

Policy Framework for Community-based Services for People with Mental Disabilities in Bulgaria

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Development of new social policy

- **2002 New Social Policy** - concept of community-based services was introduced on policy level
- **Social Support Act and Regulations** - amended in 2003 to allow:
 - decentralization - state to municipalities, state funding, decisions made by municipal councils
 - new social services were introduced- protected homes, day-care centers, personal assistant, etc. without detailed regulation
 - provisions come after services exist and function
- **Standards for maintenance of different services** - elaborated by Council of Ministers for the first time in 2002
 - do not take into account personal needs
 - no flexibility - money to follow the person
 - unreasoned
 - discriminatory approach
- **Policy papers** were not:
 - based on statistics
 - based on needs assessment
 - detailed
 - implemented



Funding

- State Budget Law - no special provisions for social services, no planned budgeting, no provisions for mentally disabled
 - According to MLSP state budget for social services for 2007 - 35 mln. Euro - to be given to municipalities
 - From MLSP budget - personal assistant program - 19 mln. Euro
 - From MLSP budget - integration of people with disabilities - welfare- 65 mln. Euro
 - average amount for building one protected home - 60 000 Euro - funding from UNDP and EU
 - average amount for renovation of one institution - at least 60 000 Euro - funding from MLSP
- Council of Ministers Decision for annual standards (revised every year)
 - person with ID or MI in protected home - 646 Euro
 - person with ID in institution - 846 Euro, person with MI - 1241 Euro
 - person with disability in day-care center - 515 Euro
 - average salary for staff -lowest in BG - 130 Euro




Problems for developing community-based services

- Municipalities are not obliged to seek for the best provider of a social service (often not aware of the option)- do not offer tenders, manage the services themselves, do not know interested NGOs or business companies
- When they provide services, they are not obliged to register at Social Support Agency as the other providers and quality criteria do not apply to them - double standards
- Municipalities have access to public funding while the private providers do not
- If one potential/functioning provider is available, direct contracting should be allowed without tenders
- Only the community-based services are object for decentralization so far, the old-type ones provided to the majority of the people are regulated by the state
- Mayor is the employer of the staff no matter who the provider is
- Real decentralization impossible because the municipalities do not accumulate the income and are not able to invest it in social services
- No system for quality control exists so far
- Applicable rules and methodology for community-based services do not exist
- Job descriptions - unclear, do not correspond to reality



Statistics

- Agency for People with Disabilities (APD) - unable to provide data
 - **Gathers only assessments sheets on the local level**
 - **They are not reliable – take into account only people eligible for “integration welfare”**
 - **Problem - lack of staff to convert the papers into electronic documents at the medical commissions**
- National Labour and Expert Commission – has only papers, no statistic is kept
 - **Do not desegregate data according to diagnosis**
 - **They count only people with certain percent of reduced working capacity**



Community-based services for people with mental disabilities

- Day-care centres for children and adults
- Protected homes (group homes)
- Personal assistants
- Social Assistants
- Centres for rehabilitation and integration



Day-care centres for children and adults

- Day-care centers were built in the same buildings where the centers for children and for the same children who are over 18 now
- They still treat the adults like children and provide no structured and meaningful activities
- They do not support outside contacts of the adults, nor they train clients for independent living
- They provide residential care in fact but not for 24 hours
- The monthly fee is 10 Euro, the pensions of the people are 37 Euro and the state pays for them 42 Euro per capita monthly
- First monitoring of day-care centers for children was in 2006 by SACP
 - **58 day-care centers (264 municipalities) for children provide services to almost 8 % of the disabled children - 2400 children**
- No monitoring yet for day-care centers for adults and no control
 - **23 day-care centers for adults with 594 clients**



Protected homes

- 27 protected homes built so far with 120 deinstitutionalised people (mainly with ID) but the capacity is 220
- some places in the protected homes are vacant
- selection is arbitrary and the homes' staff is not asked about it
- more and more people from families are placed there
- very wide range of conditions of the people from institutions
- most of them without capacity to leave the homes soon
- protected homes are perceived as permanent homes for the residents
- confusion with the guardianship issues
- still serious human rights concerns – abuse, neglect
- no monitoring done so far
- no regulations and methodology
- no psychological support provided-neither to staff, nor to clients
- no preparation, just moving



Centers for rehabilitation

- No clear concept about services
- The staff - social workers only and a psychologist in some
- No expertise in working with people with mental disabilities



Personal Assistant

- Eligible to be assistants - unemployed members of family or people who live in the same flat or town with the disabled person
- 13 955 assistants hired till December 2006
- salary 90 Euro a month
- 2294 personal assistants to 2320 children
- 8 children deinstitutionalised and 24 adults with disabilities deinstitutionalised because of provision of personal assistants !



Social Assistant

- eligible - unemployed people
- 2558 social assistants hired till December 2006



Challenges

- Little interest in community-based services even from NGOs
- No one to work with on lobbying - those who work in the field of developing the services are too busy with that and do not have the overview to be able to plan, those who plan do not know what the practice is
- Hard to find information - most of the people cannot provide and do not gather
- Many people involved in different sectors of social services and set the rules regardless of the type of disability and special needs of the disabled people