Social Services for Migrants: The Case of Serbia

Ana Čekerevac *

Natalija Perišić **

Jelena Tanasijević ***

The paper focuses on the current migrant situation and the provision of welfare to irregular migrants in Serbia. The theoretical framework stems from the concept of social rights and their references to irregular migrants. It is scrutinised through the lens of social services provided by the pub-

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* Ana Čekerevac, Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia (redovna profesorica na Fakultetu političkih znanosti, Sveučilište u Beogradu, Srbija, e-mail: ana.cekerevac@fpn.bg.ac.rs)

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1371-5251

** Natalija Perišić, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia (izvanredna profesorica na Fakultetu političkih znanosti, Sveučilište u Beogradu, Srbija, e-mail natalija.perisic@fpn.bg.ac.rs)

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7678-7231

*** Jelena Tanasijević, PhD, Social Work Practicum Instructor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, Serbia (voditeljica praktične nastave na Fakultetu političkih znanosti, Sveučilište u Beogradu, Srbija, e-mail: jelena.tanasijevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs)

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1031-472X

lic and the civil sector. The emphasis is on the regulation of the provision of basic support: accommodation, food, and clothing, but also psychological support, cash benefits, legal advice, and the like to irregular migrants. The main challenges the sectors will be facing are identified, along with obstacles to improvement. Some of the challenges are at the macro level and may be attributed to the overall decline of the national welfare state. Those relating mainly to the lack of cooperation mechanisms between the public and the civil sector are meso-level challenges. Finally, micro-level challenges refer to the capacities of the sectors *per se*.

Keywords: civil sector, migrants, migration, public sector, social services

1. Introduction

Migration, in general, stems from inequalities and disparities (Black et al, 2005; Agiomirgianakis, 2006; Babović, 2006; Spencer, 2011; Bailey & Yeoh, 2014). Because the world abounds in all kinds of inequalities, (in terms of economic, political, and social opportunities), migration has become increasingly transformative, be it voluntary or not.

One of the most striking contemporary developments and experiences, with global figures of forced migrants unparalleled since 1945, is a result of current migration from the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). This has had severe effects worldwide, both nationally and locally, but has varied in intensity depending on the role of each community. This has led to the questioning of solidarity and humanity among the peoples and countries of the world. At the moment, it seems that the opportunity to see humankind united and each of its members a global citizen has been missed. Europe has been witnessing a somewhat paradoxical situation: "[…] the right to leave is not complemented by a right to enter; one may emigrate, but not immigrate. From a human rights point of view, we are faced with an incomplete situation that sees many people being deprived of their right to emigrate by an absence of possibilities to immigrate" (Pecoud & de Guchteneire, 2007, p. ix).

The focus of this paper is the current migration situation and the role of national social services in the provision of migrant welfare. In the pub-

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lic discourse, the current situation has been most frequently termed the *migrant crisis*. However, even the most basic deconstruction of the term *crisis* in this context points to its inadequacy. On the one hand, it leads to the production of the spectacular; i.e., a dramatic representation of migrants, their behaviour, and life stories. On the other hand, increasingly loud voices have revealed the true nature of the crisis: the crisis of solidarity. Another essential term – *migrant* – also seems to be controversial. Once again, public discourse is rife with terms such as illegal migrants, unauthorised migrants, undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and the like. Most of these serve as a false excuse and a justification for numerous prohibitive measures against migrants. The preferred term in this paper is *irregular migrants*, in line with the definition provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Serbia is not an EU member state; however, its aspirations towards EU membership have arguably been persistently strong, with varying efforts and effects regarding the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. In terms of geography, it is bordered in its entirety by EU member states (Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) and has been part of the Western Balkan migrant route since September 2015. The combination of all these factors has made it a transit country for refugees aiming to reach "Fortress Europe".

The country's transit position has reflected strongly on policies and measures towards the migrants. First of all, these policies have been strongly rooted within the EU, as well as regional contexts. On the one hand, national policymakers were eager to design and provide the migrants with any supporting measures required by high-level EU officials and some member states. The reasons for this have mainly stemmed from the need to receive a positive progress report from the European Commission and to gain better access to EU funds. On the other hand, even though its transit position has enabled Serbia to experience a more "relaxed" position compared to those countries where migrants intended to stay, there were still misunderstandings, naming, and the apportioning of blame among the countries of the Western Balkan route.

Therefore, there have been many changes in national policies regulating migration and related topics. These were frequently instituted ad hoc and resulted in many gaps in the support provided to migrants. Moreover, they also occasionally resulted in the illegal behaviour of migrants, which only heightened their vulnerability.

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Unsurprisingly, policy changes have reflected strongly on the social services provided to migrants. First of all, numerous international and national stakeholders became active in the field. The Red Cross of Serbia and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations were among the first to provide support. Existing and newly established centres for the accommodation of refugees and local social work centres became the most severely affected public social services. On top of this, civil organisations have been providing substantial support to migrants.

The introductory part of the paper is followed by a theoretical framework debating social rights; i.e., the right to welfare for those who are claimed to be "others" (them *vs* us). Migrants are globally seen as an economic burden and a safety threat; they are labelled as outsiders and undeserving.[1] The third, descriptive part briefly presents the background to the situation regarding migrants and migration in the Serbian context. The fourth part focuses on social services as an element of social rights according to Marshall. Here social services are taken to mean activities, i.e. professional procedures of institutions, organisations, and agencies, as well as of their professionals, established for the purpose of welfare promotion and realisation (Selimović, 2015, p. 142). Welfare sectors are diversified and they include public, private, civil, and informal ways of welfare provision. Contrary to the public sector, which comprises services provided by the state, private sector services are provided by the market. Social services of the civil sector are those provided by non-profit organisations. Finally, family, friends, and neighbours are informal providers of social services (Spiker, 2013). In this paper, social services provided for migrant welfare by the public and civil sectors are taken into consideration. The fifth part of the paper points to obstacles and opportunities for better performance of the sectors in their provision of services to migrants.

Regarding the methodology, the paper includes qualitative content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations.

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[1] Despite the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which reduces refugees to their status, a refugee is in fact determined in negative terms; he/she is always defined by the prefix non or not, to the extent that the positive qualities of refugees are virtually absent. Refugees knock on the door of those that can grant them legal and political subjectivity; they are at the threshold of a sovereign host. It turns out, however, that a modern state reluctantly opens its door to refugees, and when it does so, this is increasingly less often in the name of universal values and human rights, and more often as an expression of its own needs (which is why it strives to place migration processes under control) (Milenk-ović, 2006, pp. 1–2).

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The content analysis was conducted on normative documents: a) regulating state policy towards irregular migrants, b) rule books prescribing the competences and activities of social services, and c) national and international reports on the statistics of migration trends in the country.

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted in the spring of 2017, with five practitioners performing managing and professional roles in the public sector and five practitioners performing professional roles in the civil sector. The public sector organisations vary regarding their competencies: one of the respondents is employed by a central level organisation, while the remaining four are employed by local level public service providers. The civil sector organisations are all based in Belgrade, but have a national scope and reach. The purpose of the interviews was to highlight current practices of support to migrants in order to be able to grasp the extremely dynamic developments in the field. On top of the qualitative view obtained by the interviews, at times these also proved to be an almost indispensable tool to achieve insights into the factual situation. The primary reason for this also stems from dynamic changes, which meant that street-level practitioners, i.e. practitioners working in the field, were the the most reliable and up-to-date sources on the actual numbers of migrants covered by social services.[2]

Finally, the observations took place in the spring of 2017 at an informal meeting point for migrants and at one of the centres for migrant accommodation.

2. Theoretical Framework: Welfare and Citizenship

In his seminal work of 1949, *Citizenship and Social Class*, Thomas Humphrey Marshall, a British sociologist, introduced the idea of welfare as citizenship (Čekerevac, 2005). Marshall positioned the concept of citizenship within the context of rights and duties, arguing in favour of three elements of the rights – civil, political and social: "the first refers broadly to guarantees of individual liberty and equality before the law; the second to political enfranchisement – the right to vote and to seek political office; the third, a good deal less specific than the other two, comprises a 'modicum of economic welfare and security' and the 'right to share to the full in the social heritage and life of a civilized being according to the standards

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[2] Reports with statistical data were sometimes obsolete the moment they were issued.

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prevailing in the society'. The first of these rights is basically inherent in legal institutions, the second in political institutions and the third in social services" (Mishra, 1981, p. 27). One of the ground-breaking features of Marshall's concept was the introduction of the responsibility of the community towards its citizens. It was strongly connected with the concept of welfare and the development of the welfare state (Coffey, 2004), with clear implications for policy-level decisions. On the other hand, "in practice, the development of social rights has been constrained [...] because they have remained systematically subordinate to civil and political rights" (Dean, 2011, p. 20).

While there have been many dilemmas about the enforcement of social rights[3] – i.e. the right to welfare – both historically and today, there is no doubt that the embodiment of citizenship in the community is actually confined to the nation-state. Therefore, the strong emphasis on the inclusion of *citizens* is in sharp contrast to the exclusion of *non-citizens*: non-citizens, non-belonging, legally non-existent – caught in the mysterious 'no man's land', at the level of survival, marginalised, without any powers and without access to the institutions in the country of their stay; they are in the shadow of citizenship (Mekmaster, 2009, p. 160). In this way, citizenship status can become oppressive for those who do not have it: those labelled as others and outsiders. "Citizenship signifies closure and exclusion at the same time as it claims universalism and inclusion" (Anderson, 2012, p. 2). Identities, increasingly fluid under the pressure of globalisation, do not seem to have reflections in the concept of citizenship, which is within the scope of national interpretations, "unharmed" by postmodern changes and challenges.[4] Impressive numbers of contemporary others, i.e., of forced and irregular migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, are deprived of the rights belonging to citizens, which has led some authors to claim that this goes so far as to present the breaching of their human rights [...] for asylum seekers who cannot enjoy active civil rights, social type of citizenship is a precondition for effectuating the basic human rights [...] the social aspect of the citizenship status provides for the right to welfare support, health care, and employment, i.e. all those rights necessary for a

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[3] Over time, social rights have evolved at international, regional, and national levels so as to include rights pertaining to labour relations, health, education, housing, decent income, and the like, with special references to so-called vulnerable groups.

[4] Postmodern changes and challenges relate mainly, though not exclusively, to the human rights perspective and the presence of supranational stakeholders.

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decent and human life of asylum-seekers while awaiting the completion of the asylum-seeking procedure (Mekmaster, 2009, pp. 158–159).

As already enshrined, the concept of the welfare state, for its part, essentially contributes to and reinforces the division between citizens and non-citizens: "Welfare states in particular can only function properly when the dividing line between insiders and outsiders is crystal clear, because anyone who contributes to one is also a potential beneficiary, and vice versa. Redistributive transfers always take place from those who are better off to those who are less well-off *within* a given society and *within* one and the same system" (Entzinger, 2007, p. 119). On the other hand, the concept of the welfare state, and especially some of its aspects, has been endangered for decades. Because the critique of the welfare state is primarily loud and influential from (neo)liberal and (neo)conservative social policy perspectives, the issues of cost, paying taxes and contributions are at the front line; i.e., at the heart of the debate regarding the changes (to be) undertaken in the concept of (the) welfare (state). Unsurprisingly, the readiness to pay for social rights is in close connection with the ownership of citizenship rights, bringing the debate back once again to "our" rights and rights for us *vs.* rights of the others (Maimone, 2017, pp. 55–56). The question of cost, raised by many with vested interest in public finance, extends from the monetary burden of society to so-called social costs, resulting in a situation in which it is "natural for us to restrict *our* resources to *our* own" (Hayes, 2008, p. 16).

"Citizenship is a status that can be extended, given, restricted, and withheld" (Coffey, 2004, p. 43). What would be done is conditional on "ethically open" and "morally restrictive" notions and interpretations of social rights[5] (Dean, 2011), with the latter prevailing worldwide. Furthermore, "the openness that characterizes immigration societies and the closed nature of the welfare state are difficult to reconcile. Immigration asks for permeable borders, but the welfare state functions best within a closed system, which most often coincides with the nation-state" (Entzinger, 2007, p. 120).

Additionally, the paradigm of diversity within the welfare state seems to have been under strong pressure recently. "One dominant explanation for the shift away from engaging with diversity in European societies is the

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[5] "Ethically open notions are more inclined to acknowledge the social rights of migrants in relation to the wider human rights framework, whereas morally restrictive notions are inclined to acknowledge social rights in a more parochial moral context" (Dean, 2011, p. 28).

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insecurity created by globalization" (Vasta, 2009, p. 4). It is, among other things, exemplified by heightened concerns over national safety. Paradoxically, "the threat to personal security would seem to be substantially greater for the migrants themselves than for the rest of the population" (Spencer, 2011, p. 162).

3. Background Facts: Migrations and Serbia

The prevailing migration characteristic of Serbia are emigrations, motivated primarily by political, economic, and/or humanitarian reasons, depending on the period. These date back to the period prior to the First World War, when they were mostly oriented towards overseas countries, primarily the American continent. After the Second World War, emigration flows were redirected towards European countries. These were especially intensive during the 1960s and 1970s, when mostly low-skilled migrants emigrated to Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, and the United Kingdom. This was reversed once again after the 1990s. Since then, "brain drain" emigration has come to the fore, with the emigration of young and skilled labour (Grečić, 1990; Vuković, 2007; Bobić & Babović, 2013). Based on data on migration profiles compiled by the Population Division of the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in 2013 there were 532,457 emigrants from Serbia worldwide (UNICEF, 2017), representing about 7% of the country's total population.[6]

Immigration to Serbia has also played a role in the country's development. This was mostly in the form of forced migration, which was especially intensive during the 1990s. A total of 379,135 refugees from ex-Yugoslav republics and internally displaced persons from Kosovo immigrated to Serbia, accounting for 5.1% of the population as per the 2002 census (Republički zavod za statistiku, 2011). During the 2000s, based on signed readmission agreements, Serbia became obliged "to accept those of its nationals who were not legally resident in European countries" (Perišić, 2016a, p. 135).[7] Finally, the post-2010 period in Serbia saw a new chal-

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[6] According to the same source, there were 99,269 and 856,763 emigrants from Serbia worldwide in 1990 and 2000 respectively (UNICEF, 2017).

[7] Data on the number of Serbian citizens who returned based on readmission agreements differ, depending on the source. "The database of the Commissariat for Refugees is claimed to be incomplete, but is relatively reliable and the only official indicator according to which in 2008, when the readmission agreement with the EU entered into force, there were

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lenge regarding forced migrants. Contrary to previous immigration waves, which mainly had national and regional repercussions with Serbia as their epicentre, the latest one is global to its full extent. Summarised by the Deputy Commissioner for Refugees and Migration in Serbia: "The refugees of the 1990s and of the 2010s share rather similar characteristics – they want to escape from war disasters; they are tremendously traumatised, both men and women; all around you can see misery and plastic bags. And the distinction between them: the former refugees mentioned skin colour, religion, language, and the desire to stay here. The latter mentioned none of these things".[8] In Serbia, the majority of irregular migrants come from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq but increasing numbers have been recorded from Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Bangladesh, and Morocco (KIRS, 2017). Serbia has been facing the influx and struggling to find an appropriate response to their needs since 2009. As early as in 2012, facilities used to house migrants from MENA countries were full nationwide.[9] Meanwhile, the pressure rose, requiring additional resources to be devoted to their assistance. The number of migrants entering and leaving Serbia has increased, particularly since September 2015. The agreement between the EU and Turkey in March 2016 officially brought the Western Balkan route to an end, but unofficially it still exists, taken by a comparatively lower number of migrants.

Table 1 shows the number of persons who have expressed their intention to seek asylum protection in Serbia. Although it may be reasonably supposed that the numbers presented here are lower compared to the number of persons who have passed through Serbia, these seem to be reliable official data.[10]

15,681 requests for the readmission of Serbian nationals" (Perišić, 2016a, pp. 145–146). Since then, numbers have ranged between 3,706 in 2010 and 9,495 in 2015. The national *Strategy on the Reintegration of Returnees Based on Readmission Agreements* of 2009 forecast the return of more than 100,000 persons (Strategija reintegracije povratnika po osnovu Sporazuma o readmisiji, 2009, p. 1).

[8] This statement is also paradigmatic, regarding the attitude of the national authorities, with regard to the lack of a strategy for the integration of migrants into Serbian society.

[9] Interestingly, Banja Koviljača was the first and the only asylum centre with 85 beds for the whole of ex-Yugoslavia.

[10] The number of persons who have passed through Serbia is given in terms of estimations. The estimations are rather diverse. However, there is a huge gap between the estimated number of irregular migrants and those who expressed their intention to seek asylum protection. For example, according to the APC, 20,000 irregular migrants are estimated to have passed through Serbia in 2012 (APC/CZA 2013, p. 28), contrary to 2,723

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Table 1: *Persons who expressed intention to seek asylum protection in Serbia, 2009–2015*

Year	Number of persons
2009	275
2010	520
2011	3,134
2012	2,723
2013	5,065
2014	16,500
2015	579,518

Source: Authors, based on KIRS (2015)

Currently, with 7,860 migrants in Serbia,[11] public resources have been almost depleted and capacities are overstrained. Any potential increase in the number of migrants might mean a stop to the functioning of the elements essential to their protection and support. Consequently, officials and practitioners have grown increasingly concerned that the factual inability of migrants to transit through Serbia would result in the collapse of the support system.[12] However, in case migrants need to stay in Serbia, integration could be even more challenging.

4. Welfare Practices and Provisions for Migrants

4.1. Public Social Services

The first stakeholder in the social welfare system that a migrant comes into contact with upon crossing the Serbian border is the Commissariat

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who expressed their intention to seek asylum protection. This accounts for roughly 13% of the estimated number of irregular migrants.

[11] Naturally, data on the number of refugees vary on a daily basis and UNHCR reports are issued on a weekly basis. The number of 7,860 refugees relates to March 13–19, 2017 (UNHCR, 2017a).

[12] Rules, laws, and practices of treating migrants in neighbouring countries have reflected strongly on the number of refugees in Serbia. For example, as a result of Hungarian and Croatian bans "the number of refugees and migrants in Serbia increased from approximately 2,000 in June to 7,000 by the end of the year […]" (UNHCR, 2017b, p. 4).

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for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia. The Commissariat is a public agency with competencies regarding the protection, return, and integration of forced migrants. More specifically, as per the Law on Refugees, the Commissariat performs tasks related to the: recognition and cessation of refugee status; caring for refugees; registration of refugees; adjustment assistance to refugees from other agencies and organizations at home and abroad, and ensuring balanced and timely assistance, provision of accommodation or settlement of refugees in the areas of local self-governments; taking measures for the return of refugees; meeting the housing needs of persons in accordance with the law; keeping records of their responsibilities and the establishment of databases (KIRS, 2017).

Based on its jurisdiction for the provision of accommodation and meals, the Commissariat has established a total of 17 transit, reception, and asylum centres throughout the country.[13] The Commissariat's centres have diversified with time: those in Preševo and Šid are the largest (because they are nearest to the borders), accommodating up to 2,000 people each, with rather modest living conditions. Contrary to that, the centres in Bogovađa and Banja Koviljača have the best living conditions, comparatively speaking, and are therefore intended for the accommodation of families and migrants intending to stay for a longer period.

About 87% of all migrants (6,768) are given accommodation in the Commissariat's centres (UNHCR, 2017a, p. 1), while the current accommodation capacities amount to about 6,000 beds. Because these are not sufficient for all migrants, the Commissariat has rented some private houses (for example, in the village of Bogovađa where the centre is located) for their accommodation. However, there are still about 1,000 migrants in the barracks behind the Belgrade central bus station, and finally, the remaining migrants are located outside the Commissariat's jurisdiction, either voluntarily or by use of force. Most of them are in Subotica (near

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[13] There are five asylum centres in Krnjača, Sjenica, Bogovađa, Tutin, and Banja Koviljača; five transit centres in Adaševci, Šid, Principovac, Sombor, and Subotica; five reception centres in Preševo, Obrenovac, Bujanovac, Divljana, and Bosilegrad; and two reception-transit centres in Pirot and Dimitrovgrad (see: http://www.kirs.gov.rs/articles/aboutus.php?lang=ENG). Typically, migrants cross over from Macedonia to Serbia, and are directed towards the nearest centre, the one in Preševo. They are accommodated there for a few days and their presence is officially documented/recorded during this time. Health care and social welfare support is also provided if necessary, following an initial assessment. From the centre in Preševo migrants are taken by buses to other centres in the country, in order to be provided with the most suitable conditions according to their status and needs and also to be as close as possible to the state border in order to enter the EU, if this is in compliance with their recorded intentions.

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the Hungarian border), where there is an informal meeting point for migrants. Those are migrants who did not want to be officially documented/recorded or to have legal accommodation provided by the Commissariat, and they only receive support from local stakeholders.

A local stakeholder from the public sector is the Centre for Social Work (CSW). It is the backbone of the social welfare system and the most important public social service in the national context, established throughout the country. The offices of the CSW are generally entrusted with the activities of social welfare and social inclusion of the population, not only of Serbian citizens, but also of foreign citizens and non-citizens (article 6 Zakon o socijalnoj zaštiti). More specifically, foreign citizens and non-citizens as beneficiaries of social rights include unaccompanied children, adults and senior citizens "in need of social welfare" (art. 41, p. 8 and 5, ibid), and victims of trafficking (art. 41, p. 4, ibid). For example, in 2015 a total of 1,462 foreign citizens and non-citizens visited a CSW office in order to exercise some of their rights[14] (Republički zavod za socijalnu zaštitu, 2016, p. 15).

This practice has demonstrated that migrants exercise their right to social welfare benefits[15], which are financed from the state budget and disbursed by local CSWs. The benefits can be sought by asylum-seekers and those whose asylum protection has been approved, provided that they are accommodated outside an asylum centre, in private accommodation. An additional requirement is that their means be determined (art. 3, Pravilnik o socijalnoj pomoći za lica koja traže, odnosno kojima je odobren azil).

Contrary to 2015, when women and children accounted for only 27% of migrants, currently the majority (55%) are women and children. Because they are, unsurprisingly, additionally vulnerable in a crisis, in this case the public sector plays additional roles. One is in connection with the accommodation of children; i.e., unaccompanied underage migrants in shelters for children, which are part of the public social welfare sector.[16] A person's

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[14] Out of the total number of foreign nationals who visited a CSW office in order to exercise their social welfare rights, unaccompanied minors accounted for 57%, young people for 29%, adults for 12%, and senior citizens for 2% (Republički zavod za socijalnu zaštitu, 2016, p. 15).

[15] The right to social welfare benefits which may be sought by migrants is regulated in greater detail by the rule book on social welfare for asylum-seekers, enacted as early as 2008.

[16] These are, as their official names read, the Institution for Raising Children and Youth in Belgrade and the Institution for Raising Youth in Niš. In 2011 and 2012 there were 72 and 119 underage migrants in the two institutions respectively (Morača, 2014).

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age is established based on their statements, because frequently they do not have any personal documents proving their identity. In March 2017, the number of unaccompanied children was about 600 or 750, according to the data of non-governmental organisations and the Commissariat respectively. All underage migrants are placed in temporary custody by local centres for social work, which generally have jurisdiction over appointing custodians in the national social welfare system. In practice, the CSWs are informed by the centres for the accommodation of refugees and shelters for the accommodation of children. As a rule, temporary custodians are social workers employed by the centres for social work. A single social worker may be, and in practice often is, custodian to many children and they assume responsibility for the children (among other things, during the asylum procedure and the like). Most recently, the Centre for Foster Care has initiated training and education of national foster carers for unaccompanied migrant children.

Furthermore, the CSWs have reported on foreigners as victims of trafficking, both children and women.

4.2. Civil Social Services

Stakeholders in the civil sector are diverse, primarily in terms of the services they provide to migrants, be they of a humanitarian or developmental nature.[17] The urgent assistance they provide has been of two types: first, the distribution of non-food items (shoes and clothing, tents, sleeping bags and blankets, hygiene items, and mobile phone SIM cards) and second, the distribution of food items. Even though this is not exclusively within the social welfare sector, civil society organisations have been providing medical aid consisting primarily of dealing with injuries, administering medicines, and referring patients to national health care institutions, if necessary.

Legal support and advocacy have been used as tools necessary for migrants to achieve their legal rights, the fundamental one being the right to

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Their accommodation in these institutions is of temporary nature, lasting until they apply for asylum. After lodging the asylum application, they are transferred to an asylum centre, if there is a place available.

[17] There are many NGOs providing for the migrants, in addition to the Red Cross of Serbia, which has been active in the areas of distributing humanitarian aid, finding family members, providing technical and logistic support, as well as informing the public and professionals about current challenges.

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asylum. Migrants were informed about these rights by civil organisations, as well as represented before public institutions, both national and international. This support was provided free of charge with the help of interpreters hired by civil sector organisations. Advocacy has frequently meant the need to have children's rights respected. Sometimes it has also meant the representation of the need to be aware of children's needs. Advocacy in the local community has translated into the organisation of workshops with mixed groups of migrants and the local population in order to make the latter more sensitive to the needs of migrants.

Psychosocial support given by civil stakeholders has been both general and specific; i.e., with an emphasis on some groups (primarily, women and children). It has proved helpful for migrant recovery and increasing their ability to adapt to new circumstances, leading to their empowerment. Professionals from civil sector organisations have been dealing with needs assessment (basic and urgent), and organising a series of activities, such as workshops, gatherings for children, corners for teens, corners for mothers, as well as work with migrants on an individual basis. Psychosocial support has been also aimed at encouraging migrants to practise their traditional and routine ways of living in the Commissariat's centres to the maximum possible extent.

Child protection by civil sector organisations has mainly consisted of identification activities aimed at unaccompanied underage migrants and other children in need of urgent support. This kind of support has had very strong links with public sector welfare organisations, such as the national Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and centres for social work. On top of this, civil sector organisations have participated in the reunification processes of unaccompanied minors and their families.

Educational support has only recently been added to the agenda in the national context regarding the formal school system. It was designed by civil sector organisations focusing on support for children in terms of their preparation for inclusion into schools. The majority of children are not included in the regular school system (currently, there are about 60 migrant children attending schools in Serbia, out of a total of 600–750). On the other hand, civil sector organisations were the only stakeholders providing informal learning for children by allowing them to express themselves through drawing, singing, acting, and similar activities. Those informal workshops have had the additional role of allowing children to talk about everyday routine. Educational support activities have also been oriented towards consulting the parents of migrant children regarding the children's school needs. Finally, teachers in public schools have been tar-

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geted by workshops and specialised training about migrants, their needs, their culture, and similar issues.

Civil sector organisations have also been engaged in strengthening the capacities of the public welfare system, primarily by means of organising specialised training for employees in the public sector, focused on supporting migrants.

Urgent psychological support, child protection, and educational support express solidarity and are the humanitarian practices most frequently used and evaluated as the most effective by civil sector professionals.

5. Challenges Ahead of Social Services

5.1. Functioning of Social Services: Micro-Level Challenges

Currently, the stakeholder arena regarding the provision of migrant welfare is rather heavily populated. However, this is not to say that there are no gaps when it comes to the evaluation of outcomes.

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration has faced the biggest challenge regarding the accommodation of migrants. As this paper has shown, the challenge is not critical at the moment; however, an increased number of migrants or a prolonged stay would require additional actions on part of the Commissariat.[18] In the event of an impossibility to accommodate migrants, this would mean the breaching of their legal right to accommodation. In addition, this would bar migrants from exercising their right to asylum, because this is dependent upon accommodation in one of the centres. The right to asylum is related to many other rights in the national context: the right to social welfare cash benefits (as demonstrated), and the right to a working permit as the most important right.

On the other hand, according to available data and statements of employees of public social services, the numbers of migrants referred to centres for social work are almost negligible compared to the numbers of migrants who entered and left the country, as well as to the numbers of migrants

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[18] For example, in 2012, when there were only a few centres in the country, there were huge numbers of migrants living in the woods around the centre of Bogovađa. Official records show that they stated they wished to be accommodated in the centre, but there were no beds for them. The situation became especially severe during the winter months.

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who have used services provided by the civil sector. Even though there may be a difference between the sectors in the method used to keep record of cases, there is also a possibility that many migrants did not even try to get support from the CSWs, because they received support from other organisations (Republički zavod za socijalnu zaštitu, 2016, p. 16).

One of the disadvantages of working practices with migrants generally reported by employees of CSWs has been a lack of clear and consistent instructions on professional procedures and competencies of the CSW. First of all, this refers to the right to social welfare benefits. Namely, professional employees have faced the challenge of establishing the differences between the rights belonging to irregular migrants, as opposed to those belonging only to asylum-seekers, those who had obtained asylum status, and finally those belonging to Serbian citizens (Morača, 2014, p. 62). They were also uncertain how to react in case of a lack of funds for the disbursement of the benefit, either from the central or local budget. Despite this, regarding the right to social welfare benefits, data so far show that the majority of asylum-seekers did not create problems in order to exercise their right to social welfare benefits in local centres for social work (Djurović, Dedakin, & Jančić, 2013, p. 31). Apart from anecdotal evidence, there are no official data on the topic. Available annual reports on the work of local CSWs do not offer any information on the frequency of migrants exercising their right to this type of support – foreign nationals are not specifically recognised in the records, and they could potentially be traced through another beneficiary category: neglected persons, victims of violence, persons with behavioural issues, persons with troubled family relationships, and persons who are socially and materially jeopardised. (Morača, 2014, p. 48).

On the other hand, because the essence of social work lies in communication skills, it may be reasonably supposed that the provision of interpretation services is of the utmost importance. There are indications that this also presents a challenge and an obstacle to the provision of services such as counselling, assessment, and support planning, along with a scarcity of professionals and their regular workload. With regard to this, particular importance may also be attached to skills for culturally competent practices, and the employees claimed to be in need of these. There is an impression that cultural specifics of the migrant population are ignored in many cases, despite efforts to avoid this. Family violence is not addressed to an adequate level; i.e., there are indications that public social welfare sector services are not sensitive enough regarding violent behaviour in the migrant population. One of the centres covering a huge migrant popu-

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lation does not even have the prescribed practice of notifying police officers of the potential risk of human trafficking in cases in which underage unaccompanied migrants express their intention to seek asylum status, after which they actually disappear (Morača, 2014, p. 51). A lack of human resources and necessary communication skills were also an obstacle to regular meetings between custodians and underage unaccompanied migrants (Djurović, Dedakin, & Jančić, 2013, p. 31). Activities to accommodate children under custodian protection in foster families have been revived recently, but there is a lack of foster families prepared for urgent placement and of sufficiently sensitised foster families.

The most important types of support which are needed but not provided include mental health services and specialised support in the system of psychiatric care. Standard psychosocial support is inadequate for adults and children who are experiencing severe trauma and are depressed and aggressive. The most frequently reported obstacles to providing adequate psychosocial support are: a relatively short stay, aggravated communication, insufficient capacities (personnel and infrastructural for the implementation of support programs), and similar issues (Group 484, 2016, p. 8).

On top of this, the system for the integration of migrants into society is underdeveloped, if it exists at all. This is probably partly due to the recognition of Serbia's transit position. Consequently, there are no structured and individualised plans regarding employment and integration for migrants.

At the moment, some of the most active civil sector organisations in supporting migrants from MENA countries are those with a history of supporting migrants since the 1990s. However, increasing numbers of migrants, the diversification of their problems (unaccompanied children, migrants with all kinds of disabilities, victims of violence, and the like), as well as increased funds (given by different stakeholders but primarily the EU) for their support, have brought many civil organisations into the arena. These sometimes appear to have competing and overlapping agendas. This is not to say that there is no cooperation between civil sector organisations. Still, along with the strengths of their work, there are also weaknesses, the first one being the appearance of the migration industry. Namely, the logic of financing in the civil sector along with their project based activities, has streamlined numerous civil society organisations towards supporting migrants, despite their original expertise. Furthermore, this "concentration" on supporting migrants has left many vulnerable groups outside the scope of the services of civil sector organisations.

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5.2. Cooperation Between Sectors: Meso-Level Challenges

Regarding the current situation, the division of welfare tasks between public and civil social services has its roots in the recent movements of people in and out of Serbia. A short overview of the migration processes characteristic of Serbia's recent history has shown that the infrastructure for the current migrant crisis was established as recently as the 1990s. At that time, any kind of public sector services necessary to support forced migrants were almost completely absent. It was the emerging civil sector which rather spontaneously started to provide the first necessary support measures to migrants, and only afterwards did the public sector follow suit. Interestingly, public sector employees were frequently engaged in civil sector organisations aimed at providing for forced migrants. As a rule, good practices, expertise, and innovations were initiated by the civil sector and then transferred to the public sector. On top of this, civil organisations were the only ones to support those beyond the reach of public services.

Currently, "non-governmental organisations have been managing the process with the Commissariat, the Department of the Interior and other public stakeholders on an equal footing", according to the national Deputy Commissioner for Refugees and Migration. As may be observed from the description of social services provided to migrants, there is cooperation between the sectors. Cooperation between the civil and the public sector includes both the local and the national level. At the local level, it includes but is not limited to migrant protection (asylum centres), social welfare (centres for social work, centres for children accommodation, and centres for foster care), education (schools in the vicinity of centres where migrants are housed), health care (health centres), and police (police stations). At the national level, continuous cooperation has been developed with the Commissariat for Migration and Refugees, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Education.

Although civil sector activists have generally assessed cooperation with the public sector as good, there are certain problems, mainly regarding the implementation of the Law on Asylum, but also the accommodation and registration of asylum-seekers. Therefore, unsurprisingly, one of the first recommendations of civil sector professionals is to strengthen inter-sector cooperation, as well as to increase the number of professionals and provide them with additional training on migrant needs. An area that has been observed to require attention is weak cooperation with the local

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community and inadequate preparation of the local population for life in the vicinity of asylum centres. The state policy regarding migration management is generally said to be good, but its implementation should be improved so as to avoid failure.

Planning and conducting civil sector activities has been determined by several factors: the migration route(s), places in which migrants have been staying, reaction of relevant public authorities, and the capacities available to them (Group 484, 2016, p. 6). The role of the civil sector in the current migration situation seems to be both supplementary to and complementary with that of the public sector, depending on the services provided. For example, the public sector is in charge of food and accommodation, but the civil sector has been conducting supplementary activities in this field. Their services are of particular importance for migrants accommodated at informal meeting points and outside the system of registration held by the public sector. Legal advice is provided almost exclusively by the civil sector, which seems to be the only advocate of migrant rights in the public domain, actively combating discrimination against migrants. Their role in encouraging volunteers to contribute to the support of migrants cannot be overstated. Psychosocial support is an extremely important addition to this kind of support provided by the public sector.

The complementary relations between the public and civil sector are jeopardised by the fact that all kinds of resources in the public sector have steadily become less available.

5.3. National Welfare State: Macro-Level Challenge

It is a specific political, historical, and economic context – characterised by a severe economic crisis and austerity measures – in which the public and the civil sector have attempted to legitimise their social services towards migrants. Therefore, unsurprisingly, all kinds of public resources in the social welfare sector have been modest and limited. The social welfare sector may be even denoted as a transition loser (Perišić, 2016b, p. 645) and it has been continuously facing the problem of its catalogue of services, despite strong reform incentives since 2000. In general, preventive activities have not progressed past the stage where they are yet to be developed, even when it comes to the national population. Inclusion mechanisms aimed at the socially excluded are to a large extent absent in the country. It would be a huge challenge for them to prove effective if they were to be offered to migrants on a long-term basis. In parallel, un-

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surprisingly, neo-liberal logic has been dominating the agenda of changes to be made in the welfare state. Thus, key terms in current and future reforms are self-reliance, personal responsibility, and activation, with a general absence of empowering actions.

Underfinanced social services, professionals overburdened by their existing workload, and increasingly demanding job requirements coupled with low job satisfaction and high levels of burnout have become usual phenomena in the public sector. In view of this, the legally enacted conferring of activities to the civil sector was received by many as the factual inability of the state to be fully engaged and to perform its functions. It was seen rather as the forced mitigation of its role and not the need to have a fully functioning welfare state. This is supported by the fact that there are no state activities to create an arena in which the state sector would be a real partner to the public one.

6. Conclusion

The combination of micro-, meso-, and macro-level challenges, as presented in the sections above, has added to the concern over the achievement of social rights of irregular migrants in Serbia. However, there are signs that the situation in Serbia cannot be described and observed as discouraging, at least regarding "the willingness and devotion of all key stakeholders to the establishment of the system of accepting refugees which is essentially focused on the needs of individuals" (Group 484, 2016, p. 14). On top of this, not only has the policy of open borders been embraced, but the necessary infrastructure for its implementation has been put in place. However, the current perspective, framed within the design and implementation of short-term measures for migrant welfare may prove to be problematic, requiring mid-term and long-term measures.

Public and civil sector social services have been balancing their roles in the current context. It may be reasonably supposed that civil sector social services will be supported by the state in the provision of currently lacking services to migrants, as well as that the scope of current activities of the public welfare sector will not be expanded.

Future research should focus in greater detail on the division of welfare tasks for migrants between the public and the civil sector in terms of their functions, ideologies, motives, and roles. The quality of services, unfortunately, was out of the scope of this research; however, this could be very

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important for the evaluation of the exercising of migrant social rights. The existence of a social service is not a guarantee of its quality and sometimes services for "others" are designed as less important. It is also necessary to analyse the roles of the public and the civil sector in supporting another welfare sector: that of migrant families. It is reasonable to expect that their role is of the utmost value in a crisis.

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SOCIAL SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS: THE CASE OF SERBIA

Summary

The paper focuses on current global migration trends and their reflections on Serbia's social services. Serbia has been a transit country for migrants from the MENA region on their way to the European Union. Their stay has been short-term and social services have been organised accordingly. Both the public and the civil sector at the national and local level have been strongly involved in providing support to ensure migrant welfare. The public sector has provided services regarding migrant registration, accommodation and transit, as well as social support to migrants generally, and particularly to victims of violence and underage children. On top of this, cash welfare benefits have been disbursed to eligible migrants. The civil sector has provided urgent and humanitarian aid, medical aid, legal support and advocacy, psychosocial support, child protection, educational support, and has strengthened the capacities of the public welfare system. Along with strengths and opportunities, social services in these sectors face certain micro-level challenges. These are identified within the current and expected deficiencies of migrant social services – there is a need for greater housing capacity, more professionals in the field, greater support with a view to integrating children into the educational system, and the like. Cooperation between the sectors is seen to present a challenge at the meso-level. However, it seems that cooperation between the civil and the public sector is quite good, while state support policy and financial measures could pave the way to even better cooperation. Finally, there is the macro-level challenge of the changed nature of the national welfare state and its decline. This is the framework within which social services need to operate.

Keywords: *civil sector, migrants, migration, public sector, social services*

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SOCIJALNE USLUGE ZA MIGRANTE – SLUČAJ SRBIJE

Sažetak

U radu se analiziraju globalni migracijski trendovi te kako se oni odražavaju na socijalne usluge u Srbiji. Ta je država već neko vrijeme tranzitno mjesto za migrante s Bliskog istoka i iz sjeverne Afrike (MENA) na putu za Europsku uniju. S obzirom na njihov kratkotrajni boravak u Srbiji, tako su organizirane i socijalne usluge. I javni i civilni sektor aktivno se uključio u pružanje podrške na državnoj i lokalnoj razini. Javni se sektor bavi registracijom, smještajem i premještajem migranata te pružanjem socijalne podrške, posebice žrtvama nasilja i maloljetnicima, a isplaćuje i novčanu socijalnu pomoć migrantima koji za to ispunjavaju uvjete. Civilni sektor pruža hitnu i humanitarnu pomoć, liječničku pomoć, pravnu podršku i zastupanje, psihosocijalnu podršku, usluge zaštite djece te edukacijsku podršku, jačajući time kapacitete sustava socijalne skrbi. Uz mnoge pozitivne značajke, socijalne usluge u ta dva sektora također se bore s izazovima na mikro razini. Ti su izazovi prepoznati u okviru sadašnjih i očekivanih nedostataka socijalnih usluga za migrante te se izdvaja potreba za većim smještajnim kapacitetima, većim brojem profesionalnog osoblja na terenu, većom podrškom kada je riječ o integraciji djece u obrazovni sustav i slično. Suradnja između dvaju sektora izazov je na mezo razini, iako je, općenito uzevši, suradnja razmjerno dobra. Ipak, nacionalna politika podrške i financijske mjere mogle bi je dodatno ojačati. Konačno, na makro razini izazov predstavlja slabljenje sustava socijalne države i njegove temeljne promjene s obzirom na to da je riječ o širem okviru unutar kojega socijalne usluge djeluju.

Ključne riječi: *civilni sektor, migranti, migracija, javni sektor, socijalne usluge*