



ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK IN MONTENEGRO

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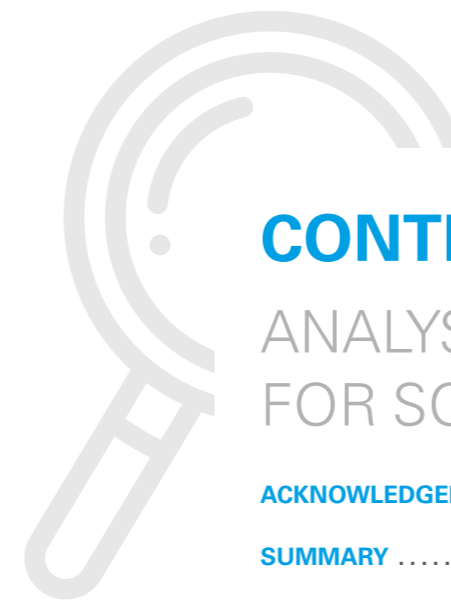
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Ministry of Labour
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Acronyms

BU	Branch unit
CSW	Centre for Social Work
EU	European Union
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISCP	Institute for Social and Child Protection
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
SWIS	Social Welfare Information System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund



SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

According to the last population census, the population of Montenegro stands at 620,029, of which 145,126 are children, **who make up 23.4% of the total population.**

The current social challenges in Montenegro, as well as in the other countries of South-East Europe are: poverty, social exclusion, unemployment (especially among young people and women), internal migration, social polarization and socio-demographic trends, such as aging populations. In order to better respond to the social challenges, Montenegro has been carrying out comprehensive reform of the social and child protection system over the last 10 years. The initial incentive for the reform was the expert support of UN agencies (UNICEF and UNDP) and the significant financial support of the European Union (IPA 2010 and 2014), which resulted in the harmonization of the legal and strategic frameworks with international documents and standards, establishment of the Institute for Social and Child Protection, implementation of a comprehensive reform of the Centres for Social Work, as well as intensification of the deinstitutionalization and decentralization processes, which resulted in a significant reduction in the number of beneficiaries of residential care and the expansion of the number of services provided at the family and community levels. One of the most significant results of the reform is the reform of the CSWs, aimed at introducing case management methodology into the work of the CSWs, changing the organization of the work of the centres and the introduction of supervision. Centres for Social Work are the key institutions in the area of social and child protection in Montenegro, with the public authority to provide social and child protection assistance

to their beneficiaries: children (families), adults and elderly people. There are 13 functioning Centres for Social Work with 12 branch units, covering 24 municipalities throughout the whole territory of Montenegro.

In 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare conducted the initial analysis of the work of the centres, with the technical assistance of UNICEF and financial assistance of the EU. The analysis determined the need for a comprehensive reform of the centres in order to increase the number and capacities of the staff, introduce new working methodologies, introduce territorial reorganization, etc.

The present assessment was created as a result of the need of the state of Montenegro to measure the progress that has been made in improving work with beneficiaries of the social and child protection system, through the impact of a number of reform initiatives of importance for the operation of the CSWs, implemented from 2011 to the present day. The assessment was carried out as an integral part of the comprehensive reform of the social and child care system, at the beginning of the implementation of the five-year strategic plan for the development of the social and child protection system in Montenegro (Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System for the Period 2018–2022), and in that sense it aims to generate data and information, on the basis of which decision makers can develop policies and measures to improve the organization and work of the CSWs.



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the research is to provide support for the improvement of the organization and quality of the work of the CSWs in Montenegro, as well as for the improvement of the quality of services for children and families through: a) analysis of the implementation of the legislative framework at the level of the CSWs; b) analysis of the barriers that the CSWs encounter during the provision of services to beneficiaries; and c) making recommendations regarding the improvement of the organization, work and performance of the CSWs. In order to accomplish these goals, the specific objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To examine whether the legislative framework that regulates the work of the CSWs is adequate;
2. To determine the extent to which the legislative framework that was created during the reform of the social and child protection system is being applied at the level of SCWs;
3. To assess whether the currently available resources at the level of CSWs are sufficient to perform the tasks envisaged by the reform; and
4. To determine the quality of services provided by the CSWs and the effects of the reform.

The direct user of this analysis will be the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which will make use of the research findings to improve the management of the CSWs. Given that the ultimate goal of all these measures is to increase the quality of customer service, CSW beneficiaries can also be considered as end-users in the long run.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis will produce data and information that will feed government policy in the direction of increased efficiency and effectiveness of the work of CSWs. It will assess the

ability of the centres to provide holistic and multidisciplinary support (by cooperating with other sectors) to children and families exposed to various vulnerability risks and provide concrete recommendations for improved work of the CSWs in the areas of identification, outreach, multi-sector cooperation, planning and provision of assistance (services and cash benefits). The analysis will also assess the pros and cons of the changes introduced: case management methodology, the Social Welfare Information System, new cash benefits administered by the Centres for Social Work, the new legal framework and expanded family and community-based services.

The research has benefitted from qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including: a desk review of the existing literature, qualitative research with decision makers, qualitative research with the CSW staff, qualitative research with children and families, quantitative research with the CSW staff and analysis of secondary data from the SWIS. The research process had three phases. During the first phase, an analysis of the international and national legislative framework and the available data was carried out. Based on the initial findings, a set of data-collection instruments and procedures was developed. The second phase included data collection. In the context of the qualitative part of the research, we organized: a) 15 interviews with the representatives of decision makers; b) four focus group discussions with 52 professional workers; c) 36 semi-structured interviews with professional workers; d) four focus group discussions with 39 parents of children; and e) 20 interviews with children. Participants were identified in cooperation with the ISCP and CSWs. The centres were chosen in such a way as to cover all of Montenegro's regions, as well as to cover both small and large centres. An informed consent form was signed by all the participants, while children also gave verbal consent, in addition to their parent's/guardian's signed consent for the child's participation in the research. Quantitative research was conducted through two questionnaires in order to collect data on the work of 67 case managers



and supervisors. The data was collected using the SurveyMonkey platform. Analysis of the primary data from the information system was not possible with the envisaged methodology, so secondary data was used.

The limitations of the research were reflected in the insufficient availability of official data and in difficulties in organizing and supporting the process of primary data collection, as well as organizing focus groups and interviews. The period for collecting data for quantitative research with professional workers was extended until August, and the period for qualitative research with children and parents was extended until September 2018.

In order to ensure the appropriate quality of the process, the Steering Committee oversaw the entire research process. The findings of the analysis were presented to all interested stakeholders. Both the findings and recommendations of the analysis were validated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Institute for Social and Child Protection and other relevant stakeholders, which participated in the process.

BASIC FINDINGS

The analysis indicates that Montenegro has been investing significant efforts and resources in improving the work of the CSWs in the past 10 years.

In the period from 2011 to 2018, the number of workers increased by 53% and the network of CSWs was further developed by the establishment of new centres. In addition to this, significant resources were also invested in improving the competencies of professional workers, and the reform of the legislative framework introduced the basic principles of protection, such as individualization of work, participation, prohibition of discrimination and respect for the human rights of beneficiaries,

including the right to life in the community and the right to involvement in the life of the community. This has led to an improvement of the quality of work with beneficiaries, both in terms of timely work with the users and in terms of individualization of the work. In this regard, the reform of the CSWs represents a major step in improving the quality of services for the users of the social and child protection system.

However, not all citizens enjoy the same benefits from the reform. A major challenge remains in terms of the availability of CSWs to all citizens, whereby the analysis indicates that support is most often offered to citizens in a situation of high or moderate risk, that is, when the beneficiaries have already suffered significant damage or harm. Once they come into contact with the CSWs, such beneficiaries usually remain isolated from the community, without the support they need in order to engage equally with other citizens in society, despite the efforts of professional workers to provide them with a quality service.

The basic factors identified in the analysis that have led to this situation are:

1. PROACTIVE IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION

The analysis indicates that effective mechanisms of proactive identification and prevention have not been established at the level of local communities, which leads to an absence of systemic guarantees that a person in need of support from the social and child protection system will be recognized as such. The following factors are recognized as the main barriers to proactive identification and prevention within the framework of the analysis: a) CSWs are not sufficiently present in the community; b) there is no strong interconnectedness between institutions and organizations in the community; and c) the capacity of service providers to identify persons in need of support remains low.



2. COMMUNITY - BASED SUPPORT AND A HOLISTIC APPROACH

The analysis indicates that there are no available resources at the local community level for the effective involvement of users in society and that the CSWs do not encourage the involvement of different local community stakeholders in their work, which leads to the fragmentation of support. The key obstacles to delivering quality and holistic support to the CSWs are: a high burden of documentation; the insufficient involvement of representatives of other systems in the professional work of the CSWs; and underdeveloped resources at the levels of local communities and the social and child protection system, as well as at the level of other systems.

3. PARTICIPATION AND REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION

The analysis indicates that the CSWs are not empowering their beneficiaries, that they are not providing sufficient information necessary for the protection of rights, nor the possibility to meaningfully participate in the protection process, which is incompatible with the application of the principle of the best interest. This kind of conduct by professional workers is associated with insufficiently developed competencies, as well as the time constraints they face in their work. The disbalance of power between professional workers and beneficiaries is further contributed to by the fact that there are no appeal mechanisms established at the level of CSWs, nor are there mechanisms for protecting the rights of beneficiaries.

4. ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF USE OF RESUSCITATION AT THE LEVEL OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The analysis indicates that the limitations in the quality of services provided by CSWs are due to a lack of resources for implementing the applied model and inefficient use of

the existing resources. The number of employees, especially those in direct work with beneficiaries, is not sufficient to provide quality services to beneficiaries, although there are 23% more employees than the applicable standards envisage. In the overall structure of employees, the highest number of employees work on financial, administrative and technical jobs with a share of 32%, and just 48.5% of staff are engaged in direct work with beneficiaries. There is a significant percentage (13.1%) of managerial staff, 2.5% of employees are involved in planning and development work, with 3.8% working on so-called other (non-systematized) jobs. Although the professional procedure in the CSWs is based on the case management method, only 17.3% of workers deal with this type of work, while 19.7% of professional workers deal with cash benefits, and 9.0% with legal matters. This shows that CSWs use the majority of their human resources to work on cash-benefit-related matters. The negative impact of limited human resources on the quality of work with users is further aggravated by the insufficient level of alignment between the competencies of professional workers and the demands of the jobs they perform. The analysis points to significant inequalities in the availability of both human and material resources among different CSWs.

5. ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND REALIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL PROCEDURES

The analysis points to significant challenges in organizing the work of CSWs, in relation to the internal organization of the service, but also in relation to the organization of professional procedures and human resource management. The practices of management in social work are not sufficiently developed, including monitoring and distributing the workload. In the course of the case management procedure, an admission assessment is rarely carried out, which makes it difficult to determine the urgency of treatment and the adequate response of the CSWs in such situations.



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Challenges have also been identified at the level of case management. Deadlines are not being respected in a large number of case management procedures. The analysis indicates that deadlines are being respected in only about one-third of cases, except where there is a need to produce findings and opinions for the courts, and then the deadline is respected in almost four-fifths of these cases. When it comes to smaller CSWs and branch units, a deviation from

the case management methodology has been identified whereby most procedures are run by professional workers who gather in informal teams, with one of the team members being in charge of entering the case into the information system. In relation to the envisaged tasks of a case manager, the tasks with the largest numbers of perceived malpractices are in the following areas: providing support and training for foster parents; carrying out guardianship-

related tasks; keeping records of children with disabilities and adults with disabilities and reporting on their situation. These jobs are not being carried out by professional workers, or else the professional workers do not possess the necessary competencies to perform them. At the level of CSWs, procedures for stimulating good work and also sanctioning bad work have not been identified, which creates the image of a bad working culture.

6. INTRODUCTION OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEM

As for the impact of the information system on working with users, the analysis indicates that introduction of the information system has led to an improvement in the quality of work with beneficiaries, in terms of both material benefits and case management. Inconsistencies in the application of the information system in case management were identified in the course of this assessment. Only 15% of the case managers believe that the information system fully describes what they do with beneficiaries, and as many as 35% think it describes their work to a small extent or hardly describes at all what they do with the users. In some centres, professional workers enter the cases into the system with a significant delay or do not enter them at all, with only 46.3% of case managers entering more than 90% of the cases on which they are working into the information system.

7. CHALLENGES IN APPLYING THE SUPERVISION MODEL

The research findings indicate that the planned model of supervision is not adequate, and that supervision is being carried out to a very limited extent. Two-thirds of case managers (64.8%) did not participate in any of the group supervisions during 2017, and 38.9% of them did not participate in individual ones. Supervision is mainly carried out through consultations regarding a concrete case, without any organized form of educational and supportive supervision.

8. SUPERVISION OF THE WORK OF THE CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

Analysis of the legislative framework and also data in the field indicate that supervision of the work of the CSWs is neither efficient nor clearly defined. At the level of the social protection system, sufficient resources have not been allocated, nor have supervisory procedures been developed, which significantly limits the possibility of implementation of the legislative framework in practice.

This is indicated by a number of stated deviations from the prescribed work models, which can be easily identified through the supervision.

9. DESIGN OF THE CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK AND JOB STANDARDIZATION

The analysis indicates that the reforms at the level of the organization of the CSWs have not been sufficiently accompanied by changes in the organization of the work of the CSWs. During the reform of the CSWs, a large number of public authorities and other tasks were assigned to them, so CSWs are carrying out the activities of the social and child protection agency, the guardianship authority, the authority responsible for cash benefits and the body responsible for keeping various records, reporting on the social situation of citizens and the development of systems at the local level.

The changes to the work and authorities of the CSWs have not been accompanied by an assessment of their capacities to perform these tasks or job standardization, which has led to a mismatch between the resources of the centres, the organization of centres and the requests put before them. Specific challenges in the work of the centres exist in relation to the organization of foster care.



RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the work of the CSWs, a wide range of measures should be implemented at the level of strengthening implementation of the current regulations, improving the resources of the CSWs, as well as in terms of adjusting the legal framework.

In the following period, it is necessary that:

1. The Government of Montenegro, acting at the national level, and local self-government units, acting at the local level, should work on enhancing the existing prevention and proactive identification mechanism by strengthening inter-sector cooperation and developing the capacity of service providers to recognize citizens at risk. This implies: **a)** improving the coordination between institutions and organizations at the community level regarding the prevention and proactive identification of citizens at risk; and **b)** the development of the competencies of professionals working in all institutions that are in contact with citizens, in order to be capacitated to recognize those citizens who need support from the social and child protection system and to be able to refer them to such support, through the development of multi-sector indicators for the identification of children at risk.
2. The Government of Montenegro should work on establishing a responsibility mechanism for the social inclusion of vulnerable citizens at the level of all institutions and organizations and introduce a mechanism of obligatory participation by representatives of other relevant organizations and institutions in the processes of assessment and planning of protection.
3. The ISCP should design a Social Service Workforce Development Plan with a competency framework in cooperation with academia and other interested parties for development of a social service workforce in social and child protection.
4. In order to increase the amount of time professional workers can dedicate to their work with beneficiaries, which is a prerequisite for providing quality work and a holistic type of support, the MLSW should increase the number of employees working directly with beneficiaries as soon as possible.
5. The MLSW should make changes to the legislative framework as soon as possible in order to change the standards determining the number of professional workers in the centres. Apart from the number of citizens, the criteria for determining the number of professional workers should be the number of beneficiaries and the inherent characteristics of the territory covered by the given CSW.
6. The MLSW should increase the number of case managers at the system level by 80%, so that the number of new cases is reduced to five per month. This requires the hiring of an additional 50 professional workers.



7. The MLSW should limit the number of beneficiaries per case manager to a maximum number of 50.
8. The time that professionals can dedicate to beneficiaries can be increased by reducing the time they spend on administrative work. Therefore, the ISCP should approach the revision of both documents and records so that the percentage of the workload of professional workers that is related to administration can be reduced from 49% to a maximum of 25%.
9. In order to develop the necessary community-based resources, the Government of Montenegro should increase its efforts to develop community-based social services, especially in regard to the sustainability of funds for such services.
10. The ISCP should work on the development of a formal mechanism for protecting the rights of beneficiaries at the level of the CSW. This could be achieved by means of introducing the institution of the Protector of the Rights of Beneficiaries, who would be in charge of informing the beneficiaries about their rights and the available grievance and complaint mechanism. When it comes to the complaints, the Protector would report directly to the ministry in charge of social welfare affairs.
11. The ISCP should increase the level of support to the CSWs in terms of developing social and child protection management practices and working on the development of a culture that encourages the development of professional workers, innovation and learning.
12. The CSWs should come up with a system of rewarding workers who demonstrate excellence in their work, while the directors of the CSWs should promote quality work and sanction irresponsible behaviour.

13. The management of CSWs should pay more attention to establishing cooperation with other community-based institutions and organizations and involve experts from the community in the work of CSWs.
14. The ISCP should establish a model of internal supervision at the level of all CSWs, to strengthen the educational function of supervision and to develop an external supervision model to be provided by the ISCP.

LESSONS LEARNED

Several key lessons were learned while undertaking this research:

Prior to the implementation of the reforms at the CSWs, it is necessary to standardize the work and to draft professional guidelines for every individual task, since implementation of any legal framework without practical guidelines and norms leads to uncontrolled innovation, that is, discrepancies in practice at the system level, without any guarantees that the envisaged norms will be implemented.

The reform of the social and child care system requires partial reform of the responsibilities of other community-based systems and broad support from the government of the country in which the reform is being carried out. Although the system of social and child protection can create the grounds for social inclusion, in order to achieve the inclusion of citizens in society it is important that other systems are involved in support and that they provide services that are tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.

In the course of the reform of the system, it is necessary to establish effective methods of participation by professionals working in the systems, in order to make sure that the reforms are relevant to direct work with beneficiaries.



Major system reforms should be phased in order to avoid any potential destructive innovation. Implementation of a large number of changes, without adequate support for adopting the new methods of operation, changes in the education system, that is, acquiring competencies, may lead to major changes that could be destructive for the

system and may lead to a feeling of a loss of control over the work. In this regard, the pace of reform should follow the readiness of the system, while the reforms themselves must be planned carefully, not only in relation to the public policy objectives, but also in relation to the available resources.



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THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Montenegro is an upper- middle - income country located in South-East Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, which regained independence in 2006, following a referendum on independence.

Montenegro is an upper- middle- income country located in South-East Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, which regained independence in 2006, following a referendum on independence. Accession to the European Union is the country's highest political and economical priority. Montenegro applied for EU membership in 2008 and officially received the status of a candidate state in 2010, initiating massive reforms at all levels. Montenegro became a member of NATO in 2017. The territory of Montenegro covers 13,812 square kilometres, and according to the 2011 census its population is 620,029, of which 145,126 are children, making up 23.4% of the total population. Montenegrins make up 45% of the population, Serbs 29%, Bosniaks 9% and Albanians 5%, while other nationalities are represented in smaller percentages. The birth rate is moderately negative, which indicates a gradual decrease in the number of inhabitants. Slightly more of the population lives in an urban environment (63%) than a rural one (37%). Montenegro's economy is being transformed into a market one, whereby 90% of the state companies have been privatized, including banks, telecommunications operators and the energy sector. The unemployment rate in Montenegro was at 16.1%¹ in early 2018, while GDP per capita stood at about US\$17,800 in 2017 and had an annual growth rate of 3%–4%.

1 Montenegro, Statistical Office of Montenegro (2018). ARS Press Release – 1st Quarter, 2018: <https://www.monstat.org/cg/novosti.php?id=2730>.

The current social challenges in Montenegro, as well as in other countries of South-East Europe are: poverty, social exclusion, unemployment (especially among young people and women), internal migration, social polarization and socio-demographic trends, such as aging populations. Combating poverty and social exclusion requires more efficient and more targeted provision of services in the domains of health, employment and social protection. MONSTAT's poverty analysis from 2013 shows that the average poverty rate is 8.6%, while the poverty rate for the northern region stands at 10.3%. The population in the north of the country has limited access to public services, while women and the elderly have significantly lower incomes. The unemployment rate in the north is twice as high as the national average, reflecting growing regional developmental disparities.

In order to better respond to its social challenges, Montenegro has carried out a comprehensive reform of the social and child protection system during the last 10 years. The initial incentive for the reform was the expert support of UN agencies (UNICEF and UNDP) and the significant financial support of the European Union (IPA 2010 and 2014), which resulted in the harmonization of the legal and strategic frameworks with international documents and standards, the establishment of the ISCP, implementation of a comprehensive reform of the CSWs, as well as intensification of the deinstitutionalization and decentralization processes, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of beneficiaries in residential care

and the expansion of the number of services provided at the family and community levels. The reform is based on the rights, normatives and standards established in international documents (1–7). In that sense, the reform rests on the following principles: respect for and the indivisibility of human rights, the best interests of beneficiaries, the availability of services to beneficiaries in the least restrictive environment, the participation of beneficiaries, the responsibility of beneficiaries, autonomy of beneficiaries, the choice of services and service providers, timeliness and continuity (8). Special attention during the reform has been paid to the establishment of an integrated social protection system in line with UNICEF's guidelines (9). In this regard, special attention during the reform has been paid to strengthening competencies and the general design of the system so as to contribute to the independence of the beneficiaries to the greatest extent possible, linking the social and child protection system with other community-based systems and the sustainability of services.

In order to achieve this, in the last decade Montenegro has adopted a set of laws, by-laws and strategic documents of importance in the domain of social and child protection, as well as in the domain of the work of the CSWs². In addition to changes made at the level of legislation and the work of the services, the work on reforms has been accompanied by an improvement of the strategic framework. The current strategic framework for the

2 The most important acts are: The Law on Social and Child Protection, "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 27/2013, 1/2015, 42/2015, 47/2015, 56/2016, 66/2016, 1/2017, 31/2017 – decision of the CC, 42/2017 and 50/2017 (2013), the Law on Protection from Family Violence "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 46/2010 (2010). The Family Law, "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 1/2007, 53/2016 (2007), the Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings, "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 64/2011 (2011), the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities, "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 39/2011 (2011), and the Strategy for the Prevention of Violence and Protection of Children from Violence (2017–2021).



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development of the social and child protection system in Montenegro is defined primarily through the Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System for the Period 2018–2022 (10).

The Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System (10) is of particular importance for the further reform of the work of the CSWs. As a special measure in the context of the improvement of the normative framework, the Strategy envisages the following: improvement of the functioning of the CSWs; improvement of material benefits and activation measures for users of financial support allowances; and improvement of the system of supervision of professional work (10). The Strategy defines that, in relation to the



overall functioning of the CSWs, it is especially important to conduct an analysis of the work of CSWs, of the functioning of supervision and of the Social Card – Social Welfare Information System's (SWIS) compliance with the requirements of professional work. A particularly important field of development in the domain of supervision is the development of an external supervision model and the further development of supervision at the level of CSWs.

The Law on Social and Child Protection (2013), as a fundamental law, rests on the principles of the decentralization, deinstitutionalization and development of community-based services. New articles were introduced in relation to supervision in social work and inspection, as well as in relation to the model of public procurement for social and child protection services. Within the current course of reforms, progress has been made in the field of the development and application of information technology, and after many years of professional efforts, the Social Card – Social Welfare Information System (SWIS) has been put in place. The introduction of SWIS has led to a more efficient performance of triage jobs, more efficient office work, management of administrative and non-administrative procedures, and monitoring and managing the work at the level of CSWs. A particularly significant effect of the introduction of SWIS is the improved management of resources and a reduction in the costs for social allowances. From the perspective of the beneficiary, the SWIS has facilitated access to the exercising of the right to social and child protection, the transparency of the procedure itself, and has generally led to a greater credibility of and trust in the social welfare institutions.

Prior to the reform of the social and child protection system, CSWs operated at an inter-municipal level³. The previous practice of CSWs was marked by two organizational models that operated simultaneously:

³ There used to be nine CSWs (public institutions), which were mainly organized at the inter-municipal level. The exceptions were the CSWs in Herceg Novi, Rožaje, Plav and Podgorica.

territorial (professionals responsible for a specific geographical area/part of the city); and categorical (professionals working mostly with beneficiaries that had one dominant specific problem). The work was organized within professional teams comprised of a social worker, a psychologist, a pedagogue and a lawyer. The territorial approach was based on so-called 'polyvalent' work, where professionals worked in the territory of a particular local community, trying to solve problems regardless of the type of problem.

The reform of the work of CSWs, which took place after the initial analysis of the work of the CSWs (2011), led to professional, methodological and organizational changes in the functioning of the CSWs. In place of the categorical/territorial approach, a case management method was introduced, abolishing mandatory teamwork and increasing personal and professional accountability (11).

Although significant steps have already been taken, recent research in the area of social and child care points to some of the challenges in the work of CSWs, the most important ones being (12–14):

- Insufficient connections between the centres and other actors in the community;
- An insufficient level of compliance between the SWIS and the requirements of case management;
- Insufficiently developed professional competencies of professionals working in CSWs;
- The high workload of professional workers, or an insufficient number of workers; and
- The high degree of focus of the resources of the CSWs on the distribution of cash benefits, which does not leave enough resources for case management.

Nevertheless, that research work was only qualitative in nature and analysis of the work of the CSWs was not a major point of the research. This research analyses those, and other issues, from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, and will provide the evidence needed for informed decision making regarding the response to the challenges that CSWs are facing.





2

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This research is taking place within the ongoing reform process aimed at supporting the reforms of the social and child protection system in Montenegro and at the beginning of the implementation of the new strategic cycle of planning the development of the social and child protection system. In that sense, the choice of the moment to carry out this research is rather important since it allows the shortcomings of the reforms at the level of CSWs to be addressed through the provision of recommendations, and incorporation of such recommendations into strategic planning, thus contributing to further success and work on the initiated reforms.

Specifically, the main purpose of the research is to support the development of the organization and quality of the work of the CSWs in Montenegro and the improvement of the quality of services provided to children and families. CSWs have been selected as the subject of research because they play a vital role in the implementation of the reform and development of the social and child protection system at the local level. In this sense, one specific research objective is to provide support for the ISCP, as the main research body also tasked with providing quality assurance of the social and child protection system, conducting an analysis of the progress achieved, as well as assessing the barriers to the capabilities of the centres to fulfil their roles, in order to provide recommendations for improving the organization, work and performance of CSWs. The direct beneficiary of the analysis is the MLSW, as the main creator of policy and organization of work of the centres. As the results of the research will be presented to all the key decision makers in the field of social and child protection, as well as to the employees

of the CSWs, the research will stimulate debate among the social and child protection stakeholders on the further improvement of the work of the CSWs.

Based on the information generated during this research, the MLSW will take measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CSWs, and to improve the quality of services provided to the beneficiaries of the CSWs. The research is designed in such a way as to generate data and information, on the basis of which decision makers can develop policies and measures to improve the organization and work of the CSWs. The direct beneficiaries of the analysis will be the MLSW and the ISCP, which will make use of its findings to improve the management of the CSWs. Given that the ultimate goal of all these measures is to increase the quality of service provided to end-users, CSW beneficiaries can also be considered as end-users of the research findings in the long run.

In order to achieve this, the specific objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To examine the adequacy of the legal framework and create recommendations for improving the legal framework if necessary;
2. To examine and improve the implementation of the legal framework at the level of the CSWs by identifying the key challenges in the application of the legal framework and developing recommendations for improving the application of the legal framework;
3. To examine the adequacy of the currently available resources at the level of the CSWs in relation to the legal obligations of the centres and to produce recommendations for the improvement of such resources if necessary; and

4. To take a closer look at the quality of the services that CSWs provide to beneficiaries and to produce recommendations focusing on improving the quality of such services.

1. ALTHOUGH THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK, AS SUCH, IS ADEQUATE.

However, analysis of the legal framework of the work of the CSWs has never been carried out and this research will give the first insight into this domain. In order to establish whether the job descriptions are in line with the legal framework governing the work of the CSWs, the following objectives have been addressed:

- It is necessary to determine the extent to which the legal framework governing the work of the CSWs is in line with the international strategic and legal framework;
- It is necessary to examine whether and to what extent the legal framework prescribes standards that support accessibility and a proactive approach in identifying families and children at risk, as well as prevention;
- It is necessary to examine to what extent the legal framework supports the participation of beneficiaries and the individualization of work with them;
- It is necessary to determine to what extent the design of the CSWs allows for adequate allocation of the assigned roles; and
- It is necessary to determine whether the criteria for determining the number of employees are adequate.

In this way, the relevance of the legislative framework to the beneficiaries can be analysed, especially when it comes to the key domains defined by the job description. In the part of the report dealing with the results, these questions were considered from a theoretical perspective. When it came to the discussions, they were considered in the light of the obtained findings.



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2. THE ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AT THE LEVEL OF THE CSWS FOCUSED ON THE DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN TERMS OF ORGANIZATION OF WORK AT THE LEVEL OF CSWS AND THE APPLICATION OF THE LEGALLY PRESCRIBED PROFESSIONAL PROCEDURES.

In this regard, the aim of the research was to determine:

- To what extent the organization of the CSWs is in line with the legislative framework.
- To what extent the standards related to professional workers are being fulfilled.
- To what extent the work at the level of CSWs is being carried out in line with the procedures envisaged by the legislative framework.





3. THE APPLICATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS ADEQUATE IMPLEMENTATION ARE INEVITABLY LINKED TO THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND, IN THAT SENSE, IT WAS CRUCIAL TO EXAMINE WHETHER THE CSWS HAVE THE SUFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCES NEEDED FOR AN ADEQUATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK.

Given that the work of the CSWs relies directly on community resources, apart from the development of the resources of the CSWs, the analysis focused on the development of community-based resources. In order to examine whether the available resources at the level of CSWs were sufficient to carry out the tasks envisaged by the reform, the following research questions were addressed:

- To what extent are the professionals in the CSWs familiar with the reform of the social and child protection system?
- Are professionals (given the existing capacities and resources) able to fulfil the tasks defined by the legislative framework?
- To what extent does the number of currently employed workers allow adequate work at the level of CSWs in relation to the number of beneficiaries?
- How are resources redistributed at the level of CSWs in relation to the basic responsibilities of the centres?
- How does the distribution of material benefits affect case management and alternative models of distribution of benefits?
- How do professionals see the available resources in relation to the volume of work?
- How present and intensive is cooperation with other institutions (primary healthcare centres, schools, national employment agency, day-care centres and other social welfare institutions) that are relevant to the centres, given the nature of their work?

4. THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE REFORM OF THE SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM WAS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO BENEFICIARIES.

Given the recent analysis of the reform from the perspective of the beneficiaries, this analysis has focused on the three research questions. Nevertheless, it did tackle the issue of the quality of services provided to beneficiaries, in order to answer the following questions:

- How do professionals from the CSWs see the impact of introducing the aforementioned information system on the quality of work with beneficiaries?
- How do professionals from the CSWs see the impact of introducing case management methodology on the quality of work with beneficiaries?
- How do professionals from the CSWs perceive the role and functions of the Institute for Social and Child Protection?
- To what extent are the services provided by the CSWs important and meaningful to children and families?

In this way, the analysis aims to provide comprehensive recommendations for further improvement of the work of the CSWs, in order to:

- Improve the context of professional work with beneficiaries through further improvement of the legal and strategic frameworks and the organization of the CSWs;
- Improve the implementation of the legal framework and the uniformity of work of the CSWs through better control and implementation of regulations and guidelines and the development of additional guidelines; and
- Improve the resources available at the level of CSWs in working with beneficiaries

through different mechanisms (e.g. re-distribution of the workforce, hiring new employees, change of job descriptions, improvement of worker competencies and improvement of management).

- By acting at all these levels, that is, by improving the organization of CSWs by

application of the legal and professional frameworks and by improving the resources available to the centres, the outcome would be an improvement of the quality of services for the beneficiaries – achievement of the ultimate goal of the reform of the CSWs.





3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The research was designed as a mixed-method research work, with the research part consisting of the following components:

- A desk review;
- Qualitative research with decision makers;
- Qualitative research with CSW employees;
- Qualitative research with children and families;
- Quantitative research with CSW employees; and
- Analysis of secondary data from the SWIS.

The desk review was conducted at the very beginning of the research for the purpose of identifying the challenges in the work of the CSWs, as well as the capacity of the centres to fulfil their obligations. It covered the relevant legal and strategic documents, standards and protocols related to the work of the CSWs, as well as relevant statistical reports and research findings.

After the secondary data analysis was developed, preparatory talks with stakeholders took place in order to obtain information on the expectations of the various research stakeholders and to allow them to take part in the development of a detailed methodology.

The research with decision makers took place in June and July. It covered 15 different institutions and organizations: the Institute for Social and Child Protection, the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, the Ministry of Labour and Social

Welfare, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ombudsperson, the Parliament of Montenegro, UNDP, UNICEF, the EU and two civil society organizations. The beneficiaries themselves were not directly involved in the development of the methodology.

Qualitative research with professional workers was conducted in June and July 2018 through two focus groups and 36 semi-structured interviews that took place in June 2018. Two focus groups with case managers and professional workers in charge of cash benefits were held, one of which gathered supervisors and managers, and the other one lawyers. The focus groups were attended by 52 respondents, which means that the survey itself covered a total of 88 professional workers. The focus groups took place at the ISCP. The semi-structured interviews were carried out in CSWs.

During each of the semi-structured interviews, one case was analysed in detail, in addition to two cases that were analysed to examine the actions undertaken by the case manager and to check whether the deadlines were being respected. CSWs were chosen in such a way as to cover all the regions of Montenegro, including both small and large centres.

Qualitative research with beneficiaries was carried out in the period June–September 2018. The focus groups with parents/caregivers were attended by a total of 39 parents/caregivers. A total of 32 children were interviewed. Families were selected in such a way as to encompass a diverse set of problems and beneficiaries;

in particular the focus was on families with children with disabilities, families with a problem of violence and families living in extreme poverty. Also, one criterion was that 50% of families have been on the records of the CSW since 2015 (after the reform). Case managers informed the children and parents/caregivers about the research. If both the children and parents/caregivers agreed to participate in the research, they were involved in the research. In addition, they had the opportunity to back out before the interview, after talking about it with the interviewer. Children and parents/caregivers were in no way obliged to participate in the research. An informed consent form was signed by all the parents/caregivers, and the interviews with children were conducted after reaching an agreement with the children (verbal consent).

When it comes to the quantitative part of the research, 56 case managers and supervisors participated (77% of the total number of such professionals in Montenegro). Data on the case manager workload was collected for 67 case managers and supervisors (93% of the total number). Managers submitted workload data for a total of 67 workers: 60 case managers and seven supervisors, or 2,968 cases. Of the total number of case managers who participated in the research, 36.7% work in the department for children and young people (N=22), 18.3% work in the department for adults and the elderly (N=11) and 45.0% in the professional department service (N=27). Managers provided researchers with a detailed structure of the tasks for 58 case managers, who in the course of one month undertook a total of 4,216 different actions, which is 72 actions per case manager per month, or about three actions per day.

The data was collected through the SurveyMonkey platform^{4,5}. In spite of the high response rate, the number of case managers

4 The total number of case managers employed in the CSWs, who were identified through the research, was significantly lower than the expected number of case managers.

5 SurveyMonkey is an international platform for the collection of data: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>.

included was lower than planned. Namely, it was assumed, prior to the analysis of the workplaces, that the number of professional workers acting as case managers would be significantly higher.

The instruments used during our qualitative research with parents and quantitative research with professional workers were piloted. Five cognitive interviews⁶ took place to examine the level of understanding of the questions contained in the qualitative instruments, as well as in the quantitative instruments. Quantitative questionnaires were tested on two cases, during which we checked the applicability of the matrix for encoding the work on the case. After testing, the questionnaires were duly adjusted.

During the process of planning the analysis of SWIS data, at the beginning of the research, we analysed the practice of data entry into the system, the integrity of the data from the system, as well as the quality of the data itself. During the assessment of the quality of the SWIS data on case management, it was concluded that the data itself was not sufficiently reliable, that certain centres are not entering information on case management into the information system in an adequate manner, and that the data is not always entered in a timely manner, which is why we collected additional detailed quantitative data. Nevertheless, the data related to cash benefits is reliable.

Some of the limitations of the research were: insufficient availability of official data and difficulties in organizing and supporting the collection of primary data; the organization of focus groups and interviews, and the fact that the users were contacted through the local CSWs. Namely, the practice of CSWs contacting beneficiaries, with the technical support of the ISCP, could lead to bias in the

6 Cognitive interviews are organized in order to assess the understanding of the questions, and if the way participants understand the question is the same as that planned by the researcher.





focus group sample with parents. In order to ensure the highest level of impartiality possible, the ISCP was provided with the criteria for selecting participants for focus groups. Prior to the beginning of the interview or focus group, the participants were asked about the kind of information that was shared with them by the CSWs about the research, in order to determine whether the centres had accurately informed potential participants in the way that had been agreed. This feedback indicated that the CSWs had adequately communicated the information to the users. The period for collecting data for quantitative research with professional workers was extended until August and for qualitative research until September 2018.

3.2 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical principles prescribed by UNICEF. In the course of the research, procedures for the prevention of harm to children due to their participating in the research, informed consent, confidentiality of information and prevention of conflicts of interest were duly applied.

In order to ensure that all individuals in contact with the children had adequate competencies to interview children, the following criteria were followed: 1) the people interviewing the children had to have previous experience in working with children; 2) they had to be familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and 3) they must have attended a course in developmental psychology, or a similar course. In addition to this, the setting of the interview was controlled. In order to ensure that children were protected against any additional harm during the research, researchers never remained alone with the children in a room with the door closed, and the children were allowed to invite a person of trust to accompany them during the interview. The interviews were organized in a safe environment in the CSWs. The topics discussed with children were such that they were not asked to provide sensitive information, nor did they refer to any traumatic experiences, but primarily to their experience

with professional workers, their participation in processes in the CSW and their relationships with professional workers. With the intention of preventing any secondary traumatization of the users, the participants were duly informed of the possibility of ending the interview or skipping any questions. This possibility was repeated during the interview. In order to protect children from abuse and neglect, at the beginning of the interview, all the participants were told that if any information provided during the interviews should indicate any possible abuse or neglect of children, the case would be reported to the external supervisor.

The design of the research specifically addressed the issues of confidentiality of information and informed consent. A written informed consent form was distributed and filled out by all the adults who participated in the quantitative part of the research, while informed consent for the quantitative research was guaranteed by submission of the informed consent form at the beginning of the interview and participants were able to continue with the research only if they clicked on the box proving that they had read the electronic form and agreed to the content. In the case of children, parents or guardians had to give written consent for their participation in the research, after which oral consent was required from the children. The informed consent also contains provisions related to the confidentiality of information by the researchers and the participants in the research. Only the researchers had access to the recordings and transcripts, which were deleted after writing up the report. All the participants were informed that participation in the research does not involve any remuneration. The research began upon approval from the Ethics Committee. The Ethics Committee is an external body that was engaged by UNICEF in order to analyse the ethical procedures of the research and it is composed of professors from various universities in Podgorica and independent experts. The procedures were assessed as being good, with the exception of a warning regarding the selection of participants in qualitative research by the CSWs, a situation which was overcome by providing strict criteria to the ISCP for the selection of participants.



The final report was evaluated by the Ethics Committee and all the recommendations were implemented.

3.3 MANAGEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The project was managed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Goran Kušević, Director of the Directorate for Social and Child Protection), the Institute for Social and Child Protection (Drago Spaić, Director), UNICEF (Nela Krnić, Child Protection Officer; Marija Novković, Social Policy Officer) and UNDP (Aleksandra Višnjić, Programme Manager for the Social Card – Integrated Social Welfare System). The project management included monitoring the implementation of the research, enabling data collection, organization of the work and access to documentation, quality control of the instruments and methodology and the research itself in all its phases. The overall process was overseen and technically guided by the external supervisor – Nela Krnić, UNICEF Montenegro Child Protection Officer. The MLSW invited professional workers and the directors of CSWs to take part in the research, while the ISCP organized focus groups and interviews with both professional workers and beneficiaries and informed the IDEAS project team about the agreed dates and times for focus groups and interviews. In addition, one of the tasks of the management board was to organize a complete presentation of the project and to disseminate its findings to the relevant decision makers. The final presentation took place in November 2018. The presentation was attended by professional workers, the directors of the CSWs, representatives of international organizations, representatives of the ISCP, as well as representatives of the MLSW and the Government of Montenegro. During the conference, social and child protection stakeholders were able to comment on the analysis itself. IDEAS oversaw the development of the research framework, the methodology of the research and instruments,

implementation of the interviews and focus of groups, the setting up of questionnaires on an online platform, development of the initial and final reports and the presentation of data at the final presentation of the research. The IDEAS team leader was Marko Milanović, the director of IDEAS, while the other members of the team were: Miroslav Brkić, full professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade; Ivana Krstić, an associate professor at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade; and Lidija Milanović, a psychologist and expert in the field of social and child care. The IDEAS researchers collected the data in the field.

No incidents were recorded during the process of data collection. During the preliminary discussion of the researchers with the participants it was found that the CSWs, that is, the ISCP had informed them about the research in an adequate manner. The conversations were recorded and the recordings themselves were deleted immediately after the report was drawn up. The researchers were specially trained and instructed to ask open questions and to generally stick to the principle of neutrality in interviews and focus groups. The quality of the interviews was checked on a sample of five randomly selected interviews with the aim of establishing whether the participants felt free to express their opinions and to assess whether the researcher had any impact on the data collection.

Links to the quantitative questionnaires intended for the employees in the CSWs were distributed by the ISCP. Data was compiled from different sources with the aim of ensuring the quality of the quantitative data. The possibility of filing a complaint against the researchers' actions to the external supervisor in UNICEF was introduced as yet another mechanism for data control.

The findings and recommendations of the analysis were validated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Institute for Social and Child Protection and other relevant stakeholders that participated in the process.

4

ANALYSIS OF THE MONTENEGRIN LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS REGULATING THE WORK OF CENTRES OF SOCIAL WORK

4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE MONTENEGRIN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK REGULATING THE WORK OF CENTRES OF SOCIAL WORK

Centres for Social Work are the primary institutions for social and child protection in Montenegro, with entrusted public authority in this field. In accordance with the legal provisions, CSWs perform numerous and diverse roles⁷.

They:

1. Decide in the first instance on the applications for the exercising of social and child protection rights;
2. Make decisions on travel benefits for persons with disabilities;
3. Provide emergency intervention services;
4. Assess the current situation, needs, strengths and risks;
5. Create and monitor individual service plans, including a plan to help victims of violence;
6. Develop an individual activation plan and provide support for the social inclusion of beneficiaries capable of working;
7. Monitor the exercising of rights and protect children with disabilities from violence;

⁷ The basic tasks of the CSWs are determined primarily by the Law on Social and Child Protection, the Family Law, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and the Law on Travel Benefits of Persons with Disabilities.

8. Assess the eligibility of the guardian, foster parents and adoptive parents;
9. Provide training and professional support for foster parents;
10. Act as a guardianship authority;
11. Undertake measures, initiate judicial and other proceedings and take part in them;
12. Determine developmental disabilities, incapacity for work, or disability;
13. Keep records and take care of storing the records of beneficiaries;
14. Keep records of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities in the territory of the local self-government unit;
15. Report on the situation of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities in the territory of the local self-government unit;
16. Develop and participate in the implementation of strategies, plans and programmes;
17. Cooperate with state administration bodies, local governments and other organizations; and
18. Perform affairs in accordance with the Law on the Execution of the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro U-I No. 6/16 of 19 April 2017.

The CSWs are responsible for the provision of support to both children and adults from the above list of roles.

Table 1. Beneficiaries of Centres for Social Work

Children	Adults and the elderly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without parental care or a child whose parents are unable to provide care for the child; With disabilities and developmental difficulties; In conflict with the law; Abusing alcohol/psychoactive substances; Victim of abuse, neglect, domestic violence and exploitation, or at risk of becoming a victim, or a human trafficking victim; Whose parents disagree on the exercising of their parental rights; Found outside the place of residence without parental, foster-parent, or guardian supervision; Pregnant girl without family support and without adequate living conditions; Single parent with a child, without family support and without adequate living conditions; Who, due to special circumstances and social risk, needs an appropriate form of social protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With disability; Abusing alcohol/psychoactive substances; Victim of neglect, abuse, exploitation and domestic violence, or at risk of becoming a victim; Human trafficking victim; Homeless; Pregnant woman without family support and without adequate living conditions; Single parent with a child, without family support and without adequate living conditions; Who, due to special circumstances and social risk, needs an appropriate form of social protection.

A CSW is obliged to make and issue a decision at the beneficiary's request for exercising social and child protection rights within a maximum of 15 days and, if necessary, to conduct a special inquiry procedure within 30 days of the date of receipt of a properly served application, or the initiation of a procedure ex officio.

In addition to case management, assessment and planning affairs, the CSW is authorized to recognize the right to material benefits. The

Law on Social and Child Protection stipulates 14 forms of material benefits 8, 9, 10:

1. Financial support;
2. Care and support allowance;
3. Personal disability allowance;
4. Allowance for the parent or guardian of a personal disability beneficiary;
5. Non-recurring financial assistance;
6. Funeral expenses;

⁸ The maternity benefit for the mothers of three or more children was also in place in the period from 2015 to 2017.

⁹ Article 20, 41–42, 46–50, 52, 54 and 55–56 of the Law on Social and Child Protection.

¹⁰ Allowances under items 1 to 7 relate to basic social protection cash benefits; allowances under items 8 to 17 relate to basic childcare cash benefits.



7. Healthcare assistance;
8. Benefit for a newborn child;
9. Child allowance;
10. Costs of nutrition in preschool institutions;
11. Assistance for the upbringing and education of children with disabilities;
12. Reimbursement of salary compensation and salary compensation for maternity or parental leave, including compensation of the salary of an employee undertaking entrepreneurial activity for maternity or parental leave;
13. Multiple birth benefit; and
14. Reimbursement of salary compensation and salary compensation for part-time work.

In the procedure of exercising the rights to material benefits related to financial support, personal disability allowance, allowance of the parent or guardian of a personal disability beneficiary and non-recurring financial assistance, besides collecting documentation, the CSW must provide findings and an opinion that serves as documentary evidence^{11,12}. The state of Montenegro provides a wide range of material benefits that can significantly support children and other beneficiaries. Still, there is a question of the **burden of processing applications related to such a large number of different benefits**.

The Law on Social and Child Protection **is restrictive in relation to the institutional placement of children and prohibits placement of children from 0 to 3 years of age** and, for the general population of children, placement can be provided only when other options are exhausted and when the child cannot stay in a family or in family placement

– foster care¹³. In order to provide community-based support for beneficiaries, that is, to secure the child's stay in the family, the Law on Social and Child Protection prescribes various types of social and child protection services¹⁴:

The state of Montenegro provides a wide range of material benefits that can significantly support children and other beneficiaries. Still, there is the question of the burden of processing applications related to such a large number of different benefits.

1. Support services for life in the community (day-centre support services, home help, living with support, day centres, personal assistance, interpretation and translation into sign language and other support services in the community);
2. Counselling therapy and social/educational services (counselling, therapy, mediation, SOS telephone line and other services with the objective of overcoming crisis situations and of improving family relations);
3. Accommodation (foster family placement, family placement, in an institution, a day centre, refuge and other types of accommodation)
4. Services of urgent intervention (services ensuring safety in situations that endanger the life, health and development of beneficiaries, to be provided 24 hours a day)¹⁵.

In this manner, a wide range of social and child care services have been introduced. However, there are no dedicated funds set up for the development and funding of these services,

which significantly limits the development of services in the domain of social and child protection.

The Law on Social and Child Protection for the first time establishes the Institute for Social and Child Protection¹⁶ to perform development, counselling, research and other professional activities in social and child protection. The work of the centres is particularly important for those activities of the institution related to providing professional supervision support and monitoring the quality of professional work, organizing professional development programmes for professional workers and professional associates, informing the professional and general public about the implementation of social and child care, drawing attention to the needs and problems of beneficiaries, and issuing, renewing and revoking licences for work.

In addition to the establishment of the ISCP, the Law on Social and Child Protection provides a range of mechanisms that should guarantee the professionalism of the employees of the CSWs, such as obligatory internships¹⁷, taking a professional examination¹⁸, vocational training of professional workers¹⁹, as well as the licensing of professional workers²⁰.

The Law on Social and Child Protection recognizes the MLSW as the body competent for supervision over professional work, while inspection supervision over the work of CSWs is carried out by the Directorate for Inspection Affairs and its Sector for the Inspection of Social and Child Protection²¹.

A wide range of social and child care services has been introduced. However, no dedicated funds have been set up for the development and financing of these services, which significantly limits the development of social and child care services.

In the area of custodial affairs, the obligations of the CSW are stipulated by the Family Law (15). In accordance with this law, a CSW is responsible for protecting the best interests and rights of the child. In addition to this, this law provides for the obligation of all actors, including citizens, to notify a CSW as soon as they find out about any violation of the rights of the child²², and in particular emphasizes that the judicial authorities, other bodies, medical, educational and other institutions, non-governmental organizations and citizens have to notify a custodial body as soon as they find out that a parent is unable to exercise his/her parental rights.²³

The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (16) stipulates the obligation and determines the mechanisms for coordinating the activities of all bodies and institutions for the protection of victims of violence²⁴ and defines in detail the role of the key actors protecting against domestic violence. This law stipulates that it is the obligation of a CSW to:

- Set up a multidisciplinary expert team in order to design a victim-assistance plan and coordinate victim-assistance activities; and
- Act in cases of domestic violence following an expedited procedure²⁵.

The Law on Protection from Family Violence sets additional guarantees for the protection of children with disabilities and persons

11 Article 78, Law on Social and Child Protection.

12 When the exercising of rights in the field of material benefits requires the assessment of the degree of developmental disabilities, or incapacity for work, or the disability itself, the CSW determines this fact based on the findings, assessments and opinions of the Social and Medical Commission.

13 Article 70, Law on Social and Child Protection.

14 Articles 60 and 62–72, Law on Social and Child Protection.

15 Emergency interventions are carried out through being on standby, as a special form of work outside of working hours, during which an employee must be continuously available.

16 Articles 120–121, Law on Social and Child Protection.

17 Article 126, Law on Social and Child Protection.

18 Article 127, Law on Social and Child Protection.

19 Article 128, Law on Social and Child Protection.

20 Articles 126–139, Law on Social and Child Protection.

21 Articles 163–164, Law on Social and Child Protection.

22 Article 5, Family Law.

23 Article 80, Family Law.

24 Article 5, Law on Protection from Family Violence.

25 Article 6, Law on Protection from Family Violence.



with disabilities, and stipulates that it is the obligation of the CSW to:

- Keep records of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities on the territory of the local self-government unit²⁶;
- Pay visits at least once a month to children with disabilities, and produce written reports²⁷; and
- Deliver a report at least once every six months in written form to the ministry competent for social care affairs, which shall contain data on the level of realization of social care for children and persons with disabilities.²⁸

A WIDE RANGE OF SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES HAS BEEN INTRODUCED. HOWEVER, NO DEDICATED FUNDS HAVE BEEN SET UP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCING OF THESE SERVICES, WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY LIMITS THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES.

Also, the Law on Protection from Family Violence opens the possibility for a CSW to initiate a procedure for determining protection measures²⁹, as well as the possibility of a misdemeanour body to require a CSW to seek an opinion on the purpose of such a protection measure³⁰.

The Law on Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings (17) stipulates that a person who, at the time of committing an unlawful act which is qualified by law as a criminal offence, is younger than 14 (a child), may not be tried in criminal proceedings³¹. In these cases, the criminal charges are dismissed, and/or the proceedings are suspended, and the data on the offence and the perpetrator are referred to the custodianship authority to take further measures, or to a CSW³². The prosecutor may

request that the CSW produce a report on the child's personality and the circumstances in which he/she lives, to ascertain the circumstances in which the offence was committed, the juvenile's antecedents and his/her personal characteristics³³. The CSW informs the judicial authorities about the application of educational orders³⁴, criminal sanctions³⁵, educational measures or measures of special obligations³⁶. The CSW also participates in the execution of institutional measures and of sentences of juvenile imprisonment³⁷ and is obliged to provide the child with the necessary assistance following the enforcement of an institutional measure or of a sentence of juvenile detention.³⁸

26 Article 12, Law on Protection from Family Violence.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Article 27, Law on Protection from Family Violence.

30 Article 29, Law on Protection from Family Violence.

31 Article 2, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

32 Article 47, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

33 Article 69, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

34 Article 13, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

35 Article 98, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

36 Articles 126–127, 129, 131, 133, 134 and 137–138, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

37 Articles 148–149 and 180, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.

38 Article 181, Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings.



4.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK REGULATING THE ORGANIZATION OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

4.2.1 Organization of Centres for Social Work and job descriptions

The organization of the CSWs is more closely defined by the Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The work of the CSWs is carried out through the professional department and department for financial and administrative and technical affairs³⁹. Depending on the number of professional workers, the professional department can be established as a unique organizational unit or a number of professional departments can be established.

In CSWs, there are work positions of managers, supervisors⁴², professional workers and other workers. A professional worker can be employed to perform basic tasks related to social and child care (case manager and professional worker in charge of cash benefits), as well as to be in charge of legal affairs. Other workers can be employed to deal with financial/administrative and technical affairs. In CSWs with seven or more professional workers, supervision is carried out by a supervisor, while in centres with up to six professional workers supervision is carried out by the ISCP⁴³ (18). Following the approval of the head of department, the supervisor may also perform the role of case manager and carry out specialized professional tasks.

Up to 10 professional workers
1. Unique professional service.
11–16 professional workers ⁴⁰
1. Professional department for children and young people, and adults and the elderly.
2. Professional department for cash benefits and legal affairs.
More than 16 professional workers ⁴¹
1. Professional department for children and young people.
2. Professional department for adults and the elderly.
3. Professional department for cash benefits and legal affairs.

40 A professional department for cash benefits in the CSWs may be organized as a professional service if it has at least two professional workers engaged on legal affairs and one professional worker engaged on basic social and child protection affairs.

41 A professional department for children and young people and a department for adults and elderly people may be organized if the CSW has at least six professional workers engaged on basic social and child protection affairs (at least three per professional department).

42 Supervision or so-called support to professional workers at the CSWs was introduced in Montenegro following the adoption of the Law on Social and Child Protection in 2013 (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 27/13 of 11 June 2013). The Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 17/16 of 11 March 2016) introduced supervision in CSWs as a form of internal professional support.

43 Article 11, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.

39 Article 4, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.



The Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work defines in detail the duties of managers, supervisors and professional workers at the CSWs⁴⁴, while the tasks of the

Department for Financial and Administrative and Technical Affairs are regulated by the Act on the Internal Organization and Job Systematization of Centres for Social Work (18).

44 Articles 12–14, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.

Table 3. Job descriptions of Centres for Social Work

POSITION	JOB DESCRIPTION
Manager	Organizes the work of professional workers, supervises the keeping of records and documents, assigns the cases, coordinates the work with other departments and services at the centre and local self-government units, monitors the work of interns and volunteers and appoints their mentors, produces monthly, quarterly and annual plans, programmes and work reports.
Supervisor	Guides, trains, supports, encourages and evaluates the work and development of case managers' professional competencies case managers, organizes and carries out the supervision procedure, informs the head of the professional department about cases of unprofessional and illegal behaviour by of case managers, and compiles an annual progress report on the work of case managers.
Case manager	Informs the beneficiary of his/her rights, plans and carries out an initial and targeted assessment, produces proposals of plans and services, monitors and coordinates the implementation of proposed services, performs a review and evaluation, and generally organizes and realizes the exercising of rights, services and protection measures, keeps records and documentation about the beneficiary, drafts and explains the findings and expert opinion and may perform specialized professional tasks if he/she meets the prescribed criteria for such tasks.
Professional worker in charge of cash benefits	Collects data for exercising the right to cash benefits, assesses the situation and needs of beneficiaries, produces findings and opinions, motivates and involves the beneficiaries through appropriate forms of activation, creates an individual activation plan and generally provides support for community involvement.
Professional worker in charge of legal affairs	Informs the beneficiaries about procedures for exercising their rights, about their rights and obligations, checks the admissibility of evidence and submitted documents, collects evidence from other competent authorities necessary for the exercising of rights, performs actions related to the initiation of court and other procedures, provides consultative support to the case manager and the professional worker in charge of cash benefits.

THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK SEES THE CSW AS A REACTIVE INSTITUTION AND DOES NOT CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR PROACTIVE ACTION BY THE CSW.

The basic professional tasks of the CSW are carried out by the case manager and professional worker in charge of cash benefits^{45,46}. Basic professional tasks are carried out by professionals who possess the appropriate educational profile and work licence⁴⁷. Supervisory tasks can be performed by professional workers who perform basic social and child protection tasks, provided they have five years of experience and have acquired the necessary knowledge in the field of supervision⁴⁸. At the level of CSWs, planning and development tasks can be performed by sociologists with a specialist degree in the field of sociological sciences and a licence to work, as well as professional workers who perform basic professional tasks⁴⁹.

45 The work of a case manager can be done by a social worker, a psychologist, a pedagogue, a special pedagogue, a sociologist, a defectologist and an andragogue, while the work of a professional worker in charge of cash benefits can only be carried out by a social worker.

46 Article 4, Rulebook on Detailed Conditions and Standards for the Performance of Professional Work in the Area of Social and Child Protection.

47 Article 7, Rulebook on Detailed Conditions and Standards for the Performance of Professional Work in the Area of Social and Child Protection.

48 Article 12, Rulebook on Detailed Conditions and Standards for the Performance of Professional Work in the Area of Social and Child Protection.

49 Articles 15 and 16, Rulebook on Detailed Conditions and Standards for the Performance of Professional Work in the Area of Social and Child Protection.



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CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

In order to establish a CSW, it is necessary to have three professional workers performing basic professional tasks in social and child protection, one professional worker in charge of legal affairs, two workers in charge of administrative and financial affairs and one technical worker⁵⁰ (18). When it comes to branch units, at least two professional workers in charge of basic professional activities of social and child care must be employed, alongside one professional worker in legal affairs, one administrative/financial worker and one technical worker, while the offices must have at least one professional worker performing basic professional tasks in social and child care⁵¹ (18). In addition to the minimum number of employees, depending on the number of inhabitants covered by the CSW and the increase in the number of beneficiaries in the previous year, the territorial coverage or a

50 Article 21, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.

51 Article 21, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.



particularly complex beneficiary structure, shall also be taken in consideration when defining the total number of employees of the CSW^{52,53}.

4.2.2 Professional procedure

The basic stages of the professional procedure at the CSW are: admission, assessment, planning, review and evaluation.

The admission procedure is common to both case management and cash benefits. The centre opens a case only after the case has been reported by other services or citizens. The professional worker in charge of cash benefits receives the application or speaks to the person who reported the case. Besides a professional worker in charge of cash benefits, admission can also be performed by a professional

52 Articles 22–24, Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of Centres for Social Work.

53 If a CSW covers a territory of more than 10,000 inhabitants, there should be one additional professional for basic professional services for every 5,000 inhabitants; if there are more than 30,000 inhabitants, there should be one additional professional worker in legal affairs for every 30,000 inhabitants; for up to 100,000 inhabitants there should be one professional worker in planning and development, and an additional one for every additional 50,000 inhabitants. In doing so, out of the total number of professional workers in the centres, at least 50% should be social workers. CSWs may recruit additional administrative, financial and technical workers, workers if the territory has: 1) fewer than one employee in administrative and financial affairs and one employee in technical affairs for 30,000 inhabitants; 2) for between 30,000 and 60,000 inhabitants – two workers in administrative affairs and one technical worker; 3) for between 60,000 and 100,000 inhabitants – three workers in administrative and financial affairs and two workers in technical affairs; 4) for between 100,000 and 150,000 inhabitants – four workers in administrative and financial affairs and three workers in technical affairs; 5) for between 150,000 and 200,000 inhabitants – five workers in administrative and financial affairs and three workers in technical affairs. Article 24 prescribes the possibility of increasing the number of employees based on an increase in the number of beneficiaries which has not been considered in the above calculation.

worker dealing with basic professional tasks or a professional worker in charge of legal affairs, with the support of workers in charge of administrative and financial affairs (18). If the centre finds the case admissible, the case shall be forwarded to the head of the professional department, that is, the case manager or other responsible professional worker. It is the obligation of the professional worker to determine the priority of treatment based on the data collected during admission. Based on the collected data, the following priorities are determined – immediate intervention (within 24 hours), urgent intervention (within 3 days) and regular intervention (within 5 working days). In accordance with the Law on Social and Child Protection (19), the CSW is obliged to provide immediate intervention services, which should be available to citizens 24 hours a day. These are realized in all situations when the safety, health and development of the beneficiary are under direct threat. If the right to cash benefits is being exercised, the case is referred to the head of the professional department responsible for cash benefits, while the beneficiary is referred to a lawyer to be further informed about their rights.

This design of the admission procedure strongly relies on the practice of referring beneficiaries to the CSWs by other systems, which **makes the social and child protection system dependent on other systems in terms of the coverage and identification of potential beneficiaries**. Accordingly, none of the jobs in the job description list includes visiting communities to identify families at risk, work with diverse groups in the community to raise citizens' awareness of the work of the centre, education of citizens regarding the support they can receive, and the initiation or development of preventive programmes⁵⁴.

54 Although the law stipulates the obligation of transparency with regard to informing the public about social and child protection in the media, as well as in other ways, the Rulebook regulating the manner of work of the centres does not recognize this principle, and hence it has not been determined in which way the CSWs inform citizens about their rights and the services that are available.

	PROCEDURE	DOCUMENTATION	TIMEFRAME
Admission	<p>The admission process includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Receiving the application, telephone calls and contact with the beneficiary. 2) Checking the admissibility of the application. 3) Determining the priority of treatment. 4) Referral to other competent authorities and organizations. 5) Organizing immediate intervention 	<p>Documentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) PL form. 2) Register of rejected applications. 	/
Case Assignment	<p>The process of case assignment to a case manager or worker in charge of cash benefits can be done by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The head of the professional department. 2) The director 	/	/
Initial Assessment	<p>The initial assessment is done by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The case manager. 2) The supervisor, with the approval of the head of the professional department. <p>People involved: manager and/or supervisor.</p>	<p>Documentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) PR-1 form. 2) PR-2 form. 3) LP form. 	<p>A maximum of 10 working days from the date of the case assignment</p>
Targeted Assessment	<p>The targeted assessment is carried out by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The case manager. 2) The supervisor, with the approval of the head of the professional department. 	<p>Documentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) LPK or NM-OS forms. 2) Findings and opinion. 	<p>A maximum of 30 or 60 days from the date of completion of the initial assessment</p>
Development of plan	<p>The preparation of the plan is done by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The case manager. 2) The supervisor, with the approval of the head of the professional department. <p>People involved: the child, parents, other important persons and organizations, manager and/or supervisor</p>	<p>Documentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) PU Form. 	<p>Initial plan of services and measures – a maximum of 15 days from the date of beginning of work, after the initial assessment; other plans can be made within 60 days of the date of beginning of work.</p>
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Monitoring and evaluation are carried out by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The case manager. 2) The supervisor if he/she is in charge of the case. <p>People involved: the child, parents, other important persons and organizations, manager and/or supervisor</p>	<p>Documentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) LPK Form. 	<p>A review is performed 6 months after the adoption of the individual plan</p>

Table 4. Stages of work in case management



The legislative framework sees the CSW as a reactive institution and does not create the conditions for proactive action by the CSW. Due to all this, even though it is conceived as the main pillar of the social and child protection system, the CSW is rather passive when it comes to identifying the needs of children and families at risk.

Upon admission, the case manager should start planning an initial assessment in consultation with the supervisor or with the head of the department. Within the initial assessment, the case manager collects information on the situation and needs of the beneficiary, with the mandatory involvement of different people and institutions that can provide relevant information.

The targeted assessment is planned and implemented based on the findings from the initial assessment, when the case manager decides on the type of additional data needed to undertake certain activities and measures. This **assessment process provides a good basis for identifying risks and strengths, as well as for planning protection and creating support networks.**

The development of a service plan takes place in parallel with the assessment procedure. The following various individual service plans (18) are developed at the centre:

- The initial plan of services and measures, no later than 15 days after the day when the work with the beneficiary started;
- A family plan with a continuity plan for the child, no later than 60 days after the day when the work with the beneficiary started;
- A plan of services and measures for adults and the elderly, from the day when the work with the beneficiary started; and
- A self-reliance plan for children under the age of 14.

The CSW is obliged to regularly review the work with the beneficiary. The Rulebook defines the standards for review and evaluation in relation to the age or target group (18). The case can be closed or reviewed based on the results of the evaluation.

If a person expresses his/her intention to exercise one of the rights in the domain of cash benefits, the employee who performed the admission procedure refers the case to the head of the professional department and refers the beneficiary to a lawyer. Also, the case manager him/herself can initiate a procedure for exercising the right to material benefits in the SWIS if such a need arises during their work. An employee working in legal affairs is obliged to inform the beneficiary about the rights and procedures for exercising their rights, as well as about the beneficiary's obligations. After that, the beneficiary is referred to a professional worker in charge of cash benefits to provide him/her with the necessary information to properly assess the beneficiary's needs and produce findings and opinions.

At the same time, the lawyer is obliged to obtain the evidence from other bodies that is necessary for exercising the right to cash benefits. Most of the material evidence for exercising rights is available through the SWIS, which is regularly updated in terms of the eligibility criteria, which significantly facilitates the availability of rights to beneficiaries. After the necessary documentation and evidence have been collected, the lawyer shall verify the admissibility of the claim and issue a decision on the exercising of the right to cash benefits.

4.3.3 Level of harmonization of the legislative framework with international standards

Based on the review of the legislative framework, it can be concluded that the legislative framework recognizes the beneficiary as a subject of protection, and guarantees the beneficiary's right to participate in every stage of the work of CSWs, the active involvement of beneficiaries in the creation, selection and use of rights in the domain of social and child care, and voluntary participation in procedures related to the exercising of rights. This is also formalized within the documentation of the CSW and beneficiaries are required to sign the

documents produced by their case manager, such as the service plan, to confirm that they are familiar and in compliance with the content of the documents relating to them⁵⁵. However, the question remains as to whether these mechanisms are a sufficient guarantee for the participation of the beneficiaries, since the by-laws do not establish clear obligations or procedures for the participation of beneficiaries, e.g. sanctions if the beneficiaries' participation is lacking. Also, there are no appeal mechanisms at the level of CSWs, nor is there anyone in charge of protecting the rights of the beneficiaries in relation to the work of the CSWs, to ensure effective protection of the beneficiaries. These gaps in the legislative framework are the reason for a major imbalance in power between the beneficiaries and professional workers in the process of protection, which raises the risk that this principle defined at the level of the law does not apply in practice.

The legal framework gives broad authority to the CSWs to protect and guarantee the rights of beneficiaries and the best interests of beneficiaries, especially children. Apart from obliging all citizens and organizations to report violations of children's rights to CSWs, the centre, as a referral body for social and child care services, controls the quality of the work of the service providers and the fulfilment of the planned goals based on the individual work plans, which enables the CSWs to actively work to fulfil the best interests of beneficiaries in the protection process. However, the CSWs cannot influence the quality of work of other institutions, in relation to the best interests of those beneficiaries not in the social and child protection system, which can be crucial to achieving the best interests of beneficiaries, such as the health and education systems. Similarly, the best interest is neither specified nor defined, although the principle is mentioned in the Family Law. The insufficient definition of this principle and the lack of clear guidelines for work in relation to determining the best interest can be a significant challenge for the implementation of the principle of best interest in work.

⁵⁵ The beneficiary's refusal to sign his/her plan must be justified.

AT THE LEVEL OF THE CSW, THERE ARE NO APPEAL MECHANISMS, NOR IS THERE ANYONE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF BENEFICIARIES.

The legal framework designates CSWs as the institutions responsible for the coordination of all the local community actors in the processes of providing services, assistance and support. However, the legal framework does not provide systemic mechanisms for coordination, nor the responsibilities of representatives of other systems to respond to the invitations of the CSWs, which means that the involvement of other actors remains at the level of their willingness. In such a context, the **expectations from CSWs are significantly higher, especially in terms of coordination and providing immediate protection at the local level, than their real possibilities allow.** The lack of clear provisions for the participation of these institutions in the process of protection and ways of cooperation with the CSWs can be a barrier to organizing effective social and child care in Montenegro. As already stated, the **legal framework provides for a general appeal mechanism**, where the second-instance authority is the ministry responsible for social welfare, which does not ensure the accessibility of the appeal mechanism to all beneficiaries.

Prevention, as a form of activity, is not defined in the job description of the CSWs. Usually, other systems identify risks, or the beneficiaries turn to help themselves, which most often happens in high-risk situations. The organization of the CSWs, based on the case management method, was created to provide support in high- and medium-risk situations, which places the CSWs primarily in the position of a reactive service.





Table 5. Structure of children and young people who are CSW beneficiaries (ISCP data)

	N	%
Cash benefits	25,814	88.9
In conflict with the law	871	3.0
Placement in foster families	394	1.4
Assessment of parental competencies	390	1.3
Violence	371	1.3
Witnesses of violence	244	0.8
Approval of the CSW on the disposal of the property of a minor	237	0.8
Emergency intervention services	218	0.8
Other services (day-care centres, resource centres)	184	0.6
Placement in an institution	128	0.4
Guardianship	46	0.2
Guardianship in special cases	44	0.2
Limitation of parental rights	32	0.1
Supervision of the exercising of parental rights	26	0.1
Deprivation of parental rights	16	0.1
Placement in the institution for upbringing and education	13	0.0
Extension of parental rights	8	0.0
Adoption	7	0.0
Total	28,915	100

Based on the data of the ISCP, the most frequently used cash benefit is child allowance, then benefit for a newborn child, as well as multiple-birth benefit (20).

Figure 3. Basic cash benefits in the domain of childcare

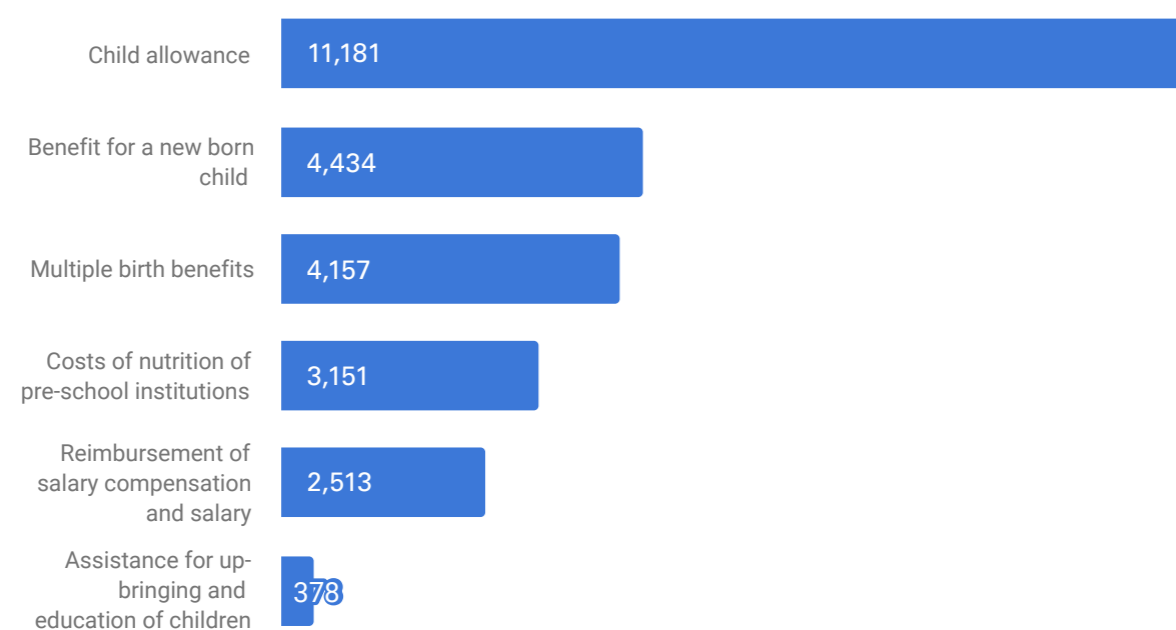


Table 6. Some of the material allowance beneficiaries per municipality (MONSTAT, 2016)

Municipality	Average number of beneficiaries per month			
	Financial support to families		Personal disability allowance	Care and support allowance
	Number of families	Number of family members		
Andrijevica	138	393	22	201
Bijelo Polje	805	2,429	244	1,467
Bar	523	1,642	135	721
Berane	1,025	3,063	126	1,052
Budva	59	124	42	143
Cetinje	209	583	89	561
Danilovgrad	194	555	59	343
Gusinje	96	261	16	91
Herceg Novi	102	268	102	396
Kolašin	181	444	39	227
Kotor	54	124	48	267
Mojkovac	163	455	42	395
Nikšić	1,392	4,134	232	1,582
Petnjica	0	0	0	0
Plav	288	912	56	400
Pljevlja	417	1,129	108	1,132
Plužine	43	86	13	105
Podgorica	1,989	6,261	604	4,168
Rožaje	896	3,050	126	691
Šavnik	49	96	8	63
Tivat	68	181	18	138
Ulcinj	218	611	77	538
Žabljak	52	72	16	175
Crna Gora	8,961	26,873	2,222	14,856

On 31 December 2017, the CSWs recorded 46 children under guardianship, and another 44 under guardianship in special cases, with their guardians primarily being foster parents or professional workers of the CSWs (20). In 2017, the right to financial support was used by 7,374 families with 22,112 members; the personal disability allowance was used by 2,356 people; the care and support allowance was used by 13,386 people; the health protection support was used by 3,802 people; funeral costs were covered in 30 cases; the right to compensation for a newborn child was used by 598 people; the

right to child allowance was exercised by 5,829 families with 10,876 children; compensation for the parent or guardian of a beneficiary of the personal disability allowance was used by 1,892 people; the costs of nutrition in preschool institutions were covered for 304 people; reimbursement of salary compensation and salary compensation for maternity or parental leave was used by 1,745 people; benefits for a newborn child were used by 3,905 people; and reimbursement of salary compensation and salary compensation for part-time work was used by 14 people (10).



5.3 THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES



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As the work of the CSWs strongly relies on the availability of community-based services, we will present data that indicates the level of development of services for children in Montenegro.

During the reform, the number of children in the Children's Home "Mladost" in Bijela decreased significantly. The number of children placed in this institution decreased by 49.7% in the period 2008–2017, and in July 2017 it stood at 85 (10, 20). In the context of the transformation of the system, the Small Group Home was established in Bijelo Polje, with six children living in it in 2017 (10). This process was accompanied by an increase in the number of children in foster families, so at the end of 2017 there were 394 children in 288 foster families, which is 29.6% more than in 2010, with the highest level of increase in fostering children recorded in the last two years (12, 20). Although

kinship foster care is dominant, with 84.0% of children living with relatives, compared to 2010 there has been a rise in the number of children in non-kinship foster families from nine to 63, that is, from 3.0% to 16.0% in terms of the share (12, 20). It is important to mention that most children in institutions currently are children with developmental disabilities, with only six children being placed into foster care with intensive support (20). During the reform, community-based services were also developed. Significant funds were invested in the development of day-care centres, 13 of which were established⁵⁹ – serving 180 children and young people with disabilities in 2017 (20) with girls being significantly more represented (62.2%). In 2016, the family outreach worker service was piloted, and in 2018, the process of establishing an SOS telephone for child victims of violence was initiated (14).

⁵⁹ Day-care centres have been established in Bijelo Polje, Nikšić, Pljevlja, Herceg Novi, Plav, Ulcinj, Cetinje, Berane, Mojkovac, Rožaje, Danilovgrad, Podgorica and in the Public Institution "Mladost" in Bijela, within the process of its transformation.



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6

ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

6.1 ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

Based on the analysis of the job systematization, it can be concluded that the systematization of jobs is, to the greatest extent, harmonized with the legislative framework.

OF THE 365 JOBS THAT ARE PROJECTED BASED ON SYSTEMATIZATION OF JOBS, 3.8% ARE NOT IN LINE WITH THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK.

Of the 365 jobs that are projected on the basis of the systematization of jobs, 3.8% are not in line with the legislative framework⁶⁰. The following table shows the structure of employees in the CSWs based on the job classification system.

60 CSW Podgorica – professional associate for the calculation of benefits in the field of child protection and travel benefits for persons with disabilities with a work complexity coefficient of 7.22, professional associate for human resources management with a work complexity coefficient of 7.22; CSW Bijelo Polje – worker for personal disability allowances, worker for health care support, assistant director; CSW Nikšić – professional associate in project management; CSW Bar, branch unit Ulcinj – professional associate for human resources management with a work complexity coefficient of 7.22; CSW Rožaje – admissions worker with a work complexity coefficient of 4.66.

Table 7. Structure of prescribed positions in Centres for Social Work

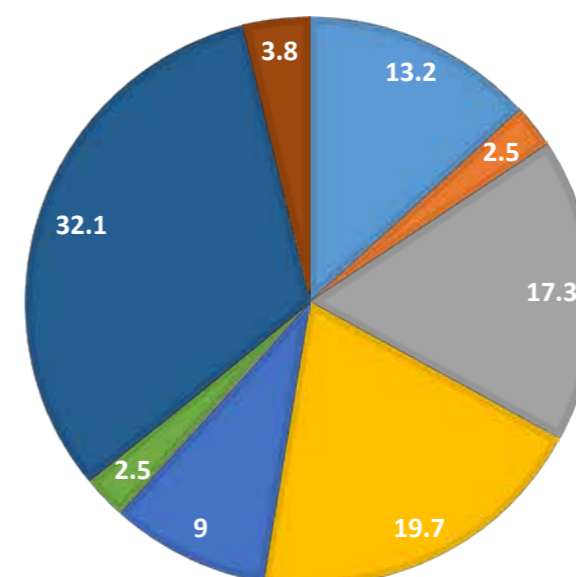
Position	N	%
Director	13	3.6
Head of Department	11	3.0
Head of the Department for Cash Benefits	9	2.5
Head of the Department for Children and Young People, and Adults and the Elderly	4	1.1
Head of the Department for Children and Young People	2	0.5
Head of the Department for Adults and the Elderly	2	0.5
Head of the Department for Administrative and Financial Affairs	7	1.9
Supervisor in the Department for Children and Young People	4	1.1
Supervisor in the Department for Adults and the Elderly	3	0.8
Supervisor	2	0.5
Case manager in the Department for Children and Young People	16	4.4
Case manager in the Department for Adults and the Elderly	6	1.6
Case manager	41	11.2
Professional worker in charge of cash benefits	72	19.7
Professional worker in charge of legal affairs	33	9.0
Professional worker in charge of planning and development	9	2.5
Professional worker in charge of financial and administrative affairs	38	10.4
Worker in charge of technical activities	79	21.6
Jobs not provided for by the Rulebook	14	3.8
Total	365	100.0

In the overall structure of employees, the highest number of employees (117) work on financial, administrative and technical jobs with a share of 32%. There is a significant percentage (13.1%) of managerial staff, 2.5% of employees are involved in planning and development work, with 3.8% working on so-called other (non-systematized) jobs. Although the professional procedure in the CSWs is based on the case management method, only 17.3% of workers deal with this type of work, while 19.7% of professional workers deal with cash benefits, and 9.0% with legal matters.

Overall, the structure of staff in CSWs is dominated by those who are not engaged in direct work with beneficiaries (51.5%).

There are only nine workers who act as supervisors in all CSWs. Internal supervision functions in four CSWs – those in Podgorica, Bar, Bijelo Polje and Nikšić – while in the other centres supervision is carried out by the ISCP.

- Management
- Supervision
- Case Managers
- Professional for financial support
- Professional for legal support
- Professional for planning and development activities
- Financial, administrative and technical staff
- Other



OVERALL, THE STRUCTURE OF STAFF IN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK IS DOMINATED BY THOSE WHO ARE NOT ENGAGED IN DIRECT WORK WITH BENEFICIARIES (51.5%).

WHEN IT COMES TO CASE-MANAGEMENT-RELATED WORK, ONLY 17.3% OF WORKERS DEAL WITH THIS TYPE OF WORK, WHILE 19.7% OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS DEAL WITH CASH BENEFITS AND 9.0% WITH LEGAL MATTERS.

Although the job systematization is consistent with the legislative framework to a large extent, the staff structure cannot be considered optimal. The existing method of work is based on the case-management method, but only 17.3% are dealing with this kind of jobs. On the other hand, 18.9% of professional workers are in charge of cash benefits. This is due to the complex structure of services that the CSW provides, as well as to the inadequate organization and systematization of jobs in the centres.

If we analyse the structure of jobs in individual centres, we can notice significant differences. Thus, the share of management employees in the CSWs varies from 26.7% in the CSW in Herceg Novi to 5.6% in the CSW in Plav. The share of professional workers working directly with beneficiaries ranges from 29.4%

Figure 4. The share of different positions envisaged by the Rulebook on the staff structure.



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in the CSW in Cetinje to 58.8% in the CSW in Mojkovac. The largest number of financial / administrative and technical workers are employed in Danilovgrad (56.3%), and the smallest number in Kotor (22.2%).

Eight of the 13 CSWs in Montenegro have their own branch units^{61,62}. The results of the research indicate that the prescribed standards are not being met for all those units. According to the existing regulations, a branch unit (BU) must have two employees engaged in basic professional work, and half of them (6) do not meet this standard – BU Golubovci has one professional worker working on cash benefits; BU Gusinje also has one professional worker dealing with cash benefits; BU Plužine does not have any employees covering basic professional tasks; BU Šavnik does not have any employees covering basic professional tasks; BU Žabljak does not have any employees covering basic professional tasks; and BU

Petnjica has one case manager. Although there are two professional workers in BU Tuzi, there are no case managers⁶³. So, **58.3% of branch units do not meet the prescribed standards for professional workers**, which calls into question the quality of the services they provide.

There are differences in the human resources available to CSWs and regional units especially when comparing centres and branch units of the same size. For example, the ratio of professional workers to inhabitants in the territory of Mojkovac is 1 to 1,437, and in the territory of Kolašin this ratio stands at 1 to 2,095⁶⁴. Similarly, if we observe the situation in Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Budva and Ulcinj, it can be concluded that the ratio of professional workers to inhabitants is significantly more favourable in CSWs (Cetinje and Danilovgrad) than in branch units (Budva, Ulcinj)⁶⁵.

61 There are 12 branch units in total.

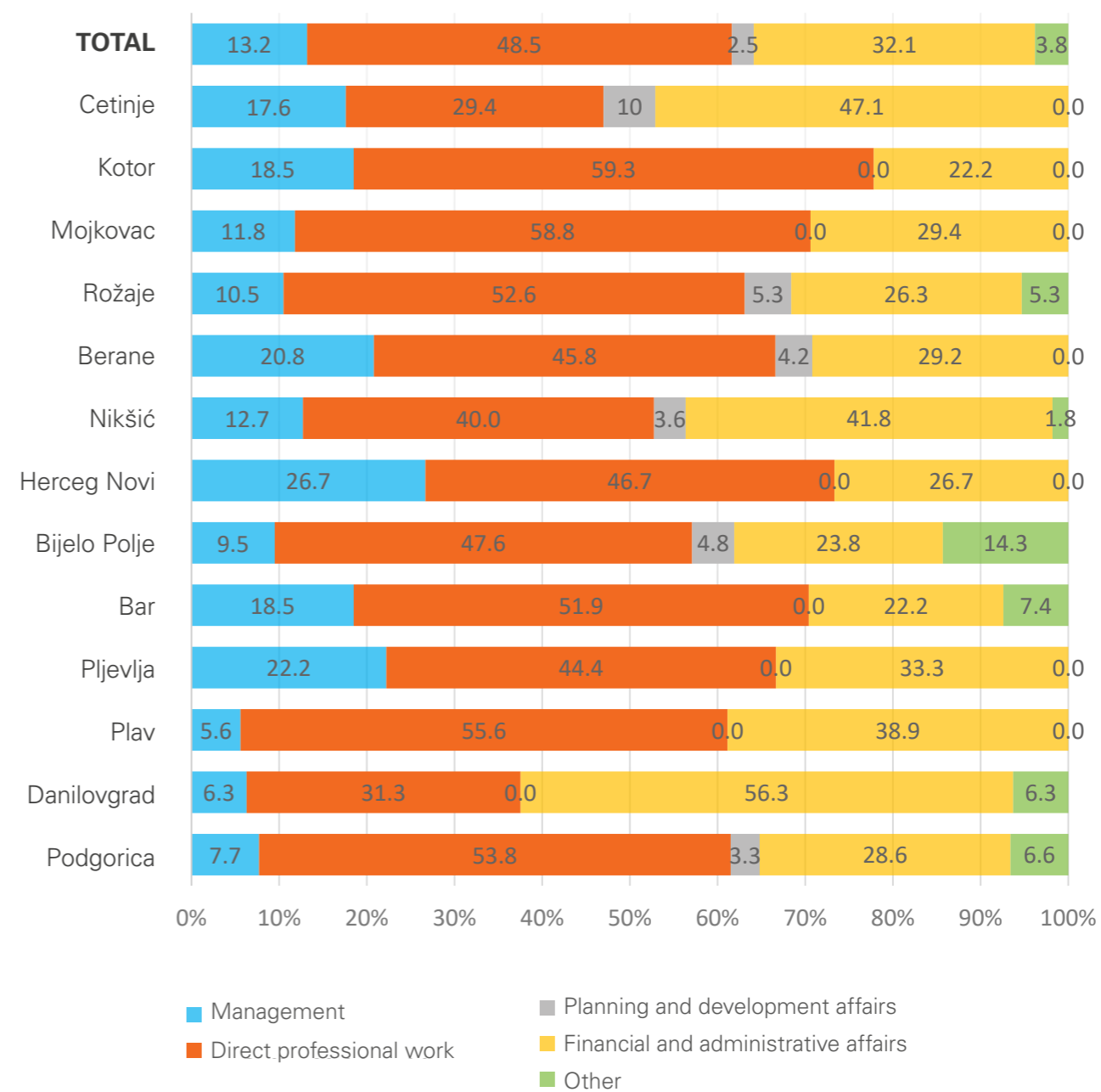
62 CSW Bar – Branch Unit Ulcinj; CSW Podgorica – Branch Unit Golubovci, Branch Unit Tuzi; CSW Pljevlja – Branch Unit Žabljak; CSW Nikšić – Branch Unit Plužine, Branch Unit Šavnik; CSW Mojkovac – Branch Unit Kolašin; CSW Kotor – Branch Unit Tivat, Branch Unit Budva; CSW Berane – Branch Unit Andrijevica, Branch Unit Petnjica, CSW Plav – Branch Unit Gusinje.

63 Branch Unit Tuzi has two workers dealing with basic professional jobs, but both work on cash benefits.

64 The population of Mojkovac is 8,662, and the population of Kolašin is 8,380.

65 The exception to this rule is Tivat, which has a significantly higher number of workers than the other branch units.

Figure 5. Staff structure in Centres for Social Work in relation to the type of the job.



It is obvious that there are significant differences in the number of professional workers per capita, and that they range from 1 professional worker per 591 inhabitants in Plav to the ratio of 1 to 8,047 in Golubovci, **which is worse by a factor of about 13.**

58.3% OF BRANCH UNITS DO NOT MEET THE PRESCRIBED STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL WORKERS, WHICH CALLS INTO QUESTION THE QUALITY OF THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE.



At the same time, according to official statistical data, 3,123 fewer people live in Plav than in Golubovci (Plav – 13,108, Golubovci – 16,231).

The difference is even more drastic when comparing Plav and Ulcinj. In Plav there is one professional worker covering 591 inhabitants,

while in Ulcinj this ratio is 1 to 6,640 and Ulcinj has 6,613 more inhabitants than Plav.

Data shows that the **most favourable ratio between CSW workers and inhabitants** is in the main offices of CSWs and branch units covering fewer than 10,000 inhabitants.

Figure 6. Overview of the number of inhabitants per professional worker in the main offices of the Centres for Social Work and branch units.

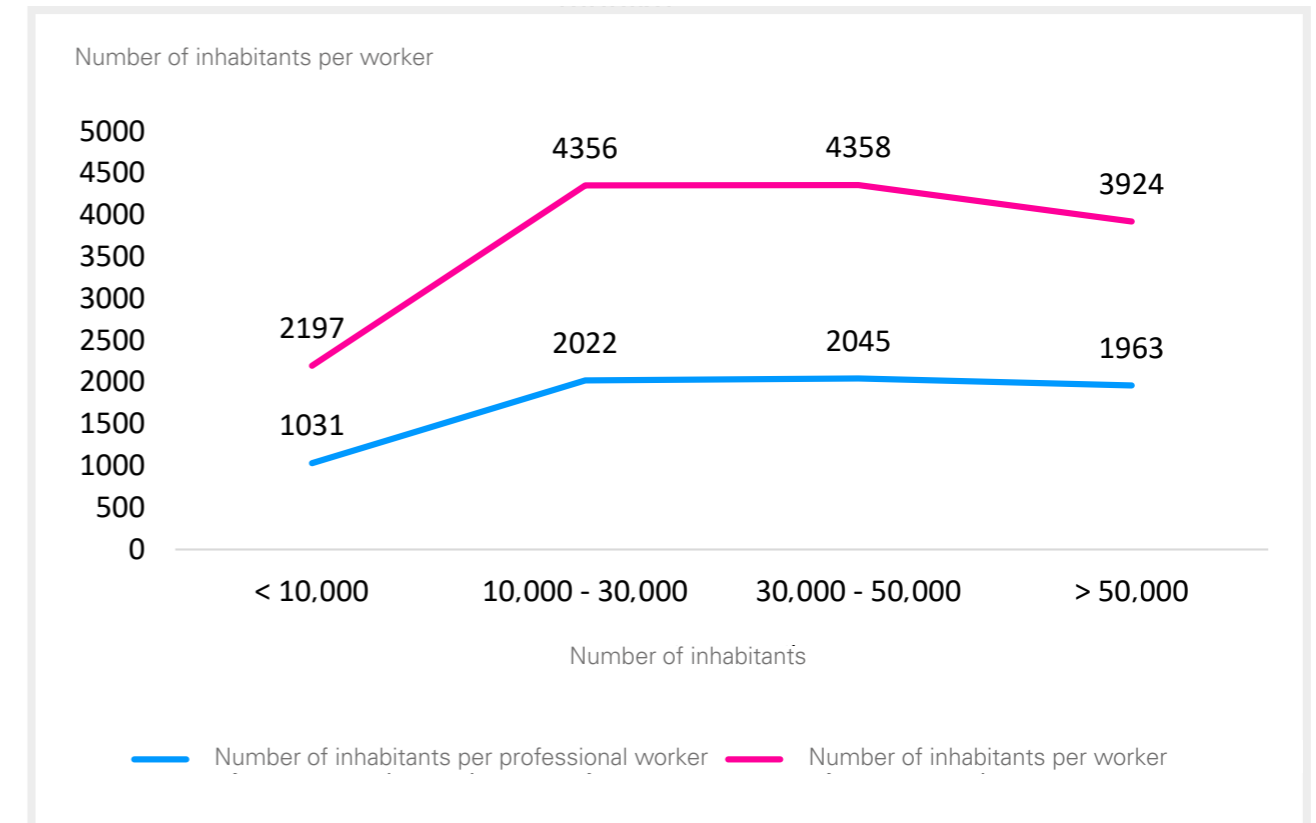
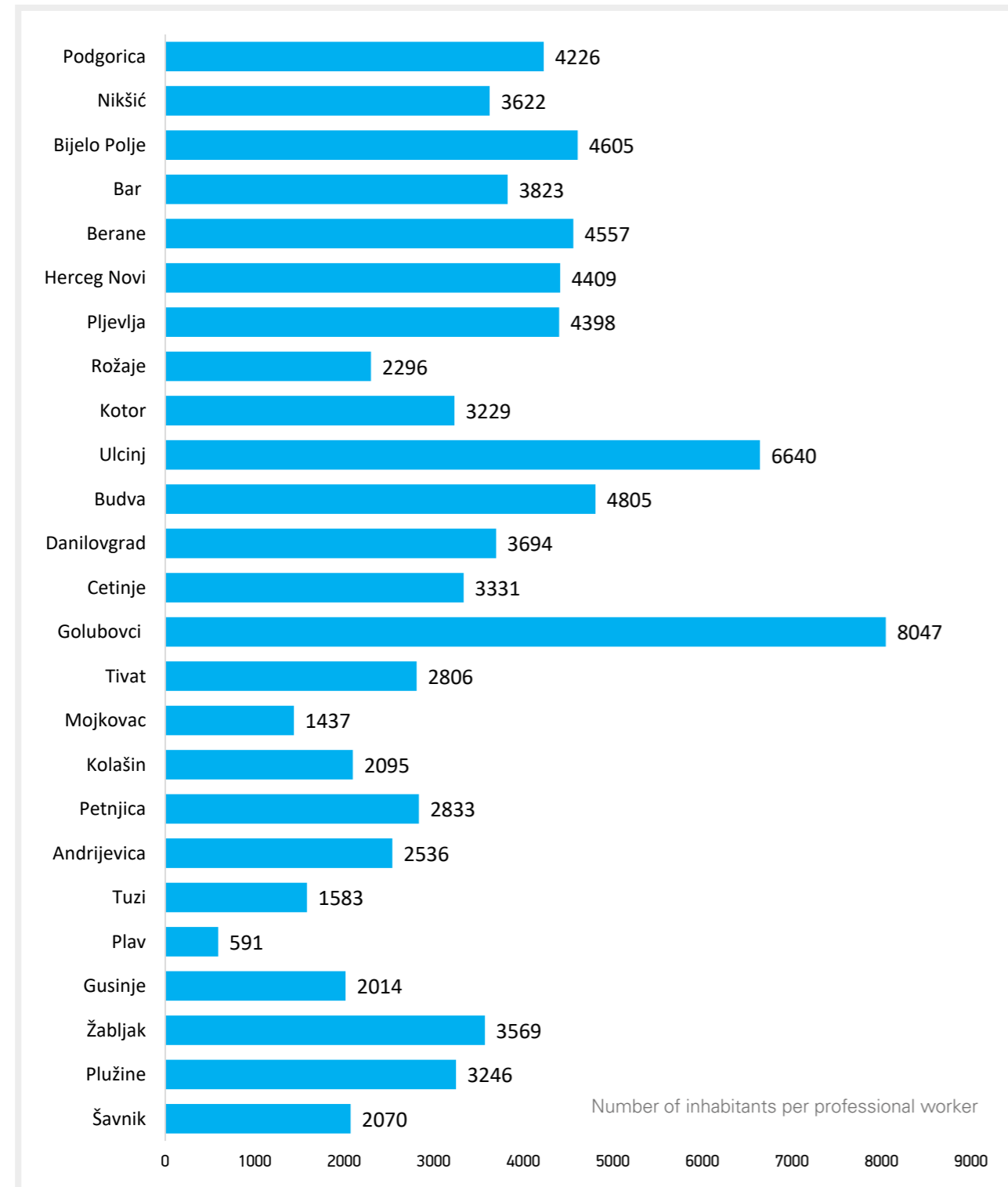


Figure 7. The ratio of the number of inhabitants and the number of workers and professional workers in CSWs and BUs.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the most unfavourable situations are in Golubovci and Ulcinj, and that these centres require the employment of additional staff.

This data points to significant differences in the resources that the CSWs have in terms of staff, which can lead to a systemic difference in the quality of services provided to beneficiaries or differences in the quality of services throughout Montenegro.

Although the Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of CSWs clearly defines the conditions for forming professional services in relation to the number and structure of staff, it does not prescribe the criteria for the education of the staff in charge of financial and administrative services. Organizing a Department for General Affairs is a discretionary right used by virtually all centres. The number of departments

ORGANIZING A DEPARTMENT FOR GENERAL AFFAIRS IS A DISCRETIONARY RIGHT USED BY VIRTUALLY ALL CENTRES.

allowed in relation to the number of employees is linked to the current number of professional workers, and to the prescribed conditions for the establishment of professional services. The following table shows the number of professional departments in each of the CSWs in relation to the prescribed norms, the number of professional departments that the CSWs can have in relation to the current number of employees and the actual situation.

The unfavourable ratio of professional workers to those working in administrative / financial and technical affairs affects both the number and types of established departments.



Table 8. Number of departments in Centres for Social Work

Centre for Social Work	Number of departments allowed based on norms	Number of departments allowed based on the number of workers	Current number of professional departments according to the job systematization
Podgorica	4	4	4
Danilovgrad	2	2	0
Herceg Novi	2	2	3
Bar	3	4	3
Cetinje	2	2	2 ⁶⁶
Berane	3	3	3
Bijelo Polje	2	2	1 ⁶⁷
Mojkovac	2	2	0
Kotor	3	4	2 ⁶⁸
Rožaje	2	2	1 ⁶⁹
Plav	2	2	0
Pljevlja	2	2	2
Nikšić	4	4	5 ⁷⁰
Total	33	35	26

The table shows that there are significant deviations from the planned and existing professional services:

- The CSWs based in Danilovgrad, Mojkovac and Plav have not formed any departments, although according to the current legislative framework they have the right to establish two;
- The CSWs based in Bijelo Polje and Rožaje have established one department each, although they have the right to establish two.

- Two departments have been formed in the CSW in Cetinje, which is in accordance with the prescribed standards for the number of employees. Departments for Cash Benefits and Financial/Administrative Affairs have been established, which is understandable, given that there is only one case manager in this centre.
- Based on the number of employees, the CSW in Kotor is entitled to four departments while only two have been established so far. In addition, these are the department covering the “financial sector” and the Department for Cash Benefits and Legal Affairs, and not those in charge of the protection of certain groups of beneficiaries (children and young people, and adults and the elderly). The CSW in Herceg Novi has established three services, although it is allowed to form only two services based on the number of employees.

This data indicates that the internal organization of the work of the CSWs is in line with the legislative framework in only three of the 13 CSWs (Podgorica, Nikšić and Pljevlja). The fact that case managers in the overall structure of

66 A Department for Cash Benefits and Financial and Administrative Services has been established.

67 A Department for Cash Benefits has been established, but no other departments exist.

68 A Department for the “Financial Sector” and Department for Cash Benefits and Legal Affairs have been established.

69 No professional departments have been established.

70 A Department for Planning, Service Development and Project Management has been established.



THIS DATA INDICATES THAT THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE CSWS IS IN LINE WITH THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN ONLY THREE OF THE 13 CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK (PODGORICA, NIKŠIĆ AND PLJEVLJA).

A DEPARTMENT SPECIALIZING IN WORK ONLY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, AND ONE ONLY WITH ADULTS AND ELDERLY BENEFICIARIES WERE FORMED IN PODGORICA AND NIKŠIĆ, RESPECTIVELY.

professional workers make up only 17.3% of the employees has influenced the fact that the professional departments dealing with issues related to for children and young people and adults and the elderly are very rarely formed

as separate departments. A department specializing in work only with children and young people, and one only with adults and elderly beneficiaries only, were formed in Podgorica and Nikšić, respectively.



6.2 ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLIANCE OF THE NUMBER AND STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYEES IN RELATION TO THE NORMATIVES

The analysis of the compliance of the structure of employees with respect to the prescribed professional competencies **has shown that they are being respected in 95.4% of cases.**

With 16 workers in the CSWs in Podgorica⁷¹, Danilovgrad⁷², Plav⁷³, Bar⁷⁴, Bijelo Polje⁷⁵, Nikšić⁷⁶ and Cetinje, a lack of the required professional competencies was determined, which primarily relates to the employment of sociologists in the position of professional workers in charge of cash benefits.⁷⁷

Comparative analysis of the prescribed number of job positions and the number of filled positions points to significant differences between the number of standardized jobs and the number of employees. Namely, if we take into account the standards that prescribe the number of workers needed for

71 Two sociologists are employed as professionals working on cash benefits, as well as one person with a university degree, whereby the worker with a university degree is employed in the planning and development service.

72 A sociologist is employed as a professional working on cash benefits.

73 A sociologist and a teacher of philosophy and sociology are employed as professionals working on cash benefits.

74 A sociologist is employed as a professional working on cash benefits.

75 Two sociologists are employed as professionals working on cash benefits.

76 Three sociologists are employed as professionals working on cash benefits and a teacher of French language and literature in planning and development.

77 Employees most often have considerable experience in social care.

the establishment of CSWs and the number of inhabitants based on the 2011 census, then the total number of professional workers, workers employed in administrative, financial and technical services, as well as planning and development services, stands at 284.

In the CSWs, there are 28% more employees than the normatives prescribe:

- 32% more in financial / administrative and technical services⁷⁸;
- 19% more in charge of basic professional activities⁷⁹;
- 9% more in legal services; and
- 36% fewer working in planning and development services.

The need to adopt new standards is additionally supported by this finding, since the analysis, on the one hand, indicates that the current number of workers is not sufficient to provide adequate support to beneficiaries, while, on the other, it indicates that the CSWs are employing more workers than they are supposed to do. In all

78 These two sets of professional activities are presented together because there is no consistency in job classification in relation to these types of activities. Thus, the position of secretary in some centres is considered and labelled "administrative", without calling it a "financial/administrative" job, and in some centres this appears to be a position related to technical affairs. In some CSWs, the archivist is also considered a member of the technical staff, while in some centres it is seen as a financial and administrative position.

79 Including managers and supervisors.

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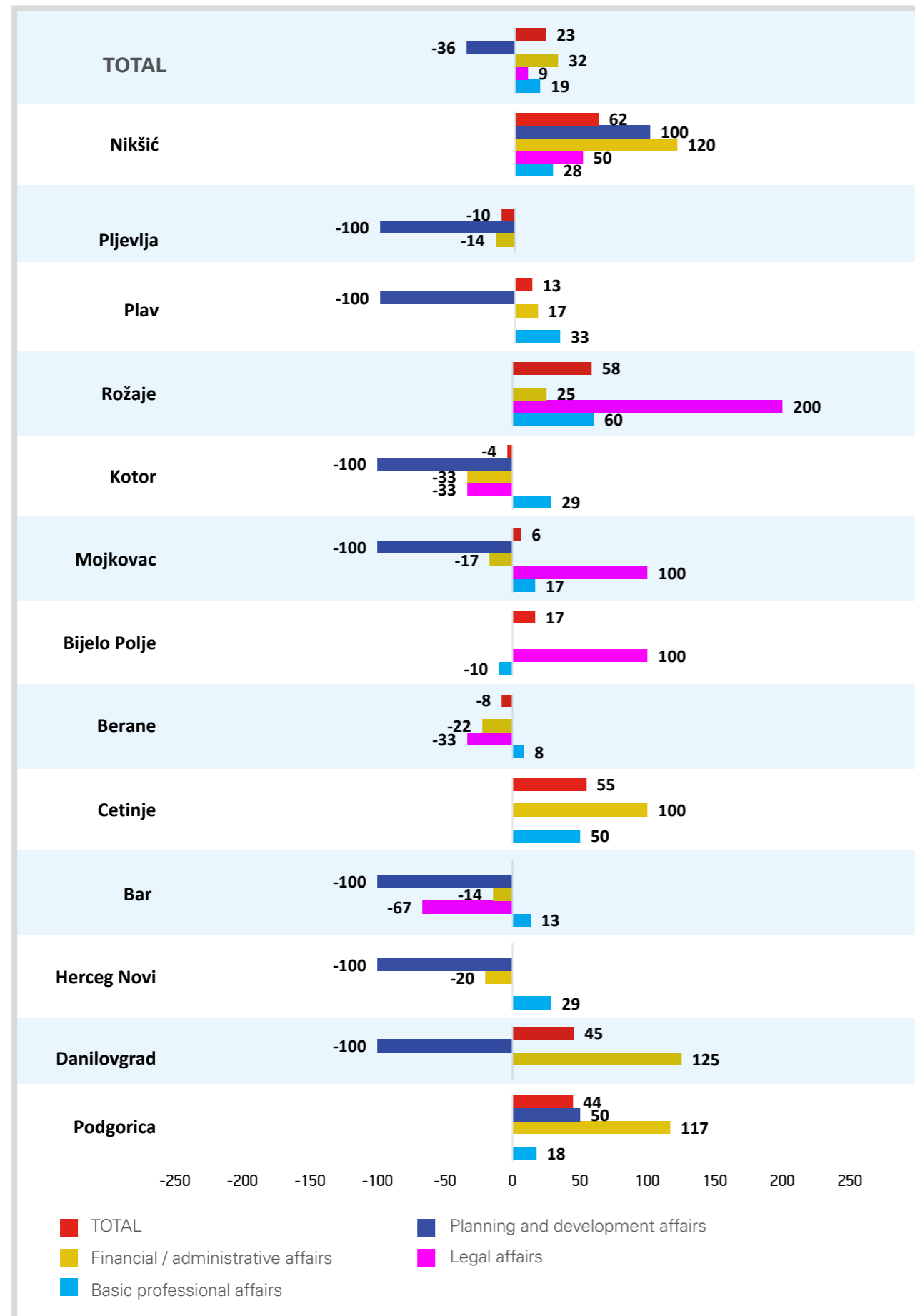
Municipality	Basic professional	Legal	Administrative and financial	Technical	Planning and development	TOTAL
Podgorica	40	8	9	3	2	62
Danilovgrad	4	1	3	1	1	10
Herceg Novi	7	1	4	1	1	14
Bar	15	3	6	1	1	26
Cetinje	4	1	3	1	1	10
Berane	12	3	6	3	1	25
Bijelo Polje	10	1	4	1	1	17
Mojkovac	6	2	4	2	1	15
Kotor	14	3	6	3	1	27
Rožaje	5	1	3	1	1	11
Plav	6	2	4	2	1	15
Pljevlja	9	2	5	2	1	19
Nikšić	18	4	7	3	1	33
Total	150	32	64	24	14	284

Table 9. Overview of needed workers in relation to the normatives.

the centres, the number of employees working on basic professional activities is in line with the norms or higher, except in Pljevlja, where 10% fewer workers are employed compared to the prescribed number. The largest number of professional workers exceeding the norms are employed in Rožaje and Cetinje. Significant differences exist in relation to the number of lawyers. While fewer lawyers are employed in Bar, Berane and Kotor in relation to the norms,

Rožaje employs four times as many as the norm, while Mojkovac and Bijelo Polje employ twice as many as the norm. The number of financial/administrative and technical workers in Danilovgrad, Podgorica, Nikšić and Cetinje is twice as large as prescribed. The CSWs in Danilovgrad, Herceg Novi, Bar, Mojkovac, Kotor, Plav and Pljevlja do not have any professional workers in planning and development services.

Figure 8. The ratio between the current number of workers and the number prescribed by normatives in %



6.3 ANALYSIS OF THE WORKLOAD OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS AND CASE CHARACTERISTICS

Based on the questionnaires filled out by managers, it can be concluded that one case manager is assigned 44 cases on average at any one time ($M=44.29$, $SD=23.56$)⁸⁰. It should be noted that 33.3% of case managers, in addition to basic professional tasks, also cover cash benefits.

There is no statistically significant difference in the caseloads of case managers and supervisors.

There is no difference in relation to whether the manager is additionally in charge of cash benefits. Similarly, there is no difference in relation to the type of service in which the professional workers are employed. Although the statistical difference itself is not significant, there is a tendency for workers with less than one year of service to be less burdened with cases. Thus, workers with less than two years of service are on average assigned 34 cases ($M=34.07$, $SD=14.84$), those with three to five years – 46 cases ($M=46.00$, $SD=21.10$), those with six to 10 years of service – 40 cases ($M=40.00$, $SD=20.78$), and those with 11 or more years of service – 53 cases ($M=52.80$, $SD=29.93$), $F(3.63)=2.09$, $p=0.11$, $\eta^2=0.09$.

⁸⁰ The reliability of this data is indicated by the fact that the average workload is calculated on the basis of responses received from case managers – 48 ($M=47.96$, $SD=32.44$), in which the workload ranges from seven to 199. The differences are expected due to the small sample size and the fact that not all the cases are entered into the information system, but also due to slight differences in the sample. Within this research, an assessment of the workload will be used based on the inputs of managers, whose task is to monitor the workload of professional workers.

ONE CASE MANAGER IS ASSIGNED 44 CASES ON AVERAGE. THERE IS NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE CASELOADS OF CASE MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS.

Significant differences exist in terms of the burden imposed on case managers in relation to the unit of local self-government covered by the given CSWs, or the branch unit. The burden is lowest in Plužine and Petnjica, and highest in Bijelo Polje. Case managers are heavily burdened in Cetinje, Ulcinj, Tuzi, Mojkovac, Podgorica and Pljevlja. These differences cannot be explained by the number of employees, except in Ulcinj, or by the number of users of cash benefits, but are due to other factors: the management and organization of work in the given CSWs. When comparing the data on the number of inhabitants in certain municipalities in Montenegro and the number of users of cash benefits, very interesting results are obtained. These indicate that the actual burden on the case manager and the organization of professional work is not directly related to the number of users of cash benefits. Thus, those who receive cash benefits are:

- 13.2% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Rožaje;
- 5.7% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of municipality;
- 5.2% of the inhabitants of the municipalities of Mojkovac and Bijelo Polje;
- 3.6% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Pljevlja;
- 3.5% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Cetinje;
- 3.3% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Podgorica.

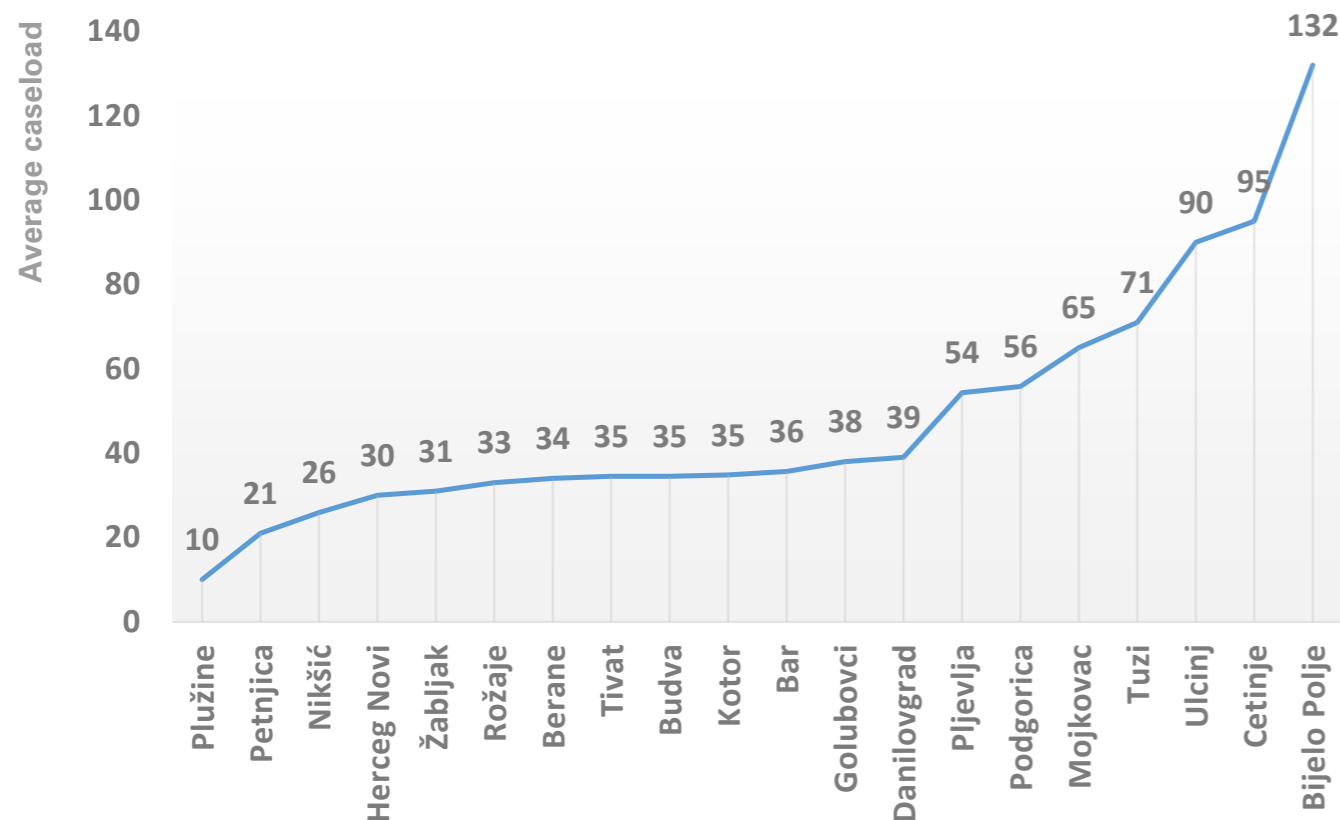


If the number of beneficiaries of material benefits were directly related to the organization of professional work or the workload of case managers, then the greatest burden should be in the Municipality of Rožaje, which is not the case. On the contrary, Rožaje falls into the category of centres with the lowest workload – 33 cases per case manager. On the other hand, Cetinje is among the municipalities with the lowest percentage of beneficiaries of material benefits (3.5%), while the average burden of case managers is 95 cases. In this sense, this analysis indisputably indicates that the uneven burden on professional workers is primarily conditioned by inadequate workload management and an inadequate structure of staff. Namely, the Rulebook on the Organization, Normatives, Standards and Manner of Work of CSWs prescribes the number of professional workers, but not explicitly the number of case managers. Bearing in mind the above-mentioned results that indicate that the services are not generally established in accordance with the norms, it is clear that the differences in the workload of case managers are, above all, a product of

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF THE BURDEN IMPOSED ON CASE MANAGERS EXIST IN CERTAIN CSWS. THESE DIFFERENCES CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, EXCEPT IN ULCINJ, OR BY THE NUMBER OF USERS OF CASH BENEFITS, BUT ARE DUE TO OTHER FACTORS: THE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK IN THE GIVEN CSWS.

the way the management organizes the work process. These views are best illustrated by the following chart.

Figure 9. The average workload of case managers by headquarters of the Centre for Social Work/branch unit



The largest proportion of cases on which case managers were working was recorded in 2018 (45.6%), while when it comes to the previous years this figure stands at 71.3%. The majority of active cases were opened in the period from May to July. The following graph shows the structure of cases in relation to the month they were opened; when it comes to cases that were opened in 2008 or earlier, the month of opening is not known.

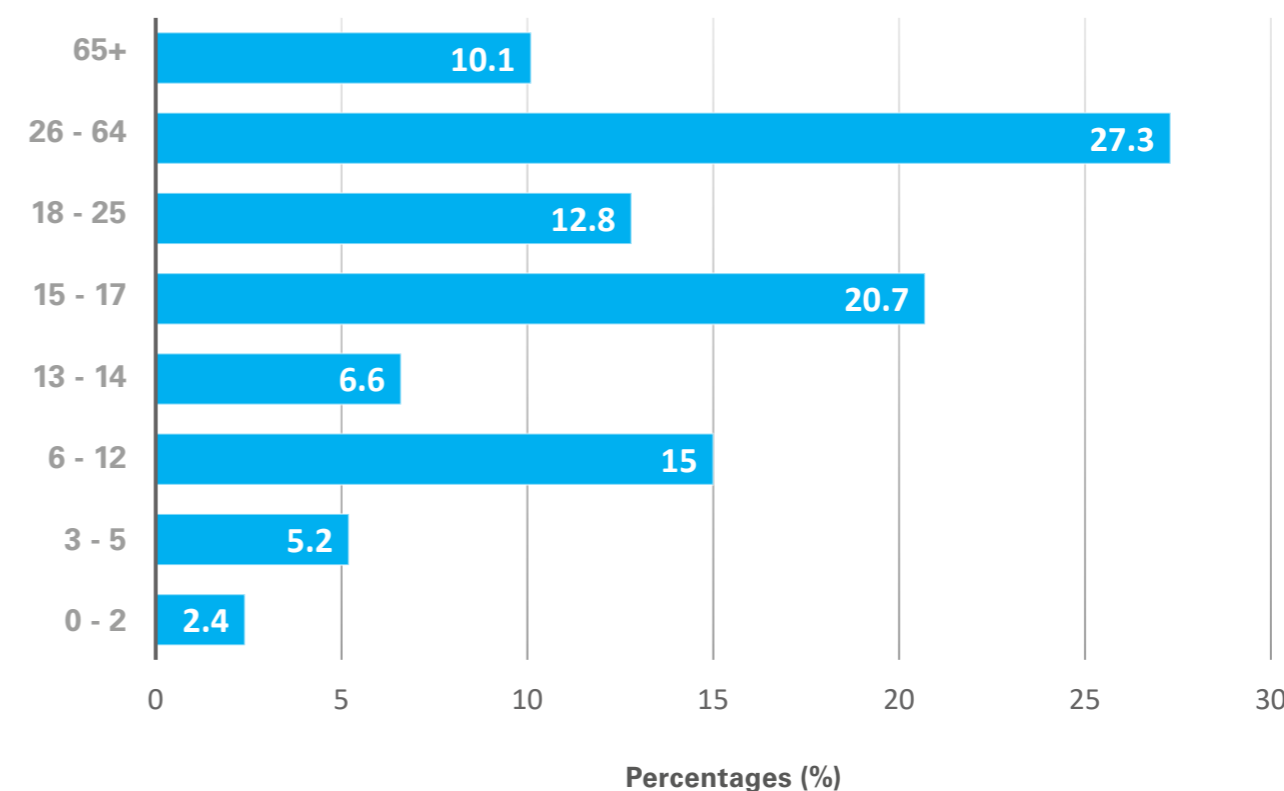
The number of new cases on average amounts to nine cases per case manager per month (N=9.32, SD=8.76).

The largest proportion of cases, at the time of the research, were in the phase of monitoring and implementation of the plan (68.5%), followed by the initial assessment stage (13.5%), evaluation and closure (12%), the development of the plan (4.7%) and targeted assessment (3%). In relation to the case management process, the most demanding phases are those of assessment and development of the plan because they require frequent contact and the implementation of expert and methodological

WHILE FOR SOME CASE MANAGERS ONLY 3.8% OF CASES ARE COMPLEX, FOR OTHERS THE FIGURE IS 100%, WHILE ON AVERAGE 65.2% OF CASE MANAGERS WORK ON CASES WITH ONE OF THE FOUR LISTED COMPONENTS.

procedures. The phase involving evaluation and closure of the case is less demanding, since it is usually related to subsequent assessment. However, it does imply the implementation of certain professional procedures. From the point of view of the complexity and direct involvement of the case manager, the monitoring and implementation of the plan is usually the least demanding phase, assuming that the plan is well designed and adjusted in terms of the timeframe and assuming that

Figure 10. Structure of beneficiaries in relation to their age





the specific activities and responsible actors are listed. In these circumstances, the tasks of the case manager are mostly reduced to coordination, periodic contact with beneficiaries and stakeholders, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Although it is difficult to precisely determine the complexity of the case in this way, based on the actual stages they are in, it can be said that about one-third of the current cases were in stages that require the undertaking of continuous and complex professional procedures. This means that if the average number of cases per case manager is 44, about 15 current cases are in the stages with the highest degree of complexity, i.e. the greatest burden for professional workers.

We closely analysed the workload of professional workers related to cases of placement, violence, guardianship and work with children and adults with disabilities. The measure of placement was either initiated or in procedure in 35.2% of beneficiaries⁸¹, guardianship was initiated in 24.2% of cases (N=719), violence was present in 614 cases (20.7%) and disabilities were present with 17.8% of beneficiaries (N=527). If we depart from the assumption that the complex cases are those with at least one of these four elements (placement, guardianship, violence, and providing support to persons with disabilities), we can conclude that the cases are not evenly distributed among the case managers in relation to the degree of their

81 The largest number of cases that require more than 2 years relate to work with beneficiaries who are placed in institutions.



This analysis indicates that the work of CSWs is largely focused on cash benefits, which results in the fact that professional workers in charge of cash benefits dominate the structure of professional workers, with about one-third of all case managers dealing with this type of work. Namely, as many as 36.1% of the resources of the centres are spent on cash benefit services, excluding financial/administrative and technical workers, and 61.5%

complexity. **While for some case managers only 3.8% of their cases are complex, for others the figure is 100%, while on average 65.2% of case managers work on cases with one of the four listed components.**

Of the total number of users involved in case management, 43.0% are women, 57.0% are male and half of them are minors under the age of 18.

If we analyse the concrete tasks performed by case managers, it can be concluded that the most frequent tasks are monitoring and evaluation of the work on the case, activities involving provision of support to beneficiaries, the performance of tasks related to the guardianship mandate, assessment of the situation, needs, strengths and risks, and cooperation with state-level and local administration bodies and other organizations.

When asked about the amount of time they spend working on guardianship issues and the time spent on child protection, professional workers answered that on average they spend slightly more time working on guardianship issues (56.6%) than on protection from abuse and neglect (43.4%).

The largest number of case managers did not organize any training for foster parents in 2017 (62.5%), one or two training sessions were organized by 26.8% of case managers, while more than two training sessions were organized by 10.7% of case managers. However, no training for adult foster care has ever taken place. During our field visits,

of professional workers are engaged in cash-benefit-related tasks. Child care takes up 2.5 times fewer resources than material benefits, and adult protection takes up 4.5 times fewer resources than cash benefits. This indicates that the CSWs are not primarily social and child protection agencies, but rather agencies that deal with the distribution of cash benefits.

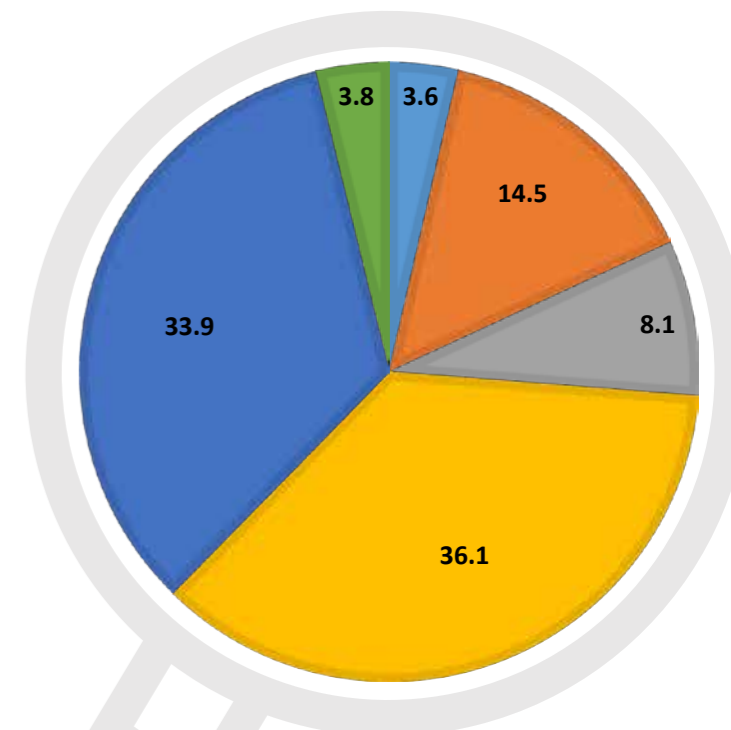


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we detected irregularities in the carrying out of foster-care activities. In this regard, there was a case in which a child was placed in a family although the family had not undergone formal training. There was also a case where the child was placed in a “foster care” family which had not undergone training because the family had been rejected as an adoption family. In this particular case, adoption took place a little later. During the visits, some good practices were identified as well. The foster families which participated in the survey estimate the support of the CSW as very good – they state that the professional workers have always been available and helpful. Similarly, the foster families we interviewed are providing the children with all the support for growth and development in a culturally competent way.

such decisions issued varies from 200 to 40,000 per year. Similarly, the size of the workloads of lawyers is indicated by the fact that, from the beginning of 2015 to date, 464,527 decisions have been issued, that is, 14,076 decisions per lawyer.

Figure 11. Analysis of the distribution of human resources in relation to the fields of work of CSWs



Analysis of the number of decisions issued in three CSWs points to significant deviations in the workloads of lawyers. where the number of

- Directors
- Child protection
- Adult and elderly protection
- Cash benefits and legal affairs
- Administrative, financial and logistics affairs
- Other

6.4 MANAGEMENT AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS IN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The analysis points to numerous shortcomings in the organization of the work of the CSWs.

Only 13.0% of workers fully agree with the claim that inadequate job performance is being sanctioned, while 11.1% believe that the quality of work with beneficiaries is recognized and adequately valued.

Based on this, it can be concluded that the climate in the CSWs is such that it does not encourage the personal development of professional workers, nor the development of good practices.

At the level of case managers, the analysis points to an unequal workload for case managers. Thus, 5.6% of respondents fully agree with the claim that all case managers are equally burdened with their workload, as well as with the claim that their workload allows quality work with beneficiaries. In accordance with the previous findings, 13.0% of case managers fully agree with the claim that the distribution of cases is being carried out in accordance with the competencies of professional workers. Likewise, only one-fifth (18.5%) of all case managers agree that supervision is fully operational in practice.

As far as spatial working conditions are concerned, **only 19.0% of case managers believe that the conditions for working with the beneficiaries are very good**, while 31% think they are good. Fifty percent of professional workers think that working conditions are bad or very bad. Fifty-nine percent of employees share their offices with another colleague or work alone, 26% share their offices with two colleagues, and 15% with three or more colleagues. Thus, as many as **46% of employees say that they cannot provide adequate conditions for conversations with**



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beneficiaries when they need privacy. The majority of professional workers in Budva, Podgorica, Cetinje, Mojkovac and Pljevlja believe that they work in poor conditions. This is in line with the findings from field visits, when **particularly poor working conditions were identified in Budva and Podgorica.** Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to expand these CSWs as soon as possible. Two-thirds of professional workers think that the CSWs do not have enough cars and drivers, while 37% think they have sufficient resources in this regard.

6.5 ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLIANCE OF THE WORK OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS WITH THEIR JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The compliance of professional work with the procedures envisaged by the legislative framework is presented in relation to the “pathways” that beneficiaries take through the CSWs and in relation to the various tasks that the CSWs perform.

6.5.1 Admission

The admission procedure is not being carried out in accordance with the prescribed procedure in all CSWs. The biggest differences in terms of the organization of admission appears to be between those centres that are headquarters and those that are branch units. When it comes to the main offices, admission is performed by experts with adequate professional profiles, and the branch units mainly rely on financial and administrative workers in this regard. During the field visits, the following models of organization of admission were identified:

1. The admissions office has been established and is managed by professional workers performing their basic professional activities, or financial/administrative workers if required, which is in line with the legislative framework;
2. A professional worker in charge of cash benefits works as an admissions officer, which is in line with the legislative framework;
3. Admission is performed by all professional workers, while there is an admissions officer in charge of entering the data into the information system, which is not in line with the legislative framework; and
4. Admission for beneficiaries seeking the right to cash benefits is performed by a financial/administrative worker, while admission matters related to case management are dealt with by a case manager who opens the case later and works on it, which is not in line with the legislative framework;

THE ADMISSION ITSELF, BEING THE FIRST CONTACT OF A PROFESSIONAL WORKER WITH THE BENEFICIARY, DOES NOT ALLOW FOR A PROACTIVE AND PREVENTIVE APPROACH IN THE WORK OF THE CSWS.

The admission assessment procedure, as well as methods for identifying risks and determining the level of procedural priority, have not taken off in the CSWs. Thus, at one of the centres, the priority of the procedure was not determined at the time of admission – urgent interventions are usually arranged by the director or the manager in cases of violence or in cases of a high degree of vulnerability of children, and not by the worker in charge of admission.

Admission for the purpose of cash benefits is of a technical nature and takes place in all centres without any major problems. Depending on the practice of the CSWs, the admissions officer or professional worker informs the beneficiary about the documents which must be presented for the exercising of that right and provides the beneficiary with information on further steps. When it comes to cash benefits, a professional worker always refers the case to the manager, which is not always the case with the case management procedures. Namely, not every centre has the practice of managers assigning the cases. In smaller centres or branch units, professional workers themselves organize and



distribute cases, or else it happens that the number of case managers is small, so there is only one case manager and there is practically no possibility of distributing the caseload. When it comes to case management where an admission office is in place, a professional worker performs the admission and refers the case to the manager. If a case manager performs the admission him/herself, he/she is not supported by workers dealing with administrative and financial affairs.

Inconsistencies with regard to the distribution of cases are also indicated by the results of quantitative research with professional workers, in which 46.4% of case managers consider that there should be some criteria for assigning new cases. Of the professional workers, 28.6% think that such criteria do not exist, while 25.0% claim that they do not know if such criteria exist. The centres in which the majority of professional workers think that there are no clear criteria for assigning new cases are: Podgorica, Golubovci, Ulcinj, Tivat, Rožaje, Plav and Žabljak.

When they say that there are criteria in place, they most often respond that the only criterion is the caseload (50.0%), or the competencies and the caseload (11.5%), or the competencies of the professional worker (3.8%). It was reported by 15.4% of the case managers that the distribution is based on "special expertise" or the type of cases, while 19.2% of the case managers who believe that such criteria exist state that there is currently no possibility of assigning the cases to a larger number of professional workers because they are the only case managers in their institutions.

A number of centres report problems during admission in terms of **postponing the entry of cases into the system, while certain cases are not entered into the system at all**. This delay may take several days, weeks or months, during which professional workers provide services to the beneficiary. In several centres, there is a practice of avoiding entering the cases into the information system at the moment of admission. The reasons for this

THE ABSENCE OF A PROACTIVE AND PREVENTIVE APPROACH MEANS THAT CSWS DO NOT PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS, WHICH CALLS INTO QUESTION THE AVAILABILITY OF THE SERVICES OF THE CENTRE TO ALL GROUPS OF CITIZENS.

that case managers mentioned during the interviews were that they were "waiting" to see if something more extensive needed to be done in relation to the case, so where there was no need for more significant support the case itself would not be entered at all. In some centres, even complex cases that require case management procedure are not entered, although all the necessary activities are undertaken, which the managers and directors are duly informed about.

The admission itself, being the first contact of a professional worker with the beneficiary, does not allow for a proactive and preventive approach in the work of the CSWs. CSWs are not being active in identifying users at risk, and thus the admission itself does not depend much on their work.

Based on the analysis of cases, it was discovered that CSWs did not identify the needs of beneficiaries in a single case through a proactive approach, but: 1) the beneficiaries themselves came to the centre and asked for help, or parents or relatives reported the case; 2) there was a telephone report about the need for support for the beneficiary; 3) there was a referral by other services – most often the police, judiciary or civil society organizations; or 4) the beneficiary was referred by a professional worker in charge of cash benefits. However, beneficiaries often decide to report that they need support only very



late, especially when violence is involved. Even if they have been in contact with the centre for a long time, they often endure violence long before a case is initiated.

This finding was confirmed in the context of interviews with children and families. Parents of children most often state that they were not familiar with the role of the centre and the manner of work of the CSW, in particular its case management services. Specifically, the CSWs are primarily perceived as an institution in charge of providing cash benefits, which to a significant extent corresponds to the truth, bearing in mind the aforementioned findings. Two women who took part in the focus groups were long-standing victims of violence. They did not turn to the CSW promptly because they were not sure whether it provides protection and support in such cases.

6.5.2 Case management procedure

The research indicates that the case management procedure is not being applied in all centres in the planned manner.

There are deviations in relation to the organization of the process, where in some centres a number of professional workers still work with a single beneficiary. In a small number of centres, the process of case management is not being applied either at the level of work with beneficiaries or in relation to the use of the prescribed documentation.

Case management has not significantly ensured the participation of beneficiaries in the process. Similarly, although one of the objectives of case management is to ensure the involvement of a larger number of actors in the protection process in order to build a community-support network for beneficiaries, this is not happening in practice. Nevertheless, despite

IN THIS REGARD, IT CAN BE CONCLUDED THAT, WHEN IT COMES TO THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT, LESS ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT OF BENEFICIARIES IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE RESOURCES AT THEIR DISPOSAL, ON THE BASIS OF WHICH PROTECTION COULD BE PLANNED. IN THIS WAY, THE ASSESSMENT IS PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON RISKS, BUT NOT ON STRENGTHS.

the lack of application of case management as a procedure, this has led to more timely work with beneficiaries, greater visibility of the beneficiaries, more frequent contact with users and a general improvement of the relationship between users and professional workers.

No centres have recorded **the practice of planning an initial assessment**, consulting with a supervisor or a manager, creating a contact plan or data collection procedures. In this sense, the initial assessment is most often performed spontaneously by the case manager or an informal team. During our visits, we identified the following practices related to the initial assessment:

- The initial assessment is carried out independently by the case manager, after the case is referred to the manager;
- Both the admission and the initial assessment are carried out by the case manager, without distinguishing the admission from the initial assessment; and
- An initial assessment is carried out by an informally formed team, consisting of two or three professional workers, whereby one of the employees is assigned the role of case manager.



The desk review and interviews with professional workers indicate that professionals **do not collect information during the initial assessment using different methods and sources.** The initial assessment is primarily based on observations and interviews with the beneficiary and, if the beneficiary is a child, on home visits primarily with family members and the child, whereas in only every fourth case did a professional worker talk to relatives (23.1%). In fewer than a third of the cases they contacted other community-based organizations (30.7%). In half of the analysed cases, home visits were organized as announced, and in the other half as unannounced. During home visits, professional workers often organized visits in pairs for safety reasons, although this is not stipulated in the legislative framework. Case managers believe that it would take another three to four days for a quality initial assessment, which would include the involvement of other people close to the beneficiary and community, and stated that they did not have that amount of time at their disposal. When it comes to the initial assessment, they spend about one day working on it. If we take into account the fact that, on average, case managers are assigned about nine new cases per month, it is understandable that they cannot spend three days working on an initial assessment.

Depending on the case, the content of the assessment encompasses most of the areas listed in the legislative framework: assessment of the situation and needs of beneficiaries; safety; risks; social history; personal characteristics and developmental needs; health; emotional development and behaviour; housing; and economic situation. The areas that are present in 20%–50% of initial estimates are environmental factors and social and family relationships. In fewer than 20% of the cases examined, the initial assessment contained information related to: the identity of the beneficiary; the degree of community involvement and community characteristics; and a summary assessment of the strengths, personal, family and community resources. From the evaluation itself, **it could not be concluded from the documents that the**

THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT WAS CARRIED OUT IN ONLY ONE-THIRD OF CASES.

beneficiaries participated in the assessment to a great extent. No examples of the use of a case conference were recorded during the survey.

In this regard, it can be concluded that, when it comes to the initial assessment, less attention is given to the actual involvement of beneficiaries in the community and the resources at their disposal, on the basis of which protection could be planned. In this way, the assessment is primarily focused on risks, but not on strengths. In line with this, professional workers look **at the best interests of the beneficiaries in the narrow sense** – ensuring their security and the preservation of their health. This is especially important in children, because the **role of the centre is not perceived as that of a provider of the conditions for full development, but above all as a “remedy” for the situation.**

The results of the initial assessment are communicated to the beneficiary alone. If the beneficiary happens to be a child, the parents are informed and not the child him/herself. The research and the sample of cases indicate that adult beneficiaries – or parents, if the case relates to a child – are informed of the findings of the initial assessment, while in cases of child protection, the children learn about the results of such an initial assessment in 50% of cases. Although the legal framework stipulates that it is necessary for a supervisor or manager to approve the method and manner of reporting on the initial assessment, this does not occur in practice.

Since professional workers do not enter the data into the information system at the same moment that they carry out the procedures, it

is difficult to precisely determine whether the deadlines are being met in working with the beneficiary during the initial assessment⁸². Bearing in mind that the documentation sometimes does not reflect the real situation, **the initial assessment, based on this alone, was realized in 33.3% of the cases.** In accordance with this finding, 25.9% of case managers state that the initial assessment is always carried out within the prescribed deadline, while an additional 38.9% believe that it is very often carried out within the deadline.

Extending the duration of the initial assessment does not mean that CSW employees do not carry out beneficiary-support measures. The completion of such an assessment is postponed because the professional worker cannot collect all the information needed within the given timeframe in order to make a final conclusion about the further protection process or because they do not always have enough time to carry out an initial assessment within the given time due to a high caseload. In all the cases analysed by professional workers, they had undertaken certain protection measures in accordance with their understanding of the situation.

At the same time, professional workers do not formally distinguish the process of the initial assessment and the process of the targeted assessment. In 36.4% of the analysed cases, case managers indicated that such a targeted assessment was not needed, **while in two-thirds of cases (63.6%) the targeted assessment was planned but not started**⁸³.

82 For example, a professional worker could have met with a beneficiary in October 2017 and entered the case into the information system in February 2018, entering the initial assessment on the same day that he opened the case or a few days later. The dates in the documentation do not indicate the real working days with the user and the implementation of the initial assessment.

83 This is in line with an analysis of the complexity of cases, which indicates that about two-thirds of the cases where the case manager is involved require a targeted assessment.



IN ALL THE ANALYSED CASES, CASE MANAGERS HAD REGULAR CONTACT WITH BENEFICIARIES, BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS.

The production of findings and opinions is closely related to the assessment process. Specifically, the **findings and opinions of the centres are usually submitted on the basis of court requests and are a process that is usually completed within the deadline (72%).**

During the qualitative part of our research with professional workers, they presented various ways in which they “modify” the process of starting the work with the beneficiary in order to adjust it. In particular, professional workers **think that the process of case management is not always applicable or necessary, especially its steps involving the development of a plan and monitoring.** Thus, in some centres, as will be seen later, in some cases professional workers do not apply the case management method. However, they do not dismiss the case, but rather provide counselling services, and after a certain period of time they contact the beneficiary to check their situation. In this way, workers monitor the situation of beneficiaries at a lower level of risk, but do not go through the whole process of case management⁸⁴. Work with low-risk beneficiaries or with those who are not facing significant risks involves producing findings and opinions, but some workers put as little information as possible into the assessment and planning templates, while undertaking measures they consider to be adequate. Less often, they produce an initial assessment report claiming that initial assessment is not necessary and then, without further elaboration, close the case.

84 This is characteristic mainly of smaller centres.



Development of the plan is the most important step in terms of involving different actors in the process of protection and of establishing a system of holistic support. Involving different institutions and people from the person's environment in the creation of such a plan, assigning responsibilities to each of the identified actors and formalizing cooperation are the basis for establishing a comprehensive community-support system and for coordinating community organizations for the purpose of support.

Compared to the analysed cases, **the initial plan of services and measures has been completed in only 25.0% of cases**, which is in line with the findings of the survey, in which 25.9% of case managers state that the initial plan of services and measures is being produced on time.

In addition to the beneficiary and his/her family, or foster carers, **representatives of other institutions and organizations participated in the development of the aforementioned plans in only 12.5% of the cases that were analysed**. When it comes to the prescribed methods of work related to the development of plans, joint meetings at the level of CSWs would regularly take place, while a case conference was not organized in any of the analysed cases. When it comes to child protection, the plan was signed by 33.3% of the children. However, the plan itself was submitted to the parent – not the child. The survey's findings, whereby only 7% of case managers state that people other than the professional team, the beneficiary or his/her family participate in the development of plans, are consistent with this data. Thirty-seven percent of case managers often involve other people, while the rest report that such involvement takes place very rarely or almost never. Not one case manager answered that the production of the plan always included a representative of another community-based institution, and 31% said that representatives of other institutions are often involved, while the rest consider other institutions to be included in the work rarely or very rarely.

IN ADDITION TO THE BENEFICIARY AND HIS/HER FAMILY OR FOSTER CARERS, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFOREMENTIONED PLANS IN ONLY 12.5% OF THE CASES THAT WERE ANALYSED.

In accordance with the stated low level of involvement of other actors in the planning of work with beneficiaries, we discovered that only 4% of the case managers considered that other community-based institutions were very involved in the process of protecting beneficiaries. Forty-four percent of them believe that they are mostly involved, and **52% of case managers believe that other institutions and organizations are generally or not at all involved in the protection of beneficiaries**. Case managers have a shared view of the quality of cooperation with other organizations and community-based institutions. However, when it comes to those institutions with which they have the best cooperation, they single out the police, with which 88% of case managers report good cooperation. The worst cooperation is reported in the case of the health system, with only 40% of case managers saying that this cooperation could be called 'very good' or 'good'. Case managers list the courts, prosecutors' offices, day-care centres and the education system as institutions with which they also have good cooperation, while a somewhat poorer level of cooperation is present with civil society organizations and local self-government units.

During the analysis of the cases, **it was discovered that family plans of services and measures were not made in a single case, and the same goes for the plan of**

continuity⁸⁵, i.e. the plan of contact with the family. One of the reasons is that there are no specific guidelines for the development of these types of plans, and most often case managers do not distinguish them from the initial plan or planning process. In all the analysed cases, case managers had **regular contact with the beneficiaries**, both children and adults.

During our visits to a number of centres, it was identified that Centres for Social Work do not initiate a procedure for protecting a victim of violence before a court of law when they find out that violence has taken place. They rather wait for the victim to do so, neglecting the previous history of contacts and the knowledge that they have been suffering violence for a long period of time. The desk review showed that in two centres cases were not opened and that no measures were taken to protect against violence.

Apart from the fact that the resources at the community level are not being sufficiently used during the work on a case, both during the assessment and in the preparation of the plan, the CSWs also have problems in organizing team work at the level of the centres. The collected data indicates that teamwork does not take place in the planned way. During the visits to the centres, the following practices of teamwork were identified, which can be informal or formal in nature.

In some centres, although the method of case management is formally present, compulsory teamwork is still a dominant approach, especially in small centres. The reason for this type of "team" work is the inadequate number of case managers in individual centres, as well as their insufficient autonomy, assurance and belief in their own competencies, which is also affected by the fact that only a small number of supervisors are employed, and it is clear that educational and supporting functions are not sufficiently present.

⁸⁵ In two cases, the plan of continuity was identified – in one case of adoption and in one case of placement with a foster family.



SUPERVISORY MEETINGS – GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ONES – ARE RARELY HELD. TWO-THIRDS OF THE CASE MANAGERS (64.8%) SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN A SINGLE GROUP SUPERVISION IN 2017, 22.2% OF THEM REPORTED THEY HAD PARTICIPATED ONCE OR TWICE, WHILE 13.0% OF CASE MANAGERS PARTICIPATED IN GROUP SUPERVISION MORE THAN TWICE.

The research also identified the practice of the formal establishment of teams without a joint decision-making process and support among colleagues. This is primarily characteristic of centres where the caseload per case manager remains high and where case managers do not have time to deal with "other" cases.

In some CSWs and branch units, it is not possible to form a team because of the small number of professional workers working on case management.

Within the qualitative part of the research, professional workers state that teamwork still does not exist, because the majority of the workload falls on the shoulders of one or two team members, while the other team members do not contribute, due to their lack of experience or confidence, or for other reasons. One of the reasons why teamwork has not got going properly is that there is no appointment of a **responsible person to lead the team when it is formed, nor teamwork guidelines**. Professional workers believe that it would be good to develop clear guidelines for establishing such teams, to define the roles of different team members in each of the procedures involving work and team management.



CHALLENGES IN CASE MANAGEMENT

Professional workers usually do not follow the prescribed procedures within the set deadlines. They list the main reasons for this as follows:

1. **Difficulties in gathering data**, since it happens that it is not possible to establish contact with the beneficiary or to organize a home visit within the prescribed time frame;
2. Job prioritization, whereby case managers state that in some cases it is **more important to immediately work on providing services and support, rather than making an initial assessment**;
3. **The interweaving of various jobs**, because it often happens that, during the initial assessment of one case, an emergency response is necessary for another case, which interrupts the work on the initial assessment and leads to a failure to respect deadlines. This leads to cases that require an urgent response and that are “alarming” being dealt with particularly when there is a need to produce findings and opinions required by the courts, which eventually leads to a failure to meet deadlines in cases which are not deemed urgent or high-priority on some other grounds;
4. **Poor organization of work at centres and a high workload due to the large number of various obligations** taking place at the same time (admission, technical work, cash benefits, and courier activities), which makes it difficult to focus on working with the beneficiary;
5. **Difficulties in organizing the team in cases** where teamwork is required due to the obligations of each team member;
6. Experiencing difficulties when entering cases into the information system when beneficiaries do not have a unique citizen’s number or do not know the number;
7. **A high case load**; and
8. **A lack of available vehicles**, with which professional workers can make field visits within the required timeframe.

The view voiced by case managers that they often **cannot control their time during their working day** corresponds with the above findings. Thus, only 1.9% of case managers state that they can fully control their time during a typical working day, with another 16.7% reporting they can control their time in general. Most often, case managers say that sometimes they can and sometimes they cannot control their time (55.6%), while 25.9% say that they cannot control their time in general or at all.

SUPERVISION

The results of the analysis indicate that supervision did not happen in the way it was planned, for which there are many reasons.

Supervisory meetings – group and individual ones – are rarely held. Two-thirds of the case managers (64.8%) said that they did not participate in a single group supervision in 2017, 22.2% of them reported they had participated once or twice, while 13.0% of case managers participated in group supervision more than twice. More than a third of professional workers (38.9%) said that they had not participated in individual supervision even once in 2017, except through consultations during work on the case; 27.8% of them said that they had participated in individual supervision once or twice, while 33.3% of professional workers participated in individual supervision more than twice. Individual supervision was organized once a month only for 18.5% of case managers.

However, **supervisors are generally available to case managers for consultation while working on a particular case.** Most case managers claim that supervisors are always (46.3%) or almost always (31.5%) available to them for consultation regarding their work with beneficiaries, either in person or by telephone, while 22.2% of them state that supervisors are rarely available or almost never available.

The attitudes of the workers regarding the importance of supervision are mixed: 40.7%

of case managers find supervision significant for working with beneficiaries, 31.5% find it significant in general, while 27.8% do not find it beneficial for working with beneficiaries. While 59.3% of case managers state that supervision completely or largely helps them overcome work-related stress, 40.7% of them believe this is not the case. Similarly, 64.8% of professional workers think that working with a supervisor helps them develop their competencies, while 35.2% do not see this happening. Annual progress reports indicate that supervision was provided to only 16.7% of case managers. Professional workers see the importance of supervision primarily in terms of:

- Support for planning the development of competencies;
- Direct support and participation of supervisors in complex cases;
- Opportunities for reflection and the exchanging of views and opinions; and
- Stress reduction due to responsibility being shared between the supervisor and case manager.

When it comes to problems in the application of supervision, professional workers identified:

- Inadequate criteria for the selection of supervisors, that is, a lack of guarantees that the supervisors are professionals with the knowledge, competencies and skills necessary for performing such a job and for providing support to other professional workers;
- The supervisor’s heavy workload related to case management, which is the reason why the supervisor cannot really be dedicated to the cases of the case manager that he/she is supposed to supervise;
- Case managers working in branch units state that communication with supervisors from the main office of the CSW is reduced to “communication” through the SWIS, that is, signing the necessary case files, which is a problem due to the distance between the two; and
- Although they praise good cooperation, case managers who are supervised by the

SUPERVISORY MEETINGS – GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL ONES – ARE RARELY HELD. TWO-THIRDS OF THE CASE MANAGERS (64.8%) SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN A SINGLE GROUP SUPERVISION IN 2017, 22.2% OF THEM REPORTED THEY HAD PARTICIPATED ONCE OR TWICE, WHILE 13.0% OF CASE MANAGERS PARTICIPATED IN GROUP SUPERVISION MORE THAN TWICE.

ISCP, consider that it would be good to have a supervisor at the level of the CSWs, which would foster easier and faster communication.

While a number of case managers believe that supervision contributes to their sense of responsibility by improving their competencies and self-confidence in work, others believe that supervision reduces the responsibility of the case manager, because the supervisor oversees the job of the case manager and can draw attention if he/she makes a mistake.

The obtained data corresponds to the views of professional workers that the supervision itself mostly consists of administrative supervision, while its educational and supportive components are less represented. A non-systematic approach to the development of workers’ competencies is a particular challenge in terms of the professional development of young workers.

The largest proportion of case managers did not participate in any form of external supervision (77.8%), 11.1% participated in one or two external supervisions, 9.3% participated in three to five such endeavours, while 1.8% of case managers participated in 11 or more supervisions.





6.5.3 Cash benefits

Cash benefits and the work of professional workers on cash benefits are primarily of an administrative nature, and are reflected in the provision of documentation for the purpose of obtaining the right to certain cash benefits and the adoption of a decision based on professional findings and opinions describing the actual economic situation, which leads to a neglecting of the work on the social inclusion of the beneficiaries, as well as of the work on motivating them towards social inclusion and work activation.

Currently, in each centre, professional workers in charge of cash benefits do the administrative work for lawyers. Since the Law on Administrative Procedure regulates the field of cash benefits, there are clearly defined deadlines for certain stages of the process, and the procedures related to cash benefits are fully in line with the aforementioned law.

The common view of all the lawyers we interviewed is that the Law on Administrative Procedure significantly complicates the implementation of the process of exercising different rights before the CSWs. Given the fact that they cannot influence any of these solutions, lawyers are adapting to the changes. Similarly, the large number of entitlements to maternity benefits being handled by the CSWs is considerably increasing the number of decisions that lawyers have to issue, so it is necessary to consider the appropriateness of the number of cash benefits and, possibly, the combination of some benefits on the same basis.

Based on our visits to the centres, it was found that a significant challenge for the accomplishment of the tasks of professional workers in charge of cash benefits is that they often do not have a vehicle available in order to make field visits, so most often they make such visits two to four times a month. In the course of one day, professional workers usually visit about eight families, which, along with the time they spend in the centre and in transport,

CASH BENEFITS AND THE WORK OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS ON CASH BENEFITS ARE PRIMARILY OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE NATURE AND ARE REFLECTED IN THE PROVISION OF DOCUMENTATION FOR OBTAINING THE RIGHT TO CERTAIN CASH BENEFITS AND THE ADOPTION OF A DECISION BASED ON PROFESSIONAL FINDINGS AND OPINIONS DESCRIBING THE ACTUAL ECONOMIC SITUATION, WHICH LEADS TO A NEGLECTING OF THE WORK ON THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE BENEFICIARIES.

does not leave enough time for professional work and the provision of support to the family.

Similarly, professional workers are not carrying out the activation activities in the planned manner, nor do they consider this activity meaningful, since this kind of responsibility falls to the national employment service rather than to the CSWs.

Although the plan is to have such plans created through cooperation between the CSWs and the Employment Agency of Montenegro, the professionals with whom we discussed this issue stated that this cooperation is not taking place in their work with the beneficiaries. Similarly, in the documentation itself, the person listed as being responsible for the development of such a plan is the professional worker of the CSW, so the practical implementation of work activation activities falls to the CSW.



6.6 USE OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEM

The research suggests that **professional workers face challenges during their use of the information system**, but most professional workers (75%) believe that the information system is fully or largely adapted to the needs of their work, while 25% believe it has not been sufficiently adapted to such needs.

Based on our visits to the CSWs, it can be concluded that this attitude toward the use of the information system is related to the information literacy of the employees, their attitude toward the work and innovations. Furthermore, the monitoring and inspection systems do not currently monitor the use of the system itself. Namely, case managers who were recruited after the introduction of the information system and who were not employees of the CSWs before it was introduced believe that the information system is excellent and do not see any alternative to it. Similarly, the largest proportion of employees who were employed before the introduction of the information system report that the information system itself helps in the management of the cases, especially in terms of improved access to the data of all users and increasing the accuracy in work. When it comes to disadvantages, they point to the slowness of the programme itself. All respondents who reported technical errors in the functioning of the information system or sent suggestions for its improvement were visited during our visits to the CSWs and reported that the modifications were made quickly and that support for the work on the information system is very good. A smaller proportion of employees see the information system as an obstacle because it takes a large amount of time to enter the necessary information. However, the information system itself contains only the documentation prescribed by the legislative framework and, in that sense, it requires professional workers to enter data that they would otherwise have to fill in themselves, so it is not possible to talk about the impact of the information system on the volume of the documentation.

Depending on the CSW, professional workers use the information system in the context of case management in different ways and to varying degrees. The following practices of using the information system have been recorded:

1. The information system is used entirely in the planned way, whereby the admissions officer opens a case during the admission phase, after which the work on the case is continued by the professional worker in accordance with the assignment of the case by the manager⁸⁶; and
2. Some cases are not entered into the information system, while some are⁸⁷. Depending on the CSW, professional workers make different decisions regarding which cases should be entered, so the following practices are present:
 - a. Based on initial admission assessment, professional workers decide whether the beneficiary appears to be at significant risk or not. If not, the beneficiary is provided with counselling services, but the case file is not opened, nor are the beneficiaries' documents kept;
 - b. Professional workers do not systematically enter a particular group of cases, e.g. cases related to violence. For this type of cases, the prescribed documentation is being not filled in either in paper or in electronic form, and such cases are not being recorded in the information system in general; and

⁸⁶ Adequate use of the information system was recorded in Podgorica, Niksicčić, Ulcinj and Berane.

⁸⁷ Such practice was noticed in the CSW in Kotor and its branch units, but also in the CSW in Bar, the CSW in Bijelo Polje and the CSW in Rozžaje.



- c. Professional workers decide not to enter cases into the system, without any special rules, but do keep them in paper form.

In some centres, cases are being entered into the system, but not in the way they are originally assigned to professional workers in practice. Thus, in some CSWs, all cases are assigned to one particular case manager, while the cases themselves are then informally shared between the employees within the service.

In centres where there are no designated admissions officers, this procedure is run by case managers and those in charge of cash benefits. In some centres, while working with beneficiaries, case managers create official records and then, at some point, they open a case in the information system and enter the data in accordance with the rulebook. Where the admission is not clearly regulated, the professional workers dealing with cash benefits enter the relevant data only when the beneficiaries have collected all the documentation, and not when they make their first contact with the Centre for Social Work. While these irregularities in relation to cash benefits do not call into question the validity of the data within the information system for cash benefits, since final decisions cannot be made outside of the system, this practice significantly undermines the quality of case management data that can be obtained from the analysis of the information system.

Namely, **when it comes to cash benefits, the information system has eased the work of professional workers in many ways because of its interconnectedness with the databases of other systems** for the purpose of obtaining necessary documentation. In addition, **the process of obtaining the right to cash benefits has been improved, which has reduced the burden on users in terms of collecting the necessary documents.** However, although most of the documentation is available electronically, some CSWs continue to require beneficiaries to collect all the necessary documents themselves, which

reduces their benefits⁸⁸. As the information system greatly facilitates the work of professionals who deal with cash benefits, it is their unanimous attitude that the information system is very useful.

Since these deviations from the prescribed mode of operation represent flaws that are not difficult to perceive and that could be easily identified through professional supervision, the absence of a reaction to such practices indicates a poor level of control over the work of employees.

In accordance with these findings, only 15% of the case managers from the survey responded that the data they enter into the information system fully describes what they do with the beneficiaries, while as many as 35% of them answered that the data they entered into the system describes what they do with the users "to a small extent" or "hardly at all". Thus, when it comes to the question of how many cases they are entering into the system, only 16.7% of case managers report entering 100% of them, while 29.6% of case managers report that they enter over 90% of the cases in the system. If we observe the data on the average number of cases that are entered in the system, case managers enter 77% of the cases into the information system (M=77.13, SD=21.40).

We asked the case managers how much time they spend in direct work with beneficiaries, as well as how much time they spend filling in documents. On average, professional workers report that 51% of their time is spent in direct work with beneficiaries and 49% in work on the system (M=50.69, SD=15.24). Nevertheless, as noted above, insight into the documentation in most cases proves that the documentation is very scarce, i.e. that it contains little information, which is not in accordance with the reported amount of time.

⁸⁸ The reason for this is because professionals want to "make sure" that they have not made a mistake because the inspection is very harsh on them if the documents received through the information system from other databases prove to be incorrect, or if they are not up-to-date.



6.7 PERCEPTION OF SUPPORT OF THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION

All case managers attended one of the training programmes organized by the ISCP.



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Of them, 42.6% attended at least one or two training sessions organized by the Institute for Social and Child Protection, three to five training sessions were attended by 42.3%, and more than five training sessions were attended by 14.8%. The majority of professional workers see training as 'very relevant' (57.4%) or 'mostly relevant' (35.2%), while 7.4% of them believe that the training programmes organized by the ISCP are not relevant. In line with these findings, as well as the findings related to internal supervision, the largest proportion of case managers assess the impact of the ISCP on the development of professional practice as 'very positive' (14.8%) or 'positive' (42.6%). However, a large number of them believe that the ISCP has no influence over professional practice (35.2%), and that it has a negative impact (7.3%).

When it comes to the findings from the interviews, professional workers still do not

feel any support from the ISCP in terms of solving the problems they experience at work.

In terms of expectations related to the support of the ISCP, professional workers agree that they need external supervision related to solving specific cases that are complex, or for which there are currently no support systems in their local communities. In that sense, they report they would benefit from regular visits by the Institute, during which they could try to jointly resolve these issues.

Professional workers also report that they are required to perform tasks for which, on the one hand, they do not have sufficient competencies, which presents a special challenge. On the other hand, they cannot make use of the competences they have in their work, especially those that they have been developing for a long time, due to the equalization of all jobs in case management.



8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis indicates that Montenegro has invested significant efforts and resources in improving the work of the CSWs in the past 10 years.

In the period 2011–2018, the number of employees increased by 53% (professional staff by 58.3%), while the network of CSWs was additionally developed and saw the establishment of new centres. Significant resources were also invested in improving the competencies of professional workers, while reform of the legislative framework protection led to the introduction of the individualization of work, participation, prohibition of discrimination and respect for the human rights of beneficiaries, including the right to life in the community and involvement in the life of the community, as key principles of work. This has led to an improvement in the quality of work with beneficiaries in terms of both the promptness of work with them and the individualization of the work. In this sense, the reform of the CSWs represents a major step forward in improving the quality of services for beneficiaries of the social and child protection system.

However, not all citizens have enjoyed the same benefits from the reform.

The availability of the services that the CSWs provide to citizens remains a substantial challenge and the analysis indicates that support is most often offered in situations characterized by high or moderate risk, that is, when the beneficiary has already suffered a significant degree of damage. Even when they come into contact with CSWs, such

beneficiaries usually remain isolated from the community, without the support they need in order to engage in social life on an equal footing with other citizens, despite the efforts of professional workers to provide them with the highest-quality service.

The present analysis identified some of the basic factors that have led to this situation, as follows:

1. Insufficient networking with other actors in the community in regard to proactive identification and prevention;
2. Limited community-based support and a lack of a holistic approach to work;
3. Insufficient participation and realization of the right to protection;
4. A lack of resources for implementing the legally envisaged model of work of the CSWs and rather inefficient use of the existing resources;
5. Challenges in the organization of work;
6. Challenges in the implementation of the supervision model;
7. An unclearly defined structure of supervision of professional work and inefficient supervision of the work of CSWs; and
8. A mismatch between the job descriptions and assigned responsibilities with the organization of the CSW and a lack of clear operational procedures.



Proactive identification and prevention

The legal framework designates CSWs as the institutions responsible for the coordination of all the local community actors in the processes of providing services, assistance and support. However, the legal framework does not provide systemic mechanisms for coordination, nor the responsibilities of representatives of other systems to respond to the invitations of the CSWs. In such a context, the **expectations from the CSWs are significantly higher especially in terms of coordination and providing immediate protection at the local level than their real possibilities allow**. The lack of clear provisions for the participation of other institutions in the process of protection can be a barrier to organizing effective social and child care in Montenegro.

The analysis indicates that effective mechanisms of proactive identification and prevention have not been established at the local community level, which leads to an absence of systemic guarantees that a person who may need the support of the social and child protection system will be provided with the support of the CSWs. The following factors have been recognized as the main barriers to identification and prevention: a) CSWs are not sufficiently present in the community; b) there is no strong interconnectedness between institutions and organizations in the community; and c) the capacity of service providers to identify persons in need of support remains low.

Community-based support and a holistic approach

The analysis indicates that there are no resources in the local community for the effective inclusion of beneficiaries into society, and it also indicates that centres are not sufficiently encouraging the inclusion of different community stakeholders through their work, which inevitably leads to the fragmentation of support. When it comes to direct work, the following factors have been

identified as critical barriers to delivering quality and holistic support by the CSWs:

- Due to a high workload and complex documentation and record-keeping procedures, professional workers cannot dedicate sufficient time to beneficiaries in order to fully individualize their work with them;
- When protecting beneficiaries, professional workers make limited use of the existing mechanisms of involving the representatives of other institutions and community-based organisations, which leads to the support offered being limited to the resources available from the social and child protection system only, without further development of community-based support networks;
- The managers of professional services with the CSWs are primarily concerned with the distribution of cases, and only to a much lesser extent with working on establishing the means of cooperation with the local community; and
- Community-based support resources remain underdeveloped, at the levels of both the social and child protection system and other systems.

Participation and realization of the right to protection

The findings indicate that CSWs are not empowering their beneficiaries, that they do not provide enough information necessary for the protection of rights, nor do they provide the beneficiaries with the possibility to participate meaningfully in the process of protection, which is essentially incompatible with the application of the principle of 'best interest'. Such an approach in the work of professional workers is related to insufficiently developed competencies, but also to the time constraints characterizing their work. The imbalance of power between professional workers and beneficiaries is further contributed to by the fact that there are no complaint and grievance mechanisms established at the level of CSWs, nor are there mechanisms for protecting the rights of beneficiaries.



Availability and efficiency of resource use at the level of Centres for Social Work

The analysis suggests that the limitations in the quality of services provided to beneficiaries by the CSWs are the result of a lack of resources for implementing the present model and the inefficient use of the existing resources. In this sense, the following barriers have been identified in the work of the CSWs:

- The number of employees, especially those in direct work with beneficiaries, is not sufficient to provide quality services to beneficiaries, although there are 23% more employees than the applicable standards envisage.
- In the overall structure of employees, the highest number of employees (117) work on financial, administrative and technical jobs with a share of 32%.
- There is a significant percentage (13.1%) of managerial staff, 2.5% of employees are involved in planning and development work, with 3.8% working on so-called other (non-systematized) jobs.
- Although the professional procedure in the CSWs is based on the case management method, only 17.3% of workers deal with this type of work, while 19.7% of professional workers deal with cash benefits, and 9.0% with legal matters.
- Overall, the structure of staff in CSWs is dominated by those who are not engaged in direct work with beneficiaries (51.5%). Also, the majority of professional workers are less than 35 years old (60.1%) in the high need of continuous capacity building.
- The degree of workload in professional workers is relatively high, especially when it comes to the assignment of new cases – on average, professional workers work on 44 cases at the same time, with a caseload ranging from 10 to 132, including an average of nine new cases on a monthly level.
- The CSWs use disproportionately more resources on cash-benefit-related affairs than on case management, which weakens the role of the centres as social and child

OVERALL, THE STRUCTURE OF STAFF IN CSWS IS DOMINATED BY THOSE WHO ARE NOT ENGAGED IN DIRECT WORK WITH BENEFICIARIES (51.5%).

WHEN IT COMES TO CASE-MANAGEMENT-RELATED WORK, ONLY 17.3% OF WORKERS DEAL WITH THIS TYPE OF WORK, WHILE 19.7% OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS DEAL WITH CASH BENEFITS AND 9.0% WITH LEGAL MATTERS.

protection agencies. The analysis indicates that child protection consumes 2.5 times fewer resources than cash benefits, while 4.5 times fewer resources are being spent on adult protection than on cash benefits. In other words, 14.5% of all the human resources of the centre are spent on child protection, 8.1% on adult protection, and 36.1% on cash benefits, which is 61.5% of the professional workforce. The remaining resources are spent on management, administrative, financial, technical and other tasks. Professional workers spend a significant amount of time on keeping records and documentation (49%).

- There are notable disproportions in terms of work organization, as well as in terms of the available human and cash resources between different CSWs, as well as between the CSWs and branch units. Thus, the number of employees in relation to the number of beneficiaries varies from 591 to 8,047, while the percentage of employees involved in direct work varies from 29.4% to 58.8%.
- The competencies of professional workers do not correspond to the job requirements to a sufficient measure. Apart from the fact that professional workers lack the

specific competencies to work with different groups of beneficiaries, they also lack general competencies related to the understanding of the best interests of beneficiaries and their rights, as well as those related to the legislative framework, which is especially prominent among young workers. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the system of licensing and in-service professional development is not aligned with the competencies required for performing professional tasks.

The results of the research indicate the existence of a strong negative impact of an insufficient number of professional workers and financial resources on the work with beneficiaries, in terms of the individualization of work, participation and the involvement of the community in protecting and respecting the rights of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, it is equally important to emphasize that the mere reduction of the burden of caseload per professional worker itself will not yield the desired effects without proper investment in their professional competencies and monitoring of their work.

Organization of work

The analysis points to significant challenges in the organization of the work of CSWs, both at the level of internal organization of professional services and at the levels of the organization of professional procedures and human resource management.

The internal organization of professional services is fully in line with the existing legal framework in only three out of the 13 CSWs, with two-thirds of the units failing to meet the prescribed standards (58.3%). Significant progress has been made in regard to the harmonization of the structure of employees with the legislative framework, meaning that only 3.8% of jobs are not fully in line with the existing regulations, compared to 95.4% of cases in which employees fully meet the criteria prescribed by the law.

The research also points to deficiencies existing at the management level. Management practices in the CSWs are such that they do not allow for an equal distribution of the caseload to professional workers, nor do they guarantee that the professional worker to whom the case is assigned is adequately trained to work with the specific beneficiary in question. The essential factor that leads to such an unequal overloading of professional workers is the lack of sufficiently developed criteria for the distribution of cases, with slightly more than half of the professional workers believing that there are no criteria for the distribution of cases or, at least, that they are not familiar with them.

In addition to the aforementioned lack of criteria, adequate distribution of cases is unmanageable due to differences in the admission procedures. The initial assessment procedure does not lead to the collection of sufficient information for the manager to be able to decide which case manager could be the most suitable for the given beneficiary, nor does it allow for the level of priority of the treatment to be determined. Employment of insufficiently experienced admission workers and the fact that admission office workers are not entitled to carry out fact-checking field visits, as well as the generally inadequate organization of the admission office, significantly impede the further work of the CSWs.

Challenges have also been identified at the case management level. Deadlines are not being respected in a large number of case management procedures. Analysis shows that deadlines are being respected only in one-third of cases, with the exception of those procedures that involve the provision of findings and opinions, when the deadline is respected in almost four-fifths of all cases. However, in smaller CSWs and branch units we identified deviations from the regular case management procedures, whereby most procedures are being carried out by professional workers who are acting as members of informal teams, with one of them in charge of managing the case in the information system. Having in mind the envisaged job description of a case manager, the tasks in which we notice the





greatest gaps in regard to performance are as follows: providing support to and training foster parents; carrying out guardianship-related tasks; keeping records of children with disabilities and adults with disabilities, and reporting on their situation. These tasks are not being performed by professional workers, or else they do not have the necessary competencies to perform them.

No *procedures related to stimulating good work* or to sanctioning bad work, have been identified at the level of CSWs, which creates a bad working culture.

When it comes to the impact of the information system on work with beneficiaries, the analysis indicates that the introduction of the information system has led to an improvement in the quality of work with beneficiaries, in terms of both cash benefits and case management. In the context of the present analysis, we have identified certain inconsistencies in the use of the information system in case management. Only 15% of case managers think the information system gives a full description of what they do with beneficiaries, while as many as 35% think it describes their work to a small extent or hardly describes at all what they do with beneficiaries. In certain centres, professional workers enter the case information into the system with a significant delay or else do not enter it at all, with only 46.3% of the case managers entering 90% or more of the cases on which they are working into the information system.

Implementation of the Law on Social Protection's provision related to the lifetime allowance for mothers of three or more children was one of the greatest challenges for the organization of the work of the CSWs, consuming a significant amount of resources of the centres. Payment of these allowances began in 2016 and ran until the provision itself was declared unconstitutional in 2017. The complex procedures related to the work on these cases demanded significant resources from the centres, which additionally hindered their regular operation.

Challenges in applying the supervision model

The research indicates that the envisaged supervision model is not adequate, and that supervision is being implemented to a very limited extent. Two-thirds of case managers (64.8%) did not participate in any group supervisions during 2017, while 38.9% did not participate in individual case supervisions. Supervision is mainly carried out through consultations during work on a concrete case, without any organized educational and supportive aspects. One of the reasons for this is that supervisors are also burdened with a caseload in the same manner as case managers, although this is contrary to the legislative framework. An additional challenge, when it comes to internal supervision by the ISCP, is that supervisors are not present in the field. There are no individual or group supervisions taking place, meaning that supervision is done primarily over the telephone. In this regard, supervisors are supposed to have insight into the case file of beneficiaries. Such a manner of supervisory work does not provide adequate conditions for more extensive support for case managers when they need it, nor does it provide insight into the competencies and knowledge of case managers for the purpose of guidance for their further professional development. As for the other challenges related to supervision, professional workers also report inadequate criteria for the selection of supervisors and the unavailability of supervisors in branch units.

Supervision of the work of Centres for Social Work

Our analysis of the legislative framework and of data from the field indicates that the supervision of the work of CSWs is neither efficient nor clearly defined. When it comes to the level of the social and child protection system, sufficient resources are not allocated, nor are the supervision procedures developed, which significantly limits the implementation of the legislative framework in practice. This is indicated by a number of listed deviations from

the prescribed operational models, which can be easily identified in the domain of supervision of the work.

The design of Centres for Social Work and job standardization

The analysis indicates that reforms at the level of the organization of CSWs were not sufficiently followed up by changes in the organization of the work of the CSWs. During the reform of the CSWs, the CSWs have been assigned a large number of public authorities and other tasks. Therefore, CSWs are expected to carry out the activities of the social and child protection agency, the guardianship authority, the authority responsible for cash benefits and the authority responsible for keeping various records, reporting on the social situation of citizens and the development of systems at the local level. Changes in the work and mandate of the CSWs have not been accompanied by the assessment of the capacities of CSWs to carry out these tasks. Work on job standardization has never taken place, either, which has led to a mismatch between the resources of the centres, the organization of the centres and the demands put before them. The analysis suggests that it is very difficult to organize work with the professional services set up in the current manner, that professionals cannot monitor the work, and that adequate job performance requires too broad a range of knowledge. Additionally, no expert instructions for performing individual tasks have been developed so far, which leads to a significant difference in work practices between the centres.

There are specific challenges in the work of the centres related to the organization of foster care. The research points to the following weaknesses in the functioning of fostering:

- Case managers are not working sufficiently on the development of foster care. Thus, as many as two-thirds of case managers (62.5%) did not organize a single training session for foster parents during 2017.
- There have been cases of placing children in families that are not adequately trained.

However, the foster families that we interviewed provide their children with all the conditions for proper growth and development ensuring an individualized type of care.

Unexpected findings

The majority of the findings are in line with expectations and findings from other research conducted in the broader area of social and child protection, except two findings which came up quite unexpectedly. They relate to: 1) the structure of the professional workforce in centres; and 2) the level of fulfilment of the prescribed standards. The research pointed out an unexpectedly lower engagement of CSWs in the area of child protection than was expected. While the centres are seen as a major agency of child protection in the country, only 14.5% of the professional resources of the centres are allocated to child protection issues. It means that around 10 case managers, out of the total number of 72 case managers covering the territory of the whole Montenegro, are engaged on child protection cases. On the other hand, the analysis points out the inadequacy of predefined standards for the recruitment of a professional workforce. Despite the very low number of professional workers engaged, still the number of professional workers extends the legally prescribed norms. These findings imply the need for urgent measures towards improvement of the standards of organization of the work of the centres and the number of professional staff in direct work with beneficiaries.

Even though the territorial differences are correlated with the level of engagement of case managers and other professionals, still, this research pointed to significant differences in this domain. That is to say, the ratio of professional workers with regard to the population varies from one professional worker per 591 people to one in 8,047. This finding requires urgent measures towards the reorganization of the work of the centres and the equalizing of the engagement of professional workforce across the centres.





8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research, and in close consultation with the MLSW, the ISCP, UNICEF and UNDP, a set of recommendations for systemic improvements at both the legislative and strategic levels were created, as well as at the levels of the Government of Montenegro, the MLSW, the ISCP, the local self-governments and the CSWs.

The recommendations are grouped according to the structure of the findings⁸⁹.

1 Recommendations regarding improvement of the proactive identification and prevention mechanism

R1: The Government of Montenegro, acting at the national level, and local self-government units, acting at the local level, should work on enhancing the existing prevention and proactive identification mechanism by strengthening inter-sector cooperation and developing the capacity of service providers to recognize citizens at risk. This implies: a) improving the coordination between institutions and organizations at the community level regarding the prevention and proactive identification of citizens at risk⁹⁰; and b) the development of the competencies of professionals working in all institutions

R2: The MLSW should strengthen the prevention function of the CSWs. This implies: a) introducing activities related to proactive work with the community into the systematization of the job descriptions of professional workers, primarily those related to informing citizens about the available rights and services, fostering cooperation with community-based organizations and institutions, and strengthening informal networks in the community, as well as creating stronger links between the CSWs and the community; and b) introducing formal procedures for informing beneficiaries, along with indicators for identifying beneficiaries who are at risk. The ISCP should develop recommendations for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs regarding those issues.

2 Recommendations regarding improvement of the quality of work with beneficiaries and the development of a holistic type of support

R3: In order to increase the amount of time professional workers can dedicate to

that are in contact with citizens, in order to be capacitated to recognize those citizens who need support from the social protection system and to be able to refer them to such support, through the development of multi-sector indicators for the identification of children at risk.

their work with beneficiaries, which is a prerequisite for providing quality work and a holistic type of support, the MLSW should increase the number of employees working directly with beneficiaries as soon as possible.

R4: The time that professionals can dedicate to beneficiaries can be increased by reducing the time they spend on administrative work. Therefore, the ISCP should approach the revision of both documents and records so that the percentage of the workload of professional workers that is related to administration can be reduced from 49% to a maximum of 25%.

R5: The Government of Montenegro should work on establishing a responsibility mechanism for the social inclusion of vulnerable citizens at the level of all institutions and organizations and introduce a mechanism of obligatory participation by representatives of other relevant organizations and institutions in the processes of assessment and planning of protection.

R6: Managers at the CSWs should devote more attention to establishing community-based support networks for beneficiaries and, more generally, to interlinking CSWs with institutions and organizations acting at the level of the local community.

R7: All professionals should pay more attention to the involvement of other institutions and organizations, as well as experts from the community, in assessment, planning and providing support.

R8: The ISCP should introduce a component related to the monitoring of links established between CSWs and the community in their Annual Reports.

R9: In order to develop the necessary community - based resources, the

Government of Montenegro should increase its efforts to develop community-based social services, especially in regard to the sustainability of funds for such services.

R10: The MLSW should pay special attention to the development of services that are important for the individual lives of beneficiaries who are at risk of being removed from their families, that is, being institutionalized, as well as beneficiaries who are leaving social welfare institutions.

3 Recommendations regarding improvement of the level of participation and respect for the rights of beneficiaries

R11: The ISCP should provide support for CSWs regarding the development of practices that enable beneficiaries to participate in assessing and planning protection or regarding the empowerment of beneficiaries.

R12: Professional supervision of the work of the CSWs, as one of the aspects of supervision, should certainly define the application of participatory procedures related to the beneficiary who is undergoing protection.

R13: The ISCP should work on the development of a formal mechanism for protecting the rights of beneficiaries at the level of the CSWs. This could be achieved by means of introducing the institution of the Protector of the Rights of Beneficiaries, who would be in charge of informing the beneficiaries about their rights and the available grievance and complaint mechanism. When it comes to the complaints, the Protector would report directly to the ministry in charge of social welfare affairs.



⁸⁹ The most important recommendations are marked with a rectangle.

⁹⁰ This can be accomplished through changes at the level of the legislative framework, whereby all institutions and organizations working with children should be responsible for identifying and referring children at risk to CSWs, and follow-up support for institutions and organizations to implement mechanisms for identification should be provided, or else this obligation can be introduced by a protocol of cooperation at the local level.



4

Recommendations regarding improvement of the resources of CSWs

R14: The MLSW should make changes to the legislative framework as soon as possible, in order to change the standards determining the number of professional workers in the centres. Apart from the number of citizens, the criteria for determining the number of professional workers should be the number of beneficiaries and the inherent characteristics of the territory covered by the given CSW.

R15: The ISCP should design a Social Service Workforce Development Plan with a competency framework in cooperation with academia and other interested parties for development of social service workforce in social and child protection (with long-term and short-term goals and indicators for the measurement of progress).

R16: The MLSW should increase the number of case managers at the system level by 80%, so that the number of new cases is reduced to five per month. This requires the hiring of an additional 50 professional workers.

R17: The MLSW should limit the number of beneficiaries per case manager to a maximum of 50.

R18: The ISCP should develop a jobs distribution plan so that the workloads of professional workers in all CSWs can be distributed more evenly, and the MLSW should carry out a revision of the jobs systematization plan, taking care that at least 50% of professional workers in each centre work directly with beneficiaries.

R19: The MLSW should redistribute the professional workers within the centre,

which would involve the redeployment of 72 professional workers, who are currently in charge of working on cash benefits, to the management of cases. This would be a response to the demand for an increase in the number of case managers, and at the same time it would create conditions for financial and administrative tasks, which have been performed by professional workers dealing with cash benefits, to be taken over by financial/administrative workers.

R20: The ISCP should improve the work of professional workers dealing with cash benefits. In this way, the task of professional workers related to cash benefits would be to provide professional findings and opinions when necessary, with the support of financial/administrative workers. In addition, they would assume a proactive role in identifying citizens with vulnerable factors and in connecting beneficiaries to the resources available in their communities.

R21: The ISCP should encourage the development of training programmes in relation to the aforementioned competency development framework.

R22: The ISCP should strengthen the practices related to the organizational socialization of new workers, in the process of their introduction to the work as new employees.

R23: In terms of improving the organization of work, the MLSW should, in particular, review the standards and tasks performed by the branch units. In the coming period it is necessary to strengthen the functional connectedness between the branch units and the headquarters of the CSWs and come up with clear criteria for the establishment of branch units and CSWs in relation to the population

levels and the need for support in the territory of the local self-government unit.

R24: In order to improve the quality of work with beneficiaries and the presence of professional workers in the communities, the MLSW should procure additional vehicles and provide better working conditions for the CSWs.

5

Recommendations regarding improvement of the organization of the work of Centres for Social Work

R25: The MLSW should revise the Statutes and Job Systematization Plans of CSWs in order to harmonize the structure and number of professional services with the legislative framework.

R26: Clear criteria and guarantees should be established during the process of distribution of cases to ensure that the professional workers possess adequate competencies to work with the specific beneficiary they are assigned to.

R27: The ISCP should increase the level of support to the CSWs in terms of developing social and child protection management practices and working on the development of a culture that encourages the development of professional workers, innovation and learning.

R28: The CSWs should come up with a system of rewarding workers who demonstrate excellence in their work, while the directors of the CSWs should promote quality work and sanction irresponsible behaviour.

R29: Managers from the CSWs should devote more attention to respecting deadlines. The CSWs should establish the practice of prioritization upon initial assessment,

as well as the practices of targeted assessment, establishment of an appropriate team when necessary, and regular use of the information system in all procedures related to professional work.

R30: Case management should be made more flexible, but also should allow for a higher level of control over the respecting of deadlines. In this sense, it is necessary to extend the period for completion of the initial assessment to a minimum of one month. During this period, the centre should carry out the necessary protection measures.

R31: In order to ensure the functionality of the assessment taking place during admission, that is, to strengthen the CSW entry "control" mechanism and provide basic support in terms of assessment and referral to other institutions and organizations for children and families who are at low risk, the MLSW should more precisely define the process of admission and should establish admissions offices in all the CSWs that have a larger number of employees. The admission assessment process should be revised in order to allow field visits for the purpose of carrying out such an initial assessment.

6

Recommendations regarding the improvement of supervision

R32: The Institute for Social and Child Protection should work on the further development of a supervision model, which implies the following: a) establishing internal supervision work positions in all centres or on a regional basis, whereby the ISCP would not be performing tasks related to internal supervision; and b) the development of a model of external supervision provided by the ISCP, which would





include other social welfare institutions, as well as social and child protection service providers.

R33: The ISCP should develop additional criteria for the appointment of supervisors to ensure that the supervisor has the competencies necessary for supervision within the professional worker's service.

R34: Supervision in CSWs needs to be additionally regulated and should clearly indicate the difference between internal and external supervision, the obligations of the supervisor, as well the criteria for their appointment and dismissal.

R35: Supervisors must not be burdened with a high caseload as case managers. However, due to the high caseload of case managers, exclusion of the supervisor from direct work would lead to a further burden being put on case managers, which could have a negative impact on the quality of the work of case managers. In this regard, the development of supervision is inextricably linked with a reduction of the caseload put on professional workers.

R36: Supervisors should work to strengthen the educational component of supervisory work by supporting professional workers to develop the specific competencies and skills required to overcome the multitude of challenges that beneficiaries experience.

7

Recommendations regarding improvement of the supervision of professional work

R37: The MLSW should allocate more resources for the supervision and control of professional work and should establish a special organizational unit with the relevant responsibilities.

8

Recommendations regarding improvement of the design of Centres for Social Work and job standardization

R38: The MLSW should develop guidelines and standards for the supervision and control of professional work.

R39: The MLSW and the Institute for Social and Child Protection should work to improve the functionality of work organization within complex institutions, such as the CSWs, and make clearer arrangements related to the organizational structure and job descriptions with the assigned responsibilities. In this respect, it is necessary to:

- Draft a set of norms related to performing each of the tasks within the mandate of the CSWs.
- Develop professional guidelines and instructions for performing each of the tasks within the mandate of the CSWs.
- Harmonize the organization of professional services and job descriptions with the tasks delegated to the centres. In this regard, it is important to perform a minimal separation of guardianship affairs from the tasks related to social and child protection in the narrower sense, i.e. the assessment and provision of support to beneficiaries who are victims of violence and neglect.
- Revise the competencies and obligations assigned to the CSWs by other systems, especially those stemming from the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. It is necessary to abolish the obligation of the Centres for Social Work to conduct regular visits to all families whose members are persons with disabilities and to report on their situation.

R40: The MLSW must introduce the position of Foster Care Counsellor at the level of the CSWs or establish an independent institution that would employ Foster Care Counsellors.



8.3. LESSONS LEARNED

Several key lessons were learned while undertaking this research:

Prior to the implementation of the reforms at the CSWs, it is necessary to standardize the work and to draft professional guidelines for every individual task

A number of reforms in the social and child protection system depart from the changes to the legislative framework, without clearly developed professional guidelines for the envisaged individual tasks and norms for job performance, or without sufficient instructions for the professional staff on how to implement the new tasks. Often decision makers believe this to be the task of professionals and very often institutions, such as the ISCP, are being created in the context of reform, to support the process of changing professional practice. Nevertheless, the implementation of any legal framework without practical guidelines and norms leads to uncontrolled innovation, that is, discrepancies in practice at the system level, without any guarantees that the envisaged norms will be implemented.

The reform of the social and child protection system requires partial reform of the responsibilities of other community-based systems and broad support from the government of the country in which the reform is being carried out.

Unlike the reform of other systems and having in mind that the goal of social and child protection is the inclusion of citizens, the implementation of reform inevitably depends on other community-based systems – above all education, health, justice and the police. In other words, the reforms which take place at the level of the social and child protection system

can produce only limited effects and benefits for citizens, even when they are implemented successfully. Although the system of social and child protection can create the grounds for social inclusion, in order to achieve the inclusion of citizens into society it is important that the other systems are involved in support and provide services that are tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.

In the course of the reform of the system, it is necessary to establish effective methods of participation by the professionals working in the systems.

The analysis indicates that the reform has not ensured permanent and continuous input by professionals at all its stages. Had such a system been in place, the risk of discrepancies in the field of work and organization could have been lower.

Major system reforms should be phased to avoid any potential destructive innovation.

Implementation of many changes, without adequate support for adopting new methods of operation, changes in the education system, that is, acquiring competencies, can lead to major changes that can be destructive to the system and can lead to a feeling of loss of control over the work. In this regard, the pace of reform should follow the readiness of the system, while the reforms themselves must be planned carefully, not only in relation to the public-policy objectives, but also in relation to the available resources.



9

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