

ROMANIAN SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR EDERLY PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT: *In recent decades, demographic ageing has become a sensitive issue with an impact on various fields of activity and on future generations, marked by an alarming increase of elderly population and declining birth rate. The National System of Social Assistance represents a complex system of measures of motorization and control of main risks that the citizens are exposed to respectively old age, illness, unemployment, injury and poverty. Through the guaranteed intervention of the state the framework for respecting human rights is insured, the means and measures of social protection, manifesting solidarity with the elderly people in need. As a member of the European Union, Romania is committed to promote and to implement political strategies for active ageing, insuring measures for maintaining optimal health conditions for citizens, social security, assistance and social protection. The purpose of the article consists in theoretical analysis of the national system for assistance and social protection destined for the elderly in Romania, which plays a fundamental role in implementing and updating policies for active ageing, as well as to stimulate population growth. Keywords: ageing population, active ageing, elderly people, social services, social protection.*

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The elderly represent, among other categories, a typical group of people / families who, in the conditions of a market economy based society, have difficulty in obtaining the necessary income for a decent life in that community. This is one of the reasons why the state develops a series of complementary functions to the economy to correct the production of collective well-being. [1]. The problem of the third age "is not, in fact, a problem of age, but a response of social policies to the needs of the elderly"[2].

The issue of the elderly is a continuing concern for many international institutions and organizations. To recognize the increased importance of this social segment and to sensitize the community to the value of this age group all over the world, it was decided that October celebrates the holidays

of the elderly (the "moon of the day") and October 1 considered the international day of the elderly.

The Ministry of Labor, Family and Equal Opportunities is the one who develops social assistance policy and promotes the rights of the family, child, the elderly, people with disabilities and any persons in need. Elderly people participate in the decision-making process through the National Council of Elderly People and through the Advisory Committees on Civic Dialogue on Older People's Issues in the Prefectures.

Each state protects the rights and liberties of its senior citizens. The social assistance for the elders needs to make sure that these rights are respected, just the way they are regularized in treaties and international conventions. The European Social Charter, according to the European Council's

normative act, signed by 13 states- among which Romania-, regularizes the elders' rights to social protection by promoting a number of measures in co-operation with the public or private services.

The law of social assistance was enacted on the 3rd of December 2001, as the law number 705/2001 regarding the national social assistance system. It regularizes the organization, the functioning and the financing of the national social security system, opening a new stage based on professional and system institutional accumulations, promoting the deployment of a coherent national social assistance system. The financing of the social assistance services and of the elders' labor conscriptions is assured by the principle of sharing the responsibilities between the central and local administration, as well as using sponsorships. The state organizes as well as technically and financially supports the social services system, promoting a partnership between the local community and the civil society representatives. The social services are provided at home, in daycare specialized institutions or residential institutions. These can be socio-medical care services and social assistance services.

Old age began to be increasingly considered a risk of addiction and social exclusion. As a result, the social protection of older people finds the priority theme, including the documents of the European Commission aimed at elaborating common social action objectives and plans, within the open method of coordination of the social exclusion policy stated at the European Council summit in Lisbon in March 2000.

The global phenomenon of population aging generates imbalances in the public pension systems, social services and health services in the E.U. countries, representing a challenge for governments and policy makers in these countries to reform these systems. Romania faces the same demographic issue, specific of E.U. countries, namely the decline of the total

population, the growth of the elderly population and the average life span, feminization of aging, however the economic potential of Romania leads to difficulties in managing the social impact upon the elderly. Demographic forecasts regarding Romania show that in the following decades we will register a high and quick index of elderly people. It is estimated that between 2010 and 2050, the population structure by age group will be fundamentally altered. Population of 60 years of age and over will increase from 4, 2 (2005) to 6, 5 million (2050), and as a share in the total population from 19, 3 % to 33, 3 % [3]. Demographic ageing can be considered a success of public health policies, of economic and social development, representing one of the biggest victories of humanity, but also one of the biggest challenges it faces. Eurostat index concerning population ageing is calculated by analyzing "the number of people with ages of 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the number of people with ages between 15 and 64 years old".

The older the population the higher the percentage. The age structure of the population is characterized by decrease in birth rate, which reduced the absolute and relative growth of young population (0-14 years). In parallel, increasing life expectancy has led to an increase in the number and share of elderly population (65 years and over).

In this respect, it is noted a reduction in the share of young population (0-14 years), from 23, 7 % (1990) to 15, 4 % (2015) and increasing the share of the elderly population (65 years and over), from 10, 3 % (1990) to 16, 9 % (2015). Adult population of 15 to 64 years old decreased steadily from 66 % (1990) to 60, 7 % (2015).

Society's ability to discover and understand all aspects of demographic changes and to connect them and tackle them through social policies and social work may be a guarantee to ensure the social welfare of the population.

Concept normative ageing active. An objective of public policies Active ageing is a normative concept that describes what should be a desired situation for old people at this stage of their lives. From a sociological perspective, some scholars consider that it is important to not only describe how their lives should be, but also for the realities and experiences perceived to be studied by the persons concerned [4].

Active ageing means ageing in optimal conditions of health, having an active role in society and fulfillment professionally, as well as an autonomy in daily life and involvement in civic activities, this concept being developed in relation to the national system for assistance and protection of the elderly. In Romania, as in other European countries, the ageing population is recorded due to the accelerated growth in the number of retirees, and the main challenge of the future will be generated by the pressure of public expenditure in the area of pensions and health. A study by Eurostat regarding the active ageing indicates that only 47 % of Romanians consider that their country is „adapted to the needs of the elderly” (compared to 65 % in the EU) and only 27 % of the employed persons interviewed have expressed interest to continue working even after retirement age (33 % in the EU)

However, latest data contained in the public opinion barometer published in 2014 under the SeniorINET Project3, over 20 % of the elderly population of Romania needs home care services, but only 0.23 % of seniors are benefiting from these services and a percentage of over 81 % of providers of home care services have experienced an increased demand of services from the senior citizens. Survey results also show that the elderly do not know their rights and don't know they are eligible for home care services.

A holistic approach to active ageing involves the existence of programs and concerns direct grant assistance, social security and social benefits to senior citizens.

Active ageing on the labor market, promoting independent living and participation in society assistance programs and social protection of the elderly shapes three important dimensions. According to a. Walker (2002) active aging is “a comprehensive strategy to maximize the participation and well-being of senior citizens” [5]. In this respect, European active ageing perspective emphasizes health, participation, and well-being of the elderly person. Regardless of age, the individual may play an important role in society and one can enjoy a good standard of living, even at old age.

The elderly are a vulnerable population group with specific needs due to their physiological limitations and frailty characteristic of the ageing phenomenon. (Report of the National Council for the Elderly, Romania Design elderly population by the year 2060 in May 2014, pp.13-14).

Defining the concept of elderly person is based on biological and chronological perspective. These two criteria are analyzed to consider a person elder, the latter being more commonly used. UN General Assembly (1985) classifies the person according to age as follows: adults (45-59 years old), the elderly (60-64 years) and old people (65-90 years) [6].

According to the legislation in Romania, the elderly person is a person who has reached the statutory retirement age (According to art. 1 of Law No. 17/ 2000 on social assistance for the elderly, republished in 2007 in the Official Gazette, Part I no. 157 of 06 /03/ 2007).

In Romania there are five types of pensions, respectively retirement pension (standard retirement is 65 for men and 63 for women), early retirement, partial pension, disability pension and descendant's pension (Law. no. 263/ 2010 (updated 2015), published in the Official Gazette no. 444 of June 22, 2015). Social security benefits due under the public pension system in Romania and the benefits associated with these rights

can transform the countries where the insured establish domicile or residence, as regulated by international agreements and conventions in which Romania is a party. Along with pensions there are other rights insured to the elderly such as: balneary treatment, death grant, in case of death of the insured, pensioner or a member of the family (ibid. art.121).

Some of the effects of retirement consist in reduction of income and occurrence of financial difficulties which is reflected in the loss of social positioning and individual prestige, loss of social status, the emergence of a negative image regarding the person, representing a burden for other family members. In Romania, it was registered in the year of 2015 a total of 5140, 8 thousand state pensioners and farmers with a monthly pension of 830, 2 lei/ month, income that is below the national minimum wage (Data on the monthly pension, offered by Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection for the Elderly available by www.mmuncii.ro/J33/index.php/ro/, accessed on 18.11.2017).

1.The national system of social welfare for the elderly in Romania

The social welfare state is a concept of governing in which the state plays a key role in protecting and promoting the economic and social well-being of its citizens, based on the principles of equal opportunity, equitable distribution of the benefits of social and public responsibility for those who cannot prevail of the minimum provisions for a better living.

Social protection, a concept introduced by John k. Galbraith, represents the policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerabilities through effective promotion of the labor market, reducing people's exposure to risks, and increase their ability to manage economic and social risks, such as: unemployment, exclusion, disease, invalidity and old age

In Romania, the social assistance law

regulates the national system of social assistance and defines it as the ensemble of institutions, measures and actions whereby the state, represented by the central and local public administration authorities, civil society, involved in preventing, limiting or removing temporary or permanent effects of situations which may give rise to marginalization or social exclusion of individuals, family, groups or communities.

Social assistance benefits, depending on the conditions of eligibility, categorized into social welfare benefits, which are based on sample testing the livelihood of a person living alone or of family, universal social assistance benefits, granted without testing the livelihoods of single persons or family and categorical social assistance benefits, with or without testing the livelihoods of single persons or of family.

The current system of social assistance, mainly comprises the following aspects: transfers from the State budget, various facilities, home care services, hosting services, supervision, rehabilitation in special units, specialized personnel for the provision of services, decentralization of social actions to the communities, and local and county funding, social partnership and solidarity of the members of the communities, the identification of beneficiaries and to establish forms of support.

Under the Social Assistance Law 292/2011, social services represent the activity or set of activities carried out in order to meet social needs, as well as special needs, individual, family or group, to overcome situations of difficulty, risk prevention and combating social exclusion, promoting social inclusion and raising the quality of life.

Social services with primary character (proximity services) involve actions for prevention or limitation of difficult situations or vulnerability, which can result in marginalization or social exclusion. To overcome a situation of social need,

integrated services/specialized are centered on maintaining, restoring or developing individual capacities. The granting of social services requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensure the maintenance of elderly persons in their own home.

Legislation on social assistance provides that elderly person's family is required to provide care and maintenance, so as the family income is not affected, and considered to be the minimum necessity for the livelihood of the person obliged to maintenance as well as their children's livelihood. At the core of the process for the granting of social services for the elderly are the following principles: equality, freedom of choice, independence and individuality of each person, quality services, affordable, flexible, adapted to social needs, transparency and the participation of community members in according social services, confidentiality concerning the beneficiaries of social services, respect for human dignity.

Social welfare for the elderly is regulated by Law No. 17/ 2000 setting out the social services provided to senior citizens in their homes, in residential institutions, in daycare centers, clubs for the elderly, apartments and social housing. Social welfare services for the elderly person is granted at the request of the person concerned, the legal representative of the elderly, the Court, the specialized personnel within the City Council, the Police, the pensioners organization, of religious organizations recognized in Romania or organizations nongovernmental that have social welfare activity for the elderly. Homes for the elderly are organized into wards for three categories of single elderly persons, namely: dependent people, semi-dependent people and people who are not dependent.

Current services intended for the protection of the elderly, under Law No. 47/ 2000 republished, and are day services, care services at home and residential services.

2. Social assistance benefits insured for elderly persons

The main categories of social services granted to senior citizens provided for by the current legislation are:

- ▶ **Social services aimed for personal care**, prevention of social exclusion and support for social reintegration, legal advice and administrative support to pay current obligations and services, housing and household care, aid for housekeeping, food preparation;
- ▶ **Socio-medical services** for aid in order to achieve personal hygiene, preadaptation of physical and psychological capacities, adaptation of housing to the needs of the elderly person and economic activities, social and cultural, as well as temporary care in day care centers, night shelters or other specialized centers;
- ▶ **Medical services**, in the form of consultations and health care, are awarded on the basis of legal regulations relating to health and social security;
- ▶ **Counseling social services** in or social reintegration, without payment of a contribution, as a fundamental right of the elderly, done by social workers.

According to the proposal project of the Romanian Government for the approval of social services Nomenclature and of the framework regulation on the organization and functioning of social services classified categories of social services granted to the elderly, as follows:

- ▶ **Day care centers for the elderly** (day care centers for assistance and rehabilitation, day care centers for socialization and spending free time/ club type, multifunctional day care centers);
- ▶ **Residential centers for assistance and care** (homes for the elderly, pensioner communities, respite centers, crisis centers, protected housing);
- ▶ **Residential care centers and socio-medical assistance** (socio-medical residential centers, palliative care residential centers);

- ▶ **Home care services** (home care units, home care provided by caretakers, personal assistants, health care centers and in-home assistance for people with disabilities).

Community services for the elderly are realized with their consent and assume the temporary or permanent care at home, temporary or permanent care in a home for the elderly and care in day care centers, clubs for the elderly, nursing homes, apartments and social housing.

Under the Law, the people that can benefit of social assistance are the ones who are not in someone's care already, have no housing and no possibility to secure living conditions on the basis of their own resources, or don't realize they are not sufficient to ensure the needs, cannot be managing alone or requires specialized care, and is unable to ensure the socio-medical needs, because of disease, physical or mental state.

In home personal care services for the elderly are carried out by a formal or informal caregiver.

By legal status, the person has facilities and support services, allowances, counseling services, respite type services and holidays for care in accordance with the Law. In order to maintain their own living environment and prevention of situations of difficulty and dependency, the elderly benefit from counseling services, accompaniment, as well as services intended for dwelling adaptation or arrangement, depending on the nature and degree of impairment of functional autonomy.

Social assistance benefits represent, according to the Romanian legislation, some form of addition or substitute of income individual / domestic derived from work in order to ensure a minimal standard of living, as well as a form of support in order to promote social inclusion and quality of life for certain categories of persons whose rights are expressly provided for by Law (according to article 7 of Law No. 292/2011).

Social security benefits for the elderly are:

- ▶ Social assistance benefits in preventing and combating poverty and the risk of social exclusion;
- ▶ Care allowance granted in accordance with the law;
- ▶ Grants or contributions to ensure the quality of social services, intended to cover the cost of food in canteens, social centers and residential care, as well as to support certain nutritional supplements;
- ▶ Facilities relating to urban transport and interurban, telephone, radio and tv, the purchase of food, balneary treatment or for recreation, as well as other services;
- ▶ Aid for emergencies which endanger the life and safety of the elderly person, and to avoid institutionalization;
- ▶ Aid in kind such as: food, clothing, footwear, medicines and medical devices, construction materials and the like.
- ▶ Contribution, as a fundamental right of the elderly, done by social workers.

In order for the elderly to receive assistance and care services provided by a public residential center or day care center or at home, they have to address the request at the Town Hall where they have domicile. As a result of the survey that will be conducted at the domicile of the elderly person, local public administration authorities shall determine entitlement to social support services provided in centers that are in own administration.

Social survey will include data on illnesses of the person demanding, the ability to manage themselves, living conditions, income, etc.

Evaluation of functional autonomy is performed, as a rule, at the place of residence of the person by a mobile team of evaluators, specialists in social work and psychology from Public service of social assistance within the General Directorate of social assistance and child protection.

The social services system includes services of assistance and support to ensure

the basic needs of the individual, personal care services, recovery/ rehabilitation, insertion/ social reinsertion, etc.

Social services benefits are granted to the following categories: individuals and families in difficult situations (individuals and families without income or with low

income), the elderly, the homeless, people with disabilities, victims of trafficking, persons deprived of their liberty and other persons in cases of social need.

Helplessness, futility and lack future plans dominate their lives without foresaw the hope of a change. [7]

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