

Quality and cost-effectiveness in long-term care and dependency prevention



## POLICY SUMMARY: BULGARIA

Improving LTC and ensuring equal access to social services for adults

Petko Salchev, National Center of Public Health and Analyses, Sofia

September 2017

Policy theme	Deinstitutionalization and provision of more community- and family-based services
Design and implementation level	National design, locally implemented. Measures are implemented by Social Assistance Agency (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)
Policy objective	Development and modernization of long-term care, and to ensure equal opportunities for access to social services for adults.
Start date – End date	2012–2030

## Aims

The adoption of the National Strategy for Long-term Care in 2014, which reflects the political will regarding the provision of affordable, high quality and sustainable services for the elderly and disabled as well as improving coordination between social and healthcare systems and introducing integrated cross-sectoral services.

The implementation of the National Strategy will include development of an action plan containing all measures and concrete projects to reform and modernize the system of long-term care and provide deinstitutionalization of care for the elderly and people with disabilities.

A new Social Assistance Act was drafted in 2015 with a view to the creation of more flexible approaches to providing social services, enhancing their quality and introducing specific criteria for their effectiveness and efficiency.

Providing social benefits: the Social Assistance Act regulates the types of benefits (one-off, monthly, target), designed to support needy individuals and families who live below a certain income, by meeting their basic living needs. Monthly allowances in accordance with the regulations for the implementation of the Social Assistance Act under the 'Provision of Social Benefits in Applying Differentiated Approach' program are granted that add personal income up to a certain limit. Target fuel allowances have been mentioned as one of the state policy priorities on social protection. Granting and

providing targeted fuel assistance as well as target groups subject to priority support are directly dependent on economic development, unemployment rates and energy prices. With regard to this, in 2011 legal amendments were made to the Ordinance on the Terms and Conditions for Granting Targeted Fuel Allowances, which facilitated and refined the conditions for access to targeted fuel allowances related to the sale of real estate over the past five years.

The national program 'Assistants for People with Disabilities' (Agency for People with Disabilities) launched in 2003 and aims to provide employment to unemployed persons to alleviate the situation of families with a person with permanent disabilities in need of constant care, in most cases people over retirement age. The program has a strong social impact, with the program activities being of great importance for small settlements in the country where these target groups lack prospects and opportunities for reintegration. Legal amendments over the years have attempted to expand the access to the program to more needy people.

The 'Support for a Dignified Life' project within 'Alternatives' scheme was approved in October 2010 with a duration of 19 months – until May 2012 (with the provision of the social service continuing until March 2012). It is implemented by the Social Assistance Agency with EU financial support under the operational program 'Human Resources Development' 2007–2013. The project is in

## Aims (continued)

compliance with the objectives of the priority axis 5 'Social Inclusion and Promotion of Social Economy', area of intervention 5.2 'Social Services for the Prevention of Social Exclusion and Overcoming its Consequences'. It provides an opportunity for people with disabilities to receive care at home on an hourly basis by personal assistants, persons of working age, based on a monthly budget approved in hours (average 120 hours per month) in compliance with an individual's needs assessment. 262 municipalities and 23 districts in Sofia participate in the project as partners. The project has been extended eight times, finally envisaged up to February 2015 with the duration of social services up to 31 December 2014.

The 'Family Environment Care for Independent and Dignified life for People with Various Disabilities and People Living Alone' scheme was implemented in 2012, with 'social assistant' and 'home helper/domestic assistant' activities being phase 3 under the operational program 'Human Resources Development'. Activities regarding 134 projects across the country within the scheme finished in July 2012. The scheme was developed in response to a number of social problems in Bulgarian society such as poverty, regional disparities, aging of the nation, social isolation and dependence of people with permanent disabilities on constant care, and the unequal distribution of resources in social services and the difficult access to them. The overall objective of the scheme was to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and people living alone by creating conditions for the effective exercise of their right to independence and social inclusion, including by exercising the right to work and reducing the risk of dependence on institutional types of care.

'Help at Home' scheme (2012–2014). The scheme aimed to create a sustainable model

for providing decent living and services in the home environment for people who are partially or completely unable to take care of themselves and are therefore at risk of social isolation. In order to achieve effective and sustainable public policy to support people in need of care in their daily lives, the scheme envisaged the expansion of the existing domestic social patronage: a service for disabled people and those 65+ carried out by social workers who provide a variety of services ranging from food delivery, personal care, to house maintenance and others.

Measures supporting people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease (provided both in homes for elderly people with dementia and family-type accommodation centres for elderly people with dementia).

Measures for the improvement of skills of professionally employed carers. Within the project 'Development of the System of Planning and Provision of Social Services at the Regional Level', implemented with the financial support of the operational program 'Human Resources Development', the Social Assistance Agency has conducted training nationwide, which included representatives of municipal administrations, social service providers and NGOs. Training was oriented towards enhancing the competence of employees of municipal administrations and service providers with respect to monitoring the implementation of policies and strategies for development of social services and delivery, management and control of social services and crisis intervention. An analysis of the status of specialized institutions for the elderly is envisaged by the end of the project, which will support the development of the Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Long-term Care with developing criteria in relation to social services that will lay the groundwork for future amendments in legislation.

<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Rapid quantitative expansion of community-based social services for the elderly and people with disabilities and reduction of places in specialized institutions, though more slowly for the period 2012–2014. State budget funds for all social services (as delegated state activities – both community-based and specialized institutions) increased for the period mentioned above.</p> <p>A slight increase in the number of people for whom social assistance has been provided for the period 2012–2014.</p> <p>Increase in the funds granted as targeted fuel allowances between 2011 and 2015 as well as an increase in the number of people applying for these targeted fuel allowances. Approximately 80% are people over normal working age or disabled.</p> <p>Decrease in the number of unemployed persons recruited under the programme for personal assistants to both the elderly and children. These data compare 2012 to 2014.</p> <p>Increasing number of personal assistants recruited within the project as well as increasing numbers of persons with permanent disabilities used their services for the period 2012–2014.</p> <p>Supported social inclusion of people in need of constant care through expansion and diversity of services. Conditions were created for the people in the target group (those living alone and people with</p>	<p>disabilities) to participate in events and cultural events in the settlements, lead a better quality life and organize their lives themselves. Emphasis on increasing accessibility with provision of appropriate care in a family environment and contribution to building more individual skills for independent living. The activities were crucial for people with disabilities and those living alone in small settlements where there are no prospects and opportunities for resocialization and reintegration.</p> <p>Establishing units and centres for providing services in home environment.</p> <p>Keeping the same number of homes for elderly people with dementia while increasing the number of family-type accommodation centres for elderly people with dementia based on data for the period 2012–2014.</p> <p>Training conducted nationwide, which included representatives of municipal administrations, social service providers and NGOs. The training was oriented towards enhancing the competence of the employees of municipal administrations and service providers with respect to monitoring the implementation of policies and strategies for development of social services and delivery, management and control of social services and crisis intervention.</p>
<b>Target group</b>	Elderly people, people with disabilities, vulnerable groups living in poverty, home	helpers, volunteers, carers.
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	No eligibility criteria have been specified.	

<b>Resources</b>	Social services funding in Bulgaria is both centralized and decentralized. The financial resources for social services development and support are stipulated in chapter VII of the Social Assistance Act and include the following sources: state budget, municipal budgets, national and international programs, donations from local and foreign individuals and legal entities, 'social support' fund, etc.
<b>Performance assessment and monitoring</b>	At national level by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Council of Ministers. The monitoring and assessment are prepared by the MLSP while the final decision is made by the Council of Ministers.
<b>Evidence of success (outcomes, quality, satisfaction, awareness)</b>	Report on the National Concept on Promoting Active Aging of the Elderly in Bulgaria (2012–2030) in Sectoral Policies (2012–2014), adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers in 2015 (in Bulgarian), <a href="http://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/demografska%20politika/otchetti%20i%20planove/Monitoring%20report%20on%20active%20ageing%202012-2014.pdf">www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/demografska%20politika/otchetti%20i%20planove/Monitoring%20report%20on%20active%20ageing%202012-2014.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&amp;Id=764">www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&amp;Id=764</a>
<b>Transferability/ uniqueness</b>	The heterogeneity of the schemes funded makes it difficult to draw conclusions about its transferability, at least at this stage.
<b>Is this an emergent practice?</b> <b>Degree of innovation</b>	Long-term care policy in Bulgaria through expansion of social services is still in its infancy. The Council of Ministers seeks to expand and develop the whole system (policy).
<b>Sustainability</b>	Intended to be sustainable.
<b>Academic literature on this action</b>	<a href="http://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/demografska%20politika/otchetti%20i%20planove/Monitoring%20report%20on%20active%20ageing%202012-2014.pdf">www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/demografska%20politika/otchetti%20i%20planove/Monitoring%20report%20on%20active%20ageing%202012-2014.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&amp;Id=764">www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&amp;Id=764</a> [both in Bulgarian]
<b>Documents</b>	See section above