Report on the Implementation of the Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme in the process of accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union for 2018

Belgrade, February 2020

# LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

# REFORMS ADDRESSING CHALLENGES ON THE LABOUR DEMAND SIDE

## OBJECTIVE 1: PREVENTING HIGH INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT

Preventing a major spike in unemployment following the privatization of business entities wholly or partly owned by the state, including public enterprises, and the public sector reform process, is a top priority objective of active labour market policies on the labour demand side.

This objective will be pursued through the implementation of a set of timely preventive active labour market policy (ALMP) measures targeting the inclusion of: (1) workers who will be declared redundant in the final stage of the privatisation process, and (2) workers who will be declared redundant in the public sector reform process.

#### Measure 1.1: Implement a package of measures for workers who will be declared redundant in the process of finalising privatisation

Description of the implemented measure

The National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) for 2018 sets out a package of services for redundant workers which includes a set of activities to be undertaken both prior to and following the registration of these persons as unemployed. Unemployed persons from the category of redundant workers are prioritised for participation in active labour market policy (ALMP) measures. In line with the target of this measure, this Report only provides information on activities targeting potential redundant workers, i.e. before they are registered as unemployed with the National Employment Service (NES). The implementation of this measure was not funded from allocations for active labour market policy measures, considering that the target group are potentially redundant workers and are not yet on the NES unemployment register. As in the previous period, the NES staff continued to implement available measures, (e.g. active job-search trainings, entrepreneurship trainings, and similar).

During the course of 2018, the NES received 83 proposals for Redundancy Programmes from 60 employers (both in the final stage of privatisation, and in employer entities subject to the obligation of implementing the Programme in accordance with the Labour Law), for an expected 5,252 redundant workers. A total of 40 meetings was held with the management of 31 employer entities, while 978 workers from the “potentially redundant” category, in total, were informed about the NES’ services, i.e. active labour market policy measures. With the aim of preventing the potentially redundant workers from becoming unemployed, the NES branch offices collected information about the employers’ staffing needs through 138 on-site visits to 130 employers. As a result, these employers submitted 287 applications reporting the need for recruiting 1,342 workers.

#### In the process of informing potentially redundant workers about NES services and measures, a survey was conducted to establish their interest in participating in active labour market policy (ALMP) measures. Based on the interest expressed, the following measures were taken: (1) 288 one-on-one employment counselling sessions were conducted to explore the employment possibilities of potentially redundant workers, and decide on appropriate measures to be taken in each case. Potentially redundant workers were supplied with detailed information about the conditions and possibilities for employment, local labour market situation, and opportunities to participate in specific ALMP measures, in accordance with the needs assessment; (2) 22 persons participated in the active job-search training; (3) 53 persons completed the “Path to a Successful Entrepreneur” training; (4) 7 persons completed the “Psychological Support to Career Planning” training.

#### A total of 26,632 redundant workers (of which 14,384 women) registered with the NES unemployment register in 2018. A total of 12,191 unemployed persons from this group were treated with ALMP measures (of which 7,165 women), accounting for 7.87% of the total number of unemployed participants in the measures. Taking into account the IPA 2013 project support as well, a total of 12,632 redundant workers (of which 7,389 women) participated in ALMP measures, accounting for 8.16% of the total number of unemployed participants in these measures.

In 2018, the employment status of 1,556 redundant workers from 30 companies (privatised companies and companies for the vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, operating with state, i.e. social capital) was solved.

The budget planned for 2018, for Measures 1.1. and 1.2. amounted to RSD 2 billion (RSD 2,000,000,000.00) – from the Transition Fund, of which RSD 987,415,799.85 were spent in the reporting period.

#### Measure 1.2: Package of measures for workers who will be declared redundant in the public sector reform process

Description of the implemented measure

An employability assessment was made and individual employment plans were drafted for 219 individuals (119 women) declared redundant in the process of rightsizing the public sector in 2018. Forty-four unemployed from this category participated in ALMP measures.

In 2018, 12,632 redundant workers (7,389 women) were included in ALMP measures, accounting for 8.16% of the total number of unemployed included in the measures.[[1]](#footnote-1) I In the baseline year (2014), 8,488 persons from the observed category of unemployed were covered by ALMP measures.

The budget planned for 2018, for Measures 1.1. and 1.2. amounted to RSD 2 billion (RSD 2,000,000,000.00) – from the Transition Fund, of which RSD 987,415,799.85 were spent in the reporting period.

# REFORMS ADDRESSING CHALLENGES ON THE LABOUR SUPPLY SIDE

## OBJECTIVE 2: DECREASE THE OVERALL INACTIVITY RATE AND INCREASE THE EMPLOYMENT RATE

This objective envisages:

* General measures indispensable for decreasing the inactivity rate, as well as for preventing the further growth of the inactivity rage, and
* Creating targeted programmes for vulnerable groups: older workers (50–64), women, persons with disabilities, low-skilled and unskilled workers.

### GENERAL MEASURES

#### Measure 2.1: Strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation, in particular by introducing a system of integrated services in the areas of education, social protection, employment, and attending to youth, both in terms of preventing unemployment, as well as reducing the unemployment length of hard-to-place categories of the population

Description of the implemented measure

The multisectoral approach in designing employment policies in response to the situation, the needs, and opportunities inherent to the labour market and to the characteristics of the target groups, is reflected in the cooperation established within the NEAP Working Group, made up of representatives of relevant institutions, social partners and other key and influential stakeholders in the employment policy area, and in the activities of the local employment councils which bring together representatives of local structures. It is also reflected in the intensification of cooperation between NES branch offices and centres for social work. In fact, NES branch offices are continuously implementing activities aimed at establishing and fostering cooperation with expert staff of the centres for social work.

Under the cooperation protocols stipulated in the previous years between the NES and centres for social work, twenty NES branch offices held 312 meetings with representatives of the centres for social work in the period from January to December 2018, for the purpose of coordinating the activities between the two institutions, planning and implementing joint activities and sharing data.

A total of 12,355 unemployed social welfare recipients (6,202 women) participated in ALMP measures, accounting for a 7.98% share in the total number of unemployed that took part in the measures.

The average inactivity rate for the 15-64 age group stood at 32.2%[[2]](#footnote-2) in 2018, relative to 36.7 (38.3)%[[3]](#footnote-3) in the baseline year (2014). The average employment rate for the 15-64 age group amounted to 58.8%[[4]](#footnote-4) in 2018, relative to 50.7 (49.6) %[[5]](#footnote-5) in the baseline year (2014).

This measure was funded as part of the total amount spent for the implementation of ALMPs, and PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures.[[6]](#footnote-6)

#### Measure 2.2: The National Employment Service intensifies support to unemployment benefits recipients and monitors the job-searching process of this category of persons

Description of the implemented measure

With a view to supporting the timely, efficient and sustainable labour market integration of unemployment benefit recipients, the NES has included this group of unemployed in its active labour market policy (ALMP) measures, employment counselling methods and techniques, the employability assessment, and ALMP measures defined in the individual employment plans.

In 2018, 10,874 unemployment benefit recipients (6,353 women) participated in ALMP measures. The unemployed eligible for unemployment benefits can opt to receive a lump-sum payment for the remaining period of eligibility, for self-employment purposes. The objective is to increase the number of employed benefit recipients, by creating conditions for self-employment. The lump-sum unemployment benefit is disbursed for the remaining period in which the recipient is entitled to receive unemployment benefits according to the decision establishing their eligibility for unemployment benefits. From January to December 2018, 111 unemployed from the NES register availed themselves of this opportunities.

A total of 10,874 unemployment benefit recipients (6,353 women) participated in ALMP measures[[7]](#footnote-7) in 2018, relative to 9,861 unemployment benefit recipients in the baseline year (2014).

This measure was funded as part of the total amount spent for the implementation of ALMPs, and PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures.

#### Measure 2.3 Pilot the concept of social enterprises for the delivery of social care services at the local level

Description of the implemented measure

 The Law on Social Entrepreneurship has not yet been adopted, although the adoption process is under way, so we still cannot address the concept of social entrepreneurship with any degree of certainty.

#### Measure 2.4 Design packages of measures aimed at the activation and stimulation of employment of the long-term unemployed

Description of the implemented measure

The NEAP for 2018 envisages a package of services for unskilled, low-skilled, and long-term unemployed persons. Persons belonging to these groups (as hard-to-place) have priority for inclusion in active labour market policy measures. The package of services for these persons includes: (1) an individual employability assessment; (2) establishing an individual employment plan and a plan of the most adequate measures for activation and increasing the employability of the unskilled and long-term unemployed; (3) inclusion in active job-search measures (self-efficiency training for qualified, long-term unemployed persons as well as motivation and activation trainings for the unskilled and low-skilled); (4) inclusion in further education and training programmes (functional primary education for adults, a programme for acquiring practical skills for the unskilled, redundant workers, the long-term unemployed and other groups), public works and other.

A long-term unemployed person is any person who has spent longer than a year on the NES unemployment register seeking employment. The expected outcome of the implementation of the package of services for the long-term unemployed is a decline in the number of long-term unemployed on the NES register relative to their number in 2014, which was set at 507,074.

In 2018, 384,855 individual employment plans (including revised individual employment plans) were signed with long-term unemployed persons based on employability assessments. ALMP measures included 81,068 persons from the long-term unemployed group (45,093 women), accounting for 52.36% of the total number of unemployed included in the measures.

There were 372,259 registered unemployed persons on 31 December 2018 looking for a job for longer than 12 months [[8]](#footnote-8), showing a decline relative to 2014, when their number stood at 507,074.

This measure was funded as part of the total amount spent for the implementation of ALMPs, and PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures.

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#### Measure 2.5 Ensure a more proactive attitude of registered unemployed persons toward job search, by means of obligations stipulated in individual employment plans[[9]](#footnote-9)

Description of the implemented measure

Pursuant to the Law on Employment and Unemployment Benefits (RS Official Gazette No. 36/09, 88/10, 38/15, 113/117-as amended and 113/17), the NES and the unemployed person are required to establish an individual employment plan within 90 days from the date of registration of the unemployed at the latest, and to revise the plan according to labour market demand and the characteristics of the unemployed person at least once in six months.

The individual employment plan is the fundamental instrument in working with the unemployed and the basis for inclusion in active labour market policy measures. The individual employment plan identifies the occupations in which job matching services will be provided to the client, the actions that the client will be taking, and the measures they will be included in with a view to finding a job or increasing employability. At the same time, during the interview with the employment counsellor, the unemployed will be informed about their rights and obligations stemming from the Law.

A total of 818,533 individual employment plans (including revisions) were drafted in 2018. The NES regularly reports on the effects of this measure.

No amendments were made to the aforementioned regulation in 2018.

 The aforesaid activity is realised by the NES staff as part of their regular work, hence, it is not possible to quantify the funds spent, considering that these are part of the total current expenditures on salaries and wages of NES staff.

#### Measure 2.6 Develop the concept of seasonal jobs with the aim of activating the unemployed

Description of the implemented measure

The Law Streamlining Seasonal Hiring in Selected Sectors (RS Official Gazette No 50/18), was adopted on 28 June 2018, entered into force on 7 July 2018, and became applicable from 7 January 2019.

Pursuant to Article 5(5) of the Law Streamlining Seasonal Hiring in Selected Sectors, a Rulebook on the content of the seasonal workers’ employment certificates (RS Official Gazette No 67/18) was adopted that became applicable from 7 January 2020.

The Law Streamlining Seasonal Hiring in Selected Sectors and the Rulebook on the content of the seasonal workers’ employment certificates were adopted.

No funds are planned for this activity in the current expenditures framework.

### MEASURES FOR OLDER WORKERS (50–64)

#### Measure 2.7 Include older workers, especially high-skilled ones, in IT literacy training

Description of the implemented measure

The National Employment Action Plan for 2018 envisages the implementation of specialised IT skills trainings for the labour market (as part of the further education and training programme) covering 1,000 unemployed. The trainings were attended by 778 unemployed. Out of the total number of participants, 32 unemployed persons belonged to the 50+ group (4.11% of the total number of participants). Reference indicators’ baseline values used for monitoring progress are: increase in the employment rate of the older population (55–64) relative to the 35.9% rate registered in the baseline year (2014); 10% increase in the number of older workers included in ALMPs compared to 2014 (13,686); a 10% increase in the number of older workers included in further education programmes compared to 2014 (378); a decline in the 55+ unemployment rate relative to 2014 (11.9%).

The average employment rate for the 55–65 age group amounted to 46.5% in 2018.[[10]](#footnote-10) In the same year, 30,992 unemployed from the 50+ age group (14,818 women) were included in ALMP measures, which is a share of 20.02% in the total number of unemployed included in the measures.[[11]](#footnote-11) In the same year, 771 unemployed persons (461 women) from the 50+ group were included in further education and training programmes.[[12]](#footnote-12) The average unemployment rate of the 55–65 group was set at 8.7% in 2018.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Funded from the total amount of funds spent for the implementation of ALMPs, PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures.

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#### Measure 2.8 Design specific measures for older workers, i.e. packages of services aimed at their activation

Description of the implemented measure

The NEAP for 2018 did not envisage the implementation of a specific package of services for the unemployed 50+ population. However, the activation of the unemployed population in this group is supported through individual counselling work, a package of services for redundant workers, a package of services for unskilled, low-skilled and long-term unemployed, and a package of services for PWDs.

The NEAP for 2018 did not envisage a specific self-employment subsidy programmes targeting unemployed in the 50+ age group. However, the unemployed in the 50+ age group who were found eligible, could receive a self-employment subsidy through the relevant NES public competition. The self-employment subsidy amounted to RSD 180,000, or RSD 200,000 for unemployed who also belong to the group of redundant workers, or RSD 220,000 for unemployed PWDs.

In 2018, 1,127 persons from the 50+ group (477 women) were included in the self-employment subsidy programme, and if taking into account the applicants for the self-employment subsidy supported through the IPA 2013 programme cycle, a total of 1,206 persons (502 women).

No specific self-employment subsidy programmes were designed targeting older workers.

Funded from the total amount spent for the implementation of ALMPS, PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures, and from the IPA 2013 programme cycle funds.

### MEASURES FOR WOMEN

#### Measures 2.9 Develop specific measures for supporting the employment of women, especially single mothers

Description of the implemented measure

The hard-to-place category and the highly vulnerable unemployed are prioritised for inclusion in ALMPs. Accordingly, special attention is paid to the activation of and participation in ALMPs by unemployed women, in particular those facing multiple employment barriers.

In 2018, the following highly vulnerable groups of women were included in ALMPs: 2,994 single mothers, 74 victims of domestic violence, 2 victims of human trafficking, 6,202 women recipients of social welfare and 2,781 Roma women.

The average activity rate of women (15+) stood at 46.7%[[14]](#footnote-14) in 2018, less than the baseline value of 53.8% in 2014.

Funded from the total amount earmarked for the implementation of ALMPS, vocational rehabilitation measures and promoting PWD employment, and IPA 2013 programme cycle funds.

#### Measure 2.10. Stimulate local-level initiatives contributing to job creation for unemployed women with no/very low qualifications

Description of the implemented measure

 Continued support to local government units (LGU) for creating and implementing local employment action plans (LEAP) resulted in the submission of 121 applications for co-funding ALMPs measures envisaged in the LEAPs for 2018. Of these, 115 applications were granted by decision of the line minister for employment affairs of 7 May 2018. The parties signed 108 agreements regulating mutual rights and obligation in the implementation of ALMPs envisaged in LEAPs. Under these agreements, 5,783 unemployed persons were included in ALMPs, which is 88.71% of the projected coverage. Furthermore, the NES also stipulated 54 agreements on technical assistance in the implementation of LEAPs with the LGs. A total of 2,160 unemployed persons participated in ALMPs through this modality.

 With a view to the further improvement of cooperation with LGs, six (6) regional meetings were organized with representatives of local employment councils, i.e. representatives of the LGs and NES branch offices. The LEAP for 2018 was presented at these meetings, (with special focus on the ALMPs envisaged in the LEAPs co-funding programme), experiences were shared about the situation and needs of the local labour market and the implementation of the LEAPs, and proposals were discussed for improving the ALMPs implemented at national and local level as part of the process of drafting the NEAP for 2019.

 From 1 January to 31 December 2018, the local government units allocated RSD 928,087,912.88 for the implementation of active labour market policies envisaged in the local employment action plans (co-funding and technical assistance) under the agreements regulating mutual rights and obligations in this process.

The average employment rate of women in the 15+ age group was set at 40.3%[[15]](#footnote-15) in 2018, relative to the average employment rate of women of 43.7% in 2014. In 2018, 83,210 unemployed women participated in ALMPs, a total of 84,153 unemployed women if taking into account the funds allocated to increasing employability and boosting employment from the IPA 2013 programme cycle[[16]](#footnote-16), an increase relative to 2014 when 58,417 women were included in active labour market policy measure. A total of 2,329 unemployed women was included in the self-employment subsidy programme[[17]](#footnote-17) in 2018, an increase compared to 2014 when 363 women participated in self-employment programmes.

Funded from the total amount spent for the implementation of ALMPS, PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures, and from the IPA 2013 programme cycle funds.

**Measure 2.11 Develop women’s entrepreneurship promotion programmes**

Description of the implemented measure

The line minister for innovation and technological development granted 168 grants to women entrepreneurs through the Support Programme for the Development and Promotion of Women’s Innovative Entrepreneurship for 2018, 118 women entrepreneurs used mentor services, while 545 women entrepreneurs and 11 teams participated in trainings. In addition, 1,598 participants completed online trainings, 15 conferences and round tables were held with 1,417 women participants, and 3 study visits were organized for the grantees as well as two contests for innovative entrepreneurial ideas. The support programmes for the development of female innovative entrepreneurship were developed with the help of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

According to data in the National Gender Equality Strategy 2016–2020, in the business sector, men still dominate in executive positions and in SME owner’s/manager’s role (77.9%), while women are predominantly store owners (34,3%) and medium-sized company owners (22.1%).

The implementation of the **Women’s** **Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme** at national and local level, as well as through the **development of female innovative entrepreneurship** at local level, is contributing to raising awareness about the importance of female innovative entrepreneurship, and the support the Government of Serbia (GoS) provides for female innovative entrepreneurship through various programmes, enabling women to play a vital role on the labour market by expanding their business, hiring more employees, increasing their revenues and achieving income sustainability.

The priority of the support programme for the development and promotion of women’s innovative entrepreneurship is to support women’s innovative entrepreneurship, significantly boost the development of social awareness, create the conditions for improving the business climate, and increase the number of women in executive positions, or in the role of company founders, owners or shareholders, or sole proprietors.

The overall goal of this programme is the structural improvement of innovative entrepreneurship among women through the promotion and affirmation of female innovative entrepreneurship, direct support to the implementation of entrepreneurial ideas and the development of women’s entrepreneurial abilities and capacities.

 In its first cycle, implemented in 2018, the Programme supported the implementation of 17 projects with a total of RSD 100,000,000, granted to the following local governments: the City of Zaječar, City of Novi Sad, City of Belgrade – Youth Office, City of Leskovac, City of Loznica, Municipality of Sremski Karlovci, Municipality of Vladičin Han, Municipality of Topola, Municipality of Kosjerić and Municipality of Mali Zvornik, as well as to partnerships of local governments and organizations: City of Novi Sad and Student Association of the Novi Sad University, City of Novi Sad and The Best Fest association, the City of Novi Sad and the Citizens’ Association “Factory of Knowledge and Preservation“, the City of Belgrade and Interlink Business Ltd., City of Belgrade and Domino Ltd., City of Kikinda and the “Pannonia Initiative”, and Municipality of Varvarin and the Calliope Women’s Association from Brus.

Speaking about figures, over 200 women were granted material support; over 2,500 women attended various trainings, education programmes and online courses; and 10 conferences, workshops, trade shows and round tables were held on the topic of women's innovative entrepreneurship in cities across Serbia.

### MEASURES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

#### Measure 2.12 Design new training programmes for persons with disabilities

Description of the implemented measure

A Catalogue of Trainings for the Labour Market was developed for persons with disabilities (PWDs), envisaging the implementation of 84 training courses for 550 unemployed PWDs.

In 2018, the implementation of 59 trainings started, with the participation of 385 unemployed PWDs (based on the plan for 2018), while 7 trainings for 224 unemployed PWDs were completed (under the plan for 2017). A total of 609 unemployed PWDs participated in trainings for the labour market.

As regards the education level of the participants, 60 unemployed PWDs were unskilled or low-skilled (9.85%), 468 unemployed PWDs had a secondary education degree (76.85%), 43 unemployed PWDs had a three-year post-secondary or higher education degree (7.06%) and 38 unemployed PWDs had, as a minimum, a four-year higher education degree (6.24%).

As regards the age structure, 106 unemployed PWDs participating in the trainings is up to 30 years of age (17.41%), while 166 PWDs is over 50 years of age (27.26%). Of the total number of participants, 379 unemployed persons with disabilities are women (62.23%), while 405 belongs to the long-term unemployed group (66.50%).

The labour market training programmes are prepared on the basis of the findings of an annual survey of employers conducted by the NES.

Of the planned RSD 550 million, a total of RSD 451,917,883.90 was spent for PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion under Measure 2.12. and 2.13. of the planned RSD 550 million, from the Budget Fund for Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

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#### Measure 2.13 Design specific programmes for promoting employment of persons with disabilities in the open market

Description of the implemented measure

The package of services for persons with disabilities entails employment counselling and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in active labour market policy measures under general conditions (in any case, whenever possible, in accordance with the assessment of the National Employment Service experts) and under accommodated programmes (in line with the individual employment plan and work capacity assessment). The package of services for persons with disabilities includes: (1) an assessment of career opportunities, and employability assessment; (2) the development of an individual employment plan and a plan of the most suitable measures for the activation of and for increasing the employability of persons with disabilities; (3) job matching services or inclusion in active labour market policy measures intended to contribute to increasing employability and employment.

In 2018, 10,018 persons with disabilities (4,494 women) participated in ALMP measures, accounting for 6.55% of the total number of participants in these measures. A total of 6,868 unemployed PWDs (2,938 women) was included in active job-search trainings, 653 unemployed PWDs (403 women) in further education and training programmes, 901 unemployed PWDs (415 women) in subsidized employment programmes, and 1,596 unemployed PWDs in public works programmes, of which 738 were women.

When taking into account the support provided through the IPA 2013 project, 10,034 unemployed PWDs (4,499 women) were included in ALMP measures, accounting for 6.48% of the total number of unemployed participants in these measures. An additional 14 PWDs (4 women) were included in subsidized employment programmes.

No additional programmes were designed in 2018 for promoting PWD employment. As regards participation in existing programmes, in the same year 10,034 unemployed PWDs (4,499 women) were included in ALMP measures[[18]](#footnote-18), an increase relative to the baseline year (2014), when the number of unemployed PWDs included in these measures stood at 6,567. In 2018, 6,573 unemployed PWDs from the NES register were placed in jobs, of which 2,814 women[[19]](#footnote-19), more than in the baseline year (2014), when there were 4,132 placements of PWDs.

Out of the total funds disbursed from the Budget Fund for Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities (RSD 451,917,883.90), RSD 413,394,951.24 were spent on promoting the employment of PWDs.

### MEASURES FOR LOW-SKILLED AND UNSKILLED PERSONS

#### Measure 2.14 Design public works programmes tailored to this group

Description of the implemented measure

In 2018, no public works programmes were implemented specifically targeting the placement of unskilled or low-skilled unemployed. However, considering these unemployed are hard to place, (facing multiple employment barriers, e.g. concurrently recipients of social welfare and similar), they were prioritised for inclusion in the general public works programme, with the aim of preserving and improving their employability. In fact, in the NEAP for 2018, this group of unemployed was recognised as one of the five (5) hard-to-place groups for which a minimum quota of 70% is reserved in the total number of participants in public works.

The public works programme was revised in 2018 to reduce the number of groups of hard-to place individuals to be placed in public works programmes under the minimum 70% quota. In 2018, 3,720 unemployed from this group were placed in public works programmes, of which 1,342 women[[20]](#footnote-20), a significant increase relative to 391 unemployed persons, including low-skilled unemployed persons placed in public works programmes in 2014.

The ALMP measures were funded from the ALMP budget with RSD 336,341,309.99, while vocational rehabilitation and promotion of employment of persons with disabilities was funded from the eponymous Budget Fund with RSD 207,244,996.80.

**Measure 2.15. Improve active labour market policy measures and programmes targeting this group**

Description of the implemented measure

The following programmes and measures were implemented in 2018, targeting low-skilled and unskilled workers under the NEAP for 2018:

**Package of services for unskilled, low-skilled and long-term unemployed persons –** a set of ALMP services and measures was designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of unskilled, low-skilled and long-term unemployed persons, and to prevent their exclusion from the labour market, among other, through the functional adult primary education programme, practical skills programmes, trainings, subsidized employment programme, public works programme, and other.

**Functional adult primary education programme** – to acquire a primary education degree pursuant to the law, along with competences for performing simple tasks. The programme targets unemployed persons with no primary education.

 **Practical skills training programme for unskilled workers,** redundant workers and long-term unemployed who have been on the unemployment register for more than 18 months – entails practical skills training on the job, under an employment contract with a private sector employer.

 The programme targets persons with no secondary education degree, or with no skills, and persons who previously completed the functional primary education programme for adults.

 The employer stipulates a fixed-term employment contract with the unemployed person and is entitled to reimbursement of the salary costs for the programme participants for a period of 3 months. The employer is required to retain the person in employment for an additional 3 months after the end of the programme. In case the employer stipulates an open-end employment contract with the unemployed person at the beginning of the programme, or before the expiry of the three-month period, i.e. before the end of the programme, the employer will be reimbursed for the employee’s salary for an additional three months, up to a total of 6 months. The employer is required to retain the employee in employment for a minimum of 6 months after the subsidized employment period has expired.

In 2018, 39,905 unskilled and low-skilled unemployed persons (19,811 women) were included in ALMP measures, accounting for a share of 25.77% in the total number of unemployed included in the measures.[[21]](#footnote-21) In 2014, 28,318 unemployed persons from this group were included in ALMP measures.

In 2014, 28,318 persons from the unskilled and low-skilled group were included in active labour market policy measures.

The biggest share of persons was included in the active job-search training (15,668), of which 13,832 in motivation and activation trainings, 7,633 persons in job fairs, 1,723 persons in the functional primary education programme for adults and 391 persons in the public works programme.

## OBJECTIVE 2.1: INCREASE ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET FOR THE ROMA

#### The inclusion of the Roma in the formal labour market is intrinsically linked to their emancipation in terms of their access to education and housing, and their participation in the public life, consequently it requires not only systematic work, but also significant resources. The effects of the measures implemented in 2018 are described further down in this report.

#### Measure 2.1.1 Preventive measures for the young Roma with a view to ensuring better access to education, reducing the drop-out rate, preventing exclusion from the labour market and social exclusion – pilot them through projects, evaluate and introduce new methods and instruments

Description of the implemented measure

The expansion of the network of teacher assistants is implemented through the IPA II programme – sector budget support. In the school year 2017/18 and 2018/19, 50 new assistants were hired in primary schools. In total, 261 teacher assistants were hired in preschools and primary schools in Serbia.

A total of 1,969 and 2,220 Roma students enrolled in secondary education in the 2017/18 school year, and the 2018/19 school year, respectively.

In the 2018/19 school year, 547 scholarships were granted to Roma secondary school students, оf which 60% to Roma girls.

In the 2017/18 academic year, 154 Roma students enrolled in higher education through the Affirmative Action Programme (71 men, 83 women).

The Training in Early Detection of Students at Risk of Drop-out and Drop-out Prevention was added to the List of Accredited Trainings in the Public Interest of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD). The target group are representatives of 50 selected schools, in total, 225 participants were included in the trainings.

The Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) project, implemented by GIZ, aims to improve the position of youth in the labour market, while at the same time establishing and strengthening local employment initiatives targeting youth in the 15–35 age group, as well as vulnerable youths. In 2018, 12,220 youth participated in the measures (career guidance trainings, active job-search trainings, student entrepreneurship trainings, and labour market skills trainings/vocational trainings), of which 1,467 Roma youth and 349 returnees under the Readmission Agreement. Work-based trainings included 1,252 youth, among which, 265 members of the Roma ethnic minority and returnees. As a result, 1,090 youth were placed in employment, of which 112 members of the Roma minority.

An initiative was launched by the Coordination Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Roma Social Inclusion Strategy 2016-2025, in cooperation with the Roma National Minority Council, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, with the support of the NES, for the inclusion of young Roma graduates from colleges and universities into a work experience placement programme which entailed gaining practical working experience in state and local government administrations. Upon receiving a list of Roma youth interested in completing a work experience placement programme in the public sector (local governments), contact was made with 26 members of the Roma population.

In 2018, 6,175 unemployed Roma (2,781 women) were included in active labour market policy measures, accounting for a share of 3.99% in the total number of unemployed included in the measures.[[22]](#footnote-22) A total of 3,552 unemployed Roma was included in active labour market policy measures in 2014.

Funded from the total amount spent for the implementation of active labour market policy measures and PWD vocational rehabilitation measures and employment promotion.

#### Measure 2.1.2 Intensify activities aimed at increasing the motivation for labour market inclusion of the unemployed Roma, especially financial social assistance recipients, and strengthen the cooperation with relevant civil society organisations

Description of the implemented measure

Considering that unskilled or low-skilled workers account for 89.77% of the total number of Roma (men and women) registered on the NES unemployment register (as at 31 December 2018), 1,644 Roma (766 Roma women) were included in motivation and activation trainings for unskilled or low-skilled persons. Also, their individual employment plans were revised regularly.

Pursuant to the Law on Employment and Unemployment Benefits (RS Official Gazette No 36/09, 88/10, 38/15, 113/17-as amended, and 113/17, hereinafter: the Law), the NES and the unemployed client define an individual employment plan (IEP) at the latest within 90 days from the date of entry of the unemployed on the NES register, and the IEP is revised in line with the labour market needs and the characteristics of the unemployed persons every six months as a minimum. The individual employment plan is the basic instrument in working with the unemployed and the basis for the inclusion of the unemployed in active labour market policy measures. The individual employment plan defines the occupations in which job matching services will be provided to the client, the actions the client will take and the measures in which he/she will be included with a view to finding employment or increasing employability. Concurrently, during the interview with their counsellor, the unemployed persons are informed about their rights and obligations, pursuant to the Law.

Furthermore, a significant number of Roma was informed about the rights and obligations stemming from the Law, as part of the activity of mobile teams established for the areas of 50 local governments (IPA 2012-20, IPA 2013-20, IPA 2016-10), consisting of, among other, a mandatory NES member.

In the period from 1 January – 30 October 2018, employability assessments were conducted and individual employment plans were developed (including revisions) for 23,773 Roma (11,087 Roma women), and 108 Roma (55 Roma women) used information and counselling services about career development opportunities.

From 1 November 2018 to 30 April 2019 employability assessments were conducted and individual employment plans were developed (including revisions) for 16,956 Roma (7,982 Roma women), while 140 Roma (56 Roma women) used information and counselling services about career development opportunities.

In 2018, 10,874 unemployment benefits recipients (6,353 women) was included in ALMP measures.[[23]](#footnote-23) The baseline value in 2014 stood at 2,561 users.

Funded from the total amount spent for the implementation of active labour market policy measures and PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measure.

#### Measure 2.1.3 Develop Roma entrepreneurship and cooperatives, in particular for Roma women

 Description of the implemented measure

The NES issued an invitation for applications from unemployed Roma for the self-employment subsidy scheme. The development of Roma entrepreneurship was also supported through the regular NES invitation for applications for the self-employment subsidy under the programme of co-funding active labour market policy measures envisaged in the LEAPs, and through the IPA 2013 programme cycle.

In 2018, self-employment subsidies were granted to a total of 156 Roma minority members (64 women)[[24]](#footnote-24), a significant increase relative to 54 in 2014[[25]](#footnote-25).

Funded from the total amount spent for the implementation of active labour market policy measures, PWD vocational rehabilitation and employment promotion measures, local government funds and funds from the IPA 2013 programme cycle.

#### Measure 2.1.4 Promote good Roma employment practices

Description of the implemented measure

The Youth Employment Promotion Project (YEP) is implemented by GIZ and aims to improve the position of youth in the labour market, and establish and strengthen local initiatives for the employment of youth aged 15-35, as well as youth from vulnerable groups. In 2018, 12,220 youths participated in the measures envisaged under this project (career management training, active job-search training, student entrepreneurship and labour market skills trainings/vocational trainings), of which 1,467 Roma youths and 349 returnees under the Readmission Agreement. A total of 1,252 youths, of which 265 Roma and returnees participated in the vocational trainings. As a result of these measures, 1,090 youths were placed in employment, of which 112 Roma youths.

An initiative for the inclusion of young Roma college and university graduates in the Work Placement Programme launched by the Coordination Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Roma Social Inclusion Strategy 2016–2025 was implemented in cooperation with the Roma National Minority Council, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, with the support of the NES. This Programme envisaged work placements in public and local administration. Upon receiving a list of Roma youths interested in gaining work experience in the public sector (local government) contact was made with 26 Roma youth.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2: STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

Strengthening the role of employment policies entails the implementation of the following measures: measures to integrate employment policy goals in the overall economic development strategy, measures to increase allocations for active labour market policies, measures to reform the National Employment Service, as well as measures to improve the evidence-based employment policy-making system.

**MEASURES TO INTEGRATE POLICY EMPLOYMENT GOALS IN THE OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**Measure 2.2.1 Actively participate in the development of a comprehensive document containing the set strategic goals and lines of action in all important areas of economic development**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the next period (2019–2020).

**Measure 2.2.2 Revise the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 in line with the country’s long-term economic strategy, taking into account the entire set of instruments and interventions available**

Description of the implemented measure

The review process was completed in 2017. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the European Commission, a performance assessment of the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 was implemented for the first five years of implementation of this Strategy, for the purpose of determining the further course of action for the remaining period of the Strategy, until 2020.

The employment policy development activities until 2020 will focus on supporting the creation of new jobs, increasing employability and supporting structural adjustment, in parallel with the ongoing activities aimed at further developing and strengthening social dialogue and sectoral cooperation, the decentralization of employment policies, boosting youth employment and employability, providing support for the reintegration of redundant workers in the labour market, and increasing the participation of women in the labour market.

An impact assessment was made of the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, for the first five years of implementation for the purpose of determining the further course of action for the remaining period until 2020.

**Measure 2.2.3 Establish an employment council at the Government level, which will debate the issues of designing and implementing the employment policy**

Description of the implemented measure

A National Employment Council was established in 2019. Detailed information will be presented in the next report.

**MEASURE TO INCREASE ALLOCATIONS FOR ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

**Measure 2.2.4 Implement the recommendations from the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020 seeking an increase of the funds allocated for ALMPs**

Description of the implemented measure

Starting 2015, the allocations for active employment policies from the budget of the Republic of Serbia were maintained at a stable level. Relative to 2017, the amount of available funding for the implementation of active employment policies was increased in 2018 (from RSD 2,800,000,000 to RSD 3,650,000,000), while the amount for the implementation of vocational rehabilitation and promotion of employment of PWDs remained at the same level as in 2017 (RSD 550,000,000).

In 2018, allocations for active employment policies (including allocations for improving the employability and promoting the employment of persons with disabilities) stood at 0.08% of GDP.[[26]](#footnote-26) In 2014, allocations for active employment policies stood at 0.015% of GDP.

**MEASURES TO REFORM THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

**Measure 2.2.5 Improve the work of NES employment counsellors by introducing an internal certification system**

Description of the implemented measure

This measure has been fully realized. The internal certification system developed for NES employment counsellors aims to improve the quality of management of individual cases of active job-seekers. The certification areas are as follows: legal and strategic operations framework, working with employers, working with job seekers, working in the NES IT system. The internal certification test is passed if the employee scored a minimum of 80% correct answers in each of the four areas. A plan for acquiring the Internal Certification was agreed with the employees who failed to meet the required criteria.

The Law on Employment and Unemployment Benefits (RS Official Gazette No 36/09, 88/10, 38/15, 113/17 – as amended, and 113/17) has introduced the obligation for the NES to ensure and organize induction trainings, in-service professional skills development and enhancement, as well as tests of the professional competence of NES staff. The Rulebook Amending the Rulebook on NES Staff’s Professional Skills Development and Enhancement and Induction lays down the obligation of employment counsellors and employment counsellors for PWDs to acquire certification.

At the meeting held on 14 January 2019 in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (as part of the process of optimization of the public administration in the employment sector) it was agreed that the 2018 Indicator should be modified so as to read: “85% of the total number of employment counsellors and employment counsellors for PWDs certified” (maintaining the indicator at a minimum of 85% of staff certified, due to the high fluctuation of employees in these positions).

By the end of 2018, 550 employment counsellors/employment counsellors for persons with disabilities acquired their certification, which is 88.1% of the total number.[[27]](#footnote-27)

**Measure 2.2.6 Enhance the collection of information about vacancies**

Description of the implemented measure

The purpose of collecting information on vacancies is to increase the number of vacancies that are notified to the NES by employers seeking job-matching services, to fulfil the staffing needs of employers, to increase the number of job-seekers referred to employers who notify vacancies. The purpose of visiting employers is to ensure the notification of vacancies to the NES so that the firms with vacancies are matched with the unemployed on the register, surveying employers’ future staffing needs, establishing cooperation with newly established employers, as well as those who do not contact the NES to request job-matching services, and to disseminate information about NES-led active employment policy measures services targeting the employment of the hard-to-place individuals.

In 2018, 88,752 vacancies (128.63% of the target) were reported to the NES by employers seeking job-matching services to fulfil their staffing needs.

In the same year, the NES made 27,184 visits to employers, an increase relative to 25,331 visits in 2014.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**Measure 2.2.7 Intensify employment counsellor’s work with active job seekers**

Description of the implemented measure

The NES Work Programme for 2018 envisaged a total of 811,660 individual interviews with the aim of disseminating information and providing counselling services to job-seekers (information about their rights and obligations, employment requirements and opportunities, active job-search counselling and similar), individual employability assessments and individual employment plans.

In 2018, 963,367 individual interviews were conducted, which is 118.69% of the target value.

The standard deviation of the mean value of the employment counsellors' workload among the NES branch offices stood at 252 at the end of December 2018, while their average workload stood at 885.[[29]](#footnote-29) The standard deviation of the average workload by branch office stood at 381 in the base year (2015).

**Measure 2.2.8 Improve the process of profiling unemployed persons**

Description of the implemented measure

An employability assessment is an activity designed to analyse the compatibility of a job-seeker’s characteristics, relevant for employment, with labour market requirements, and is the basis for the Individual Employment Plan.

The Work Programme for 2018 envisages the drafting of 676,390 individual employment plans, which are the basic tools for working with job-seekers and for integrating them in active employment policy measures.

In 2018, 818,533 individual employment plans were developed on the basis of employability assessments (including revisions of individual employment plans), i.e. 121.01% оf the target number.

The tender for the selection of a consulting company (to prepare an Action Plan for Monitoring, Evaluating and Redesigning ALMPs and Profiling the Unemployed) was not implemented in 2018.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE EVIDENCE-BASED EMPLOYMENT POLICY-MAKING SYSTEM**

**Measure 2.2.9 In the coming period, the following should be made mandatory: systematic use of *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations of programmes in the area of employment; use of evaluation results as the basis for the development of the National Employment Action Plan and budget planning, as well as local employment plans**

Description of the implemented measure

In 2018, an analysis of the LEAPs for 2018 was prepared under the Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) project implemented by the GIZ. In addition, a Comparative Report on Integrated Case Management in the Western Balkan Countries was prepared under the Promoting Inclusive Labour Market Solutions in the Western Balkans Project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ILO, with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). With the support of UN Women, an analysis was prepared on the share of women participating in ALMP measures as well as an assessment of the funds spent for this purpose in the period from 2015 to 2017.

Under the Education to Employment (E2E) project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), support was provided for the development of the youth employment and employability thematic focus, with the aim of improving monitoring and evaluation of policies targeting youth employment and employability. Selected key indicators were adopted under the Third National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction of the Government of the Republic of Serbia[[31]](#footnote-31).

**Measure 2.2.10 Improve the design and effects of active labour market policy measures through evidence-based actions**

Description of the implemented measure

The self-employment subsidy, the subsidized employment scheme for the hard-to-place group and the public works programme were all modified – in terms of the groups prioritized or exclusively targeted for participation – the work placement programme was also modified (to include the judiciary sector), relaxing the employers’ obligation to employ the participants in the training programme at the employers’ request (for a minimum 6-month period).

New measures were introduced in the further education and training segment: practical skills training for the unskilled, redundant, and long-term unemployed who are on the NES unemployment register for longer than 18 months; specialist IT trainings tailored to labour market needs and trainings of employees for the needs employers.

Five ALMP measures were modified, and three new ALMP measures introduced.[[32]](#footnote-32)

**OBJECTIVE 3: REDUCE LABOUR MARKET DUALISM**

The labour market segmentation in Serbia is primarily reflected in the dichotomy between private and public sector employment (working conditions, job security, salaries, and similar), as well as formal and informal sector employment. Furthermore, significant differences were identified in regional employment. In line with the labour market segmentation problems identified, the following measures were introduced: measures to reduce the difference between employment levels in the private and public sectors, measures to curb employment in the informal economy, measures to reduce regional disparities and measures to contribute to reducing structural unemployment.

**MEASURES TO REDUCE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR**

**Measure 3.1 Assess the existing legal provisions that reduce the attractiveness of work in the private sector and propose measures for improving them**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed until 2020. In the meantime, consultations will be held with a view to possibly revising this measure.

**Measure 3.2 Enhance compliance with the legislation governing employment relationship through efficient and effective inspection**

Description of the implemented measure

In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018, the Labour Inspectorate conducted a total of 70,122 inspections in the field of employment relations and occupational safety and health (OSH). The Labour Inspectorate adopted a total of 10,644 decisions to issue administrative orders for correcting violations, orders on the basis of 4,607 inspection reports on the correction of identified violations, as well as 823 decisions to ban work on the inspected site. Concurrently, labour inspectors submitted 6,538 motions for filing infringement proceedings, and filed 40 criminal charges against responsible entities. In 15,667, i.e. 22.9%, of the 52,655 site inspections conducted in total, the labour inspectorate found labour infractions, in other words, irregularities related to the application of labour and employment legislation. The foregoing data confirm that Measure 3.2 has been implemented.

**MEASURES TO CURB WORK IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

**Measure 3.3 Develop a concept of reducing the tax burden for minimum-wage earners**

Description of the implemented measure

The Government of Serbia (GoS) has adopted the Serbian Tax Administration (STA) Transformation Programme Action Plan for the period from 2018 to 2023 (hereinafter: Action Plan), by Decision 05 No: 021-12037/2017 of 5 December 2017, and the Decision on Core and Non-Core Activities of the Tax Administration, according to which the Tax Administration will focus on its core taxation activities, and the first phase of consolidation of its organizational units.

In 2018, activities related to the implementation of the Tax Administration Transformation Programme (TATP) 2015–2020 and the Transformation Programme Action Plan 2018–2023 continued. In parallel, action was taken to prepare for the activation of the World Bank loan for the modernization of the Tax Administration’s business processes and ICT system.

In 2018, consulting services were procured for the separation of core and non-core activities of the Tax Administration. Consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting d.o.o. Beograd prepared a Report and Plan for the Separation of Functions, including a roadmap with specific activities that the Tax Administration can implement, along with a schedule. Accordingly, preparations were made for the implementation of the activities under the Transformation Programme Action Plan related to the separation of non-core activities and the functioning of a new organizational structure which entails a new business network of 37 branch offices across the country and a Large Taxpayers Office (LTO) as a separate organizational unit. The new organizational structure was scheduled to become operational on 1 July 2019, and entailed a new organizational network which was downsized from 78 to 37 branch offices across the country, and the establishment of the LTO as a separate organizational unit, while separated activities will be covered in 75 locations. The tax control and collection function, as the core function, is thus compacted in 37 locations, which is a pre-requisite for increasing tax inspection and collection efficiency. This is the first phase of the reorganization of the STA structure, which envisages the further rightsizing of these functions to 8–14 locations. Activities related to human resources, material resources, ICT, providing tax assistance to taxpayers and tax accounting will be centralized, and distributed across the territory in line with the organizational structure of core and non-core activities.

**Measure 3.4 Reorganise the tax administration with a view to more efficient oversight**

Description of the implemented measure

The following activities were undertaken in 2018 to strengthen the STA oversight function:

* Reorganization of tax audit (inspection) activities, based on an efficient risk assessment and evaluation. To that effect, the Operational Risk Department was staffed with qualified personnel, both inspectors and ICT experts, to support operational activities.
* Centralization of on-site tax audits through the development of an Annual Plan of Tax Audits, according to which this activity will take up 80% of the total effective working time of inspectors at the STA Head Office, and 20% of the total effective working time of tax inspectors at branch offices.
* Improving the quality of tax audits and standardization of practices, by developing guidelines and instructions that were observed in the implementation of each operational plan,
* Materials were developed to improve tax audits, specifically: tools for executives, audit standards and performance assessment of audits,
* 50 newly hired tax inspectors underwent trainings in auditing high-risk industries, by type of tax, and in the application of the law (Law on Tax Procedure and Tax Administration, VAT Law, Corporate Income Tax Law).

 The following steps are planned:

* Considering that intake of public revenues and carrying out tax audits are among the key tasks of the Tax Administration, the number of tax inspectors should be increased, in other words, new tax inspectors must be hired because of the high loss of staff since 2017, both due to natural causes (retirement) and other reasons (transfer to other STA organizational units, to executive positions, and similar).
* Securing funds for the procurement of laptops for all inspectors.
* Securing funds for the procurement of new vehicles, because of the distance between the new “centralized” branch offices and “annexed” branch offices.

**Measure 3.5 Enhance the operation of the Labour Inspectorate**

Description of the implemented measure

The activities of the Labour Inspectorate on minimizing undeclared work focus on checking compliance with the Law regulating the legal construct of the “contract of employment”, as well as on identifying factual employment.

With a view to curbing undeclared work, the Labour Inspectorate, and its departments/sections in the district organizational units in the city of Belgrade, conducted on-site inspections in accordance with the activity plan and priorities, which entails both regular inspections of its own motion, and enhanced inspections in specific sectors, in parts of, or in the entire territory of Serbia. Enhanced inspection oversight activities were performed not only in daytime, but also at night, in the early morning hours, as well as in the weekend.

In the course of its inspection oversight activities in 2018, the Labour Inspectorate detected a total of 17,026 undeclared workers. Following visits by inspectors, employers stipulated employment contracts with 13.869 undeclared workers. Thus, 82% of the total number workers who were found to be undeclared signed employment contracts with the employer as a result of the inspection oversight activity in 2018, which means that the measure was almost fully implemented.

**MEASURES TO REDUCE REGIONAL DISPARITIES**

**Measure 3.6 Develop concrete measures through local employment action plans in response to local labour market needs and evaluation of the measures implemented**

Description of the implemented measure

The support to local governments (LGs) in designing and implementing LEAPs continued, and, as a result, 121 applications for co-funding ALMP measures envisaged under the LEAPs in 2018 were approved from 7 May 2018 onwards. A total of 108 agreements was implemented regulating mutual rights and obligations in the implementation of ALMPs envisaged under LEAPs. As a result, 5,782 unemployed were included in ALMPs, reaching 88.71% of the projected coverage. In addition, the NES stipulated 54 technical cooperation agreements with LGs for the implementation of LEAPs, so an additional 2,160 unemployed were included in ALMPs through this modality.

For the purpose of further improving cooperation with local governments (LGs), six (6) regional meetings were organized with LECs, i.e. representatives of the local governments and NES branch offices. The LEAP for 2018 was presented on this occasion (with special focus on ALMP measures included in the LEAPs’ co-funding programme), and experiences were shared about the local labour market situation and needs and the implementation of LEAPs, and proposals were reviewed for the improvement of LEAPs realized at national and local level as part of the preparation of the NEAP for 2019.

 The highest employment rate (15+) registered in 2018 was in the Belgrade Region (50.1%), and the lowest in the Eastern and South Serbia region, at 44.1% (6 percentage points). The unemployment rate (15+) in 2018 was at its lowest in the regions of Vojvodina (10.5 %) and Belgrade (10.9%). The unemployment rate in the Šumadija and West Serbia Region stood at 13.8%, while the highest unemployment rate was registered in the South and Eastern Serbia region, at 16.2% (5.7 percentage points)[[33]](#footnote-33). In 2014, the difference between the highest and lowest employment rate stood at 4.2 percentage points, while the difference between the highest and lowest unemployment rate stood at 5 percentage points (2014).

**Measure 3.7 Continuously train members of local employment councils and other municipal bodies, as well as staff of municipal administrations and National Employment Service branch offices**

Description of the implemented measure

In January 2018, the NES branch offices were supplied with information and materials to assist local governments and the autonomous province with the development of local employment action plans (LEAPs), and with opportunities for co-funding active employment policy measures or programmes.

The NES took an active part in four regional meetings focusing on “Support to local governments for co-funding local employment action plans in 2018“, organized by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the National Employment Service, and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. The National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) for 2018 was presented and additional information provided on active labour market policy measures that will be co-funded in 2018 by pooling funds earmarked in the National Employment Service Financial Plan and funds from local government budgets.

In total 112 local governments (LGs) signed agreements regulating mutual rights and obligations in the implementation of active labour market policy measures – co-funding of LEAP in 2018. Subsequently, four of the LGs terminated the agreements, while the remaining 108 continued with the implementation of the Agreement. In the same year the NES also signed 54 Technical Cooperation Agreements with local governments. In 2014, no agreements were signed for the co-funding of LEAPs, however, 53 technical cooperation agreements were stipulated.[[34]](#footnote-34) In 2018, a total of RSD 928,087,912.88[[35]](#footnote-35) was committed to the implementation of LEAPs (an increase relative to RSD 483,192,100.52 in 2014).

Local governments committed a total of RSD 508,939,204.13 for co-funding active labour market policy measures under the Agreements/Annexes signed regulating mutual rights and obligations in the implementation of active labour market policy measures, and RSD 456,817,704.50 was allocated for this purpose from the budget of the Republic of Serbia. In addition, local governments allocated a total of RSD 419,148,708.75 for the implementation of 54 technical cooperation agreements.

**MEASURES TO CONTRIBUTE TO REDUCING STRUCTURAL EMPLOYMENT**

**Measure 3.8 Design and target further education and training programmes to better match the needs of the unemployed with lower education attainment, in line with local labour market needs, while placing the emphasis on the practical aspect of training**

Description of the implemented measure

The specific further education and training programmes designed to improve the employability of unemployed persons to be implemented in the given year are laid down in the annual further education and training programme, which is a part of the NEAP. These training programmes are based on labour market demand, i.e. on the needs of employers in terms of knowledge, skills and competences required, and on the characteristics of the unemployed. As regards the low-skilled unemployed, the focus is on their prioritized inclusion in functional adult primary education, skills trainings for the labour market, practical skills training programme, and trainings for known employer.

On 31 December 2018, there were 184,618 unskilled or low-skilled job-seekers on the NES unemployment register, (of which 95,475 women).[[36]](#footnote-36) This indicator stood at 233,429 in 2014. The other indicator, of the number of unemployed persons on the NES register with secondary school qualifications, reveals a similar declining trend at a rate of 10% at annual level, relative to 2014 (285,697). In total, 285,697 unemployed with secondary school qualifications (147,209 women) were on the NES unemployment register, as at 31 December 2018.[[37]](#footnote-37)

In total, RSD 1,062,716,561.48 were spent (under the NES Financial Plan) out of the planned RSD 1,797,865,628.53 earmarked for further education and training programmes. A total of RSD 23,990,536.56 was spent from the Budget Fund for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of PWDs out of the earmarked RSD 51,198,000.00 for vocational rehabilitation measures and activities.

**Measure 3.9 Design active labour market policy measures to promote the activation of the long-term unemployed**

Description of the implemented measure

Unemployed persons seeking employment for longer than 12 months, and in particular longer than 18 months, were designated as a hard-to-place group in the NEAP for 2018. As such, this group is prioritized for inclusion in ALMP measures. The focus is, in particular, on including this group in subsidized employment of unemployed persons from the hard-to-place group, in the public works programme and in the system of further education and training (e.g. practical skills training programme).

An indicator of the outcome of the implemented measure is an increase in number of persons included in further education and training programmes from 3,422 in 2014 to 10,416 unemployed (6,464 women)[[38]](#footnote-38) in 2018. Another indicator is the decline in the number of long-term unemployed on the NES register relative to 2014 by 2% at annual level (507,074). On 31 December 2018, there were 372,259 long-term unemployed on the NES unemployment register, i.e. unemployed for more than 12 months.

Funded from the total amount of funds spent for the implementation of further education and training programmes (please refer to 3.9).

**OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVE THE STATUS OF YOUTH IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

**MEASURES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF YOUTH NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEET) AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

**Measure 4.1 Improve traineeship and internship programmes, such as professional training programmes, with the aim of offering the first work experience to youth leaving the education system**

Description of the implemented measure

The professional training programme is a work-based professional training that teaches the unemployed person skills relevant to independently working in a certain profession, for which they have acquired an appropriate degree – qualifications, and is also designed to enable the unemployed person to complete the full period of traineeship/internship prescribed by the law, or bylaw, for taking the professional qualification test, as a special condition for independent practice. Under this programme, the professional training provider is not required to stipulate an employment contract with the apprentice/trainee/intern.

The professional training programme is intended for unemployed persons with certain types of degrees and level of education who are required to gain experience in their line of work and also to enable those who have not completed a full period of traineeship/internship to bridge the gap, i.e. the remaining period, in order to qualify for taking a professional qualification test. The professional training programme is implemented in accordance with the law, and the employer’s internal organization and staffing act, and is funded by the National Employment Service for a maximum of 12 months.

In 2018, the Ministry of Youth and Sport approved 33 projects promoting youth employment self-employment and entrepreneurship through inter-sectoral cooperation implemented by youth associations and local governments youth offices. Through these 33 projects, 80 youths were placed in employment or self-employment; 160 completed professional training programmes, while over 1,400 attended trainings designed to increase their employability.

A three-month professional training programme was organized under the YEP project (GIZ) in hubs, companies and agricultural holdings engaging in organic production. A total of 50 youths successfully completed apprenticeships/traineeships/internships, and many were offered employment after completing the programme.

The decrease in the NEET rate for the population in the 15–24 age group is an indicator of the degree to which the implemented measure has been achieved. The average NEET value decreased from 20% in 2014, to 16.5%[[39]](#footnote-39) in 2018.

Pursuant to the Law on the Budget, RSD 95 million dinars was spent for the implementation of this measure, of which RSD 51,647,940.55 was spent in 2018.

**Measure 4.2 Improve the system for informing youth of the possibilities for action in the areas of education, employment, youth entrepreneurship, European integration and use of EU funds, and other areas (through support to the work of youth offices and the Young Talents Fund)**

Description of the implemented measure

Through public calls inviting applications from LGs for support to the implementation of youth policies at local level (for LGs with established Youth Offices), the Ministry of Youth and Sport supported seven projects intended to create the conditions for informal youth education, dissemination of information tailored to the needs of all groups of the young population, the development of one or more programmes, and the establishment of sustainable and cost-effective youth services (career guidance, information desk, volunteering services, health counselling…)

The key goal of the Young Talents Fund is to provide scholarships to help finance talented youth’s education and specialization through annual competitions and foster cooperation with prominent institutions, companies and institutes in Serbia. Based on regular annual competitions, the Fund grants student scholarships for further education and rewards secondary school students for the results they accomplished at recognized international and national competitions.

In 2018, the Serbia’s Young Talents Fund disbursed almost RSD 800 million (gross) in grants and scholarships for 3,395 secondary school and university students. At the initiative of the youth and sport minister and the Young Talents Fund, the number of scholarships was increased from 900 to 950 for undergraduate students, and from 400 to 410 for master students, which means that a total of 1,360 scholarships were granted to students through scholarship competitions in Serbia.

The Young Talent Fund also disseminated information about scholarships to students at education fairs where the Fund presented its scholarship programme (Travelling Student Fair in Belgrade, Scholarship Fairs in Kragujevac, Belgrade and Niš).

An indicator of the impact of the implemented measure is the decrease in the youth unemployment rate (15-24) from 47.1% in 2014 to 29.7% in 2018.[[40]](#footnote-40)

A total of RSD 28 million was committed to the three public competition fields, of which RSD 8,322,749.60 was spent for two of the fields. In 2018, RSD 817,781,000 was allocated for the activities of the Young Talents Fund, of which RSD 813,570,719 was spent.

**Measure 4.3 Promote the life-long learning system and develop programmes for youth who have dropped out of school and/or persons without qualifications, which would involve training combined with employment subsidies**

Description of the implemented measure

The training programme for the labour market is designed to teach the unemployed specific knowledge and skills over a short, but intensive period of time, in order to increase their competencies and competitiveness in the labour market. The programme is implemented in cooperation with educational institutions from the informal or formal education system.

The training at employer’s request entails covering a share of the costs of a training programme designed to teach the unemployed knowledge and skills required for a specific job, if none of the unemployed on the register of the National Employment Service have the required knowledge and skills. The training lasts from 1 to 3 months, i.e. a maximum of 480 hours, depending on the type and complexity of the job, usually in accordance with an in-service training curriculum.

The functional adult primary education programme enables adults to acquire primary education, pursuant to the law, with the possibility to also acquire competencies for performing simple tasks.

The practical skills training for the unskilled, redundant and long-term unemployed who have been on the unemployment register for over 18 months is intended to teach workers practical knowledge and skills on the job, i.e. while working with a private sector employer under an employment contract.

Around 300 youth from hard-to-place groups were included in job placements/learning on the job under the Education to Employment programme (SDC) in five municipalities in 2018, and 56% got a job. Through GIZ’s Youth Employment Promotion project, 945 youth were included in the job placement programme (386 young women and 165 Roma youth, of which 98 returnees).

An indicator of the impact of the implemented measure is the increase in the number of persons using life-long-learning systems from 1,223 in 2014 to 1,205[[41]](#footnote-41) in 2018.

This measure was funded from the current expenditures planned for this activity and from international donor sources.

**Measure 4.4 Develop the concept of student jobs with a limited weekly number of working hours per for the purpose of their activation**

This measure is incomplete, so the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs proposed to abolish or revise it, which would require the involvement of the Ministry of Economy and youth and student cooperatives in formulating indicators, implementing agencies and time schedules.

**Measure 4.5 Further develop the early profiling system for unemployed youth in the National Employment Service**

Description of the implemented measure

The package of services designed for youth entails a set of steps that the NES has to implement for every young person registered on the unemployment register. This package is designed to prevent the obsolescence of relevant competitive labour market competences (knowledge and skills) and the downward spiral into long-term unemployment, and includes the following: conducting an individual employability assessment, determining an individual employment plan and the most adequate measures for activating and increasing the employability of youth; job matching services and participation in active employment policy measures that can contribute to employment (career orientation and guidance, job placement programme, employment and self-employment subsidies, functional adult primary education programme and other).

For the purpose of preventing the obsolescence of competencies (knowledge and skills) relevant for gaining a competitive position in the labour market, and preventing long-term unemployment, 239,379 individual employment plans (including revisions of individual employment plans) were developed for young clients in 2018, i.e. in the reporting period, based on employability assessments. However, no special training programme was envisaged to raise the competences of NES staff for early profiling of youth. All employment counsellors are trained to perform employability assessments and produce individual employment plans together with the job-seekers.

In accordance with the integrated management system, the Procedure for Conducting an Individual Interview and Developing an Individual Employment Plan defines how to work with this population group, one-on-one, as well as how to profile unemployed persons. The second indicator of the impact of this measure is the number of NES counsellors trained for early profiling of youth.

**Measure 4.6 Develop innovative models and services to support youth employment at the local level through a wide partnership of local stakeholders – education institutions, NES, the business and civil sectors**

Description of the implemented measure

The evaluation of SIPRU’s support programme for innovative youth employment models through inter-sectoral partnerships (“Education to Employment”, SDC)[[42]](#footnote-42) revealed that progress was made in developing local approaches conducive to increasing youth employment and employability. According to the youths participating in the programme, the most significant benefits of the programme were the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and the support provided toward the achievement of their professional goals. Four innovative youth employment approaches were supported in the “scale-up” phase at local level, and around 150 youth participated in the programme. The programme’s priority areas are:

* Creation of new jobs through entrepreneurship, improvement of access to information, education and trainings, business counselling and mentorships,
* Youth employability, mobility and flexibility through work placements in the MSE sector, youth and civil society organizations, and also through opportunities for learning cross-curricular and generic skills,
* Teaching youths about entrepreneurship through formal and informal education,
* Employability and mobility of youths from the so-called NEET group (young people who are neither in employment, nor in education or training),
* Employability of youths facing multiple barriers to employment (unskilled youths, Roma, youths with disabilities, youths from rural areas, youths leaving residential care, youths living with HIV, as well as other youth population groups recognized as vulnerable in the relevant strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia.

The Ministry of Youth and Sport supported the implementation of 33 projects, selected through a public competitive process, targeting: creative mentorships; promotion of creative industries; the establishment of student-led businesses; development of youth tech entrepreneurship through hands-on activities on developing tech start-ups; establishing modern creative spaces for co-working activities as a multidisciplinary platform stimulating the development of creative industries, providing business incubation services and establishing synergies among modern trends; digital marketing trainings; development of mechanisms for increasing youth employability and employment through a multidisciplinary and bilingual training programmes in the area of ICT, community languages, and "job shadowing"; international networking with young social entrepreneurs; support for innovative approaches contributing to the employment of PWD youth; as well as the establishment and testing of an innovative approach for supporting student business initiatives.

Three approaches for increasing youth employment and employability were identified under the Youth Employment Promotion project (GIZ): (1) Promoting youth employment in hubs – in 2018, 24 youths were granted support for managing and developing hubs, 30 youths were included in the work placement programme and 19 in the entrepreneurship training programme; (2) Promoting youth employment in rural areas – in 2018, 110 youths started a business and 25 youths were supplied with equipment. The project also supported cooperatives facilitating increased youth participation, supplying them with equipment, as well as new knowledge and skills to implement their business ideas. The model for promoting youth employment in rural areas was expanded through the introduction of two additional measures: work placements in organic agricultural production (20) and support for students of the final year of secondary agricultural schools to develop their own start-up ideas (39); (3) Improvement of employment conditions through cooperation between educational establishments and businesses and by better tailoring trainings to the private sector needs and improving the conditions for the implementation of trainings.

The Youth Employability and Active Inclusion project (2018-2021), funded under IPA 2014, started implementing its EUR 4 million grant scheme, and 24 projects were awarded grants through this scheme.

In 2018, 1,400 young participants underwent training programmes for increasing their competencies; 160 youth completed traineeships/internships; 80 youth were placed into (self-) employment. Three innovative modes were established under the Youth Employment Promotion project, also resulting in the employment of 515 youth.[[43]](#footnote-43) Four innovative models for youth employment were supported in the “scaling-up” phase at local level (SDC).

A total of RSD 95 million was earmarked under the Budget Law for the implementation of this measure, and from international funding sources, and a total of RSD 51,647,940.55 was spent in 2018.

**Measure 4.7 Promote and further develop the career guidance and counselling system in the Republic of Serbia**

Description of the implemented measure

With a view to promoting the concept of life-long learning and career development, 32 professional orientation and career guidance fairs were organized by the NES in 2018, with the participation of, and in cooperation with, schools and other relevant employment stakeholders at regional level.

The NES, in cooperation with local partners, also participated in 28 round tables /workshops/lectures for youth across Serbia, to promote the concept of life-long career development.

**Measure 4.8 Promote the youth package by defining in more concrete terms the measure whereby and individual’s participation in programmes is concluded**

Description of the implemented measure

The package of services for youth entails a set of steps that the NES is required to implement for every young person registered on the unemployment register. This package is designed to prevent the obsolescence of relevant competitive labour market competencies (knowledge and skills), and the downward spiral into long-term unemployment. In 2018, the package of services for youth was not revised, but the targeting of youths for inclusion in the individual ALMPs was improved.

 In 2018, 52,438 unemployed youths (27,317 women) were included in active employment policy measures, accounting for 33.87% of the total number of unemployed included in these measures.[[44]](#footnote-44) In 2014, 45,184 youths were included in the same measures.

**HUMAN CAPITAL AND SKILLS**

Serbia’s current stock of human capital is inadequate to meet its social and economic needs. The lack of qualifications and key competencies restrict employability to low-skill and low-paid jobs. The following objectives were set, with a view to improving the current situation: (1) align educational outcomes with labour market needs by improving the quality and relevance of education and training; (2) improve the overall education level of the population; and (3) increase education system efficiency.

**OBJECTIVE 1: ALIGN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS BY IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION**

**Measure 1.1 Establish the system for the National Qualifications Framework in Serbia (NQFS)**

Description of the implemented measure

The following activities were implemented in the reporting period to establish a National Qualifications Framework in Serbia:

* the Law on the National Qualifications Framework in Serbia (NQFS) was adopted;
* the NQFS institutional framework was set up: the NQFS Council, the Qualifications Agency and 12 sector councils were established;
* the database of qualifications is being continuously updated so that 140 qualifications were entered in the database, of which 86 with qualification standards;
* activities started on the preparation of the Report on Referencing the NQFS with EQF;
* a contract was signed for the implementation of the IPA 2014 programme envisaging programme activities related to the development of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system.

The integrated NQFS for life-long learning[[45]](#footnote-45) was adopted, a database of national qualifications was developed, 12 sector council were established[[46]](#footnote-46) and a technical assistance contract was signed under the IPA 2014 programme related to the establishment of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system.

The planned budget totalled RSD 3,000,000.00, of which RSD 408,393.02 were spent.

**Measure 1.2 Develop relevant education and training programmes consistent with the needs of the labour market and society as a whole**

Description of the implemented measure

Under the dual education model in secondary vocational education, students learn on the job. Pursuant to the Law on Dual Education[[47]](#footnote-47), work-based learning is defined in special contracts (Contract on Dual Education, stipulated between the school and the employer and Contract on Work-Based Learning stipulated by the employer and the student or the student’s parent/legal representative). With the adoption of the Law on Dual Education, two models were introduced for the implementation of practical teaching: the “school-based” model and the “work-based” model. Both models are part of the curriculum for all educational profiles in the secondary vocational education and training system.

In the school year 2017/18 a total number of 1,482 students enrolled in 19 dual education profiles, while an additional 3,077 students enrolled in one of the 43 educational profiles with elements of the dual education model, in 128 secondary vocational schools and 205 companies. The dual educational profiles were developed in accordance with labour market demand.

In the school year 2018/19 the 19 dual education profiles were kept and new ones were added that were developed by the Institute for Improvement of Education (IIE) for the needs of dual education, so that the total number of dual education profiles was increased to 33. The IIE Annual Plan envisaged the introduction of 15 educational profiles, but the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development (MoESTD) had additional requests that were not envisaged in the IIE Annual Activity Plan, consequently, more was done than was anticipated.

In the school year 2018/19 an increase was registered in the number of companies interested in implementing work-based learning for dual educational profiles (600), and the number of schools integrated in the dual education system also increased, from 50 to 85, i.e. 23% of the total number of secondary vocational schools in Serbia. Furthermore, the number of students enrolled in dual education profiles increased from 1,482 to 2,960.

As regards secondary vocational education on the whole (including general data for dual education), a set of activities was implemented in the reporting period.

Cooperation was intensified with the business sector to define the missing profiles. Qualifications standards are developed in workshops with corporate sector experts and their findings and conclusions are verified at separate workshops with independent experts.

In the school year 2018/2019 a total of 85 study programmes were implemented in the vocational education and training (VET) system based on the qualifications standards and learning outcomes. The enrolment rate of students in these programmes is increasing every year. In 2018, over 70% of students enrolled in vocational education attended one of these programmes. Most of these educational profiles will be realized through some form of cooperation with employers, which is a pillar of all vocational education reforms as a whole. These changes contribute to improving VET quality and achieving the envisaged qualification standards and learning outcomes.

Owing to these changes, another strategic goal is being accomplished in the area of vocational education and training, to increase the share of students enrolled in profiles based on qualifications standards in the total number of students enrolled in vocational education to 80% in the school year 2019/20 and 100% by 2021. This means that by 2021, all students enrolled in vocational schools will be studying according to contemporary and future-fit curricula.

The Rulebook on Student Cooperatives was adopted, published (RS Official Gazette No. 31/2018 оf 27 April 2018), and entered into force on 5 May 2018. The schools that already have established student cooperatives will be obliged to align the activities of student cooperatives with the new Rulebook by 5 May 2019. The Law on Foundations of the Education System, the Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary Education all recognize student cooperatives as an important model for supporting the development the entrepreneurial spirit in students.

implementation of the Professional Development Training Programme for Teachers designed to support the development of entrepreneurial competencies in both teachers and students is currently underway, and the way is being paved for teaching entrepreneurship in primary schools, which was recognized as a Programme in the Public Interest (Decision No: 610-00-02244/2018-07). A Manual for Student Cooperatives was published under this project. Promotional activities are underway to promote the Rulebook and good practice examples and outputs of Student Cooperatives.

Finally, the vast majority of VET educational profiles are implementing hands-on instruction in partnership with the business sector, according to the dual concept strictly defined under the Law on Dual Education and the Contracts defined by the law. Nevertheless, in the school system there are excellent examples of practical skills training, work placements, summer internships, hands-on learning and similar.

Schools in the field of health care and social protection are a good example of how students can acquire lasting and versatile professional knowledge and skills in the school system through partnerships with health institutions. Cooperation with medical centres, hospitals, primary health care centres and similar. In the domain of personal service industry, there are examples of excellent cooperation with hair and beauty salons. The tourism and catering schools also have quality practices which include hands-on training at the school facilities or traineeships in top-rated hotels and restaurants in Serbia.

In the school year 2018/19, the VET system had a total of 85 study programmes based on qualification standards and learning outcomes. The Rulebook on Student Cooperatives was adopted as a model of entrepreneurial learning[[48]](#footnote-48). As regards the various approaches to implementing work-based learning in the VET system there are two (2) basic models with many variations depending on the field of work, time of the year, local environment and similar.

**Measure 1.3 Improve the quality of initial education, professional development and professional cooperation among teachers at all education levels**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of professional training of secondary school teachers is regulated by a bylaw. The catalogue of accredited programmes covers all necessary and relevant areas. For particularly important aspects, to prepare teachers for the introductions of innovations, programmes are accredited with the prior approval of the line minister. These programmes, unlike the ones funded by the LGs, are free for the participants. Cooperation of teachers takes various forms, VET school communities, and professional societies for the individual subjects and subject fields play a key role in the field of secondary education. An important aspect of teacher cooperation takes place through national competition programmes in all fields of study. This measure was fully implemented in 2018.

A training programme was designed to prepare managers and teachers for the implementation of new outcome-oriented curricula from September 2018. This training was undertaken by 19,400 teachers, non-teaching specialist staff and school principals. A total of 669 trainings were realized. The participants’ average satisfaction was rated with 3, on a scale from 0 to 4.

The total planned budget for 2018 amounted to RSD 91,000,000.00, and RSD 89,909,782.28 of the total budget was spent on this measure.

**Measure 1.4 Establish a quality assurance system at all education levels**

Description of the implemented measure

The following quality assurance activities were implemented for the dual model: (1) after the enactment of the Law on Dual Education, a significant step forward was made with the adoption of a secondary legislation framework, which was within the purview of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, including the Rulebook on detailed conditions, method of work, activities and composition of the career guidance and counselling team in dual vocational education secondary schools, and the Rulebook on the placement of students in work-based learning and the Rulebook on the training curriculum, detailed conditions and other relevant issues related to the instructor licensing exam; (2) in early 2018, the Government of Serbia established a Commission for the development and implementation of dual education and for the implementation of three-year performance assessments. In 2018, the Commission had 6 meetings. The Commission’s members are appointed among representatives of the Government, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, schools, and employers; (3) a working version of the Master Plan for the Implementation of the Law on Dual Education in Secondary Vocational Education was drafted at the end of 2018.

Quality standards for pre-university education institutions were revised, along with the external evaluation methodology and self-evaluation of the performance of these institutions. The (self-) evaluation standards and methodologies were revised on the basis of the results achieved in the seven years of application of the standards, the results of the empirical quality evaluation of these results and broad public consultation results. The revised standards and methodologies are in application starting from the school year 2019/2020.

A Rulebook on the Model Institution was adopted for the purpose of developing innovative practices and identifying excellence in various aspects of the pre-university institutions’ work, which regulates in detail the procedures for the assessment of the eligibility for model institution, the performance and excellence criteria, as well as the rights and obligations of institutions that have acquired the status of “model institution”.

A National Body for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education was established, with the status of a legal entity, and has its governing and management bodies, as well as an expert body – Accreditation Commission – which is funded with revenues from accreditations and external quality evaluations of higher education institutions and study programmes.

A survey was conducted of a representative sample of schools and teachers to collect information about the attitudes of school teachers and principals with regard to the evaluation procedures. The online survey questionnaire was completed by 289 school principals, 364 non-teaching specialist staff and 5,658 teachers – in total, 6,311 staff members in school across Serbia. The collected and processed data were used to propose improvements. The procedures for the evaluation of the performance of schools were redefined. The new methodology was published in the Rulebook on Quality Evaluation of School (RS Official Gazette No 10/19.

As regards the system of accreditation of the work-based training centres in vocational education and training (VET), the companies involved in the implementation of work-based learning are required to complete the accreditation process, i.e. an evaluation of their eligibility to provide work-based learning. The implementation of the accreditation process is delegated to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), and is performed on the basis of the Law on Dual Education. The CCIS adopted a Rulebook on the organization, composition, and methodology of the Commission for the Accreditation of Work-Based Learning Providers.

The evaluation of performance at the school-leaving exam at the end of primary education is an activity exercised by the Institute for Education Quality Evaluation (IEQE) as part of its delegated authority. Owing to their reports on and analysis of student assessment performance, the final test not only has a role in the certification and selection of students, but also in evaluation. Findings on the school-leaving exam performance can be seen as one of the key sources informing decisions on how to improve teaching and the schools' performance on the whole. In addition to the results of the school-leaving exams at school level, that are available to the schools, reports are prepared with key findings for the system as a whole, school administrations, districts and municipalities. Thus, the expert community, school staff, professional societies, and creators of teacher training curricula can gain better insights into the current situation and design and implement activities geared toward improving performance.

The latest report[[49]](#footnote-49) provides an account of the school-leaving exam performance of 65.129 students attending tuition in the Serbian language who took the exam in June 2018. The performance of students from minority ethnic groups will be presented in a separate report. The report does not include performance of students who took the exam in the August term, not only because the IEQE does not have the required data, but also because these students had a different set of test questions and tasks than students who took the test in the June term. The students’ average score in the Serbian language test, expressed in points, was 11.99, in Maths 10.04, and in the combined science test 12.60 out of a maximum of 20 points. The fact that almost two thirds of students managed to solve half of the tasks in the Serbian language test and combined test (scored around 10 points), while this share was lower in the Maths test, suggests that these two tests are easier.

An analysis of the performance of students at the district level indicates that around 60% scored below average on all tests. In the case of the Serbian language test, in approximately one-third of the districts, scores were more of less average, while in the case of the combined test and the Maths test, fewer districts reached average scores. Students from two districts achieved above-average scores on all tests, these were the City of Belgrade and the Južnobački District. Overall, relative to the previous year, districts with the highest deviation relative to the expected score, registered a lower score in 2018, which better reflects the real situation, owing to the set of measures introduced by the Ministry and the school administrations.

There is a clear correlation between student performance in all assessments and the economic development parameters of the municipalities in which the students are pursuing their education. Specifically, scores on the final school-leaving test increase in parallel with the level of economic development of the municipality, and this trend is more prominent in the Serbian language and Maths test than in the combined science test.

As regards international and national assessments, the IEQE conducted a national pilot assessment of 7th grade of primary school (lower secondary) and 3rd grade secondary school (upper secondary) students under the research and development programme in primary and secondary education. The specific objectives were to monitor and evaluate the attainment of subject competences in three key general education subjects (Maths, Physics and History). The assessment was conducted on a representative sample of schools and students in primary and secondary education. In total, 147 primary schools and 132 secondary schools took part in the assessment. The tests were taken by 2,754 primary school students and 5,482 secondary school students. To collect data relevant for understanding the learning context, the survey also included 147 school principals and 441 teachers from primary schools and 132 principals and 549 teachers from secondary schools. The findings and recommendations for improving the system will be made available in mid-2019. Two international assessments were implemented in 2018 – PISA 2018 and TIMSS 2018. Assessment results will be published in late 2019.

Finally, in connection with the improvement of accreditation standards in higher education, the National Council for Higher Education, at the proposal of the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority, adopted new rulebooks on accreditation and quality assurance standards for higher education institutions and study programmes:

* Rulebook on accreditation standards and procedure for study programmes (RS Official Gazette No 13/2019)
* Rulebook on self-evaluation and evaluation standards for higher education institutions and study programmes (RS Official Gazette No 13/2019)
* Rulebook on external evaluation standards and procedure for higher education institutions (RS Official Gazette No 13/2019)
* Rulebook on accreditation standards and procedure for higher education institutions (RS Official Gazette No 13/2019)
* Rulebook on preliminary accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes (RS Official Gazette No 13/2019)
* Rulebook on the short study programmes’ organization, implementation, issuance of certificates and record-keeping procedure (RS Official Gazette No 32/2019).

Performance standards for educational institutions: The performance framework for educational institutions was redefined. Quality standards for educational institutions were improved. External evaluations were performed in nineteen primary and secondary schools. The collected and processed data were used to submit proposals for improvement[[50]](#footnote-50).

Performance in the school-leaving exam in primary and secondary education: a report was published on Performance on School-leaving exam at the End of Primary Education in School Year 2017/2018.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Performance in national and international assessments: a pilot national assessment was conducted of 7th grade primary school students and 3rd grade secondary school students, and its results will be made available in 2019. Two international assessments were implemented in 2018 – PISA 2018 and TIMSS 2018. The results will be published at the end of 2019.

Improved accreditation standards in higher education: At the proposal of the National Quality Assurance Authority, The National Council for Higher Education adopted six (6) new rulebooks on accreditation and quality assurance standards for higher education institutions and study programmes.

No special budget was envisaged for this activity. The activity was implemented as part of the regular work of educational advisors.

**OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE THE OVERALL EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE POPULATION**

**Measure 2.1 Develop the life-long learning system**

Description of the implemented measure

Every year, the Government of Serbia (GoS) adopts a Decision Establishing an Annual Plan for Adult Education constituting the framework for the implementation of adult education activities in priority areas. The GoS enacted the Decision Establishing an Annual Plan for Adult Education for 2018 in August 2018 (RS Official Gazette No 60 of 3 August 2018). The prioritization of the public interest in the area of adult education and life-long learning is defined in Article 56 of the Law on Adult Education (RS Official Gazette No 55/2013).

The Annual Plan for Adult Education for 2018 is an integrated overview of planned adult education activities in the priority education areas, which are implemented by the relevant institutions and social stakeholders in response to defined local business sector and labour market needs.

The Annual Plan defines formal adult primary and secondary education and informal adult education activities.

The following top-priority activity areas in formal adult education were implemented in 2018:

* Primary education for adults (according to the functional adult primary education model), funded from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, in 64 primary schools in the territory of 15 school administrations. A total of 6,090 adult learners attended the adult primary education programme, exceeding the target which was set at 5,912, from the 15+ age cohort that either left or never even enrolled in primary school. The programme was implemented by specially trained teachers, while adult education assistants successfully carried out their role and tasks as members of the school teams. In 2018, 257 teachers completed the required trainings for the application of the new curriculum – (Module 1. Basic adult education assistant skills), and a new Rulebook was enacted on the content and procedure of record-keeping and issuing certificates in formal adult primary education (RS Official Gazette);
* Part-time secondary education for 17+ learners was funded from the budget of the Republic of Serbia and implemented in 121 secondary schools in the territory of 16 school administrations. The part-time secondary education programme was attended by 351 learners (of the planned 444) over the age of 17 years;
* Reskilling, upskilling and specialization programmes not financed from the budget of the Republic of Serbia were implemented in 178 secondary schools in the territory of 17 school administrations. A total of 4,018 adult learners attended reskilling, upskilling and specialization programmes;
* Activities in the process of accreditation of licensed adult education providers (LAEPs) continued. A list of accredited LAEPs for the specific programmes is available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/obrazovanje-odraslih/>

Currently, there are no available data on the share of adult population (25–64) with secondary or tertiary education. Data on the rate of completion of tertiary or equivalent education for the 30–34 age group are not available either.

The adoption of the Law on the National Qualifications Framework requires the preparation and enactment of amendments to the Rulebook on detailed eligibility criteria for accreditation of licensed adult education providers with regard to the curriculum, personnel, equipment and teaching materials. So far, 43 institutions were accredited by decision of the Minister to provide a total of 153 adult training programmes for competencies and qualifications that are in demand on the labour market. A significant number of secondary vocational schools, institutions and organizations from the informal system acquired the status of licensed adult education provider for a variety of training programmes developed in cooperation with local employers and social partners, in response to the demand in the local labour market and by employers for qualified workforce, and a significant share of accredited programmes on the labour market are offered by the workers’, peoples’ and open universities (28 programmes). As regards secondary vocational schools, the first to apply for and obtain accreditation as licensed adult education providers were the vocational schools in which Regional Centres for Continuing Adult Education are based (34 programmes).

**Measure 2.2 Raise the level of education attainment of vulnerable groups and reduce regional disparities**

Description of the implemented measure

Several activities were implemented in 2018. Primarily for the purpose of reducing school drop-out rates and early school leaving by school-age children and adolescents, 212 teachers participated in relevant trainings, of which 176 women and 36 men from 50 schools. The training is listed in the List of Public-Interest Trainings titled “Training in planning, implementing and monitoring the implementation of school drop-out prevention measures”, Ministerial Decision No: 07-00-00021/2018-07.

A competition was implemented for the selection of teacher assistants. A MoESTD panel selected 50 candidates to attend a training for teacher assistants who were employed by 50 schools after the training.

Decision No 451-02-01524/2018-07 was adopted to develop a plan for the training of trainers (ToT) designed for teachers and non-teaching specialist staff, and a comprehensive modular training programme for the basic module, advanced module, and online training, as well as hand-outs. In 2018, a total of 12 classroom trainings were held with a total of 450 participants.

At the higher education level, affirmative action is implemented in the process of enrolment of first-year students to promote the enrolment of persons with disabilities and members of the Roma minority.

Special incentives are envisaged for vulnerable populations to acquire qualifications. Pursuant to the Rulebook on the Enrolment of Students in Secondary School, for students who are members of the Roma minority applying for enrolment in secondary school under affirmative action policies, for the purpose of achieving full equality, the number of points scored based on their grade-point average in school and on the final school-leaving exam is increased by 30% of the number of points short of 100. If these students live in a family receiving financial social assistance, the number of points scored based on their grade-point average in school and on the final exam is increased by 35% of the number of points short of 100.

Pursuant to the Rulebook on the Enrolment of Students in Secondary School, learners who completed the adult primary education programme who applied for enrolment in secondary school under affirmative action policies, for the purpose of attaining full equality, the number of points scored based on their grade-point average in school and on the final exam is increased by 30% of the number of points short of 100. If these learners live in a family receiving financial social assistance, the number of points scored based on their grade-point average in school and on the final exam is increased by 35% of the number of points short of 100.

If there are several classes in the same vocational profile – members of the Roma minority and learners who completed the adult primary education programme will be equitably distributed among these classes.

In exercising their right to enrolment in secondary school, the candidates may only avail themselves of the right to additional points on one of the aforesaid grounds.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Special programmes for acquiring qualifications are available for vulnerable population groups. Under the programme for the Introduction of and Early Warning System for Identifying Children at Risk of Dropping Out of Primary or Secondary Education important information and trainings are provided in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of measures for the prevention of student drop-out. This training is on the list of public-interest trainings approved by decision of the Minister (225 participants with 24 points were awarded training certificates). A total of 229 teacher assistants were hired in 2018, an increase relative to 2014 when 175 were hired.

The training in prevention of school drop-out was funded with RSD 1,516,896.35; the training for teacher assistants with RSD 1,516,896.35; and the MADAD 2 training with RSD 2,092,408.16.

**Measure 2.3 Increase the accessibility of preschool education**

Description of the implemented measure

As part of the activities implemented under the Support for the Implementation of a Four-Hour Preparatory Preschool Programme, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) is granting funds for the implementation of a preschool programme in the year preceding the start of primary school for children undergoing hospital treatment and children with disabilities, pursuant to the law.

The preparatory preschool programme (PPP) is part of the regular programme delivered by preschools, available on a full-day or half-day basis, and is compulsory for children in the year before they reach school-going age. For children receiving hospital treatment PPP is organized in the medical facility, while children with disabilities are included in preschool development groups based on an individual education plan.

According to data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, a total of 64,345 children (98.17%) were included in the PPP in 2017/2018.

According to MoESTD data, 1,370 children receiving hospital treatment, and 193 children with disabilities attended the PPP in the same year.

The percentage of children in the 1.5–6 years age group enrolled in preschool education increased from 41.36% in 2014 to 56.04% in 2018.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In 2018, the planned budget for this measure was set at RSD 2,183,980,000, of which RSD 2,117,163,000 (96.94%) was spent.

**OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE EDUCATION SYSTEM EFFICIENCY**

**Measure 3.1 Establish the information system as a precondition for efficient education system management**

Description of the implemented measure

So far, a register of institutions, a register of staff, at all levels of education, as well as a register of study programmes and the esDnevnik (electronic grade book) were developed as part of the ongoing Information System (IS) development activity. This was accomplished with the resources of the Ministry.

Future activities until full IS development entail the establishment of a register of children, students at all education levels, and adults, the implementation of which will require the development of a Unique Student Identifier. In addition, it will also require the setting up of a monitoring and control mechanism for data entry with the aim of ensuring reliable and accurate data.

It has been estimated that the Ministry does not have the capacity to successfully implement the listed IS components with its own human resources, so a decision was made to outsource external contractors. In 2018, experts were hired to prepare the specification for the Unified Information System for Education (UISE), and the implementation of the tender on the basis of this specification was delegated to the Office for IT and eGovernment. The launching of the procurement procedure is scheduled for mid-2019, and it is estimated that it will take two years from the start of operation for the system to be fully developed, in which period its components will be developed and implemented in phases.

As regards higher education, an information system and a database on higher education institutions, professors and other staff, as well as on number of students, is already partly in place. In the forthcoming period, the plan is to develop a comprehensive information system and set up data registers as laid down in the Law on Higher Education.

Seven registers are already in place in preschool, primary, secondary and higher education.

The budget planned for this measure in 2018 amounted to RSD 213,330,000.00, of which RSD 199,339,000.00 was spent.

**Measure 3.2 Align the education system of Serbia with the EU education trends**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Higher Education provides that the line ministry responsible for higher education shall be tasked with aligning the education system of Serbia with the EU education trends and that, with a view to achieving this goal, the ministry shall take all necessary action to ensure Serbia’s full-fledged participation in EU cooperation programmes in the field of education and training, monitor the effects of participation in these programmes, and ensure the participation of Serbia’s representatives in the working groups and activities organized as part of the Open Method of Coordination, the Bologna process, and other similar initiatives launched at the level of the European Union and Europe at large, as well as foster cooperation with other state agencies, educational institutions, civil and other organizations.

The preparatory activities for Serbia’s full-fledged membership in the Erasmus+ programme were successfully finalized mid-2018. The Agreement on the full-fledged membership in the Erasmus+ Programme[[54]](#footnote-54) was officially signed in February 2019. Accordingly, Serbia took part in the General Call for Project Proposals for 2019, for the first time as a programme country, while the Tempus Foundation officially became the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme.

The Institute for Education Quality Evaluation (IEQE), and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) took part in the pilot project titled Self-reflection tool for digitally capable schools (SELFIE)[[55]](#footnote-55) organized by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (EC). A survey, in which Serbia participated together with 14 other European countries, informed the improvement of an online instrument that will enable our schools to plan future activities based on feedback.

The Tempus Foundation has officially become the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme.

**Measure 3.3 Optimize the network of education institutions (primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia), pupil and student halls of residence**

Description of the implemented measure

According to information provided by the MoESTD, the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (RS Official Gazette No 88/17,27/18 – 10/19 as amended) and the Law on Primary Education (RS Official Gazette No 55/13, 101/17, 27/18 – as amended, and 10/19) were adopted in the reporting period. Furthermore, the Government of Serbia adopted the Regulation on criteria for the adoption of an act on the network of public preschool institutions and an act on the network of public primary schools (RS Official Gazette No 21/18). The act on the network of primary schools is adopted by the local government and approved by the Ministry upon obtaining an expert opinion from the school administration with territorial jurisdiction. Under Article 185(1) of the Law, the act itself as well as the task of approving the act establishing the network of public primary schools in AP Vojvodina is delegated to the autonomous province’s public administration.

According to information provided by the MoESTD, two decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia were adopted in the reporting period, specifically: the Belgrade Business Vocational Studies Academy[[56]](#footnote-56) and the Belgrade Preschool Teacher Training College[[57]](#footnote-57).

An act on the standards of the network of housing/boarding/recreational/cultural facilities for school pupils has not been yet adopted. Preparations are in course – data were collected from all of the facilities, the institutions were categorized, and decisions on categorization were drafted and delivered. The network of housing/boarding/recreational/cultural facilities for university students was categorized, but the decisions on categorization have not been drafted and delivered yet (the costs and budget impact are being analysed). New facilities were fitted and commissioned with a CEB loan.

Two higher education institutions founded by the Republic of Serbia were accredited. The act on the network of pupil and student facilities was not adopted.

In 2018, A total of RSD 10,000,000 was planned under the budget for this measure, of which RSD 10,000,000 was spent.

**Measure 3.4 Develop the education funding model based on the analysis of the existing education funding system and the activation of the existing education capacities**

Description of the implemented measure

In the reporting period, a working group was established by decision of the Minister to draft a Law governing the funding of higher education, the role of the manager and employer councils in colleges, universities, and vocational studies academies, (Decision No 119-01-00670/2018-01 of 27 December 2018).

**SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

**FUTURE STEPS AND MEASURES IN THE SPHERE OF SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION**

**OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASE THE COVERAGE AND IMPROVE THE ADEQUACY OF CASH BENEFITS**

**FINANCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Measure 1.1. Increase the weightings (benefits) for children and youth with disabilities**

Description of the implemented measure

In 2018, under the then applicable Law on Social Protection of 2011 the weightings (benefits) for children were established at 0.3 of the base for the individual, i.e. the eligible financial social assistance recipient (Art. 88 of the Law). Individuals who are incapacitated for work, families whose all members are incapacitated for work, and single parent families are entitled to receive an increased financial social assistance amount (Art. 85. of the Law), calculated by increasing the amount of financial social assistance for the individual, and for the family, by 20%, respectively, (Art. 90 of the Law).

The Law on Social Protection was not amended. The planned budget for Measures 1.1. and 1.2. amounted to RSD 500,000, but there are no data available on spending in 2018.

**Measure 1.2. Relax property-related requirements, in particular raise the land ownership ceiling depending on land quality for elderly households**

Description of the implemented measure

In 2018, under the then applicable Law on Social Welfare of 2011 the following groups were eligible to receive financial social assistance: individuals and families who own no real estate other than their home, adequate to their needs, and/or a maximum of 0.5 hectares of land; individuals who are incapacitated for work, and families whose all members are incapacitated for work, provided that they own no real estate other than their home, adequate to their needs and a maximum of one hectare of land. By way of exception, an individual or family not meeting the listed eligibility criteria can nevertheless receive financial social assistance if they give their consent to the registration of mortgage on the real property owned by them, to secure the settlement of the claim equal to the adjusted amount of the financial social benefits received (Article 82 of the Law).

A Draft Law Amending the Social Protection Law was prepared, but no changes were made to relax the means-related eligibility criteria, i.e. to increase the land ownership threshold, because of the impossibility to secure funds for this purpose in Serbia’s budget. For the same reason, the weightings (benefits) were not increased from 0.3 to 0.5 of the base for the individual, i.e. eligible financial social assistant recipient.

The planned budget for Measures 1.1. and 1.2. amounted to RSD 500,000, but there are no data available on spending in 2018.

**CHILD ALLOWANCE**

**Measure 1.3. Increase the child allowance amount for children of secondary school age (one-off benefit upon successful completion of a school year**

 Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Financial Assistance to Families with Children was adopted at the end of December 2017, it was subsequently amended in June 2018, and became effective on 1 July 2018. As the new school year 2018/2019 started on 3 September 2018, compliance testing of regular school attendance also began from that date. The compliance with conditions related to regular school attendance was tested every half-semester and an extra child allowance will be disbursed in September 2019 for secondary school children who successfully completed the school year.

The Law on Financial Assistance to Families with Children took effect in mid-2018. On the basis of the aforementioned law a total of 27,886 children, plus 896 children in Kosovo, qualified for the one-off benefit.

The planned budget for Measures 1.3. and 1.6. amounted to RSD 2,009,875,000.

* 1. **Increase the child allowance amount for children with disabilities**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Financial Assistance to Families with Children became applicable on 1 July 2018, and based on application submitted from that day onwards, for children with developmental disorders and disabilities, and for the children of attendance allowance recipients who qualified for child allowance, the regular child allowance (RSD 4,500) is increased by 50%.

 The Law on Financial Assistance to Families with Children became applicable in mid-2018. Information about the number of children who were granted an increased child allowance on these grounds will be known after the disbursement of the child allowance for September 2019.

The planned budget for Measures 1.3. and 1.6. amounted to RSD 2,009,875,000.

**Measure 1.5. Simplify the child allowance eligibility requirements**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children became applicable on 1 July 2018, and – when filing a claim for child allowance – the claimant is only required to submit evidence that is not available in any of the existing records or that cannot be provided by relevant authorities.

The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children became applicable in mid-2018. This measure has been implemented with the entry into force of this Law.

The planned budget for Measures 1.3. and 1.6. amounted to RSD 2,009,875,000.

**Measure 1.6. Award the entitlement to four underage children in the care of their parents, rather than the first four children in the family by birth order**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children became applicable on 1 July 2018, and, based on the claims filed after this date, the entitlement to child allowance can be exercised for additional children born after the first four children in the family by birth order, provided that the children born earlier no longer qualify for child allowance because they are over the age limit.

The Law on Financial Support to Families with Children became applicable in mid-2018. Information about the number incremented child allowances granted on these grounds will be known after the disbursement of the child allowance for September 2019.

The planned budget for Measures 1.3. and 1.6. amounted to RSD 2,009,875,000.

**HOUSING ALLOWANCE**

**Measure 1.7. Analyse and propose the introduction of a housing allowance (housing support)**

Description of the implemented measure

The Draft Law Amending the Social Protection Law did not provide to introduce a housing allowance because of the impossibility to secure funds from the budget of the Republic of Serbia.

**Measure 1.8 Implement a housing improvement programme in substandard settlements**

Description of the implemented measure

Two contracts are being implemented with funding from the IPA 2013 programme: Technical assistance for the improvement of living and housing conditions of the Roma population presently residing in informal settlements and the Grant scheme for the implementation of durable housing solutions and physical infrastructure improvements in Roma settlements. Under the technical assistance project, technical documentation was prepared for 12 municipalities, specifically: Bačka Palanka, Kraljevo, Šabac, Lajkovac, Požarevac, Kostolac, Paraćin, Niš, Vlastotince, Bor, and Aleksinac and Svilanjac, which were added subsequently after the withdrawal of the city of Zrenjanin from the programme (construction of a car tyre factory) and of the Kovačica municipality (they decided to finance the development of technical documentation with municipality funds in order to be able to include the non-Roma population in it. In 2018, the technical documentation was fully completed in 4 local governments, specifically: Paraćin, Kostolac, Požarevac and Lajkovac, thereby paving the way for durable housing solutions for the members of the Roma population currently residing in substandard settlements.

The Grant scheme project, which started in June 2017, aims to improve the living conditions of the Roma Population, through the construction and reconstruction of housing facilities and the construction of public utility infrastructure, in the following municipalities/towns: Čačak, Prokuplje, Stara Pazova, Smederevo, Novi Pazar, Loznica, Opovo, Boljevac, Niš, Lebane, Svilanjac, Ub and Odžaci. The project activities have been completed in the following local governments: Ub, Lebane, Svilanjac, Boljevac, Odžaci and Novi Pazar. The projects were suspended in the city of Čačak (due to the impossibility of the municipality to successfully implement the tenders due to pressure from the local community) and Niš (ongoing restitution process).

The following contract is being implemented under IPA 2014: Technical assistance (TA) for the improvement of socioeconomic living conditions of the Roma population. Under this TA programme, 100 substandard Roma settlements will be examined and a minimum of 30 will be selected for intervention. Planning and technical documentation will be developed for the selected ones, to create durable housing solutions for members of the Roma population. The project started on 4 March 2019 and the implementation period is limited to 2 years.

Through the IPA 2016 programme implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, planning documentation is being developed for the following municipalities: Sombor, Bač, Beočin, Pećinci, Kučevo, Vrnjačka Banja, Kuršumlija, Leskovac, Lebane, Surdulica, Bujanovac, to improve the living conditions of the Roma population. The programme is scheduled to last 4.5 months.

Through the IPA 2018 programme, housing solutions will be provided for 500 families or about 1,500 members of vulnerable groups in 20 local government units. The programme is scheduled to last 36 months.

**OBJECTIVE 2: ACTIVE INCLUSION**

**Measure 2.1. Improve the regulations governing activation**

Description of the implemented measure

The final version of the Draft Law on Social Protection was drafted in 2018, after public consultations, and was referred to the relevant ministries and other authorities for their opinion. Most opinions have been received, and preparations are underway to move the bill to the next step of the legislative process.

The Regulation on Social Inclusion Measures for Recipients of Financial Social Assistance adopted in October 2014, and will be amended following the adoption of amendments to the Social Protection Law.

Amendments to this Law require the NES to establish and individual employment plan on the basis of a notification by the social work centre of the activation plan of the individual social assistance recipient.

**Measure 2.2 Establish sustainable cooperation mechanisms that would include both support to the hard-to-employ and mobilization of community resources to create new work opportunities**

Description of the implemented measure

The legal grounds for the implementation of this measure will be laid down in the new Regulation on Social Inclusion Measures for Recipients of Financial Social Assistance, which will be enacted following the adoption of the Amended Social Protection Law.

**Measure 2.3 Enhance accessibility of public building to persons with disabilities and ensure full accessibility of public institutions’ websites to all citizens, including persons with disabilities and the elderly**

Description of the implemented measure

The accessibility issue in Serbia will be addressed through the creation of a sound legislative and institutional framework. To that effect, the Law on the Use of Guide Dogs for Assisted Mobility (RS Official Gazette No 29/15) and the Law on the Use of Sign Language (RS Official Gazette No 38/15). The Law on the Use of Guide Dogs for Assisted Mobility for the first time regulates the right of persons with disabilities to use guide dogs for assisted mobility, primarily the right of blind and partially sighted persons, but also other persons who have Person with Disability status, who require guide dogs to assist their mobility, and independence, both in terms of getting around unhindered and safe, and in terms of facilitating physical access to public buildings, public transport, and public and working spaces. The Law on the Use of Sign Language allows people with hearing loss to exercise their right to communicate, in accordance with their needs, and contributes to creating an accessible environment for the hard of hearing and deaf who would otherwise not be able to fully participate in social life without sign language as a natural form of communication. With this, Serbia has complied with Article 9 of the Convention on Persons with Disabilities by taking appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. This measure was partially implemented in 2018.

**OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE SUPPORT TO (BIOLOGICAL) FAMILIES AT RISK, CONTINUE THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION PROCESS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.**

**DEVELOPMENT OF NON-INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

**Measure 3.1 Adopt a bylaw on earmarked transfers, which would regulate additional funding of local-level social care services from the national level**

Description of the implemented measure

For a more equitable development of social protection measures across the entire territory of Serbia, in 2016, the state introduced the mechanism of earmarked transfers through the adoption of the Regulation on Earmarked Transfers, thus enabling the transfer of funds from national to local level, specifically, to local government units whose level of development is below the national average and that do not possess sufficient funds to independently finance the establishment and development of social care services in their territory. The Regulation establishes that earmarked transfers will be granted to local government units belonging to group 4, which includes the most underdeveloped local governments, regardless of their share in funding social protection services within their purview. Local governments in the second and third group by level of development will be funded through complementary, i.e. supportive funding in line with regulations governing regional development, in other words, the local government units from group 2 and 3 have the obligation to earmark funds for social protection from their own budgets through decisions on budget funding for social protection services within the purview of the local government for the budget year for which social earmarked transfers are made.

Pursuant to the Social Protection Law and regulations on funding local government units, the Republic is securing funds from the budget for earmarked transfers to support social protection services at local level defined in local decision on social protection rights and services.

Budget funds of the Republic of Serbia are earmarked for this purpose. Following the adoption of the amended Social Protection Law, the Regulation on Earmarked Transfers will also be revised.

 The Regulation on Earmarked Transfers was adopted in 2016. A total of 109 contracts on earmarked transfers were signed with local government units in 2018 in connection with social protection services within the purview of local governments that are funded through earmarked transfers from the budget of the Republic of Serbia.

A total of RSD 689,999,999.90 was earmarked for this purpose in 2018.

**Measure 3.2 Launch programmes aimed at strengthening local capacities to establish supported living services for persons with disabilities**

Description of the implemented measure

At the time of reporting, the data on the number of clients using supported living services was not available because the annual reports on the activity of social protection institutions were not fully processed.

A training programme in the delivery of Supported Living Services – Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Service Delivery was implemented in Montenegro for a group of 24 participants in 2018. So far, none of the two accredited training programmes in the delivery of supported living services were implemented in Serbia.

Data on the number of users of supported living services in 2018 were not available at the time of reporting. Also, none of the two accredited training programmes in the field of assisted living were implemented in 2018.

The planned budget for Measures 3.1. and 3.5. amounted to RSD 1,500,000,000 and EUR 4,778,000.

**Measure 3.3 Develop models on the delivery of content and the modality of establishing services at the local level, and develop programmes and train potential service providers**

Description of the implemented measure

To provide support for local governments to establish social protection services at local level, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities prepared and published guidelines for local governments titled “Models and Recommendations for Improving the Social Protection Legislative Framework”. These guidelines aim to support local governments in implementing social policies within their purview, especially in the section that addresses the revision of the Decision on Social Protection pursuant to the applicable Social Protection Law of 2011. The Guidebook contains proposal of the following model acts, specifically: a Model Decision on Social Protection, a proposal for a Rulebook on conditions for securing and delivering services; proposal for a Rulebook on conditions for securing and delivering the following standardized social care services: home help, day care, personal escort of the child, personal assistance and shelter/drop-in services.

A model of local acts establishing social protection services at local level was developed in 2016 and is available on the website of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities[[58]](#footnote-58).

The planned budget for Measures 3.1. and 3.5. amounted to RSD 1,500,000,000 and EUR 4,778,000.

**Measure 3.4 Improve the capacities needed to expand and develop non-institutional services, such as personal assistance, supportive housing for young people leaving the case system, shelters for domestic violence victims and children’s personal attendants**

Description of the implemented measure

Despite plans to reduce the number of residents in residential social care facilities in 2016, data of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs reveal that the number of residents in residential social care institutions increased from 13,755 in 2014 to 13,808 at the end of 2016.

In December 2014, a total of 837 children, and in December 2017 a total of 761 children were placed in residential care. The number of children in residential care was decreased by 9% from 2014 to 2017.

The number of community-based social care services in the total number of services increased (Table 1).[[59]](#footnote-59)

**Number of social welfare services at local community level**

Table 1.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of service | Number of services, by year  |
| **2016** | **2017**  |
| Day care | 23 | 35 |
| Personal escort | 13 | 7 |
| Personal assistant | 7 | 11 |
| Home help | 39 | 62 |
| Shelters | 34 | 8 |
| Drop-in centres | 1 | 2 |
| Supported living | 4 | 4 |
| TOTAL | **121** | **129** |

The other indicator, which is the increased number of users of social care services for each of the established services, was not monitored in 2014. Data for 2016 and 2017 are available, based on the annual activity reports of licensed social care service providers, (Table 2). Considering that the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia only started collecting these reports in 2016, no data is available for the baseline year (2014). The increase in the number of users of community-based social care services is evident.

**Number of beneficiaries of social welfare services at the local community level**

Table 2.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of service | Number of beneficiaries, by year  |
| **2016** | **2017**  |
| Day care | 705 | 867 |
| Personal escort | 461 | 616 |
| Personal assistant | 119 | 153 |
| Home help | 9,574 | 12,008 |
| Shelters | 2,266 | 838 |
| Drop-in centres | 295 | 356 |
| Supported living | 45 | 37 |
| TOTAL | **13,465** | **14,875** |

**Measure 3.5 Upgrade the capacities of the social protection system to ensure access to rights and provide services to trafficking victims**

Description of the implemented measure

The first Shelter for victims of human trafficking, as the first of its kind in the social protection system, was opened at the beginning of February 2019. It is intended for women and girls older than 16 years of age. The shelter provides lodging, 24-hour surveillance, high security level, adequate help and assistance.

 The indicator “operation of a shelter for trafficking victims ensured” was achieved.

The planned budget for Measures 3.1. and 3.5. amounted to RSD 1,500,000,000 and EUR 4,778,000.

**NON-MATERIAL SUPPORT TO BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES AT RISK**

**Measure 3.6 Amend the rulebook on inter-sectoral committees, change the modality of operation**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 3.7 Develop training programmes on supporting families at risk of having their children separated and train professionals in the social protection sector to deliver these programmes to service providers**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 3.8 Define professional procedures for the separation of children from biological families**

Description of the implemented measure

Pursuant to Article 332(2) of the Family Law, the Centre for Social Work as the guardianship authority has the authority to implement child protection interventions that involve separation from the biological family and placement in temporary guardianship. In addition, the Rulebook on the Organization, Norms and Standards for the Activity of Centres for Social Work (RS Official Gazette No. 59/2008, 37/2010, 39/2011 – as amended and 1/2012 – as amended) contains provisions that apply in child protection interventions implemented by centres for social work that involve separation of the child from their biological family. Specifically, under Article 51 of the Rulebook, the centre for social work shall provide urgent intervention services, directly and in cooperation with other services and authorities in the local community, when this is necessary to protect the child, and shall take action to ensure the safety of the child when there are reasonable grounds to believe that failure to take urgent action within its purview could put the life, health and development of the child in need of protection at risk. The official protocol for the assessment of the situation and needs of the child, as well as for planning a package of measures and services, is also prescribed by the aforementioned rulebook.

Upon separating the child from its biological family, and placing the child in temporary guardianship, including providing alternative accommodation for the child, the guardianship authority is required to immediately file legal action for the termination of parental rights against the child’s parents, or for the protection of the child’s rights. These interventions are part of the regular practice of the centres for social work. In addition, 499 practitioners of the centres for social work were trained through an accredited training programme in the “Implementation of guardianship in the Centres for Social Work – the role, obligations and responsibilities of case managers and lawyers” so that they are able to implement this child protection intervention.

The control mechanism is regulated in the currently applicable Social Protection Law – through inspection oversight and monitoring the work of expert practitioners (according to the present legislative solution it only applies to a part of the service providers). Pursuant to the Law, supervisory support is within the purview of the National Social Protection Institute. The current amendments to the Social Protection Law envisages the enhancement of these elements of the social protection system's quality assurance.

There is a standard operating procedure for the relocation of the child from its natural environment, and the control mechanism is regulated by the current Social Protection Law. It is expected that this mechanism will be improved with the adoption of the new law.

**Measure 3.9 Introduce the practice of early identification of and provide support to pregnant women at risk (cross-sectoral project)**

No cross-sectoral project was developed in 2018, nor was a protocol developed for early identification and provision of support to pregnant women at risk (in cooperation with health care institutions). The start of this activity has been postponed to 2019 and beyond.

**Measure 3.10 Regulate in more detail the needs assessment and planning of support to children with developmental disabilities and their families**

Description of the implemented measure

The measure was partially implemented by piloting the services of family assistants. Amendments to the Law on Social Protection envisage the services of family assistants as part of the range of intensive support services designed for families with children. Amendments to the Law on Social Protection set the legal grounds for establishing centres for children, youth and families that will deliver intensive support services to families with children.

The procedures and tools for needs assessment and planning support for children with developmental disabilities and their families will be established after the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Social Protection.

In 2018, the National Social Protection Institute implemented the following groups of activities: support for cooperation and exchange among stakeholders involved in delivering the services of family assistants, organizing and implementing the necessary further trainings of service providers, analysing the service from the perspective of its effects in preventing and curbing domestic violence against children, and supporting the activity of the Working Group established to amend the Law on Social Protection in the part defining intensive support services to families with children, and to improve the draft bylaws.

The measure has been partially implemented by piloting the service of family assistants.

**DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION**

**Measure 3.11 Develop an institution transformation plan, also in order to use more efficiently the existing infrastructure and professional resources as the number of residents in institutions decreases**

Description of the implemented measure

The first working versions of the Strategy for the Development of the Social Protection System 2019–2025 and the Strategy for the Deinstitutionalization and Development of Community-Based Service 2019 – 2025 with Action Plan, were developed in 2018. The adoption of transformation plans for each individual residential care institution is one of the expected outcomes of the deinstitutionalization strategy.

This Measure has been partially implemented, considering that plans for the transformation of residential care institutions are currently being adopted.

The planned budget for Measures 3.11. and 3.12. amounted to EUR 2,478,000.

**Measure 3.12 Enhance the development of kinship care, kinship foster care, foster care for children with disabilities, and foster care for children victims of trafficking in human beings and other forms of violence**

Description of the implemented measure

A research project was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Social Policy and Social Work Research Centre of the Faculty of Political Science of the Belgrade University and the Institute of Psychology, to assess the welfare of adolescents in kinship foster care in Serbia. This research aims to identify and draw attention to future needs of the child protection system reform, as a follow-up to the current activities of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and other partners in the implementation of the social protection system reform. The field survey (quantitative and qualitative) of the selected representative sample was successfully finalized. The plan envisages the finalization of the data analysis and report in the first half of 2019.

The planned budget for Measures 3.11. and 3.12. amounted to EUR 2,478,000.

**OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVE THE LONG-TERM CARE SYSTEM**

**Measure 4.1 Review the rationale for having an attendance allowance under two systems (an insurance-based allowance and a social benefit) and analyse the basic allowance level**

Description of the implemented measure

The conditions are not yet ripe for implementing this right under one system.

In 2016, 2017, and 2018 preparations were made to conduct an assessment, initially planned for 2016 and 2017. The assessment will be implemented in 2019 and 2020.

**Measure 4.2 Disseminate information on and provide assistance in exercising rights**

Description of the implemented measure

This measure will be implemented in 2019.

**Measure 4.3 Link cash benefits to the relevant services**

Description of the implemented measure

In 2018, a working group was established in the Ministry to prepare the Law on Social Card with the aim of linking information systems of various sectors (social protection, child protection, veteran and disability protection sectors). The hardware and software infrastructure is scheduled to be installed in the data centre by the end 2019. In fact, this activity is defined as one of the priority goals in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Government of Serbia Programme. It is expected that the linking of databases and the setting up of an information system will improve the targeting of recipients of financial social assistance.

The different databases are already partially linked with one another, considering that the centres for social work already have access to six databases from which they directly retrieve data required in the procedure of processing claims regulated under the Law on Social Protection. In fact, the Law on General Administrative Procedure prescribes the obligation of the first instance authority to obtain supporting evidence of its own motion. This is implemented through the eZUP system which enables access to the databases of: the Ministry of Interior, the Geodetic Authority, the National Employment Service, civil registers, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia, and the Tax Administration.

**Measure 4.4 Define the network of social and health care institutions**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 5: IMPROVE SERVICE QUALITY, STRENGTHEN OVERSIGHT AND REGULATORY MECHANISMS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

**SERVICE QUALITY**

**Measure 5.1 Complete the process of licensing social service providers and professionals, and expand the range of accredited training programmes for professionals, on the basis of which licences are obtained**

Description of the implemented measure

The licensing process is an ongoing process, running according to the expected schedule, and the process of renewal of the first batch of licenses previously issued is due to being in 2018.

In 2018, 18 programmes were submitted for accreditation, of which 15 (83.33%) were classified as basic programmes. For 7 programmes, the applicants were required to supplement their application with additional documents. The complete and duly filed applications for accreditation were entered in the Register of Applications for Accreditation in order of receipt.

A total of 19 programmes submitted for accreditation in 2017 and 2018 were accredited in 2018. Furthermore, the accreditation of 64 programmes was renewed. At the end of 2018, there were 170 programmes in the Register of Accredited Programmes, and this is an overview of the breakdown by content: Development of General Competences in Social Protection (36 in total), Support to Adults and the Elderly in the Social Protection System (24 in total), Support to children and youth (25 in total), Support to marginalized groups (13 in total), Support to persons and children with disabilities (35 in total), Support to family (37 in total).

Over the course of 2018, 263 programmes, attended by 4,912 participants, were realized and entered in the Register of Implemented Programmes. This number is not final, considering that Reports on trainings held at the end of the year usually arrive within the first few months of the next year.

A total of 128 licenses were issued to social protection organizations for the delivery of services. A total of 464 licenses was issued to social protection organizations up to 31 December 2018[[60]](#footnote-60). In 2018, 255 licenses were issued to 255 persons. Nineteen new programmes were accredited in 2018, so that there were 170 accredited programmes in the Register at the end of 2018[[61]](#footnote-61).

The planned budget for Measures 5.1. and 5.4. amounted to RSD 1,060,422,262 and EUR 3,100,000.

**Measure 5.2 Formulate and implement support programmes for non-state social service providers**

Description of the implemented measure

A total of 109 contracts on earmarked transfers were signed in 2018 with local governments (LGs) in connection with the delivery of social protection services within the purview of the LGs funded by earmarked transfers from the budget of the Republic of Serbia in accordance with the Regulation on Earmarked Transfers. RSD 689,999,999.90 were earmarked for this purpose in 2018.

A public call was launched inviting applications for funding of project proposals and activities of public interest in the area of family protection, child protection and social protection, and 12 projects were selected for funding with a total of RSD 5 million.

A programme was introduced to support non-state providers of social protection services under which 109 contracts on earmarked transfers were signed with LGs in 2018 in connection with the delivery of social protection services within the purview of LGs that are funded earmarked transfers from the budget of the Republic of Serbia. In addition, 12 projects were funded under the Public call inviting project proposal for funding of project proposals and activities of public interest in the area of family protection, child protection and social protection.

A total of RSD 689,999,999.90 was earmarked for this purpose in 2018.

**Measure 5.3 Improved mechanisms for mapping social protection clients**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 5.4 Improved quality of care in the institutions that will maintain their residential function**

According to data of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, a total of RSD 229,376,997.00 was allocated for social protection institutions in 2018, under budget item 511 – (buildings and structures), and RSD 156,936,704,00 under 512 - (equipment). There is no information about the effects of the funds invested.

 A total of 250 on-site inspections were implemented in 2018 and 8 bans on the operation of illegal homes for the elderly were issues.

The planned budget for Measures 5.1. and 5.4. amounted to RSD 1,060,422,262 and EUR 3,100,000.

**REGULATION**

**Measure 5.5 Introduce elements to ensure service individualization in line with individual client needs**

Description of the implemented measure

Pursuant to the Law on Social Protection, an individual service plan is developed for every client, in cooperation with the centre for social work and service provider, and with the participation of the client.

The provider of social protection services prepared an individual protection plan for the client, in accordance with the assessed needs of the client for support, other needs, and the capacities of the service provider. The implementation of this measure is implemented continuously at an annual level.

**Measure 5.6 Analyse the practice of developing and applying eligibility criteria for clients of non-institutional social care services**

Description of the implemented measure

The development of eligibility criteria for clients of non-institutional social care services is the responsibility of the service providers. A qualitative analysis of the nature of their services is performed in the licensing process – for the purpose of standardizing criteria, while practices and compliance with set criteria are checked through on-site inspections.

While eligibility criteria for non-institutional social care services are considered to be in place and consistent with efficient and equitable exercise of rights at the local level, this measure should, nonetheless, be permanently monitored.

**OVERSIGHT, MONITORING, EVALUATION**

**Measure 5.7 Introduce monitoring and evaluation of social care service quality (including client satisfaction assessment)**

Description of the implemented measure

The quality of social care services is assessed in the process of licensing and renewing the licenses of providers, through on-site inspections (regular, extraordinary, follow-up) and through the right of clients to lodge a complaint or appeal when they are not satisfied with the service provided.

Following the entry into force of the Law on Inspection Oversight, the social protection inspectorate has introduced the practice of ordering service providers to perform self-evaluations using checklists.

**Measure 5.8 Expand regional foster care and adoption centres (establish two more centres) and define and improve their oversight function**

Description of the implemented measure

The Foster Care and Adoption Centre in Subotica is in the process of being established. This Centre is under the responsibility of the AP Vojvodina. The AP Vojvodina government issued a decision establishing this centre, and appointing an acting director. Currently, activities are underway to draft its internal acts, and the Centre is scheduled to begin its activity by the end of 2019.

**Measure 5.9 The exchange of experiences and selection of good practices in the area of social care services established at the local level have proved to be a good evaluation instrument and an important motivation factor for improving the services within the mandate of the local governments**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 5.10 Strengthen inspection services (increase the number of staff, introduce a new organization and modality of operation)**

Description of the implemented measure

The Social Protection Inspectorate is structured at three tiers of administration: Inspection Oversight Department of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs under the Family Care and Social Protection Sector, the Provincial Social Protection Inspectorate under the Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality, and the inspectorate of the Secretariat for Social Protection of the City of Belgrade. A total of 13 social protection inspectors (9 at the level of the Republic, 3 at the level of the Province and 1 in Belgrade) were tasked with conducting on-site inspections of social care service providers in 2018[[62]](#footnote-62).

The Social Protection Inspectorate has 9 inspectors at the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, 3 at the Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality and 1 at the Secretariat for Social Protection of the City of Belgrade.

**OBJECTIVE 6: LINK CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK TO HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS, AS WELL AS THE POLICE, THE JUDICIARY, CSOs REPRESENTING CERTAIN VULNERABLE GROUPS, THE RED CROSS AND RELEVANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

**Measure 6.1 Spread the practice of procuring documents on behalf of the client, support particularly vulnerable groups in applying for certain entitlements**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on General Administrative Procedure prescribes the obligation of the first instance authority to procure evidence of their own motion required to process client applications and claims. This was made possible under the said Law by enabling access to the databases of the Ministry of Interior, the Geodetic Authority, the National Employment Service, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia and the Tax Administration, as well as to civil registers.

In 2017, the centres for social work were enabled to directly retrieve data from six databases, and in 2018, activities started on drafting the Law on Social Card, which will enable the interconnection of three databases (social protection database, child protection database, and veteran disability protection database) and the procurement of documents on behalf of the client.

**Measure 6.2 Link the different sectors’ information systems to ensure that clients have access to their social protection rights without administrative barriers**

Description of the implemented measure

The social work centres and the Ministry of Labour do not have a shared social protection information system, and setting one up is a priority. An analysis of the current situation was conducted and an implementation modality was identified that will begin with an analysis of the usability of the existing software application developed under the DILS project that was never put to use, so that a decision can be taken to either upgrade this application or develop a new one. It is expected that this analysis will be completed in the first half of 2019, while all the activities are scheduled to be completed in the forthcoming two-year period. The implementation of this measure is scheduled for the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 6.3 Enhance the system of cooperation between centres for social work and other authorities with a view to client protection and integrated approach**

Description of the implemented measure

On the basis of an assessment of the clients’ potentials and needs undertaken by the centre for social work independently or in cooperation with the relevant local government authority, and implementing agencies for the individual activities, a centre for social work may stipulate a cooperation protocol with other entities that could contribute to the social inclusion of the clients (e.g. the Red Cross, employment agencies, companies, enterprises for the vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, associations, and other).

Otherwise, Article 7 of the Law on Social Protection regulates cooperation in the delivery of social protection services: “institutions and other organizations providing social protection services defined by the law shall cooperate with preschool, primary, secondary and higher education institutions, health care institutions, the police, the judiciary and other state, provincial or local government agencies, associations and other legal and physical entities. Cooperation in delivering social protection services shall be established in the frame of and according to the terms laid down cooperation agreements.''

**Measure 6.4 Analyse, align and redefine the role of local-level stakeholders who emerged during the implementation of different projects targeting individual vulnerable groups and identify their multisectoral potentials (Roma coordinators, health mediators, youth offices, teacher assistants, etc.)**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**PENSIONS**

Serbia’s pension system is facing similar challenges as the systems of other European countries, primarily due to rapid demographic aging and an increase in the number of pensioners relative to the active population. In addition, Serbia has some of its own specificities – the “heritage” of unduly generous benefit schemes in the past; the use of the pension system to resolve the issue of redundancies in the transition process; the long-term decline and low unemployment rate; widespread informal economy activities and a shorter life expectancy compared to other European countries.

The major challenge for Serbia's pension system, just as for other countries, is to provide for adequate and at the same time financially sustainable pensions, however, these two objectives are difficult to reconcile.

**IMPROVING THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PENSION SYSTEM**

**OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE THE SYSTEM OF PENSIONS ACCRUED ON THE GROUNDS OF INCREASED PENSIONABLE SERVICE**

**Measure 1.1 Assess the possibility of terminating the disbursement of the portion of pension accrued under special regulations, in case of re-entry into insurance**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period due to a change in priorities in the area of pension and disability insurance.

**Measure 1.2 Assess the possibility of abolishing the 20% pension increase for the insure who exercise their right to pensions under special regulations**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period due to a change in priorities in the area of pension and disability insurance.

**Measure 1.3 Adopt bylaws on increased pensionable service for special categories (MoI, SIA, etc.)**

Description of the implemented measure

The Security Information Agency (SIA) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) enacted the relevant bylaws, or amendments to existing bylaws, in early 2015. The Tax Administration has done this in 2013. According to amendments to the Pension and Disability Insurance Law enacted in September 2018, new bylaws on increased pensionable service for special categories will be adopted within 18 months from the effective date of the law (i.e. by the end of March 2020).

**Measure 1.4 Assess the possibility of reforming the concept of increased pensionable service**

Description of the implemented measure

The assessment will be completed in 2019 or 2020. The implementation of this measure is planned for the 2019–2020.

**OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF PENSION AND DISABILITY INSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION**

**Measure 2.1 Improve databases in the Central Registry**

Description of the implemented measure

The Central Registry of Compulsory Social Insurance (CROSO) was established by the Government’s Decision Establishing the CROSO of July 2010, pursuant to the Law on the Central Registry of Compulsory Social Insurance (RS Official Gazette No 95/2018) and the law regulating the operation of public services. The operations of the CROSO are funded through the Republic of Serbia budget appropriations, Ministry of Finance section, in accordance with the Law on Ministries (RS Official Gazette No 44/14). The Law on the Central Registry of Compulsory Social Insurance defines the activity of the CROSO.

The CROSO is an electronic service commissioned in August 2013. The CROSO portal is intended for taxable entities to submit online applications for the registration of their employees with the compulsory social insurance system, and for the insured citizens to be able to check their compulsory social insurance data online. Furthermore, in January 2016, the electronic exchange of data between the Tax Administration and the Central Registry of Accounted and Paid Contributions, as well as the exchange of the same data between the Central Registry and the compulsory social insurance organizations (Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia, National Health Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia, and the National Employment Service).

Based on the foregoing, we can say that the CROSO accomplished full operability in 2016, hence, this measure has been implemented, in other words, no changes were registered relative to 2016 and 2017.

**Measure 2.2 Improve the efficiency of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the envisaged measure has been affected by a 9.5% increase in the number of claims received in 2018 relative to 2017, as well as the amendments to the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance. The amendments entered into force at the end of September 2018, and made it necessary to start a huge number of extraordinary procedures related to already established pension and disability insurance entitlements, and finally by a reduced staff capacity, which, when combined, have led to falling short of the 90.5% target.

The foregoing information can be verified by inspecting the PDI Fund Strategic Plan 2018-2020, and the Financial Plan of the PDI Fund.

**Electronic data exchange with other states introduced**

Agreements on electronic exchange of PDI data signed with the Funds in the former SFRY (Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia) are currently being implemented. An agreement is yet to be signed with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to problems on the side of the Pension Fund of the Federation, despite the readiness of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia to move ahead with this, nevertheless, an agreement on electronic PDI data exchange was signed with Republika Srpska.

There are no activities currently related to the stipulation of new agreements with pension funds in other countries. Regarding plans to sign agreements with the pension funds of Germany and Austria, there are some legal aspects that still have to be aligned with requirements on personal data protection. Preliminary talks started with the pension funds of Italy, Hungary and the Russian Federation.

**A document analysing the introduction of digital signatures developed**

An analysis was conducted of all business processes that regulate the implementation of the digital signature in the online operations of the PDI Fund. The expansion of the functionality of the E Portal has been an ongoing activity since 2014 until the present.

The foregoing information can be verified by inspecting the PDI Fund Strategic Plan 2018-2020.

**Improved electronic communication with clients (online applications for seven certificates enabled**)

In addition to the possibility of requesting certificates online, a new electronic services was made available in 2018 on the PDI Fund's website for the blind and partially sighted people, in the form of a “Read me“ option for listening to all of the website's content ( [www.pio.rs/Elektronski](http://www.pio.rs/Elektronski) servisi /E-ZAHTEVI - drop-down menu for request type).

**OBJECTIVE 3: ADAPT THE STATUTORY SOCIAL INSURANCE PARAMETERS TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES**

**Measure 3.1 Assess the possibility of tying the retirement age to changes in life exectancy**

Description of the implemented measure

The assessment will be completed in 2019 or 2020.

**Measure 3.2 Assess the possibility of revising early retirement requirements and parameters**

Description of the implemented measure

The assessment will be completed by the end of 2019.

**OBJECTIVE 4: REFORM STATUTORY SOCIAL INSURANCE RIGHTS**

**Measure 4.1 Assess the possibilities for reforming the concept of disability**

Description of the implemented measure

Due to changes in the priorities in the field of compulsory pension and disability insurance, the implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 4.2 Assess the possibility of reforming the entitlement to survivors’ pension**

Description of the implemented measure

Due to changes in the priorities in the field of compulsory pension and disability insurance, the implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 5: IMPROVE SAFEGUARDING OF THE MINIMUM LIVING STANDARD OF THE ELDERLY**

**Measure 5.1 Consider the concept of minimum pension and alternative measures for safeguarding the minimum living standard of the elderly**

Description of the implemented measure

Due to changes in the priorities in the field of compulsory pension and disability insurance, the implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019–2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 6: MAINTAIN PENSION ADEQUACY**

**Measure 6.1 Assess the modality of uprating pensions and the general point value**

Description of the implemented measure

Preparations for the assessment started in 2018. It is scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2019.

**Measure 6.2 Reform farmers’ insurance**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure is envisaged in the 2018-2020 period. The preliminary assessment and proposal was drafted in 2018 by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture. According to expectations, the assessment will be finalized and the proposal formulated in 2019 or 2020.

**OBJECTIVE 7: ENHANCE THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY PENSION FUNDS IN THE PENTIONS SYSTEM**

**Measure 7.1 Assess the ways to enhance the role of voluntary pension funds within the pension system**

Description of the implemented measure

This assessment will be implemented in 2019.

**HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

**REFORMS ADDRESSING CHALLENGES RELATING TO POPULATION HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY**

The group of objectives and measures/activities related to increasing health care accessibility includes financial accessibility of health care to all vulnerable groups, in particular the poor and the population over the age of 65, also improved physical accessibility to persons with disability and better cultural accessibility of health care to the Roma population, curbing discrimination against these groups and their inclusion through the development of inclusive health care services.

**OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE TO ALL VULNERABLE GROUPS**

**Measure 1.1. Increase budget allocations for the health care of persons at increased risk of disease and socially disadvantaged population in conformity with the Law on Compulsory Social Insurance Contributions (RS Official Gazette No 84/04, 61/05, 62/06, 5/09, 52/11, 101/11, 47/13, 108/13, 57/14, 68/14 – as amended, 112/15, 113/17 and 65/18)**

Description of the implemented measure

The Law on Health Insurance provides for the right to health insurance coverage for persons at increased risk of disease in need of significant social and medical treatment, and the socially disadvantaged population. The compulsory contributions for these persons are funded from the budget of the Republic of Serbia according to the contribution base and rate prescribed by the Law on Compulsory Social Insurance.

**Measure 1.2. Form mobile teams in the primary health care centres of dispersed municipalities to visit the elderly, persons with disabilities and Roma settlements in remote areas**

 Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 1.3. Establish telephone health advice services for the elderly and persons with disabilities in primary health care centres**

Description of the implemented measure

In primary health care centres, besides making direct contact, patients may also call the individual services, where they have their chosen doctor (general practitioner, gynaecologist, paediatrician, dentist), by telephone. Some health care centres have organized advice services for particular diseases, and chosen medical practitioners are required to provide patients with information and advice, as part of their regular activity.

**Measure 1.4. Introduce regular institutionalized training for volunteers from the non-governmental sector in assisting the elderly and persons with disabilities**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 2: ENSURE BETTER ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE TO THE POPULATION OVER 65**

**Measure 2.1. Develop and strengthen work in areas of home care and palliative care in the primary health care centres of all “elderly” municipalities in Serbia**

Description of the implemented measure

Primary health care centres have organized home care medical services or, in the adult health care department, emergency care and visiting nurses’ services to provide necessary medical services to patients who are not able to go to the primary health care centre and physician.

**Measure 2.2. Continue the establishment of dedicated palliative care units within extended treatment and care wards in inpatient health care institutions with a stock of beds in line with the needs imposed by the health status of the elderly in the municipality**

Description of the implemented measure

The activities on the implementation of by this measure started earlier, under the 2009-2015 Palliative Care Strategy. The results of the assessment, including data on established dedicated palliative care units by health care facility, the number of patient days and average bed occupancy, are contained in the report of the Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr Milan Jovanovic Batut” for 2017. With a view to accomplishing the objective set under Measure 2.2, healthcare workers involved in palliative care were trained under the **Development of Palliative Care in Serbia** project.

 Data are still not available to adequately assess the achievement of indicators, because the implementation of this measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 2.3. Equip the polyvalent community nursing service better to visit and assist the elderly suffering from chronic mass non-communicable diseases**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 3: ENSURE BETTER ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Measure 3.1. Install access ramps in all health care institutions where they do not exist**

Description of the implemented measure

 State-owned health care institutions, (institutions defined under the Regulation on the Network of Health Care Institutions) are acting in compliance with and meeting their statutory obligations with respect to technical accessibility standards designed to ensure the unhindered mobility of persons with disabilities, so that they can exercise their right to health care.

 The new Law on Health Care (RS Official Gazette No 25/19), adopted after the public consultations process with, among other, several citizens' associations, envisages the principle of equity and the principle of accessibility of health care, which entail:

The principle of health care equity prohibits discrimination in health care services provision on grounds of race, sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, nationality, social background, religious, political or other belief, financial standing, culture, language, type of disease, mental or physical disability, or any other personal characteristic that could be the cause of discrimination. Affirmative action to ensure the full equality, protection and development of disadvantaged persons or groups are not to be considered discriminatory.

The principle of health care accessibility entails the provision of adequate health care to the population, and in particular persons with disabilities, which is accessible, in terms of physical, communicational, geographical and financial access, and culturally acceptable.

**Measure 3.2. Procure gynaecological and dental chairs adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure has been postponed to the 2019-2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE BETTER ACCESSIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE TO THE ROMA POPULATION**

**Measure 4.1. Expand the Roma health mediator network**

Description of the implemented measure

Pursuant to the Law on Health Care, under Chapter II, 1. National Public Health Programme, specifically Article 11 thereof, in 2008 the Ministry of Health supported a programme for the introduction of health mediators in Serbia's health care system designed to improve the health of and delivery of health care services to groups of the population at higher risk of disease.

In accordance with Serbia's Roma Social Inclusion Strategy for the period from 2016 to 2025 and the Action Plan of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Health expanded the health mediators programme by hiring additional 26 health mediators. The Ministry has a team of 85 mediators in 60 municipalities in Serbia.

The health mediators' role is to keep records on the state of health of the residents of informal settlements, advise them about the need to vaccinate children, the importance of proper nutrition and hygiene, and about reproductive health. The task of health mediators is to provide better insight into the situation in these settlements, and to inform residents about the importance of seeing a doctor regularly, she is the link between the health care system and the residents of informal settlements.

Health mediators are hired by primary health care centres, in the polyvalent community nursing service department, for outreach activities to connect the Roma community with health care services, to educate the Roma population in the field of health care, to improve the health of the Roma population and the availability of health care system to vulnerable groups. Health mediators have to be able to speak Romani, and they are all women.

Under the Health Ministry's health mediators' programme, 45,264 men, 49,146 women and 53,148 children were registered, 11,948 were booked with their chosen physician, 14,364 children were immunized, 13,113 persons received a health card. Even better results are expected in 2019.

**Measure 4.2. Implement the Action Plan for improving Roma health**

Description of the implemented measure

The introduction of health mediators in working with the Roma population is the most successful public policy measure launched since 2009. Through their outreach activities designed to raise the awareness of Roma, in particular Roma women, health mediators indisputably made a significant contribution not only to increasing accessibility of health care and improving the state of health of the Roma population, but also to enabling the Roma population to exercise their rights stemming from the social protection system, to obtain personal documents, to enrol children in preschool and school education.

Mini grants were awarded to civil society organizations engaged in improving the health of Roma and vulnerable groups. The objective of the public call for the mini grants scheme was to improve the health of the Roma population in Serbia, based on the Action Plan for Roma Health adopted by the Government of Serbia in the framework of the Roma Decade. The priorities were defined on the basis of Serbia's Roma Social Inclusion Strategy from 2016 to 2025, and in accordance with Article 45(1) of the Law on the Government. The constitutional grounds for adopting the Strategy are enshrined in Articles 18, 19, 21, 23, 48, 49, 60, 64, 66, 68, 69, 71, 75 – 81, 97, 137, 178, 179, 183. and 190 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The results, analysis and reviews of experiences from previous projects, the data and indicators related to the health of and health care provided to the Roma population contribute to prioritizing the health care issues to be addressed through project activities primarily in areas in which health mediators are not involved.

Status of indicators: no data are available for monitoring the achievement of the indicators. Budget spending: RSD 5,500,000.00.

**OBJECTIVE 5: IMPROVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND HEALTH CARE OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION**

**Measure 5.1. Adopt an Action Plan for the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Strategy**

Description of the implemented measure

Serbia's 2018–2022 Strategy on Safety and Health at Work was adopted in 2018, along with the Action Plan for its implementation, and was published in the RS Official Gazette No 96/18 of 11 December 2018.

An Action Plan was adopted for the implementation of the Strategy of Safety and Health at Work in the Republic of Serbia 2018–2020

The planned budget for 2018 amounted to RSD 1,630,000.00, which was spent in its entirety.

**Measure 5.2. Improve oversight and implementation of occupational health and safety measures**

Description of the implemented measure

The Strategy on Safety and Health at Work in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2018 to 2022, with the Action Plan for its implementation (RS Official Gazette No 96/18) envisages specific objective 2. in the implementation of a Strategy for the Prevention of Injuries at Work and Occupational Diseases. The measure designed to contribute to the achievement of this objective is the improvement of inspection oversight. The following actions are envisaged with a view to implementing the Action Plan measure: Standardization of on-site inspections in the area of occupational safety and health, Training and professional development of labour inspectors for conducting occupational safety and health inspections. Trainings of labour inspectors in the use new technologies, new risks, contemporary approaches and practices in the field of occupational safety and health as well as in the field of inspection oversight, and the advisory role of the Labour Inspectorate. This activity is scheduled for 2019 to 2021.

**Measure 5.3. Strengthen occupational health care (occupational medicine) services**

Description of the implemented measure

In addition to the relevant provisions of the Law on Health Care, the Law on Public Health also establishes that the work environment and occupational health fall under the scope of the public health sector activity. The implementation of public health in this area includes, among other, the development and implementation of an information system for collecting data and monitoring the epidemiological situation in the field of occupational diseases, work-related diseases, injuries at work and proposing measures for the prevention and monitoring thereof, as well as for assessing the conditions of work, professional risks and their impact on the health of the working population.

In this context, the List of Occupational Diseases is currently being updated, and a special Rulebook is being developed to regulate the criteria for providing public health care services in this field.

**Measure 5.4. Increase the coverage of the unemployed active population by health care**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure is scheduled for the 2019-2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 6: REDUCE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST VULNERABLE GROUPS AND IMPROVE THEIR INCLUSION**

**Measure 6. 1. Implement and oversee the implementation of the Law on Patients’ Rights**

Description of the implemented measure

Following the adoption of the Patient Rights Law, the Ministry undertook a set of activities needed to ensure the implementation of this Law.

In monitoring the implementation of the Law, and in accordance with the Ombudsman’s recommendation, provided in its Special Report on the Activity of Mechanisms for the Protection of Patients’ Rights of May 2016, the health inspectorate established a unified methodology for monitoring the inspection oversight activities of the health inspectorate, on the basis of petitions submitted with respect to violations of patients’ rights, which was used in 2018.

In 2018, 2,141 petitions were submitted to the health inspectorate in connection with violations of patients’ rights, оf which 92% concerned 5, of a total of 19 patients’ rights.

Of all the founded petitions that concerned violations of patients’ right in 2018, 90% concerned the following 3 rights: the right to quality health care services, the right to a second specialist opinion and the right to access to health care. The quality of the health care system on the whole, and patients’ satisfaction with health care services provided could be improved by as much as 90% just by improving compliance with these three rights of patients.

The health inspectorate issued a total of 437 orders for the elimination of non-compliances and filed 4 criminal charges in 2018, based on 422 well-founded petitions in the field of patient rights.[[63]](#footnote-63)

**Measure 6.2. Raise vulnerable groups’ awareness of the rights to health and patients’ rights**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure is scheduled for the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 6.3. Develop integrated services in the local community (health, social and education)**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of this measure is scheduled for the 2019-2020 period.

**Measure 6.4. Implement and oversee the implementation of the Law on the Protection of Persons with Mental Health Difficulties**

Description of the implemented measure

As part of its regular and extraordinary inspections – the planned ones as well as those not planned (including actions taken upon receiving notification by clients) – the Health Ministry's health inspectorate has been continuously overseeing compliance with the Rulebook on detailed criteria for the use of physical restraint and isolation of persons with mental disorders receiving treatment in mental health institutions.

 There were no notifications/reports in 2018 warranting on-site verification of statutory compliance, nevertheless, at the end of June 2018, extraordinary on-site inspections were conducted of the Mental Health Clinic Dr. Laza Lazarevic in Belgrade, the Special Mental Health Hospital in Kovin and the Special Mental Health Hospital Gornja Toponica, with the aim of checking compliance with statutory obligations related to the restriction of rights of persons with mental disorders, development individual treatment plans, notification and obtaining informed consent of persons with mental disorders to the proposed medical treatment, determining the reason for the use of physical restraint and isolation, criteria for the use of physical restraint and isolation, competences for adopting a decision on the use of such measure, monitoring the use of physical restraint and isolation, as well as related to monitoring the health condition of the person subject to such measures.

 In the course of on-site inspections to the mental health facilities listed herein, the health inspectorate did not identify any omissions in the procedure for adopting a decision on the use of such measures, or in the use and monitoring thereof, or in the follow-up actions by the medical staff, including proper medical record-keeping.

**COURSE OF ACTION TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES RELATING TO PUBLIC HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY**

Planning and education health care professionals in accordance with a national strategy of human resources in the health care sector, which we do not have yet, would contribute to improve the management of human resources in public health care and attain public health care system objectives. A better assessment and planning of needs for health care professionals would contribute to optimizing the number of students enrolled in medical schools and universities, as well as the ratio of administrative to expert personnel, which – if unfavourable – can put a burden on the health care system.

**OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE THE PLANNING OF NEEDS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**

**Measure 1.1. Adopt a Health Care Professionals Development Plan**

Description of the implemented measure

A Health Care Professionals Development Plan has yet to be adopted. The new Law on Health Care, envisaged the adoption and enactment of a Health Care Professionals Development Plan, by April 2019, by the minister for health in consultation with the minister for education, containing, among other, a plan for enrolment in medical schools and universities. A realistic plan would be to adopt the Plan in 2020.

**Measure 1.2 Train managers and employees in public health institutions in staff planning**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 1.3. Train managers in health care institutions in human resources management skills**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 2: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SCHOOLS AND FACULTIES IN THE AREA OF HEALTH/MEDICINE IN LINE WITH THE COUNTRY’S NEEDS**

**Measure 2.1. Introduce numerus clausus at the national level**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 2.2. Change the modality of funding faculties – on the basis of the quality of knowledge and skills gained by students, rather than the number of students enrolled**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**Measure 2.3. Train managers and employees in public health institutes in human resources management skills.**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of the measure is scheduled for the 2019–2020 period.

**OBJECTIVE 3: OPTIMISE THE NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL STAFF IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

**Measure 3.1 Outsource ancillary services in health care institutions (food preparation, hygiene, laundry and other services)**

Description of the implemented measure

The implementation of measures is scheduled for 2019–2020.

1. Report on the Implementation of the NEAP for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Statistical Office of Serbia significantly improved the quality of its Labour Force Survey data in 2014 and 2015, for the purpose of achieving compliance with the Eurostat recommendations and international comparability. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) revised its data in 2014, to ensure data comparability at international level for 2014 and 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Statistical Office of Serbia significantly improved the quality of its Labour Force Survey data in 2014 and 2015, for the purpose of achieving compliance with the Eurostat recommendations and international comparability. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) revised its data in 2014, to ensure data comparability at international level for 2014 and 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The total budget allocation in 2018 (according to the NES Financial Plan) for the implementation of ALMPs and vocational rehabilition measures/incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities amounted to amounted to RSD 3,650,000,000 and RSD 550 million, respectively, (the latter amount was disbursed by the NES through the Budget Fund for Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities). In the period between 1 January and 31 December 2018, local government units allocated RSD 928,087,912.88 under the agreement regulating mutual rights and obligations in the implementation of active labour market policies set out in local employment action plans (co-funding and technical assistance).

In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018, RSD 2,795,230,665.40 were spent to finance active labour market policy measures. In the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018, RSD 451,917,883.90 were spent to finance vocational rehabilitation and incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities from the Budget Fund for Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Report on the NES' activity for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Law on Employment and Unemployment Benefits was amended in 2015. Source: RS Official Gazette No 38 of 29 April 2015, and the target for this measure was achieved prior to the adoption of this Programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. NES. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Report on the Implementation of the NEAP in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Report on the Implementation of the NEAP in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from Januaty to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. NES Activity Report for 2018, Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018, Report on the Implementation of the NEAP for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement in 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Treci_nacionalni_izvestaj_o_socijalnom_ukljucivanju_i_smanjenju_siromastva_2014%E2%80%932017.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. NEAP for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), Labour Force Survey (LFS), annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. NES Activity Report for 2018, Report on the Implementation of the NEAP for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. NES Annual Activity Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. NES Statistical Bulletin for December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. NES Statistical Bulletin for December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Report on the Implementation of the NES Performance Agreement for the period from January to December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS; annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, LFS; annual average. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. NES Activity Report for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/periodicna-evaluacija-programa-lokalnih-inicijativa-za-zaposljavanje-mladih/> [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The final reports on the implementation of projects by civil organizations and local government units were funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Report on the Implementation of the NEAP for 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. RS Official Gazette No 27/18 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. RS Official Gazette No 104/2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Law on Dual Education, RS Official Gazette No 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Правилник о ученичким задругама „Сл.гласник РС“ бр.31/2018 од 27.4.2018 године. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. [Report on student performance on the primary education final year exam in the school year 2017/2018 (in Serbian).](https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/%D0%98%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98-%D0%BE-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%80%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%98%D1%83-%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B0-%D1%83-%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%98-2017-2018-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Rulebook on quality standards for educational institutions, RS Official Gazette No 14/18. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Reports for the school year 2017/2018, as well as for previous school years are available on the following link: [http://ceo.edu.rs/извештаји-о-реализацији-и-резултатим/](http://ceo.edu.rs/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98%D0%B8-%D0%BE-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BC/) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Decision on the Enrolment of Students in Secondary School in the School Year 2018/2019 No 611-00-505/2018-03 of 30 March 2018 and Rulebook on the Enrolment of Students in Secondary School in the School Year 2018/2019 (RS Official Gazette No 3/18). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Statistical Yearbooks, communications and newsletters of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The Agreement on Serbia's full-fledged merbership in the Erasmus+ Programme was signed on 5 February 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. For detailed information, please refer to: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg/selfie-tool> , <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/> ; <https://ec.europa.eu/education> [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Decision establishing the Belgrade Business Vocational Studies Academy (RS Official Gazette No 60/18 and 74/18). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Decision establishing the Belgrade Preschool Teacher Training College (RS Official Gazette No 26/19. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. <http://www.skgo.org/reports/details/1924> [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Annual activity report fr licenced social care service providers for 2016 and 2017. Considering hat the SORS started to collect reports from licensed social care service providers in 2016, no data is available for the baseline year (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Annual Plan of Inspections of the Social Protection Inspectorates for 2019, <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/aktuelnosti/obavestenja/plan-inspekcijskih-nadzora-inspekcije-socijalne-zastite-za-2019-godinu> [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Activity Report for 2018, National Social Protection Institute, <http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/media/1613/izve%C5%A1taj-o-radu-2018-cir.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Annual Plan of Social Protection Inspections for 2019, <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/aktuelnosti/obavestenja/plan-inspekcijskih-nadzora-inspekcije-socijalne-zastite-za-2019-godinu> [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Report on the Activity of the Health Inspectorate Department for 2018, available on the website of the Minsitry of Health and the Coordination Commission for Inspection Oversight. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)