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Access to essential services for low-income people

Serbia

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**ESPN Thematic Report on
Access to essential services for
low-income people**

Serbia

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Summary

There are no national, regional or local definitions of essential services in Serbia. There is no national definition of low-income people used in the context of access to services. The beneficiaries of Financial Social Assistance (FSA) and of child allowance benefits are generally entitled to all support measures that facilitate access to essential services. There are no official data on the number of beneficiaries, and there are no impact assessments of the policies implemented.

The measures which facilitate access to water, sanitation and public transport are not available to all Serbian residents. In practice, these measures are introduced, administered and funded by local authorities in co-operation with the public providers of these services. To some extent, the eligibility conditions vary between local communities; however, in general FSA beneficiaries are automatically considered eligible. The kinds of services and measures introduced are officially defined in local government legislation on the social protection of local residents. Their administration is delegated to local secretariats of social protection. The majority of residents in the larger cities had access to reduced tariffs for water and sanitation, whereas similar measures for public transport were less common. The review also showed that the availability of support measures is directly correlated with the economic development of a local community; for this reason, these measures are rarely available to residents from less-developed communities.

The measure to facilitate access to energy is defined under the Energy Law, and further specified in secondary legislation on energy-vulnerable consumers. This measure is administered by two public entities: local secretariats for social protection and local branches of public energy providers. The approval procedures are quite complex and little support is available to potential beneficiaries in realising their rights. Available information shows that take-up of this measure is far below the number of eligible consumers. The reasons are numerous, from the lack of appropriate information and support services to rather rigid eligibility criteria.

Even though all measures to facilitate access to utility services (water, sanitation, and energy) are administered by the local secretariats for social protection, there is no integrated management of application procedures for all services. Such fragmented organisation requires repeated submission of the same documents, with an unnecessary waste of applicants' time.

The availability of digital public services is still limited and there are no measures to facilitate access for low-income people to these services. All legal residents in Serbia are entitled to payment accounts with basic features, regardless of their personal financial situation.

Without a broader national policy for access to essential services by low-income people, a number of the most vulnerable residents do not have adequate access to these services. This is primarily true for the residents of less-developed local communities with limited local government budgets. Due to the complete lack of official data on the coverage and effects of the policies in force, there is no knowledge of the effectiveness of the resources used. It is also apparent that some population groups that are better organised, such as associations of pensioners, have a significant influence on local authorities over decision making on the availability, accessibility and affordability of essential services.

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Policy has announced an amendment to the Social Protection Law, the adoption of a new social protection strategy and the introduction of 'social cards'. This is a good opportunity for policy makers to consider including provision for access to essential services by low-income people in national legislation.

1 Overview of national/subnational measures aimed at supporting low-income people in accessing essential services

According to Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), everyone should have “the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications”. Moreover, support for accessing such services should be available for those in need.¹ The importance of ensuring access to essential services is also well established globally in the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was endorsed in 2015 by all UN countries including all EU countries.² This report investigates the extent to which Principle 20 of the EPSR has already been implemented in the six services under scrutiny in Serbia. The group of “those in need” is restricted in the report to people on a low income and low-income households.

1.1 Definition of “essential services”

There are no national, regional or local definitions of essential services in Serbia. The 2015 strategy for development of social protection is outdated and a new document is still in the process of preparation.

1.2 Definition of “low-income people” used in the context of access to services

There is no national definition of low-income people used in the context of access to services. The beneficiaries of FSA and of child benefits are mostly entitled to all available services. In 2019, the monthly income limit for FSA eligibility was €72 (RSD 8,465) per household member; for calculating the amounts paid to households the following scale is used: 1 for the first adult in the household, defined as a person aged 18 or above; 0.5 for each additional adult; and 0.3 for children under 18. In 2019, the monthly income limit for eligibility for child benefit was €77.70 (RSD 9,135) per household member.

1.3 Measures for facilitating access for low-income people to services

1.3.1 Access to water

There are no measures defined at the national level on access to water, but only at the local community level in the form of reduced tariffs for utility bills. The supply of water and sanitation services is commonly managed by local public companies. Residents receive a unified utility bill for city-provided water, sewerage and garbage services (and for district space and water heating, if available). The unified utility bill allows residents to make one monthly payment for all charges.

There are no official records on the number of local communities (LCs) that provide support measures in the form of reduced tariffs for low-income people. To some extent, the measures applied vary between communities. FSA beneficiaries and pensioners with a

¹ The EPSR was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission on 17 November 2017. For more information on the EPSR, see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

² The SDGs and their targets seek to realise the human rights of all, by promoting an integrated notion of sustainable development aimed at creating synergies between economic, environmental and social policies and objectives. For more information on the SDGs, see: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

minimum pension are commonly eligible, and tariff reductions for these two categories are in the 30-100% range. In some LCs only unemployed FSA beneficiaries are eligible, or those who are not able to work. In a few LCs, additional categories of low-income people are eligible. One example is the City of Belgrade, the largest city in Serbia; in 2018, the total number of residents in Belgrade made up 24.2% of the country's population (RSO, 2019a). The measures are applied to all of the 17 municipalities that constitute the city. FSA beneficiaries and pensioners on minimum pensions are entitled to a 30% reduction in tariffs for utility bills. The reductions for other categories of low-income people are in the 10-30% range, subject to household size and income. Reduced tariffs are applied to monthly utility bills up to €68 (RSD 8,000), which is the average amount in the City of Belgrade.

A review of policy measures applied in 2019 in 56 LCs (representing 60% of the country's population) revealed that 22 LCs had measures to facilitate access to water for low-income people.³ The population in these LCs represented 33% of the total country population in 2018; 17 were located in the City of Belgrade. The review also showed that some LCs had had similar measures in previous years, but that they had been discontinued in 2019, due to lack of funds.

1.3.2 Access to sanitation

As explained in Section 1.3.1 the same measures cover access to sanitation and access to water.

1.3.3 Access to energy

Reduced tariffs for energy bills are applied as a national policy measure to facilitate access to energy by low-income people. Reduced tariffs are available to the owners of housing units with a single energy-measurement point and also to tenants who rent a housing unit. For a household to qualify, its monthly electricity and natural gas consumption cannot be higher than a defined ceiling. FSA and child allowance beneficiaries are considered eligible, while additional conditions are set for other categories of low-income households (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). In order to benefit from reduced tariffs on energy the household's monthly income has to be lower than €125 (RSD 14,645) for a single-person household (see Table 1). This amount does not correspond to any threshold used in other social policy contexts. In 2018 the at-risk-of-poverty threshold for a single-person household was €141.40 (RSO, 2019c), slightly above the limit for reduced energy tariffs.

The additional eligibility condition referred to above relates to dwelling size, which must meet the standards and norms defined for social housing units (this condition is not relevant for FSA and child allowance beneficiaries). The maximum housing space is 30 square metres for a single person, ranging up to 14.2 square metres per member for a household with six or more members (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2013). Households in dwellings with more space than these limits are not eligible for reduced tariffs. Another eligibility condition relates to households with children, for which there is a requirement for regular enrolment of school-age children in primary education. Regular payment of monthly bills is a prerequisite for reduced tariffs for all beneficiaries.

³ For the purpose of this report, the authors reviewed local authority policy documents from 42 of the largest LCs (29% of the total LCs in Serbia).

Table 1: Levels of reduced tariffs for energy consumption, by household size; Serbia (2019)

Household size	Monthly income limit per household member*	Electricity			Gas		
		Allowance (kWh)	30-day ceiling (kWh)		Allowance (m ³)	30-day ceiling (m ³)	
			Reduction			Reduction	
			100%	50%		100%	50%
Single person	€125 (RSD 14,645)	120	480	780	35	70	87.5
2-3 members	€181 (RSD 21,323)	160	640	1,040	45	90	112.5
4-5 members	€238 (RSD 27,996)	200	800	1,300	60	120	150
6+	€300 (RSD 35,207)	250	1,000	1,625	75	150	187.5

Source: Government of the Republic of Serbia (2019).

*Irrespective of whether adult or child.

Reading note: If a single person consumes up to 480 kWh in a 30-day period, they are entitled to a 100% reduction for 120 kWh, i.e. only 360 kWh will be charged.

Reduced tariffs for electricity are applied throughout the whole calendar year, whereas those for natural gas are applied for six months from October until the end of March. Reduced tariffs for electricity and gas cannot be received at the same time. The monthly energy allowance that is subject to reduced tariffs depends on the household size and on the quantity of energy consumed. The tariff reduction granted is either 100% or 50%: if electricity consumption is up to four times the monthly allowance, the reduction granted is 100%; if it is in the range of 4 to 6.5 times, the reduction is 50%; there is no reduction for consumption above the defined ceiling (see Table 1). A similar methodology is applied to the consumption of gas: if consumption is higher than 2.5 times a defined allowance the reduction is not applicable.

1.3.4 Access to public transport

There are no measures to facilitate access to public transport by low-income people at the national level, but only at the LC level. The national passenger railway company, Serbia Train (*Srbija Voz*) does not provide any reduced tariffs for low-income people, but only for young people and for persons aged 60 or over. Rail transport is not well developed in Serbia and is mainly used for long-distance travel.

Public city transport has been developed mainly in the larger cities and LCs, while in a number of smaller LCs there is no public transport. There are no official data on the number of cities or LCs that provide measures to facilitate access to public transport by low-income people. The review of practices in the major cities and LCs in Serbia in 2019 provides information for 42% of the total country population. The four largest cities provide reduced tariffs for FSA beneficiaries (only for heads of households), entitling them to a reduction of 30% on the monthly fare for city transport, while in one LC only the children of FSA beneficiaries are entitled to a 50% reduction on bus fares. In two cities (City of Belgrade and Kragujevac), only unemployed FSA beneficiaries are eligible for a reduced tariff. Older people (65 and above) and pensioners are eligible for reduced tariffs in almost all the cities and LCs reviewed. However, the eligibility conditions and reduction levels vary. In some LCs older people are entitled to free tickets independently of their income level; in others, the reduction is granted only to pensioners on the average pension or less. The most generous is the City of Belgrade, where people over 65 pay only 1% of city bus fares.

1.3.5 Access to digital public services

The availability of digital public services for citizens is still limited, and mainly encompasses services for making an appointment for the issuing of personal documents.

The Law on e-Governance which was adopted in April 2018 defines a 36-month period for all public entities (at republic, province and local level) to establish digital platforms for public services.⁴ Presently there are no measures to facilitate access for low-income people to digital public services.

An analysis of the current situation regarding digital public services is presented in the draft 2019-2025 programme for the development of e-governance (Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-government, 2019). A survey quoted in this document shows that only a small proportion of citizens use the available e-services, with survey respondents stating that a lack of knowledge and skills relevant to using digital services is the main barrier to accessing the e-services. The draft programme does not include any measures for improving access by low-income people.

1.4 Access to financial services (Directive 2014/92/EU)

Residents (natural persons) have the right to open and use payment accounts with basic features (including withdrawals, bank transfers and a debit card), regardless of their personal financial situation.

⁴ RS Official Gazette 27/2018.

2 National/subnational policy frameworks and reforms

2.1 National/subnational policy frameworks

Measures to facilitate access to essential services by low-income people are not covered by a national policy framework to fight poverty and social exclusion, and there are no announced reforms in this area. The existing supporting measures for low-income people are defined independently for each service, by national and/or local legislation.

Measures to facilitate **access for low-income people to water and sanitation** are planned and implemented by the LCs, within their mandate for the provision of social protection to local residents. Under the Social Protection Law, LCs are entitled to provide additional forms of social protection, alongside those organised and funded by central government (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2011). The provision of subsidies for utility bills is defined in the Law on Municipal Services (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2018a), which regulates the delivery and financial management of utility services (supply of water, sewerage, garbage disposal, district heating systems, municipal transport, etc.). In the chapter on the financing of utility services, Article 29 (on subsidising specific categories of consumers) rules that LCs may define the categories of consumers eligible for subsidies, and that LCs must reimburse service providers for the amount of any subsidy. In a number of LCs that provide reduced tariffs for utility bills to low-income people, these decisions are regulated by decrees on the social protection rights and services for local residents, which are adopted for every calendar year. The City of Belgrade regulates reduced tariffs through “conclusions” on intervention measures for protecting the most vulnerable residents, which define procedures and eligibility conditions (Assembly of the City of Belgrade, 2016).

Reduced tariffs on energy consumption for low-income people were first introduced in Serbia in 2013. The eligibility conditions were changed in 2015 (applicable from 1 January 2016) with more relaxed criteria. Until 2016 the conditional limit on total electricity consumption had been up to 2.5 times a defined monthly allowance: this limit was increased to 6.5 times. Presently, the measure to facilitate access to energy is defined by the Energy Law (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2014) and by related secondary legislation. The Energy Law includes provisions on consumer protection and defines energy-vulnerable consumers as “*households which on account of their social or health status have the right to energy supply under special conditions*”. The funds necessary to pay for assistance to vulnerable consumers are secured from the central budget.

A 2013 directive defines the procedures and eligibility conditions for “energy-vulnerable consumers” who are entitled to reduced tariffs. The process for obtaining the status of vulnerable consumer is organised as a two-step procedure. The first eligibility check relates to household income and housing conditions. This is implemented by the local authority (i.e. the local secretariats for social protection). The designated income limit is adjusted twice a year using a consumer price index. The secretariats manage the application and approval process and refer necessary information to the local public operator of electricity/gas distribution. In the second step, the energy provider every month approves (or withdraws) reduced tariffs, subject to households’ measured energy consumption.

In 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled that the procedures defined in the directive were not consistent with the Law on General Administrative Procedure.⁵ The government rejected the court ruling; and even though some procedures were altered in directives adopted in later years, they are still not in accordance with the law. One example is the appeals procedure in cases where an application is refused by the local secretariat for social protection: the applicant may submit the appeal only to the Ministry of Mining and

⁵ RS Official Gazette 82/2015.

Energy, even though this ministry is not directly involved in the whole process of approval.

Measures to facilitate **access by low-income people to transport** are initiated and implemented only at LC level. The decision-making process and implementing procedures are the same as for measures to facilitate access to water and sanitation, and are defined in LC annual social protection plans. Transport companies are reimbursed for reduced tariffs from local authority budgets.

Access to financial services is regulated by the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Payment Services (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2018b). The law regulates the conditions for, and manner of providing, payment services. Article 73(b) sets out a non-discrimination policy: *“When opening an account for a consumer legally resident in the Republic of Serbia, any form of direct or indirect discrimination, based on any ground, particularly race, sex, genetic features, nationality, social origin, birth, religion, political or any other opinion, property status, place of residence, culture, language, age, sexual orientation or disability, shall be prohibited”*. Legal residents (natural persons) have right to a payment account with basic features used for executing payment transaction in RS dinars (the national currency).

2.2 Ongoing or announced reforms

There are no ongoing or announced reforms in any of the six areas.

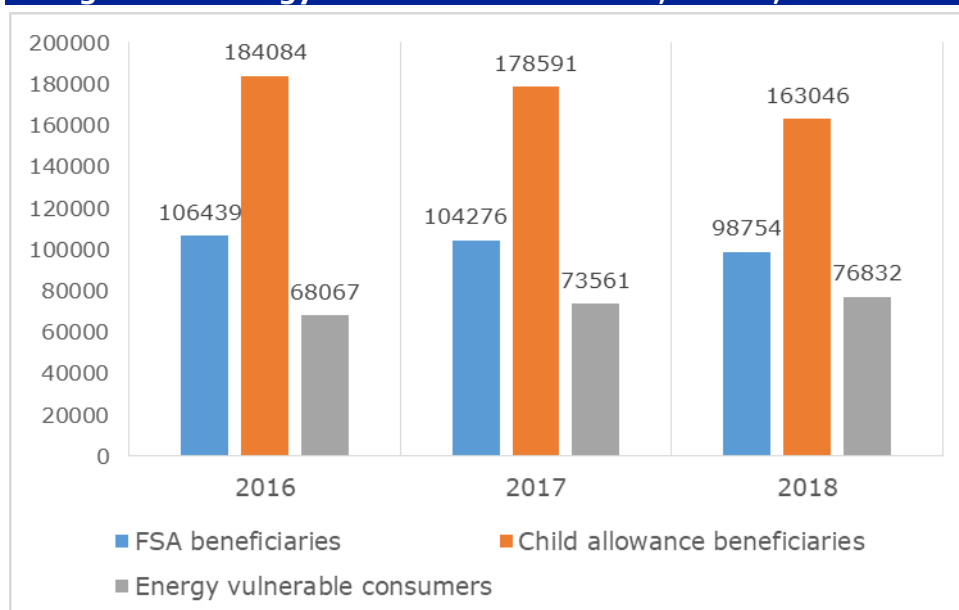
3 A focus on access to energy

The directive on eligibility conditions for the status of energy-vulnerable consumer states that FSA beneficiaries and households who receive child benefits are considered eligible. The other low-income households entitled to reduced benefits are defined in relation to income levels and size of the dwelling unit. From the start of this measure in 2013 until 2018 (there are no published data for 2019) the number of beneficiaries was far below the number of eligible households. This discrepancy can be seen by comparing the annual average number of FSA beneficiaries and households who received child benefits with a number of households granted the status of energy-vulnerable consumer (see Figure 1). Over the 2016-2018 period, between 68,067 and 76,832 households were registered each year as energy vulnerable consumers, compared with between 98,754 and 106,439 FSA beneficiaries. However, there are no data on the duration of benefits over each calendar year (Energy Agency of Republic of Serbia, 2016-2018).

As with FSA beneficiaries, the number of households receiving child benefits was significantly greater than the number of registered vulnerable consumers over the 2016-2018 period – more than double in each year.

The take-up of reduced tariffs for consumption of gas was negligible; over the 2016-2018 period, on average around 60 households were registered annually as vulnerable consumers. Gas distribution for households was only introduced in Serbia at the beginning of this century, and is still only available in 39% of LCs; consequently, only around 8.7% of all households in Serbia were connected to gas networks in 2019.⁶

Figure 1: Number of households eligible for reduced energy tariffs, and number of registered energy-vulnerable consumers; Serbia, 2016-2018 (November)



Data Source: RSO (2019a); Republic Institute for Social Protection (2019); Energy Agency of Republic of Serbia (2016, 2017, 2018).

There has been no assessment of the reasons for the low take-up rate of this measure. One reason is probably the complex application process, requiring the submission of 14 different documents. It is also questionable how much information is accessible to potential beneficiaries, as the directive on energy-vulnerable consumers is not easily understandable by any ordinary person. The eligibility conditions which relate to dwelling

⁶ http://www.srbijagas.com/?page_id=1103&script=lat

size are not fully outlined in the directive; there is only a reference to a related piece of legislation. In a number of cases, potential consumers learn that they are not eligible only after submitting all the necessary documents.⁷ The eligibility condition on dwelling size seems rather strict, since the average housing space per household in Serbia in 2018 was 72.3 square metres, much higher than the norm applied to social housing (RSO, 2019b).

Another eligibility condition may also have a negative impact on take-up rate: namely, the monthly limit on consumption, which is calculated by reference to household size (see Table 1). The consumption of electricity for heating is in fact correlated more closely with dwelling size and type, and less so with the number of household members. For the majority of dwellings in Serbia the main sources of heating are electricity and solid and liquid fuels, while only 21.7% of dwellings were connected to district heating systems in 2018 (RSO, 2019b). For this reason, the imposed ceiling, which is the same for winter and summer months, discriminates against smaller households who use electricity for heating. The available data, published by the Energy Agency of Republic of Serbia, show that over the winter period the number of vulnerable consumers who are entitled to reduced tariffs is usually lower than the whole-year average. In 2017, 13.1% of the population in Serbia stated that they could not afford to keep their home adequately warm, 4.3 percentage points higher than the EU28 average (Eurostat, 2019a). The consumption limits that are imposed also discriminate in favour of consumers whose dwellings are connected to district heating, as they spend less on electricity in the winter months while at the same time being eligible in some cases for reduced tariffs (including on district heating costs).

It is apparent that the measure to facilitate access to energy by low-income people has not been fully effective. On average, over the 2016-2018 period, only around 1% of the Serbian population were registered as energy-vulnerable consumers, while over the same period 25% of country population were at risk of poverty (RSO, 2019c). The household budget survey shows that utility bills present a significant burden: the average monthly electricity bill represented 5.6% of budget expenditure in 2018, while in the same year 28.4% of households in Serbia had arrears on utility bills – 21.8 percentage points higher than the EU28 average (RSO, 2019b, Eurostat, 2019b).

Since there have been no impact assessments of this policy measure, it is not possible to fully explain its rather low effectiveness. There is no transparent recording system, as the approval process is fragmented into two steps and implemented by two different bodies. In practice, every month the number of vulnerable consumers entitled to reduced tariffs differs, since some consumers may not receive reduced energy bills if their monthly consumption exceeds the defined limit.

In a number of interviews, officials from the national energy provider *Elektroprivreda Srbije* have acknowledged the continuous problems related to low take-up, while maintaining that the earmarked funds in the central budget have been sufficient.⁸ Their view is that the local authorities bear the responsibility for low coverage and inadequate support to potential beneficiaries.

⁷ <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/402786/Ekonomija/Zbog-sest-kvadrata-vise-ostao-bez-besplatnih-kilovata>, accessed on 7.01.2020

⁸ <https://www.blic.rs/biznis/moj-novcanik/za-ugrozene-gradjane-156-milijardi-dinara-kako-do-olaksica-za-placanje-struje-i-gasa/p6nwfzz>

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2019a, Local communities and regions in Serbia in 2019, Belgrade;

2019b, Households budget survey, 2018;

2019c, SILC 2018.

Annex

Table A1: Essential service – Water

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:⁹

There is no definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access by low-income people to water (for hygiene purposes, to cook...) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	Yes-most
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

⁹ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A2: Essential service – Sanitation

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:¹⁰

There is no definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to sanitation (i.e. systems for taking dirty water and other waste products away from dwellings in order to protect people's health) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	Yes-most
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

¹⁰ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A3: Essential service – Energy

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:¹¹

There is no definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access by low-income people to energy (to light dwellings, heat or cool dwellings, and use home appliances) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	Yes		
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

¹¹ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A4: Essential service – Public transport

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:¹²

There is no definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access by low-income people to public transport in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	Yes-few
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

¹² **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A5: Essential service – Digital public services

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:¹³

There is no definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access by low-income people to digital public services (e.g. digital post, digital fiscal services, digital social security services, digital healthcare appointments) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	No
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

¹³ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table B1: Essential services – Summary table

- 1) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to the different services that exist at national, regional and/or local level in the country
- 2) Broader policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised in the country
- 3) Ongoing or announced reforms of the measures and/or related frameworks aimed at (further) enhancing effective access to the service by low-income people in the country

	1. Measures (NAT, SUBNAT, BOTH, NONE) (*)	2. Policy framework (**)		3. Ongoing or planned reforms (Yes/No)
		National (Yes/No)	Subnational (Yes/No)	
Access to water	SUBNAT	No	Yes	No
Access to sanitation	SUBNAT	No	Yes	No
Access to energy	NAT	Yes	No	No
Access to public transport	SUBNAT	No	Yes	No
Access to digital public services	NONE	No	No	No
Access to basic financial services (***)	Not applicable	Yes	No	No

(*) This column summarises the response provided in Tables A1-A5 above. "NAT" means that all the measures that exist in favour of low-income people are national measures; "SUBNAT" means that there are no national measures but some of/all the measures that exist are subnational measures; BOTH means a mix of NAT and SUBNAT; "NONE" means that there are no measures, be it at national or subnational level.

(**) Is there a broader national policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised in the country for some of/all the services under scrutiny ("Yes"/"No")? **Only if** there is no such national framework for one service **and if** the service is organised at subnational level: Is there a broader subnational policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised for this service ("Yes"/"No")?

(***) Open and use payment accounts with basic features (Directive 2014/92/EU).

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