

## SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE ROMANIAN RURAL AREA

Elena SIMA

Institute of Agricultural Economics, INCE, the Romanian Academy, no.13, Calea 13  
Septembrie, District 5, Bucharest, Phone/Fax:021/3182411, E-mail: elena.sima2008@yahoo.com

*Corresponding author:* elena.sima2008@yahoo.com

### *Abstract*

*The system of social protection represents the set of actions, decisions and measures enterprised in society for the prevention, diminution or the removal of the consequences of some events considered as social risks. At present, the actions for social protection are conceived for ensuring a basic living standard for all people, regardless the means of which they dispose and has in view the social living conditions. The paper employs a quantitative and a qualitative analysis, using the data from governmental and non-governmental sources. The results reveal one of the lowest levels of expenses for social protection in the rural area, and the social assistance services in the rural area are also affected by the socio-economic context and by the general poverty both of the local budgets and of the State budget.*

*Key words:* rural area, social assistance, social aid

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of social protection is defining the policy of protecting the less-favoured population categories, by measures following the alignment of these categories at a decent life standard.

In conformity with the standards of the international bodies (UN, UNESCO) in establishing the living standard there are measured the following parameters: the material living conditions (employment, incomes, the working conditions, the dwelling, clothing etc) and the social conditions (health, education, culture etc).

According to the EUROSTAT methodology, the expenses for the social protection must cover risks as: health insurances, disabilities, old age, family/children, unemployment, dwellings, and social exclusion. The impact of the social programs is assessed on basis of three dimensions: the target of the allocation or the share of funds for social assistance of which the poor population benefitted; effectiveness or share of allocations in the mean of poor population's consumption and the degree of the covering or the share of the poor population receiving the respective allocation.

Social assistance is working following another principle than the social security: based only on funds coming from the state budget or from donations of volunteers and of international institutions. The assistance does not presuppose a previous financial contribution on behalf of the person assisted socially, it has at its basis the principle of solidarity and presupposes the assessment of the assisted person's needs.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The whole information volume in this article was obtained through specific methods for the selective research, respecting all its stages from the methodological point of view: identification of the researched issue, research framework delimitation, information collection, data processing, analysis and interpretation drawing up the conclusions.

The office research also played an important role in the article, which consisted, on one hand, in the identification of other studies and articles on the same subject, and in the processing of some statistical data, on the other hand. Hence, the information sources used can be classified into governmental sources (statistical, ministerial and from research institutes), and into non-governmental sources (independent publications).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The process of land restitution has placed the agricultural land in the ownership of the small sized households. A big part of those receiving land through the restitution process are lacking the education necessary, are lacking the experience, money means and even the physical capacity to practice a commercial agriculture.

With all these, the farm income (both in cash and in kind) is the most important income source for the rural households, after which there come the salary gains, the governmental transfers mainly pensions) and the performing of the social assistance (family allowances, aids and indemnities).

*Because of the high degree of employment on own account in agriculture, the official nominal rate of unemployment in the rural area is much lower than amidst the urban population. Unemployment on long term is firstly an urban problem, while in the rural area the major issue is the underemployment combined with the low productivity of the present farming jobs [3].*

***The activity of social assistance at the level of the communes in the rural environment*** is reduced, many times, only to the work of the *social worker employed in the Town hall*. The work of the social workers is as more important, as the other forms of support offered by the community or the NGO sector, as are quasi-non-existent in most of the rural areas.

Beside the services offered by the representatives of the local authorities and those of the nongovernmental sector, the most important role in supporting the persons under difficulty comes to the *family* and, in a significantly smaller measure, to the *cult institutions*.

The support offered by the family in the social cases is very important but it is neither very important or sufficient and specialized, most of the times, being necessary alternative forms, as the services supplied by the institutions with attributions in the field, to permit an efficient support of the persons under difficulty.

Neither the religious (cult) institutions with a role in the delivering of social services at community level, although increasingly, can cover the lack of the institutionalized forms of support as those offered through the state bodies or of the nongovernmental organizations. This, as much more, as the activities of the cult organisms in the social field are far from the standards developed by organisms as *The Catholic Church in Italy*, for example [1].

Implication of the *nongovernmental organizations* in the social sector in *the development of projects and programs in the rural environment* is sporadic, even if, in the last years, together with the starting of European financings through the Operational Sectoral Program Human Resources Development it grew the number of such types of organizations, which are developing activities in the rural communities.

Also, we cannot speak yet about the existence of an important social role, which the NGO-s have systematically at the level of rural communities. The steps made in this respect until now are not enough and there remained many rural areas with deficient social services.

Development of the nongovernmental sector, represent, in this respect, the only viable modality through which it could be covered the void represented by the need for social services specialized, at the level of the rural communities. The barriers of such expanding can be identified both at the level of the rural communities, and at that of public policies in the field and of the access to finance.

The problems of infrastructure and the relationship with the local authorities are the main obstacles met at the communities' level, but these seem easily surmountable in comparison with the major problems in regard with the insurance with the necessary of finance for the projects' development.

The actions of the NGO-s with activity in the social sector in the rural environment are addressed to some specific target groups (unemployment, persons employed in the subsistence agriculture, roma population,

young people, and disabled persons) and are made of actions as:

-Support and counselling according supply for the integration on the labour market;

-The delivering of courses for professional formation free of charge to the persons coming from vulnerable groups;

-Organizing campaigns for media and information at the level of communities and of the public opinion;

-The foundation of some entities of social economy and the support for their activities ;

-The realization of studies and elaboration of strategies regarding the situation of the vulnerable groups and the ways to intervene at the level of the communities;

- Social services supply.

Implication of the nongovernmental organizations into the rural communities has in its centre:

-Supply of services of information and counselling for the beneficiaries coming from the groups socially disadvantaged;

-The services supply for professional orientation and for professional formation of the unemployed and the persons being in the search for a job.

Thus, the actions of the NGO-s with social activity in the rural are developing, generally, in a small area of activities, speaking about a niche specific for them. The increase of the NGO-s involvement can be realized only through the development of the schemes for financing which should support their activities or through the creation of organizations inside the community, to develop activities mainly within it.

Referring to the social services which can be offered to the old persons under difficulty, the aspects of interest are of the existence and functioning of the social canteens, 'economat' shops, the services for care at the domicile or in specialized institutions.

The presence of the social canteens in the rural is a sporadic one; only in 24.1% of the counties under research existing such suppliers in the rural, and 'economat' shops localized in communes are to be found only in two counties (Ilfov and Vâlcea). The explanation we can consider to be that in the

rural, the local people are procuring their food from their own household, which it should not justify, the foundation of such units in the villages. Nevertheless, there are food products processed, which anyhow the villagers 'import' from the urban, and their presence at accessible prices (the 'economat' shops) or even for free from the social canteen, would be in support of the old persons.

At the level of the communities in the rural, within the Town halls, the activity object of the social *protection activity* is made of the ensemble of measures, programs, professional activities, specialized services for the persons' protection, of the families, groups and communities with special problems, under difficulty and under a high degree of social risk, who do not have the possibility to realize through means and efforts of their own a normal and decent way of life.

The development of the villages depends on the economic progress of the whole society that is why any sectoral approach must take into account the larger frame represented by the general economic context. We cannot speak about the reduction of subsistence agriculture practicing, for example, in lack of the development of the lucrative opportunities in the other sectors of activity, which could increase the demand for labour. From this perspective, the overcoming of the economic problems at societal level represents the only viable way through which it can be produced the transformation of the economic profile of the villages. All the other measures coming in support of the development of the human capital, including through increase of the professional training of individuals, represent only secondary measures, which, in lack of the increase of the labour demand, cannot prove their efficiency.

The rural strategies dedicated to the sustainable systems for social protection comprise measures, actions realized in order to answer the individual, family, or group social needs in view of preventing and overcoming of some difficulty, vulnerability or addiction situations, for the prevention of marginalization or social exclusion in the goal of increasing the life quality.

The strategic orientations of the rural space, which, through the effects of the implementation, convergent and integrant, are based on the improvement of the conditions of the rural employment, on the reduction of economic and social fragility, specific for the unemployed population [2]:

- creation of a rural society based on the social inclusion by taking into consideration to the rural solidarity between generations and the ensuring of the increase of the rural life quality as a condition of the sustainable individual welfare;
- the formation of the rural labour market, adjusted to the requirements of the ratio demand-supply;
- the promotion of the access of the young people to the labour market and the consolidation of the status of professional formation, of the stages and apprenticeships;
- the accelerated modernization of the education systems and professional formation of the rural population.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the last decades, the world of the Romanian village was in a continuous process of transformation which leads to the modification of both the specific of the rural localities, and of the demographic, occupational and value coordinates of the population. An important part of the employed population has insecure jobs, seasonal ones or even occasional, from which they obtain small incomes (mostly in kind), uncovered by the system of social security, health and unemployment relief.

Social assistance must ensure the respecting of the persons' rights as they are regulated in the treaties and in international conventions which Romania ratified and through which it engaged itself to promote, either directly, or by cooperation with the nongovernmental organizations, measures adequate, destined to persons (young, old or with problems) in order to permit them to remain full members of the society, to dispose of sufficient resources for a decent existence, to be able to actively participate on the public, social and cultural life, to decide upon their own life, to

live an independent existence, as long as possible, in the usual environment; to have the necessary services for care, in function of the individual needs, and for the persons under institutionalized regime, a proper existence to be ensured.

In this framework, social assistance, component of the social protection system, has in view the ensemble of institutions and measures through which the State, the public authorities of the local public administration and the civil society ensure the prevention, limitation, or the outgiving of the temporary or permanent effects of some situations which could generate the marginalization or social exclusion of some persons. It has as main objective the protection of the persons, who, due to some reasons of economic, physical, psychic or social nature, do not have the possibility to ensure the social needs, to develop their own capacities or competences for the social integration.

To the social need with an economic aetiology it can be answered only by interventions, in which the social benefits are covering the necessary wished for a minimum standard of living. The services in the field of social assistance are specific for the needs provoked by personal incapacity or addiction. When between the social assistance and social change it is not established a tight relationship, there can emerge serious problems coming from the users, from those offering a support, from the practice people, from the managers and the organizations-suppliers of social services.

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