

The Structure of Social Services – current status in the Czech Republic

1) How are social services in the CR organised?

Social services cover a range of assistance to people in unfavourable social conditions ranging from urgent crisis advice, temporary care in shelter homes and dormitories to services for people who need medium term – intensive assistance in day care centres and protected workshops up to long term help provided through care services, personal assistance and protected living and homes – currently often labelled as institutions. Social services are therefore provided not only to citizens who are handicapped by age, physical, sensory or mental disability but also to all those who cannot or are unable to resolve problems related to social relationships on their own. These are homeless people, people with drug problems or other addictions, prostitutes as well as families with children having partnership problems, battered wives and abused children. The list shows that the user of social services may be any citizen during the course of his/her life.

Over the last ten years, major changes occurred in the provision of social services. The changes were prompted and implemented from the bottom, primarily thanks to individual providers both from the non-governmental and the governmental sectors. Fast development of social services has occurred but without having been co-ordinated and regulated by law. Users of social services became more self-confident and wish to influence to a significant degree where, by whom and how the service will be provided. Providers introduce new method of social work and are thus better able to respond to the requirements of individual users. Further development of social services, however, is hindered by out-dated legislation, division of competencies, methods of distribution of funds and professional abilities of social workers in the public administration. The existing system of social services cannot continue to be modified only cosmetically. It is necessary to go ahead with fundamental transformation of the system.

The current state of the system and its deficiencies

Existing legal standards governing the social area and social services, in particular, are out-dated, neither match current developments in practice nor reflect recent overall changes. Effective instruments have not been developed to implement social policies of the state and the responsibility and powers of individual entities have not been clearly defined. The current system completely lacks a consistent set of tools to implement social policies of municipalities and regions. Individual regions are not fit to meet the requirements (neither in terms of the types of social services nor in terms of capacity) and differ considerably in their ability to meet demand. Expertise and skills of social workers in the public administration are inadequate in some areas as there is no system of continuous life-long training responding to new trends and problem areas in the field. A continuing and a very unfortunate feature of the current system is the fact that the financing of governmental and non-governmental entities providing social services is separated and providers do not have equal access to funding. The financing of social services depending on capacity rather than requirements is equally wrong. Moreover, the quality of the provided services is not adequately checked and the effectiveness of the spending is not controlled at all. At present there do not exist comprehensive data on social services and quality analyses are not performed. Users have very small participation in the decision making about the manner and form of social services provided and play almost no part in the control which is contradictory to European trends that are directed towards enhancing the role of users in social services systems. Institutional – closed services still

continue to prevail over community – open services, and a de-institutionalisation process is not taking place; social services are also too often affected by a medical approach. Awareness of citizens – potential users – of social services is low because there is no consistent information system for social services. The lack of transparency in the system is further deteriorated by the terminology used that is out-dated and not uniform; professional or social debate on new concepts is not taking place.

An undisputed positive aspect of the current state of affairs is the existence of a budding network of social services, benefits system or development of social care departments at university, higher technical or secondary school level. Probably the most important role in the field of social services is played by the strong non-profit non-governmental organisation sector striving to provide modern social services. Other major advantages include the increasing self-confidence of users of social services and their efforts to influence the financing, organisation, management and methods of provision of social services. The present developments also open many opportunities. The on-going convergence process with the EU also offers the opportunity to use their resources and to share common principles in this field. Another opportunity is the on-going reform of the public administration. A major element that is coming up and has to be made use of is the direct involvement of interested parties (users, providers, self-government and state administration) in the process of social services reform.

2) What is the legal basis and which is the competent body in respect to the social services structure?

The provisions on social services are currently contained in the following laws and regulations:

- Act No. 100/1988 Coll. on Social Security, as amended
- Act No. 114/1988 on the Competence of the CR bodies in social security, as amended,
- Decree of the MoLSA No. 182/1991 Coll. implementing the Act on Social Security and the Act on Competence of the CR bodies in social security, as amended,
- Decree of MoLSA No. 82/1993 Coll. on reimbursement for the stay in social care facilities, as amended,
- Decree of MoLSA No. 83/1993 Coll. on catering in social care facilities, as later amended.

3) Which is the financing body for social services

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services is low because there is no consistent information system for social services. The lack of transparency in the system is further deteriorated by the terminology used that is out-dated and not uniform; professional or social debate on new concepts is not taking place.

At present there are no comprehensive data on social services and quality analyses are not being performed. The collection of quantitative data is performed only in respect to those facilities that are embedded in the existing legislation. Data on services provided by non-governmental non-profit organisations are not being systematically collected. Overall expenditures on the existing social services cannot therefore be documented. The absence of uniform methodology allowing for the elaboration of a survey showing the scope of social services provided and the cost of their provision was one of the reasons behind the launch of the social service reform.

According to the MoLSA annual reports on social care facilities, in 1999 there were in total 929 facilities providing social care services with the capacity of 71.977 places. It included 329 old people's homes with the capacity of 35.182 places, 152 pensions for old age pensioners with the capacity of 12.600 places, 70 social care institutes for adults with the capacity of 6.102 places, 3 institutes for chronic alcoholics and drug addicts with the capacity of 136 places, 5 institutes for chronic psychotic and psychopathic patients with the capacity of 505 places, 185 social care institutes for young people with 12.468 places, 35 special facilities for foster care with the capacity of 333 places, 33 homes for mothers with children with the capacity of 628, 55 asylum homes with the capacity of 1.759 places, 22 charity homes for nuns with the capacity of 1.441°places and 4 other facilities with the capacity of 823 places. The "other" facilities include multi-purpose facilities offering services for the elderly and physically or mentally handicapped citizens (care service, eateries, short term respite etc.). The following providers participated in the provision of social care services in 1999 as per the above source: state providers 47.5 %, municipalities and cities 35.4 %, churches 10.4 %, other non-governmental non-profit organisations and physical persons 6.7 %.

The overall expenditure on the above types of social care services amounted to 10.143.733.364 CZK, including CZK 4.992.172.265 for old age pensioners homes, 582.598.715 CZK on homes-pensions for old age pensioners, CZK 1.121.749.118 for social care institutes for adults, 2.828.766.865 for social care institutes for young people, CZK 22.656.771 for institutes for alcoholics and drug addicts, CZK 81.114.638 on institutes for psychotic and psychopathic patients and CZK 31.638.836 on special foster care facilities; CZK 48.759.993 on homes for mothers with children, CZK 109.710.391 on shelter homes, CZK 190.850.796 on charity homes for nuns and CZK 91.231.695 on other facilities.

4) Who are the users of these services? What is the relationship between the state and non-governmental organisations providing social services?

In order to secure the operation of non-governmental non-profit entities providing social services, the MoLSA announced in the press and in the Internet in July 2000 a grant procedure to provide a subsidy from the national budget for 2001 to civic associations, humanitarian organisations of churches, public service companies and physical persons. In accordance with the main areas of subsidy policy to non-governmental non-profit organisations, pursuant to the government Resolution No. 260 dated March 15, 2000, a programme aimed at non-governmental non-profit organisations entitled the Social Services Development Programme was announced aimed at providing social services to citizens in social distress. By way of the same resolution for 2001 the government published a binding

application form for the provision of grants from the national budget (see the application). The MoLSA amended the general part and requested that other parts, namely the project description and attachments/project budget are filled in. In order to make the filling in of the application easier, instructions on the application were drawn up and published.

For the implementation of non-governmental non-profit organisations project, applications were made to allocate CZK 750 000 000 in the MoLSA budget chapter to the grant procedure for 2001, including funding of the technical renewal of fixed assets of the organisations. Moreover, in connection with the adoption of new budgetary rules that will make it impossible for regional authorities to provide funds to NGOs in 2001, additional CZK 300 000 000 was requested to secure the operation of social services that would otherwise have not been financially covered for the above reasons. The government approved the proposal of MoLSA and the draft act on the national budget currently contains a proposal regarding the subsidies to non-governmental entities for the amount of CZK 1 050 000 000. As part of the grant procedure for 2001, MoLSA received 932 applications for the provision of grants from the national budget.

5) How is the access of all groups of population to social services ensured?

Existing legislation allows for the provision of certain types of services (e.g. institutional care or care service) to persons who are unable to secure their basic needs (generally due to age or health handicap); majority of modern types and forms of social services that react best to changes in demand, however, is not defined in law at all. This essentially prevents the desirable development of social services and does not provide a guarantee to citizens as users that the services are provided in standard quality, or are accessible at all.

6) Who guarantees the quality, or who performs supervision?

The quality of the provided services is currently not sufficiently controlled and therefore there is the danger of abuse of users, in particular in case of institutional care. The control of effectiveness of the spending is being performed only to a very limited extent. There is no competent body to systematically exercise control. Instruments to remedy the shortcomings found by the control are insufficient. Users are not involved in the control process, their only option is to file a formal complaint.

7) How diverse are social services in the CR?

At present, there are no comprehensive data on social services. The collection of quantitative data is performed only in those facilities that are embedded in the existing legal provisions. Data on services provided by non-governmental non-profit organisations are not being systematically collected. The absence of uniform methodology to facilitate the elaboration of a comprehensive survey on the scope of social services provided was one of the reasons to launch the reform of social services.