

Holistic Approach to Social Housing

Regulatory and policy framework
to Social Housing and Active Inclusion



HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SOCIAL HOUSING

Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework
of Housing and Active Inclusion



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
Ministry of Construction,
Transport and Infrastructure
Ministry for Labour, Employment,
Veteran and Social Affairs

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ACRONYMS

CSW	Centre for Social Welfare
EU	European Union
EU SHAI	EU Support to Social Housing and Active Inclusion Programme
IPA	EU Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance
LSGU	Local Self-Government Unit
NES	National Employment Service
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
RS	Republic of Serbia
SIPRU	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

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INTRODUCTION

The 'Holistic Approach to Social Housing' study was prepared within the "European Union Support to Social Housing and Active Inclusion" Programme (hereinafter: Programme) funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The Programme provides a wide scope of housing solutions for 500 families across Serbia from the ranks of particularly vulnerable groups such as the Roma, persons with disabilities, youth leaving the social protection system and women victims of domestic violence. To achieve long-term sustainability, the Programme supports the compulsory implementation of complementary social inclusion measures for the beneficiaries of housing solutions, with particular emphasis on their employment and economic empowerment, as well as on exercising their rights to education, health and social care, access to other services and related rights, with the application of good governance principles - including gender equality and active participation from all stakeholders in the process.

The study represents a form of support to local self-government units (LSGUs) in holistic planning and implementation of social housing and active inclusion measures for vulnerable groups. The study is based on an analysis of national legislative acts and strategy papers, relevant sources and literature, as well as European and local best practice examples. 13 structured interviews with members of vulnerable groups, representatives of LSGUs,

social protection institutions, and civil society organisations were conducted during the development of this study.

The study consists of two fundamental parts. The first part analyses legal and policy frameworks of housing, social, educational, health care and employment policies and active inclusion of vulnerable groups, as well as the institutional framework at a national, provincial and local level.

The second part illustrates holistic models of inclusion and housing support for vulnerable groups. Two holistic inclusion models were presented for each of the four Programme target groups through the provision of housing support and active inclusion measures. It is also possible to provide other forms of housing support for each target group, in line with legislative solutions and the local context, coupled with the compulsory implementation of active inclusion measures. Furthermore, the study features a holistic model of social housing in a supportive environment, suitable for vulnerable groups to live together. Best practice examples from Serbia and individual EU countries were listed with each example.



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1. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS OF HOUSING AND ACTIVE INCLUSION

The legal and policy frameworks for the provision of adequate housing support, social security and achieving active inclusion in the Republic of Serbia is made of:

- ▶ legislative solutions in the competence of the ministries and local governments
- ▶ regulations in the field of housing, planning and construction, social and health care, employment, education, gender equality
- ▶ national strategy papers related to individual vulnerable groups (the Roma, persons with disabilities, youth, returnees under readmission agreements, refugees and internally displaced persons etc)
- ▶ sector strategies and action plans enacted by the local self-government units

1.1. HOUSING POLICIES

It must be stated at the beginning that the legislative and regulatory frameworks regulating the housing support field in Serbia remain underdeveloped both at the national and local level. The slow introduction of necessary bylaws and particularly in the institutional setup significantly slows down the full enforcement of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance adopted in 2016 and the enactment of planned housing support measures.

1.1.1. Law on Housing and Building Maintenance

The **Law on Housing and Building Maintenance**¹ sets out the foundations for the establishment of strategic, institutional, financial and other housing policy development instruments in Serbia. The law sets out the field of sustainable development of housing, management, use and maintenance of buildings, eviction and relocation procedures, **housing support** and other issues pertaining to housing policy. The law establishes housing support to be “any form of housing assistance to persons who are unable to fulfil the housing need for themselves and their household under market conditions with their own funds due to social, economic and other reasons” (Art. 88). Housing support is exercised through programmes formulated and implemented in line with the following principles:

- rationality in terms of housing support provision according to the beneficiary's capacity and up to the level of satisfying their housing needs
- fairness in terms of providing a proportionally larger share of support to beneficiaries in worse social and housing circumstances
- Financial sustainability in terms of the highest possible return on invested funds for their future use in subsequent housing support programmesocial sustainability in terms of provision of adequate social protection measures and services so the housing costs do not threaten the beneficiary's livelihood

¹Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law.)

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- *institutional sustainability* in the sense that reducing the cost of living for beneficiaries does not threaten the operation of the non-profit housing organisation providing the housing support
 - *transparency of the flow of funds in the housing support programme*, in terms of clearly outlined funding sources and terms of the return of funds per funding source, as well as a list of all subsidies and reliefs
 - *spatial & urban planning adequacy* in terms of locating housing units from housing support stock near existing residential buildings, public services, other compatible functions, roads and utility infrastructure, with the aim of avoiding spatial segregation.
- homeless persons²
 - Persons who are temporarily homeless, i.e. persons left without a home or whose housing conditions were significantly impaired due to structural instability of the building, or due to extreme weather or other incident.
 - domestic violence victims
 - persons without a home who lay claim to cash benefits as defined by the law regulating social protection
 - 1st category veterans and beneficiaries of rights from the field of veteran & disability protection and protection of wartime disabled civilians
 - persons with disabilities
 - persons who lack funds to provide for housing for themselves or their household under market conditions, i.e. to improve their housing condition
 - persons with scarce occupations of interest to the local self-government unit (LSGU) or the public administration body.

Housing support beneficiaries are defined on the basis of some general and special criteria (Art. 89). The general conditions are the following:

- the person should be a citizen of the Republic of Serbia
- the person should be in a situation of housing need (homeless or without an adequate home)
- the person's income should be insufficient to enable him/herself and his/her household to solve their housing need in the market.

The law also specifies eight categories of housing support beneficiaries, with the precondition being that they do not have sufficient funds to provide themselves and their families with (adequate) housing or improve existing housing conditions as follows:

Beneficiaries' income limits as preconditions to access certain forms of housing support were set out by law (Art. 91). The manner of calculating maximum income for multi-member households depending on the number of members and for households with persons with disabilities was provided. The top income limit can also be set at a lower level by an appropriate housing support programme, while disability benefits are not considered as income.

² The term from the law was quoted although professionals recommend the term "person in a homeless situation".

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The maximum income of a multi-member household is calculated according to the following formula

$$C = 1 + O \times 0,7 + M \times 0,5$$

where:

- C** – coefficient
- 1** – person eligible for housing support
- O** – number of household members over the age of 14
- M** – number of children under the age of 14.

Adequate housing, as per Law (Art. 90) is housing that fulfils conditions in terms of: structure and size; existence of basic fittings; structural safety and security; weatherproofing; basic housing sanitary conditions. These adequate housing criteria have a manifold role in ascertaining minimum conditions that the flat acquired for housing support needs must fulfil. In addition, they represent a limit to ascertain the level of housing need, a standard for prioritising in the exercise of housing support and a tool to set the housing support amount through the housing allowance.

Number of household members	Housing structure	Net useful living area (m ²)
1	Studio or one bedroom	22-30
2	One bedroom, one-and-a-half bedroom or two bedroom	30-48
3	One-and-a-half bedroom, two bedroom or two-and-a-half bedroom	40-56
4	Two bedroom, two-and-a-half bedroom or three bedroom	50-64
5	Two-and-a-half bedroom, three bedroom or three-and-a-half bedroom	56-77
6 and more	Two-and-a-half bedroom, three bedroom or three-and-a-half bedroom	64-86

Adequate housing according to the spatial criterion and depending on the number of family household members

¹⁶ The Law (Art. 92-103) provides for **five basic types of housing support**:

► **Renting property**, which includes two types of housing support (Art. 93):

- *Leasing publicly owned property under non-profit conditions (non-profit lease)* that entails leasing publicly owned real estate that can not be bought or sold (Art. 94). The tenant and/or housing support beneficiary pays the rent under the conditions and in a manner stipulated in the Non-Profit Lease Contract. The contract is concluded for a five-year period with the possibility of renewal under the same conditions and for the same term, upon a written request from the beneficiary and pursuant to the appropriate act from the LSGU competent authority allocating housing to person(s) who applied to the public call and fulfilled all requirements. Non-profit rent is calculated annually and the manner of its calculation is set out in the Rulebook on the Uniform Methodology of Calculating Non-Profit Lease.³ Homeless persons and persons with household income under 1.2 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU shall be eligible for this type of housing support, whereby the limit is raised according to a specified scale for each additional household member (Art. 91). Persons without adequate housing and/or persons living in extremely disadvantaged conditions (structurally unstable buildings, overcrowded, with uncertain legal status etc.)

and when relocation to another housing unit represents the only option shall also be eligible for this type of housing support.⁴ Housing for this type of support can be secured through construction (usually the most expensive option) or through acquisition of units on the market.

- *Subsidizing the rent for housing units in any form of property (housing allowance)* providing housing support to beneficiaries through down payment and/or financial assistance in paying a part of the rent or non-profit rent (Art. 95). Tenants in housing units in any form of property (public or private) shall be eligible for this type of housing support. Housing allowance eligibility requirements shall be the following: the rent shall not exceed the highest non-profit amount calculated under the methodology from the above-mentioned Rulebook, the surface area of the unit shall not exceed the surface area of adequate housing as defined in Art. 90. of the Law, and the housing support beneficiary shall have a contract with the owner of the unit registered with the tax authorities.⁵ Closer conditions and the housing allowance approval procedure shall be defined by a decision of the LSGU competent authority (Art. 95 and 121).⁶

► **Purchase and other forms of obtaining ownership over a flat or family house** (Art. 94–100) also includes two types of housing support:

- *Acquisition of property rights over a flat or family house through acquisition of the flat or family house under non-profit conditions.* Homeless persons and persons with household income under 1.5 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU shall be eligible for this type of housing support, whereby the limit is raised according to a specified scale for each additional household member (Art. 91). The Law stipulates the manner of ascertaining the sales price of the flat and house (Art. 97), real estate purchase conditions and/or installment plan and safeguards in case that the housing support beneficiary does not pay three consecutive instalments (Art. 98). The flat or family house purchased under non-profit conditions can not be sold for five years from the date of payment of the sales price (Art. 100).

- *Acquisition of property rights over a flat or family house through allocation without compensation* shall be granted to a homeless person with household income under 1.2 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU, whereby the limit is raised according to a specified scale for each additional household member (Art. 91). Acquisition of the flat or house without compensation shall also be available to persons with the lowest income, since the Law does not prescribe the minimum income limit to access this type of support⁷. Allocation of family houses is set out as a priority form of housing support in rural areas (Art. 96). The Law sets out the price of real estate that is allocated without compensation (Art. 99). A flat or family house acquired by way of allocation can not be sold for ten years from the date of acquisition of ownership rights over that real estate (Art. 100).

¹⁷

³ Rulebook on the Uniform Methodology of Calculating Non-Profit Lease (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 90/2017)

⁴ S. Ristić, G. Blagojević, *Local Self-Government Unit Housing Support Provision Manual*, SCTM, Belgrade, 2020

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ To this date there have been no cases of an LSGU approving a housing allowance in Serbia.

⁷ S. Ristić, G. Blagojević, *Local Self-Government Unit Housing Support Provision Manual*, SCTM, Belgrade, 2020

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- ▶ **Improvement of housing conditions** (Art. 101) is a form of housing support that is implemented through the allocation of construction material and/or professional support for refurbishment, adaptation, reconstruction or extension of the flat or family house. Homeless persons and persons with income under 0.5 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU shall be eligible for this type of housing support, whereby the limit is raised according to a specified scale for each additional household member. When housing support is implemented to improve the energy efficiency of the flat or home, the income limit rises to 0.7 average salary. Owners of a flat or family house can also benefit from this type of housing support regardless of their income level if a part of the housing unit is leased to a person entitled to housing support in accordance with the Law.
 - ▶ **Assistance to Legalize a Flat or Family House** (Article 102) is a form of housing support that can be used to obtain assistance for the development of technical and land surveying documentation for the legalization of a flat and/or family house. Owners of illegally constructed flats or houses with income under 0.5 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU shall be eligible for this type of housing support, with corrections of the limit for each additional household member. Certain categories of beneficiaries can access additional support in the form of release from legalization fees. Certain restrictions apply regarding the property status of beneficiaries and household members to be eligible for assistance for the legalization of the flat or family house.
 - ▶ **Housing Provision** (Art. 103) represents provision of temporary accommodation for all persons listed by the Law as beneficiaries of housing support (Art. 89) until their long-term housing needs are resolved, and especially for the accommodation of homeless, temporarily homeless, persons living in structurally unsound buildings that pose a danger to human life and health,⁸ as well as domestic violence victims who left their family household and have no means to fulfil their housing needs independently. Housing provision shall be conducted in an emergency procedure without the implementation of the procedures for the allocation of housing support required by the Law for other forms of support.

1.1.2. Other legislative provisions

The **Law on Utility Services**⁹ sets out that local self-government units can identify categories of utility users who pay the subsidized price of utility services, as well as the amount of subsidies for each category (Art. 29). LSGUs have a duty to provide a list of subsidized users to the public utility service provider, as well as to compensate the public utility service provider for the subsidized price. The contract may also provide for a share of the utilities price that will not be compensated to the utility service provider for certain categories of users. These provisions are relevant for beneficiaries who receive housing support benefits in the form of subsidized rent in any type of property, as well as for beneficiaries who acquired real estate through allocation or purchase under non-profit conditions.

The provisions of the **Law on the Legalization of Buildings**¹⁰ are particularly relevant for beneficiaries of assistance in the legalization of flats and houses. This Law sets out the conditions under which owners may legalize their illegally constructed buildings (Art. 10). The Law provides for tax relief for the payment of legalization fees for houses or flats belonging to members of individual vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, beneficiaries of social assistance and single parents), provided that the property being legalized is a housing unit up to 100m² in size and that it is the only real estate they own.

Inter alia, the **Law on Planning and Construction**¹¹ regulates issues related to the spatial planning, regulation and use of land, and construction of buildings. Legal provisions related to urban planning, the procedure for issuing construction permits and certificates of occupancy, as well as building construction are particularly noteworthy from the perspective of housing support provision. Rulebooks closely regulating the design and construction of buildings are important in this context, while other relevant regulations must be consulted as well in line with specific situations during planning and construction, reconstruction, refurbishment, adaptation and execution of other works on buildings and flats in the framework of housing support.

⁸ Law on Planning and Construction (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 72/2009, 81/2009 - corr., 64/2010 - CC ruling, 24/2011, 121/2012, 42/2013 - CC ruling, 50/2013 - CC ruling, 98/2013 - CC ruling, 132/2014, 145/2014, 83/2018, 31/2019, 37/2019 - oth. law and 9/2020) Art. 167 also uses the term "necessary accommodation" for solving the issue of accommodating persons whose houses were demolished due to structural insecurity and deterioration, based on the decision of the competent building inspector.

⁹ Law on Utilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 88/2011, 104/2016 and 95/2018)

¹⁰ Law on Building Legalization (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 96/2015, 83/2018 and 81/2020 - CC ruling)

¹¹ Law on Planning and Construction (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 72/2009, 81/2009 - corr., 64/2010 - CC ruling, 24/2011, 121/2012, 42/2013 - CC ruling, 50/2013 - CC ruling, 98/2013 - CC ruling, 132/2014, 145/2014, 83/2018, 31/2019, 37/2019 - oth. law and 9/2020)

1.1.3. Bylaws

²⁰ Several bylaws (rulebooks) closely regulating housing support procedures were issued in line with the Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings.

The **Rulebook on the template report related to housing needs, housing conditions, and housing support programmes in local self-government units.**¹² This Rulebook stipulates the structure of the form that should contain information about housing needs, housing conditions and housing support programmes in the LSGU. The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure drafted special instructions regarding the manner of data collection, filling out the form and preparing reports based on collected data.¹³ As provided in the Law (Art. 115), local self-government units shall annually submit the completed form with the data for the previous year to the Ministry, not later than by the end of February.

The **Rulebook on the conditions and documentation required for issuance and withdrawal of licenses for the operation of non-profit housing organisations and the manner of keeping a registry of non-profit housing organisations and the contents thereof.**¹⁴ The Rulebook closely regulates the conditions for issuance of licenses and the contents of the documentation required to obtain a license for the operation of non-profit housing organisations, as well as the conditions under which the license may be withdrawn. Organisations established by the LSGU, housing cooperatives (with the cooperative rules provided) or other legal per-

sons can be licensed as non-profit housing organisations. The necessary precondition for licensing is that the goals and/or tasks the non-profit housing organisation undertakes are to obtain, manage and lease flats intended for housing support, manage and set up construction of flats to be purchased under non-profit conditions, as well as implement housing support programmes. The license for the operation of a non-profit housing organisation is issued by the Minister competent for housing affairs. The Rulebook also regulates the manner of keeping a uniform Registry of non-profit housing organisations and the contents thereof.

The **Rulebook on the standards for determining the order of priority for the allocation of housing support.**¹⁵ Depending on the form of housing support, the Rulebook sets out standards, conditions and criteria for determining the order of priority for the allocation of housing support (housing status,¹⁶ housing conditions, number of family household members, health and disability, as well as physical impairment). The Rulebook also sets out the order of housing needs priorities based on each individual criterion.

The **Rulebook on conditions and norms for the planning and design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes.**¹⁷

The Rulebook specifies the conditions for determining the appropriate location, as well as the conditions and norms for the design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes. The conditions for determining the location concern the following:

- ▶ the possibility of connecting to the infrastructure network
- ▶ close proximity of existing housing, to avoid spatial segregation
- ▶ possibilities of combining with other forms of housing and related functions (to prevent spatial segregation)
- ▶ safety of the construction site and its distance from sources of pollution and other negative influences
- ▶ availability of public transport, public and commercial services (primary schools, health institutions, supply centres, etc.)
- ▶ proximity of green areas.¹⁸

Conditions and norms for parking and design of roads and pedestrian areas within the building plot, i.e. residential complex, as well as spatial and functional elements and norms related to the building - such as ancillary services and commercial facilities, connecting roads and spaces - were set out. The Rulebook also provides detailed norms for the area and structure of the flats according to the number of beneficiary household members; general conditions for the layout of the flat and the minimum dimensions and surface areas of the rooms in the flat; installation of fittings; application of materials; and elements related to the safety of use of the common facilities and rooms in the flat.

¹² Rulebook on the template report related to housing needs, conditions, and housing support programmes in local self-government units (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 52/2017)

¹³ *Instructions for the preparation of reports on housing needs, conditions and housing support programmes in the local self-government unit*, SCTM, 2017

¹⁴ Rulebook on the conditions and documentation required for issuing and revoking licenses for the operation of non-profit housing organisation and the manner of keeping a registry of non-profit housing organisation and the contents thereof (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2017)

¹⁵ The Rulebook on criteria for determining the order of priority for the allocation of housing support (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 75/2017)

¹⁶ Housing status is not a criterion in housing support by way of improving housing conditions.

¹⁷ The Rulebook on conditions and norms for the planning and design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes. (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 76/2017)

¹⁸ Recommendations related to setting the criteria to determine the appropriate location for building housing facilities within housing support have been provided in the publication *Criteria for the Evaluation of Social Housing Locations*, UNOPS, 2013.

²² The **Rulebook on the uniform methodology of calculating non-profit rent**.¹⁹ The Rulebook specifies the manner of calculating non-profit rent for the lease of publicly owned flats, the manner of rent payment and the possibility of receiving additional discounts. The Rulebook sets out elements of a non-profit lease, as well as the highest annual corresponding percentage of individual rent items against the value of the flat. The elements of a non-profit lease shall consist of: investment and ongoing maintenance of common facilities within the building and investment maintenance of the flat; insurance costs against common risks; costs related to managing the building, flats and tenants; and depreciation. If the apartment was procured through donor funds, depreciation shall not be calculated in a non-profit lease.

The **Rulebook on contents and manner of keeping records of eviction and relocation procedures**²⁰ and the **Rulebook on conditions for adequate housing facilities**²¹ apply to provisions of the Law from the section 'Eviction and Relocation' (Art. 78-87). The provisions of these rulebooks are relevant for housing support programmes implemented as part of the eviction and relocation procedures, as set out in the Law. If the housing support programme requires the eviction and relocation of the beneficiary group, then it is necessary that this procedure be in compliance with the provisions of these rulebooks and/or the Law, as well as other local and international documents in this field, as well as the field of human rights.

1.1.4. Strategic Framework

Strategic courses of relevance for national housing support have not been established yet. The **National Social Housing Strategy with the Action Plan** for the period between 2012 and 2022 is in effect²²; it was passed pursuant to the Law on Social Housing which was repealed in 2016, thus rendering some strategic solutions and measures obsolete. The adoption of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance initiated the development of the **National Housing Strategy** for the period between 2020 and 2030,²³ currently in draft stage. According to the draft text, four strategic objectives have been set:

- ▶ easier access to adequate housing for persons and households who can not satisfy their housing needs with own funds under market conditions and secured adequate housing for the most vulnerable population in terms of housing and in social terms
- ▶ efficient management of residential buildings ensured
- ▶ the system for the rehabilitation and improvement of informal settlements established
- ▶ enhanced institutional and other necessary capacities for sustainable housing development

²³ The envisaged measures include, inter alia, establishing a system for planning, implementation and monitoring of the application of housing support programmes; implementation of programmes and projects for the provision of different types of housing support, including co-funding of local self-government housing projects, as well as the development of incentive measures to increase housing affordability.

The Law also provided that the Government will adopt a **Housing Support Programme** consisting of a set of measures and activities implemented through housing projects aimed at providing housing support to beneficiaries. The following shall be defined by the housing support programme:

- ▶ the type of housing support, adequate housing projects and beneficiary target groups
- ▶ planned number of housing support beneficiaries and number of beneficiaries in different target groups
- ▶ the type and amount of funds for the implementation of individual programmes and housing projects
- ▶ plan of activities that can be implemented within the budget year
- ▶ conditions and criteria for the utilization of funds, conditions for the return of funds, etc.

¹⁹ Rulebook on the Uniform Methodology of Calculating Non-Profit Lease (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 90/2017)

²⁰ Rulebook on contents and manner of keeping records of eviction and relocation procedures (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 75/2017)

²¹ Rulebook on conditions for adequate housing facilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 75/2017)

²² National Social Housing Strategy (Official Gazette of the RS, 13/2012)

²³ Draft 2020-2030 National Housing Strategy

1.2. SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES

1.2.1. Law on Social Protection

The relevant legislative framework for social protection is set out in the Law on Social Protection and is operationalized by several bylaws. The process of monitoring legislative solutions exists to a significant extent, creating the preconditions for its effective and efficient enforcement. Under the **Law on Social Protection**²⁴, social protection is “an organised social activity of public interest aimed at providing assistance and empowerment for an independent and productive life in the company of individuals and families, as well as preventing and eliminating the occurrence of social exclusion and its consequences.” Social protection is provided through financial support and provision of social protection services. The Law, inter alia, defines services and beneficiaries of social protection; institutions and service providers; quality control mechanisms; as well as competences in establishing and funding social protection. As one of the principles of social protection, the Law states the principle of the least restrictive environment, which is an incentive to continue the deinstitutionalization process, i.e. the process of inclusion and protection of particularly vulnerable groups²⁵, as well as the development of new services and alternative forms of social protection in the community. Focusing on social protection services, the established concept of social protection development defines the position of the beneficiary as an active participant in all processes that concern him/her and his/her best interest and provides for the possibility of participation of different stakeholders in the provision of social protection services.²⁶

According to the Law, **the rights or social protection services beneficiary** is an individual or family facing obstacles to meet their needs, due to which they can not achieve or maintain quality of life, or who does not have sufficient funds to meet basic living needs and cannot obtain these through their work, income from property or other sources. Beneficiaries are divided by age to: minors (children) and adults up to 26 years of age (youths), when health, safety and development is at risk due to familiar and other life circumstances, or if it is certain that they cannot achieve an optimal level of development without the support from social protection systems. Also, social protection beneficiaries are adults between the ages of 26 and 65 (adults), as well as adults older than 65 years of age (elderly) – when their welfare, safety and productive life in society are threatened by risks due to age, disability, illness, familiar and other life circumstances.

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²⁴ Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 24/2011)

²⁵ The term from the law was quoted although professionals recommend the term “vulnerable groups”.

²⁶ D. Vlačić Vasiljević, *Standards of community-based social protection services and licensing procedures: Guide for civil society organisations*, Centre for Liberal Democratic studies, Belgrade, 2013

²⁶ A **social protection service provider** is a licensed organisation basing its work on fulfilling national quality standards and carrying a permit from the competent Ministry for the provision of a particular service. The right to a license shall be granted to an organisation registered in accordance with the law and meeting service provision standards for which it is asking a license to be issued - related to the location, offices, equipment, organisation, number and expertise of the engaged staff, assessment, planning and activities the provision of specific services; and providing social protection services for not less than two years. Public services, civil society organisations (CSOs) and entrepreneurs can be service providers.

Social protection services consist of activities and goods offered to the beneficiary to improve and maintain quality of life, to eliminate or mitigate the risks of adverse life circumstances as well as to create the possibility for them to live in society on their own.²⁷ The law closely defines the duties in terms of funding and competencies of the national, provincial, and local levels of government (Art. 208–209) and establishes **five groups of social protection services** (Art. 40):

- ▶ **Assessment and planning services** include an assessment of the situation, needs, strengths and risks of beneficiaries and other relevant persons in their environment; assessment of guardians, foster and adoptive parents; design of individual or family service provision plans, legal protection measures, and other assessments and plans. Planning services include individual planning of services for their use or

assigning protection measures, through the development of: a family plan of services and measures with a permanency plan for children; a plan for the independent life of a young person who was deprived of parental care before the age of 14, or did not live with parents or adoptive parents; an individual plan of services and measures for an adult or an elderly user. The Law stipulates that planning and evaluation services shall be performed by the centre for social welfare (CSW), Centre for family accommodation and adoption, and institutions for the education of children and youth (Art. 43).

- ▶ **Daily community services** are organised in such a way that they can be used daily and can be intended for different groups of beneficiaries. The LSGU is responsible to provide these (Art. 44), which means commissioning service from service providers and funding them. These services include, inter alia, home assistance, day care, drop in shelter, as well as other services that support the beneficiary's stay in his/her immediate environment (Art. 40).

- **Day care** is a service that supports users in improving their quality of life in their own social environment, in an organised setting and with the necessary supervision to support their inclusion in the local environment. Beneficiaries are provided with structured services through which they gain and develop life skills, social, educational and physical functions, to enable them to lead independent lives as much as possible.²⁸ Beneficiaries can be children

and young people with physical or intellectual disabilities; adults with physical or intellectual disabilities; children and young people who are in conflict with the law, parents, school or community; adults and seniors who need daily care and supervision. The day care service is implemented for a limited period of time and the service provider harmonizes time with the beneficiaries' needs and its own capabilities. This service does not require specific minimum standards regarding the size, content and layout of the service area; rather than that, common structural standards apply in terms of location and equipment, functions and accessibility of the facilities as per the Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Art. 67-72).²⁹

- **Drop-In Shelter** (Rulebook Art. 77-82) is a service providing temporary or occasional interventions and meeting the current beneficiaries' needs, as well as facilitating the availability of other community services. The drop-in shelter service is available to children, the youth, adults and the elderly who live or work on the street and request or agree to this service of their own free will. In line with the beneficiaries' needs assessment, drop-in shelter services include the provision of the following: accommodation; meals; conditions personal hygiene maintenance; clothes and

footwear; education; support for acquisition of basic life skills; psychosocial support; as well as facilitating access to community services (health, education, social, legal and other if needed).

- ▶ **Independent Living Support Services** include, among other things, the supported housing service (Law, Art. 40), as well as personal assistance. These are provided by the LSGU and the RS in certain cases (Law, Art. 45).

- **Supported Housing** (Rulebook Art. 88-98)³⁰ is a service in which beneficiaries are provided with adequate housing,³¹ professional assistance and support in developing skills that are essential to their independence and integration into the community. The service, in line with the assessment of individual needs and needs of the beneficiary group, ensures a secure environment and monitors security, provides assistance and support in meeting everyday life needs, provides an environment where social, educational, health, cultural and other services are available in accordance with the needs and abilities of users.³² The service provider hires an appropriate number of professionals and associates according to the number and group of service users. The service may be provided temporarily or continuously, depending on the beneficiaries' needs.

²⁹ Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

³⁰ Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

³¹ The minimum structure of the housing unit, surface area per user and the way of use were defined by the regulations in the domain of social protection, not in the domain of housing. Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services

³² Supported Housing for young people who are becoming independent and persons with disabilities, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013

²⁷ Daycare for children and young people with disabilities: Guidelines for establishing and providing services, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013.

²⁸ Daycare for children and young people with disabilities: Guidelines for establishing and providing services, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013.

- **Personal Assistance** (Rulebook Art. 99-106)³³ is a service aimed at meeting personal needs and inclusion of people with disabilities³⁴ into educational, work-related and social activities in the community, to establish the biggest possible level of independence. This service allows persons with disabilities to plan and receive necessary practical support and assistance for 20 to 40 hours a week, based on their own needs assessment, from persons who have received training in an accredited personal assistance service provision programme.
- ▶ **Counselling, Therapeutic and Socio-Educational Services** (Art. 46) consist of a large number of various services focusing on the development of certain skills necessary to carry out every day and other life activities. These can be: Intensive support services for families in crisis; counselling and support to parents, foster parents and adoptive parents; support to families caring for children or an adult family members with developmental disabilities; support for maintaining family relations and family reunification; counselling and support in cases of violence; family therapy; mediation; SOS help lines; activation and other counselling and educational services and activities.
- ▶ **Accommodation Services** (Art. 47) are organised in the form of providing accommodation to beneficiaries in: family accommodation (kinship, foster and other family); residential accommodation (a facility for the accommodation of beneficiaries, including small residential communities), drop-in shelter and other types of accommodation. Accommodation services are provided by the RS, Autonomous Province and LSGUs through programme activities that provide the following, in line with the beneficiaries' needs assessment: meeting basic living needs and ensuring a safe and pleasant environment; developing and preserving the beneficiaries' potential; legal support; support in education and employment.

- **Residential Accommodation** (Art. 51) provides the user with housing, meeting basic living needs and health care; the children and the youths are given access to education. Residential accommodation or placement is the last alternative for beneficiaries whose best interest is not to remain in their families and cannot be provided with family accommodation, or other community services. Residential accommodation is not provided for children under the age of three, except in particularly justified reasons (Art. 52). The following may constitute residential accommodation: standard, with intensive or additional support; emergency and occasional accommodation. The service can be provided by a social protection institution or a licensed/authorized service provider. The capacity of the home for the accommodation of adults and the elderly can not exceed 100 beneficiaries, or 50 in case of children and the youth (Art. 54). This service is funded from the national budget (Art. 206).
- **Small Residential Communities** (Rulebook Art. 23-24, 48-59) are a service available to children and youth until the end of secondary education, providing a temporary, secure and stimulating environment in circumstances where this cannot be provided in the family, to support and prepare them for sustainable independent living. The service is aimed at preparing children and youths for a return to their biological family, departure to a foster family, adoption or training for their integration in the commu-

nity as independent adults. Working with children and the youth is aimed at meeting their short-, medium- and long-term needs, developing abilities, knowledge and practical skills necessary in daily life, establishing self-respect and trust in relations with others. Small residential communities are formed in individual, physically separated facilities that can be connected spatially, organisationally, and functionally.

- **Accommodation in the shelter** (Art. 55 and Rulebook Art. 58-62) provides short-term accommodation for beneficiaries and ensures security, finding sustainable solutions for crisis situations, meeting their basic needs and access to other services. The shelter accommodation service is provided by the LSGU outside of certain exceptions as set out in the Law. Shelter accommodation services are provided to the following target groups for up to six months: children, youths and adult victims of domestic violence, abuse or neglect; children, youths and adult victims of trafficking; children and youth vagabonds, unaccompanied and in various crisis situations, who need temporary accommodation and a needs assessment to be referred to the use of other services; adults and the elderly in crisis situations, the homeless and beggars. According to target groups, the shelters can belong to one of the following: shelters for adults and the elderly; shelters for children; shelters for victims of violence (safe houses).

³³ Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

³⁴ Art. 99 of the Rulebook closely defines which persons with disabilities can exercise the right to this service.

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- **Respite accommodation** (Rulebook Art. 27-28, 63-66) provides short-term and occasional care for children and young people with developmental disabilities, enhances and develops independent living skills, creates opportunities for integration into the community, as well as for the development, preservation and enhancement of family strengths. It is provided as a daily, weekend or multiple day accommodation, which provides support for both the child and the child's family in maintaining and raising the quality of their lives to keep the child in the family. The accommodation service is provided to children and youths with developmental disabilities from the age of five to 26, and to adults and seniors with impaired functioning, as follows: intellectual and mental disabilities or disabilities in physical functioning and autism; multiple developmental disabilities or impairments; sensory disabilities; physical disabilities. This service is provided for a maximum of 45 days within the calendar year, provided it can last up to 20 days continuously.
 - **Social housing in a supportive environment** is not explicitly mentioned in any social protection service group. Local self-government unit is implementing it as other types of accommodation within accommodation services, but also within the group of services supporting independent living or in the framework of innovative services. Social housing in a supportive environment is a housing and social care programme for the most vulnerable persons and their families. It consists of two components: provision (construction) of housing units of the appropriate standard and provision of support services according to the needs of the beneficiary with the engagement of a "host family" which is also a beneficiary of one of the apartments. Local self-government unit decisions on rights and social protection services define the beneficiaries of this support differently, such as beneficiaries of financial social assistance, single parents, the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc. There are no set standards for this service, but local self-government units define them according to the projects within which they are implemented. Housing support regulations apply to the construction of residential buildings, as well as to the layout and spatial characteristics of the flats.

1.2.2. Bylaws

The **Decree Concerning Earmarked Transfers in Social Protection**³⁵ determines the financial transfer amounts, criteria for the distribution of transfers to individual LSGUs, criteria for the level and manner of LSGU participation, as well as social protection services of special importance for the Republic of Serbia. Earmarked transfers provide additional funds from the national budget to fund services within the local self-government unit sphere of competence. It was highlighted that additional funds are earmarked for social protection services in underdeveloped LSGUs, LSGUs where institutions are undergoing transformation, as well as for funding innovative services and social protection services of special interest for the RS. Earmarked transfers aim to enable service provision in LSGUs where they need them, provided that the LSGU does not have the capacity to provide them.

The **Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for social protection service provision**³⁶ sets out the conditions and standards applied by all social protection service providers. The Rulebook sets out the service specifications and minimum standards. The service specification as set out in the Rulebook includes: purpose of the service; groups of beneficiaries targeted by the service; activities to be taken to meet the needs of individual groups of beneficiaries. Minimum service standards as set out in the Rulebook are: minimum structural standards (infrastructure, organisational and personnel requirements for service provision) and minimum functional standards (value-based, quantitative and qualitative elements of technical procedures). The Rulebook provides a set of minimum structural and functional standards, common to all services, which must be fulfilled independently of the beneficiary group targeted by the service. Furthermore, it also provides for specific minimum structural and functional standards containing specific requirements that must be met within a specific group of services or specific service, in line with the needs and diversity of the beneficiary group. Minimum common structural standards include conditions relative to the location and equipment of the facility providing social protection services.

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³⁵ Decree Concerning Earmarked Transfers in Social Protection (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 18/2016)

³⁶ Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

³² The **Rulebook on Closer Conditions and Standards for SOS Helpline Service Provision for Women with Experience of Violence**³⁷ sets out conditions and minimum standards for the provision of SOS helpline services to women with experience of gender-based violence from the group of counselling, therapeutic and socio-educational services provided by the Law. The SOS line for victims of gender-based violence is a service that provides a direct connection between service providers and women victims of gender-based violence to provide necessary assistance and support. The service is implemented by calling a special telephone number where trained consultants provide information on rights, anonymous consultations, assistance and support in crisis or emergency/acute situations to women with experience of gender-based violence, as well as referrals to other services and sources of support, i.e. connecting to those services. The service can also be provided through other telecommunications or information technologies (Skype, e-mail, online consultations etc.), anonymously and in compliance with confidentiality standards. The service provider defines the working hours depending on available human, technical and financial resources and programming of the service, whereby it can be no less than three hours a day and at least five days a week.

The **Rulebook on licensing social protection organisations**³⁸ regulates the conditions for licensing, the manner of issuing and renewing licenses, suspension and withdrawal of licenses to social protection organisations or social protection service providers. The Ministry competent for social protection is competent for licensing organisations and the licensing decision shall be issued by the Minister.³⁹ Possession of a license is a formal precondition to obtain the status of a licensed social protection service provider⁴⁰ and to enter into a Social Protection Service Provision Contract with the competent authorities of the LSGU, the province or the republic, after concluding a social protection services public procurement procedure. An organisation that is not licensed can implement social protection projects in line with the authorities' public calls, but this cannot be equalized with social protection service provision. Various organisations can be licensed if they meet the requirements set out in the Law on Social Protection (Art. 179-181) regardless of their form: CSOs, social protection institutions and other institutions, partnerships, companies and sole proprietorships. The organisation can be licensed for one or more social protection services and the license shall be issued for a six-year period. The license shall be issued for a period of five years (limited license) if the organisation does not have the required two years minimum experience in service provision or does not meet one of the service provision standards. The Republic Institute for Social Protection prepared detailed instructions on the social protection service providers licensing procedure.⁴¹

1.2.3. Strategic Framework

The strategic framework of relevance to social protection has not yet been precisely defined by the sectoral strategy paper at national level. Adopted as early as in 2005, the **Social Protection Development Strategy**⁴² launched reforms in the social protection system and set its main goal to develop an integral social protection where social actors use existing resources most effectively and develop new resources through available, high-quality and diverse services, to preserve and improve the quality of life of vulnerable⁴³ and marginalized individuals and groups, train them for productive living in the community and pre-empt dependence on social services. The strategy has set respect for and indivisibility of human rights as a founding principle, which implied the following principles in the social protection system reform: beneficiary-focused service provision; beneficiaries' access to services; unrestrictive environment; beneficiaries' participation, accountability and independence; as well as the continuity of protection and the choice of services and service providers. Key elements of effective social protection are also based on these principles, through the development of programmes that pre-empt the emergence and intergenerational transferral of social issues, followed by the development of measures, services and activities specifically targeting individuals, families at risk and marginalized groups and their training for productive living in the community and pre-empting dependence on social protection, as well as the development of measures, services and activities for groups in need of special support (children without parental care, children in conflict with the law, adults and the

elderly who are unable to live on their own, disabled people, children and adults victims of violence, neglect and exploitation). An efficient social protection system implies the transformation of current institutions in the social protection system to use new methodological approaches, new work organisation and guarantee the quality of services, intra- and inter-sectoral linking and integration at the local level. The objectives of the strategy were to improve the protection of the poorest citizens and develop a community-based service network. Regarding the establishment of a social protection service system, an integral approach has been put forward to identify needs and plan community services, introduce quality assurance systems in social protection and develop services supporting community living.

A new **social protection strategy** was launched in April 2018, still in the phase of an unadopted **draft** after consultation meetings and public hearing in April and May 2019.⁴⁴ The strategic orientation of the Republic of Serbia, as seen in the draft social protection strategy, highlights the process of decentralization and deinstitutionalization as key directions for the development of social protection, the precondition for which is the development of local social services - daily community services and support services for independent living. Moreover, the focus is on achieving the potential of inter-municipal co-operation in local social service provision, which is also in line with the provisions of the amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government, as well as on a multi-sectoral approach, i.e. developing integrative services (e.g. the expressed need to combine health and social services).

⁴² Social Protection Development Strategy (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 108/2005)

⁴³ The term from the law was quoted although professionals recommend the term "vulnerable groups".

⁴⁴ Draft 2020-2030 National Housing Strategy.

³⁷ The Rulebook on Closer Conditions and Standards for SOS Helpline Service Provision for Women with Experience of Violence (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 93/2015)

³⁸ Rulebook on Licensing Social Protection organisations (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013)

³⁹ More detailed licensing information: Serbian social protection providers licensing system set up and implementation

⁴⁰ V. Jovanovic, L. Milanovic, G. Rajkov, *Manual for the licensing of social protection service providers for persons with disabilities*, Association of Social Researchers - NETWORK ISP, Belgrade, 2014.

⁴¹ *Instruction for the preparation of documents and drafting of a study on compliance with the license issuing requirements to social protection service providers*, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013.

1.3. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND HEALTH INCLUSION POLICIES OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Legal solutions, national strategies and action plans were adopted in Serbia as a guarantee of equal rights for all citizens and support for the development and improvement of the quality of life of all, especially vulnerable social groups. Principles, implementers and sectoral employment, education and health care measures were all defined by the Employment Act,⁴⁵ the Law on the Foundations of the Education System⁴⁶, as well as the Law on Health Care.⁴⁷ Intersectoral principles and measures were defined within the framework of the Law on the Prohibition of discrimination⁴⁸ and the Law on the Prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities⁴⁹. The provisions relevant to the position and rights of persons from vulnerable groups, especially persons with disabilities, children and youth, victims of domestic violence and national minorities, in particular Roma, can be found in: The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities,⁵⁰ the Law on the Prevention of domestic violence,⁵¹ the Law on professional Rehabilitation and Employment of persons with disabilities⁵², as well as other laws in the fields of labour, education, health care etc.

⁴⁵ Employment Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/2009, 88/2010, 38/2015, 113/2017 and 113/2017 - oth. law)

⁴⁶ Law on the Foundations of the Education System (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 88/2017, 27/2018 - oth. law, 10/ 2019, 27/2018 - oth. law and 6/2020)

⁴⁷ Law on Health Care (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 25/2019)

⁴⁸ Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of RS, 22/2009)

⁴⁹ Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2006/16 and 13/2016)

⁵⁰ Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (FRY Official Gazette, No. 11/2002, Official Gazette of Serbia and Montenegro No. 1/2003 - Constitutional Charter and Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 72/2009 - oth. law, 97/2013 - CC ruling and 47/2018)

⁵¹ Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 94/2016)

⁵² Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2009/16 and 32/2013)

1.3.1. Legal framework

³⁶ The **Employment Act**⁵³ regulates, inter alia, an active employment policy and other issues of relevance to employment, increasing employment and prevention of long-term unemployment in RS. The principles of prohibition of discrimination, gender equality and affirmative action focused on more difficult-to-employ unemployed persons should be particularly highlighted among the principles on which this law is based. Employment affairs include information on employment opportunities and conditions, employment mediation, professional orientation and career planning advice, implementation of active employment policy measures etc. Active employment policy measures are activities aimed at improving employment, namely: employment mediation for job seekers; professional orientation and career planning advice; employment subsidies; support for self-employment; additional education and training; incentives for beneficiaries of cash benefits; public works and other measures aimed at employment or maintaining employment levels.

The **Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities**⁵⁴ creates conditions for the equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as regulation of the fields of employment and professional rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in accordance with international and national regulations and labour market flows. The law sets out specific active employment policy measures for persons with disabilities, which include measures and incentives aimed at boosting motivation, employment and self-employment of persons with disabilities. The law also provides for specific incentive measures for employers in the form of the right to cost reimbursement for workplace adjustment, as well as income subsidies. In addition, it identifies specific forms of employment and employment of persons with disabilities in the form of enterprises for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, work centres, and social enterprises and organisations. The law also introduces an obligation to hire persons with disabilities, i.e. an obligation for employers with more than 20 employees to hire a certain number of persons with disabilities, whereby employers who are unable to fulfil the required obligation by employment can opt to carry out certain financial duties.

The **Law on Preschool Education**⁵⁵ regulates preschool education as part of the single system of education. Preschool age is defined as the age of children between six months after birth to primary school enrolment. The law defined the principles and objectives of preschool education and sets availability in terms of equal rights and availability of all forms of preschool education, without discrimination and separation based on gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious or other affiliation, place of residence or residence, financial or health status, developmental difficulties, disturbances and disabilities, as well as on other grounds as one of those principles. It is provided that children members of national minorities shall be educated in their minority language (Art. 5), as well as that priority for enrolment is given to children from vulnerable groups (Art. 13). The law also regulates the compulsory preparatory preschool programme for all children, provides for the delivery of quality programmes based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and high-quality monitoring of the effects of programmes with the participation of parents and children.

³⁷ The preparatory preschool programme is guaranteed to children who are foreign citizens, stateless persons and seeking citizenship, coming from a vulnerable group without proof of residence and other identity documents, refugees or internally displaced persons, under the same conditions and in the manner provided for RS citizens (Art.14). The Law (Art. 34) also defines special support for children from vulnerable groups, who require additional education support due to social deprivation, intellectual disabilities, disability and other reasons, including the elimination of physical and communication barriers in preschool education in their education group.

⁵³ Employment Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 36/2009, 88/2010, 38/2015, 113/2017 and 113/2017 - oth. law)

⁵⁴ Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2009/16 and 32/2013)

⁵⁵ Law on preschool Education (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2009/16 and 32/2013)

38 | The **Law on the Foundations of the Education System**⁵⁶ regulates the foundations of the pre-school, primary and secondary education and adult education systems. This Law sets out the right of every person to get an education, equality in exercising the right to education for all citizens of RS, as well as respect of educational needs of persons with developmental and physical disabilities. The general principles define, inter alia, that equality and the availability of the right to education based on social justice and the principle of equal opportunity without discrimination, respect for human rights and the high quality of education for all must be ensured for all children, students and adults. In these terms, the Law (Art. 7) mandates special attention to the following:

- ▶ support to the child's, i.e. student's transition to the next level of education and achieving continuity in education
- ▶ the possibility for children, students and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities and coming from vulnerable groups, regardless of their own financial status, to have access to all levels of education in institutions, and persons located in social protection institutions, children, students and adults with health problems to exercise the right to education during their residence in an institution and during hospital and home-based treatment
- ▶ reducing the education system drop-out rate, especially persons from socially vulnerable categories of population and underdeveloped areas, persons with intellectual and physical disabilities and other persons with specific learning difficulties and support for their re-inclusion in the system, in accordance with principles of inclusive and intercultural education
- ▶ career guidance and counselling
- ▶ cooperation with students to achieve goals set for education, as well as implementation of appropriate activities, programmes and projects with a view to improve the quality of education.

The Law specifically regulates roles and competencies of the Centre for Vocational and Adult Education (Art. 41), role of pedagogical assistant and personal escort (Art. 136). LSGU budgeting and provision of funds for higher quality education was also regulated (Art. 189 and 190). The prohibition of discrimination was regulated in a separate Article - 110.

The **Law on Health Care**⁵⁷ (Art. 11) regulates social health care under equal conditions for groups of socially vulnerable population and among them children under the age of 18 or of school age, and not later than 26 years of age; women in terms of family planning and during pregnancy, childbirth and maternity up to 12 months after childbirth; persons older than 65 years of age; persons with disabilities and mentally underdeveloped persons;⁵⁸ persons without financial security receiving financial benefits under social protection regulations; beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance under social protection regulations; unemployed and other categories of socially vulnerable persons; the Roma; victims of domestic violence.

The **Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination**⁵⁹ regulates the general prohibition of discrimination, defines the forms and cases of discrimination, as well as the procedures of protection against discrimination. In this Law, "discrimination" and "discriminatory treatment" mean any unjustified distinction or unequal treatment, or failure to act (exclusion, restriction or giving priority), in relation to persons or groups, as well as members of their families or related persons, in an open or hidden manner based on race, skin colour, ancestors, citizenship, nationality or ethnic origin, language, religious or political beliefs, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, financial status, birth, genetic specificities, health status, disability, marital and family status, convictions, age, appearance, membership in any political, trade union and other organisations and any other real or presumed personal characteristics. Art. 13 specifically defines severe forms of discrimination, and Art. 14 defines special measures: *specific measures introduced to achieve full equality, protection and progress of persons or groups of persons in a different position shall not be considered to be discrimination*. It is also specified by Article 14 in terms of discrimination in the field of labour that differentiating, exclusion or giving priority due to the specificities of a particular job in which the personal characteristics of a person represent the actual and decisive condition for the performance of a job shall not be considered discrimination, if the intended purpose is justified, as well as undertaking protection measures for certain categories of persons from paragraph 2 of this Article (women, pregnant women, new mothers, parents, minors, persons with disabilities etc).

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⁵⁶ Law on the Foundations of the Education System (Official Gazette of RS, 88/2017, 27/2018 - oth. law, 10/2019, 27/2018 - oth. law and 6/2020)

⁵⁷ Law on Health Care (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 25/2019)

⁵⁸ The term from the time this law was adopted was quoted although the term "mentally handicapped persons" is recommended.

⁵⁹ Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of RS, 22/2009)

40 | The **Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities**⁶⁰ regulates the general regime prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, specific cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities, the procedure for protecting persons exposed to discrimination and measures taken to encourage equality and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. This law is based on the following principles: prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities; respect for human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities; inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of social life on an equal basis; inclusion of persons with disabilities in all processes where their rights and obligations are decided; equal rights and obligations. This law defines “persons with disabilities” as persons with congenital or acquired physical, sensory, intellectual or emotional incapacity who, due to social or other obstacles, do not have the possibility or have limited possibilities to engage in societal activities at the same level with others, regardless of whether they can accomplish these activities using technical aids or support services.

The law defines forms of discrimination, severe forms of discrimination, as well as violations of the principles of equal rights and obligations, where it is repeatedly emphasized that they *are not considered infringements of the principles of equal rights and obligations or discrimination: provisions of the law, regulations, decisions or special measures taken to improve the position of persons with disabilities, members of their families and associations of persons with disabilities, which receive special support necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their rights under the same conditions under which they are enjoyed and exercised by others; neither adoption or withholding of existing acts and measures aimed at removing or repairing the disadvantaged position of persons with disabilities receiving special support* (Art. 8). The law also regulates specific forms of discrimination including, inter alia, in the fields of health care and education, as well as in relation to employment and labour relations. The following is set out in the fourth section of this Law, entitled Measures to encourage equality of persons with disabilities: *local self-government units are required to encourage the establishment of support services for persons with disabilities, to increase the level of independence of persons with disabilities in their daily life and to exercise their rights* (Art. 32). *The units of local self-government are obligated to take measures aimed at making the physical environment, buildings, public areas and transport accessible to persons with disabilities* (Art. 33), as well as other measures to encourage equality (to Art. 38).

The **Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities**⁶¹ enables the adoption of regulations, legal acts and measures to ensure full and effective equality between national minorities and citizens belonging to the majority, especially with a view to improving the position of the Roma national minority. This law regulates the manner of exercising individual and collective rights, which are guaranteed to the members of national minorities by the RS Constitution and ratified international treaties. This Law also regulates the protection of national minorities from any form of discrimination in the exercise of their individual rights and freedoms and ensures the exercise of collective rights of national minorities to self-management in culture, education, information and official use of languages and letters. The law also specifies that measures to promote full and effective equality of employment in the public sector at all levels of the territorial organisation, which are set out in the provisions of special laws, will not be considered as discrimination if such measures apply until the appropriate representation of the members of national minorities established by those laws is achieved.

The **Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence**⁶² sets out measures to prevent domestic violence and the actions by public authorities and institutions in preventing domestic violence and provision of protection and support to victims of domestic violence. The law stipulates that police, public prosecutors, courts of general jurisdiction and misdemeanour courts as the competent public authorities, and the CSW as an institution, are competent to prevent domestic violence and provide protection and support to victims of domestic violence. The CSW is educating a team of experts within its staff to support victims of violence. Public authorities and institutions have a duty to provide protection, legal aid, psychosocial and other support to the victims for their recovery, empowerment and independence. Victims of domestic violence are entitled to free legal aid. In addition to the competent public authorities and the CSW, other institutions in the field of child protection, social protection, education and health are also involved in supporting victims of violence, as well as gender equality bodies at local self-government level and other legal and natural persons and associations.

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60 Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2006/16 and 13/2016)

61 Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (FRY Official Gazette, No. 11/2002 and Official Gazette of the RS, No. 72/2009– oth. law, 97/2013 – CC and 47/2018)

62 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 94/2016)

1.3.2. Strategic Framework

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Strategy papers dealing with the fields of protection and rights of Roma, persons with disabilities, children and youth, as well as prevention and combating domestic violence against women include measures related to housing support, provision of social protection services, as well as social inclusion measures.

The **Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women** for the period between 2016 and 2025⁶³ highlights five key areas: education, housing, employment, health and social protection, within which it defines operational objectives to improve the overall social-economic status of this national minority. In the field of housing, the objectives and measures set by the Strategy focus on improving Roma housing conditions, developing urban planning documents for Roma settlements, regulating property and legal issues and building legalization, improving infrastructure and housing standards, implementing social housing programmes and other forms of housing support, as well as the application of international standards when resettling informal (substandard) settlements. In the field of employment, the Strategy provides for improvement of the Roma employability and their economic empowerment, especially those in the category of multiply vulnerable groups, including the increase in Roma participation in the formal labour market, prevention and reduction of discrimination in the labour market, and a number of other measures to stimulate their employment. The strategy envisions strengthening the capacities and roles of Roma coordinators, pedagogical assistants, health mediators and Roma inclusion mobile teams as an important resource and tool in the social inclusion of Roma.

63 Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period between 2016 and 2025 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 26/2016)

64 National strategy for preventing and combating violence against women in family and in intimate partner relations (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 27/2011)

The **National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relations**⁶⁴ focuses on improving the protection of women against violence in family and intimate partner relations by supporting all stakeholders in the activities that prevent and combat these types of violence. The Strategy sets out the duty to develop a General Protocol on actions and co-operation between institutions, bodies and organisations in situations of violence against women in family and intimate partner relations, that will define procedures and institutional multidisciplinary cooperation between police, CSW, public prosecutors, health institutions, educational institutions, CSOs and courts of general and special jurisdiction. Inter alia, the measures provided in the Strategy include: comprehensive protection that provides for the coordination of all necessary interventions, measures and services; forming mobile teams made of CSW staff, police and health care institution for emergency response to reports of violence; ensuring the operation of safe houses with networking of social actors and standardization of the operation of safe houses; psychological and social services, personal assistance services for women with disabilities and other professional assistance and support for victims of violence during criminal procedure; standardizing health care for women exposed to violence; introducing economic empowerment programmes for women with the aim of gaining employment and self-employment to further protect victims of violence; implementing affirmative action measures to encourage employment and self-employment of women who suffered violence.

The **National Gender Equality Strategy** for the period between 2016 and 2020⁶⁵ specifically addresses the position of vulnerable women from vulnerable groups, such as victims of domestic violence and trafficking in human beings, Roma women and girls, rural women and women with disabilities. The proposed measures include different modalities: supporting young women and young mothers to continue their education and gain employment with emphasis on vulnerable groups of women; providing housing support within social housing; developing measures to contribute to the formal employment of women, especially older women and vulnerable groups; creating a favourable environment for the development of entrepreneurship, including starting micro start-ups, microfinance, social entrepreneurship, family businesses and co-operatives, all of which particularly benefit women; encouraging women's social entrepreneurship and provision of training to launch business initiatives in this field. The strategy pays additional attention to the introduction of measures for social inclusion of Roma women and girls through the improvement of their situation in the fields of education and improving housing conditions, health care, employment and prevention of domestic violence, as well as by strengthening the role and presence of Roma women in public life.

65 National Gender Equality Strategy for the period between 2016 and 2020 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 4/2016)

66 Strategy for the Improvement the Position of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 44/2020)

The **Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities** for the period between 2020 and 2024⁶⁶ sets the overall objective of improving the overall social and economic situation of persons with disabilities and their equal participation in society. The three specific objectives are implemented through a series of measures which include, inter alia: ensuring full accessibility of facilities, public areas, information, services and products to persons with disabilities; ensuring adequate support for life in the community and family, including the development of community-based independent living support services; strengthening the role of disability associations; support for disability organisations and self-representation advocacy groups and provision of support services; implementation of active employment policy measures for persons with disabilities in the open labour market through developing and implementing social entrepreneurship models and other models of social employment for people with disabilities, including supported employment; improving inclusive education and lifelong learning for people with disabilities by providing adequate personalized assistance and support for individual learning in an inclusive education setting; improving health care and care that meets the needs of persons with disabilities by ensuring better health care, care and rehabilitation of children, youth and adults with disabilities.

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44 | The **National Youth Strategy** for the period between 2015 and 2025⁶⁷ significantly focuses on the measures for active participation in society and youth employment. Objectives concerning employability and employment include the development of services and mechanisms to stimulate employment and encourage youth entrepreneurship, including the development of measures to support and employ youth from vulnerable groups. These objectives are complemented by measures related to improving quality and opportunities for the youth to obtain qualifications, develop skills and competences through supporting the youth to apply for apprenticeship programmes and other ways to gain work experience; as well as developing models of support for employers and CSOs that deliver and develop mechanisms to implement other forms of work experience for young people. One of the objectives focuses on improving measures for solving housing issues and gaining independence, through youth housing subsidies development measures, particularly for single mothers, and encouraging the construction of non-profit flats for young people.

The **Employment and Social Reform Programme**⁶⁸ (ESRP) was adopted by the Serbian government in May 2016 as a strategic instrument to monitor the European integration process in the fields of employment and social policy. This document plans for solutions that are essential to move closer to international standards in the fields of labour market and employment policy, human capital and skills development, as well as social inclusion and social protection policies. The reform programme plans measures for multiple vulnerable and excluded groups such as the youth, Roma men and women, persons with disabilities and children and youths without parental care. The measures are aimed at integrating into the education system, motivation and inclusion into the labour market, continuing the deinstitutionalization process, specifically by developing community services through the establishment of integrated cross-sectoral cooperation and a broad partnership between local actors.

As a strategic priority, the **National Employment Strategy** for the period between 2011 and 2020⁶⁹ provides for strengthening of human capital and greater social inclusion. Active employment policy measures provided by the strategy, such as: professional development, training programmes, adult functional education in line with market needs, short training and training for further learning and competences for youths leaving education early, and developing the labour market through partnerships between relevant service providers; they are specifically targeted at disadvantaged vulnerable groups on the labour market, including: persons with disabilities, the Roma, women and youths, as well as rural populations, the elderly, internally displaced persons and recipients of social assistance. Local self-government units also pass their own employment strategies and action plans, defining local employment policy priorities and objectives, setting and implementing active employment policy measures at local level.⁷⁰

In one of its objectives, the **Public Health Strategy** with the implementation Action Plan for the period between 2018 and 2026⁷¹ foresees health improvement and reduction of health inequalities. The objectives relating to vulnerable groups include, inter alia: improving the health of vulnerable social groups through developing and implementing additional measures to reduce health inequalities; improving the access to health services and the availability of health care to vulnerable groups in the local self-government unit territory; conducting specific vulnerable group active population surveys (the youth, women in reproductive age, older workers, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, employed in small and micro legal entities, farmers). Continuous improvement of the access and availability of health care services to vulnerable groups, including the improvement of physical accessibility of the health care service for vulnerable population groups (construction and architectural solutions, deployment of mobile units) and enhancing economic accessibility of health services for vulnerable population groups are planned with the aim of developing available, high-quality and efficient health care provision,

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67 National Youth Strategy for the period between 2015 and 2025 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 22/2015)

68 Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP), 2016

69 National Employment Strategy for the period between 2011 and 2020 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 37/2011)

70 D. Vlaović Vasiljević, V. Kovačević, Ž. Šunderić, *Analysis of the position of youth at risk and recommendations for improving their social and economic inclusion*, Center for Social Policy and NALED, Belgrade, 2017.

71 Public Health Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2018-2016 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 61/2018)



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2. HOUSING POLICY AND ACTIVE INCLUSION POLICY INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS

The institutional framework and competencies of stakeholders in the field of housing, i.e. housing support, are regulated by the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance and bylaws that have been drafted so far pursuant to the law. At national level, the **Government of the Republic of Serbia** is competent for the housing policy, through the adoption of the National Housing Strategy and the implementing Action Plan, as well as the Housing Support Programme for which it also approves implementation funds.⁷² Also, in accordance with the Law (Art. 119), the Government appoints a Housing Council to play a role in drafting and monitoring the implementation of the National Housing Strategy, proposing priority measures, programmes and projects to implement the strategy and coordinating intersectoral cooperation in drafting and implementing stages. The Housing Council has not been formed yet.⁷³

The **Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure** is in charge of preparing and monitoring housing regulations, as well as housing policy measures. Under the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Art. 120), the Ministry is responsible for preparing the National Housing Strategy and implementation Action Plan, as well as preparing reports on their implementation. The Ministry shall submit a report on the implementation of the Strategy to the Government every three years, and it may include proposals for amendments to the current action plan (Art. 113). The Ministry is also in charge of preparing, monitoring and providing funds for the implementation of housing support programmes and other programmes to achieve the objectives and measures of the National Strategy and Action Plan (Art. 120). It evaluates the eligibility of the participants in the public call for housing support programmes; monitors, analyses and supervises the implementation of housing support programmes and projects and the use of funds for housing support. The Ministry, in accordance with the Law on Ministries (Art. 6)⁷⁴ is also competent in other areas of importance in planning and implementation of housing policies and housing support, such as: construction, construction land, spatial planning, urban planning, municipal infrastructure and municipal activities and inspection oversight in the fields of urban development and construction. In the structure of the Ministry, housing policy is in the remit of the Sector for housing and architectural policy, utilities and energy efficiency.

⁷² S. Ristić, G. Blagojević, *Local Self-Government Unit Housing Support Provision Manual*, SCTM, Belgrade, 2020

⁷³ The law plans for representatives of the line Ministry and other Ministries competent for housing policy issues, representatives of LSGUs, civil society and experts in the field of housing as members of the Housing Council.

⁷⁴ Law on Ministries (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 44/2014, 14/2015, 54/2015, 96/2015 - oth. law and 62/2017)

⁵⁰ In addition to the listed national institutions, there are those whose activity concerns individual housing issues. The **Republic Property Directorate** keeps a uniform record of real estate and carries out technical and state administration tasks relating to acquisition, purchase, granting for use or lease of publicly owned real estate; allocating the use of residential buildings, apartments or business premises; registration of real estate ownership; rent collection and other activities related to real estate in the public property of the RS.

The **Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs** handles public administration duties, which, inter alia, relate to the following: social protection system; family law protection system; gender equality; anti-discrimination policy; exercise of rights and integration of refugees and internally displaced persons, returnees under readmission agreements, Roma population and others socially vulnerable groups. The Ministry also performs tasks related to the following: labour relations and labour rights system, employment; monitoring of labour market conditions and developments; enhancement and promotion of employment; strategy, programme and active and passive employment policy measures; employment of persons with disabilities and other difficult-to-employ persons; development and provision of social employment and social entrepreneurship; exercise of rights pursuant to unemployment insurance and other rights of unemployed persons. This Ministry is competent for the Regulation and functioning of the institutional social protection system, which, inter alia, provides occasional, temporary and long-term accommodation services. The Ministry is also competent for licensing social protection organisations and supervision of the operation of social work centres.

The **Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development** is responsible for tasks that, inter alia, relate to the following: research, planning and development of preschool, primary, secondary and higher education and pupil/student standards; professional pedagogical supervision in preschool, primary and secondary education and pupil standard; Improving social care for students and students with special needs, creating conditions for access and implementation of projects from the remit of the Ministry funded from EU pre-accession funds, donations and other forms of development assistance. The Sector for preschool and Primary Education handles tasks related to coordination, planning, development, implementation and monitoring of activities that will ensure full implementation of existing legal measures and policies in the field of inclusion of vulnerable groups in the education system. The Department for Human and minority Rights in Education handles tasks related to the following: coordination, planning, development, implementation and monitoring of human rights-related activities in the field of education, education of national minorities, children and students with intellectual disabilities, asylum seekers, migrants, victims of trafficking in human beings, returnees under the readmission agreement, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups; as well as protection from violence and discrimination in educational institutions; co-ordination of initiatives, programmes and projects with national minority councils in the performance of human and minority rights-related tasks in the field of education, as well as with other bodies of state administration dealing with inclusion and protection from violence/discrimination, relevant institutions, independent bodies, institutions and non-governmental organisations.

The **Ministry of Health handles tasks related to the following:** health care system; system of compulsory health insurance, other forms of health insurance and health insurance contributions; closer regulation of health insurance rights; creating conditions for access and implementation of projects from the remit of this Ministry funded from EU pre-accession funds, donations and other forms of development assistance; health care coverage, preserving and improving citizens' health and monitoring of the health status and needs of the population; health care set-up. The sector for public health, handles tasks including the following, inter alia: cooperation with professional councils, organisations and associations to improve the situation of vulnerable groups.

The **Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue**⁷⁵ handles state administration tasks related to: protection and promotion of human and minority rights; drafting human and minority rights regulations; monitoring compliance of local regulations with international treaties and other international law human and minority rights acts; general issues of the position of persons belonging to national minorities; anti-discrimination policy; Issues related to gender equality, with the aim of improving gender equality in RS. The Ministry also performs public administration tasks related to the following: preparing regulations governing the position of associations and other civil society organisations; initiating dialog with civil society on issues of common interest; preparing and implementing strategy papers related to creating an enabling environment for the development of civil society, with the aim of further developing public, private and civil sector cooperation.

The **Provincial Secretariat for Social Policy, Demography and Gender Equality** performs the tasks of the provincial administration in the field of social protection, protection of families and children, pregnant women, mothers during maternity leave, single parents with children, the youth, adults and the elderly, legal protection of families and guardianship, veteran and disability protection etc. In addition, the Secretariat provides funding for the implementation of social protection programmes in the autonomous province, for the implementation of programmes and activities of organisations and citizens' associations that contribute to enhancing socio-economic and social standing and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and other persons in a state of social need.

The **Institute for Social Protection** exists as the **Republic Institute in Belgrade** and the **Provincial Institute of Social Protection in Novi Sad**. In both cases, the Institute develops and establishes databases relevant for social protection and determines the effects of applied measures in the field of social protection. Also, the Institute plays a role in continuously monitoring the quality of work and development of the social protection system, as well as providing technical support to service providers and other stakeholders (e.g. local self-government units) in establishing an efficient social protection model, focusing on reducing social exclusion of vulnerable groups, and coordinates work on developing minimum quality standards of social protection services.

Apart from these national and provincial institutions, other institutions such as the **Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team (SIPRU team)** national councils and co-ordination bodies at national level, play a significant role in active inclusion. The primary competence of the SIPRU team is to strengthen the Government's capacity to develop data-based social inclusion policies and to coordinate and monitor their implementation in line with international standards and European best practice examples. The SIPRU team is working to build capacities and processes with a view to effectively develop and implement social inclusion policies in all public administration bodies, so that RS can set up a monitoring system based on social inclusion indicators and create integrated social inclusion policies.

When talking about vulnerable groups, the National Council of Roma National Minorities is of particular importance⁷⁶, which, among other things, takes views, initiates and takes measures concerning all issues directly related to the situation, identity and rights of the Roma national minority, establishes educational institutions, it initiates adoption and monitors implementation of laws and regulations in the field of culture, education and other areas of importance for active inclusion of the Roma national minority.

The **Coordination body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women**⁷⁷ is tasked with coordinating the affairs of public administration bodies. It considers all issues and coordinates the operation of public administration bodies, LSGU bodies, public enterprises and other forms of incorporation by RS and LSGUs in relation to the social inclusion of Roma men and women. Improving interdepartmental cooperation in the field of social inclusion, considering and providing recommendations to address emergencies whose consequences may add to the vulnerability of Roma men and women, proposing ways to achieve the stipulated and other measures/actions that contribute to the greater social inclusion of this national minority, as well as the process of European integration are also in the remit of this body.

The **Coordination Body for Gender Equality**⁷⁸ considers all issues and coordinates the operation of public administration bodies related to gender equality, with a view to improving gender equality in the Republic of Serbia.

⁷⁶ The Law on National Councils of National Minorities (FRY Official Gazette, No. 72/2009, 20/2014 - CC ruling, 55/2014 and 47/2018)

⁷⁷ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Decision establishing the Coordination body for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy for Social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period between 2016 and 2025*, Belgrade, 2017.

⁷⁸ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Decision establishing the Coordination body for gender equality*, Belgrade, 2014.

⁷⁵ Law on Ministries (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 128/2020)

2.2. LOCAL LEVEL

Local self-government units are key stakeholders in planning and implementing housing support measures, providing social protection services and social inclusion measures. Under the **Law on Local Self-Government**⁷⁹ the competences, responsibilities and powers of LSGUs follow:

- ▶ adopting the budget, spatial and urban development plan and municipal development programme, as well as local economic development strategic plans and programmes
- ▶ regulate and ensure the operation and development of public utilities, local transport, use of construction land and business premises
- ▶ attend to construction, reconstruction, maintenance and use of streets and other public facilities of municipal importance
- ▶ attend to meeting the citizens' needs in the field of education (preschool, primary and secondary education), health, social and child care
- ▶ ensure the needs of persons with disabilities are met and rights of vulnerable groups are protected
- ▶ attend to the exercise, protection and promotion of human and minority rights and gender equality
- ▶ establish and regulate the organisation and operation of bodies, organisations and services for municipal needs, organise a legal aid service to the citizens and regulate the organisation and operation of peace councils
- ▶ manage municipal property and determine the rates of original revenues and the amount of local fees

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⁷⁹ Law on Local Self-Government (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 129/2007, 83/2014 - oth. law, 101/2016 - oth. law and 47/2018)

2.2.1. The role of local institutions in implementing housing policies

⁵⁶ The local administration body, i.e. the organisational unit for property and legal affairs, urban development and housing utilities is most often the competent authority for housing affairs at the local level. On the other hand, the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance set out new competencies and obligations of LSGUs in the fields of housing and housing support, that will require certain institutional and financial capacities. Under that Law, LSGUs:

- ▶ administer the residential support awarding procedure and put out public calls for citizens to apply for housing support
- ▶ implement housing projects in accordance with programmes adopted by the Government
- ▶ adopt local housing strategies with action plans for their implementation
- ▶ implement housing projects and other measures and activities in line with local housing strategies and action plans for their implementation
- ▶ plan budget funds for the implementation of local housing strategies and housing projects
- ▶ report to the Ministry competent for housing affairs on the results of implementing the National Strategy, local housing strategy and action plan
- ▶ report to the Ministry competent for housing affairs on housing needs, housing conditions and housing support programmes in implementation
- ▶ set out conditions and procedures for approving the housing allowance and provide funding for various subsidies
- ▶ adopt acts on the manner of disposing of publicly owned housing units allocated as a form of housing support
- ▶ adopt decisions on the necessity of eviction or relocation and monitors the eviction or relocation procedure and social inclusion measures after relocation
- ▶ plan, prepare and develop land for the implementation of housing projects
- ▶ can establish a housing agency to implement housing support, and if they do not do so they are obligated to implement housing support through the competent authorities within the local government.

Local self-government units annually submit the **Report on Housing Needs, Housing Conditions and Housing Support Programmes** to the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure in a uniform template.⁸⁰ The data is used for the preparation of a new National Housing Strategy, development of local housing strategies, reviewing objective conditions and systematization of data on housing needs, housing conditions, housing programmes and activities implemented at

local level. Through data collection and reporting to the Ministry, local self-government units systematize the data necessary for preparing and monitoring the implementation of their own housing strategies. In this way the local self-government units also review the competencies of individual services and thus the need to strengthen their capacities and improve their work organisation in the field of housing.

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Collecting and processing relevant data

One of the crucial challenges local self-government units encounter when drafting local housing strategies and action plans, as well as housing support programmes, is lack of data on housing needs and their citizens' housing vulnerability, available publicly owned housing stock and other resources and institutional capacities. Some general data can be obtained from the census of the population, households and housing units. The current lack of data required for planning and undertaking specific housing support measures can be overcome with a smaller scale targeted research, as well as a survey of potential housing support beneficiaries, various institutions, CSOs and other stakeholders. Permanent solutions can be achieved through regular data collecting and updating by the competent institutions, which is a duty of local housing agencies at annual level.

⁸⁰ Rulebook on the template report related to housing needs, housing conditions, and housing support programmes in local self-government units (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 52/2017)

Local self-government units participate in the implementation of housing projects from the Programme adopted by the Government (Art. 121) if they fulfil the conditions set out in the public call (Art. 118). In addition, local self-government units can enact their own housing support programmes if they can provide their own funding for implementation (Art. 121).

The Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Art. 115) provides for the development of **local housing strategies** that should be a framework for the housing support provision in the local self-government unit in question, in line with national priorities. The action plan with programmes and projects through which the planned housing support measures are implemented is an integral part of the local housing strategy. The LSGUs report annually to the Ministry of construction, transport and infrastructure on the results of the implementation of the local housing strategy and action plan. Local self-government units can delegate the development and monitoring of the local housing strategy and action plan implementation to a housing agency, if they have one established.

Local self-government unit documents required for the implementation of housing support programmes

- ▶ the local housing strategy and implementation action plan, adopted by the local self-government unit assembly
- ▶ housing support programme
- ▶ decision on the manner of disposing of publicly owned housing units allocated as a form of housing support, adopted by the local self-government unit assembly
- ▶ decision on establishing a Housing Commission to run the housing support allocation procedure, which is an act adopted by the Mayor or the President of the Municipality
- ▶ public call for housing support, prepared by the service competent for housing support and published by the housing support commission
- ▶ draft priority list and final decision on the allocation of housing support, adopted and published by the housing support commission
- ▶ decision on concluding the agreement and housing support award agreement concluded between the competent authority (administrative body for property issues or housing agency) and the housing support beneficiary..

The law provides that **non-profit housing organisations** may also be established for the purpose of housing support provision at local level (Art. 109). A non-profit housing organisation undertakes the tasks of obtaining, managing and leasing flats intended for housing support, managing and setting up construction of flats to be purchased under non-profit conditions, as well as implementing housing support programmes. A non-profit housing organisation has the duty to report annually to the competent local government and/or the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure about its operation, including data on implemented housing support programmes and measures undertaken to implement housing support from its sphere of competence.

Non-profit housing organisations can be public agencies established by LSGUs, i.e. **housing agencies**, followed by housing cooperatives established in accordance with the law and other legal entities. These tasks will be performed by the local administration if the LSGU does not consider it necessary to establish a housing agency, but if another legal entity is registered in its territory as a non-profit housing organisation, it may delegate these tasks to that organisation by contracting. Apart from the basic tasks handled by non-profit housing organisations, a housing agency is also tasked with drafting, implementation and monitoring local housing policy measures. A housing agency also:

A housing agency also:

- ▶ Collects data necessary for the development of a local housing strategy, action plan and programme for their implementation and drafts proposals of these documents
- ▶ monitors the implementation of the local housing strategy action plan
- ▶ submits a report to the competent authority of the local self-government unit and/or Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure on the implementation of the action plan and housing support programme at least once a year
- ▶ Performs oversight of the use and maintenance of flats leased under non-profit conditions and the fulfilment of obligations from the non-profit sales contracts
- ▶ Proposes new housing funding schemes under non-profit conditions through public-private partnerships

Any surplus revenue that the housing agency acquires during a business year must entirely be used for further acquisition, construction, refurbishment, reconstruction and maintenance of housing units owned by the local government that are leased under non-profit conditions. A housing agency may use funds from loan payments for allocated solidarity flats to implement non-profit housing schemes.

2.2.2. The role of local institutions in implementing social policy

⁶⁰ Inter alia, **local self-government units** do the following in the field of social protection: establish social protection institutions in the scope of their competence; monitor and ensure their functioning; establish the eligibility for the provision of social protection services; establish the norms and standards for the operation of the institutions founded by LSGUs; issue rules on social protection rights. LSGUs are competent for financing, i.e. provision of the following social protection services:

- ▶ community-based day services
- ▶ independent living support services⁸¹
- ▶ counselling, therapeutic and social educational services⁸²
- ▶ accommodation services - shelter, respite accommodation and other types of accommodation in the competence of LSGUs

LSGUs manage social protection services and rights to cash benefits in their competence, based on the Decision on Social Protection, as the basic legal act adopted by the local Assembly. Based on a needs assessment in their environment, local self-government units can also issue a decision establishing innovative community-based social protection services that are not explicitly stated in the Law on Social Protection, i.e. for which minimum standards of service have not been issued in the national rule-book. In addition, local self-government units can pass local social protection strategies to facilitate better strategic governance in this field.

It is within the remit of local self-government units to establish **Social Work Centres**⁸³ to perform the following tasks: evaluate the beneficiaries' needs, strengths and risks to them and plan for social protection service provision; implement procedures and decide on rights to financial benefits and the use of social protection services; take legally stipulated measures, initiate and participate in judicial and other proceedings. The Centre for Social Welfare does not require a license for these tasks, whereas other social protection services (excluding evaluation and planning services) may only be provided within its specific organisational unit, if it receives a license to provide a particular service and if there are no other licensed social protection providers in the local community.

The Centre for Family Accommodation and Adoption is a social protection institution whose activity centres around organising, accommodation for beneficiaries and provision of professional assistance to the foster and adoptive families. The establishment and operation of centres extended social protection services, measures and forms for children and the youth, where development of alternative forms of social protection is prioritized as opposed to institutional protection. The activities of the centre are also focused on jobs connected with gaining independence in children and young people, through participating in the preparation of beneficiaries to exit the social protection system or change services. In practice, the resources and potentials of family accommodation and adoption centres - in terms of insight into the number and structure of the target group of children and the youth, as well as their social and educational status - are not sufficiently recognized and utilized, which would be particularly important for the development and future implementation of individual youth independence plans.

⁸¹ Except for the supported housing service for persons with disabilities which is within the jurisdiction of the Republic, unless the LSGU belongs to the first group according to the level of development.
⁸² Except for counselling and training foster parents.

⁸³ The following activities of the centre are funded by the LSGU: staff carrying out social protection tasks under the competencies of local self-government units, ongoing expenditures related to the costs of operating the centre and ongoing maintenance costs.

2.2.3. Other local institutions relevant to the implementation of active vulnerable group inclusion

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Within the **local self-government units**, the implementers of strategic and operational initiatives for inclusion in education, health care and employment are organised in different ways in the form of departments, sectors or services for social activities, childcare etc. Depending on their specific role and competencies, they will always be part of the planning and implementation team, and they will always monitor active inclusion policies, with a significant binding role in ensuring the sustainability of services through their introduction into institutional frameworks. Individual LSGU bodies, such as **the councils for employment, local socio-economic development, gender equality, Interdepartmental Commission for the needs assessment for additional education, health and social support for children, students and others**, should also play a specific role in the planning and implementation of active inclusion measures to regulate the appropriate enforcement of local policies and improve local active inclusion policies on the basis of monitoring the implementation of specific measures.

2.2.3.1. Institutions relevant to the implementation of Roma inclusion

The engagement of **Coordinators for Roma Issues** in LSGUs started with the beginning of the decade of Roma in Serbia in 2005 and with support from the European Commission. This workplace has been classified in various ways, but in most cases it was staffed by the Roma community and with a significant participation of Roma women. The core operational role of the coordinators for Roma issues is identifying the needs of the Roma community in direct contacts and support in resolving the inclusion issues through direct consultation and mediation with institutions. Coordinators for Roma issues should also participate in planning, creating and implementing local level Roma inclusion policies and co-ordinating the first established cross-sectoral Roma inclusion mechanism at the local level - the **mobile team for Roma inclusion**. Apart from the Coordinator for Roma issues, the mobile team includes a **pedagogical assistant, health mediator and representatives of the Centre for Social Welfare and National Employment Service**. In best practice examples, such as the Belgrade urban municipality of Zvezdara, the expanded mobile team includes representatives of other local self-government services, police, educational institutions and adult education institutions, Roma non-governmental sector and other external associates, if necessary.

The role of pedagogical assistants in preschool and elementary school institutions is defined by the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (Art. 136), in the following provisions: the **pedagogical assistant** provides assistance and additional support to the group of children and students in the institution in line with their needs and assists employees with the aim of improving

their performance. In their work, pedagogical assistants cooperate with parents and/or other legal representatives, LSGU bodies, competent institutions, organisations and associations.

The Health Ministry introduced **health mediators** with the aim of increasing access to health services and the inclusion of Roma in all types of health services. The engagement of health mediators does not cover travel expenses since the long-term status has not been resolved yet within the Ministry of Health, and as their basic operating work is based on their daily presence in Roma families and settlements, best practice examples illustrate the importance of LSGU contribution to budgeting and covering their travel expenses. Through their engagement, health mediators contribute to a much wider inclusion through direct support to Roma families in vaccination and enrolment of children in preparatory preschool programmes and schools, as well as through providing all other relevant information for the Roma community.

The National Employment Service (NES), i.e. its local branch, plays a multiple role in active inclusion of Roma men and women. Registration in the unemployed persons register is a step that many Roma men and women do not recognize as necessary and useful, hence it is necessary to review the reasons for this and take measures to overcome the situation. Roma men and women fall into difficult-to-employ groups on several grounds, including their extremely low education and qualification levels, as well as the prejudice and discrimination they face in the employment process. Motivating Roma and their inclusion in available measures of the active employment policy and

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⁶⁴ raising employability - starting with the development of an individual employment plan, career guidance and information, to information and inclusion in training for employability, public works, employment mediation, inclusion in employer support schemes for hiring difficult-to-employ groups - are the most important steps in the way of their socio-economic inclusion.

Local self-government units have the largest competencies in the field of pedagogical education, and strategy papers provide for encouraging them to fund different activities for greater coverage of Roma children and youth in preschool programmes, primary, secondary and higher education. Within the scope of their respective competencies, various **educational institutions** play a multiple role in supporting children and youth from the Roma community to exercise their right to a quality education. **Preschool institutions** have an important role to promote the importance of early inclusion in preschool education, especially at the age of three to five and a half years, as well as to find ways to support regular attendance through cooperation with the family, increasing the number of educational groups where shorter high-quality preschool programmes are implemented in line with the needs of the family etc. Preschool institutions are also important stakeholders in identifying and organising various activities to increase the numbers of Roma children aged five to six and a half years in preparatory preschool programmes. Within the education system and in cooperation with **primary schools** and other institutions, local self-government units provide support to increased enrolment of children from the Roma community and their graduation from compulsory education, as well as enhanced

educational outcomes of children through support measures such as: individual educational plan, drafting of a plan to prevent the Roma children dropout from the education system; engaging pedagogical assistants, language learning support etc. Cooperation with parents is also organised, as well as support in the provision of free textbooks, school snacks/lunches, clothes, shoes and more. Through the implementation of systemic affirmative action measures in enrolment and through grants and mentoring programmes, local self-government units - in co-operation with **secondary institutions** and other partners - encourage Roma students to enrol and graduate from secondary education. In addition, several LSGUs award **scholarships to Roma students. Adult education institutions**, which support youth and adult Roma men and women to start or continue formal and informal education to open employment opportunities also have a significant role to play in many ways. Support, among other things, includes retraining, additional training, professional training and courses, mentoring, CV writing and preparation for job interviews etc.

2.2.3.2. Institutions relevant to the inclusion of women victims of domestic violence

The police, health care institutions, CSW, judicial authorities and educational institutions are primary institutions for supporting women victims of domestic violence in situations of acute violence. The protocol on treatment, prevention and protection against domestic violence defines the work of each individual institution, as well as their coordination and cooperation. There are no institutions other than SCW and NES to address persistent issues of their inclusion after exiting the acute crisis stage of addressing violence through the institutions listed above. The **social work centres** do not possess mechanisms or tools to enable long-term security, housing support, employment and social inclusion of these multiply vulnerable women, who often become single mothers who navigate the real estate rental, employment and childcare markets alone. Within their annual public calls, the **National Employment Service branches** open up opportunities to implement active employment policy measures for hard-to-employ categories of the unemployed, including victims of domestic violence, but unfortunately no data indicating the effects of these measures just for victims of domestic violence is available.

The institutions of the **education** system are legally required to facilitate the exercise of the right to education for children, students and adults in social protection institutions during their accommodation in said institutions. In addition, a system of education information management has been introduced in schools, giving the possibility of reporting domestic violence, in accordance with the facility's protocol of action in response to violence, abuse and neglect.⁸⁴ **Educational institutions** do not have other specific obligations to support children who have been removed with their mothers from the family where violence took place. If children stay in safe houses with their mothers, then the shelter service provider establishes contact with the primary or secondary school (the director or psychological/pedagogical service) to provide further support to children in the educational process. Cooperation between the school and service provider is particularly relevant in cases when children have organised escort from the safe house to school and back. If a woman victim of violence and her children are placed in a safe house located in another place/town compared to their place of residence, then the child has the right to attend a school in that place, for the duration of stay at the safe house. Practice has shown that schools adequately and efficiently apply the enrollment procedure in these situations. Since the share of the lower-educated among women victims of domestic violence is significant, **adult education institutions** have a multiple role to play in supporting the beginning or continuation of formal and informal education in order to open up opportunities for income generation and economic empowerment, as one of the key factors for their independence.

⁸⁴ Protocol of treatment at the institution in response to violence, abuse and neglect (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2019/16 and 104/2020)

2.2.3.3. Institutions relevant to the inclusion of persons with disabilities

⁶⁶ Crucial institutions at the local level competent for inclusion services intended for persons with disabilities are the **local self-government unit** and the **Centre for Social Welfare**, as well as all social protection services (Chapter 2.2.2). Independent living support in the form of personal assistants, appropriate community daily services, as well as financial allowance for assistance and care of another person is of particular importance for persons with disabilities and their families.

The social inclusion perspectives of any person, including persons with disabilities, are better and stronger if inclusive measures are taken at the earliest possible age. This is why **preschool institutions** hold a special role and importance in the education system. Children with disabilities should be able to exercise the right to preschool education in preschool institutions together with other children in their peer group with an individualized plan or an individualized education plan in the development group, whereas up to two children with intellectual or physical disabilities can be present in an educational group.

Institutions in **the education system** have a multiple role to play in ensuring the availability of education for all children and students, including children and students with disabilities. The most important mechanisms to improve the position of children with disabilities are: development of an individualized plan; development of an individualized education plan (IEP) with an adapted teaching method and conditions in which educational work is carried out; development of an IEP with adjusted content objectives, teaching and learning programme delivery method, educational outcomes and adjustment of the number of pupils in the education group/class.

The **Inclusive Education Team** monitors the child's development in the course of education, so that children with intellectual or physical disabilities can move from development to education group in line with its recommendation. All preschool institutions, primary and secondary schools are required to form inclusive education teams. Schools can also form a **team for additional support to children/students** if there is a need for additional support. The **Commission to assess the needs for additional education, health and social support to children and students** representing a local self-government organisational unit, creates a holistic support plan for the child, but its conclusions are not binding. Also, the **pedagogical assistant** service and **personal escort** service, assisting children to get to school and perform their daily activities should be available to children with intellectual and physical disabilities.⁸⁵ In addition, to make the inclusion process as successful as possible, all educational institutions - starting from preschool to university - must be designed accessibly, implying the existence of: ramps and dropped kerbs at entrances to institutions; elevators; hand grips in corridors; disabled washrooms; custom door width of all rooms inside the school; customized desks and benches.

Local **health care institutions** have a special role to play in the prevention, protection and improvement (rehabilitation) of physical and mental health of persons with disabilities. In this respect, their availability and accessibility are essential, as well as the scope and intensity of service provision. Given the complexity of needs and the multiple exclusion of persons with disabilities, the support effects are multiplied manifold by providing **multi-sectoral integrated services**.

The field of employment of people with disabilities remains one of the key challenges in achieving their inclusion. Based on adopted annual plans at the national level, each individual branch of the **National Employment Service**, puts out public calls for the implementation of active employment policy measures and - within their framework - the public call for the reimbursement of support costs to persons with disabilities hired under special conditions, for income subsidies for persons with disabilities, for organising and implementing public works involving unemployed persons with disabilities, and all other measures for employment of difficult-to-employ categories, including persons with disabilities.

The **Pension and Disability Insurance Fund** (PIO) shall be competent for forensic expertise of the status and extent of disability.

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⁸⁵ In 2015 this service was used by only 709 children.

2.2.3.4. Institutions relevant to inclusion of the youth leaving the social protection system

⁶⁸ Young people who exit the social protection system (institutional or family/foster family placement) after reaching adulthood or graduating from school remain among the most vulnerable and excluded groups and mostly rely on a few friends or, less frequently, relatives for support. After leaving the social protection system they are at high risk of homelessness and all the risks that follow, hence the importance of support institutions is of exceptional importance.

The **Social Work Centres**, being involved in "case management and monitoring" throughout the accommodation period due to their sphere of competence, have a special role in preparing the youth(s) to exit the social protection system. This role is primarily based on providing youths with information and access to available financial and non-financial social protection support after the status change. Supported housing in the transitional period of gaining independence is a service that will be presented in detail within the recommended holistic support models for this category of young people. This programme is implemented by **local self-government units**, and the service is provided under the auspices of the CSW and institutions for children without parental care. Some LSGUs set up the Youth Counselling Service to provide advisory, therapeutic and socio-educational support, or where young people can get informed on all issues of interest to them.

It is also important to send young people to register with the **National Employment Service** to exercise the right to institutional support for employment and health care. NES support is recommended in this case with the maximum use of all available services, in addition to employment mediation and participation in active employment policy measures. Due to the lack of their own resources (computers, internet) and skills, it is particularly recommended that these young people be referred to the NES services for professional orientation and career planning, as well as to job search clubs, where they exist. In these, young people can receive training and technical support to search for job offers, as well as to write and send applications.

In addition to ensuring the fundamental right for all young people leaving the social protection system to gain access to health care, attention should be paid in the **health care institutions at local level** to provide continued support to young people with mental health problems, as well as combined intellectual and physical disability.



3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations are voluntary and nongovernmental non-profit organisations based on the freedom of association of several natural or legal persons, established to achieve and enhance a particular common or general goal and interest, which are not prohibited by the Constitution or by law.⁸⁶ CSOs include citizens' associations, foundations, endowments, trade unions, professional associations, religious organisations, national minority councils, political parties, sports associations and informal groups.⁸⁷ Their activities contribute to the development of society, community improvement and promotion of citizen participation, occupying the place between the state and private sectors in various areas: social policy, advocacy, environmental protection, strengthening marginalized groups etc.

⁸⁶ Law on Associations (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 51/2009)

⁸⁷ Civil society - Definition, Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, 2021.

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Apart from providing direct support to the final beneficiaries, capacity building, strengthening roles and cooperation between relevant stakeholders (LSGUs, state institutions, other CSOs, etc.) also represent important aspects of the CSOs' activities. Three distinct models are most often present in terms of the interaction between CSOs and state institutions:

- ▶ the supplementary model, meaning that CSOs meet the demand for public goods and services that are not provided by governments
- ▶ the complementary model, based on a partnership between the state funding the services and the CSOs that provide them
- ▶ the confrontational model, meaning that CSOs pressure the state by demanding changes in different domains, while the state seeks to limit their activity and influence.⁸⁸

Regardless of the model of interaction between CSOs and government institutions, as well as their field of activity, one of the main characteristics of CSOs is the commitment and motivation of their employees, as well as the excellent understanding of the needs, potential and challenges that the target groups and/or local communities are facing, which results in the high quality of services offered by CSOs.⁸⁹ Target group members themselves are frequently among the CSO staff, allowing them to base the design and planning of services on their own experiences and to enable their efficient realization and monitoring through a well-developed network of contacts with various stakeholders, from experts in a given field to the end-users of their services.

Apart from actual social protection service provision, the role of CSOs in the field of inclusion is equally important and developed in education, both formal and informal, and in housing, employment, health prevention, and preservation of cultural identity. The key factor of the work of the CSOs in the field of inclusion is their significant flexibility in dealing with interests, priorities and perspectives of various stakeholders which, among other things, enables them to develop and implement services not provided by government institutions and private organisations, and thus meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups not reached by other stakeholders.⁹⁰ These often include services recognized outside Serbia as best practice examples, which are implemented by CSOs as innovative services tailored to the specificities of the local context, as presented in the second part of this study.

Speaking about vulnerable groups that are the focus of this study, there are CSOs that are informally identified as "umbrella" organisations representing their rights and interests:

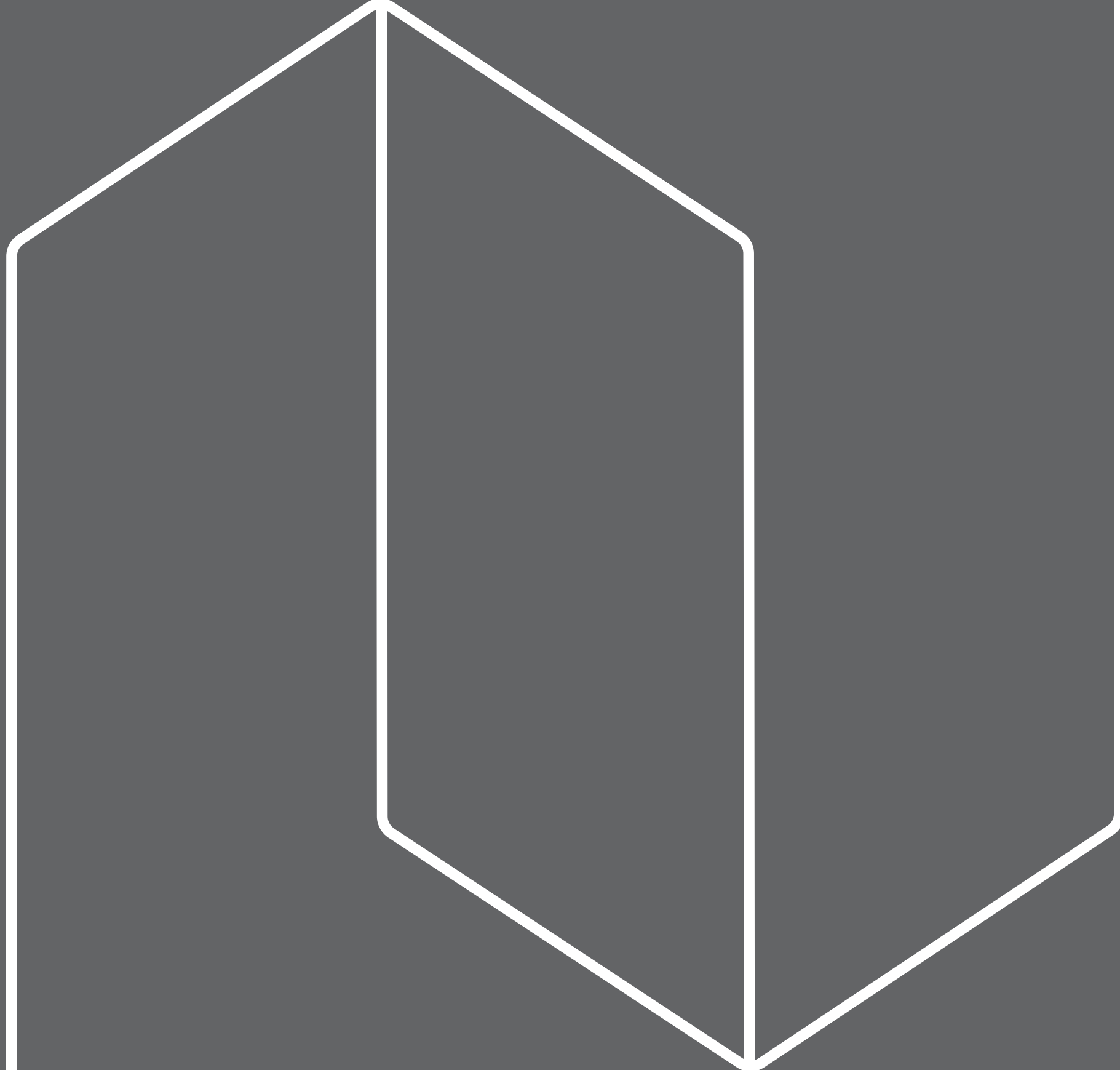
- ▶ **Standing Conference of Roma Citizens' Associations (SKRUG) - League of Roma** gathers 50 Roma CSOs and represents the successor of the informal CSO League for the Decade of Roma. It was founded with the aim of improving, involving and emancipating the Roma community through the civil sector, and is active both at national level - through advocacy and monitoring the implementation of Roma policies, and at local level - through monitoring and participating in the implementation of IPA projects.
- ▶ **The "Women Against Violence" Network** was created to empower and connect specialist women's organisations providing services to women who survived violence. The "Women Against Violence" network brings together associations and individuals who provide direct support to women with experience of violence (SOS helplines, counselling, centres, shelters, safe houses etc) or deal with violence against women through research, advocating for women's rights to life without violence, education, lobbying or otherwise.
- ▶ **The National organisation of Persons with Disabilities (NOOIS)**, established to represent a united movement of persons with disabilities of Serbia, speaks on behalf of most of the persons with disabilities and their legal representatives and represents the most important political force in representing their common interests and needs. The NOOIS advocates to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities into society, full respect for human rights and non-discrimination based on disability, through the partnership of the united disability movement and the government in the adoption and implementation of laws and other documents in the field of disability, in accordance with international standards and documents.
- ▶ **The Network of organisations for Children of Serbia (MODS)** is a union of associations consisting of member organisations engaged in protection and promotion of the rights of the child in Serbia. MODS advocates an inclusive society where all children grow up carefree and happy, protected from abuse, neglect, discrimination and violence, and gain access to quality formal and informal education, health care, social services and a healthy environment on equal terms with others. It should be taken into account that, unlike above-mentioned umbrella organisations that are closely specializing in target groups that are the focus of this study, there is no organisation in Serbia that is committed solely to the rights and interests of the youth leaving the social protection system.

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⁸⁸ G. Matković, M. Stranjaković, V. Kovačević, *Role of NGOs in providing social protection services*, Centre for Liberal-Democratic Studies, Belgrade, 2009.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.



Holistic Approach to Social Housing

Housing support and active inclusion models



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1. PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC MODELS

1.1. Holistic Models Sustainability

7 | Sustainability is essential when investing in any type of infrastructure, including social infrastructure. Full sustainability is achieved by ensuring institutional, financial, social and environmental sustainability.

The **institutional sustainability** of holistic social housing models treated in this study is achieved by handing over future permanent management and maintenance of all developed or enhanced social housing models owned by the local self-government units (LSGUs), as well as all established or enhanced local inclusion measures, to the local self-government system and its institutions. In this case, established mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation between housing stock management institutions with health care, social care and educational institutions, as well as with the private and non-governmental sectors, must be established as permanent cooperation mechanisms if their existence through piloting and initial project funding is proven to be successful and efficient.

Financial sustainability is inextricably linked to institutional sustainability and represents the precondition to ensure long-term sustainability. In terms of the financial sustainability of holistic models considered in this study, it is planned and achieved in two ways, depending on ownership of housing property. Continued funding from public funds through institutions that have permanently taken over the management of social housing stock owned by the LSGUs must be ensured for its ongoing management and maintenance. In addition, the financial sustainability of holistic models that include housing support in the form of non-profit housing lease is achieved by fixing the level of the rent which will be financially accessible to users and which will not jeopardize the basis for providing funds for maintenance of the housing stock. In the case of housing support for privately-owned housing stock, beneficiaries must be sufficiently empowered economically and build strong family ties through active inclusion measures to take on future stable management and maintenance of their property. In both cases of ownership over housing solutions, active inclusion measures - in terms of ensuring access to education, health and social services, as well as mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation - must be permanently funded from public funds to ensure their institutional sustainability.

Social sustainability of the presented models is achieved by strengthening social cohesion and social inclusion, fairness, equality, tolerance and security. Socio-spatial inequalities, segregation and marginalization of vulnerable groups will be transcended through achieving social sustainability.¹ This can be achieved by applying sound management methodologies and primarily through active participation of user groups and recipient communities in all stages of support provision - from planning to implementation and monitoring.

For holistic models to be **sustainable in terms of environmental protection**, housing standards must provide for energy efficiency while minimizing energy losses and avoiding the consumption of non-renewable natural resources. Materials that are locally available, degradable and easy to maintain should be used in construction, with an optimized use of construction land. During their tenancy users should apply controlled waste management with waste separation and recycling of secondary raw materials, as well as avoid all environmental pollution practices, which should be integrated into their life skills training.

¹ The term from the law was quoted although professionals recommend the term "vulnerable groups".

1.2. Gender Equality Principle

⁹ The principle of gender equality implies the obligation for each project, programme and activity to integrate gender equality issues in order to achieve access rights to all services equally for women, men, girls and boys. The EU Action Plan for Gender Equality (2016-2020)² emphasizes the need for women and girls to exercise all human rights and freedoms, as well as the necessity to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The UN Agenda 2030, as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5), sets out the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a fundamental human right but has a multiple effect on other areas of development, and the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality is essential to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development.

According to the UNOPS report “Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women”³, inclusive and gender-responsive infrastructure is crucial to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. While women and girls account for more than half of the population in the Republic of Serbia (RS), gender inequality persists in all fields – from access to health and social care, education, through housing and property ownership, to obstacles to acquisition of skills that contribute to competitiveness in the labour market. The Law on Gender Equality of RS⁴ emphasizes that gender equality implies equal participation of women and men in all fields and sectors, in accordance with the generally accepted rules of international law, as confirmed by international treaties, the RS Constitution and laws.

In light of the above, the application of the principle of gender equality represents an important aspect in the implementation of holistic housing support models and active inclusion of vulnerable groups. It should be applied at all stages of planning, design and execution. These principles should be adapted to the specific model and the local context in which they are applied. It also means that women and men should be represented in the implementation of actual projects, development of plans and budgets, in the work of municipal bodies and commissions, working and project teams. This approach should also exist toward all vulnerable groups as final beneficiaries of support.

The practice to date indicates that the supported housing service for young people who are becoming independent largely catered to males; hence, attention should be paid to equal gender representation of girls and boys/young men as early as in the planning stage, i.e. forwarding beneficiaries to this service. In addition, research shows that there are considerably less female property owners in Serbia, which makes them more vulnerable, especially if they are exposed to domestic violence. Therefore it is particularly important that husbands and wives, or both of the partners, be equal owners of property acquired through holistic models.

¹⁰ The planned active inclusion measures should be gender adjusted and developed in a way that respects the specific needs of both sexes, so that they are equally accessible to all. Particular attention should be paid to the application of affirmative action to allow persons who are multiply vulnerable and often discriminated against - girls with disabilities, women victims of domestic violence and Roma women - equal coverage by these measures, from access to adequate housing, quality education, health and social care until their job skills and competences, employability and economic independence are improved. In addition, for women to benefit fully from the training program, the improvement of their skills and the development of production potential, specific factors that can affect the availability and effectiveness of the planned measures (e.g. training site, flexibility of training times and so forth) should be taken into account, as well as encouraging programs aimed at removing obstacles to women's participation in planned activities (e.g. day care and other relevant services, such as support for women in the care of children, dependent family members, house chores, etc.).

² Ioannides I, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (European Parliament). EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020. Publications Office of the European Union, Brussels, Belgium.

³ Morgan G, Bajpai A, Ceppi P, Al-Hinai A, Christensen T, Kumar S, Crosskey S & O'Regan N. Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women. UNOPS, Copenhagen, Denmark.

⁴ Law on Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 104/2009)

1.3. Principle of Participation

¹¹ Citizen participation in social life means that they are actively involved in decision-making on the issues that concern them. Participation of vulnerable groups in all stages of a programme - from planning to implementation and monitoring - is one of the key factors for a successful application of any holistic social housing model.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵ and the World Programme of Action for Youth⁶, active participation of young people is central to successful implementation of measures targeting them. It highlights the principle that the youth have the right to express their views on all matters that concern them and affect them and that their views are taken seriously. Hence, current practices in Serbia have shown that the success of the process of youths gaining independence is greatly increased when individual self-reliance plans have been made in active cooperation with the beneficiaries, as it largely contributes to the plans being tailored to their needs and opportunities.

The strategy for the improvement of the position of people with disabilities in RS⁷ continues to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in creating and implementing policies related to them, with the motto “nothing about us without us”. This ensures shifting the focus from long-term dependency and passive roles towards activating potential and building capacities of persons with disabilities, as well as creating possibilities for persons with disabilities to be active and productive members of society.

The principle “for Roma with Roma”⁸ stresses the need for the Roma not to be recognized just as a target group of programmes or projects currently being implemented, but to be directly involved in all measures and activities related to improving their inclusion in society. The importance and necessity of Roma men and women participating in all aspects of improving their position and social inclusion, in the fields of education, housing, employment and gaining experience, as well as health and social care, was also highlighted in the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia.⁹

General Recommendation No.35 on gender-based violence against women¹⁰ stresses that the women’s right to participation is inseparable from other human rights, and that the full participation of women, women’s organisations and those representing marginalized groups of women and girls is essential for the establishment of multi-sectoral mechanisms and women effectively gaining access to comprehensive services, especially women affected by violence and intertwined forms of discrimination.

In the context of everything stated above, it is necessary to ensure the active participation of users from all vulnerable groups in all stages, from planning to implementing the holistic housing support model and active inclusion models. It is important that users actively participate in the formulation of individual plans for independent living or employment, in order to make the implementation of activities from individual plans more successful.

¹² In addition, active participation of all other stakeholders during the planning and implementation of housing support and active inclusion measures is crucial, in line with their responsibilities and competences and in line with good governance principles. The participation of stakeholders should also be in line with the responsibilities provided for by legal solutions, as well as national and local strategy papers and action plans for the social inclusion of vulnerable groups or other sectoral strategy papers. It is also necessary to ensure adequate participation of the receiving community, regardless of whether it is a local community in whose neighbourhood a new building is being built, or residents of an existing building where supported housing or housing support services are implemented in terms of improving housing conditions, so they can be adequately involved in the planned activities from the very beginning.

⁵ UN Convention on the Rights of the child (Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, UNICEF, Belgrade

⁶ The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, United Nations, 2010

⁷ Strategy for the Improvement the Position of Persons with Disabilities (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 44/2020)

⁸ Third Status Report on the Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area - For Roma, With Roma, OSCE/ODIHR, 2018

⁹ Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period between 2016 and 2025 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 26/2016)

¹⁰ General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2017.



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2. HOLISTIC MODELS OF ROMA INCLUSION

2.1. Position of the Roma National Minority in RS

¹⁵ According to the 2011 census, 147.604 people in Serbia¹¹ have declared themselves belonging to the Roma national minority.¹² Various sources show that Roma are among the most vulnerable groups, facing discrimination, poverty and social exclusion on a daily basis.¹³ Some 23.000 Roma internally displaced persons whose 92% of households cannot meet the basic needs of nutrition, hygiene, health care and education, or housing payments and local transport costs are among the particularly vulnerable.¹⁴ According to the census findings there were 5,719 Roma registered as persons in the homeless situation, one third of the total number of persons in the homeless situation in the RS.

The vast majority of Roma lives in informal and sub-standard settlements. As part of the project "We are here together - European support for Roma inclusion", 583 sub-standard settlements were mapped in 2015, but without precise data on the number of inhabitants.¹⁵ This survey showed that living conditions in these settlements were often inadequate, that about 40% of the buildings were built from weak materials unsuitable for construction, 38% of the buildings were not connected to the water supply and 74% were not connected to the sewage network. The lack of adequate urban plans for Roma settlements, as an initial tool to improve the settlements and regulate ownership and legal status of the houses, has been remedied recently through programmes funded by the EU through IPA funds.¹⁶

The 2017 Regional Research conducted by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)¹⁷, provides further insight into the differences between living conditions and socio-economic status of Roma and non-Roma. This survey shows that more than 20% of Roma do not have access to potable water in housing units, while this is the case with 4% of the non-Roma population; approximately 30% of Roma do not have bathrooms in their housing units, as opposed to 6% of the non-Roma population. Significant differences also exist in terms of access to education: the percentage of 2.5-6 year-old Roma children enrolled in preschool education is only 6% as opposed to 50% coverage in the majority population; 85% of Roma are covered by primary education versus almost complete coverage in the general population. The early dropout rate is very widespread among Roma students and is 80%, while only 65% of Roma students graduate from primary school. Secondary education covers only 25% of Roma youth, while it reaches 90% in the general population, while only 2% of Roma are included in higher education.

Consequently, Roma face significantly higher unemployment rates throughout all age groups; the Roma unemployment rate is around 40%, which is four times higher than in the general population. In 2019, the total number of unemployed ethnic Roma registered with the National Employment Service (NES) was 25,918, 49.6% of which were women.¹⁸ The following are most common reasons affecting lower Roma participation in the labour market identified: inadequate working skills, discrimination, discouragement, spatial segregation in housing, social capital, lack of information and capital.¹⁹

As can be deduced from the data above, which is clearly recognized in the adopted legislative and strategic frameworks of RS, the Roma national minority is among the multiply sensitive and socially most excluded groups. Increasing Roma inclusion requires effective and efficient anti-discrimination measures and a holistic approach to exercising rights in all key fields - from access to quality education, health and social care, through adequate housing to a more equitable access to employment.

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¹¹ S. Radovanović, A. Knežević, *Roma in Serbia*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2014.

¹² Various sources suggest that the number of Roma in Serbia is higher and estimates range between 250.000-600.000.

¹³ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Third National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia for the period between 2014 and 2017*, 2018.

¹⁴ *Assessment of the Needs of Internally Displaced Persons in Serbia*, UNHCR, JIPS, KIRS, 2011.

¹⁵ Lj. Živković, A. Đorđević, *General Characteristics of Substandard Roma Settlements in Serbia* OSCE Mission to Serbia, Belgrade, 2015.

¹⁶ EU support to Roma inclusion - Strengthening Local Communities towards Roma Inclusion - Component 3 description

¹⁷ 2017 *Regional Roma Survey: Socio-Economic Position of Marginalised Roma in Western Balkans*, UNDP, 2018

¹⁸ 2019 National Employment Service Work Report

¹⁹ D. Vlaović Vasiljević, V. Kovačević, Ž. Šunderić, *Analysis of the position of youth at risk and recommendations for improving their social and economic inclusion*, centre for Social Policy and NALED, Belgrade, 2017.

2.2. Holistic Model of Inclusion with Housing Support Through Acquiring Ownership Rights over a Family House by way of Allocation Without Compensation

17 | Housing support²⁰ enables the acquisition of property rights over a family house with a single housing unit through allocation without compensation to persons - particularly the Roma - who are without housing or without adequate housing. This form of housing support is also available to the persons in the lowest income bracket²¹ whose maximum income cannot exceed 1.2 average income without taxes and contributions in the LSGU, with the increase of the limit according to the number of household members.²² Due to the available housing stock in the market that always requires additional reconstruction work to a certain share of the purchase value to conform to use, and the lack of financial and technical capacities of users, including additional support for the allocation of equipment and construction materials is also recommended, as well as the engagement of professional contractors to install these. Continued support through active inclusion measures for all members of the household is needed for families to continue using and maintaining the property in a sustainable manner, pay utility bills and raise their capacity for self-sustainability, during and after moving into the house.

The model has proven particularly successful in practice for those Roma families with multiple members, particularly adult male members, who either have started their families or plan to do so; for rapidly growing families, especially those with the motivation to further engage in vegetable production, poultry and animal husbandry; for families informally collecting secondary raw materials for purpose of storage space provision; families with working-age members; as well as all families strongly motivated to acquire their own property to build on, upgrade and improve in line with their needs. This aspect of improving Roma housing conditions was used in various LSGUs through funding from donor projects or local budgets. Support models included acquisition of houses with gardens in suburban, rural and urban areas, allocation of prefabricated houses and the construction of new houses instead of an old one on private land.²³ Support was also provided to beneficiaries through allocating construction material for house repair, as well as equipment and tools or small grants for the purpose of economic empowerment.

Beneficiaries of this model conclude a contract with the LSGU and the owner of the real estate which is the subject of housing support. The contract regulates mutual rights and obligations and it may also contain provisions obligating household members to participate in active inclusion measures focusing on supporting the education of children and employment and productive engagement of the youth and adults.

20 Acquisition of ownership rights over a family house by way of allocation without compensation is a form of housing support provided in Art. 99-100, Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law.)

21 The Law on Housing and Building Maintenance does not provide for the lower limit of income of persons or households to be eligible for this form of housing support.

22 The Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Art. 91) provides for the possibility to set a lower maximum income limit through an appropriate housing support programme.

23 Z. Vuksanović-Macura, V. Macura, *Existing models of Housing improvement for Roma*, OSCE, Belgrade, 2014.

2.2.1. Housing Solution

The housing solution includes the allocation of a family house with one housing unit, provision of construction and other materials and equipment, as well as provision of professional and technical assistance for work execution. The housing solution must comply with all conditions defined for this form of support in the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance, and with additional conditions defined by the specific housing support programme through which the housing solution is provided:

- ▶ it should meet the conditions of housing unit adequacy in terms of structure, ratio between surface area and number of household members, existence of basic fittings, structural safety and security, weatherproofing and compliance with basic housing sanitation conditions²⁴

- ▶ the property must be registered in the Real Estate Cadastre; there must be no outstanding property law issues or any liability on said property (mortgage or other form of liability); the purchase is finalized after checking the property law status and physical condition of the plot and the building
- ▶ the wife and husband, or both persons in a common law marriage, shall own the acquired real estate together
- ▶ the property acquired through such an allocation cannot be sold ten years from the day of acquisition of the right of ownership over said property; the registration of the annotation prohibiting any such sale is made in the real estate register²⁵

Building a family house / installing a prefabricated house on private land

Apart from the purchase of a family house from a private owner, acquisition of property rights over a family house through allocation without compensation as a form of housing support may also be implemented through the construction of a family house or the installation of a prefabricated house on private land owned by a housing support beneficiary.

Local self-government unit provides funds (from different sources) for the construction and/or procurement and installation of prefabricated houses; it organises an assessment of the adequacy of proposed properties, the development of the necessary technical documents and obtaining construction permits; it organises construction or installation of prefabricated houses, as well as their connections to utility infrastructure. Fitting houses with basic (household) appliances and furniture (beds, chairs, cabinets etc.) is a desirable part of this housing solution.

24 Housing unit adequacy was defined in the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law. 90.)

25 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance Art. 100.

2.2.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

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As this support model mostly includes Roma families with the lowest financial, social and educational capacities, which - due to the multigenerational circumstances of exclusion - were never able to acquire their own property, the support package for their inclusion is comprehensive, the most complex and the most challenging. For these reasons, it must be focused both on short-term measures of emergency intervention and medium- and long-term measures.

Support for active inclusion should include measures targeting the entire family, as well as individual members of the housing support beneficiaries' households. Support measures include issuance of personal documents; access to health and social care; access to equal and high-quality education of children and prevention work against dropping out from compulsory education, especially for female children; measures to raise capacities and employability; employment and overcoming barriers to social inclusion; as well as measures supporting Roma girls and women. The following are considered crucial support aspects:

- ▶ support for families to enrol children into compulsory preparatory preschool education and support for preschool institutions in overcoming obstacles to the inclusion of Roma children in the preschool education system
- ▶ support for families to enrol and prevent children from dropping out from compulsory education, especially girls, as well as support for educational institutions in overcoming obstacles to inclusive education

- ▶ support for youth and adults, in particular Roma girls and women, in initiating or continuing formal and informal education to build and raise employability through internships, apprenticeships, professional training, career guidance and counselling, training for active job seeking as well as informal education in line with the local labour market potential, in accordance with beneficiaries' previous education and preferences; motivation for active job seeking and support in registering as unemployed with the NES
- ▶ employment mediation and connecting with employers; support to potential employers for creating new jobs for Roma men and women; training for known employers followed by employment with mentoring support for new employees and employers; inclusion in self-employment grants programmes, with the necessary training and mentoring support to overcome barriers to running a business, short-term employment in the form of public works and seasonal employment
- ▶ support to all members of the household in access to health and social care, especially for the multiply vulnerable (persons with disabilities, elderly, persons with chronic diseases, displaced persons, returnees under readmission agreements and others), including issuance of personal documents (birth certificate, personal identity card, health insurance card etc.)

2.2.3. Best practice example

The allocation of houses with an estate for displaced Roma families from Belgrade²⁶

20

As part of the project "Livelihood Enhancement for the most Vulnerable Roma Families in Belgrade - Let's Build a Home Together", families were given ownership over houses with plots of land and additional support provided.

Project implementer

- ▶ The project was implemented by UNOPS in partnership with the City of Belgrade

Funding

- ▶ The project was funded by the European Union

Housing solution

- ▶ beneficiaries found their own homes with plots of land and ownership was transferred to them after the purchase

Programme characteristics

- ▶ both persons in a common law marriage were owners of purchased property (land and house)
- ▶ beneficiaries were also given construction material for house repairs and they were provided help in its installation
- ▶ beneficiaries were provided with home appliances and, if needed, sanitary ware
- ▶ tools and small agricultural machinery were also provided as a measure of household economic empowerment upon beneficiaries' request
- ▶ the established coordination body ensured the connection and involvement of institutions (CSW, NES and others) at the relocation site, in order to provide new beneficiaries access to services
- ▶ the programme provided additional support (e.g. ambulances) for LSGUs with a large number of families

²⁶ M. Dimitri, *the LBHT Project. Assessment of the Durable Housing Solutions - Report*, Belgrade, 2020

2.3. Holistic Inclusion Model with Housing Support for Enhancing Housing Conditions

- ²¹ Enhancing the housing conditions of the property owned by beneficiaries²⁷, Roma in this case, is a form of housing support provided through allocation of construction materials and equipment. Installation assistance was also recommended due to the multiple sensitivity of this target group and their lack of financial and professional capacity to install construction material on their own. Persons without adequate housing as defined by the Law²⁸ with income under 0.5 average salary without taxes and contributions in the LSGU can be programme beneficiaries, while the limit is raised according to a specified scale for each additional household member. Additional measures of active inclusion and support are provided to all family members.
- This form of enhancing Roma housing conditions was used in various LSGUs through funding from donor projects or local budgets.²⁹ Support models included allocation of construction material, sometimes even professional assistance with installation, from working to complete construction to minor finishing works.³⁰ Individual programmes also provided support for the legalization of houses that were subject to enhancement, with an obligation on the part of the Roma to participate in the execution of simple, non-artisanal jobs, as well as activities to strengthen the socio-economic capacity of the Roma community.

2.3.1. Housing Solution

The housing solution has the following conditions and elements:

- ▶ that there are no unresolved property law issues on the real estate, i.e. that the real estate is fully owned or co-owned by the housing support beneficiary, or that it is jointly owned with some of the family household members, registered in the real estate cadastre without a liability as:
 - real estate taken over from the land register *or*
 - real estate built before construction regulations were adopted
 - real estate built with a construction permit for which it was issued an certificate of occupancy *or*
 - real estate registered as per the Law on the Legalization of Buildings
- ▶ households are supported with the allocation of construction materials for the enhancement of housing conditions and the execution of works which do not require an act from the competent authority or which can be performed on the basis of a decision granting approval for work execution.³¹

This form of housing support may also be granted to a user who - independently or with professional assistance - obtained the necessary approval for the execution of reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or adaptation works on the family house and/or construction permission to add new rooms (bathroom, additional room, kitchen etc.) prior to the advertising of a public call for the allocation of housing support, provided the execution of said works would improve inadequate housing conditions. Additional legal and technical assistance may be provided to obtain the certificate of occupancy and to register changes made to the real estate in the real estate cadastre, in order to fully legalize the procedure and ensure legal certainty of the property as one of the key elements of the right to adequate housing.

²⁷ Enhancing housing conditions is one of five types of housing support, closely defined by Article 101 of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law)

²⁸ Law on Housing and Building Maintenance Art. 90.

²⁹ Z.Vuksanović-Macura, V. Macura, *Housing Models for Substandard Roma Settlements*, OSCE, Belgrade, 2014.

³⁰ The project Livelihood Enhancement for the most Vulnerable Roma Families in Belgrade - Let's Build a Home Together was funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

³¹ The Rulebook on the special type of buildings and special type of works which do not require an act of the competent authority, and the type of buildings being constructed, or the type of works carried out, on the basis of a decision granting approval for work execution, and the scope and content and review of the technical documents attached to the application and procedure conducted by the competent authority (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 2/2019)

2.3.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

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All active inclusion measures relevant to members of the Roma national minority, presented in the previous model (pg. 19) are fully relevant to this model as well.

As the idea is supporting families with certain, although very limited capacities, but also with proven motivation for this type of housing solution, the support to inclusion should be initially directed to reviewing the needs and capacities of family members. Accordingly, the priority is to ensure access to all rights in social and health care and education, while informing users in a tailored and comprehensible language and providing mentoring support to achieve access where needed. Support for health care and equipment, which is outside of regular health care, additional support for the education of children, especially girls, in compulsory education can always be further provided through projects.

Support for increasing employability and employment of working-age family members aged 15 to 65 should be based on a unified assessment of their informal knowledge and skills, motivation and potential of the local labour market. Support can be provided in the form of training for formal recognition of qualifications in already existing skills, which is one of the most cost-effective ways of support; training for writing business plans to start own businesses; awarding grants for the purchase of tools, machines and equipment for income generation or self-employment; as well as supporting the registration of small businesses with the aim of starting or expanding own businesses in the fields of manufacturing/handicraft or services. Employment priorities can be sought in the short term, through public works, seasonal jobs or internships, but also in the long term through training for known employers or supporting employers to create new jobs or employ difficult-to-employ categories. The general principles behind supporting employment of vulnerable groups, including Roma, are that the result is never achieved by a single, one-off intervention, but that support in every form of (self)employment must be planned in the long term, with training and mentoring support throughout the process.

2.3.3. Best practice examples

Improving housing conditions and enhancing the socio-economic situation of Roma men and women in Vojvodina

24

The Ecumenical Humanitarian organisation (EHO) provides Roma families with improved housing conditions in terms of repairs and minor house improvements through a number of projects mainly implemented in the territory of Vojvodina.

Project implementer

- ▶ the projects are implemented by the Novi Sad-based Ecumenical Humanitarian organisation (EHO)
- ▶ providing support to beneficiaries in resolving property law issues and the process of legalizing buildings

Funding

- ▶ project-based funding from various sources, donations, LSGU participation and Roma
- ▶ providing support to beneficiaries in the form of grants for self-employment, income generation, work resources (chainsaw, outboard motor etc.), as well as domestic animals (sheep, pigs, chickens)

Housing solution

- ▶ allocation of construction materials, provision of design documents and professional assistance for house repair and/or expansion - bathrooms and/or smaller rooms
- ▶ organising training sessions for women and men for independent advocacy of rights and the interests of the community

Programme characteristics

- ▶ a wide range of housing solutions applied: rehabilitation, adaptation, reconstruction, expansion, as well as construction of houses with basic premises (hallway, room, bathroom and kitchen)
- ▶ participation from beneficiaries - financially and/or in workdays in the procurement of materials or work execution
- ▶ improving municipal infrastructure in the settlement by constructing the water supply grid, wells, sewage or septic tanks
- ▶ providing support to the surrounding, non-Roma population in some cases in order to foster social cohesion with the surrounding area, if there is a need for a particular type of housing and other support

“Build Hope - Enhancing Living Conditions in Roma Settlements”, Košice, Slovakia

The Košice-based Environmental Training Project (ETP) Slovakia is a non-profit consulting organisation that implemented a number of projects in the fields of education, youth work, support for old people over the past two and a half decades. Providing grants and microloans to Roma families to build or reconstruct their houses on their own, along with providing other forms of support, especially educational work with children is an important part of this organisation’s work

Project implementer

- ▶ projects implemented by ETP, Košice, Slovak Republic

Funding

- ▶ project funding from various sources: national budget, donations from international organisations and private companies, from ETP Slovakia funds, and with financial participation of users through paying back microloans. Grants and microloans for the procurement of construction materials and obtaining construction permits are awarded to beneficiaries. The value of the microloan is approximately 1.200 Euros repaid over the course of four years by beneficiaries, whereas the maximum value of the grant is 6.000 Euros.

Housing solution

- ▶ Roma families, mostly young, who possessed their own houses and were ready and motivated to participate in the self-building project, received training and microloans to procure some of the construction material for house reconstruction. Reconstruction works were executed by trained beneficiaries under daily guidance from ETP Slovakia experts. Local self-government provides municipal infrastructure if necessary.

Programme characteristics

- ▶ a series of meetings and workshops with various local self-government unit services involved in the project, to strengthen employees capacities, provide inter-sectoral cooperation, and monitor project progress
- ▶ regular meetings with the Roma community in the settlement. Beneficiaries, Roma families involved in the project, are obligated to attend all meetings and workshops organised in the settlement, as well as meetings with local self-government unit
- ▶ beneficiaries are obligated to attend a financial education course within the austerity programme and save 50 Euros per month during the planning and preparation of the project with a minimum of 12 months
- ▶ beneficiaries are required to undergo a 12-month long self-building training so they could participate in repairing their own houses, but also to acquire skills for further work engagement and inclusion in the labour market
- ▶ children from beneficiary families are obligated to attend school regularly, while the programme provides them support in the form of textbooks, clothing and footwear
- ▶ additional support is provided to children, youths and their parents, in cooperation with local self-government units and schools, in local community centres or in newly built community centres where social and educational services are organised in accordance with the needs of different generations under the slogan “from nursery to career”

2.4. Challenges and Recommendations

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The provision of holistic social housing models for Roma should take into account key challenges, such as:

- ▶ Insufficient capacity of LSGUs and other stakeholders to implement housing solution and of active inclusion measures for beneficiaries with an inter-sectoral, holistic approach
 - providing external support to LSGUs in planning all elements of housing support and active inclusion measures, with long-term capacity building of LSGUs and other stakeholders
- ▶ insufficient capacities (in communication, market research, financial) of potential beneficiaries to identify adequate real estate in property law-related, construction-wise and technical terms³²
 - supporting beneficiaries in finding adequate real estate
- ▶ small scope of real estate with resolved property and legal status, i.e. appropriate construction permits and certificates of occupancy³³
 - intensifying legal and professional technical assistance to beneficiaries by LSGUs during the advertising stage of the public call to speed up the regulation of property law issues over the houses and land or finalize the legalization processes
- ▶ regular coverage of the costs incurred for utilities and maintenance of the real estate by the beneficiaries
 - enabling access to social care services in accordance with the fulfilment of support criteria, support for access to subsidized utilities payments in accordance with local regulations, application of a full support package to raise employability and employment, as well as monitoring and facilitating mentoring support in adjusting and finding long-term solutions for economic independence
- ▶ involving all family members in the daily income generation in the informal economy prevents family members from committing themselves to professional development in any form
 - apart from paying for the cost of training, financial compensation should also be provided during the training period, as well as a presentation of the benefits of engaging in the formal labour market
- ▶ high level of prejudice, discrimination and segregation, especially in terms of housing
 - inclusion measures should be implemented in integration to reduce general discrimination and prejudice, avoid segregation when planning housing support, active inclusion of receiving communities and systematic action to build social inclusion

³² In acquisition of property rights over a family house by way of allocation without compensation.
³³ In enhancing housing conditions.

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- ▶ a high level of prejudice, discrimination and segregation, especially in terms of employment³⁴
 - inclusion measures should be implemented in an integrated way to reduce general discrimination and prejudice, with actions aimed at employers, as well as with concrete measures to support individuals and employers in sustainable employment
- ▶ the special multiply discriminated position of Roma women in the family, as well as in the wider community
 - requires specific approaches to their active inclusion, which should include the following: the broadest early marriage prevention measures, recognizing domestic violence and mechanisms to overcome it; supporting prevention of dropping out of education and inclusion in functional primary education; in the event that dropout already occurred in compulsory education, providing support for the acquisition of qualifications in accordance with personal capacities, interests and local market needs; supporting care for children and dependent adult and elderly family members, as well as supporting employment. All these support measures need to be implemented with continuous individual mentoring support
- ▶ social and economic exclusion of all family members (exclusion of children from preschool education, high dropout rate from compulsory education, presence of acute and chronic health issues without health insurance, low educational and qualification status, as well as exclusion from the formal labour market)
 - requires a holistic integrated approach to simultaneously addressing all sectors of exclusion, as promoted by this study
- ▶ lack of motivation for inclusion in the formal labour market due to a combination of several factors
 - planning and implementation of integrated support measures in accordance with national and local strategy papers, to overcome identified causes and encourage motivation to engage in the formal labour market

³⁴ The Balkan barometer for 2020 by the Regional Cooperation Council suggests that 90% of employers would not hire Roma - <https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/publications>.



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3. INSTITUTIONS RELEVANT TO THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

3.1. The Position of Women Victims of Domestic Violence³⁵ in RS

³¹ In 2017, the Ministry of Interior of the RS recorded 7,016 domestic violence criminal charges, which is an 88% increase when compared to 2014.³⁶ In 2019, the CSW registered 13,631 reports of physical violence against adults, of which 73.4% of the reports were filed by women.³⁷ More than 320 women were killed by partners or men in their immediate vicinity over the past decade.

The service of accommodation in shelters, i.e. safe houses is available to women victims of domestic violence, although current capacities are insufficient. In 2018, 358 persons stayed in 15 safe houses, most often from the urban environment (66% of the total number of users), between the ages of 25 and 64.³⁸ Safe houses are organised as part of a social protection service system: Service providers are from the

public sector, i.e. CSW (78% of users in 2018), as well as licensed civil society organisations (CSOs). Safe houses provide urgent and temporary accommodation to women and their children, as well as basic support to leave violence (legal, medical, psychological, etc.). Accommodation in the safe house is free of charge for users and their children and the costs of organising the service are mostly borne by local self-government units, with a smaller share from earmarked national budget transfers (9% of the total expenditures in 2018). The provision of this social protection service is costly and organisationally demanding. Among others, these are the reasons why around 43% of the LSGUs in Serbia often place victims of violence in another family, mostly in families of origin of victims of violence or with the victim's friends.³⁹

Women victims of domestic violence also have the SOS helpline, one of the most important ways to help and support. The SOS helpline service belongs to a group of counselling, therapeutic and socio-educational services that should be funded from the local self-government unit budget according to the Law on Social Protection.

Strict criteria and conditions often prevent women victims of violence from exercising some of their rights. Data indicates that women and children victims of domestic violence recorded by the CSW account for only about 2% of the total number of social service beneficiaries.⁴⁰ The findings of the RS Ombudsman suggest that rehabilitation services for women victims of domestic violence are not planned, that the resources of local communities are under-utilized, and that victims are mostly offered short-term removal from their own home, with some rare pilot programmes of economic, social and psychological self-reliance development and empowerment for independent living.⁴¹ In addition, CSOs that support women face a lack of resources, which is a major obstacle to continuing service provision and support. Women who have sufficient financial resources are able to rent an apartment on the private market, while those who lack funds or housing support from extended families are forced to return to the offender (who usually owns the apartment), indicating that financial uncertainty and economic dependence are among the prevalent reasons for staying in a violent environment.

³² The information presented above indicates the need for long-term support measures, especially in the field of economic empowerment and adequate housing access. Coordination and cooperation between competent services and institutions were identified through legal solutions and strategic measures as systemic measures to support victims of violence within integrated services and a holistic approach.

³⁵ The term from the law was quoted although professionals recommend the term "women with experiences of domestic violence".

³⁶ Knowledge of Violence/Numbers of Violence, safe house

³⁷ 2019 Synthetic Report on the work of Social Work centres in Serbia, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2020.

³⁸ M. Matković, M. Stronjaković, Mapping Social Care Services and Material Support within the Mandate of Local Governments in the Republic of Serbia, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, Belgrade, 2020.

³⁹ National strategy for preventing and combating violence against women in family and in intimate partner relations (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 27/2011)

⁴⁰ D. Pešić, Protection and support for women with experiences of violence: analysis of local policies in the Republic of Serbia, Autonomous women's centre, Belgrade, 2016.

⁴¹ Special Report of the Protector of Citizens on the implementation of the General and Special Protocols on protection of women against violence, Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2014.

3.2. Holistic Inclusion Model Through the Transitional Accommodation Service for Women Victims of Domestic Violence

³³ This type of supported housing is intended for women victims of domestic violence leaving safe houses or other forms of accommodation. After leaving the safe house, women often need continued support to build their own skills for independent living and to become more successfully included in the community. By organising adequate and secure housing and supporting services, for a limited period of time not shorter than two years, women are provided with available, stable and diverse support and transition toward economic independence and active inclusion in the community.⁴² Women can have their children staying with them. This form of housing supported by LSGUs can be developed as an innovative social care service, as an additional model within accommodation services, as per the Law on Social Protection, other national and local regulations.⁴³

Service providers can be legal persons with a license to provide a supported housing service for this target group, as well as CSWs or other social protection institutions (separate legal persons) established by the LSGUs. This kind of supported housing service intended for women victims of domestic violence has not been developed in Serbia yet. Currently, there is an example of a similarly organised service and support, which operates in Belgrade and is intended for victims of trafficking in human beings, implemented by a licensed CSO.⁴⁴

⁴² Accommodation period may be longer, until a long-term housing solution is provided.

⁴³ Innovative social protection services can be funded or co-funded with earmarked transfers in line with Article 207 of the Law on Social Protection, (Official Gazette of the RS, 24/2011)

⁴⁴ "Atina" - Citizens' Association for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence

3.2.1. Housing solution

This supported housing model is organised in flats or family houses, from the publicly-owned housing stock, property of the service providers or in a housing unit rented from a third person on the market, with possible adaptation, rehabilitation or reconstruction in accordance with standards for this service. For women with children, it is desirable to set up accommodation in a separate flat, to avoid overcrowding that can occur in a shared unit. The location, building and residential area must meet minimum structural and functional standards corresponding to supported housing services:⁴⁵

- ▶ the building should be in a residential area and near public transport; it should also be connected to the basic infrastructure; thermal insulation, sound- and water proofing must comply with all technical standards, with an adequate heating system provided
- ▶ application of accessibility regulations for users who have difficulty moving or moving with the wheelchair is mandatory
- ▶ Minimum surface area and structure of the individualized accommodation housing unit should be consistent with adequate housing as per the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance⁴⁶
- ▶ for shared accommodation, the minimum surface area of the residential space is 12 m² per beneficiary, and the housing unit structure should ensure the performance of basic living functions: accommodation, food, living room, and beneficiaries' hygiene maintenance
- ▶ no more than six beneficiaries can be accommodated in one unit and a maximum of two people can be accommodated in one room; the best option is to have 3 to 4 people in one flat, while it is preferable that each person has a separate room⁴⁷
- ▶ in the adaptation of the existing service provision flat, prior consultation with building residents is recommended for the purpose of sensitizing and accepting new tenants to the local community
- ▶ where necessary, the service provider establishes procedures to ensure the confidentiality of the beneficiaries' location, security and engaged personnel (in e.g. installing security equipment, alarm systems, reaction systems, door locks, hiring a guard, rules on allowed visits, cooperation with the police in security matters, etc.)

⁴⁵ Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

⁴⁶ Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law)

⁴⁷ Based on the experience of civil society organisations implementing related programs.

3.2.2. Mandatory complementary active inclusion measures

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Support for active inclusion should include measures for access to health and social care services, including psychosocial and medical support, as well as measures to raise capacities and employability, employment measures and overcoming barriers to social inclusion, with a mandatory individualized approach in all these processes. Support measures should also include children, especially with the aim of their continuing and completing education. The following are considered to be crucial support aspects:

- ▶ developing individual employment plans with active participation of women, supported by career guidance and counselling
- ▶ continuing formal and informal education of women with the aim of building and raising employability capacity through vocational training, career guidance, counselling and informal education in accordance with the potential of the local labour market, and in line with previous beneficiaries' education and preferences
- ▶ employment mediation and connecting with employers, as well as support to potential employers for the creation of new jobs
- ▶ support for the practical application of social entrepreneurship and connecting beneficiaries with social enterprises from the private and/or civil sectors
- ▶ legal support, family mediation and counselling
- ▶ counselling, therapy and socio-educational services for all family members
- ▶ support for children in education graduating, including establishing contact with educational institutions, in order for children to join the new school (if there is a relocation to another place of residence) and continue school successfully

3.2.3. Best practice example

Supported Housing Citizens' Association for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence, Atina, Belgrade⁴⁸

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Citizens' Association "Atina" - engaged in combating trafficking in human beings and the comprehensive social inclusion of victims of trafficking in human beings and gender-based violence - provides girls and women victims of trafficking with safe accommodation and nutrition, as well as additional measures to support self-reliance and inclusion in society.

Service Provider

- ▶ "Atina" Citizens' Association from Belgrade, a licensed *supported housing* provider

- ▶ beneficiaries are provided with support in the form of: regulation of citizenship status, mediation in the exercise of rights in relevant institutions, literacy and learning, medical support, psychological support, legal counsel, informal education (workshops etc.), support for job finding, other forms of support if necessary

Funding

- ▶ project-based funding

Housing solution

- ▶ the flat is owned by a third, private person, and the rent is paid monthly
- ▶ 3 to 4 people (women and their children) are placed in the apartment; it is desirable that each person has a room of their own, given that mothers share a room with their children

- ▶ support in economic empowerment of beneficiaries is also achieved through cooperation between the Citizens' Association "Atina" and the private sector, as well as by connecting beneficiaries to potential employers

Programme characteristics

- ▶ The *supported housing* service is also available for more than two years, as long as people are in a state of social need
- ▶ beneficiaries are provided with free food, clothing, footwear and personal hygiene products

- ▶ Citizens' Association "Atina" established a social enterprise, the "Bagel Bejrn"⁴⁹ bakery/restaurant that employs beneficiaries. They receive adequate training, are working and generating personal income. All proceeds from the work of the restaurant go to funding the accommodation service and additional support.

⁴⁸ Safe accommodation "Atina" - Citizens' Association for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and All Forms of Gender-Based Violence

⁴⁹ Bagel Bejrn, bakery - "Atina" Citizen's Association social enterprise

3.3. Holistic Approach to Inclusion Through Housing Support by way of Non-Profit Lease of a Publicly Owned Flat or Family House

37 | Beneficiaries of housing support,⁵⁰ including women victims of domestic violence, can exercise the right to non-profit rent of a publicly owned flat, with the aim of providing a long-term housing solution as a key precondition for sustainable independent life. Additional support to beneficiaries and their children is provided through active inclusion measures to provide lasting and sustainable empowerment for independent living.

In practice, women victims of domestic violence were not the beneficiaries of this form of housing support in RS because they were not recognized as a potential target group, or as individuals from vulnerable groups who needed special support in providing adequate housing.⁵¹ Women victims of domestic violence who are coming out of safe houses or are no longer able to use other forms of temporary accommodation (in family of origin or with friends), and want to start living independently, most often do not own a flat that they could move into, and the prices of flats in the private market are often too high for their incomes (if they have any). This is why renting a publicly owned flat through a non-profit lease provides women victims of domestic violence with affordable housing, provided there is additional social support, as well as active inclusion measures to ensure economic independence.

3.3.1. Housing solution

The housing solution consists of a publicly owned flat or family house that cannot be sold and that is given to women victims of domestic violence and their children under a non-profit lease. The housing solution has the following elements and conditions:

- ▶ properties are located in different locations and can be provided in the following ways:⁵²
 - acquiring a flat to public ownership by purchasing it on the market, with reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or adaptation if necessary or
 - using existing publicly owned flats with the necessary reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or adaptation if necessary, or
 - setting up a prefabricated house or building a family house on a publicly owned plot of land
- ▶ in case of construction, the location should: have the possibility to be connected to the infrastructure grid; be in the vicinity of existing housing and in the vicinity of public transport, public and commercial services (primary schools, child- and health care institutions, supply centres) and green areas; have the possibility to combine with other forms of housing and related functions (to prevent spatial segregation); be on terrain that is safe for construction; be removed from pollution sources and other negative impacts⁵³
- ▶ the actual housing unit should meet the conditions of housing unit adequacy⁵⁴ in terms of structure, ratio between surface area and number of household members, existence of basic fittings, structural safety and security, weatherproofing and compliance with basic housing sanitation conditions
- ▶ if necessary, procedures should be established to ensure the confidentiality of a beneficiary's location and security (installation of security equipment, alarm systems, response systems, etc.).
- ▶ the non-profit lease contract shall be concluded for a period of five years, with the possibility of renewal under the same conditions and with the same term, at the tenant's written request
- ▶ non-profit rent is calculated annually and the manner of its calculation is set out in the Rulebook on the Uniform Methodology of Calculating Non-Profit Lease⁵⁵

⁵² Real estate provided in this way cannot be sold from public ownership.

⁵³ For additional criteria to determine the appropriate location to build housing projects in the framework of housing support, see the publication Criteria for Evaluation of Social Housing Locations, created within the project "Livelihood Enhancement for the most Vulnerable Roma Families in Belgrade - Let's Build a Home Together" funded by the EU and implemented by UNOPS

⁵⁴ Housing unit adequacy was defined in the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law. 90.)

⁵⁵ Rulebook on the Uniform Methodology of Calculating Non-Profit Lease (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 90/2017)

⁵⁰ Leasing a publicly owned flat under non-profit lease conditions is a form of housing support closely defined in Art. 93 and 94. of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law)

⁵¹ Z. Vuksanović-Macura, V.M. Čolić Damjanović, *Social housing in Serbia*, Palgo, Belgrade, 2016

3.3.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

³⁹ Support for women victims of domestic violence, mostly with children, who have gone through the transition period of separation from the offender is the most important thing aside from providing affordable, permanent, functioning and secure housing solutions that will provide them with lasting economic and social self-sustainability. In addition to certain other psycho-social factors, it is precisely the inability to achieve economic self-sustainability in practice that has proven to be a crucial factor for their frequent return to abusers. To that extent and in terms of support for women, access to social and health care, education and employment remain as important as all the individual measures outlined in the previous model (pg. 40).

To achieve the above stated long-term goal, supports should be focused on the following:

- ▶ providing basic furniture and home appliances
- ▶ employment and self-employment mediation which will lead to long-term economic self-sustainability, with prior measures to increase employability if necessary
- ▶ psychosocial and counselling support to boost confidence and healthy ways to overcome challenges, whether in the form of individual support, by setting up self-help groups or by engaging in other existing support groups
- ▶ innovative and cross-sectoral models to overcome the challenges of simultaneous child-care and income generation, whether through new community services, complementary links to other members of the immediate housing community or involving children in existing daily community-based services.

3.3.3. Best practice example

Women victims of domestic violence in Serbia were first identified and listed as beneficiaries of housing support with the adoption of the 2016 Law on Housing and Building Maintenance. This is one of the reasons why this target group was not covered by previous housing programmes in RS, such as social housing for rent and other programmes. A best practice example from the EU is also presented due to the lack of examples from local practice.

Support and housing for women victims of domestic violence, Sonas Housing Association, Dublin, Ireland⁵⁶

The SONAS Housing Association focused its activities on providing high quality, safe accommodation, as well as quality and efficient holistic support aimed at achieving the safety and well-being of women and children who suffer domestic violence. Services are provided in County Dublin, Ireland.

Activity implementer

- ▶ Housing Association "SONAS - Freedom from Domestic Violence" from Dublin

Funding

- ▶ The SONAS Housing Association provides flats from its own housing stock, maintains and manages flats and funds the organisation of other holistic support measures. For its activities, SONAS receives continued financial support from the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Housing solution

- ▶ The SONAS Housing Association has about 100 flats in a number of locations in Dublin. As individual units, flats are located in residential buildings in various locations but also can be in a single building with 4 to 10 flats. The beneficiaries are given flats based on a lease contract for 2 to 5 years, with the possibility of extension.

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Programme characteristics

- ▶ risk assessment and safety planning throughout all stages of support and accommodation in flats are exceptionally important part of working with beneficiaries
- ▶ developed ongoing and investment maintenance programme for buildings and flats, as well as real estate management procedures; its own “housing programme” provides an adequate lease structure in line with the beneficiaries’ financial capabilities and support system sustainability
- ▶ internal monitoring system of beneficiaries, support and effects established
- ▶ support is based on the rights of women and children; working with children, their protection and well-being are some of the most important aspects of support
- ▶ support unfolds through cross-sectoral cooperation with public sector services (police, judiciary, health, education) and CSOs, including the following: legal aid and representation in court, psycho-social counselling, work of the expert team with children, representation of beneficiaries before different institutions and mediation in lieu of access to services (e.g. enrolment of children in nursery and school). Support plans are made in cooperation between the beneficiaries and service providers, and support is tailored to the beneficiaries’ individual needs

3.4. Challenges and Recommendations

- ▶ the *supported housing* service for women victims of domestic violence is not explicitly listed as a social protection service
 - including this service in the decision to establish social protection services adopted by the LSGU Assembly as a supported housing service or an innovative service specifying structural and functional standards
 - providing stable funding sources from local budgets and/or through earmarked transfers from the national budget
- ▶ a limited number of licensed *supported housing* providers for women victims of domestic violence, especially among CSOs even with innovative practices and their rich experience in this sector
 - piloting intersectoral services of this type, support to CSOs in fulfilling the licensing requirements, ensuring ongoing budget funding for these holistic services
- ▶ In terms of *a non-profit lease*, a small number of adequate publicly owned flats in different and fitting locations for setting up housing support
 - implementing various options of acquisition, construction and securing publicly owned flats
- ▶ limited financial options to pay non-profit rent and other housing costs, due to limited beneficiaries’ funds
 - setting clear rules for support if there are difficulties in paying rent, and non-payment sanctions in case of non-payment
 - finding balance between the rent level that will be financially affordable to the beneficiaries and that will not jeopardize the system of funds provision for the maintenance of the flats
 - additional subsidizing of utility costs, exercising rights to housing allowance or short-term financial welfare to cover housing costs, as well as the implementation of measures to economically empower the beneficiaries
- ▶ achieving sustainable economic independence for beneficiaries as a prerequisite for the possibility of permanent separating them from their abusers
 - focus on supporting sustainable income generation and employment in line with the capacities of beneficiaries and the local labour market, support for increasing employability through formal and informal education and active employment policy measures
- ▶ challenges of harmonizing child care and income generation for single mothers
 - strengthening intersectoral cooperation and developing innovative services to provide social protection services for child care, with maximum support for the education system
- ▶ overcoming the role of the victim with a permanent exit from violent family relations and functional overcoming of traumatic experiences
 - counselling, therapeutic and socio-educational support, alongside developing innovative support models and multi-sectoral capacity building

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4. HOLISTIC MODELS OF INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

4.1. Position of Persons with Disabilities in RS

⁴⁵ Persons with disabilities account for 8% of the total population in RS and are recognized as one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of discrimination, poverty and poverty risk. The 2011 census recorded 571.780 persons with disabilities, with an average age of approximately 67.⁵⁷ There are more women (58,2%) than men among them, whereby women with disabilities have a lower level of education compared to men with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are in a particularly disadvantaged position and often face multiple discrimination.

According to the census data, 12.2% of the total number of persons with disabilities did not attend primary education. A large number of children remain outside the education system, as data suggest that 5% of children have a disability, while only 1,2% of children with disabilities are among school children. Although RS has strategically committed to develop inclusive education, education of children with disabilities continues through two parallel systems - regular and special. It is assessed that primary and secondary education was attended by about 14.200 children with developmental difficulties during 2014/2015, with 6.708 in schools for students with developmental difficulties and about 7.500 in the regular school system.

The census indicates that 12,4% of people with disabilities were economically active, while only 9% were employed. Pensions were the prevailing source of income for disabled people (61,7%). 20,5% of the total number of people with disabilities were in the category of supported persons (70,3% of which were women), 6,8% had wages or other labour-based income and 4,9% had social benefits. Some progress has been made with the adoption of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment:⁵⁸ in 2019, 57 companies for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities employed 1.128 persons with disabilities, 40,95% of which were women.⁵⁹ Simultaneously, access to the labour market remains limited for persons with disabilities, so 13.331 people with disabilities were on the NES register in 2019, 41,8% of which were women.⁶⁰

A significant number of persons with disabilities - 16.732 - were placed in different types of residential accommodation in 2018.⁶¹ Children with intellectual and physical disabilities were less included in deinstitutionalization than other children. The strategy for the improvement of the position of persons with disabilities in RS highlights that housing poses a particular challenge for persons with disabilities, as it directly affects their isolation and the possibility of social inclusion. Nevertheless, adaptations of the places of residence of persons with disabilities are not systemic; rather, persons with disabilities are forced to provide the funds for adaptation and fulfil demanding procedures to obtain necessary approvals. The working environment and educational institutions are also frequently inaccessible, making it more difficult for persons with disabilities to have equal access to employment and education.

⁴⁶ The data shown above indicate the multiple vulnerability and multiple discrimination against persons with disabilities, which requires active participation, cooperation and coordination of all relevant stakeholders in the enforcement of legal solutions, policies and measures planned to equalize the opportunities for persons with disabilities in terms of access to all fundamental rights, including community life. It is also important to take account of full participation of persons with disabilities, gender equality, appropriate design and adaptation of spaces when implementing activities.

⁵⁷ M. Marković, *Persons With Disabilities in Serbia*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2014.

⁵⁸ *Economic Impact of Social Enterprises in the Republic of Serbia*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Beograd, 2014.

⁵⁹ Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities, (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 44/2020)

⁶⁰ 2019 National Employment Service Work Report

⁶¹ Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities, (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 44/2020)

4.2. Holistic Inclusion Model through a Supported Housing Model for Persons with Disabilities

47 Supported housing is a social protection service that is accessible in the long term to persons with physical, intellectual or mental disabilities at the age of 15.⁶² Users are provided with adequate housing and ensured an appropriate level of support by a team of professionals to improve quality of life, increase self-reliance levels, create opportunities for participation in social activities and exercise the right to live in the community.⁶³ In accordance with their capabilities, beneficiaries actively participate in paying some of the housing costs, maintaining the hygiene of the unit they reside in and in the household management business. Levels of support provision may vary from continuous and all-day to occasional and as needed. Persons with the same or related type of disability are placed together in one housing unit and can be of different ages, gender and degree of disability. An important aspect of the service is the provision of support in the immediate environment, which gives persons with disabilities the opportunity to move out of the institution and encourages their social inclusion in the community. The core of the service is the support provided in line with the individual needs of the beneficiary, which allows them to maximize their potential and community living skills.

Service providers can be legal persons with a secured license for supported housing service provision to this target group, as well as CSWs or other social care institutions (distinct legal persons) established by the LSGUs. The supported housing service for persons with disabilities is provided and funded by local self-government units, which are above the national average in terms of their level of development, while other it is funded from the national budget in other LSGUs.⁶⁴ This service is currently being provided in six LSGUs,⁶⁵ whereby four LSGUs are providing the service themselves and two providers are from the non-profit sector.⁶⁶

62 *Supported Housing for young people who are becoming independent and persons with disabilities*, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013

63 *Ibid.*

64 Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of the RS, 24/2011 Art. 209.)

65 M. Matković, M. Stronjaković, *Mapping Social Care Services and Material Support within the Mandate of Local Governments in the Republic of Serbia*, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, Belgrade, 2020.

66 The Halfway Association, Pančevo

4.2.1. Housing solution

Supported housing is organised in a flat inside a family house or a multi-family residential building from publicly owned housing stock. The service provider from the non-profit sector organises the service in residential space received for use from the LSGU or rented on the market, with possible adaptation, rehabilitation or reconstruction in accordance with standards for this service. The location, facility and residential space must fulfil minimum structural and functional standards.^{67 68}

- ▶ the building should be in a residential area and near public transport; it should also be connected to the basic infrastructure; thermal insulation, sound- and water proofing must comply with all technical standards, with an adequate heating system provided
- ▶ regulations regarding accessibility of the unit, flat and rooms in the flat for beneficiaries who have difficulty moving or move in wheelchairs must apply, including access to the building and devices for vertical movement of the beneficiaries in the building and lift if the flat is above the ground floor
- ▶ the minimum surface area of the residential space is 12 m² per beneficiary, and the housing unit structure should ensure the performance of basic living functions: accommodation, food, living room, and beneficiaries' hygiene maintenance
- ▶ a maximum of six users (of different age, gender and degree of disability) can be accommodated in one flat and no more than two persons in one room
- ▶ in the adaptation of the existing service provision flat, prior consultation with building residents is recommended for the purpose of sensitizing, adequate preparation of the local community and acceptance of new tenants

67 Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

68 Rulebook on conditions and norms for the planning and design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes. (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 76/2017)

4.2.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

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Given the heterogeneity of the target group of persons with disabilities, support for active inclusion should include measures for access to health and social care services; gaining skills for independent living; registering with the NES; measures to raise capacities and employability; employment and overcoming barriers to social inclusion; with a mandatory individual approach and mentoring support throughout these processes. The following are considered to be crucial support aspects:

- ▶ access to rights and exercise of social protection rights, including financial ones (custodial care benefits, increased allowance for custodial care, assistance for job skills training and financial social assistance) and intangible benefits (personal assistants, supported housing service; for persons with disabilities living in private accommodation, the use of day care centre and respite centre services)
- ▶ access to health care services: access to general health care services and access to disability-related health care services without discrimination; access and exercise of rights to medical aids and rehabilitation; education and professional development of health workers to prevent discrimination; promoting alternative forms of medical rehabilitation as an alternative to costly spa treatment by forming mobile teams for in-house medical rehabilitation; promoting healthy lifestyles and recreation of persons with disabilities in local communities
- ▶ access to education and support for inclusive education; provision of adequate teaching aids and resources; support through free transportation regardless of the distance, counselling support in moments of transition in education
- ▶ access to work and employment in accordance with a number of measures provided in the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities
 - implementation of professional rehabilitation measures (organising and implementing measures and activities with the aim of training provision for appropriate jobs; employment; maintaining employment; career advancement or career change), including career guidance, professional information, counselling and individual employment plan; job skills training, additional training, retraining and programs for the acquisition, maintenance and improvement of working and work-related social skills and abilities; individual- and group-based, general and tailor-made programs to enhance work-related social integration; development of motivation, technical assistance, professional support, monitoring and evaluation of professional rehabilitation results; Individual counselling work, including assistance in accepting own disability from the viewpoint of the possibility of gainful employment and specific

professional rehabilitation measures; education and training seminars for employers and professionals for job skills training and professional rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and other persons; proposals and training for the implementation of adequate technical solutions to improve the learning and work efficiency of people with disabilities, as well as support services and other activities

- establishing an enterprise for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities that can be established by the republic, autonomous province, LSGU, company, association of persons with disabilities or other legal or natural persons, and the inclusion of beneficiaries in existing enterprises
- establishing work centres and including users in existing work centres, with the implementation of all occupational rehabilitation measures in them as listed above. The work centre is a special form of institution that provides work engagement as an occupational therapy activity for persons with disabilities who cannot be hired or maintain employment under general or

- special conditions, i.e. whose performance is less than one third of the performance of a usual employee in the workplace
- establishing social enterprises, organising and including beneficiaries in existing ones. For the purposes of this document, a social enterprise is a company established to perform an activity aimed at meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and which, regardless of the total number of employees, employs at least one person with disabilities. Social enterprises and organisations are obligated to invest part of the income they generate by performing their activities in improving working conditions, skills, social integration, living standard and meeting the needs of persons with disabilities

- ▶ professional intersectoral psychosocial support for the acquisition of independent living skills, housing unit maintenance, food preparation, financial management, socialization, as well as establishing and maintaining communication with the community

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4.2.3. Best practice example

51 | “Halfway” for persons with intellectual disabilities in Pančevo⁶⁹

The “Halfway” Association provides a supported housing service for persons with intellectual disabilities, while also providing housing units and expert team support. The Association has established a Work centre to organise the beneficiaries’ work and occupation activities.

Service Provider

- ▶ The Halfway Association, has been providing services continuously since 2006 and has been a licensed supported housing service provider since 2014
- ▶ participation of the beneficiaries in sports and recreational activities (riding, bowling, swimming pool, fitness etc.)

Funding

- ▶ The service is partly funded from the town budget of Pančevo, and additionally through project funding from donations and other public sources (provincial and republic).

Housing solution

- ▶ three flats owned by the service provider, each capacity for four users

Programme characteristics

- ▶ permanent support from the team of professionals consisting of SEN teachers, psychologists, social workers and others
- ▶ developing and maintaining work and professional beneficiaries’ skills and abilities (jewellery making, loom work, embroidery skills, decorating objects with decoupage etc), as well as skills training for persons with intellectual disabilities who have legal capacity and work ability for an open labour market. These activities are carried out at the Association’s Work centre
- ▶ encouraging the beneficiaries’ cultural and social life (going to the theatre, cinema, concerts, museums, cafes, organising day-trips etc.)
- ▶ work engagement and inclusion of beneficiaries in jobs within public works in cooperation with NES Pančevo and employers

The “Halfway” association was given the Erste Foundation Award in 2011, for best project within the field of social innovation for Central and Southeast Europe for the provision of the supported housing service for people with intellectual disabilities.

⁶⁹ The “Halfway” Association, Pančevo

4.3. Holistic Inclusion Model Through Housing Support for Enhancing Housing Affordability and Conditions

Improvement of housing conditions is a form of housing support⁷⁰ that enhances physical accessibility of the housing unit as a precondition for independent living through improvement of the user’s own property and enables access to all other fundamental human rights and services. The necessity for this type of housing support is recognized by persons with disabilities as fundamental, since it enables them to improve their quality of life in their own flat and in the environment where they have social ties and support networks. This principle is in line with the fundamental strategic inclusion principles - that all excluded persons are primarily allowed to remain in their own family environment. In practice, adaptations of the place of residence of persons with disabilities are not systemic; rather, these are left to the individual capacity of families to provide the funds, planning and execution of works on the accessibility of the place of residence.

52 | Similar to the adaptation of housing conditions, the family also relies on its own capacities in providing health, education, social and labour inclusion, due to the limited and uneven availability of support services on the territory of Serbia. To overcome the marginalization and exclusion of persons with disabilities it is necessary - using the holistic approach - to provide access to all available social protection support, to develop new, appropriate and innovative services, and improve inclusive models in the fields of health, education and employment.

⁷⁰ Improving housing conditions is one of the forms of housing support, closely defined in Art. 101 of the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law)

4.3.1. Housing Solution

The housing solution includes the allocation of construction and other materials and equipment, as well as the engagement of a professional workforce to execute works on improving housing conditions and ensuring the physical accessibility of the flat or family house for persons with disabilities. The housing support has the following conditions and elements:

- ▶ that there are no unresolved property law issues on the real estate, i.e. that the real estate is fully owned or co-owned by the housing support beneficiary, or that it is jointly owned with some of the family household members, registered in the real estate cadastre without a liability as:
 - real estate taken over from the land register *or*
 - real estate built before construction regulations were adopted
 - real estate built with a construction permit for which it was issued an certificate of occupancy *or*
 - real estate registered as per the Law on the Legalization of Buildings
- ▶ identifying and implementing a customized solution that will enable individuals with primary physical and sensory disabilities to use their living space independently
- ▶ in terms of adapting the common premises in the building, prior consultation with other residents in the building is necessary to facilitate consensus building and to obtain the necessary approval of owners of other flats in the building

Works on improving physical accessibility and improvement of housing unit, family house, flat and common areas in the building can include: removing horizontal barriers; ramp installation; installation of devices for vertical movement of the beneficiaries; reconstruction and adaptation of the bathroom and installation of appropriate sanitary ware; reconstruction and fitting the kitchen with suitable appliances and food storage devices; adaptation and replacement of doors and windows, and all other works needed to improve the beneficiaries' housing conditions.

4.3.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

All active inclusion measures for persons with disabilities, presented in the previous chapter (pg.49) are fully relevant to this model as well. In addition, access to all health and social care services and financial support in line with the legal principles of accessibility and customization, as well as the improvement of these services, is essential for people with disabilities living in a family environment. It is particularly efficient to be involved in the following social care services:

- ▶ assessment and planning services, e.g. an assessment of the situation, needs, strengths and risks of beneficiaries and other important persons in their environment; design of individual or family service provision plans, legal protection measures, and other assessments and plans.
- ▶ community-based daily services (e.g. day care) that support the beneficiaries staying in their family and immediate environment, as well as provision of home assistance services
- ▶ independent living support services, such as personal assistance, independent living training and other types of support necessary for the active participation of users in society
- ▶ counselling, therapeutic and socio-educational services such as support for a family that takes care of a child or an adult family member with developmental difficulties

Since the effects of inclusion measures for persons with disabilities do not only depend on the engagement of individuals, families and institutions, but barriers to active inclusion can also be seen in the domain of the attitudes of misunderstanding, non-acceptance and open rejection from local communities, peers, employers and media, holistic inclusion models must address each of these key stakeholders with information, education and practical measures to reduce social distancing. RS and local institutions have the duty to take these integrated measures in the course of implementing existing legislation and ratified international and UN frameworks.

4.3.3. Best practice example

55 | Since holistic support for inclusion of people with disabilities by housing support through home improvements was not applied before locally, decades-long experience applying this approach in the UK is presented

Loans and grants for the physical and social infrastructure of persons with disabilities (Disabled Facilities Grant - DFG), United Kingdom⁷¹

In response to the chronic lack of flats accessible to persons with disabilities, the Government of the United Kingdom adopted a special law in 1996 establishing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), which provide persons with disabilities access to housing through the adaptation of housing units and rooms inside the unit, common rooms and hallways in the building, with intersectoral links between local governments to provide additional services.

Activity implementer

- ▶ local government units through their housing services or non-profit housing associations

Funding

- ▶ local governments and non-profit housing associations apply to the national DFG, and then through a public call to persons with disabilities or their families, award financial loans or grants for the adaptation of a property. Service providers for additional support to beneficiaries are also hired from the funds obtained from the DFG. The Municipal Social Affairs Service provides beneficiaries with services in the sphere of its competence in accordance with the law.

Housing solution

- ▶ individuals and families can apply for the loan depending on the income they have available and on the intervention they need to take. Grants shall be awarded for interventions under 1,000 pounds. The normal loaned amount is between 5,000 and 10,000 pounds and the maximum value is 30,000 pounds.

Programme characteristics

- ▶ each local government unit can introduce innovative elements in the implementation of a housing solution, in accordance with the local context. Thus, the Sunderland Housing Association introduced equipment recycling practices (e.g. vertical, inclined and folding platforms) so that those who no longer need equipment can return it to the association (with compensation), which then gives it to another user. This creates savings and reduces the equipment waiting time for new beneficiaries.
- ▶ local governments and housing associations employ health and social care service providers to support beneficiaries
- ▶ beneficiaries can apply to the local government service competent for social affairs to obtain additional support which may include:
 - supportive living care, including tasks such as assistance in shopping, food preparation, home cleaning etc.
 - procurement of disability aids
 - day care service for persons with disabilities
 - day care for children and adult beneficiaries with disabilities
 - parent counselling, parenting support and related family support
 - day care outside of the flat

4.4. Challenges and Recommendations

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- ▶ shortage of publicly owned flats where supported housing for people with disabilities can be organised and provided
 - increasing the publicly owned housing stock through acquisitions on the market, with reconstruction and adaptation
- ▶ insufficiently defined procedures and lack of experience of LSGUs and other stakeholders in planning and implementing housing unit adaptations with holistic support models
 - careful planning of all housing support elements and active inclusion measures, while strengthening the capacities of LSGUs and other stakeholders, as well as forming intersectoral mechanisms (e.g. Council for the inclusion of persons with disabilities modelled after the best practice of the City of Niš⁷²)
- ▶ demanding procedure to obtain the necessary approvals and permission for housing units adaptation
 - planning short-term and long-term measures with the phased implementation of work and planned interventions in the housing unit adaptation
 - providing technical support to families in preparing documents and securing permits
- ▶ limited availability of the supported housing service and a limited number of licensed service providers
 - piloting intersectoral services of this type, support to CSOs in fulfilling the licensing requirements, ensuring ongoing budget funding for these holistic services
- ▶ high target group heterogeneity and multiple vulnerability of the beneficiaries
 - customized approach to customer support with complex holistic measures to overcome specific challenges and achieve long-term, sustainable solutions
- ▶ educational inclusion at all levels and all ages remains a major challenge in practice even with the adequate legislative framework in place
 - continued support to improving accessibility of education institutions and offices within them, inclusive approaches and working methods, reducing discrimination, forming appropriate support teams in schools (inclusive education team, team for the provision of additional support to children/students)
 - establishing cooperation with the Inter-departmental Commission for additional educational support needs assessment
 - developing individual educational plans and the individualization plan

⁷² News on holding the inaugural session of the Council for work with disabled persons, City of Niš Administration, 2016

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- ▶ limited employment/work engagement of persons with disabilities
 - developing professional rehabilitation companies, work centres and social enterprises and organisations
 - implementing the hiring scheme for persons with disabilities in public authorities
 - customized approach to connecting unemployed persons and employers
 - measures focusing on employers to inform them about available support for the employment of persons with disabilities, overcome prejudice and reduce discrimination, provide additional support in the initial employment periods
- ▶ a high level of misunderstanding, lack of acceptance and active discrimination among all key stakeholders and communities
 - implementing existing legal options and solutions in all relevant sectors of anti-discrimination, social protection, education, employment, health
 - prioritizing the needs of persons with disabilities on the basis of systematic data gathering and analysis of the current situation, based on the principles of fundamental human rights
 - application of holistic models with enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation and services, with adequate involvement of the capacity and experience of the CSOs



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**5. HOLISTIC MODELS OF
INCLUSION OF YOUTHS
LEAVING THE SOCIAL
PROTECTION SYSTEM**

5.1. The Position of Youths in RS Leaving the Social Protection System

61 | Data from the Republic Institute for Social Protection shows that approximately 6.000 children and youths without parental care are placed in foster care, kinship or institutional accommodation, of which 5.400 in foster homes and 600 in care institutions. Nearly 500 children and youths leave accommodation in the social protection system annually: in 2018, 357 children left foster homes and 125 left institutional accommodation.⁷³ The termination of the institutional and family placement includes the removal of children and youths from the specific home or family due to various circumstances: return to the family of origin, adoption, transfer to another home or other foster family, transfer from a foster family to a home, as well as for the young person to become self-reliant.⁷⁴ In the period between 2006 and 2011, a total of 5,155 children aged up to 18 were accommodated within the social protection system. 1,162 (22.6%) left the system and half of this number were youths aged over 15.⁷⁵ More than 900 young people without parental care are aged 18 to 26, which is the period when they graduate from school and receive job skills training. Young people who leave the social protection system mostly have a high school degree - predominantly vocational school. Also, a large percentage of them belong to multiple vulnerable groups, such as Roma and persons with disabilities.

Leaving the care system requires a thorough approach and the development of an individual self-reliance plan based on understanding needs, risk assessment and planning the type of support. The self-reliance plan is developed before the child turns 14 and it provides the basis for the development of skills, monitoring and assessment of achievements. However, nearly two-thirds of the self-reliance plans are not prepared according to individual needs; they put emphasis on physical health, accommodation and hygiene, without adequate access to mental health, identity, emotional well-being, or on strengthening the capacity of children and young people to gradually take responsibility for decisions concerning their lives. Therefore, 75% of former beneficiaries considered they were not adequately prepared for such an important change as self-reliance.⁷⁶

The availability of data on young people leaving or who left the system of care is very modest, and systemic records and monitoring are absent, except for those who become beneficiaries of social protection services as adults. The CSOs supporting children and youths have a certain level of monitoring of their users,⁷⁷ as do the NES and CSW, which keep data on children and youths from foster families.⁷⁸

Young people leaving the social protection system are left without integrated system support and are left to themselves and their very limited social networks to secure housing, income generation and employment. Two appropriate holistic support models are presented below to avoid the risk of homelessness and risks associated with it and to support young people who leave the social protection system during their transition to independent living.

73 *Children in the social protection system in 2019*, Republic Institute for Social work, Belgrade, 2020.

74 D. Vlaović Vasiljević, V. Kovačević, Ž. Šunderić, *Analysis of the status of youth at risk with recommendations for improving their social and economic inclusion*, centre for Social Policy and NALED, Belgrade, 2017

75 N. Žegarac (ed.) *In the labyrinth of social protection* centre for Social Policy and Social Work Research, Belgrade, 2014.

76 *Ibid.*

77 A. Burgund Isakov, *Analysis of the position of young people leaving the alternative care system*, SOS children's villages Serbia, Belgrade, 2019.

78 2019 National Employment Service Work Report

5.2. Holistic Model of Inclusion Through Supported Housing for Youths Leaving the Social Protection System

63 Supported housing is a social protection service that belongs in the group of independent living support services.⁷⁹ The supported housing service for youths aged between 15 and 26 leaving some form of institutional care,⁸⁰ who are unable to start their independent lives, provide adequate and secure housing, with appropriate services of psychosocial support, for a maximum period of two years. The service aims to provide young people with a safe, stable and accessible transition to independence. The essential aspects of empowerment for independent living include housing support provision, support in developing and acquiring life and social skills, psychosocial support, and ensuring access to education and employment. Through agreement and with the support of the self-reliance advisor, the youth define the house rules and harmonize duties, needs, desires and habits with other persons that

they share the space with. The particular advantage of this model is that it provides young people with additional support from a peer group, creates and strengthens social networks, creates a sense of community and belonging, as well as expands peer support networks, which is particularly important in this age.

Beneficiaries of this service are mostly urban youth (90%) that are predominantly male (61,2%). This service is implemented in 14 LSGUs,⁸¹ mainly in larger Serbian cities (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac) and is fully provided by public sector service providers. Several organisations from the non-profit sector,⁸² registered for social protection provision activities, support young people through programmes that meet the standards of this service to a large extent, as required by the Law on Social Protection.

Service providers⁸³ can be legal persons with a secured license or in the licensing process for supported housing service provision to this target group, CSWs or other separate social care institutions (distinct legal persons) established by the local self-government unit. Service providers employ professionals (self-reliance advisor) in charge of drafting the plan and conducting the two-month preparation of the beneficiaries to be relocated to the housing unit. Working directly with the beneficiary after the adaptation period, the self-reliance advisor shall compose an individual service plan that defines the continuous support programme. The advisor monitors the implementation of the individual plan, provides assistance in household management, seeking employment, further education and other activities.⁸⁴

79 Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 24/2011)

80 Including young people who leave alternative accommodation and foster families, or have no possibility to continue living with parents or relatives.

81 M. Matković, M. Stronjaković, *Mapping Social Care Services and Material Support within the Mandate of Local Governments in the Republic of Serbia*, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, Belgrade, 2020.

82 SOS children's village Foundation, NGO Centar Zvezda

83 A social protection service provider is a licensed organisation basing its work on fulfilling national quality standards and carrying a permit from the competent Ministry for the provision of a particular service.

84 The service provider provides a minimum of one self-service advisor to 15 users.

5.2.1. Housing solution

Supported housing is most often provided in a multi-family residential building⁸⁵ less often in a family house from the publicly owned housing stock or purchased on the market with possible adaptation, rehabilitation or reconstruction in accordance with standards for this service. The location, facility and residential space must fulfil minimum structural and functional standards:⁸⁶

- ▶ the location of the building should be in a residential area and near public transport
- ▶ the building should be connected to the basic infrastructure (electricity and telephone, potable water supply and sewerage); thermal insulation, sound- and water proofing must comply with all technical standards, with an adequate heating system provided
- ▶ application of accessibility regulations for users who have difficulty moving or moving with the wheelchair is mandatory
- ▶ the minimum surface area of the residential space is 12 m² per beneficiary, and the housing unit structure should ensure the performance of basic living functions: accommodation, food, living room, and beneficiaries' hygiene maintenance
- ▶ a maximum of six users can be accommodated in one flat and no more than two persons in one room
- ▶ in the construction of a new building or an adaptation of the existing flat for service provision, prior consultation with receiving community and/or building residents is recommended for the purpose of adequately preparing the local community and acceptance of new tenants

85 It is possible that two or three apartments are used in one building to organise this service.

86 Rulebook on closer conditions and standards for the provision of social protection services (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 42/2013, 89/2018 and 73/2019)

5.2.2. Mandatory complementary active inclusion measures

- 65 | Support for active inclusion should include measures for access to health and social care services, registration with the NES, as well as measures to raise capacities and employability, gain skills for independent living, employment measures and overcoming barriers to social inclusion, with a mandatory individualized approach and mentoring support in all these processes. In addition to ensuring access to the rights and services listed above, special attention should be paid to professional support in the following areas during the course of supported housing:
- ▶ increasing employability through the maximum use of NES services (professional orientation and counselling, training for active job seeking and other available active employment policy measures, job search clubs), providing personalized support to formal and informal education in line with the needs of the local labour market and the beneficiaries capacities and affinities
 - ▶ employment - through employment mediation with support measures for employers and new employees in the initial employment periods
 - ▶ enhancing independent living skills in terms of household maintenance and food preparation, as well as financial management
 - ▶ building social and communication skills
 - ▶ counselling and therapeutic services as needed

The most in-demand jobs in the Serbian labour market are drivers for B, C, D and E categories; welders; construction industry crafts; operators in many industries, including CNC operators; food manufacturing professions (bakers, cooks, pizza masters, confectioners), construction machinery operators, IT industry professions, but locally it can be butchers, hairdressers etc.

5.2.3. Best practice examples

House of Opportunity for young people in Belgrade, Kragujevac and Niš, Centar Zvezda⁸⁷

A programme called the 'House of Opportunity' provides support to young people gaining independence in the form of housing and additional support for inclusion in society.

Service Provider

- ▶ Centar Zvezda, currently in the licensing process for the supported housing service

Funding

- ▶ project-based funding of the Bulgarian Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion as part of the "House of Opportunity" network

Housing solution

- ▶ renting flats from private persons who are paid in advance for a half-year period

Programme characteristics

- ▶ beneficiaries can be in the programme for longer than two years (until self-reliant)
- ▶ while in the program, beneficiaries can be employed and generate income, allowing and encouraging their becoming self-reliant
- ▶ beneficiaries participate in the ongoing maintenance of the flats and they also participate in the costs of living (utilities, food, hygiene products, etc.) according to their earnings and income
- ▶ job skills training, employment and income generation in the form of social entrepreneurship (e.g. craft workshops manufacturing New Year's decorations, candles etc.) has been organised
- ▶ users are provided with individual professional psycho-social support

67 | **“Youth Community” programme of semi-independent living in Kraljevo - SOS Children’s Village**

The “Youth Community” programme is intended for young people from SOS children’s village after they turn 15. The programme recognizes the need for services intended for young people in transition towards self-reliance and enables support during education and the acquisition of life skills.

Service Provider

- ▶ “SOS Children’s Village” foundation Serbia

Funding

- ▶ partially from the founder’s funds, i.e. The SOS children’s villages international organisation, grants from public funds, donations from corporations, small and medium enterprises, individuals and organisations

Housing solution

- ▶ property of the SOS Children’s Village Foundation, Serbia

Programme characteristics

- ▶ providing social support, financial allowance and support for job skills training, connecting with potential employers and employment
- ▶ providing coaching support by companies developing a system of corporate social responsibility (organising courses of computer work, foreign languages, CV writing, driving tests, etc.), as well as hiring young people who already have adequate qualifications
- ▶ providing individual professional psycho-social support

“Espai Cabestany” - supporting youths leaving the social protection system, Spain⁸⁸

The programme supports youths older than 18 leaving the social protection system. Their support includes: housing, training, financial support and legal assistance, labour market integration and other active inclusion measures in line with individual needs, with the aim of developing youth independence during their transition to independent living in the community. Support is organised in four cities: Barcelona, Girona, Tarragona and Lleida, and is provided by the Regional Ministry through its local offices. The programme can also be implemented by other social protection service providers, mainly from the non-profit sector, with the obligation to implement all aspects of the program.

Project implementer

- ▶ Regional Ministry of Social Welfare and Families, Catalonia Directorate general for child and adolescent care, Spain

Funding

- ▶ the programme is funded through the budget of the Regional Ministry for Social Welfare and Families, with possible financial participation of other service providers

Housing solution

- ▶ youths older than 18 get a fully furnished flat for temporary use, for a period up to three years (until the age of 21). Up to four young people live together in one flat, each with a room of their own. Young people pay subsidized rent and utility costs, with the possibility of receiving subsidies depending on their income.

⁸⁸ Espai Cabest - information about the project

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Programme characteristics

- ▶ the obligation of users to actively participate in the development and implementation of their own self-reliance plan
- ▶ providing continuous support from “educators” and social pedagogues who give beneficiaries advice on education and social skills development, and develop and monitor the implementation of the individual self-employment plan in cooperation with the youths
- ▶ housing support is always connected to work engagement and employment programmes; the ‘Via laboural’ programme (social enterprise) was established and included all housing support beneficiaries with the aim of improving their employability; beneficiaries are supported in access to the labour market, in terms of advice and training provision, apprenticeships and support in reaching out to potential employers
- ▶ providing additional financial support to beneficiaries who are involved in basic programmes and already generate certain income; support is also provided to youths who wish to attend additional training programs to progressively fulfil their individual self-reliance plan, enabling them to achieve a higher level of professional qualifications and social skills to reach permanent and sustainable employment

5.3. Holistic Model of Inclusion Through Acquiring Ownership Rights over a Flat or a Family House by way of Allocation Without Compensation

Housing support⁸⁹ through acquisition of property rights over a flat or family house with a single flat by way of allocation without compensation provides a long-term housing solution for youths leaving the social protection system. Houses and flats acquired in this way typically require reconstruction/adaptation, so including a fund for these purposes in the support package is always advisable. The eligibility precondition for housing support is that a young person is without a flat or without adequate housing, and receiving income not exceeding 1.2 average income without taxes and contributions in the LSGU.

Youths leaving care who started their own families or civil partnerships can also be beneficiaries.⁹⁰ Some local self-government units, provincial and national authorities are implementing grants to young married couples for real estate purchase (usually a rural house with a garden).⁹¹ Youths leaving the social protection system were identified in national strategy papers as a particularly vulnerable group among beneficiaries of this type of housing support.⁹² Moreover, it is an option (alongside renting) that youths see as the most desirable way to resolve their housing issue after leaving care.⁹³

In addition to providing housing support, sustainable holistic inclusion models also provide compulsory support for access to social and health care rights, support for education, raising employability and employment, overcoming obstacles to any type of active inclusion, as well as support through the provision of basic home appliances and furniture for an owned apartment or house.

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⁸⁹ Acquisition of property rights in the flat and family house by way of allocation without compensation is one of the five types of housing support provided for in the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law) Art. 99-100.

⁹⁰ If the beneficiary has started a family or civil partnership, the income limit shall be increased depending on the number of members of the household. The law does not define the lower limit for the income of beneficiaries or households, so this form of housing support is also available to those with the lowest income.

⁹¹ News about the allocation of rural houses to married couples, the Provincial Gender Equality Institute, Novi Sad, 2019.

⁹² National Youth Strategy for the period between 2015 and 2025 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 22/2015)

⁹³ M. Nijemčević-Popovski, J. Tanasijević, N. Tanasković, *Peer research on leaving alternative care*, SOS Children's Villages Serbia, Belgrade, 2020.

5.3.1. Housing solution

⁷¹ The housing solution includes the allocation of a family house with one housing unit, allocation of construction and other materials and equipment, as well as provision of professional and technical assistance for work execution on the reconstruction or adaptation of the acquired property. To be assigned to users, a flat or family house:

- ▶ should meet the conditions of housing unit adequacy⁹⁴ in terms of structure and the ratio between surface area and number of household members, existence of basic fittings, structural safety and security, weatherproofing and compliance with basic housing sanitation conditions
- ▶ the property should be registered in the Real Estate Cadastre; there must be no outstanding property law issues or any liability on said property (mortgage or other form of liability); the purchase is finalized after checking the property law status and physical condition of the plot and the building
- ▶ the beneficiary is provided with additional support in the allocation of construction materials for repair and/or reconstruction and/or accessibility for beneficiaries who have difficulty moving and/or an improvement of the house's energy characteristics (construction, joinery, insulation, fittings etc.) as well as professional technical assistance for material installation
- ▶ the flat or family house acquired through allocation cannot be sold ten years from the day of acquisition of the right of ownership over said property; the registration of the annotation prohibiting any such sale is made in the real estate register

5.3.2. Обавезне комплементарне мере активне инклузије

Since young people leaving the social care system start living on their own and independently for the first time, they most often completely lack prior resources and the ability to acquire them within a short time. In order for them to start a functioning independent life with the allocation of a flat or family house, mandatory support is recommended also by the allocation of basic home appliances and furniture.

Support for active inclusion should include measures for access to health and social care services, registration with the NES, as well as measures to raise capacities and employability, gain skills for independent living, employment measures and overcoming barriers to social inclusion, with a mandatory individualized approach and mentoring support in all these processes. As the beneficiaries of this housing model can be young people with newly formed families and children, active inclusion measures must include support for all family members. In accordance with the described institutional framework at the local level and roles and responsibilities of the CSW and NES, these beneficiaries should be provided with maximum access to and support of available services. All active inclusion measures described in the previous model (pg.70), referring to the same group of supported youths, are valid and applicable in this holistic model as well.

⁷² Additional support in terms of income generation and employment can in this case, if the allocation of family houses is in question, be sought in agricultural production even for own needs, with support for individual participatory planning, training, necessary machines, tools, equipment and agricultural materials, with mandatory mentoring support and monitoring in the initial period of implementation.

5.3.3. Best practice example

⁷³ Being that young people leaving the social protection system have not previously been recognized as beneficiaries of housing support in the form of allocating ownership of a flat or house without compensation, and that other programmes implemented so far that targeted young couples with or without children did not incorporate elements of the holistic approach, the housing support model (without accompanying measures of active inclusion) intended for young married couples, that would also be adequate for young people leaving the social protection system is presented below, considering that they were identified by the National Youth Strategy (2015-2025) as beneficiaries of this kind of support.⁹⁵

Rural Households for Youths in Vojvodina⁹⁶

The AP Vojvodina Gender Equality Institute organises a programme for young married couples of purchasing rural houses with estates located on the territory of Vojvodina and allocation of property rights without compensation.

Project implementer

- ▶ The AP Vojvodina Gender Equality Institute

Funding

- ▶ The AP Vojvodina Gender Equality Institute from the provincial budget. The beneficiaries are granted funds in the amount of a million Dinars for the purchase of a rural house with an estate, while the value of the property proposed for purchase cannot exceed two million Dinars.

Housing solution

- ▶ Beneficiaries find properties, which must be safe and fit for human habitation, on their own
- ▶ Programme specificity
- ▶ the programme also aims to increase the number of women owners of real estate, so ownership of the house and the estate is equally registered to both spouses or members of a civil partnership
- ▶ the possibility for users to engage in agricultural production on the estate for their own needs or additional income purposes

5.4. Challenges and Recommendations

- ▶ limited availability of the supported housing service with a limited number of licensed service providers
 - piloting intersectoral services of this type, support to CSOs in fulfilling the licensing requirements, ensuring ongoing budget funding for these holistic services
- ▶ the legally limited period of supported housing service provision as well as the limited possibility of employment during service life, which is often not enough for full independence
 - intensifying all measures to support active inclusion of young people, including all relevant stakeholders, in order to prepare young people for independent living as much as possible
- ▶ regular coverage of municipal services and maintenance costs for obtaining rights of ownership over property without compensation from the beneficiary
 - enabling access to social protection services in accordance with the fulfilment of support criteria, support for access to subsidized utilities payments in accordance with local regulations, application of a full support package to raise employability and employment, as well as monitoring and facilitating mentoring support in adjusting and finding long-term solutions for economic independence

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⁹⁵ National Youth Strategy for the period between 2015 and 2025 (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 22/2015)

⁹⁶ Incentive Programmes, the AP Vojvodina Gender Equality Institute

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- ▶ incomplete, untimely and unadjusted individual self-reliance plans that are not in line with the needs of the youths and community resources
 - cooperation with institutions and families of previous accommodation and care with full and active participation of the youths, and coordination with the local community potentials
- ▶ lack of independent living skills of the youth leaving the social protection system
 - mandatory support provision through practical skills development training for independent living, starting with financial management up to household management and food preparation

- ▶ multiple vulnerability of the beneficiaries (youth, leaving the social protection system, Roma, girls, persons with disabilities) with a high degree of trauma and stigmatization from the previous period
 - requires specific sensitive and complex holistic approaches to address all these issues, in order to overcome specific challenges and achieve a long-term, sustainable solution
 - requires strengthening the “soft” socialization skills, conflict management and effective communication, in order to achieve successful work and social inclusion; hence, supporting the strengthening of these skills, with individual psycho-social support, is recommended as part of the overall support package for active inclusion
 - targeting all key stakeholders, including the media, with activities of information, education, awareness raising and advocacy
- ▶ predominant involvement of mostly young men in similar support models so far, regardless of the multiple vulnerability of girls
 - consistent implementation of gender equality principles at all stages of planning and implementation with equal inclusion of girls

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**6. MODEL SUITABLE FOR
DIFFERENT VULNERABLE
GROUPS: SOCIAL HOUSING
IN A SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENT**

Social housing a supportive environment is a form of housing service⁹⁷ organised as a long-term housing solution, through the provision of publicly owned flats for use under subsidized conditions, to the most vulnerable persons and members of their families, while supporting residents in the form of “host families” and providing other measures of active inclusion.⁹⁸ The host family is engaged and recruited from the rank of tenants themselves, with reputation and authority among the tenants and with capacities in the performance of numerous and diverse tasks.

The current National Social Housing Strategy recognizes social housing in a supportive environment as the form of housing support that is adequate and affordable for a multiply vulnerable target group. In the practice of implementing this housing model throughout Serbia to-date, beneficiaries were refugees and displaced persons and to a lesser extent socially vulnerable local population, most commonly the Roma. For example, the City of Belgrade listed the following among the beneficiaries of social housing in a supportive environment in a decision: persons over 65 years of age, children and persons with disabilities and children with disabilities in development and their families; single parents; victims of domestic violence.

The model of support through social housing in a supportive environment is considered to be the most suitable for the most vulnerable users among all target groups considered in this manual: the Roma, women victims of domestic violence, persons with disabilities and youth leaving the social protection system. The key aspects of the benefit of this support model for the most vulnerable user groups are based on the following elements:

- ▶ functioning living space compliant with standards with subsidized costs of rent and utilities is suitable for families with the lowest income
- ▶ access to social protection, health, education and employment services provided in accordance with all norms for the location of social housing in a supportive environment
- ▶ constantly available support from the host family
- ▶ community support

In addition to aspects of housing support listed above and in line with the multiple vulnerability of users, systematic active inclusion measures of maximum intensity are required.

6.1. Housing Solution

The housing solution can be a multi-family housing building or a group of houses (stand-alone, detached or row houses) built on publicly owned land. The housing solution has the following elements and conditions:

- ▶ Planning and designing is conducted pursuant to the Rulebook on conditions and norms for the planning and design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes.⁹⁹
- ▶ the location should: have the possibility to be connected to the infrastructure grid; be in the vicinity of existing housing and in the vicinity of public transport, public and commercial services (primary schools, child- and health care institutions, supply centres) and green areas; be in the vicinity of existing residential complexes and other compatible functions to prevent spatial segregation; be on terrain that is safe for construction, removed from pollution sources and other negative impacts¹⁰⁰
- ▶ prior consultation with the receiving community is required, in order to adequately prepare the local community and to accept new tenants¹⁰¹
- ▶ it should meet the conditions of housing unit adequacy¹⁰² in terms of structure, ratio between surface area and number of household members, existence of basic fittings, structural safety and security, weatherproofing and compliance with basic housing sanitation conditions
- ▶ LSGUs own the property and it cannot be alienated from public ownership
- ▶ tenants use the flats on the basis of a contract concluded for a period of five years, with the possibility of extension under the same conditions and with the same term, at the tenant’s written request
- ▶ the host family, as a family selected among residents with a certain reputation and capacity, additionally supports the tenants and co-ordinates adherence to the house rules, holds and organises activities in common premises and the immediate vicinity, communicates with external key stakeholders, including public utility companies, CSWs, police and others if needed. The host family is also individually supporting the tenants in all issues of their interest, but also represents a key generator of developing good neighbourly relations and community cohesion

⁹⁷ The Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of the RS 24/2011), as well as the Rulebook on the contents and manner of the technical inspection of structures ... (Official Gazette of the RS No. 27/2015, 29/2016 and 78/2019) do not explicitly mention social housing in a supportive environment in any social protection group. Local self-government units implement it as other types of accommodation within accommodation services, but also within the group of services supporting independent living or in the framework of innovative services.

⁹⁸ Social housing in a supportive environment - description, Housing centre

⁹⁹ Rulebook on conditions and norms for the planning and design of residential buildings and flats in housing support programmes. (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 76/2017)

¹⁰⁰ For additional criteria to determine the appropriate location to build housing projects in the framework of housing support, see the publication Criteria for Evaluation of Social Housing Locations, created within the project “Livelihood Enhancement for the most Vulnerable Roma Families in Belgrade - Let’s Build a Home Together” funded by the EU and implemented by UNOPS.

¹⁰¹ Methodology for Host Community Consultations, UNOPS, Belgrade

¹⁰² Housing unit adequacy was defined in the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 104/2016 and 9/2020 - oth. law.), Article 90.

6.2. Mandatory Complementary Active Inclusion Measures

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In order to achieve the effects in the inclusion of these most vulnerable families, support measures must be planned and implemented for each family member at family level, as well as the tenants' community, with a multi-sectoral approach and simultaneous implementation of both short- and long-term measures. All inclusion measures listed in previous chapters for all individual target groups are relevant to and applicable in this holistic model as well. It is particularly recommended to provide support:

- ▶ in terms of basic furniture and home appliances
- ▶ in access to rights and exercise of social protection rights, including financial ones (custodial care benefits, increased allowance for custodial care, assistance for job skills training and financial social assistance) and intangible benefits (personal assistants, the use of day care centres, clubs, respite centres)
- ▶ access to health care services: access to general health care services and access to disability-related health care services without discrimination; access and exercise of rights to medical aids and rehabilitation; education and professional development of health workers to prevent discrimination; promoting alternative forms of medical rehabilitation as an alternative to costly spa treatment by forming mobile teams for in-house medical rehabilitation; promoting healthy lifestyles and recreation of persons with disabilities in local communities

- ▶ enrolment of children in preschool education, as well as support for families with the aim of enrolling children in the compulsory preschool programme and compulsory education, as well as preventing dropout from education, especially of girls (providing financial and programme support, counselling etc.); support for educational institutions in overcoming obstacles to inclusive education (engagement of pedagogical assistants, personal escorts for children with intellectual and physical disabilities, etc.)

- ▶ support for youth and adults in initiating or continuing formal and informal education through retraining and/or additional training to build and raise employability capacities through internships, apprenticeships, professional training, career guidance and counselling, training for active job seeking as well as informal education in line with the local labour market potential, in accordance with beneficiaries' previous education and preferences; motivation for active job seeking and support in registering as unemployed with the NES
- ▶ employment mediation and support to participating in active employment policy measures

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Employment support measures should be short-term, long-term and appropriate for individuals and local labour market potentials.

6.3. Best practice examples

83 | There have been no examples in Serbia so far that have taken a holistic approach to addressing the housing problems of various vulnerable groups while ensuring active inclusion measures, so that users can get the opportunity to achieve equal involvement in the local community. Furthermore, supported housing models including various target groups and implemented in EU countries were listed as an example of good practice.

“Living Together at 11, New Street”, Nowe, Poland¹⁰³

The project titled “Living Together at 11, New Street” was implemented in the city of Nowe in northern Poland. The goal of this initiative was to create a diverse and supportive neighbourhood community that co-operates, makes decisions together, solves problems and creates a safe living space. The tenants, 9 families with 38 members, are persons with disabilities, multi-member households and former homeless people.

Project implementer

- ▶ Foundation for activation and Integration, City of Nowe, Poland

Funding

- ▶ project-based funding from the EU and Nowe City funds

Housing solution

- ▶ included the reconstruction of the former industrial building and adaptation of space, with the formation of nine housing units and a common yard. The immediate vicinity, the building, and individual flats are adapted for persons with physical disabilities.

Programme characteristics

- ▶ future tenants of the building were involved in the initial design stage of the housing solution; the flats were designed in line with their needs and expectations
- ▶ in the course of the reconstruction process, future tenants were provided with access to a wide range of individualized support (including work engagement, vocational training, apprenticeships, coaching and training, family support and psycho-social support), which continued after the move-in, in line with the tenants’ individual needs

- ▶ key aspects of the programme were tenants working together and cooperating: tenants cooperated with each other, supported each other as a community, solved everyday problems together, organise joint yard work activities, etc.

- ▶ The Activation and Integration Foundation provides mediation services in cooperation with local self-government unit and in the event of disputes between tenants, as well as mediation between tenants and other institutions to exercise rights and services

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“Housing for Young Mothers and Seniors”, Houten, the Netherlands¹⁰⁴

This innovative support model for two groups with completely different needs was implemented in the town of Houten in the Netherlands under the name “Housing for Young Mothers and Seniors”. It is a social housing project where young mothers live together with children and older people. It was designed in such a way that seniors (“coaches”) would provide mentoring support to young mothers and girls who were unable to live with their families and who needed adequate housing and a variety of additional supports for independent living. Young people also supported seniors in jobs that professional service providers were unable to provide (going out for a walk, shopping for groceries and food preparation, etc.).

Project implementers

- ▶ A non-profit public housing agency (Habion) specialized in providing housing and housing support for seniors and that also owns flats, and a non-profit organisation (Stichting Timon) that supports young people

Housing solution

- ▶ The housing agency built a building with 17 flats, of which 4 were leased to seniors, and 13 apartments were leased to the Stichting Timon organisation to house young mothers and girls. The building is located in the urban core, close to various services including schools, day care centre, health and social services

Funding

- ▶ The non-profit housing agency (Habion) financed the housing unit construction, and Stichting Timon funded the organisation of support and ‘soft’ measure

103 Fundacja Aktywności i Ingerencji

104 Wonen voor ouderen - Habion housing agency, Houten, the Netherlands

Programme characteristics

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- ▶ the role of seniors as “coaches” is to be at their disposal as “good neighbours” and help young people in their daily needs (e.g. babysitting), and to help them build social networks. Seniors are considered suitable for the role of “coach” because they have time and the necessary life experience to help young women with useful advice.
 - ▶ contact with young mothers and their children can give additional meaning to the seniors’ lives, filling the void they can encounter in later stages of life, especially after retirement
 - ▶ some of the support measures include organising joint activities, such as weekly joint lunches, organising day trips and other activities where younger and older people can get to know each other better and hone their social skills
 - ▶ the flats for seniors are on the ground floor, each flat has a garden, while the flats for the youths are on the first and second floors. The building also has a large common area, consulting rooms and a common roof terrace. The location of the building, the layout of flats and the entire area create an environment where young women can safely develop the independent living skills and where older people can live comfortably
 - ▶ the project is not only a way to solve housing problems for the seniors and the youths, but also to ensure a mutually supportive environment in line with the tenants’ individual needs

6.4. Challenges and Recommendations

- ▶ inadequately planned locations for the construction of social housing in a supportive environment
 - good planning and management, application of criteria and methodology for the selection of an adequate location, including the option to choose between several locations in order to select the most favourable one for the specific housing project; important information is available in the publication “Criteria for the Evaluation of Social Housing Locations”¹⁰⁵
 - ▶ receiving community resistance to accept vulnerable groups for new neighbours, often caused by prejudice, open discrimination, but also existing problems in the local community (lack of certain services and public content)
 - implementation of various mechanisms and instruments to provide additional public content that will benefit the entire local community
 - risk assessment when choosing the most favourable location during the planning and location selection stages
 - the implementation of consultation with the recipient community during the preparation stage for their adequate preparation and acceptance of new tenants; important information provided in the publication “Methodology for Host Community Consultations”¹⁰⁶
 - ▶ practical spatial segregation of individual communities is frequent in this housing support model
 - inclusion of a number of different target groups with planning for their complementary support roles, as in the above best practice examples
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¹⁰⁵ *Criteria for the Evaluation of Social Housing Locations*, UNOPS, Belgrade, 2013.

¹⁰⁶ *Methodology for Host Community Consultations*, UNOPS, Belgrade



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7. CONCLUSION

Improving the position of multiple vulnerable and excluded groups in the Republic of Serbia requires planning and implementation of all support measures that are in line with ratified international standards and the legislative and institutional framework of the Republic of Serbia. This is why the first part of this study focuses on analysing the legal, policy and institutional frameworks for housing and active inclusion, with special consideration of four target groups.

The integrated approach to solving multidimensional challenges that vulnerable groups are facing was presented through holistic inclusion models. Sustainability of solutions, providing vulnerable group members with a permanent way out of the social protection system, can be achieved exclusively through comprehensive addressing of tightly interconnected issues of housing, education, employment, health and social care. In-depth understanding of the needs of the beneficiaries for whom the support measures are intended represents the precondition for their successful planning and implementation; hence, their active participation and an intensive intersectoral cooperation between all relevant stakeholders is required throughout the process.

Best practice examples from the Republic of Serbia presented in this Study point to the stakeholders' readiness to step away from the usual, traditional forms of support, to face numerous challenges and set up innovative services through which vulnerable groups will achieve inclusion and independence. Finally, best practice examples from the European Union were presented with the idea to serve as inspiration and motivate readers to additionally explore numerous existing support programmes for vulnerable groups that can be customized to fit the local context, so we can contribute to creating a society of equal opportunities for all.

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