

Research Article

Current Typology of Social Services in Bulgaria

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Abstract

This article makes a systematization of current typology of social services in nowadays Bulgaria, because new Social Services Act entered into force in 2020 and started a reform in the social sphere in the country. The new legislation regulates social services with an innovative concept that interprets them as support activities that can be organized and structured according to the needs of the population. This research was done with a view to clarifying certain aspects in the concept of the new legislation, which would allow it to be interpreted theoretically correctly and, accordingly, to be fully applied in practice. The article offers an analysis of the typology of social services in Bulgaria, which is based on five normative acts, as well as the theory of social work. Various classification criteria format this typology – accessibility, functions, age of users, main groups of activities, term and environment of social service providing. Based on the adopted profiling criteria, the article arranges and reviews the possible types of social services in modern Bulgaria: generally accessible and specialized; preventive, supportive and restorative; for children and for adults; for children and adults with disabilities; for adults in a crisis situation; for information and counseling; community work; therapy and rehabilitation; day care; residential care; assistant support; hourly, half-day, full-day, 24/7; services in a home environment, services in a specialized environment and services that are provided mobile etc. A special place in the group of residential services is occupied by integrated health and social services for residential care, which build their internal own typology according to the type of persons for whom they are intended. The typology of social services made in this article is a kind of theoretical result of the analysis both of sources with scientific literature and of Bulgarian innovative legislation in the social sphere.

Keywords

Social Services, Social Work, Criteria, Types of Social Services

1. Introduction and Circumstances

The legislation currently in force in Bulgaria regulates a significant part of social work through the Social Services Act (SSA), which entered into force on July 1, 2020. With the adoption of this new document in its spirit, a reform in the social sphere was actually carried out in the country. The new law regulates social services with an innovative concept that interprets them as support activities that can be organized and structured according to the needs of the population.

Soon after, two other documents in the field of social services were adopted in the country – Regulations for the Implementation of the Social Assistance Act¹ and Ordinance on the quality of social services².

The legal definition states that “social services are activities to support individuals for: 1. prevention and/or overcoming social exclusion; 2. realization of rights; 3. improving the quality of life”³. Today, in the social sphere, social services in

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the community are primarily relied upon as a basis for solving problems such as social inclusion, the fight against poverty and the integration of vulnerable groups in society. As Genov says, "helping in the community"... means "supporting difference", and hence in a more general aspect – individuality, as an emanation of the creative beginning" [8].

The matter of social services was also included in the texts of the old, already repealed part of other law – old Social Assistance Act⁴. At that time, there were simplified criteria for the classification of the provision of social services. They were systematized into three main groups [10], as follows: according to 1. the way (domestic, administrative and socio-communicative), 2. the duration (short-term and long-term) and 3. the place (in a family environment and in institutions). Also, the definitions of the 15-16 social services regulated at the time were provided in the outdated Regulations for the implementation of the Social Assistance Act⁵.

Today, these texts have been repealed and in 2019 the new Social Services Act in Bulgaria was adopted and entered into force in 2020.

In the development of social services, sometimes "theory must go through a process of naturalization in order to adapt to social work practice" [11]. At other times, "the theory of social work is a philosophy that is based on certain values according to which human behavior is explained" [3].

At other times, legislation precedes the development of relations in some communities and peoples and supports the development of theory – such is the case with the Social Services Act. The document not only creates a new regulation in its concept, but also details its components, such as planning, financing, partnership, commissioning, quality, efficiency, control, monitoring, etc., at a theoretical level. Among them is the problem of typing of social services.

It is obvious that in the current legislation in Bulgaria the excessive typology of social services is carried out, and in a legal way.

Placing emphasis on too many details at this stage does not allow topics such as "Social Work in an unjust society" [9] or "Multicultural Counseling" [12] to be raised and resolved in the social sphere in Bulgaria. Interesting to discuss from the perspective of social services are problems such as "Human Communication" [2] or "Group Counselling" [1], nor "Helping Process" [4] or "Community Development" [14]. Probably, it is through the prism of social work that some of these topics can provide solutions that are beneficial to Bulgarian society.

Based on the existing legal regulation, a systematization of the existing types of social services in Bulgaria can be made, which is the subject of research in this publication.

This article offers an analysis of the typology of social services in Bulgaria, which is based on several classification criteria – depending on accessibility, function, age of users, main groups of activities, term and environment for providing social services, etc.

Today, the purpose of differentiating social services is not

to list and define them, but to provide opportunities for creating such social services that vulnerable people really need. And this is the great contribution of the new concept of the newly adopted law – Social Services Act.

2. Criteria and Types of Social Services

The dynamics of development of social services in Bulgaria, which is the subject of research in this article, refers to the last 4-5 years. Its explanation is necessary to understand the need to clarify the content of the functions of social services in a country like Bulgaria.

2.1. Criterion 1: Accessibility

According to the first classification criterion, depending on accessibility, social services are divided into two large groups – generally accessible and specialized⁶. (Table 1).

In the group of generally available social services, services such as "informing, counseling and training for the realization of social rights and for developing skills, which are provided for a period of no longer than two months" are indicated in the first place. In second place, the possibilities of "mobile preventive community work" are included in the group of generally available social services⁷.

The second group of specialized social services is formed by the services that are provided when "the occurrence of a certain risk to the life, health, quality of life or the development of the person" or when "the need to satisfy a specific need of a certain group of persons"⁸.

2.2. Criterion 2: Function

According to the second classification criterion (Table 1), depending on their function, social services are distinguished in the Social Services Act as preventive, supportive and restorative⁹.

The SSA with definitive norms determines what the content of each of these three types of groups is. Thus, it is specified that "social services are preventive, which are provided to all persons or to a certain group of persons without a previously identified specific risk"¹⁰.

Social prevention has an extremely large scope for development in every society, and for sustainable societies it is a sought-after social task. By the means of prevention, communities can protect themselves from much more harmful dangers to society that occur as a result of neglect, lack of management and carelessness. The main tools for implementing prevention are quality social services and responsible social management. In this sense Genov says, this includes the fact that "social service housing in the community has 'protected' workshops, studios, test fields, gyms and sites" [7], which create options for livelihood, economic security, employment and places to work, as well as opportunities for mental relaxation through work, contact with nature, various

activities, etc.

Accordingly, the second group is the supporting social services “which are provided as a result of an identified risk or to satisfy a specific need”¹¹.

The many activities inherent in community support centers or family-type accommodation centers can be mentioned here.

And “social services that offer highly specialized support for persons with specific needs are restorative”¹².

It is often stated that “people with disabilities are about 10% of the EU population” [15]. In this context, Genov emphasizes that this circumstance “makes the problem socially significant and one of its solutions is the construction of transitional housing, alms housing and monitored housing” [5].

2.3. Criterion 3: Age, Specific Needs, Profile of the Users and Consumers

The next classification criterion profiles the social services depending on the age of the users (Table 1). This is how social services can be defined for children and for adults¹³.

This classification criterion also refers to the distinction of users depending on their specific needs. As a result of this profiling, social services may be for all children, but may also be specifically for children at risk within the meaning of the Child Protection Act¹⁴. According to this law such a child can be: 1. “whose parents are deceased, unknown”; 2. “who has become a victim of abuse, violence, exploitation...”; 3. “for which there is a danger of damage to his... development”; 4. “who suffers from disabilities” and 5. “... who dropped out of school”¹⁵.

According to the profile of the users, social services can also be intended for “children and adults with disabilities”, for “adults in a crisis situation or with the need to overcome the consequences of such a situation”, as well as for “elderly people of a working age”, and also for “persons who provide care for adults”¹⁶.

The last group is those “members of the family or household who take care of a person with a permanent disability or a person of an over-working age who is unable to take care of themselves, and for this they do not receive remuneration or any other form of financial support”¹⁷.

SSA explicitly specifies in Art. 14, para. 3, that “in the provision of social services, activities are also carried out to support the families and relatives of the users”¹⁸.

Sometimes they are so exhausted by the constant care they take that they themselves need not just mental support, but one that literally allows them to recover physically. As a sign of understanding, the Bulgarian people have not accidentally created the proverb “whether you are sick lying down, or you are sick caring” with the context that both sides are equally tortured and exhausted in such a situation.

From the point of view of the consumers (Table 1), the Social Security Act further specifies that social services may be for “parents, adoptive parents, persons caring for children,

candidates for adoptive parents and candidates for foster families”¹⁹.

2.4. Criterion 4: Main Groups of Activities

Another classification criterion profiles social services depending on the main groups of activities, on the basis of which the following types of social services are distinguished: 1. information and counseling; 2. advocacy and mediation; 3. community work; 4. therapy and rehabilitation; 5. training to acquire skills; 6. support for acquiring labor skills; 7. day care; 8. residential care; 9. provision of shelter; 10. assistant support²⁰.

The Ordinance on the quality of social services defines in detail the quality standards of each of these services, as well as criteria for their implementation. The Ordinance provides detailed annexes (Annex 1-24 therein) with a specific listing of indicators and sources of information²¹.

Regarding assistant support, it is specified by the legislator that it “is provided depending on the personal needs of the persons, and is not limited only to their home environment”²².

Residential care issues are problems of this criterion too, but they are addressed in 2.7. in this article.

2.5. Criterion 5: Duration of the Use of Social Services

SSA introduces a classification criterion related to the duration of the use of social services (Table 1), determining that the term for the provision of social services is determined depending on the individual assessment of the person’s support needs and the results for the user that are aimed to be achieved²³.

The repealed norms of the old Social Assistance Act had a different decision regarding the validity period of social services – previously the time limit was 3 months, and a distinction was made between short-term social services up to 3 months and long-term social services over 3 months²⁴.

The new SSA currently in force defines in art. 16, paragraph 2, that the use of social services may be: short-term – for a period of up to six months; medium term – for a period of up to one year; long-term – for a period of one to three years²⁵.

The legislator has taken the more mature decision regarding the duration of the social services, because for the needy persons, they are usually not easy to recover, for a period of at least half a year. In this sense, the legal solution is now significantly more realistic and useful as a social effect.

2.6. Criterion 6: Time Factor

The time factor profiles social services and, depending on the way of use, they can also be: “1. hourly; 2. half-day; 3. full-day; and 4. 24/7”²⁶.

2.7. Criterion 7: Environment for Providing Social Services

A separate classification criterion of the current law is the environment for providing social services (Table 1). On this basis, the following social services are distinguished: “1. services in a home environment, 2. services in a specialized environment and 3. services that are provided mobile”²⁷.

From the point of view of the environment for providing social services, a special place in the typology of social services is occupied by residential care.

It is specified that “residential care is provided only in a specialized environment”²⁸. The legislator has provided a definition of the concept of “residential care” – it is “an activity to provide accommodation for children, young people up to the age of 25, persons with permanent disabilities and persons over working age and depending on individual needs – to provide 24-hour care to meet the daily needs and developmental needs of individuals or to provide support for leading an independent lifestyle”²⁹.

The interpretation of Genov about living together in residential care is really original, because the author points out that “the resident person and home are independent of the credit of trust given by appointed officials” [6].

A special place in this group is also occupied by integrated health and social services for residential care, which build their own typology according to the type of persons for whom they are intended (Table 1). They are distinguished on the one hand – for children and young people, respectively without disabilities and with permanent disabilities, differentiated according to the type of disability, and on the other hand – for adults with mental disorders, with intellectual disabilities, with physical disabilities, with dementia and with sensory impairments.

Social Services Act also specifies the circumstances under which mobile provision of all social services is possible – the requirement is that their application complies with quality standards (Table 1).

Social services information and counseling, advocacy and mediation, community work, therapy and rehabilitation and skills training “can be provided mobile and in medical facilities, institutions in the preschool and school education system; nursery; places to support children with illegal behavior; and centers for persons seeking and/or granted international pro-

tection”³⁰.

2.8. Criterion 8: Organization of the Provision of Social Services

According to the organization of the provision, social services are profiled depending on: 1. the age of the users; 2. the specific needs of users; and 3. the way of managing the service³¹.

The very organization of the provision of social services is determined by the service provider in accordance with the standards for their quality³².

2.9. Criterion 9: Way of Management

Typing of social services can also be done depending on the way of management (Table 1). According to this criterion, they can be provided either independently or as a complex of different social services³³. According to Spasov, the management of social services is a “creative activity to set and achieve the goals of the system... in the conditions of a changing environment and effective management of limited resources” [13].

2.10. Criterion 10: Integrated Social Services (ISS)

The integrated social services (ISS) are regulated in Chapter 9 of the SSA.

The integrated approach to the provision of social services includes coordination and interaction:

1. with other systems;
2. within 1 system of social services;
3. in the provision of integrated intersectoral services³⁴.

Integrated provision of support through social services is when a person is provided with complex support through different types of social services³⁵.

As a result of analysis made in this article the various types of social services that currently exist in Bulgaria can be summarized in a table. The entire typing of social services is shown in the Table 1. (Table 1).

Table 1. Typology of social services (SS) in Bulgaria according to different criteria.

| # | Criteria (According to) | Types of social services (SS) | Relations (with #) |
|----|-------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | Accessibility | 1. General assessable 2. Specialized | 1-10 |
| 2. | Function | 1. Preventive 2. Supportive | 1-10 |

| # | Criteria (According to) | Types of social services (SS) | Relations (with #) |
|-----|--|---|---|
| | | 3. Restorative | 1-10 |
| 3. | Age, specific needs, profil of users and consumers | 1. For children a) without disability b) with disability 2. For adults a) without disability b) with disability | a) with permanent disabilities, differentiated according to the type of disability; b) Parents c) Adoptive parents d) Persons caring for children e) Candidates for adoptive parents f) Candidates for foster families. g) with mental disorders, h) with intellectual disabilities, i) with physical disabilities, j) with dementia and k) with sensory impairments. |
| 4. | Main groups of activities | 1. Information and counseling; 2. Advocacy and mediation; 3. Community work; 4. Therapy and rehabilitation; 5. Training to acquire skills; 6. Support for acquiring labor skills; 7. Day care; 8. Residential care; 9. Provision of shelter; 10. Assistant support | 1-10; Residential care – Integrated health and social services (IHSS) |
| 5. | Duration of the use of SS | 1. Short-terms 2. Medium-terms 3. Long-terms | 1-10 |
| 6. | Time | 1. Hourly 2. Half-day 3. Full-day 4. 24/7 | 1-10 |
| 7. | Environment for providing SS | 1. In a home 2. In a specialized environment 3. Mobile | 1. Home 2. Residential care 3. Mobile |
| 8. | Organization of the provision of SS | 1. Age 2. Specific needs 3. Way of management | 1-10 |
| 9. | Way of management | 1. Independently 2. As a complex of different SS | 1-10 |
| 10. | Integrated social services (ISS) | 1. Integrated health and social services (IHSS): 2. For children & young people 3. For adults | Residential care – Integrated health and social services (IHSS) 1-10 |

3. Guiding Principles for Organization and Management of Social Services

In addition, it is necessary to clarify that the SSA defines and specifies the guiding principles from which the organization and management of social services should be determined (Table 2). These principles³⁶ include considerations for ensuring:

1. Easy access – that is, every citizen should have the opportunity to use social services when he needs them (Table 2).
2. Complex support – that is, to cover the problem as a whole and to solve all its aspects (Table 2).
3. Efficiency and effectiveness – that is, efficiency should be understood as hard and well-organized work, and efficiency should add to this the adequacy of setting priorities and determining the dominant and most relevant tasks. In this context, efficiency indicators can be listed: completeness of the process, use of the entire capacity of the center, of resources, etc.; the speed of carrying out social activities and services; action assurance levels; turning the consultation into providing a solution to the problem, etc. Accordingly, the following can be indicated as performance indicators: the results achieved, the number of social services received, the number of resolved cases, the level of trust in the community towards the use of social services, the assessment of the quality of social services provided, the number of complaints about poor quality provision or the provision of social services, the volumes of the activities performed in relation to the needs of the community, the relative value of the invested funds in relation to the obtained social results, etc. (Table 2).
4. Flexibility in the management of social workers – that is, to flexibly organize and manage all social activities. The available resources of time, funds and professionalism should be allocated and directed in an appropriate way for more successful concrete social work (Table 2).
5. High efficiency of the funds for financing social work (ibid.) – i.e., the funds spent bring satisfaction to those in need, and citizens see meaning in the activities taking place and processes of a social nature (Table 2).

Table 2. Guiding principles for organization and management of social services.

| # | Guiding principles for organization and management of social services |
|----|---|
| 1. | Easy access |
| 2. | Complex support |
| 3. | Efficiency and effectiveness |

Guiding principles for organization and management of social services

4. Flexibility
5. High efficiency of the funds for financing

4. Materials and Methods

The theoretical analysis of normative documents is the main method of work in this article. It is combined with some basic statements in the scientific literature related to the issues of social work and social development in general.

5. Results

The main result of this article is that it makes an explanation of the typing of social services as it exists in Bulgarian legislation.

The article will be useful for everybody who is interested in matters of the social sphere in Bulgaria and social problems of Bulgarian society.

The theoretical understanding of the legal basis for the various social services contributes to their correct application and to the optimal solution of the various cases and situations in people's lives.

The systematization of voluminous information, such as the typology of social services, is useful for building a true and comprehensive view of the whole matter – therefore, in the article, the aspiration is holistically aimed at covering the whole, and not at interpreting partial details.

6. Discussion

A common problem and discussion is the prioritization of the choice of the type of social service that is actually applicable in the specifics of a given case.

Among the discussions about the types of social services there is also the constant conversation about the need for preventive social work, with the help of which severe social consequences can be avoided.

The discussion about the effectiveness of the provision of social services is also particularly significant, especially against the background of their multiplicity and variability as a product of an initial effort to satisfy the needs of socially vulnerable people.

Knowing the typology of social services can serve for their further development and implementation of new types of services in response to the needs of vulnerable groups and people in need.

The very dynamic development of social services in the countries of Eastern Europe is in itself a discussion problem - it is not by chance that every decade the conversation about

them takes place on the basis of completely different social and legal foundations.

7. Conclusions

The significance of this article consists in the theoretical explanation of the typing of social services in the modern conditions of life in Bulgaria.

Instead of a conclusion, it can be summarized that the analysis of the profiling of social services allows a systematization and a full knowledge of their possibilities for organization and use by those who manage and make social policies, by social workers and employees, by communities of citizens and by individuals and groups in need.

It is obvious that in the current legislation in Bulgaria the excessive typology of social services is carried out, and in a legal way. Probably, in a decade, society will demand that the presented classification be simplified, or at least that it is not reflected in a legal text, because this would facilitate the implementation of the social services themselves, which in turn would help to find the real practical solutions in the interest of people in need.

But now the described regulation is necessary because of the lack of traditions in the sphere of social services for the Bulgarian society. The regulation will be simplified when the described possibilities of social services become a common practice for society. With the existing opportunities inherent in the social services provided, there is potential today to influence social policy in the country to guide the development of community and home-based services to replace the institutional model of care. The provision of social services is one of the real tools for building a sustainable life for vulnerable groups of people in social practice, raising the standard of living of all people in the country and affirming classic social values such as protecting human rights, building public good, care for the needy, tolerance for the different/the other – values that bring prosperity to the societies that profess them and turn them into causes to have progress and prosperity.

The relevance of the analysis is expressed in the effort to clarify the possibilities of social services through a civil interpretation of their regulation. In turn, this will allow social services to be fully provided within the scope of their legal dimensions.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| ChPA | Child Protection Act, Bulgaria |
| IHSS | Integrated Health and Social Services |
| ISS | Integrated Social Services |
| SAA | Social Assistance Act, Bulgaria |
| SSA | Social Services Act, Bulgaria |

1 Social Assistance Act, Bulgaria (SAA)

Author Contributions

Tsetska Kolarova is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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2 Ordinance on the quality of social services

3 Social Services Act, Bulgaria (SSA), art. 3, para 1

4 Social Assistance Act, Bulgaria (SAA, repealed part)

5 Regulations for the implementation of the Social Assistance Act

6 SSA, art. 12, para. 1

7 SSA, art. 12, para. 2

8 SSA, art. 12, para. 3

9 SSA, art. 13, para. 1

10 SSA, art. 13, para. 2

11 SSA, art. 13, para. 3

12 SSA, art. 13, para. 4

13 SSA, art. 14, para. 1

14 Child Protection Act, Bulgaria (ChPA)

15 Child Protection Act, Bulgaria (ChPA), §1, item 11, b. a-d.

16 SSA, art. 14, para. 2

17 SSA, §1, item 30

18 SSA, art. 14, para. 3

19 SSA, art. 14, para. 2, item 3.

20 SSA, art. 15

21 Ordinance on the quality of social services

22 SSA, art. 17, para. 3

23 SSA, art. 16, para. 1

24 Social Assistance Act, Bulgaria (SAA, repealed part)

25 SSA, art. 16, para. 2

26 SSA, art. 14, para. 3

27 SSA, art. 17, para. 1

28 SSA, art. 17, para. 2

29 SSA, §1, item 15

30 SSA, art. 17, para. 5

31 SSA, art. 18, para. 2

32 SSA, art. 18, para. 1

33 SSA, art. 18, para. 3

34 SSA, art. 129

35 SSA, art. 134, para. 1

36 SSA, art. 18, para. 4, item 5