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GAGAUZIAN MODERNIZATION CONVENTION

Analysis of the fourth session of the Working Group „Social infrastructure“ of GaMCon – Gagauzian Modernization Convention

The 4th Session of the Working Group focused on **social services** and **strategic planning** in family policy.

The first part on social services presented the institutional model and financing of social services in Slovakia. Social services (also welfare service or social work) are publicly or privately provided services intended to aid disadvantaged, distressed, or vulnerable persons or groups.¹ Vulnerable target groups include families, children, young people, elderly people, disabled etc. In Slovakia, social services are provided according to Act 448/2008 Coll. on social services in following forms:

1. **Facilities with accommodation**, e.g. homes for retired people, homes for elderly people with severe health disability, crisis centres for families, shelters for homeless people, temporary accommodation for people who suffered violence or victims of human trafficking;
2. **Day care facilities** (no accommodation), e.g. centres for disabled people, community centres providing leisure activities for children after school, childcare facilities for children under 3 years of age, day care centres for elderly people, low-threshold facilities (for example for drug users), rehabilitation facilities providing social counselling and advisory services, canteen, laundry service. Some of these facilities are obliged to provide meals.
3. **Field services**, e.g. home care for the elderly, transportation service, translation service, personal assistance for elderly or disabled people (for example, guidance or help with shopping), au-pair service for children, early intervention for families with disadvantaged children (professional counselling for families), crisis intervention and street work for homeless people.
4. **By phone or via internet**, e.g. - personal monitoring and signalling of needs, crisis intervention via telephone.

Current providers of services in categories 1 and 2 are displayed on the map: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/isp/> (See “Mapa sociálnych služieb”)

¹ Compare <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-service>

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Recommendation 1: Maintain and regularly update a database of all providers of social services, including contact details and types of services provided.

Principles of social services and institutional relations

In Slovakia, the system of social services is guided by three main principles. 1) The principle of **subsidiarity** means that policy intervention takes place at the lowest possible level necessary to achieve a particular policy objective i.e. to compensate for a particular social situation. The role of national government is mainly to define common terms, objectives, procedures and obligations, regularly check quality of services and provide financial support. 2) **Equal access** means that municipalities are obliged to provide a service to each person who is considered socially dependent based on an assessment by a social worker. 3) The process of **deinstitutionalisation** embodies the preference for home care to care provided in an institution. Since homes are considered a natural environment, social services should be first provided at people’s homes (field services), then in facilities.

The process of deinstitutionalisation of social services in Slovakia is currently supported from the European Social Fund.

National legislation on social services provides common definitions, stipulates procedures and obligations of municipalities, and defines financial contributions provided by the central government. The actual process of granting a service takes place at the community level. People who become socially dependent request a service at municipal or regional governments. Social workers employed by municipalities first assess individual conditions and the respective social environment of the person before granting access to a service.

Responsible for granting access to services are those municipalities where socially dependent people have registered residence. A municipality can provide a service directly (create capacity) or indirectly that is to hire a non-profit provider (NGO) or order a service from another municipality. If a municipality orders capacity from an NGO or another municipality, the original municipality is obliged to provide financial contribution for this capacity. As a result, NGOs such as foundations, charities and similar organisations play a crucial role as service providers. They provide approximately 42 % of total capacities in the system of social services.

Sustainable financing of social services requires diversification of resources. Several changes in legislation have been made in Slovakia to diversify funding for social services. As of 2018, social services are funded from 3 sources: national government, municipalities and client contributions. Prices of services for clients are regulated and there is a maximum limit on price depending on facility type. If client’s income is not sufficient to cover the service, the obligation to pay for services is transferred to client’s family.

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Recommendation 2: Identify administrative, financial and other barriers which prevent socially excluded or dependent people from accessing social services.

Recommendation 3: Identify target groups which are poorly covered by social services in Gaguzia and what kinds of services shall they receive.

Efficient and sustainable social services require sufficient **strategic planning** on the part of general government, regional governments and municipalities. In Slovakia, every single municipality is **obliged** to create and approve a community plan of social services. By the same token, regional governments are obliged to have an approved concept (strategic document) on the development of social services within the region which has to be in line with national priorities and individual plans of municipalities within this particular region.²

According to the Act 448/2008 Coll. on social services, a community plan of social services approved by each municipality should include the following information:

- Analysis of social services currently provided within the municipality (current supply);
- Analysis of demand for social services within the municipality (current demand);
- Analysis of future demographic development and social situation within the municipality (future demand);
- Goals and priorities of development of social services within the municipality, including a quantification of current and required capacity (future supply);
- Time plan of the realisation of the community plan, including current capacity, future capacity targets, sources of funding, staff required, operating conditions and steps of action of the municipality and other actors (action plan);
- Evaluation of the plan - information on how this plan is annually evaluated;
- Conditions and the way of updating the community plan.

Municipalities which do not have an approved community plan are not eligible for funding from central government. Central government also plays a crucial role in assessing community plans and quality of provided services.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning in social services is a constant process which helps to manage resources more efficiently, define a clear roadmap for a policy, better anticipate and react to changes, focus on the most important things, increase cooperation and communication, resolve conflicts in policy-making. Strategic plan should encompass common values, vision, mission, main goals, short-term goals, tactics and concrete steps to help develop social services in Gaguzia.

² See § 82 and 83 of the Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services.

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Because strategic planning in the public sector is similar to strategic planning of non-profit organisations, policy makers can use readily available resources for NGOs (see page 252 at <https://pdcs.sk/sk/publikacie/hr-st-m-tija-dlja-n-mm-rch-s-ih-rg-niz-cii>).

Recommendation 4: In cooperation with policy officials, NGOs, experts, service providers, academia and other relevant stakeholders create a strategic plan for the development of social services in Gaguzia.

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