



Peer Review on "Comprehensive Follow-up of Low-income Families"

Oslo (Norway), 28th -29th of November 2019

Peer Country Comments Paper - Romania

**Piloting models and practices to better
support low-income families**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the Peer Review on "Comprehensive Follow-up of Low-income Families" within the framework of the Mutual Learning Programme. It provides a comparative assessment of the policy example of the host country and the situation in Romania. For information on the host country policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper.

2 Situation in Romania

2.1. Case management in social assistance

In 2018, the percentage of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROP) in Romania was 32.5 % of the total population. The in-work poverty rate was 15 % of the active population on the labour market (18-64 years) (Eurostat, 2018. Poverty and Social Exclusion Indicators in Romania). According to the same source, the percentage of people living in households with low work intensity in 2018 was 7.4 % of the total population, and the percentage of people affected by severe material deprivation was 16.8 % of the total population. In 2018, the average number of low-income families who received family support benefit was 224 437 and the employment rate of working-age population (15-64 years) was 64.8 % (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection - Statistic Report on the activity of MLSP in the social assistance field in 2018).

The Romanian social assistance system consists of social assistance benefits and social services and is decentralised. The central administration is composed of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and its agencies/authorities: ANPD (National Authority for Persons with Disabilities), ANPDCA (National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoptions), ANES (National Agency for Equal Opportunities), and ANPIS (National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection). The central public administration ensures the elaboration of the legislative framework in the field of social assistance, the development of policies to support the family during the whole life cycle of its members, as well as the transfer to the local public administration and civil society - including to the religious institutions recognised by law - of the attributions and financial means necessary for the social assistance actions, provided by special laws. In addition, ANPIS, through county agencies, ensures the inspection of the public and private social services providers at local level. Social services are provided by accredited public (SPAS at local or county level) or private social services providers (NGOs, religious institutions, companies, etc).

The Public Social Assistance Service (SPAS), organised at the local level, has the responsibility of creating, maintaining and developing social services of primary character, according to the identified social needs, with the primary aim of supporting the social integration of the person. At the county level (41 counties and 6 districts of the Bucharest Municipality), SPAS is responsible for developing and diversifying the specialised social services to ensure the reintegration of the person into their family life and community. Partnership agreements may be concluded between different SPAS offices at local and county level, and agreements or contracts may be established between SPAS and other social service providers for the provision of social services. Thus, the single point of contact for the vulnerable persons is the SPAS at local level, which according to the law should apply the case management method, through its social assistant(s) and other professionals.

Case management (CM) can be split into two main categories:

CM for local and county authorities (Local and County Councils) which have responsibilities related to organising, managing and delivering social services. They are also in charge of drafting and implementing the following plans and strategies,

based on guidelines, indications and/or templates provided by central administration as a way to support them in this process:

- County Strategy for the Development of the Social Services at County level – Government Decision (GD) no.797/20171 indicates how this strategy must be elaborated by the local and county authorities, which are the mandatory steps to be followed in this process and what sections and information it must contain.
- Annual County Plan for Social Inclusion - GD no. 383 /20152 provides guidelines on how this should be elaborated.
- Local Strategy for the Development of the Social Services at local/community level - developed by local authorities based on the county strategy. GD no. 797/20173 indicates how this strategy must be elaborated and which are the mandatory steps to be followed in this process and what sections and information it must contain (e.g. general and specific objectives, action plan, responsibilities, deadlines, financing sources, estimated budget, etc.).
- Annual Community Plan for Combating Poverty – the template for such a community plan will be elaborated in the framework of a pilot project funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) entitled "Creating and implementing integrated community services to combat poverty and social exclusion" (commonly referred to as Community Integrated Services or SCI).
- Annual Local Plan for Social Inclusion – a framework/template is provided by Ministerial Order no. 1086/2018.4.

CM for persons and families, applied by social assistants and other professionals, at local level. The mandatory stages for case managers for social services provision are mentioned in GO no. 68/2003⁵:

- Initial Evaluation (Social Survey) by the social assistant together with the beneficiary (individual or family) who receives free information on his/her rights;
- drafting the Initial Intervention Plan by the social assistant, for and together with the beneficiary (individual or family);
- Complex Evaluation by a multi-disciplinary team of experts once the initial evaluation disclosed special needs which require a more comprehensive evaluation;
- drafting the Personalised Assistance and Care Plan (based on the complex evaluation), consisting of social services, active measures for employment, education measures, etc. and social assistance in cash benefits recommended based on the specificities of each case;
- Social Services Delivery Contract (agreed and signed by the beneficiary and the social services provider).

¹ GD no.797/2017 for the approval of the frameworks for public social assistance services organisation and functioning and of the personnel structure, with subsequent amendments.

² GD no. 383/2015 on the approval of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty reduction for the Period 2015-2020 and the Strategic Action Plan for the Period 2015-2020, with subsequent amendments

³ GD no.797/2017 for the approval of the frameworks for public social assistance services organisation and functioning and of the personnel structure, with subsequent amendments.

⁴ Ministerial Order 1086/2018 on approving the framework of the Annual Action Plan for Social Services administered and financed from the budget of the county/local/Bucharest Municipality Council, with subsequent amendments.

⁵ GO no. 68/2003 on social services, with subsequent amendments.

According to the Law on Social Assistance no. 292/2011, with subsequent amendments, the process of social services provision must follow the above-mentioned mandatory stages: initial evaluation, drafting the intervention plan, complex evaluation, drafting the personalised assistance and care plan, implementing the measures provided in these plans, monitoring and evaluating the services provision and cases' evolution.

In the case of the Public Social Assistance Service⁶, the personnel structure foresees one case manager for every 300 people entitled to means-tested social assistance benefits (meaning low-income families or individuals).

CM involves going through all the above-mentioned stages. The tools available to the social assistants for case management are indicated in the minimum quality standards for each type of service, approved by a Ministerial Order. They include provisions regarding the mandatory tools that each social service provider must develop, have and use in relation to the beneficiaries: procedures for accessing and terminating the social service, procedure for evaluating beneficiaries' needs, needs assessment/re-assessment fiche, activities plan and related monitoring tool, beneficiaries' rights chart, Code of Conduct, Beneficiaries' Satisfaction Survey, Suggestions and Complaints evidence registry and Procedure for identifying, reporting and solving abuse and neglect cases.

The social services provider also ensures the monitoring of the intervention plans' implementation.⁷

The implementation of the intervention plans is ensured by the specialised personnel who also monitor the evolution of the beneficiary, as case manager. The social service provider determines the number of beneficiaries that each case manager must follow, depending on the complexity of their needs and the difficulty of the cases. Monitoring the application of the individualised intervention plan is carried out based on the beneficiary's file containing identification data, information regarding the activities carried out to support the beneficiary etc. The application of the intervention plan for a group of beneficiaries is monitored by using a register of activities.

3 Assessment of the policy measure

3.1 The Romanian Integrated Community Services Pilot Project as compared to the Norwegian HOLF Model

The Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is implementing, between September 2018 and January 2022, an ESF funded pilot project entitled 'Creating and Implementing Integrated Community Services to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion' (SCI) regarding the setting up and development of the community integrated services, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

The main objective of this SCI pilot project is to support the local public authorities in 139 communities that have been previously evaluated as facing degrees 3 and 4 of marginalisation (communities that combine by definition low human capital, high unemployment and inadequate housing conditions⁸), through the hiring, where

⁶ GD no.797/2017 for the approval of the frameworks for public social assistance services organisation and functioning and of the personnel structure, with subsequent amendments

⁷ According to Annex 7 of the Minister of Labour and Social protection (MLSP)'s Order Minimum quality standards for the social services provided in the community and for social services provided in an integrated manner with other general interest services for adult people

⁸ See the Atlas of Rural Marginalized Areas and Local Human Development in Romania (<https://hubs.worldbank.org/docs/imagebank/pages/docprofile.aspx?nodeid=26536853>) and the Atlas of Urban Marginalized Communities (<https://hubs.worldbank.org/docs/ImageBank/Pages/DocProfile.aspx?nodeid=19556536>)

necessary, and training of the professionals that will form the integrated community services teams (ECI), namely: the social assistant, the community nurse and the educational counsellor and/or educational mediator.

The integrated community teams aim to:

- identify the most vulnerable individuals and families through outreach activities;
- understand their needs;
- provide them with personalised guidance and support (through a case management approach); and
- help them access all available benefits and services.

The teams are expected to first identify the eligibility of beneficiaries for the various types of social protection measures, and then check the administrative procedures that are needed for accessing these measures. In case of the referral to services, the teams check the capacity and availability of service providers that could respond to the beneficiaries' needs. Depending on the beneficiaries' needs, the integrated team will refer them to different institutions, such as schools or general practitioners.

The provision of integrated community services (SCI) play a relevant role to ensure both efficiency and effectiveness in targeting the vulnerable individuals and families and better linking them with community services.

The project is based on a common order of Ministers (Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Minister of Health and Minister of Education) approving the protocol-framework to implement integrated community services. The protocol-framework sets out the responsibilities of each team member and general conditions of inter-institutional collaboration between the integrated community team members. This pilot project aims to develop an inter-institutional collaboration mechanism for SCI at community level and to set up and ensure full functionality of 139 integrated intervention community teams (ECI). It foresees to elaborate at least 42 procedures, methodologies and integrated delivery tools of community services for the ECIs, including a collaboration and coordination mechanism for the organisation of ECIs and working procedures for community teams integrated within other service providers (private providers of social services, employment services, population records, specialised health services, etc.).

Furthermore, the project aims to train at least 336 professionals in integrated community services, of which 141 in the field of social assistance, 143 in the medical field, and 52 in the educational field, and to recruit, hire and form 40 teams of County Support and Monitoring Units (UJSM) with the role of coordinating, monitoring and supervising ECIs.

A map of community services will be drawn up, integrating data from the accredited social services map, as well as providers of educational, medical and employment services. Administrative and legal documents will be drafted and proposed for approval.

In terms of events, the projects foresees the organisation of eight workshops with the relevant social actors to establish the mechanism of inter-institutional cooperation and in foster the provision of integrated community services, as well as the organisation of 16 roundtables with a minimum of 384 participants to transfer the model of the integrated approach to public social assistance services.

As compared to the Norwegian model, in the Romanian pilot project it is estimated that between 23 000 and 34 000 vulnerable people (not only low-income individuals or families) will benefit from this support provided by the 139 ECI by applying the integrated interventions methodologies and procedures elaborated within the project.

The ECI is also responsible for the follow-up, in particular the case manager (social assistant from the ECI) who must apply the case management principles as indicated by the social assistance law and subsequent regulations and also by the law regulating the social assistant profession (Law 466/2004 on the Status of the social assistant, with subsequent amendments and the Social Assistants' Code of Conduct approved by the National Council of Social Assistants in Romania).

According to the Common Ministerial Order no. 393/630/4236/2017 for the approval of the Collaboration Protocol for the implementation of the integrated community services (SCI) needed for the prevention of social exclusion and combating poverty, the working method is case management (CM), which includes a mechanism of coordination between the professionals in various fields for the integrated evaluation of the needs and resources, planning and intervention, monitoring and impact evaluation.

In CM, the social assistant *inter alia* has the following tasks and responsibilities in terms of follow-up and monitoring:

- to revise the intervention plan periodically;
- to assess the impact of the intervention and to establish future priorities of intervention in order to eliminate the causes that maintain the state of poverty and to ensure the sustainability of the intervention.

Moreover, within the project, an online app called SCI will be developed and implemented in order to serve the needs of the ECI, which would allow the registration and follow up of the cases and also the interoperability of the databases for social, medical, educational indicators, which will be monitored. This tool will allow data collection, identification, evaluation and online monitoring of each case in real time.

4 Assessment of success factors and transferability

4.1 Main aspects of the Norwegian practice which could be transferred

Since Romania is also implementing a pilot project aiming at the social inclusion of vulnerable groups and individuals through the case management, the tools developed within the HOLF model can be useful for further analysis in order to determine to what extent these can be transferred and adapted to fit the Romanian context in the implementation of this project.

Analysing the Norwegian practice, the first aspects that stand out and which could be very useful for Romania are:

- the approach used to develop, pilot and test the HOLF method (involving researchers by commissioning the literature review accompanied by conclusions and recommendations, commissioning independent evaluation of the model developed etc.);
- the two manuals developed describing the work of the family coordinators, including models, tools and details of the work processes etc.;
- the seminars organised;
- the continuous supervision of family coordinators;
- the PCE form (list of issues relating to preparing for, conducting and evaluating meetings);
- the methods and tools used: motivational interviewing and appreciative inquiry, IIMM (Inform, Involve, Mobilise and Make Responsible), Menu Agenda, IAR (Investigating, Adding Information and Reinvestigating), SMART goals etc.

All the stages of the analysis, development, piloting and evaluation of this model, as well as the cooperation between the public sector and the academia in this common approach are of inspiration for Romania.

5 Questions

We would very much welcome receiving the links from where we could download the tools mentioned in the host country's paper.

6 List of references

The project "Creation and implementation of integrated community services for combating poverty and social exclusion", financed from the Human Capital Operational Program, POCU / 375/4/22/122607, 2018, available at:
<http://serviciicomunitare.ro/despre>

World Bank (Sandu, Dumitru D.; Corad, Bogdan; Iamandi-Cioinaru, Cătălina; Man, Titus-Cristian; Marin, Monica; Moldovan, Ciprian; Neculau, Georgiana; Tesliuc, Emil Daniel; Grigoras, Vlad Alexandru; Stanculescu, Manuela Sofia), 2016, *The Atlas of Rural Marginalized Areas and Local Human Development in Romania*, available at:
<https://hubs.worldbank.org/docs/imagebank/pages/docprofile.aspx?nodeid=26536853> ;

World Bank, 2016, *"The Atlas of Urban Marginalized Communities"*, available at:
<https://hubs.worldbank.org/docs/ImageBank/Pages/DocProfile.aspx?nodeid=19556536>

The SOCIAL ASSISTANCE LAW no.292/2011 with subsequent amendments, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no. 905 from 20th December 2011, available at: https://www.servicii-sociale.gov.ro/source/Legea_asistentei_sociale_18012018.pdf

GD no.797/2017 for the approval of the frameworks for public social assistance services organisation and functioning and of the personnel structure, with subsequent amendments, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, 920 of 23rd November 2017, available at: https://www.servicii-sociale.gov.ro/source/HG_797_2017_la_18012018.pdf

GD no. 383/2015 on the approval of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty reduction for the Period 2015-2020 and the Strategic Action Plan for the Period 2015-2020, with subsequent amendments, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no.469 of 26th of June 2015, available at:
http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/2016/StrategyVol1EN_web.pdf

GO no. 68/2003 on social services, with subsequent amendments, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, no.619 of 30th August 2003, available at:
<https://www.servicii-sociale.gov.ro/ro/legislatie-servicii-sociale-si-incluziunea-sociala/servicii-sociale-si-incluziunea-sociala>

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Common Ministerial Order no. 393/630/4236/2017 for the approval of the Collaboration Protocol for the implementation of the integrated community services (SCI) needed for the prevention of social exclusion and combating, published in the *Official Gazette of Romania*, no.528 of 6th of July 2017, available at:
<http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Legislatie/O393-630-4236-2017.pdf>

Eurostat, 2018, Poverty and Social Exclusion Indicators in Romania, between 2007-2018

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Statistic Report on the activity of MLSP in the social assistance field in 2018, available at
http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/RaportariPrivindIncluziuneaSociala/2019/20190529-Raport_an2018.pdf

National Institute of Statistics, Press Release entitled Employment and Unemployment in 2018, available at:
http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_2018r.pdf

Annex 1 Summary table

The main points covered by the paper are summarised below.

Situation in the peer country

- Social assistance system: social benefits + social services
- Public Social Assistance Service (SPAS) at local level
- case management for local and county authorities
- case management for persons and families
- case manager = the social assistant from SPAS

Assessment of the policy measure

- Both NO and RO have piloted a social assistance model (HOLF and SCI);
- Both models have defined stages in implementation, supervision, and dedicated tools;
- The follow-up in RO is done by the local ECI, coordinated by the social assistant as case manager;
- SCI app for cases registration and follow-up;
- A Common ministerial order and county and local protocols lie at the basis of this pilot project.

Assessment of success factors and transferability

- the approach used to develop, pilot and test the HOLF model
- the tools developed (the 2 manuals of HOLF model, IIMM, Manu Agenda, IAR etc.)
- the continuous supervision of family coordinators
- collaboration with academia
- independent evaluation commissioned

Questions

Can we receive the links from where we can download the tools mentioned, in English?

Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Name of the practice:	"Creating and Implementing Integrated Community Services to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion" (SCI)
Year of implementation:	2018-2022
Coordinating authority:	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the capacity of local public administration to initiate, coordinate and implement measures to prevent and combat situations of marginalization and social exclusion in 139 communities with over-average and severe marginalization, through the creation of integrated intervention community teams and the development of specific procedures, methodologies and tools; 2. Improving the level of skills of specialists working in community-based teams from the 139 communities, thus contributing to the consolidation of the public social assistance community services network by providing social services tailored to the needs of the population; 3. Increasing the number of people benefiting from integrated community services in the 139 communities.
Main activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of procedures, methodologies and instruments for integrated provision of community services and operationalisation of the collaboration mechanism • development of the SCI online application used by integrated community teams • setting up the teams of the County Support and Supervision Units (UJSS) • setting up and professionally training the Community Integrated Teams (ECI) • application by ECI of the procedures / instruments of integrated provision of the community services • preparation of recommendations for multiplying the SCI model and for its transposition into administrative and normative documents
Achieved results (so far) + EXPECTED RESULTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an inter-institutional collaboration mechanism for SCI at the level of the community (so far, a common ministerial order had been approved and 114 protocols had been signed with local authorities) • 139 ECI created and functional (so far, 26 social assistants had been hired and 19 ECI can be set up and start functioning) • at least 336 people trained / trained in integrated community services (so far none had been trained) • 40 teams of County Support and Monitoring Units (UJSM), appointed and formed to coordinate, monitor, supervise ECI (so far

	<p>14 protocols had been signed and 9 social assistants supervisors had been hired)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• minimum 42 procedures, methodologies and integrated delivery tools of community services for ECI (so far there are draft tools: ECI Manual, UJSM Manual)• an online SCI application that will be a mobile work tool for the ECI, facilitating the data collection, identification, evaluation, information and online monitoring of each case (not yet developed)• a Map of Community Services, integrating data from the Accredited social services map, as well as providers of educational, medical and occupational services (not yet developed)• 8 workshops organised to consult the relevant social actors in setting up the mechanism of inter-institutional cooperation and in the provision of integrated community services (not organised yet)• 16 roundtables organised to transfer the model of the integrated approach to public social assistance services with a minimum of 384 participants (not organised yet)• administrative and legal documents proposed for approval or modification (it is planned to be done towards the end of the project)
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