risks of a user and other relevant persons, assessment of a guardian, foster carer and adopter; development of individual service plan and other assessments and plans;
2. **Daily services in the community:** club; day care; home assistance; drop-in centre and other services supporting clients' stay in the family and immediate environment;
3. **Services supporting independent living:** personal assistance; supported housing; training for independent living and other types of support necessary for clients' active participation in the community;
4. **Counselling-therapy and socio-educational services:** counselling; family therapy; mediation; intensive support to family in crisis situation; SOS phone line; services for maintaining family relations and family reunion; counselling and education for parents, foster carers and adopters and other counselling and educational services and activities;
5. **Placement services:** family placement in a relative and non-relative family; residential placement; placement in a shelter and other types of placement.

The Republic budget provides funding for the assessment and planning services by the Centre for Social Work and placement services, while under 2 to 4 are community-based social services funded from the local budgets, towns/municipalities and/or autonomous province.

This whole package of measures for development of community-based social services envisaged by the Law makes a framework for **local sustainable planning, financing and management of the social services**

tailored to meet social needs of socially excluded families and children. Although there are many good practices in implementation of this system, still it has not been extensively implemented across all local self-governments in Serbia as a consequence of many factors such as poor knowledge and capacities at the local level, lack of network of licenced services providers, no earmarked transfers ready, but also lack of funding. Mainstreaming of the community-based social initiatives provided by non-government organisations to support education of children from vulnerable groups such as for example parenting services, outreach services to socially excluded groups, etc. should be enabled within this framework.

The main social benefits as stipulated by the Law are:

1. **financial social assistance**,
2. carer's allowance,
3. one-off financial assistance,
4. in-kind assistance and other forms of financial support.

Financial social assistance and carer allowance are the main social benefits funded from the Republic budget, while one-off financial and in-kind assistance are funded from local municipal/town budget.

1.1.3 Law on Financial Support to Family with Children

The **Law on Financial Support to Family with Children** regulates state support measures and policies for families with children. The measures and instrument regulated by the Law are:

1. maternity allowance,
2. parental allowance,
3. child allowance,
4. pre-school attendance cost* for children without parental care, and
5. pre-school attendance cost for children with disabilities and
6. deduction of the pre-school costs for children from financially deprived families.

** pre-school attendance costs do not relate to preparatory pre-school programme which is funded from the education budget*

Only the pre-school deduction cost is funded from the local budgets, while all other entitlements regulated by this Law are funded from the budget of the Republic.

Out the six instruments envisaged by the Law, four instruments are relevant to look at them more closely from the perspective of the education policies, and these are 1) child allowance, 2) pre-school attendance cost for children without parental care, 3) pre-school attendance cost for children with disabilities and 4) deduction of the pre-school costs for children from financial deprived families. The other two instruments, parental allowance and maternity allowance although unquestionably relevant instruments to support early child development and care, are not subject of this study. There are many reasons for recommending revisiting of the measures envisaged by this Law, which will be more detailed analysed under policy and measures section.

Other relevant laws are the **Law on Red Cross** (LRC, 2005) which regulates the work of Red Cross in Serbia as an independent and non-profit organisation providing humanitarian and social support to the most vulnerable groups of population and preventive interventions. The **Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination**, adopted in 2009, bans discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation and gender in different areas of life such as employment and education. The law also provides for a special state representative to monitor possible discrimination, and propose sanctions. The **Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against People with Disabilities**, adopted in 2006, regulates the prevention of discrimination based on disability as well as measures for social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

1.1.4 Local strategies and plans

National laws and regulations jointly with the national strategies for improvement of the situation of vulnerable population² creates a solid framework for planning and implementing local policies and measures tailored to the social needs of the local population. Almost all local self-governments develop local strategies documents that built measures and activities based on the national policy objectives. The practice is very different, so the support to vulnerable population may be part of the local economic development strategic documents, or part of separate strategies documents such as local strategies on social policy, or local action plans for children, etc.

Review of the database of the municipal strategies and action plans³ shows that out of 618 different local strategies in 197 local self-governments there are in total 24 local action plans for children, 47 local youth plans, 23 strategies and plans for Roma inclusion, and 96 local Strategies on social policy. All of these plans rely on national documents, identify areas of improvement, poverty and social inclusion area of vulnerable groups and identify related measures. In such a way conceptualised, these documents provide ground for different entitlements provided from the local budgets. In the area of social welfare, the measures that are implemented and funded in the local community are defined in legal acts issued by the local self-governments called Act on the extended rights.

Monitoring of the implementation of local strategic documents is poor in Serbia with almost no evidences of the implementation of the measures. Further finding is that there are often separate local strategies documents (on social policy, children, youth, etc.) and planning and implementation of the proposed measures often is not coordinated well at the local level between different implementing bodies which leads to overlapping or non-existence of the support measures.

1.2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy (MoLESP) is the highest regulatory authority for social welfare and it has a clear mandate for managing state pro-poor policies in accordance with the Law and accompanying by-laws. It is policy making body and the key financier of centrally managed social services and benefits/financial support⁴.

The MoLESP delivers social care in the form of social services and benefits through the country-wide network of Centres of Social Work (CSWs) and municipal offices for social affairs.

Centres for Social Work (CSW) – are professional bodies deciding on and follow up of the provision of social welfare support to citizens, provided by local and national levels. CSW is by its nature dual body - it is a

² the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, the Strategy for Improving the Position of People with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia, the National Youth Strategy, the National Strategy for Children Protection and Prevention of Violence, the National Plan of Action for Children, etc.

³ The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities developed the Database of Municipal Strategies and Plans in 2008, which was updated in 2010 by the SCTM, Exchange programme 3. The database contains information on 197 towns and municipalities (Belgrade municipalities included) with 618 strategies and plans, mainly covering the period 2008 – 2012.

⁴ Republic budget funds 90% of the total expenditures for social welfare. Source Assessment of the Actual Allocation of Function and Financial Resources among Central and Local Level in the Domain of Social Welfare Services, Oxford Policy Management, Victor Giosan, 2009

national body performing public functions based on the Family Law and Law on Social Welfare and thus CSW professionals are paid from the national level but it is founded by the LSG which appoints a director and finances staff of CSW related to local activities and running costs. Along with public functions, CSW administers financial benefits in line with the Law on Social Welfare funded by the Republic budget and one-off social assistance provided by the local level (which include meals for poor and Roma, transportation costs, clothing, textbooks, etc.). In addition, CSW participates in planning and development of social welfare in a local community. There are 140 CSWs, almost in all LSGs in Serbia with total 3,235 employees as at 31 December 2011.⁵ The organizational structure of the CSW reflects the significance of the issues of children and youth within social sector, since the greatest part of organisational units across all CSWs are departments for children and youth, which also engage the greatest number of professionals among all employees.⁶

Reforms of the social welfare have led to the introduction of new work method and organization in CSWs, regulated by the new Regulation on the organization, norms and standards of the Centre for Social Work⁷. The new method of work – **case management is a person-centred approach**, by which case manager in cooperation with the client, assesses the needs, strengths and risks and subsequently plans adequate social support within the individual service plan. Based on the individual service plan case manager coordinates social support to clients (individual and family) and refer them to social services *regardless of whether the services are nationally or locally funded or provided by state or non-state providers*. Case manager forms with the client the team of relevant professional staff from the CSW and other agencies and organizations in the community, as well as the important persons from the client's environment, who, by actively participating in the implementation of the of service plan, contribute to achieving the targets set for the client in accordance with the his/her best interests. The by-law sets standards for CSW work and also sets timeline for each phase of the support to client - admission, development of the individual service plan and evaluation and revision of the individual service plan. According to the findings of the survey among CSW professionals (Association of Centers of Social Work, December 2012), case management is applied in all CSWs, however, still are many difficulties in its implementation related to documentation and procedures which are not sufficiently developed, adequate to specificities of the cases and not aligned with requirements of the practice.

Inter-sectoral cooperation is an important prerequisite for the successful case management, since the holistic support to client requires identification and often combination of different support and services, including the ones available in other sectors (education, health, employment, police, etc.). However, *inter-sectoral cooperation still seems to be still a challenge*. According to the same survey, the inter-sectoral cooperation is best rated with police, Red Cross, other social institutions and education institutions. Still, in relation to these organisations, in average 46.2% of surveyed staff deem cooperation as good, while 40.3% deem that the satisfactory level of cooperation has not been achieved.

The Province Secretariat for Social Policy and Demography is the authority responsible for monitoring and inspecting the network of social institutions, monitoring the implementation of programmes and plans and licensing private social institutions on the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

Local self-government (LSG) is the most important player in the implementation of social policies at the local level. According to the Serbian Constitution, art 190, LSGs are responsible for meeting the needs of their

⁵ Report on the Work of the Centres for Social Work for 2011, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade 2012

⁶ Depending of the size of the CSW, each may have the following organisational units/departments: 1) department for children and youth, 2) department for adults and elderly, 3) legal department, 4) department for financial affairs and administrative and support activities, 5) department for planning and development, 6) department for community-based social services, 7) reception/triage department, 8) optional – residential home, others

⁷ Regulations on the organization, norms and standards of the Centre for Social Work, Official Gazette of RS, 59/2008.

citizens in the area of education, culture, health, social care, child care, and sport. In the Law on Local Self-governments (2007), jurisdictions of LSGs are specified in the area of social welfare, art. 20 and these jurisdictions are elaborated more clearly in the respective social legislations. The LSG has a clear **mandate over managing social welfare support to its citizens** in line with identified local needs through the funding and provision of both social benefits and social services as stipulated by the Law. The local **Act on extended social entitlements** defines services and benefits to be funded from local budgets (these may also include support to poor and Roma, such as meals, transportation, textbooks, scholarships, etc.). While main financial social assistance and family support are benefits funded from the central budget, LSG is responsible for providing one-off financial and in-kind social assistance, out of own resources, which supplement the financial support provided by the central budget. LSG has a mandate over financing and managing community-based social services in line with the local needs defined in the Programme for improvement of Social Welfare (LSW, Art.20), and issues the local regulation on the extended social entitlements provided to the citizens. Still, the local regulation on extended entitlements does not recognize the opinion of the locally managed **Inter-sectorial Committee for assessing the needs of children for additional educational, social and health support** (ISC)⁸ as a mechanism for identifying needs of poor and vulnerable children. Thus ISC recommendations for services and measures to address educational needs of the child are not integrated into local regulation, as it should, leading to no funding available for their implementation.

Administration of the key state financial support to poor is left at the LSG - child allowance program is administered by the LSG office/department of child care and financial social assistance by the CSW. However, functional cooperation between these two institutions administering key poverty-related programmes in Serbia and exchange of data on the same client groups in the most cases is weak or non-existent.

Municipal office for social affairs is a single department in the local government that provides education, health and social support. This organizational structure could create easy possibilities of inter-sectorial cooperation relevant for enactment of pro-poor policies and actions at the local level. However, the practice shows that these offices are often understaffed, sector-isolated and that cross-sectoral interventions against common topic or target groups are weak.

While different types of responsibilities administrative, management and planning, or financing related to the pro-poor measures/social welfare are met at the local level, there is no process or single management structure for pro-poor measure. Pro-poor measures are fragmented within institutional boundaries and administrative jurisdictions with rare consultations, exchange or functional cooperation among them with no coherence interventions whatsoever. This strongly hinders coherence between planning of budgets and measures and more efficient identification and targeting of beneficiaries. Thus, social system at local level seems to be organized by measures and activities and not as person-centred system which is particularly confusing for the clients (every so often for professionals) and non-responsive to their needs.

Share of social welfare expenditures in the total expenditures at the local level is in range from 0.6% to 5%, and average being 3.4% (or 2.2% without Belgrade). In the total social welfare expenditures dominant share is allocated to social benefits with 71% (56% excluding Belgrade). (Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, 2012)

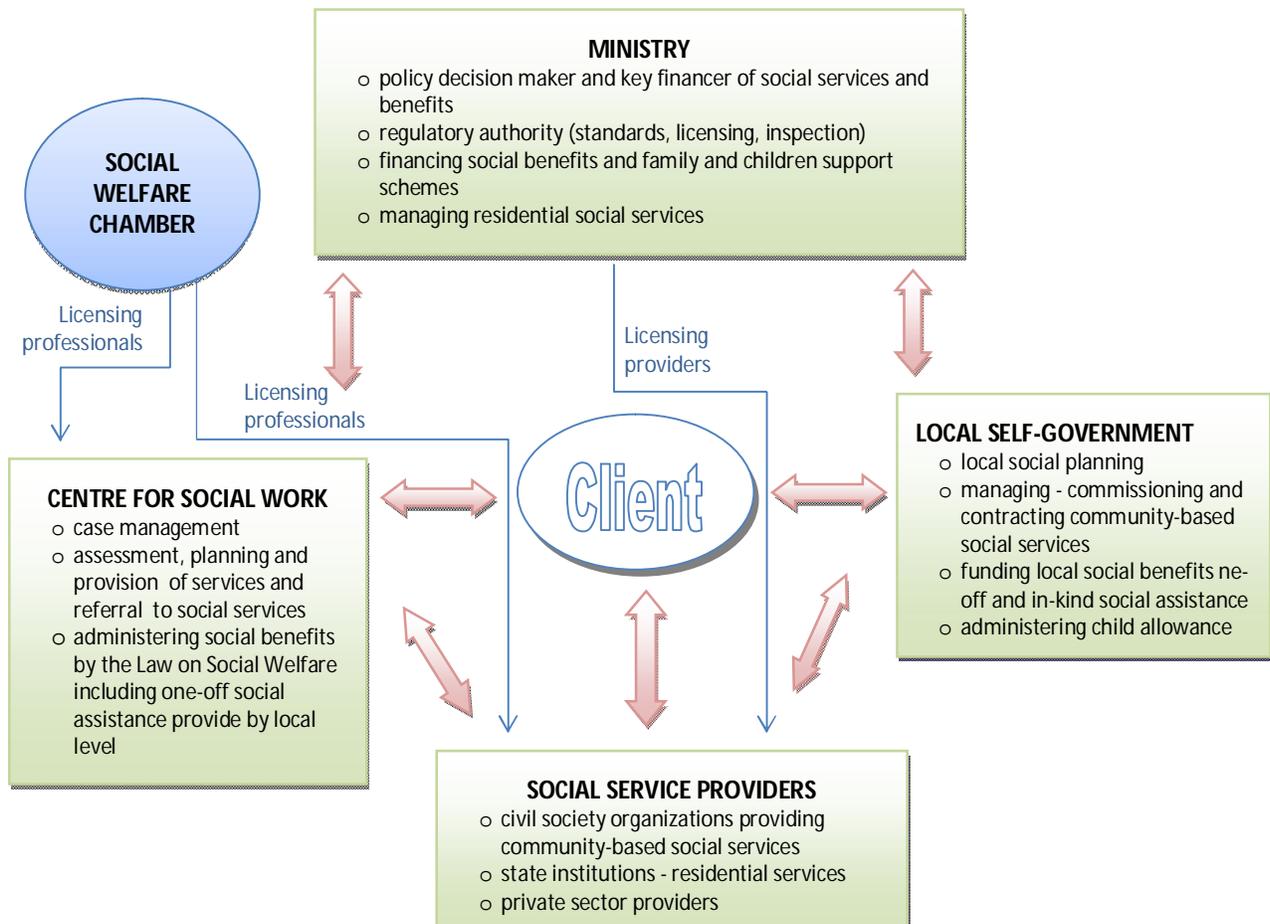
⁸ LSGs operate an important body, the Inter-sectorial Committee for assessing the needs of children for additional educational, social and health support, comprised from experts from health, education and social sectors dealing with the child, a coordinator and ad-hoc additional members who can be instrumental in providing valid information. These committees have an important role in identifying support mechanisms needed for the education of children from vulnerable groups, their work is supervised by a governmental Joint Body consisting of representatives of the three line ministries involved, ministry/secretariat responsible for human and minority rights, SIPRU, UNICEF, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, and DILS, a social inclusion education expert, a social inclusion legal expert, a parent and an NGO representative.

The Institutes for Social Protection (ISP) is a research and development institution with the overall aim of improving quality of social services. There are two Institutes, the **Republic Institute for Social Protection** and **the Province Institute for Social Protection**, both founded back in 2006. Institutes responsibilities are in continuously monitoring the quality of work in the social welfare, reporting on the delivery of the social care, providing recommendations to decision-makers in formulating policies, providing supervisory support to service providers, social welfare professionals and other actors (e.g. local self-governments) in establishing an effective model of social welfare focused on reducing the level of the social exclusion of vulnerable groups. Moreover, coordinates the work on the development of national minimum standards for social welfare services, and manages the system of accredited training programmes intended to improve the competencies of the professionals involved in social welfare.

Social service providers, state, public and civil society organisation play the main role in direct delivery of the social services to citizens. According to the Law, all social service providers have to be licenced for provision of the actual social services issued by the Ministry. However, this procedure has been recently adopted and it is expected to be implemented in 2013. The State manages and finances the residential care institutions and provides the assessment services through CSWs, while the civil society organisations are the main providers of the community-based social services funded by the local self-governments and other donors. CSW refers clients based on the individual service plan to adequate social services available in the community and the client has a right to choose the service provider from the list of licenced service providers.

In the closing of the presentation of the institutional and legal framework the following graph presents a simplified illustration of the social welfare system from the client's perspective, its main infrastructure, functions, services and benefits and their interaction.

Graph 1 – Clients in the social welfare system



2 SOCIAL WELFARE CLIENTS

This section provides an overview of the social welfare clients and analysis of CSW capacities based on the records of the Centres for Social Work in 2011 (The Republic Institute for Social Protection, 2012). This data source is selected as the most illustrative one on the clients and services they use since the CSW is a reference point for clients applying and using different social services and social benefits provided by national and local level. The section though will provide brief overview focusing on the client groups addressed by the study, poor and Roma children.

As defined by the Law, the social welfare client “is an individual and/or family facing obstacles in meeting the needs due to which they are not able to achieve or maintain the quality of life, as well as an individual and family who do not have sufficient means to meet the basic subsistence needs and are unable to ensure them through their work, income from property or other sources”.⁹ The person and/or family may become client of the social welfare system upon own requirement for a service or support, or in other cases, where other institutions, services or citizens report, initiate or direct them to the CSW. Upon the client’s admission to CSW, based on urgency/priority the initial assessment should start within 24 hours in case of urgency and the latest up to 7 days in regular admissions.

Since 2003, the number of clients has been growing until 2011. In 2011, there were **584,828 clients** of the social welfare system according to records of the CSWs, which makes 8.14% of the total population¹⁰. The number of clients decreased for 2.2% comparing to 2010¹¹ in absolute terms, but due to new census data it increased as the percentage in the total population (in 2010 it was 7.23%).

Among all CSW clients, 45,050 are from Roma population, which is almost one third of registered Roma in the Census 2011, 147,604 (or 2.05% of the total population).¹² This means that among Roma population the share of social care clients is almost four times higher than among general population in Serbia, which corresponds to the fact that overall and extreme poverty of Roma population is much higher than for a general population. According to the age structure of Roma clients of social welfare system, 47.2% are adults, 31.1% are elderly and children and youth constitute 21.7%.

Children up to age of 17 represent 27.6% of all the CSW clients, and with youth (18-26) which constitutes 9.8%, make in total 37.3% of all CSWs clients and the second largest client group of CSWs. In 2010, there were 160,592 children up to age of 17 clients of CSWs.

⁹ Please see more on different categories of clients of the social support in the Law on Social Welfare, article 41

¹⁰ The population in Serbia is 7,186,862 according to the Census 2011, the Republic Statistical Office

¹¹ The reasons for the decline of clients can also be found in the new reporting form for CSWs and new registry system of the CSW clients.

¹² However, various researches estimate their number to range from 250,000 to 500,000. The majority of Roma live in ethnic enclaves, and are legally “invisible” i.e. have not been entered in records, do not have personal identity documents and, without the personal identification number, do not have access to certain rights and often unwilling to participate in nation-wide research, which explains the relative scarcity and inaccuracy of data about them.

Table 1: Clients of CSWs

Clients of CSWs as per active records in 2011			
Clients	Male	Female	Total
Children (0-17)	86,728	73,858	160,586
Youth (18-25)	29,876	27,601	57,477
Adult (26-64)	129,203	143,504	272,707
Elderly (65+)	34,832	59,226	94,058
Total	280,639	304,189	584,828

According to the age structure, majority of children with 46.2% are those in the age group from 6 to 14, then 25.2% in the age 15-17, 16.8% in the ages 3-5, and 11.6% of children up to age of 2, which corresponds to the general demographic structure.

Table 2: Age structure of the children clients of CSW throughout year

Age group	Male	Females	Total
0 - 2	9,661	9,048	18,709
3-5	14,000	13,066	27,066
6-14	39,367	34,828	74,195
15-17	23,834	16,788	40,622
Total	86,862	73,730	160,592

According to the main clients groups among children¹³, more than a half, 90,984 children or 57.2% of all children clients of CSWs up to age of 17 belong to the poor children i.e. children from socially and financial deprived families. Similarly, among youth clients, also the dominant client group are youth from financially deprived families 28,503 young persons or 49.1%.

According to the particularly vulnerable children clients¹⁴ of CSW, the largest client group among children clients are Roma children with 10.4%, and the second largest groups are children with disabilities with 6.3%.

¹³ Main clients groups among children are 1) neglected children and/or children at risk of neglect; 2) children victims of violence; 3) children with behavioural problems; 4) children whose parents are having a dispute about the manner of care for the child; 5) socially and financially deprived children, and children with other needs for social welfare system support. The child depending on the type of vulnerability may be categorized in more than one client category.

¹⁴ Particularly vulnerable children groups are: 1) children with disabilities; 2) children victims of human trafficking; 3) Roma children; 4) homeless children; 5) children returnees (by readmission agreement); 6) children victims of international child abduction; 7) unaccompanied minors foreign citizens.

CSWs records provide data on the education status of 70.4% of children clients of social welfare system in the age groups 6 to 17, although it is expected that the data on education status of each and all clients, and children particularly should be available. Moreover, the data is required for defining further possible interventions of CSW professionals on the child inclusion into education system and society as whole.

Table 3: Education status of the children clients of CSW

Age group	Pre-school	Primary school	Secondary school	Course	Do not attend school	Total
6-14	5,693	36,988	1,673	300	6,567	51,221
15-17	0	5,544	15,882	938	7,311	29,675
TOTAL	5,693	42,532	17,555	1,238	13,878	80,896

Alarming fact is that 17.1% of children clients for which education data are provided do not attend school, which means that this percentage might be even higher. Among the children, 42.5% attend primary school, 21.7% attend secondary school, 7% attend pre-school institution, and only 1.5% attends non-formal education courses.

3 MEASURES IN SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

This section will provide analysis of available policies and measures in the area social welfare system funded by the Republic of Serbia and local governments focusing on those relevant to support inclusion of the vulnerable children into the education system.

The **main set of state pro-poor policies** and measures (provided by local or national level) is regulated by three Laws - the Law on Social Welfare, the Law on Financial Support to Family with Children and the Law on Red Cross. Within the social welfare system, the main social support to poor children and families comes in a form of financial support i.e. social benefits. In the total social welfare expenditures, cash benefits make a larger portion of around 70% according to some earlier studies.¹⁵ Already the Social Welfare Development Strategy (2005) set as one of the key policy objectives the improvement of the social welfare for the poorest citizens through securing existential minimum and creation of a more efficient and effective cash benefits system.

Regarding the measures that come from social welfare system to support education prospects of vulnerable children the social interventions of the CSW under the mandate of Family Law will be analysed. Also the section gives an overview of the provision of community-based social services, focusing on the ones provided to the poor.

3.1 MEASURES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

3.1.1 Financial Social Assistance

3.1.1.1 Key facts

Financial social assistance is the most important state measure against poverty and social exclusion and it is regulated by the Law on Social Welfare. The financial social assistance is a means-tested instrument for no or low income households, initiated once an individual/family fails to maintain the minimum living standard. In the most EU countries it is known as the guaranteed minimum income benefit. In Serbia, it is the most important source of income for poor families, namely Roma families, single member families, families with many members, the elderly and persons with disabilities who are unable to work. Important feature of the programme is that it provides access to other types of assistance provided by local governments, such as one-off social assistance, subsidies for the payment of utility services, free-of charge school material, transportation and medical treatment.

¹⁵ Assessment of the Actual Allocation of Function and Financial Resources among Central and Local Level in the Domain of Social Welfare Services, Oxford Policy Management, Victor Giosan, 2009

- *The financial social assistance is a benefit regulated by the Law on Social Welfare, funded by the central budget and administered by the Centres for Social Work.*
- *This instrument has been significantly improved within the 2011 Law, and the main improvements are:*
 - a) *equivalency scale valorises each family member, and for each subsequent adult household member, the basis is increased by 0.5, and for a child by 0.3;*
 - b) *increased financial social assistance, with up to 20% of the regular amount of the financial social assistance for persons unable to work and single parent families;*
 - c) *the new law envisages that six-member household, instead of a five-member household as it was in previous regulation, should be eligible for assistance;*
 - d) *the new law introduces the concept of base in nominal amount with biannual indexation to the living cost; and*
 - e) *significant innovation is the emphasis on the proactive role of beneficiaries and opening possibilities for their active inclusion. Law provides for a possibility that CSWs conclude contracts (individual action plans) with individuals on their activation. Individual action plans shall include activities and obligations undertaken by a beneficiary, such as participation in anti-addiction programmes, referral to a family therapy, pursuing adult education programme, training and retraining, work engagement in public construction works etc.*
- *These legal changes have led to increased coverage of financial social assistance programme, and the number of individual users and families has increased by one third comparing to the period before enforcement of the Law. In May 2013, number of families of the financial social assistance was 106,714 i.e. 270,358 individuals.¹⁶*
- *In May 2013, out of the total number of households 3.76 % received the financial social assistance¹⁷ (in 2009 it was 2.3% of households receiving financial social assistance).*
- *In 2011, public expenditures for financial social assistance were 9.57 billion dinars, and in 2012 as a consequence of legal changes 17.3 billion dinars. The financial social assistance accounted for 0.2% of GDP in 2010, 0.3% of BDP in 2011, and 0.5% of BDP in 2012, which is at the level of the countries in the region (Croatia 0.3% of GDP, Slovenia 0.6% of GDP, Bulgaria 0.3% of GDP)¹⁸*
- *Income and assets of the applicants are assessed in the same way for all citizens, while the income does not include incomes from other social benefits such as child allowance, carer allowance. Income threshold for financial deprivation is defined depending on the size and age structure of the households.*
- *Regular amount of financial social assistance was at 7,530 RSD in June 2013. The increased amount of the financial social assistance was approved to 25.4% beneficiaries, out of which to single parent families 17.4% and the rest to beneficiaries unable to work in October 2012.*
- *Structure of the families beneficiaries of the financial social assistance shows that the greatest part constitutes single member families with 36.0%, followed by 2-member*

¹⁶ Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Policy and Employment

¹⁷ Social profiles of the municipalities in Serbia, database, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy website

¹⁸ World Bank (2006)

families with 20.9%, 3-member families 14.8%, 4-member families 15.5%, and 5 and more member with 12.8%.

- The age structure of the individuals receiving financial social assistance shows a dominant share of adult persons with 48.7%, and the second largest group are children up to 18 with 38.1%, youth 18-26 with 9.4%, and elderly 3.8%.
- For this study, important finding is that among the children (0-18) beneficiaries of the financial social assistance 13.1% do not receive child allowance.
- By the employment status 49% of beneficiaries are unemployed and able-bodied.
- According to the CSW data, more than two third of the users of financial social assistance are Roma with 69.3%.
- Disbursement of the financial social assistance varies widely across Serbia while the share of financial social assistance beneficiaries in the total population by municipalities shows that it does not correlate to the level of economic development of the municipalities. In some underdeveloped local self-governments with very low living standards and significant social problems, the share of households receiving financial social assistance is far below the republic average (3.1%) such as Razanj 1.85%, Ljubovija 1.72%. LSGs where the share of households receiving financial social assistance is over 5% include both some of the least developed LSGs and some of the most developed ones (Beocin 7.07% and Vrsac 7.04%).

3.1.1.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Weaknesses in targeting of the financial social assistance still persist** – higher coverage of the households with financial social assistance is rather a result of the legal changes and economic crisis than the improved targeting of the financial social assistance. According to some earlier studies only 8.6% of the poor received financial social assistance in 2007, while only 11.4% of households living below the poverty line applied for FSA.¹⁹ Distribution of financial social assistance that does not correspond to the economic development of the municipality/town also indicates poor targeting. This can be explained by the different approaches that staff of CSW use when assessing the eligibility of applicants, the lack of standardised assessment procedures, etc. but also to certain extent it can be attributed local specificities.
- **Lack of appropriate information** - weaknesses in targeting of financial social assistance can be explained by poor policies, both national and local towards better informing of the potential client groups on their entitlements and the way how to access them. For the poor population which in majority of cases is of low education status, availability of information on printing leaflets and internet is not enough to reach them. There is a need to back up the transfer with outreach services that would enable the most excluded groups entering into the system.
- **Administrative procedures** – although the number of document required for application for FSA has been decreased, costs (e.g. travel) related to the application process for families living in the underdeveloped municipalities with no CSW have to be considered. *Requirement of identification documents and residence of stay* have been obstacles for receiving financial social assistance for families in Roma settlements who are most socially excluded groups. Recent legal changes relating to obtaining personal documents for people without residence permit are expected to enable coverage and social inclusion of “invisible” groups in population. Rulebook on the Application Form for the

¹⁹ Living Standard Measurement Study, Serbia 2002-2007

Registration of Permanent Residence at the address of an Institution or Social Work Centre entered into force only in December 2012. Also, a new legislation, the Law on amendments of the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings, adopted mid-2012 regulates the ways how to obtain birth certificates for children from the “invisible” group.

- Law provides for a possibility that CSWs conclude an individual action plans with individual beneficiaries of financial support on their activation. This provision provides opportunity for more **proactive role of CSW professionals towards educational needs of children beneficiaries of financial support**, who are currently excluded from case management. However, by-law on active inclusion of beneficiaries is not yet ready, and this opportunity is rarely used across CWs in Serbia.

3.1.2 Child allowance

3.1.2.1 Key facts

In Serbia, the child allowance is **the largest programme targeting poor children**²⁰. Still this is not exclusive objective of the child allowance programme, it also support education of children, support families of lower socio-economic status, incentive to birth policy. It is a means-tested instrument with income and assets threshold which means that only financially deprived children and families (with income below the threshold) are eligible to receive it²¹. In Serbia, child allowance has also characteristics of a **typical conditional cash transfer**, since one of the eligibility criteria is regular school attendance for children/youth up to age of 19 (children with disabilities up to 26).

- *Child allowance is regulated by the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, administered by the municipal social offices while the funding is provided by the central budget. Supervision of the work of the municipal offices is carried out by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy.*
- *In May 2013 there were 389,033 children beneficiaries of the child allowance which is every fourth child i.e. 206,968 families and a slight increase is recorded comparing to the same period of the last year²². The coverage of the children with the child allowance in Serbia is lower in comparison to the majority the EU countries that have child allowance as a means-tested instrument, in Bulgaria, 40% of children are included, in Slovenia even 86% of all children. The income threshold level in those EU countries is set higher than in Serbia, making more families and children eligible for it and. (Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, 2012).*
- *In 2011, expenditures for child allowance amounted at 10.4 billion dinars i.e. approximately 0.3% of GDP which is the same level as in the past several years. Comparing to EU countries, Serbia belongs to the group of countries with the lowest allocation for child allowance*

²⁰ It has been active as a programme for support to families with children since the 50's. Over this period the programme has been conceptualised differently as a semi-universal instrument, population policy instrument, etc. Today it is an instrument of the social policy targeting the poor children

²¹ At the EU level, child allowance is dominantly a non-means-tested instrument, a universal instrument available to all children, while there is a special child allowance rate targeting children of lower socio-economic status. Source: Child Allowance Programme in Serbia: Analysis and Recommendations for Its Improvement, Gordana Matkovic and Bosko Mijatovic, Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, UNICEF, 2012

²² Source: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, 2013

programme. At EU level, the average expenditures for child allowance are at 1.1% of GDP, making it the largest instrument within the families and children support programmes²³.

- The threshold and child allowance rate are equal for all children in the entire territory of Serbia. They are defined in nominal terms and indexed to the cost of living. The equal child allowance rate is a rare practice among EU countries, where usually the rates are differentiated by the age of child or the birth order.
- The Law also recognises the increased child allowance for single parents, foster parents, guardians and parents of the children with disabilities in the amount of 30% increase to the regular child allowance amount. In May 2013, the child allowance rate was 2,535.11 RSD and the increased child allowance is 3,295.62RSD²⁴. Based on the study (Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, 2012), in terms of purchasing power standards (PPS), the child allowance rate places Serbia in the group of EU countries with low child allowance rates and according to OECD data the share of child allowance for one child in the average salary is 3.8%, which corresponds to the level in almost half of EU countries. Furthermore, in Serbian context, the rate of the child allowance is almost equal to the amount allocated to the child within the financial social assistance, and this amount is equal to a half of the amount needed for the children aged up to 14 for covering the minimum consumer basket, defined by the absolute poverty line²⁵.
- Among the child allowance beneficiaries prevailing are children of the first and second birth order, 43.7% and 37.6% respectively which corresponds to family structures in Serbia. This entitlement is available to up to the fourth child by the birth order, but this does not mean that it is available for four children in total.²⁶ Distribution of the child allowance by the number of children in families who receive child allowance shows that majority are families receiving the child allowance for 2 children with 45.7%, than for 1 child 35.5%, for 3 children 15.3% and for 4 children 4.4%, which can be explained by this limitation.
- According to the age structure, the beneficiaries of the child allowance as in October 2012 are mainly children at primary school age from 7 to 14 with 47%, followed by the pre-school age children with 34% and secondary school age 19%. The age structure of child allowance beneficiaries is the same as the last year in the same period, and corresponds to the demographic structure. Among the beneficiaries of the increased child allowance the largest group are the children from single parent families, 16.5% of all beneficiaries.

²³ In Serbia, total budget expenditures for the financial support programmes for families with children (parental allowance, child allowance, maternity allowance and pre-school attendance costs) amounted at 37.67 billion dinars or 1.15% of GDP. Looking at the share of each instrument in the total public spending on the programmes for financial support to families with children, dominant spending goes to maternity allowance and leave for special care of the child with almost more than a half of the total amount, which is opposite to EU countries where child allowance being the most funded programme.

²⁴ Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy data

²⁵ In 2011, poverty line (minimal consumer basket) is set at 9,438 dinars for adult, and by equivalency scales for child up to 14 is 0.5 of the amount. Source: Child Allowance Programme in Serbia: Analysis and Recommendations for Its Improvement, Gordana Matkovic and Bosko Mijatovic, Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, UNICEF, 2012

²⁶ In the families with five and more children, all children from fifth child by birth order are not eligible to receive child allowance. Even in case when the first and second child by the birth order stop receiving the child allowance (due to age for example) the fifth and other children do not become eligible for the child allowance, meaning that only two children will receive it. The common practice in EU is to limit number of children eligible to receive child allowance by the family, to four or five children in total, but not to limit by the birth order.

- *Disbursement of the child allowance programme by the share of child allowance beneficiaries in the total population up to age of 18 shows that in Vojvodina the share is above republican average (28.7% in May 2013), while in Central Serbia it is slightly below and in Belgrade far below the republican average. The data on the share of child allowance beneficiaries in the total population up to age of 18 by municipalities shows that it does not correlate in every case to the level of economic development of the municipalities²⁷. Consequently, we can find the most developed municipalities with among the highest shares of the child allowance beneficiaries in the total population up to 18 (Beocin with 45.87%) and the most underdeveloped municipalities with among the lowest shares (Kucevo with only 8.1%)²⁸.*

3.1.2.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Faults in targeting of the child allowance** - Different studies identify that great number of eligible families do not exercise the entitlement to child allowance²⁹. Recent research identifies that 59.4% of eligible children do not receive the child allowance. On the other hand, 52.8% of children receive child allowance although they not meet the criteria (Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, 2012). This leads to conclusion that the child allowance programme does not meet effectively its main purpose – addressing poverty of poor children.
- **Poor administering of child allowance** – faults in targeting and disbursements of child allowance across Serbia that does not correspond to the economic development of the municipality/town can be explained by poor administering of the entitlement by the municipal social offices. Municipal social offices are not directly linked to the Ministry or professionals in CSWs; therefore they are not competent in the social area, but rather deal with administrative procedures. Furthermore, the employees are not part of central government, and thus they not have an incentive to focus on the effective use of the republic fund (Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, 2012).
- **Lack of appropriate information** - Poor administering of child allowance also include poor polices, both national and local towards better informing of the potential client groups on their entitlements and the way how to access them. More than 20% of those eligible are not well informed about the criteria for exercising child allowance programme, but there also some that do not know for the programme at all or are not aware how to access it.
- **Weaknesses in administrative procedures set by Law** –
 - According to the same study, more than half of the eligible agricultural and mixed households (57.9%) who do not receive child allowance are excluded as a consequence of the *poor and outdated income and assets assessment procedure, precisely cadastre income*. Cadastre income is an obsolete calculation of the potential income from agricultural land, which leads to unrealistic picture of the social standing of these households and the situation where only 5.9% of children in these households receive child allowance.

²⁷ Based on the Government resolution on the level of development of local self-governments in Serbia

²⁸ Social profiles of the municipalities in Serbia, database, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy website

²⁹ Options for Delivering Social Assistance: A Feasibility Study, Main Report, Oxford Policy Management, April 2007; An Analysis of the Impact of Government Financial Assistance for the Poor, Gordana Matkovic and Bosko Mijatovic, Septemebtr 2008; Child Allowance Programme in Serbia: Analysis and Recommendations for Its Improvement, Gordana Matkovic and Bosko Mijatovic, Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, UNICEF, 2012

- *Complicated administrative procedures which is time consuming and costly* is an obstacle for 15.8% of potential beneficiaries. The list of documents includes 11 official documents, often by the different local public offices. Families receiving financial social assistance need to collect and submit the same documentation to apply for child allowance therefore children (0-18) beneficiaries of the financial social assistance 13.1% do not receive child allowance. This is caused by the fact that two different offices administering these two benefits do not have cooperation protocols and share of data for the same client groups.
- *Requirement of identification documents and residence of stay* have been obstacles for receiving child allowance for children in Roma settlements who are most socially excluded groups. Recent legal changes relating to obtaining personal documents for people without residence permit and ID are expected to enable coverage and social inclusion of “invisible” groups in population (see under FSA bottlenecks).
- *Limiting child allowance by the birth order instead of number of children in the family* as a consequence had lower coverage of the children with child allowance program per family.
- *Disfunctionality of Child Allowance as a cash transfer measure conditional upon school enrolment and attendance.* The Local social offices require school attendance certificate only at the beginning of the school year. This leads to the possibility that some of the children who do not regularly attend school receive child allowance (only 8.8 %of families do not receive child allowance as a consequence of child not attending a school). In order to strengthen the incentive value of this measure for reducing absenteeism and dropping out risks, there are initiatives requesting that the certificate on school attendance should be more frequently followed, but no action has been taken on this up to now.

While many of the weaknesses could be remedied by the provision of the *community*-based social initiatives, primarily outreach services and activation policy of CSW, greater improvement of the efficiency of the programme could be expected by the legal changes.

3.1.3 Benefits supporting pre-school education of children from vulnerable groups

3.1.3.1 Key facts

The Law on Pre-school education and bylaws stipulate that preschool education is available for every child and prioritize enrolment of children from vulnerable groups³⁰. The importance of the early child education and care is also emphasized by the EU Commission.³¹

According to the MICS4 report, the access to pre-school education from 20% of the richest families is three times higher than from 20% of the poorest families. The inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education in urban areas is 10%, while in other areas is only 4.1%. The coverage of children with disabilities is at only 1.2% although there are around 5% of these children in the age group.

Financing of the pre-school education according to the Law is a local level responsibility, while parents participate with 20% in the pre-school costs per child enrolled³². Exemption from parental contribution is

³⁰ Law on Pre-school education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 72/09

³¹ Communication from the Commission Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow, Brussels, 17.2.2011, COM(2011) 66 final

regulated by the legislation in the area of social protection i.e. within the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children. The Law regulates three benefits aiming at supporting the objectives of early education policies of a) children without parental care, b) children with disabilities and c) children from financially deprived families. For the first two groups of children, funding is provided by the central budget, while subsidies for the children from financially deprived families are provided by the local self-governments budgets. The two benefits provided by the national level will be presented in this section, while subsidies for pre-school costs will be presented under next section about local level measures.

Pre-school attendance benefit for the children without parental care

- It is part of the package of support to the families with children, particularly designed to respond to specific vulnerability of the children without parental care.
- It is benefit that covers user participation costs in the pre-school institution, and it is provided from the Republic budget and delivered through pre-school institutions.
- The Law sets different criteria for the acquirement of the benefit for the children without parental care placed in the child home and in the foster family.
 - a) For the children placed in foster families, the entitlement is acquired under the same conditions as the child allowance, and it is considered as a cumulative entitlement, conditional upon receiving child allowance.
 - b) For the children without parental care who are placed in the child home there is a direct access to this entitlement with no conditions set, aiming to support their early inclusion in the peer group and to encourage an early child development in the pre-school institution.

Pre-school attendance benefit for the children with disabilities

- It is part of the package of support to the families with children, particularly designed to respond to the early inclusion of children with disabilities into pre-school education.
- It is benefit that covers user participation costs in the pre-school institution, and it is provided from the Republic budget and delivered through pre-school institutions.
- The eligibility criteria are set differently for the children with disabilities attending the regular pre-school group or the "development" pre-school group which is reserved exclusively for children with disabilities.
 - a) For the children with disabilities attending the regular pre-school group the entitlement is acquired under the same conditions as the child allowance, and it is considered as a cumulative entitlement i.e. exercised if the child allowance entitlement is acquired.
 - b) For the children with disabilities enrolled into the "development" pre-school group there are no conditions set enabling direct access to this entitlement, which is in conflict with inclusive education objectives.

- *In the total amount of the financial support programmes for the families with children, financial allocations for the two instruments are the lowest. In the 2012, until the end of November 2012, total spending was at is 16.3 million dinars.*
- *In 2012, the average monthly number of children clients of this entitlement is 303 children, where the half of the clients is residents of the city of Belgrade.*

³² In practice, the parent participation in the pre-school costs are higher than 20% of the economic price, in Serbia in 2011, according to DevInfo data parents participate in average with 33 percent in economic price of the pre-school costs.

3.1.3.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Coverage and targeting** – although both instruments are intended to support inclusion and better coverage of children from vulnerable groups in the pre-school education, take-up of this instrument is extremely low in Serbia and it is far from meeting the real needs, which can be indication of the weaknesses in the design of these instruments and administration of the instruments, which will be further elaborated.
- **Weaknesses in design and administrative requirements**
 - Design and administrative requirements regulated by the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children for acquiring the benefit for the children with disabilities is in collision with inclusive education objectives stipulated by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System and the Law on Pre-school Education and Care. According to the Law on Financial Support, direct access to the entitlement stimulates enrolment of the children with disabilities into “development” pre-school groups, contrary to the objectives of inclusion policy in education which encourages the enrolment into regular groups in pre-school education. Conflicting regulations in education and social legislation create difficulties in implementation of this instrument.
 - Design and administrative requirements for exercising both entitlements, with one sub-group as presented above, the question is whether it needs to be treated as cumulative entitlements i.e. conditional upon the family being eligible for child allowance or simple should enable direct access.
 - Furthermore, according to procedures for approving the entitlement to children with disabilities, the opinion of the Commissions for categorisation of children with disabilities is required. These Commissions existed at the time of drafting this Law, but in accordance with inclusion practice in Serbia they have been replaced with the newly established Inter-sectoral Committees for additional education, health and social support to children and students. In reality, the administrative procedures for awarding the benefit do not recognize the Inter-sectoral Committees opinion.
- **Poor administering** - One of the reasons of the poor use of the instrument could be along with the gap in the administrative requirements as presented above, a low awareness of its existence, and the process of acquiring it. Furthermore, there is a low interest and no efforts from the pre-school institutions in utilizing these instruments in greater extent. Admission criteria for pre-school institution at local level do not prioritize these groups of children.

3.1.4 One-off financial assistance

The Law on Social Welfare stipulates one-off financial assistance as an instrument provided by the Republic budget for the most financially disadvantaged families in cases when living standard of the great number of citizens is extremely threatened. Decision on disbursement including criteria and target groups is made by the Government. In 2011, one-off financial assistance has been paid to the most disadvantaged families through the network of CSWs in amount of 120 million dinars. In 2011, this instrument has been used for the underdeveloped municipalities of IV group.

This is an add-up and flexible state measure activated in the crisis situation, thus it does not improve in a sustainable way the situation of vulnerable groups. To our knowledge this instrument has never targeted strictly children, only indirectly addressing the poor families. Should the Government decide or prioritise, this instrument potentially can also be used to target child specific issues.

3.1.5 Social measures by the Centre for Social Work

3.1.5.1 Key facts

- Centre for Social Work is an important player addressing education prospects of children at risk of dropping-out or children out of the education system based on the mandate given in the Family Law. Should the parents fail to perform their duties in relation to education of children, the following measures are envisaged:
 - a) preventive interventions through counselling work in the council office for marriage and family;
 - b) corrective actions through warning to parents on execution of parental rights, referral to specialized institution for family relations or other parental support;
 - c) sanctions - partial or full termination of parental rights in case of parents do not obey the corrective measures;
 - d) access to adequate financial and non-financial support including referral to service providers in order to support education needs of children (financial social assistance, equipping for school, clothing, etc.).

With difference to above presented measures under national level measures, these set of interventions is not exclusively targeted to poor population, but they are applicable to general population.

- CSW records do not provide data on education status of all children age 6 to 17 clients of social welfare system, but only for 70.4%, indicating low intervention of CSW in this regard. Furthermore, 17.1% of children clients for which education data are provided actually do not attend school, which means that this percentage might be even higher, but there is no record on the CSW case manager's interventions in this respect.
- Case management as a method of work of CSW does not cover beneficiaries of the financial social support i.e. poor population. The Law on Social Welfare introduces one new instrument of CSW for poor families and children beneficiaries of financial social assistance – individual action plan within active inclusion policy. Active inclusion policy for children population is focused on the measures to support child/young person return to school. This instrument is still not implemented by the CSW professionals since the by-law on its use is still not ready.

- CSW employees:

Table 4. Employees in CSWs in 2011 as of December 31st 2011

Financing	Managers	Professional staff	Administrative staff	Others	Total
Republic	242	1,550	357	216	2,365
Local-self government	21	240	95	214	570
Total	263	1,790	452	430	2,935 (with part time and trainees: 3,235) ³³
Professional staff					
Case managers		994			
Supervisors		109			
Case managers and supervisors combined		133			
Other professionals		554*			
Total		1,790			

* Among the group of other professionals there were 282 legal professionals, who do not perform case management or supervision, so do not directly work with the clients.

If we take that 469,188 of clients were on active records of CSW as at 31 December 2011 and put it in relation to all professional staff in direct work with the clients i.e. case managers, supervisors as well as employees with time-limited contracts and trainees being in total 1,809 people, ratio is 1 professional: 259 clients, as a minimal estimate of caseload (Association of Centers of Social Work, December 2012). This calculation is made based on total number of clients. In the internal structure of the CSW the organizational units for children and youth employ greater number of professional staff in comparison to other departments e.g. for adults and elderly, financial, community-based services, planning, etc.

- Normative for the number of case managers is set by the number of general population of the town/municipality and not by the number CSW clients, and due to the different nature of cases it is hard to assess whether an average of 9 hours case work yearly (if we take effective hours as 6 hours) is optimal for quality person-centred work. According to the statements of case managers "little time that the social professional can dedicate to clients, do not allow enough space for development of relationship with a client, and only 22% of case managers states that they have enough time available to go thoroughly through adequate services and steps in managing social support for the client." (Association of Centers of Social Work, December 2012)

³³ Out of the total number of employees, 258 were employed based on time-limited employment contract and 43 were trainees. The rest are employees with full-time permanent contract.

3.1.5.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Low prioritization of the education needs** - education barriers faced by children are at low level of prioritization by the CSW professionals within the spectrum of social problems reported. It means that following the standards of work, the case will be opened in the regular procedure within 5 days since reporting and the first assessment to be completed within 7 days, while the individual service plan should be completed within 60 days since opening of the case. Considering bad consequences of a child being out of the school this is highly late intervention of the CSW.
- **Poor cooperation with school and local office administering child allowance** – neglect of education needs of vulnerable children is consequence of the poor cooperation among relevant local institutions. School often reports lately a child absence, while there is almost no cooperation between local offices for child allowance and CSW on supporting children beneficiaries of child allowance.
- **Limited field capacity of CSW – in many LSGs, CSW does** not have a vehicle and limits field visits to immediate interventions. In practice this is often overcome by the NGO providing outreach services. Red Cross or pedagogical assistance in some LSGs. However, provision of outreach services within the framework of community-based services should be systematically provided across all LSGs in Serbia.
- **Territorial division of CSW interventions** - child with no residence in the LSG does not fall under jurisdiction of respective CSW. Until recently not having residence permit at the territory of CSW/LSG or identification documents has been also a bottleneck in accessing CSW intervention. Since December 2012 the Rulebook on the Application Form for the Registration of Permanent Residence at the Address of an Institution or Social Work Centre and the Law on amendments of the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings, adopted mid-2012 regulates the ways how to obtain birth certificates for children from the “invisible” group should remedy this bottleneck.
- **No active inclusion policy in place** - children beneficiaries of financial social assistance do not necessarily go through case management which means that they do not access adequate support for their schooling. In this sense, they are actually considered as passive recipients of financial support provided to their families.

3.2 MEASURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

3.2.1 Deduction/Subsidies of the pre-school costs for children from financially deprived families

3.2.1.1 Key facts

- The benefit is part of the additional support package stipulated in the Law on the Financial Support to Families with Children aiming at an early inclusion of the children from poor families into pre-school education. In its idea this is an adequate instrument for the achievement of the early inclusion of poor children into education.
- With difference to the presented benefits, financing of this measure is a local level responsibility, in the form of subsidies to parents' participation in the pre-school cost.

- According to the Situation Analysis Report of the IMPRESS programme³⁴, although legislation prioritizes enrolment of the children from vulnerable groups, and as we can see this financial instrument support this priority, the actual coverage of the children from the families receiving the financial support or child allowance in 15 pilot municipalities shows that this is not fully implemented or instrument used. In Uzice and Arandjelovac municipalities, less than 10% of children aged 0.5–5.5 from the families receiving child allowance are enrolled in pre-school education; in Šabac 10%; in Beočin and Mali Zvornik 22%; Gadzin Han 31%, Razanj 39% and Surdulica 44%.

3.2.1.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Monitoring weaknesses** – the implementation of this instrument is not monitored at the national level, or the use of the instrument in any form guided. There is no unified database at the national level on its use in the LSGs in Serbia, information on the number of users or the criteria for its disbursement. Furthermore, in case of not applying this instrument there are no penalties of any kind for the LSGs.
- **Administrative requirements for enrolment into pre-school institution** - analysis of the admission criteria for pre-school education³⁵ shows that the highest scores are given to the families with employed parents (50), *while vulnerability criteria are poorly ranked and not prioritized*, such as a) neither of the parents/guardians is employed (0) score, b) single parent (10-30), c) health condition of the parents (5), c) recommendation for admission of a child with disabilities and child from a foster family, adopted child, child from the Safe House, child temporarily living with relatives (10). Should there be more children with the same score at the ranking list, the following criteria and score are applied: a) children of vulnerable groups (15) and b) children whose parents are employees of pre-school institutions (10), and negative scores are applied for an older child already admitted to pre-school, but the parents/guardians fail to perform contractual obligations (- 30). In the last case, there is no knowledge of possible remedial actions should the reasons for not meeting their contractual obligations be a job loss, or deterioration of material situation, etc. Therefore, in practice criteria for enrolment into pre-school do not prioritise vulnerable children as pre-school legislation requires, which can also be among the reasons of low implementation of the instrument.
- **Design** - one of the main reasons for prioritizing employed parents lies in pre-school financing system, by which up to 20% of the economic price of pre-school institutions comes from parents' participation on monthly basis. If not, local self-government would additionally cover in total participation costs of parents or provide subsidies from the local budget. In this way, the total burden of pre-school education for poor is at the local budget, which demotivates local self-governments in promotion and better use of this instrument.

3.2.2 One-off social assistance

3.2.2.1 Key facts

One-off social assistance is envisaged by the Law on Social Welfare, as support programme financed by the local self-governments, in the form of financial and in-kind benefit. The main purpose, as stated in the Law is an immediate assistance for the persons/families in the state of unexpected or temporary social need.

³⁴ Improvement of the Pre-school education in Serbia, IPA programme aims at social inclusion and poverty reduction by improving pre-school provision and broadening access for children, especially children from disadvantaged groups.

³⁵ Situation Analysis Report, IMPRESS, 2012

The target groups and eligibility criteria are defined by the local self-governments, while the disbursement of on-off social assistance are performed through the CSWs, but also can be provided directly by local social offices.

One-off assistance is a supplementing part of the financial social assistance provided by the central level. According to earlier survey in 30 municipalities³⁶ almost all LSGs allocate funds for one-off payments to people most in need and almost one-third of LSGs allocate budget funds for in-kind assistance and humanitarian support. These one-off benefits are not systematically provided, but represent flexible measure of different types of extraordinary payments (one-off payments).

- *According to the CSW records for 2011, among all financial assistance beneficiaries, majority 43.9% are beneficiaries of one-off financial assistance.*
- *By its purpose, one-off financial assistance is allocated in most cases for food items with 38.7%, purchasing of medicines 22.8%, essential household items 14.1%, and for equipping children for school 7.9%.*
- *According to an earlier CWS report, for 2009, scholarships for the children from vulnerable groups presented one of the main financial supports in social welfare. In 2009, 4,094 secondary school and university students received scholarship, out of which 14.7% from financially deprived families.*
- *For the in-kind assistance, the CSW data shows that the majority is provided for free meals, while the dominant client groups are Roma people, 70.4%.*

Local self-governments also allocate funds for different types of support to local citizens, such as soup kitchens, subsidies for utility costs, scholarships for children from vulnerable groups, increased one-off financial assistance, transportation for persons with disabilities, etc. but also allocations for monthly bus tickets, excursions, summer vacations, etc.

Data collected on the local budget allocations for children in Serbia by the MODS³⁷, show some similarities in the types of benefits and support provided by the local governments. The set of packages available mainly include schools books and equipment supply, population policy benefits, free meals (targeted for primary school children or Roma children), transportation costs³⁸ (targeted for children with disabilities, primary school children, of secondary school children, excursions and financial incentives/scholarships that in majority cases merit-based performance benefits. Although there are similarities in the types of support provided, it can be noticed that criteria, target groups (whether poor, Roma, talented, merit-performance) and disbursement procedures (whether through CSW, or school) vary significantly.

3.2.2.2 Main issues and bottlenecks

- **Design and implementation**

³⁶ The Situation Analysis on Social Welfare at Local Level, Centre for Liberal democratic Studies, 2006

³⁷ Child Organizations Network in Serbia, Mreža organizacija za decu Srbije

³⁸ Covering transportation cost is obligation by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System: the Law prescribes that transport shall be provided to children to attend preparatory preschool education if they live more than 2 kilometers from the school, to primary school students if they live more than 4 kilometers from the school, as well as to children and students with developmental disabilities irrespective from the distance of their residence from school.

- While almost all LSGs allocate funds for one-off social assistance there are *no national guidelines or recommendations on criteria on how to use these funds to address national pro-poor policies in the most efficient and effective way*. Along with one-off assistance various support measures in the area of education and social support are provided but the issue is whether they are coherent with national measures. One-off social assistance and other locally provided measures are discretionary right of the local self-governments and as such they can also be manipulated by local politician or add to populist politics, so the national guiding policy could significantly improve the effectiveness of use of scarce local funds.
- It seems that the measures locally provided *do not adequately response to national strategic objectives*, particularly to objectives of *fighting poverty in the education, social, health sector*. Often benefits are merit-based and not targeted to poor (e.g. scholarships), or available to all children (excursions) which open an issue of efficient use of already scarce local finances. Also, often benefits overlap with the central benefits and on the other hand some that are needed are not provided (services to poor are not provided due to lack of funding). For example, the question is whether it is needed to add up parental allowance as local benefit to already existing national transfer. It seems that these expenses unless well planned and implemented cannot have any sustainability in improving the welfare of the citizens.
- There is *no central monitoring of local measures*, so the efficiency and effectiveness of its use cannot be assessed. Furthermore, due to the lack of unified databases e.g. it cannot be checked whether the same children are recipients of the national scholarships and local at the same time.
- *Administering local benefits* – when these benefits supplement other social and financial support measures e.g. provided through CSW, the weaknesses of its administration are the same as the weaknesses in distribution of national support benefits, such as targeting, lack of information, etc. In this regard, it is not clear in which extent the most excluded groups not covered by the main national transfers so far (e.g. due to lack of personal documents) have had access to these types of support or whether in place are mechanisms for targeting those families and children. In cases where benefits are directly provided, not provided through CSW, there is not enough knowledge on the criteria and disbursement procedures, while at the same time this type of distribution is more prone to populist local policies.

3.3 COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES

The Law on Social Welfare provides regulatory framework for regular provision of quality community-based social services that is based on the national minimum standards for services, licensing of the providers and professionals, and mechanism of commissioning of the social services and providers by the state and local self-governments. This regulatory framework facilitates sustainable planning and provision of community-based social services tailored to the needs of the local vulnerable population. It creates a very new setting, approach and practice in providing social services and social welfare at local level in general and still it is not fully applicable and knowledge is still not widely spread across Serbia.

Many of the community-based social services such as support to independent living, day care centres for children with disabilities, personal assistance, shelters, etc. are mainstreamed. For them national minimum standards are adopted (Rulebook on national minimum standards), many local self-governments provide them and they are part of the local strategy documents and local acts on the provision of extended rights to the citizens. A pool of competent service providers among civil society organizations exists and with recently adopted Rulebook on licensing service providers and professionals it is expected soon to become licensed service providers. Donor organizations and the Ministry itself have invested a lot of efforts in developing these community-based social

services however their availability across the country is still limited, and therefore this is an area of further continuous support and investments. According to the earlier study as an illustration, 21.2% of all LSGs do not have home care service and only 38.8% have day care centres for children with disabilities³⁹. There are also huge discrepancies among municipalities, given the difference in the size of LSGs and their budgets. Currently, there is no developed database of the all social service providers and type of social services available in Serbia, but there is an on-going project on Mapping social services and providers in Serbia⁴⁰ which will provide an updated overview of the social services, providers and clients. Furthermore, once licensing system is up and running the Institute for Social Protection will maintain the registry of licensed social providers and services.

By analysing different studies and available registry of the community-based social services⁴¹ it is evident that among the present community-based social services *there are no social services specifically targeted to support poor families and children for which one could claim that they are mainstreamed and regularly provided in the system of social welfare*. The examples of this type of services are parenting support, outreach services for poor population, legal assistance in providing documents, etc.⁴² While these services are delivered by civil society organisations, they are primarily funded by donor funds with no sustainable financing mechanism from local self-governments. Although necessary and well complementing existing state measures (financial support, distribution of the in-kind support), these social services are provided on ad-hoc basis, with no mainstreaming initiatives and no sustainability in their financing leading to risk of closing these programmes by many civil society organizations (please see more in the paper Pro-poor measures – NGO sector). One of the explanations for unstable provision of social services target to poor population could be the perception that these services are traditionally provided (reserved) by the Red Cross or anyway funded by donors.

3.3.1 Red Cross

Traditional service provider of humanitarian and social support programmes to the poor population is the Red Cross, with organisations in almost all municipalities in Serbia. There are 186 Red Cross organizations in Serbia (including HQ, and two province organizations). Financing of the Red Cross activities and projects comes from different sources, republic budget, province budget, local budgets and donor supported activities. The biggest share of the funds from the national lottery, 24.4% is spent on financing social activities of Red Cross. Out of the funds provided from the local self-governments, 63% is allocated for funding different programmes, while the rest is allocated for financing running and administrative cost of the Red Cross.

The Red Cross social support activities include:

- ***soup kitchens program***,
- ***support in food and hygiene items*** to socially deprived families in the municipalities of II, III and IV level of development,
- distribution of locally donated ***clothing***,

³⁹ Distribution of the Social Welfare Services in Serbia, UNDP and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Belgrade (January - May 2009).

⁴⁰ Project funded by the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and implemented by the Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies

⁴¹ at the website of the Institute for Social Protection <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/>

⁴² In social welfare system there was a good example of the project funded under the Social Innovation Fund, which provided outreach service for Roma population on raising awareness of the financial entitlements and support them in accessing the entitlements, which attracted more of this social excluded group into the system of social care.

- programme for **recovery of socially vulnerable children** - provision of 10 days of stay at the sea side in the Red Cross facilities⁴³.
- **support program to the victims of human trafficking**,
- **social inclusion programme**⁴⁴ for Roma children and children with disabilities in 29 LSGs includes support to their education inclusion through mentoring and learning support, parental support, etc. An additional segment of this program is the program on **Promotion of human values** aiming at anti-violence promotion and development of the intercultural values and respect of cultural and ethical differences.
- **solidarity actions** and traditional assistance actions to the most vulnerable population (gifts for the new-born, new year's gifts, etc.),
- **programmes of one-off in-kind support to the most vulnerable population** have been running in 105 LSGs (II-VI development level).⁴⁵ In general priority is given to families with no income, single-member elderly families, socially vulnerable families from remote rural areas, single parents with no incomes, families which are borderline cases with no access to rights. All of these general criteria are further adjusted to local circumstances.

Out of these programmes the most prevailing ones listed in descending order of predominance are a) solidarity actions, b) assistance in food, hygiene, clothing items, c) prevention of the human trafficking, d) care for the elderly, f) soup kitchens programme and then g) social inclusion programme.

By the effectiveness, according to the Red Cross analysis⁴⁶, the most effective ones are the programmes in meeting subsistence needs (food, hygiene, clothing). In the long run, the best results are achieved with psycho-social support component for empowering vulnerable households, and individuals (education programmes, attitude change, participation, etc.), while the solidarity action and traditional aid are estimated as the least efficient which need to be modernised.

According to the client groups, the majority of programmes is devoted to a) elderly (50%), b) to the most vulnerable families, primarily Roma families at the poverty line and families with persons with disabilities who do not access other support programmes (25%), followed by c) vulnerable children and youth, d) unemployed and e) persons with disabilities.

⁴³ In 2012, 887 vulnerable children from all over Serbia benefited of this kind of support, the children from Kosovo, from Roma families, children from foster or residential care

⁴⁴ the program has been provided since 2002, with support from Danish Red Cross and IFRC, and since 2009 support of SDC

⁴⁵ Selection of the eligible families for this support is done by the local committees comprising of representatives of Red Cross, CSW and local self-government.

⁴⁶ Annex to the Strategy: Analysis of the Red Cross Serbia capacities and activities to date in the social area, Red Cross, 2012

3.4 RECENT AND ON-GOING DONOR SUPPORT PROGRAMMES IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE AREA

The following table presents the main donor supported projects in the social welfare area. Focus of the key donor programmes has been to support pluralism of service providers and development of community-based social services, jointly with strengthening regulatory framework (licencing, national minimum standards) necessary for the implementation of quality social services setting as designed by the Law 2011.

Title	Program me	Time scale	Budget*	Main activities
Supporting the implementation of the Social Welfare Development Strategy (SWDS)	Norway and UK	September 2006 – December 2009	€4.19m	<p>Building capacity of MoLSP, local self-governments and other central and local stakeholders in the social welfare system to effectively implement the Strategy and Action Plan, and the broader social inclusion reform process. The support included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing coordination and implementation of SWDS, social policy planning at local level, regulatory system development, fiscal decentralisation, donor coordination, PR; • Involving ISPs, SIF, SCTM, other ministries, LSGs, CSWs, residential institution & the NGO sector etc. with defined responsibilities for an effective implementation of the SWDS through the WGs; • Designing a model for the development of national minimum standards for 16 social services and designed service regulatory system; • Introducing case management method in all CSWs; • Developing local strategic documents on social policy in 31 cities & municipalities, with action plans and budgets for their implementation; • Supporting 37 new or existing community based social services through grant scheme; • Enhancing capacities in social policy strategic planning in 4 major cities; • Supporting work on drafting the new Law on Social Protection, etc.
Development & implementation of the accreditation system for social care professionals in Serbia	Norway	2007-2008	€0.52m	<p>Developing the accreditation system in the Institute for Social Protection (ISP) for the training programmes for social care providers and professionals. The implementation of the accreditation system is one of the pillars of the quality assurance system in social welfare and provides a solid base for the implementation of licensing system for social service providers.</p>

Title	Program me	Time scale	Budget*	Main activities
Transforming residential institutions for children and developing sustainable alternatives	CARDS 2006	2008-2010	€1.39m	<p>Implemented by UNICEF, addresses the following areas of child care reform in line with the Social Welfare Development Strategy and the National Plan of Action for Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy development and support to legislative reforms so as to ensure the fulfilment and respect of the rights of the child without parental care or with special needs; • Capacity-building and support to increasing the quality of care – through enhancing child-centred programmes, increasing professional competencies, accountability and independent monitoring; • Up-grading and developing family and child support services – including foster care, day care services and home care assistance
Fostering social inclusion by strengthening institutions that provide community-based social protection services	IPA 2008	2010-2013	€5.5m	<p>Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the MoLESP capacity to monitor, evaluate and supervise decentralised and well-targeted community-based social protection services; • Clustering municipal authorities in at least 10 regions of Serbia to adopt shared Community-Based Social Service Protection Strategies, and develop targeted local level community-based social protection services to implement these strategies; • Sensitising public opinion in Serbia, particularly at local levels, to the needs of vulnerable groups in general, and children with disabilities in particular, leading to a change in models of acceptance and care for these groups in society; • Implementing one service contract and grant scheme.
Creation and implementation of licensing system for social service providers across Serbia	Norway	2011-2013	€0.6m	Assisting the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to design licensing model for social service providers and pilot it with an aim to create and implement licensing system in line with the new draft Law

Title	Program me	Time scale	Budget*	Main activities
Support deinstitutionalisation and social inclusion of persons with mental disability and mental illness	IPA 2011	2012-2015	€5.17m	The project aims to enable deinstitutionalisation and social inclusion of persons with mental disabilities and mental illnesses by transforming the institutions to improve services and support development of social-health services at local level.
Support to social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, including Roma, through more diversified community-based social services.	IPA 2012	To be launched	€6.5m	<p>The project will enable greater social inclusion of vulnerable groups, including Roma, by broadening and strengthening community-based responses tailored to their specific needs. The project provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building to LSGs in managing social inclusion policies, and both LSGs and social providers to design community-based social inclusion initiatives through building local partnerships and stronger cross-sectoral networking. • Specific training for case managers within CSW to deal with Roma inclusion policies. • A grant scheme to strengthen the network, range and quality of existing community-based social services, but also encourage the development of innovative and cross-sectoral approaches among social, health, education and employment in service delivery and encourage inter-municipal cooperation in social service delivery (cluster approach), towards economies of scale and budget efficiency.. • Part of the grant scheme will specifically support active inclusion initiatives at the local level promoting inclusion of Roma people. • support to national level in mainstreaming the most successful innovative initiatives and adopting national minimum standards, including the development of joint standards for cross-sectoral services in cooperation with other relevant ministries. • Support to MoLESP to manage further decentralisation of social policies and services, provide guidance and support to LSGs in the process, monitor and evaluate the process, disseminate best practices, raise awareness on social inclusion policies.

CONCLUSIONS

In the closing of the presentation of the social welfare measures that directly or indirectly support education of the vulnerable children, particularly poor and Roma children, the analysis identifies number of policies and measures provided from national and local level along with the solid legal and strategic settings that could drive their implementation. However, implementation faces difficulties due to a lack of synergy between different measures, lack of higher level of institutional cooperation, low capacities and low level of accountability at national and local level which influence that the implementation of the support to poor looks rather chaotic, not properly guided and often ineffective to respond to the needs of the socially excluded groups.

In this sense, the general findings are:

- Many of the pro-poor initiatives are left down to the local level, or to administer them or to fund them but weaknesses in the implementation indicate that the local capacities are weak to harmonise and implement those policies. This strongly hinders coherence between planning of budgets and measures and more efficient identification and targeting of beneficiaries.
- Social system at local level seems to be organized by measures and activities, kept fragmented within responsible bodies and not as person-centred system. Thus clients stay with their basic social needs unaddressed while the accountability for it lies somewhere in the vacuum between strict boundaries of different institutions. Coordination and planning of implementation of measures at the local level provided by the CSW, local social offices, Red Cross, NGOs, as well as monitoring of their implementation should be improved.
- Measures targeting vulnerable children do not seem to be well coordinated between different sectors (education and social) or level of governments (national and local). Institutional coordination and cooperation between two sectors on the national objectives within each sector and on the measures undertaken to meet those objectives is lacking. An example is education and social legislations that have a conflicting orientation regarding the approach to inclusion of children with disabilities, which creates difficulties in its implementation on the ground.
- There is no monitoring in place of the integration of national policy sector objectives into the local strategic documents and their implementation through local acts and budgets across country. Lacking databases, disconnected between the social and education sector, between national and local levels seriously hampers the possibility to assess the impact of any measures and policies or to plan future interventions;
- Implementation of the number of existing measures, some well conceptualised to respond to the objective of social inclusion has been far below the needs for years and the causes of such poor implementation have not been addressed e.g. pre-school benefits.
- Instead of more innovative/creative or tailor made approach to finding solutions to difficult situation faced by the poor children and Roma at local level, the analysis rather identified replication of the types of measures provided from the national level (e.g. population policy benefits) at the expense of no funding for some needed interventions.
- Community-based social services are absolutely underrepresented in pro poor initiatives at local level. These are delivered here and there, on ad-hoc basis, funded by donor funds with no initiatives for their mainstreaming and more system-wide provision.

In response to identified weaknesses in this document the following are the first set of recommendations for the actions to improve care and support to most socially excluded groups from the perspective of education:

A. **The Law on the Financial Support to Families with children needs to be changed, more efficient and aligned with legislation in education sector.** The recommendations refer to the instruments from the Law analysed this document:

- 1) ***Child allowance programme needs to improve.*** These are some of short and medium term recommendations to improve coverage, targeting and modernise the instrument based on the study consulted in this analysis: automatic inclusion of the families with children beneficiaries of financial social assistance with the provided evidence of regular attendance of the school; limiting the entitlement by the number of children (proposal 4), instead of limiting by birth order; redefining administrative procedure, primarily the assessment of the agricultural income, eliminating the cadastre income, with keeping the assets threshold for non-registered agricultural good; introduction of the OECD equivalency scale in calculating the income threshold and increasing of the threshold to extend the coverage of the children with child allowance; increase of the child allowance rate, and introduce different rates by the age of children up to 14 and older children; removing requirement of health insurance for receiving child allowance. Along with the legal changes, implementation and targeting of the child allowance can be improved by signing protocols of cooperation among municipal offices for child allowance and centres for social work in addressing education needs of vulnerable children, by providing information on the entitlement for child allowance in a user friendly way. Local self-governments where the share of vulnerable groups in total population is below national average should get supervision and support in targeting beneficiaries.
- 2) ***pre-school attendance costs for children without parental care and children with disabilities must be improved,*** and should include changing legal procedures to be in line with education objectives to improve coverage of these children. The changes should recognise Inter-sectoral Committees opinion about the child; enable direct access to the entitlement not conditional upon child allowance and not conditional upon enrolment into development or mainstreamed pre-school groups. Further activities should include design of guidelines or instructions/rulebook for pre-school institutions in using this entitlement and impose reporting/monitoring mechanism on the use of the entitlement to LSGs and pre-school institutions; raise awareness on the entitlement, and make information widely available; provide capacity building to the LSGs, pre-school institution staff.
- 3) ***subsidies for the pre-school costs for children for financially and socially deprived families*** need to be revisited, the following are proposals. Since the national level provides the key support measures to poor, it could be considered that the participation costs for children from poor families are nationally funded so to reduce burden from the local level and in such a way provide incentives for its better use. This recommendation is aligned with recommendations provided in the pre-school costing study⁴⁷. This might also lead to better monitoring and efficiency of the instrument; link local databases on child allowances and financial social assistance beneficiaries for better targeting of the children for this entitlement.

⁴⁷ Investing in Early Childhood Education in Serbia, Belgrade, September, 2012 UniCEF

- 4) **define local benefits that can supplement support to children from vulnerable groups provided by the national level** (scholarships to poor and Roma, excursions, meals, clothing etc.) and develop guide on the possible criteria for its implementation
 - 5) **promote development and implementation of services to back up and link to the financial transfers from the national level** - for fighting poverty among children from vulnerable groups the financial transfers are not sufficient, and they need to be backed up with services which can be preventive, enhancing parenting competences, outreach and support, etc. for supporting their prospects into education programme.
- B. CSWs should prioritise education needs of the vulnerable children within its interventions and within an active inclusion policy should support children beneficiaries of financial support in their schooling prospects.** Once the pre-school or school reports absence of children to CSW, procedure for opening a case should start within urgent procedure as every additional day out of the school has extremely negative consequences for a child and wider community. CSW should improve own records and keep updated data on the educational status of each child registered in the CSW. It is necessary to initiate case management procedures and beneficiary activation for each financial social assistance beneficiary, and child allowance recipient when school aged children are involved which should enable families and children to access adequate services and support available in the community. Ministry of Labor, Social Policy and Employment should make clear instructions on prioritizing education prospects of each child client of the CSW but also child reported by the school in the community. This pro-active approach would require also strengthening of institutional cooperation between the CSW, local social offices, the school and inter-sectoral committees. For financial assistance beneficiaries it would require developing by-law on active inclusion, pilot individual action plans, provide training for CSW professionals, and prepare a financial justification analysis for additional investments, if new recruitments in CSWs are required, since current caseload do not include beneficiaries of social financial support.
- C. Expanding the availability of community-based social services for supporting poor children both by facilitating investment decisions by local self-governments and use of coming donor programmes supporting social inclusion initiatives.** Social welfare system in its design offers numerous possibilities for linking measures and policies to support education of children from vulnerable groups through social services. These include case management as a focal point to identify needs and provide single entry system for provision of support, social policy planning, mechanism of commissioning and contracting, social providers working with children, minimum standards which enable mainstreaming of best practices, and all of these elements needs to be employed. It needs to be given more priority to children from socially excluded groups in further social planning. Also, the IPA project on integrated social services at local level, and related grants scheme to LSGs need to embrace this priority, develop new initiatives and mainstream best practices, and further develop capacities at local level for future use of grant scheme on social inclusion.

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