



EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

Access to essential services for low-income people

North Macedonia

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Social Europe

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Directorate C — Social Affairs

Unit C.2 — Modernisation of social protection systems

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European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

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

North Macedonia

2020

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Quoting this report: Gerovska Mitev, Maja (2020). ESPN Thematic Report on Access to essential services for low-income people – North Macedonia, European Social Policy Network (ESPN), Brussels: European Commission.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	4
1 OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL/SUBNATIONAL MEASURES AIMED AT SUPPORTING LOW-INCOME PEOPLE IN ACCESSING ESSENTIAL SERVICES	6
1.1 Definition of “essential services”	6
1.2 Definition of “low-income people” used in the context of access to services	6
1.3 Measures for facilitating access for low-income people to services	8
1.3.1 Access to water	8
1.3.2 Access to sanitation	8
1.3.3 Access to energy	8
1.3.4 Access to public transport	9
1.3.5 Access to digital public services	9
1.4 Access to financial services (Directive 2014/92/EU)	10
2 NATIONAL/SUBNATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND REFORMS	11
2.1 National/subnational policy frameworks	11
2.2 Ongoing or announced reforms	11
3 A FOCUS ON ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION	13
REFERENCES	15
ANNEX	17
Table A1: Essential service – Water	17
Table A2: Essential service – Sanitation	18
Table A3: Essential service – Energy	19
Table A4: Essential service – Public transport	20
Table A5: Essential service – Digital public services	20
Table B1: Essential services – Summary table	22

Summary

Essential services in North Macedonia are defined in a number of laws and by-laws. According to the Draft Law on Consumer Protection (Ministry of Economy, 2019) these include *“services related to water, electricity, gas and district heating supply, public electronic communications services, drainage services, wastewater, waste & maintenance services, chimney services, postal services, passenger transportation services, public parking lot services, services of management of apartment buildings, as well as other services of economic character determined by regulation as public, i.e. as services of public interest”* (Art. 2, point 11).

There is no single definition of “low-income people” used in North Macedonia in the context of the delivery of the essential services under scrutiny in this report. In most cases, the definition of **low income** is related to the status of the social assistance beneficiary acquired through the Centres of Social Work. The Draft Law on Consumer Protection defines a “vulnerable consumer” as a *“consumer who, due to his or her economic or social position, living conditions, special needs or other difficult personal and family circumstances, purchases goods or services under particularly difficult conditions or is unable to supply them, as well as the consumer who due to intellectual disability or old age or behaves in a way that the service provider could reasonably have foreseen”* (Art. 2, point 24).

Access to water and sanitation for low-income groups has been provided at a local level, through measures such as subsidised access to water in the form of a certain number of cubic metres per household monthly, mainly targeted at economically inactive people – that is, beneficiaries of the right to permanent financial assistance (currently guaranteed minimum assistance and social pensions). Data show that the burden of water and sanitation bills is much higher for the lowest income quintile than for all other income groups.

Access to energy for low-income groups has been the most systematically developed, compared with all other essential services. There is a national integrated policy framework for access by, and protection of, vulnerable energy consumers, involving measures such as: direct financial support to vulnerable energy consumers; direct financial support for energy-saving and energy-efficiency improvements; and provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply for vulnerable consumers in cases involving unpaid bills for energy supplied in December, January and February. In the latter case vulnerable consumers also benefit from in-kind benefits such as: exemption from the obligation to pay a reconnection fee; exemption from the obligation to pay the costs of extraordinary verification of measuring equipment; and priority for correction of faults. (Government of North Macedonia, 2019b).

There is no explicit support for access to transport for low-income groups. Local measures consist of free transport for pensioners and undergraduate students (at the public universities), as well as disabled people – groups that may, however, include many people on low incomes.

Although there is a government e-services portal, where citizens can apply electronically for public services, **there are still no particular digital public services for people with low incomes in North Macedonia.**

Access to financial services for low-income groups will be enhanced with the adoption of the Draft Law on Payment Services and Payment Systems (Ministry of Finance, 2019a), expected in 2020. The law will transpose the EU Directive 2014/92/EU and will introduce the right to payment accounts with basic features. According to data from the National Bank of North Macedonia, whereas 77% of the adult population in the country have a transaction account, only 12% of the population access their accounts electronically.

The essential services where there are the most access problems for low-income groups are water and sanitation, in particular for low-income Roma households. In these cases there are systematic barriers linked to social exclusion.

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 North Macedonia. The group of “those in need” is restricted in the report to people on a low income and low-income households.

In North Macedonia, support in relation to low-income people and other vulnerable social groups has traditionally been offered through the social protection system. Within this system, support has been mainly channelled through financial transfers, while the social service provision has been marginally developed until 2019. Hence, measures targeting low-income people for enabling access to essential services are not specifically developed outside the social protection system. In cases where such support exists, it is mainly provided to people who are inactive on the labour market, such as people with disabilities and pensioners. Moreover, eligibility for these measures is usually linked to the beneficiary’s registration status with the centres for social work. This leaves little room for other vulnerable groups to benefit from measures to access essential services.

1.1 Definition of “essential services”

Essential services in North Macedonia are defined in a number of laws and by-laws. The Draft Law on Consumer Protection (Ministry of Economy, 2019) defines public services as: “*services related to water, electricity, gas and district heating supply through an appropriate distribution network, provision of public electronic communications services, drainage services, wastewater, waste & maintenance services, chimney services, postal services, passenger transportation services, public parking lot services, services of management of apartment buildings, as well as other services of economic character determined by regulation as public, i.e. as services of public interest*” (Art. 2, point 11).

In addition, the following laws also define broadly or specifically certain public services: Law on Local Self-government (2002, Art. 2, point 11), Law for Communal Services (2012, Art. 5), Law on Water (Official Gazette, No 87/2008), Law for Supply of Drinking Water and Disposal of Urban Waste Water (Official Gazette, No 68/04), Law for Waste Management (Official Gazette, No 68/04), Law on Energy (Official Gazette, No 96/2018,), and Law for Transport in the Public Traffic (Official Gazette, No 68/04).

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

There is no single definition of low-income people used in North Macedonia in the context of the delivery of the essential services under scrutiny in this report. Different laws and other legal acts use specific definitions in the context of access to essential services. In

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/>.

most cases, the definition of low income is related to the status of the social assistance beneficiary acquired through the Centres of Social Work.

The Draft Law on Consumer Protection (Ministry of Economy, 2019) defines a vulnerable consumer as a: *“consumer who, due to his or her economic or social position, living conditions, special needs or other difficult personal and family circumstances, purchases goods or services under particularly difficult conditions or is unable to supply them, as well as the consumer who due to intellectual disability or old age or behaves in a way that the service provider could reasonably have foreseen”* (Art. 2, point 24).

Vulnerable social categories and water subsidy At the municipal level, subsidised access to water is provided to *“vulnerable social categories that are registered at the Centre for Social Work as beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance”* (Municipality of Prilep, 2019). The right to permanent financial assistance existed under the old Law for Social Protection and was generally aimed at low-income households/persons (a monthly income per household member below 4,000 MKD/€65) and who were not economically active – that is, older people over 65 with no access to a pension, disabled people, and single parents with children aged up to 3 years.

Sanitation and low-income people At the municipal level, the definition of low-income people in the context of access to sanitation is the same as that for access to water, and is: *“vulnerable social categories, that are registered at the Centre for Social Work as beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance”* (Public Enterprise for Water Supply and Sewerage, Skopje, 2002).

Vulnerable energy consumer On the basis of the Law on Energy (Official Gazette, No 96/2018) the government has adopted a programme for protecting vulnerable consumers of energy for 2020, according to which a category of *“vulnerable consumer”* is stipulated. A vulnerable energy consumer is defined as: *“1. a household that is a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum assistance; and 2. a member of a household that is in social risk, such as: maternity, illness, old age, injury and disability, whose consumption of energy is provided under special conditions”* (Art. II.2).

In addition, certain categories are provided with an energy subsidy, such as beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance (under the Law for Social Protection), as well as the beneficiaries of the right to social security for the elderly (i.e. a social pension under the Law for Social Security of the Elderly, Official Gazette, No 104/2019). The first category (guaranteed minimum assistance beneficiaries) is defined as: *“a household that is financially insecure and does not own a property or property rights from which it can be sustained”*. A financially insecure household is considered to be a: *“household whose total average amount of all income of all household members on all grounds in the last three months prior to the filing of the application for entitlement and during the exercise of the right is lower than the amount of the guaranteed minimum allowance (i.e. 4,000 MKD or € 65)”* (Art. 28, Law for Social Protection, Official Gazette, No 104/2019). The second category (beneficiaries of a social pension) is defined as a: *“person 65 or above, who is a citizen of North Macedonia or resided in North Macedonia in the last 15 years, has no income in the last three months, has no right to pension on other grounds and has no property or property rights”* (Art. 4, Law for Social Security of the Elderly).

Free public transport for students and pensioners There is no definition of low-income people related to access to transport. At a local level, some municipalities provide a subsidy to public transport enterprises to enable free transport. In this respect, the city of Skopje provides a subsidy for free transport for *“women over 62 years old and men over 64 years old and for full-time undergraduate students at state universities”* (Municipality of Skopje, 2018, Art. 1).

Digital public services and low-income people Currently there is no national or local definition of low-income people in relation to access to digital public services.

Financial services for low-income people The Draft Law on Payment Services and Payment Systems (Ministry of Finance, 2019a) stipulates six categories of clients with the

right to open, and use without any fee, a payment account with basic features. These categories include the beneficiaries of: "(1) maintenance under family law or compensation for health deterioration or reduced or full incapacity for work; (2) compensation for physical disability according to the disability insurance acts; (3) financial assistance from the social protection; (4) temporary unemployment; (5) child allowance; and (6) scholarship or loan for high school or undergraduate students" (Art. 74).

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

1.3.1 Access to water

Measures for facilitating access to water for low-income people do not exist at the national level. Access to water and sanitation is obtained through providers at the local level, and due to this each municipality or local provider defines their own set of measures. On the basis of the experiences of urban municipalities (Skopje and Prilep), the following measures exist at the local level.

- 1) *Reduced tariffs* Some municipalities provide subsidised access to water for beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance – five cubic metres per household monthly in Prilep, and 10 cubic metres in Skopje (Public Enterprise for Water Supply and Sewerage, Skopje, 2002). In cases where the municipality subsidises access, it provides a list of beneficiaries (obtained through the Centre of Social Work) to the public provider of water, which then reduces the monthly tariff of these households for the specified amount of water.
- 2) *Advice/training or information services to all consumers* Information/advice on eligibility for reductions facilitating access to water is provided to citizens through methods such as SMS, mobile application devices, open days and direct communication.

1.3.2 Access to sanitation

Measures for facilitating access to sanitation (waste disposal) for low-income people do not exist at the national level. Access to sanitation is obtained through providers at the local level, and due to this each municipality or local provider defines their own set of measures. The measures that exist at the local level include the following.

- 1) *Reduced tariffs* Households that are beneficiaries of the reduced tariffs for water are also provided with reduced tariffs for sanitation (i.e. waste disposal). This is due to the fact that the local providers of water and sanitation are in almost all cases the same. In the case of the municipality of Skopje, beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance are provided with a reduced tariff for sanitation (i.e. waste disposal for up to 50 square metres of housing area).
- 2) *Advice/training or information services to all consumers* Information/advice on eligibility for reductions facilitating access to sanitation is provided through public campaigns by the public enterprises that are sanitation providers or through the municipality itself (website information, social media advertising etc.).

1.3.3 Access to energy

Support for low-income people in legislative terms is most systematically developed in relation to access to energy. A vulnerable energy consumer (as defined in Section 1.2) has the right to the following types of support.

- 1) *Cash benefits*
 - *Direct financial support to vulnerable energy consumers* is provided as a cash supplement in the amount of 1,000 MKD monthly (€16) to cover some of the

costs of consuming household energy in the months of October to March (as defined in the Law for Social Protection, Official Gazette, No 104/19).

- *Direct financial support for energy-saving and energy-efficiency improvements* relates to a number of measures set out in the Program for Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources and Promotion of Energy Efficiency for 2020 (Government of North Macedonia, 2019a).
- 2) *Advice/training or information services involves information for vulnerable consumers on their right to seek the use of one or more of the protection measures.*
 - 3) *Provision of a basic/uninterrupted basic supply is enabled through the following measures:*
 - non-disconnection of vulnerable consumers due to unpaid bills for energy supplied in December, January and February;
 - non-disconnection of vulnerable energy consumers due to unpaid energy bills if no more than 60 days have elapsed from the due date for payment of the bill;
 - written notification of the planned shutdown no later than 40 days prior to the shutdown; and
 - an option for deferred payment of debt, or debt restructuring.
 - 4) *In-kind benefits* The following measures are also guaranteed under the government programme for the protection of vulnerable energy consumers for 2020:
 - exemption from the obligation to pay a reconnection fee;
 - exemption from the obligation to pay the costs of extraordinary verification of measuring equipment;
 - the construction of a standard plug for connection without compensation;
 - priority for correction of faults, in order to re-establish as quickly as possible energy supply to those consumers classified as vulnerable due to the health status of a household member;
 - priority in the process for determining claims for damages due to interruptions in energy supply, or supply of a lower quality than prescribed; and
 - priority for maintenance and correction of faults in the distribution system to customers in remote areas.

Some of the criteria related to the use of the above-mentioned measures include:

- 1) proof of registration as a vulnerable energy consumer with the Centre for Social Work;
- 2) a paid energy bill for the month preceding the month in which the request is made on behalf of the vulnerable consumer or a member of their household, from which it can be established that the applicant is connected to the electricity, natural gas or thermal energy network; and
- 3) energy consumption of less than 3,600 kWh annually.

1.3.4 Access to public transport

Measures related to public transport exist at a local level. However, specific measures aimed at low-income groups are not developed. There are other groups targeted with local measures, including disabled people, pensioners and students. Indirectly, these measures also benefit many low-income households containing people from these groups.

1.3.5 Access to digital public services

There are no particular digital public services aimed at people with low incomes in North Macedonia.

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

The Draft Law on Payment Services and Payment Systems which was issued for public consultation in 2019, and is expected to be adopted in the second half of 2020, will transpose the EU Directive 2014/92/EU relating to the right for consumers to open and use a payment account with basic features. According to Article 74 of this law, an account with basic features can be opened subject to a reasonable charge, which cannot be higher than 0.1% of the average monthly net wage in the last 12 months. As already indicated, the same article also stipulates six categories of clients with the right to open and use the payment account with basic features without any fee. Each provider of the payment account with basic features needs to provide a minimum number of free transactions, and no fewer than five free transactions per month. As the law is still not adopted, no issues related to the implementation of the Directive 2014/92/EU can be reported.

According to the Governor of the National Bank, Angeloska Bezhovska, the data show that 77% of the adult population in the country have a transaction account, which is quite comparable to the EU average of around 82%. However, only 17% and 53% of the population own credit and debit cards (respectively), compared with the EU averages of 35% and 71%. Also, only 37% of the population use cards for transactions, which is only slightly more than half the EU average of 63%. In addition, only 12% of the population access their accounts electronically, and only 17% make internet transactions (Ministry of Finance, 2019b).

2 National/subnational policy frameworks and reforms

2.1 National/subnational policy frameworks

The national policy framework related to low-income people and access to essential services is generally determined by the acts and documents in the field of social policy and social protection. In this respect, the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010-2020) identifies a number of policy areas, including transport, communications and housing. However, due to the lack of an integrated policy approach, this document has provided strategic guidance only in relation to measures under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In addition, the Roma Strategy (2014-2020) and integrated Roma Action Plans (2016-2020) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2014) are targeted policy documents that indicate specific challenges among Roma in relation to issues such as housing (including access to water and sanitation).

In relation to water, sanitation and energy, there is a Regulatory Commission for Energy and Water Services, formed in 2020, which among other things is responsible for: the safe, secure and good-quality supply of energy to consumers; nature and environmental protection; and consumer protection. It also regulates the tariffs for energy, water and sanitation services from public providers.

In general, the policy framework for access to essential services by low-income people is more developed at the local level. As most of the essential services are provided at the local level, local municipalities, through the adoption of decisions as well as through their annual programmes (in the field of social protection, housing etc.), stipulate access and support in relation to essential services among different groups at the local level.

2.2 Ongoing or announced reforms

The government has recently published a catalogue of public services (Ministry for Information Society and Administration, 2019b) as well as a portal for public e-services³, whose purpose is to improve the quality of public services by providing transparent, accurate and complete information on access to all public services by all beneficiaries. The catalogue includes information on the documentation, procedures and institutions relevant to obtaining access to these services. All public services are listed under 15 categories, and only two out of six services under scrutiny in this report are included.

According to the Strategic Plan of the Ministry for Information Society and Administration 2019-2021 (Ministry for Information Society and Administration, 2019a) and on the basis of the Governmental Work Programme, there is a plan to open centres (one-stop shops) for services in each of the larger cities in the country; citizens would be able to obtain information there but also, in some cases, access to public services.

In 2020, as indicated in Section 1.4, the Law on Payment Services and Payment Systems will be adopted, which will improve the financial inclusion of low-income people.

Local Equitable Access Action Plans have been initiated in Skopje, the municipality of Veles and five municipalities in Kumanovo, and implementation of several of them has already began. Each local action plan for equitable access to water and sanitation includes objectives (targets), specific targets, specific actions, indicative time frames for the implementation of each action by responsible institutions, financing sources, and indicators (UNECE, WHO, 2019, p.61).

According to the nationally representative perceptions survey related to citizen satisfaction with public services (Centre for Change Management, 2019), when asked what are the main priorities related to the reform of delivery of public services, almost one third (27.4%) responded "reduction of the cost of public services". This indicates a need for low-income

³ National E-Services portal – <https://uslugi.gov.mk>.

people in particular to be part of the forthcoming strategies in relation to support in establishing access to public services.

3 A focus on access to water and sanitation

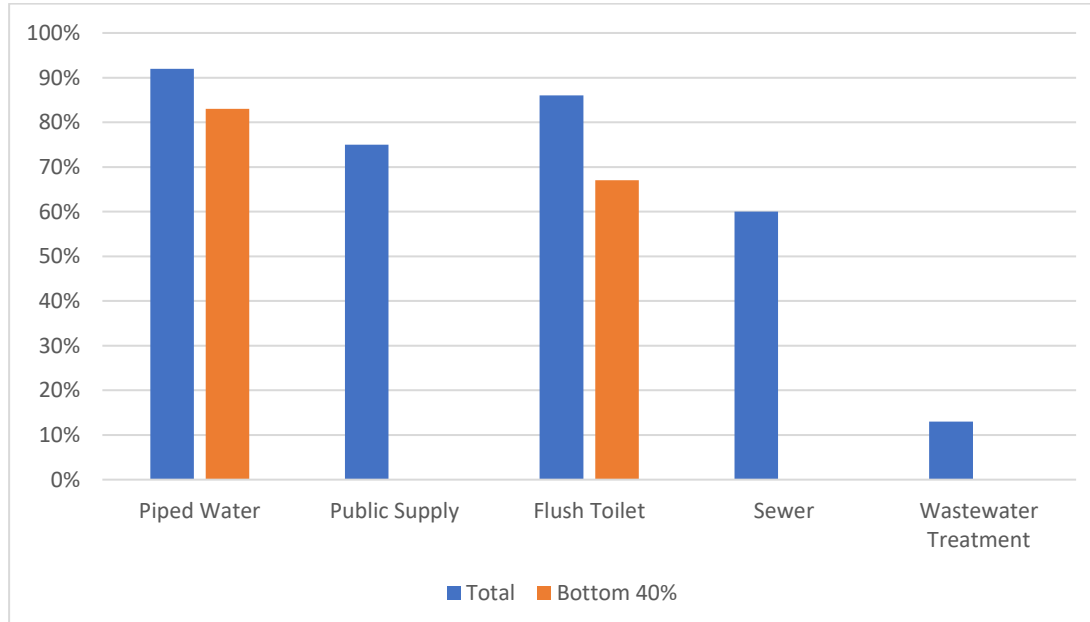
Taking into consideration the benchmark affordability threshold of 3% in the water services sector in Europe, the World Bank estimated that low-income households in North Macedonia face increased problems. According to their estimates (World Bank, 2015), the share of total income devoted to water costs is 6% for those in the lowest income quintile; just over the 3% threshold for the second lowest quintile; and less than 1% for the highest income quintile.

In relation to access, the European Roma Rights Centre (2013) indicates that approximately one third of the poorest households in Roma settlements do not have access to improved water sources and/or sanitation. According to a report on achieving the human right to water and sanitation (Kocubovski *et al.*, 2016), the Skopje Roma municipality of Shuto Orizari has the highest percentage of households living in housing without water and sanitation. Only 26% of Roma have access to water and only 16% have access to sanitation in their home.

Estimates also show that access to water and sanitation is lower among the bottom 40% of the population by income than among the general population (Figure 1).

According to a study by the Organisation for Consumer Protection on protecting the rights and interests of consumers in accessing basic communal services in the country (Organisation for Consumer Protection, 2016), the people least satisfied with water and sanitation services were citizens of the Shuto Orizari Roma community, who gave a score of 2.5 (out of 5). Half of the respondents in this municipality (50%) have indicated that they are not at all satisfied with the services for water and sanitation. Similar dissatisfaction was indicated in relation to waste disposal.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with access to water and sanitation, total population vs bottom 40% of the population by income; North Macedonia, 2015



Source: World Bank, 2015.

Barriers that low-income people, particularly Roma, face in accessing water and sanitation are linked to their predominant location in settlements with a lack of adequate infrastructure. As indicated in the National Roma Strategy, some of the barriers include:

- 1) living in illegally constructed buildings, without basic infrastructure (no electricity and water; or if there is water, it is contaminated with bacteria and unsafe to use, with sewerage systems often also lacking);

-
- 2) living in informal, unregulated settlements (not covered by urban plans);
 - 3) overload of the existing communal power grid (which is often outdated and lacks capacity);
 - 4) occurrences of discrimination on different grounds in access to housing;
 - 5) limited access to affordable credit or to the available housing stock because of high prices;
 - 6) spatial segregation on ethnic or other grounds of communities that have distinct cultural or social characteristics, and which are often a target of inherited prejudices and stereotypes.

These systematic barriers indicate that access to water and sanitation among particular low-income groups, especially Roma, is a social exclusion issue. Despite the relevant strategies and action plans that have been adopted, the provision of adequate and decent living conditions to vulnerable and low-income communities is impeded by both a lack of adequate financing as well as a lack of cooperation between central and local government.

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Annex

Table A1: Essential service – Water

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:⁴

Local definition: Vulnerable social categories that are registered at the Centre for Social Work as beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to water (for hygiene purposes, cooking...) 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
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”.

⁴ **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:⁵

Local definition: Vulnerable social categories that are registered at the Centre for Social Work as beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance.

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-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”.

⁵ **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:⁶

National definition: 1. household that is a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum assistance; and 2. member of a household that is at social risk, such as maternity, illness, old age, injury and disability, whose consumption of energy is provided under special conditions.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to energy (to light dwellings, heat or cool dwellings, or 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	No	No	No
Cash benefits	Yes		
In-kind benefits	Yes		
Advice/training or information services	Yes		
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	Yes		

(*) 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”.

⁶ **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:⁷

No national or local definition of low income in relation to public transport

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for 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	No
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”.

⁷ **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:⁸

No national or local definition of low income in delivery of digital public services.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for 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 no for national) (**)	Local (only if no 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”.

⁸ **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 for 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	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access to sanitation	SUBNAT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access to energy	NAT	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access to public transport	NONE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Access to digital public services	NONE	Yes	No	Yes
Access to basic financial services (***)	Not applicable	Yes	No	Yes

(*) 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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