Literature Review on the development of the social work and social service workforce in the Europe and Central Asia Region

Technical support to UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) for a Regional Conference on Social work/Social Service Workforce Strengthening

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About UNICEF in the Europe and Central Asia region

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

This literature review provides an overview of current knowledge and understanding of the social work/social service workforce in Europe and Central Asia (ECA)[1] and a more in-depth analysis of the situation in four countries – Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Romania – based on ongoing case studies. The review was conducted in preparation for a regional conference on social work and social service workforce strengthening in Bucharest, Romania (21-23 November 2018).

The review is structured around the three key actions required for workforce strengthening identified by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA): planning, developing and supporting.[2] These apply worldwide, including within the ECA region. It aims to capture the situation described in the literature on the region in relation to these three actions before providing more in-depth information on the four case study countries. While the review does not represent an exhaustive or definitive analysis of the situation, given time constraints and the limited availability of literature, it provides a number of key findings. These confirm an incomplete picture of the social work and social service workforce across the region and a pressing need for multi-country research to inform workforce planning, development and support.

Key findings

The development of social work and social services in the ECA region mirror the situation worldwide, with **great variation in the situation across the region on the types of social services that have developed, how social work is defined and the extent to which it has developed as a profession and an academic discipline**. Different definitions of social services, social workers and other social service cadres in each country make it difficult to understand the extent of the workforce deployed in each country of the region. Differences in the language used to describe the people who work in social services or in allied sectoral services such as health and education also contribute to a confused picture of the state of the workforce in many countries.

Workforce planning is a major challenge in most countries. This makes it more difficult to ensure the deployment of workers with the right competencies in the right positions throughout the country, including in rural or hard-to-reach areas or communities, and in both government and non-governmental services.

Social workers and other social service workers in the region tend to be underpaid and to work in challenging environments with limited infrastructure and transport compromising their ability to fulfil their designated responsibilities. In some countries where social work is well-established, as in Georgia, caseloads have expanded to a critical point confirming the critical need to expand and better support the workforce and leading to the Law on Social Work of 2018 where such measures are envisioned.

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[1] 21 countries from the UNICEF ECA region were the focus of this desk review Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
[2] Framework for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce, GSSWA (2010)

Nearly all countries in the region now have definitions of social work anchored in legislation and have social work education programmes at bachelor degree level as a minimum. In some countries, however, curricula require considerable strengthening and updating to meet contemporary social work challenges and to reflect a unified national practice model.

There are workers in many ECA countries in statutory social work positions, such as child protection decision-makers, who do not have social work education or training. The legislative and policy framework does not recognize the need for professionals with these competencies in positions with statutory responsibilities. In other countries, legislation states that only qualified social workers are permitted to work in such statutory child protection positions, but resource challenges or other factors make it difficult to implement these regulations. There are low levels of trust in the workforce in many countries as it is perceived as fulfilling inspection roles or 'taking away children' and this can affect take up of social services.

One key challenge for the governments of the region is to clearly define the processes required for statutory social work. These processes usually include assessment and decision-making, and governments need to ensure that the workers with these responsibilities are equipped with the competencies (skills, knowledge and behaviours) to execute them effectively.

In most countries of the region, social services are delivered by both government and non-government service providers. In some countries, the government engages non-government organizations (NGOs) through social contracts or other funding mechanisms to provide specialized social services to specific vulnerable groups, such as children experiencing violence, children with disabilities, street-connected children and children living with HIV. In many countries, civil social organizations and NGOs have been pathfinders in creating new services and have the competencies needed to work with some of the most vulnerable, marginalized and excluded populations. Some governments recognize the expertise of such NGOs and the role they can play in building workforce competencies. Other governments could encourage greater engagement of NGOs in workforce strengthening and social service provision.

There is no standard model of how social work has developed in the region and there is no one 'best practice' or single standard to which countries should aspire. Every country has its own definition of social work and its own path for the development of its social work and social service workforce. At the same time, all countries in the ECA region face similar challenges in terms of poverty, child protection, violence, migration and other social issues and require, therefore, a strong workforce to address these challenges. And all countries face similar challenges for workforce strengthening: ensuring that there are enough qualified, motivated and educated workers country-wide, with adequate working conditions and the support the need to address social issues with vulnerable populations, support inclusion and address violence. **If one common set of concepts and terms can be defined, the basis for a regional agenda on workforce strengthening becomes apparent**.

This literature review demonstrates that **literature on social work and social service workforce development across the region is relatively sparse,** with only one multi-country study commissioned in 2015 and a rapid survey of UNICEF Country Offices conducted by UNICEF ECARO in 2015-16.

Systematic multi-country research on the social work and social service workforce is required to establish a valid, consolidated, regional perspective over time. As a start-point, periodic in-depth country studies are needed to support more strategic, long-term workforce planning in each country.

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List of abbreviations

ASA	Agency for Social Assistance (Bulgaria)
BSW	Bachelor degree in social work
CCS	Community consultative structures (Romania)
CPU	Child Protection Unit (Albania)
C4D	Communications for development
DGASPC	County Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection (Romania)
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECARO	UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
ECD	Early childhood development
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EU	European Union
GASAS	General Administration of Social Assistance and Services (Albania)
GASW	Georgian Association of Social Workers
GSSWA	Global Social Service Workforce Alliance
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
IASSW	International Alliance of Schools of Social Work
MLSJ	Ministry of Labour and Social Justice (Romania)
MLSD	Ministry of Labour and Social Development (Kyrgyzstan)
MoES	Ministry of Education and the Sciences (Kyrgyzstan)
MoLHSA	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Assistance (Georgia)
MSW	Master degree in social work
NARU	Needs assessment and referral unit (Albania)
NGO	Non-government organization
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
OSF	Open Society Foundation

PWC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SPAS	Public Social Assistance Services (Romania)
SSA	Social Service Agency (Georgia)
SSS	State social services (Albania)
TdH	Terre des Hommes
TSAS	Territorial Social Assistance Structure (Moldova)

1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

This literature review is a contribution to the documentation of the state of the social work/social services workforce in the countries of the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, and to a high-level regional conference on this issue in Bucharest, Romania, in November 2018. The findings outlined in this document include an overview of the literature review for four country case studies – Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Romania – carried out in preparation for the conference.

This report, prepared by Oxford Policy Management on behalf of UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office:

- provides an overview of current knowledge and understanding described in the literature reviewed of the social work/social service workforce in Europe and Central Asia in terms of their planning, development and support
- examines the literature relating to the strategies, approaches and programmes that underpin the social work/social service workforce in Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Romania through more detailed case studies
- provides a preliminary conceptual framework for and definition of the 'social work/social service workforce' within the context of this assignment.

This report does not aim to provide an exhaustive documentation of the social work/social service workforce, given the limits of the timeframe and the available resources. However, it does provide a rapid review of readily available literature to document:

- key features of a range of social work/social service workforce models within the region
- definitions of workforce and workforce development indicators that are being used in the region
- some common characteristics and challenges relevant to social work/social service workforce strengthening across the region and across sectors.

Together with the case studies and the conference proceedings, the literature review will help to shape a regional agenda for greater investment in social work/social service workforce strengthening and a framework to monitor progress.

1.2   Definitions

The definition, competencies and roles of the social service workforce are evolving and vary across the region. However, one common definition is required to underpin any regional monitoring framework if data on the workforce are to become meaningful.

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA) defines the **social service workforce** as:

> *"…paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental professionals and paraprofessionals working to ensure the healthy development and well-being of*

> *children and families. The social service workforce focuses on preventative, responsive and promotive programmes that support families and children in our communities by alleviating poverty, reducing discrimination, facilitating access to needed services, promoting social justice and preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation."* (GSSWA, 2017*)*

The International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) defines social work in an international context as follows:

> *"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing."* (IFSW, 2014)

The terms 'social worker', 'social assistant' and 'social service worker' are used in different countries in the ECA region in different ways. The term 'paraprofessional' is used in some countries and not in others. For the purpose of this literature review, the case studies and the conference preparations, we propose to begin with the following definitions, recognizing that we may end up with different definitions by the end of the project.

Social worker[3]: Graduate of a school of social work who uses his/her knowledge and skills to provide social services for clients.

Social service worker[4]: Paid governmental and non-governmental professionals and paraprofessionals working in formal services and structured systems to ensure the development and well-being of people in need of additional support. These include children and families, women and people with disabilities.

In this desk review we propose using the term 'social service workforce' to include both social workers and other social service workers. Where we use the term 'social work' or 'social worker' explicitly, we intend to denote the profession of social work and its practitioners and not other social service workers. In some countries social workers not only have to graduate from a school of social work but are also required to undergo a licensing and certification process. In other countries, however, they may have a job description with the title of 'social worker' (or its equivalent), but this may not require a relevant social work education. We aim to define these terms more precisely in each case study country and to eventually come to a set of terms and definitions that can be useful across the ECA region in a regional call to action and monitoring framework.

The term 'social work/social service workforce' is used throughout this report to denote both professional social workers (social work workforce) as well as other people with

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[3] Barker, 2003, cited in http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Case-Management-Concepts-and-Principles.pdf
[4] Adapted from http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/social-service-workforce

social work functions who may not have a social work qualification (social service workforce).

1.3   Scope and methodology

This literature review focuses on the global and regional social work/social service workforce, paying particular attention to the four countries where case studies are being documented. The review takes as its guiding structure the three key actions required for workforce strengthening – *planning, developing and supporting* – as proposed in the GSSWA Social Service Workforce Strengthening Framework[5] (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Social Welfare Workforce Strengthening Framework
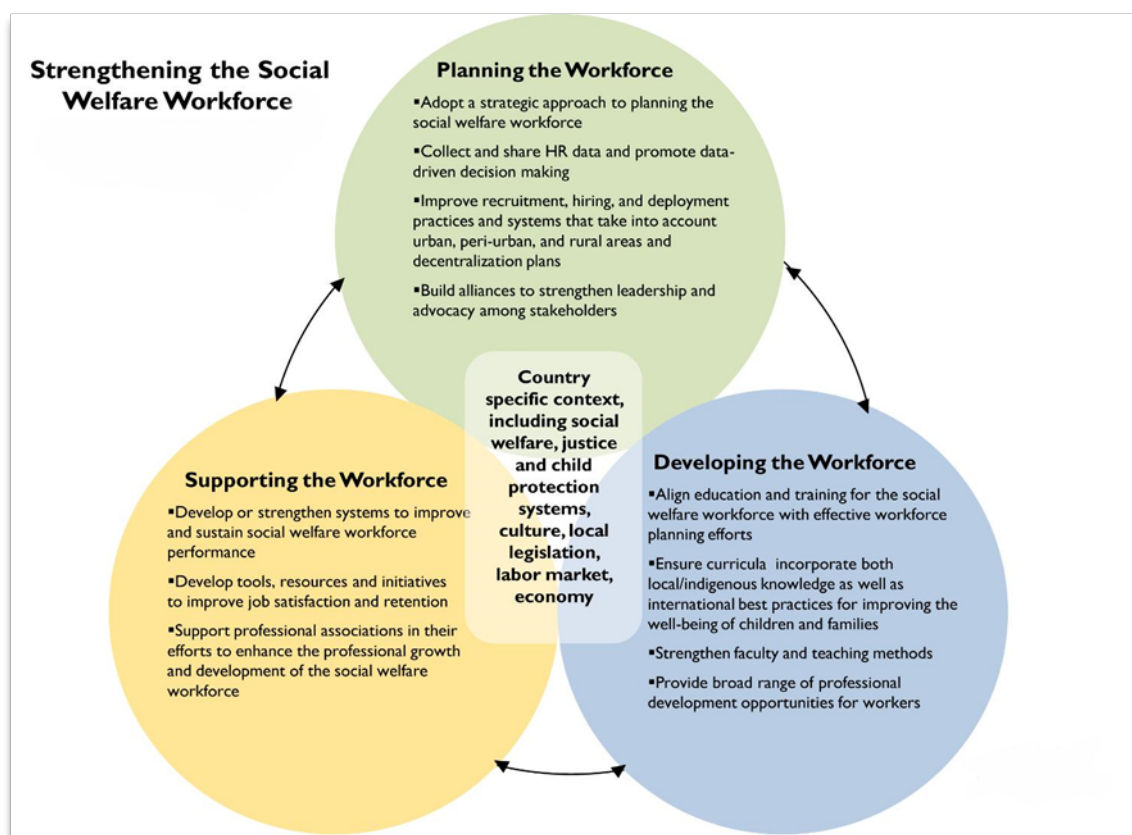
Source: GSSWA, 2017

The focus and scope of this literature review are guided by the **inquiry framework** developed for the wider documentation exercise being undertaken as part of this assignment. This sets out detailed questions for each of the three action areas presented in Figure 1. The inquiry framework may represent a useful starting point for

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[5] http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/State%20of%20the%20Social%20Service%20Workforce%202015%20Report%20-%20A%20Multi-Country%20Review.pdf

the framing of a regional agenda and for the monitoring framework emerging from the regional conference.

The literature review does not attempt to answer all the questions in the inquiry framework, but rather to identify gaps in knowledge or data in relation to the situation in the countries of the region. This approach ensures that a **wide-net** is cast in this initial stage of inquiry in terms of understanding whether the elements that can strengthen the workforce are in place and to identify gaps. It adopts, therefore, a **gap analysis approach**, using the GSSWA framework and the inquiry framework to set out a benchmark for the documented situation and experience of countries in the region.

Given the time and resources constraints, the scope of the analysis is **limited to a non-exhaustive, light-touch review of the available literature**. For example, promising practices in planning, developing and supporting are noted where identified, but are not described or documented in depth. Any gaps identified in this review may be explored through the detailed country case studies or conference proceedings and noted for future studies.

Geographic scope: UNICEF's ECA region includes all the countries of Europe to the west across to the central Asian countries in the east. This report focuses on the **21 countries in the region where UNICEF has country offices**[6]**,** although it does also reference some of the countries in the ECA wider region as appropriate.

Sectoral scope: While this literature review was commissioned by UNICEF ECARO's Child Protection section, recognizes that any study of the social work/social service workforce must take into account its intrinsically cross-sectoral nature and the full range of vulnerable groups with whom the workforce engages. A reference group convened from UNICEF's other ECARO sectoral departments and focal points (justice, education, health, early childhood development, social protection, gender, disability, communications for development (C4D), migration and youth) guided and informed the preparations for the regional conference in November 2018, including this desk review. A number of sectors have contributed reports and detailed comments and, while some issues of concern to other sectors may not receive detailed treatment, they have been considered and reflected to some extent.

The overall intention is not to focus on any particular issue or vulnerable group that drives the need for a strong social work/social service workforce (e.g. violence, gender, disability or children without parental care), but to scan **all sectors** for the required workforce functions and competencies, and for the actions required to strengthen the workforce so that it can address, respond to and adapt to an ever-changing range of social challenges. While this desk review focuses mainly on **children** (given the focus of UNICEF's work and the reports that were prioritized for consideration), it recognises that the workforce actions of planning, developing and supporting are also relevant to services for **adults,** and this is taken into account where relevant.

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[6] https://www.unicef.org/eca/where-we-work

1.4   Methods

This review is based on analysis of documents from two sources: 1) documents provided by UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and its country offices, and 2) documents gathered by the Oxford Policy Management (OPM) team through a more general search to access other relevant published resources and unpublished documents from national and international government, UN and NGO sources.

Acting on advice from UNICEF, the authors filtered the documents provided to prioritize those that reference the overall context, as well as reports documenting progress in social workforce development in the region between 2005 and 2018. When necessary, requests were made for additional documentation to support a more thorough review.

The following documents were prioritized:

- reports of direct relevance to social work/social service workforce strengthening (planning, developing, supporting) were prioritized over reports focused on specific issues (e.g. preventing infant abandonment, responding to domestic violence) or on specific social work practices (e.g. assessment forms, guidance for workers)
- multi-country reports from the region were prioritized over single- country reports.

All three sections of this report – planning, developing and supporting – focus first on the regional situation (referring to the workforce globally where relevant) before reviewing the situation in specific countries, where data are available, and then presenting more in-depth insights from the four case study countries: Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Romania.

2 Planning the workforce

This section focuses on the need to define the social service/social work workforce and its roles, responsibilities and functions in and across a range of sectors including social protection, education, health and justice as a central component of planning. Planning also touches upon the regulatory framework within which the workforce operates and the numbers of social workers deployed and their functions, whether statutory or otherwise. For the detailed research questions under planning, see Annex A.

2.1 Regional overview

A 2008 review commissioned by USAID (Rutgers, 2008) interviewed key informants in 21 countries across the region to assess the state of social work education and practice. The review used a four-pillar best practices framework for analysis and reporting (Table 1) that captures different aspects of best practices in social work education and community-based practice that are described as 'a comprehensive model of community-based social services for vulnerable groups' (Rutgers, 2008, p.8).

Table 1 Four-pillar framework

Pillar 1 – Policy and legal framework Policies and laws that reflect internationally recognized standards for the profession of social work, legal/policy mandates for social work practice that reflect good practice for community care models and laws related to social work associations.	**Pillar 2 – Structure of services and practice environment** Programmes and services in which social workers practice, qualifications, relationships with other social workers, role of social work associations, job functions, salaries, status and relationships with clients, other professionals and the public authorities.
Pillar 3 – Education and training Acquisition of knowledge, values and skills for social workers providing direct services and those managing and supervising services. This includes professional education and training, curriculum development activities and conferences and workshops delivered by a range of providers.	**Pillar 4 – Outcomes and performance measures** Outcomes for social work interventions, systems for monitoring social work inputs, cost-benefits analyses, development of evidence-based practices, research on the professionalization of social work (such as salaries, standards, opinions and attitudes, client satisfaction, client outcomes), and evaluations of programmes and services.

Source: Rutgers, 2008

The 2008 review also presents a framework of best-practice indicators based on these four pillars (Table 2).

Table 2 Indicators of best practices for community-based services

Best practices for community-based services
Policy and legal framework: *This refers to the overarching values and principles, the targeted vulnerable populations, centralized and decentralized functions, relationships with NGOs, financing and accountability, and strategic and implementation plans.*
1. Identifies and defines priority groups at-risk

2.	Promotes family and community care over residential and institutional-based care
3.	Identifies internationally recognized standards of care and professional practice
4.	Provides a mechanism for contracting with NGOs in providing social services
5.	Provides accountability and sanctioning mechanisms
6.	Engages consumers and advocacy groups in designing and evaluating public policy

Structure and types of programmes and services: *Categories and types of services available to clients; how potential clients are informed, targeted and assessed; and the degree to which services aim to support family and community living.*

7.	Provides a range of programmes from prevention to protection that reflects international standards
8.	Provides mechanisms to shift from residential care to community care
9.	Promotes principles and values of practice that reflect capacity-building over 'relief and rescue'
10.	Puts in place assessment processes to target those the programme is designed to serve
11.	Puts in place client accessibility mechanisms, such as client outreach and citizen awareness/public education
12.	Ensures that at-risk groups have influence over decisions of service providers
13.	Integrated approach to assessment, planning and intervention
14.	Provides mechanisms for community participation and volunteerism
15.	Institutes public awareness and public education campaigns to influence public attitudes and citizen involvement

Human capacity development: *This refers to the human resources available to provide services that meet care standards, the specific job functions, the availability of education and training resources for developing a qualified workforce, and regulatory mechanisms.*

16.	Integrates job functions with assessment, planning, intervention and follow-up (social work case management and multidisciplinary planning)
17.	Professionalizes the treatment and rehabilitation workforce
18.	Regulates practitioners through licensing or certification procedures
19.	Educates and trains human service professionals
20.	Trains the workforce using curricula that reflect principles and values of human capacity building, prevention and community care
21.	Promotes professional standards of practice through curricula and programmes
22.	Focuses partnerships between universities, advocacy groups and public and private service delivery organizations on performance improvement through workforce development
23.	Promotes quality of service and quality workforce through professional associations with advocacy functions

Performance measures: *Outcome indicators used to measure client change based on identified need; information and monitoring systems in place to measure change and track clients.*

24.	Measures reduced risk and/or improved well-being
25.	Employs information systems to monitor programmes and services
26.	Employs information systems to monitor clients

Source: Rutgers, 2008

The four pillars and indicators may be a useful resource for the creation of a regional monitoring framework or system of metrics to support the development and strengthening of the social services workforce. The USAID review provides an overview of education and practice development that includes an historic perspective on how social work has developed in each country of the region. The former republics of Yugoslavia established social work education in the 1950s and most other countries of the region began the development of modern social work in the 1990s.

The review highlighted the absence of common definitions or understanding of social work across the region and pointed out that while social work education existed in most countries, its standards and scope of practice varied from country to country. It also found a general lack of certification and licensing[7] except in Romania, although it also notes that "*the link between practice standards and quality of services is stronger than the link between licensure and quality."* Other findings of note include the following.

- *Job functions*: Most social workers were employed in public social services in jobs that emphasize the administration of social assistance benefits over psychosocial services.

- *Salaries and low professional status:* One of the most consistent and pervasive issues that emerged in the course of drafting the Rutgers review was low salaries for social workers and difficult working conditions (large caseloads, excessive paper work and limited resources for clients).

- *Social work as a career:* There were few opportunities to advance, or to make a career in social work, as there were few management and supervisory positions.

More recently, UNICEF ECARO undertook an assessment (or inventory) of 21 countries with UNICEF country offices in 2015-2016 (the same 21 countries reviewed in the USAID report in 2008) to understand the current situation of the social work and social service workforce across the region. This assessment revealed the following findings (all from Partsakhaladze, 2017 unless otherwise specified).

- The social service workforce across the region is made up of skilled and unskilled workers with the following job titles: social worker, social work specialist, specialist in social work, social pedagogue, child and youth care worker, community development worker, Roma mediator, outreach worker, social work assistant, social assistant, para-social worker, probation officer and others.

- There is no commonly defined understanding of the social service workforce across countries, but most countries have 'child welfare social workers' and social care workers in central or local government entities working with older people or people with disabilities. The majority of countries do not apply uniform legal definitions of the social work profession, minimum professional standards, standard qualifications requirements or job descriptions for child welfare workers.

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[7] Social work certification is 'title protection' that identifies a title, such as Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and puts limits on who can use that title. Social work licensing is a 'practice act' that defines a particular scope of practice to regulate anyone performing those services, no matter what they call themselves (Association of Social Work Boards, 2008, cited in Rutgers, 2008).

- In addition to those employed in child welfare, most countries have some kinds of social workers employed by NGOs or local authorities in the fields of juvenile justice, aging, education, healthcare and mental health.

- Almost half (48 per cent) of the countries have standardized qualification requirements for state child welfare social workers. In four countries of central/south-east Europe – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia (all formerly part of Yugoslavia) – social workers must be qualified professionals. In contrast, three countries further east report having no statutory social workers at all (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The other 13 countries surveyed report a mixture of qualified social workers and professionals with university degrees in other fields who have retrained as social workers or personnel with secondary education and no training in social work (UNICEF ECARO, 2016).

- Those countries that have standard qualification requirements and standard job descriptions in place for child welfare social workers (mainly the states and territories that were once part of Yugoslavia) also have regulatory systems for social work in place, including for registration or licensing.

- Only a few countries have information on the average workload of state-employed child welfare social workers, which is reported to range from 2 to 150 active cases per worker. In general, countries lack data from areas outside the capital city. There is also a lack of information on the qualifications and workloads of social work workforce personnel employed in different fields (UNICEF ECARO, 2016).

The study notes that the lack of available e data on the social service workforce is the result, in large part, of the complete absence of national bodies with a formal mandate to gather data on that workforce. Indeed, only a few countries have systems with the capacity to collect such data, including data on functions and workload.

Overall this study reveals the pressing need to define more clearly what is meant by 'social worker' and other types of social service workers in each country. **If a regional agenda or monitoring framework is to be viable, it is essential to ensure a focus on functions or processes and competencies, as well as job titles or professional categories, when reviewing the situation of social workers or social service workers**.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, for example, all reported not having any statutory social workers in place, even though all three countries have workers called 'social workers' who provide home care services to elderly people and those with disabilities as part of statutory government services. They also have municipal child protection bodies with statutory child protection functions that, in effect, require social work competencies even though they are staffed by people who are not formally called social workers and who do not have social work education or qualifications. It could be argued that they do in fact have 'statutory social workers' (people in positions with statutory social worker responsibilities) even if the personnel deployed are not qualified as social workers in any way that is recognized by international definitions of social work and social worker education.

UNICEF ECARO notes that in many of these countries, plus Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the core child protection functions are associated with educational systems inherited from the old soviet system, which did not recognise social work as a distinct profession. Some of these personnel may have qualifications in pedagogy or social

pedagogy that might overlap to some extent with social work education, but any certainty about the extent of this overlap would require a specific review.

The origins of the social work profession in the region

The UNICEF ECARO 2015-2016 inventory and the USAID 2008 review indicate that social work is well established as a profession in the countries and territories of the former Yugoslavia, less well established in central Asia, and established to varying degrees in other countries of the region. This is, in part, historic as the profession of social work was not recognized in the Soviet Union and, in terms of the countries of the current Europe and Central Asia region, was found only in the countries that were once part of Yugoslavia before the 1990s. As a result, there is little tradition of social work as an academic or professional path in post-Soviet and many post-communist countries (Dhembo, 2015; Rutgers, 2008).

In recent decades, however, the deep political and economic changes of the post-socialist phase and the engagement of diverse new actors (such as universities and learning centres) have been instrumental in driving new reforms to create a new and dynamic landscape in which social work development is now thriving.

The two assessments indicate that social work development in Romania has been more rapid than in other countries because of external pressure to deinstitutionalize the system of child care. They also find that the countries of the former Yugoslavia have been in the process of introducing licensing or certification processes since 2008.

The countries of the former Soviet Union all inherited a system of home care services for the elderly and for people with disabilities, which were staffed by 'social workers'. This position, therefore, existed in every country in the Soviet Union at the time they became independent and other kinds of social services began to develop along with the social work profession.

In some countries with this legacy, the job title 'social worker' was used to describe home care workers without particular qualifications rather than professional 'social workers', according to the received international understanding. In Moldova 'social assistant' (asistent social) has been used since 2003 to describe a worker with the competencies and functions of a social worker and 'social worker' (lucrator social) is used to describe a worker with the competencies and functions of a home care worker (Rutgers, 2008; UNICEF Moldova, 2015). The use of 'social assistant' in Moldova ensures Romanian language consistency with Romania where 'social assistant' also denotes 'social worker'.

In Russia and Belarus, the new professionals were called 'social work specialists' to make a distinction between the inherited Soviet home care social workers and the newly emerging profession of social worker. In Ukraine, the qualification characteristics for 'social work specialist', 'social pedagogue' and 'social worker' were formalized in April 1991 and these positions became the equivalent of the globally accepted position 'social worker' (Rutgers, 2008; Petrochko, 2018).

Social work in Turkey first began to develop under the auspices of the UN during the 1950s, but there was only one school of social work until 2003. There was a rapid expansion in social work education from 2004, 15 universities teaching social work by 2012. This has led to a range of challenges in standardizing social work education and ensuring quality and consistency (European Schools of Social Work conference briefing note, 2012).

2.1.1 Defining the social worker role

Social work cannot be separated from the social, cultural, legal and policy context in which it exists. Rogers, Jones and Rijicova (UNICEF Moldova, 2015, p.38) note that:

> "While social work is now a global activity reflected in the fact that there are probably more than 2100 schools of social work in 122 countries according to the Directory of Schools of Social Work (www.cswe.org), there are significant

> *differences in the definitions of social work in each national context. The IFSW has sought to provide a unifying framework – hence the attempt at an all-encompassing definition, but individual country definitions are not necessarily the same and have both common elements and important differences.*"

All countries face common problems and challenges – poverty, social exclusion, violence against women and children, ageing, migration – but there are important political and cultural differences in how each country addresses these challenges. These differences are reflected in social work and in the definitions of social work or social workers adopted in each country. The question that social work modes of practice, definitions and ways of working essentially address is: "is the structure of society basically fine and do people need help with adjusting to it or does society need amending in a more radical way?."

There are three main approaches to social work, according to Lymbery (2005), cited in UNICEF Moldova (2015, Chapter 3, page 28):

- working with individuals, in both problem-solving and therapeutic ways – the *individualist/therapeutic* approach
- working as a go-between, ensuring that resources are mobilized to meet need, with particular stress on the tasks of liaison and coordination – the a*dministrative* approach
- working with groups and communities, to construct creative and new types of response to problems, including the development of new services and resources – the *collectivist* approach.

Most definitions of social work across the world, including within the ECA region, reflect all three of these approaches to some extent (Rutgers, 2008; UNICEF Moldova, 2015). Most countries in the region now have definitions of social work anchored in legislation and have social work education programmes at bachelor degree level as a minimum. Depending on how the social work profession has developed in each country, one or other aspect of the three approaches may have more emphasis.

A multi-country study spanning Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Moldova, Romania and Serbia on the role of the social service workforce in child protection, found that, in most countries, the legal frameworks and the formal structures for social service workers focus on the delivery of social assistance and that their roles in child protection seem to be less defined (Akesson (2016). This echoed the findings of the 2008 USAID review in 2008, which found that "*most social workers are employed in public social services in jobs that emphasize the administration of social assistance benefits over psychosocial services"* (Rutgers, 2008).

Some definitions of social work from a selection of countries of the ECA region are presented here.

- **Albania:** according to the law Nr. 163/2014 'for the Order of Social Worker', "social Work is the professional social activity based on practice and academic discipline that promotes social change, development, social cohesion and social justice. The

social worker is a regulated profession that is exercised in the field of social work, in micro, mezzo and macro level, at the service of individuals, families, groups and communities, in institutions of central and local level, in the public and private system."[8] The social administrators who had been primarily administering cash benefits from social protection schemes country until 2013, transitioned towards case management as part of a general systemic approach (Dhembo, 2015). The Law on social care of 2016 and the Law on child protection of 2017 specify that social workers (with degrees in social work) have to be employed in municipal social services structures in needs assessment and referral units at a rate of 1 social worker per 10,000 population and in child protection units at a rate of 1 social worker per 3,000 children.

- **Croatia:** the draft Law on social work activity (under consideration by the government in July 2018) encompasses all three of the approaches identified by Lymbery and is fully aligned with the IFSW/IASSW definition of social work.

  Social work is a profession that is based on modern scientific theories and facts, principles and values that are conceived in the most important international documents related to protection and promotion of human rights and documents of the International Federation of Social Workers.

  Social work activity includes the implementation of professional methods that are provided in the form of prevention or treatment procedures. The fundamental activity of social work is conducted with individuals, groups and communities, and can include work with organizations, activities aimed at the profession itself and activities aimed at influencing the wider national and international relations in the field of social policy.

  The main methodological areas in the professional practice of social work are:
  - social work with individuals
  - social Work with groups
  - social work in the community and related areas
  - social planning
  - research in social work.

- **Georgia:** the definition of social work is one that emphasizes the importance of basic societal values and the role of social worker as the professional who provides help to socially vulnerable groups of people by carrying out of the following activities: facilitating the establishment of social justice, protecting the dignity of every individual, helping to establish community integrity and stressing the importance of human relationships.[9]

- **Kazakhstan:** the Law on Special Social Services (2008) defines a social worker and professional. Legally regulated positions of social workers are located mainly in services for residential, semi-permanent and home care services for people with disabilities, health services and, as of 2016, in institutions providing services to victims of trafficking and domestic violence. The social pedagogue performs the role

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[8] Social Work Curricula Analysis Albania.
[9] http://www.gasw.org/en/about-us/code-of-ethics.html

of social worker within the education sectors and institutions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (UNICEF Kazakhstan, 2017a).

- **Moldova:** five types of social workers can be identified: community social assistants, specialized social service providers, social assistants with specialist functions, district specialists and 'social workers' (home help assistants). The current definition of social work conducted by community social assistants, the main cadre of social workers in Moldova, can be described as a professional with two main functions as per social administration and individual case action, as well as some functions of a third strand on social action, such as 'community' mobilization for example (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

- **Romania:** the definition of social work in Romania is enshrined in the ethical principles chapter of the Law on Social Workers (2004) articles 19-24 and touches on administration, case action/case management and social action as well as referring to the education and qualification of social workers (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

- **Serbia:** Social service workers provide basic standards of care through case management, residential and foster care, day care, community-based services, and independent living services (Akesson, 2016).

2.1.2 Definition of the role of other social service workers:

Many workers across the region are fulfilling social work functions in social assistance, child protection, health and education, for example, but are not (or are not required to be) qualified social workers. In addition, what constitutes social services – and the job descriptions and duties ascribed to them – varies from country to country. Examples include:

- **Albania:** employees of the child protection unit, including its head, are child protection workers who have graduated as social workers (Law on child protection, 2017: Article 49.2). The child protection units at municipal level are part of the municipal social services needs assessment and referral units (NARUs) and have responsibilities for case management for children in need of protection. As noted, a child protection worker is employed for every 3,000 children. The functions of the child protection worker include: proactive identification of children at risk, assessment of the risk level, drafting individual protection plans for children in need of protection together with an inter-sectoral technical group, support, monitoring the implementation of the agreed protection measures and participation in court proceedings (Law on child protection, 2017: Article 51). The school psycho-social units that are being created by municipal level education departments under the Law on pre-University Education (2012) are now staffed by one psychologist and one social worker per 700 children (Decision of the Council of Ministers, No.150 of 3rd April 2018).

- **Georgia:** workers with statutory child protection, social welfare and other social worker functions who have not yet completed a four year bachelor's degree, but who have completed pre-service training courses, are recognized by the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW) as social work practitioners, but not as fully qualified social workers. Social assistance administrators who conduct proxy

means tests for households have some statutory referral responsibilities and should have some types of basic social work skills in assessment and communication.

- **Kazakhstan:** experts of the guardianship authorities, psychologists at the juvenile courts, school juvenile police officers and social pedagogues, staff of the Employment and Social Programmes Offices who administer social benefits, employees of the probation services, juvenile inspectors all have some social work functions (UNICEF Kazakhstan, 2016; UNICEF, 2017a; UNICEF, 2017b).

Guardianship and trusteeship specialists – statutory child protection specialists – in Russia, all five Central Asian countries and Belarus do not have to be qualified social workers, although they may be expected to have university degrees in, for example, pedagogy, health, law or social sciences.

Residential care workers are not usually social workers in most countries of the region. In Kyrgyzstan, a new profession, 'key social worker', for residential care services has been introduced into the nomenclature of professions with qualifications at the technical secondary level (MLSD and MoES of Kyrgyzstan, 2018). Some residential care facilities may have some social worker or social pedagogue positions, particularly if they are managed by the Ministry of Education, but on the whole, very few qualified social workers are deployed in the residential care system. These facilities tend to be staffed by a combination of para-professional care staff and education or health professionals. In contrast, professional social workers – as well as growing cadres of professional and para-professional foster carers – are running foster care services in countries where such services are being developed as part of child welfare reforms.

The way in which the social work/social service workforce is structured and how roles, functions and job titles are defined in each setting across the region varies considerably. Some countries consider the social services workforce to include only those professionals that work on social work and/or child protection. While recognizing the integration of social work into broader social protection/social assistance systems, legislation in other countries, such as Kazakhstan, states that professional/legally regulated social workers are located mainly in services for people with disabilities (residential, semi-permanent and home services), health services and, since 2017, in institutions providing services to victims of trafficking and domestic violence. Although they may perform social work functions, other professionals in Kazakhstan operating in other sectors and or institutions, such as guardianship authorities, juvenile police officers or probation officers, are not considered or regulated as social workers under current legislation (UNICEF, 2017a).

Paraprofessionals

Internationally, paraprofessionals are recognized as part of the social service workforce (see GSSWA definition earlier in this report). However, the term 'paraprofessional' is not widely used in the ECA region.

Personnel noted in the case study countries and the wider desk review who can be classified as paraprofessionals and are central to the delivery of social services in the region include: personal assistants for people with disabilities or chronic health conditions; foster carers; small group-home house-parents in Georgia or maternal assistants in Romania; care assistants in residential institutions; youth workers; community mediators engaged in outreach work with street-connected children and youth; and teaching assistants for children with special educational needs in schools in Albania.

In many countries, including Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, the term 'mediator' is used to describe paraprofessionals such as Roma health or education mediators who are also engaged in some social service processes. These processes include providing information on social assistance, supporting members of the Roma community to access social benefits (UNICEF ECARO ECD section, 2018). These paraprofessionals, however, are part of the education and health workforce, rather than the social service workforce.

Other professionals linked to the social service workforce

Professionals in the education, health and justice workforces often interact closely with social workers and the social service workforce to such an extent that they could be considered part of the wider social service workforce. Some professionals such as home visiting nurses have mandates and statutory responsibilities for outreach, early identification and assessment, intervention and referral as part of their role on early childhood development (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 Links between early childhood development and child welfare services: responsibilities of home visiting nurses
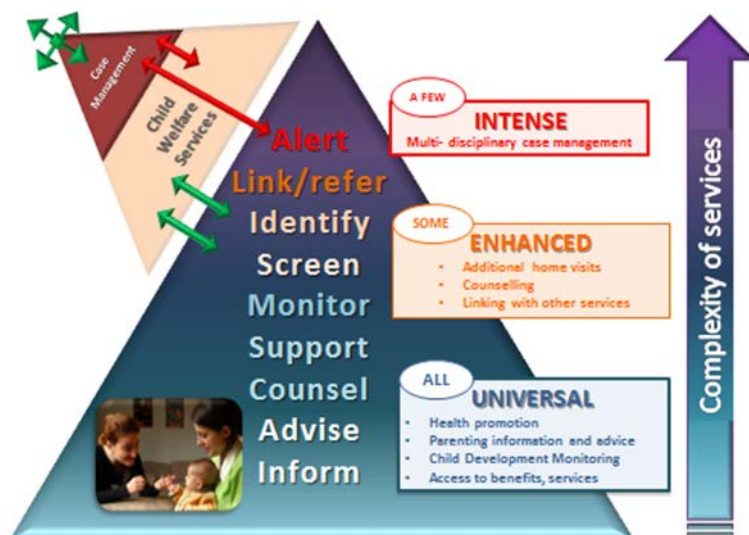
Source: UNICEF ECARO ECD section, 2018

UNICEF ECARO education advisors report that in the education sector, teachers, social pedagogues and teaching assistants may all play a role in identifying and referring children who are risk of abuse, violence or neglect to social services or child protective services. They also play a critical role in the inclusion of children with disabilities and children from excluded communities. In some cases, their role may involve greater levels of direct intervention to support children and their families and joint casework with social workers.

Universal services – intended to be accessible for all – such as education and health are not social services according to international definitions of social work and social services (see GSSWA and IFSW, IASSW definitions). There is a grey area, however, where professionals from the education and health workforces have statutory responsibilities (legally defined mandates to report child protection concerns, for example, or to support the social inclusion of excluded minority groups) that link them

directly to more specialized social services that focus on vulnerable groups in difficult situations.

In the ECA region, where education and health services, are provided as universal services guaranteed by government, confusion around whether a home visiting nurse or a social pedagogue in a school is part of the 'social service workforce' or part of the health or education workforce can be seen in the literature. It is clear, however, that these non-social service professionals have some outreach responsibilities, as illustrated in Figure 2, and that training in competencies to support outreach functions, such as inter-personal communication, can strengthen the delivery of these functions.

Figure 3 illustrates how universal services target all children and families (or the whole population) with low intensity (and lower cost) interventions. As needs become increasingly complexity and intense, so do the intensity, complexity and cost of services. The competencies of the social services workforce also have to increase in more specialized services compared to simply targeted services to be able to meet more complex needs.

Figure 2 Intensity of services and population coverage in meeting the needs of children and families
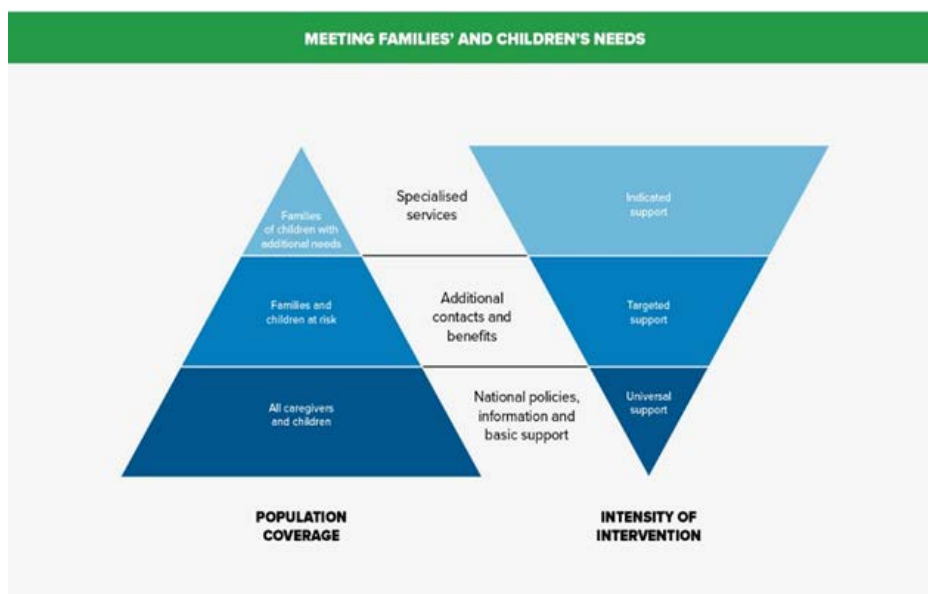
Source: UNICEF ECARO, 2018

The social service workforce in the ECA region can be defined as beginning with the social workers, paraprofessionals and other social service workers employed in the organizations providing services at the point where universal support meets targeted support and ending with highly specialized social care services.

2.1.3 Numbers of social workers and social service workers

In general, the data available in the literature on the numbers of staff in the workforce are limited and unreliable because of complications in how the workforce is defined. The GSSWA's report on the state of the social service workforce (2015) provides data on the numbers of personnel in the social service workforce in 12 countries worldwide, including Georgia and Moldova, and calculates the number of government social

workers per head of population (GSSWA, 2015, Table 7, p.20). According to this report, Moldova had the lowest ratio of social workers per population among the 12 countries presented, with one government social worker for every 3,122 people.

This is in stark contrast to Georgia, where GSSWA reported one government social worker for every 13,598 people. However, if the number of social workers registered with the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW) noted elsewhere in the report is considered, the ratio for Georgia this falls to one social worker for every 7,872 people. In both countries, social workers working in residential care services or other social service workers were not included. The reported ratio for South Africa was one government social worker per 6,096 persons (GSSWA, 2015).

Information provided by the government of Kazakhstan to UNICEF on the social services workforce in 2014 indicates a ratio of one government social worker or social service worker for every 1,750 people across the health, education and child protection sectors, residential and day care services and services for children in conflict with the law (UNICEF Kazakhstan, 2015). Data on the USA Labour Bureau website[10] indicate that there were 2,096,740 community and social service workers in May 2017, including 644,290 who were called social workers, according to Labour Bureau classifications. This represents a ratio of one (government and NGO)[11] social worker per 506 people. If NGO social workers were calculated for the other countries, the ratio would probably be lower and closer to the ratio seen in the USA.

Ultimately, without detailed data on the different types of social service workforce included, these comparisons are meaningless when it comes to tracking the numbers of staff members deployed within the social service workforce and serves to highlight the challenge of **defining the workforce consistently across countries** in a way that allows monitoring and the comparison of data. Table 3 presents the data given above as well as other data provided for this report by UNICEF country offices.

Table 3 Estimated numbers of government* social service workers (SSW) per population in selected countries, according to the literature reviewed

Country	Number of government* SSW	Population	Ratio of government* SSW to population
Albania (social workers/administrators in 2013)[12]	500	2,892,394[13]	1: 5,785
Georgia[14]	438	3,700,000	1: 8,448

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[10] Calculated based on data from the US Labour Bureau accessed on 11 November 2018: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes210000.htm

[11] Based on Bureau of Labour statistics – 644,290 social workers and population figure of 325,719,000 from US Census Bureau accessed here https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217 on 11 November 2018

[12] Dhembo (2015). UNICEF Albania comments that of the 500 workers cited by Dhembo, around 75 per cent would be social administrators rather than social workers.

[13] INSTAT, estimate on 1 January 2014 www.instat.gov.al

[14] Georgia Case Study Report, UNICEF, 2018 (see Section 5.2).

Georgia (GASW estimates 2018 cited in Georgia case study report)	800		1: 4,625
Kazakhstan[15] **(**government social service workforce in health, minors' affairs, child protection and residential and day care services in 2014; social pedagogues in education system in 2013)	9,807	17,160,855	1: 1,750
Moldova	1,140	3,559,000	1: 3,122
Moldova (workers in the social care system, 2013)[16]	6,064		1: 587
Romania[17]	3,118	19, 870, 647	1: 6,373
Romania (members of the National College of Social Workers)[18]	5,782[19]		1: 3,437
Serbia (licensed social workers June 2015) [20]	1,280	7,186,862	1: 5,615
Serbia (licensed professionals in social welfare June 2015)	3,118		1: 2,305
South Africa	8,692	52,981,991	1: 6,096
South Africa (social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) in 2014)	18,213		1: 2,909
Turkey (Turkish Association of Social Workers estimates, 2015)[21]	6,150	78,741,053[22]	1:12,803
USA (government and NGO social workers, not including other social service workforce)	644,290	325,719,000	1: 506

*unless otherwise stated

As Table 3 illustrates, the availability of accurate data in the literature reviewed on the number of social service workforce positions in the region, by sector, and on whether these positions are currently filled, has been very limited. The literature reviewed provided some information about the numbers of, for example, Roma health mediators deployed by Ministries of Health in Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, the

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[15] Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee of Statistics (provided by UNICEF Kazakhstan); population data for 2014 from Committee of Statistics demographic data http://stat.gov.kz/faces/mobileHomePage?_afrLoop=5084809729524037#%40%3F_afrLoop%3D5084809 729524037%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D6tbzz6nfz_100

[16] National Bureau of Statistics cited in UNICEF Moldova (2015).

[17] Akesson (2016); population data from National Institute of Statistics, January 2015.

[18] http://www.cnasr.ro/en

[19] Information gathered during case study field work in Romania indicate that this number continues to grow, with one document recording 7,715 members of the National College of Social Workers (1 May 2018).

[20] Zegarac, (2016). Population data are from 2011 and social worker data are from June 2015

[21] http://www.shudernegi.org/?pnum=175&pt=T%C3%BCrkiye%27deki+Sosyal+Hizmet+Uzman%C4%B1+S ay%C4%B1lar%C4%B1

[22] Turkish Statistical Institute, www.turkstat.gov.tr population statistics for 2015

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia (UNICEF ECARO ECD section, 2018), but it is not clear from the literature whether these workers are considered to be part of the social service or health workforce.

One recurring topic in the literature is that **the number of qualified and well-trained social service workforce appears to be insufficient across the region** or across a range of government policy sectors (social, education, health, justice). For a better understanding of the personnel requirements for a particular sector in a given country, comprehensive workload assessments need to be conducted systematically and periodically, which does not appear to be happening at present (UNICEF, 2017a; Akesson, 2016; UNICEF Moldova, 2015; Rutgers, 2008).

2.1.4 Financial investment and funding mechanisms

In most of the region's countries, ministries with a social protection portfolio have a policy overview of social service workforce planning, development and support. In many countries, a national ministry is the direct employer of the service managers. These, in turn, employ social workers or other social service cadres in social services that are funded and managed by central government, particularly in the case of highly specialized social services that provide national coverage.

In other countries, decentralization policies have transferred responsibilities for social service planning, management and financing to local authorities (Akesson, 2016). In Kazakhstan, for example, each ministry with social workers or social services cadres has its own mechanism for devolving the management and financing of services employing these cadres to the oblast (sub-national regions) or district authorities or to oblast ministerial sub-divisions.

The literature is consistent in signalling that, across the region, **social workers are poorly paid, and their status is low compared to other professionals** in health and education (UNICEF, 2017a; Akesson, 2016; UNICEF Moldova, 2015; OPM/P4EC Moldova (2014); Rutgers, 2008). In Georgia, some government social workers in the justice system are better paid and have better terms and conditions than other government social workers working in social services or social workers deployed by NGOs.

It is common in many countries for NGO social service workers to have slightly better pay and conditions than state-employed workers, but their employment may be less secure because NGOs often rely on time-limited donor funding or ad hoc fundraising. In some regions of Russia, however, salaries for social workers in the state sector have begun to overtake salary levels in the NGO sector as the funding landscape for NGOs has shifted away from externally funded projects and grants.

In some countries (including Albania, Bulgaria and Russia) government service commissioning mechanisms have been introduced in recent years, with government authorities purchasing services from NGO service providers to promote a mixed market of social services provision. As a result, social worker and social service worker employment is emerging. In many cases, however, these mechanisms are new and are not yet fully becoming institutionalized, so funding can be unreliable. In addition, NGOs cannot always compete in the market on even terms with state service providers that have the advantage of core funding and subsidized premises or other infrastructure.

UNICEF Albania notes that the lack of sufficient government allocations of funding to support the implementation of legislation are not unique to the social sector, with the health, education and justice sectors facing similar challenges. The Law on Pre-University Education in Albania, for example, makes statutory provision for social workers and psychologists to be hired in education inclusion units, but does not make explicit provision for a budget for salaries.

In Kazakhstan, the Law on Special Social Services (2008) helped to ensure that NGOs could be funded, mainly through regional and local authority grant mechanisms, to deliver services for specific vulnerable groups. By 2015, NGO services for children with disabilities had developed to a considerable extent across the country as many regional and local authorities prioritized these in grant and subsidy programmes. However, there are important gaps in services run by NGOs for other vulnerable groups (UNICEF Kazakhstan, 2016).

There is a need to ensure that commissioning mechanisms, whether grants, subsidies or payment for services rendered, are used strategically by government authorities at all levels to meet assessed needs and policy priorities. In addition, workforce planning, development and support is linked to service development across the whole system of social services provision, including across different government sectors that deploy statutory social workers and across the non-governmental sector.

Ultimately, the financing of the social work and social service workforce is linked to the services in which these cadres are employed and the demand for these services as defined, ideally, by community level needs assessments. The social service workforce also comprises personnel working at different levels of government and defining policy or managing a range of services.

UNICEF Albania commissioned[23] several situation analyses, studies, policy briefs and guidance documents in 2013-2016 focused on strategic planning for social care services reform that clearly show the importance of linkages between social service planning and financing and workforce strengthening (Matkovic, 2016; Miluka, 2016; Jorgoni and Ymeri, 2016). The Law on Social Care of 2016 introduced a 'Social Fund' based on the Serbian model described by Matkovic (2016). This permits co-financing of social services staffed with a social service workforce by central government and municipal authorities, based on local needs assessments that inform social care service plans for each municipal authority. The Albanian reform also envisages a minimum basket of services that each municipal authority guarantees to deliver, and the delivery mechanism (e.g. through contracting NGO service providers or direct delivery by the municipal social services bodies) can be selected by municipal authorities.

2.1.5 Coordination mechanisms across sectors

Formal inter-sectoral cooperation seems to be weak in the region, particularly on workforce planning. In Moldova, in order to address the challenges of inter-sectoral planning at national level, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family

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[23] For a full list of resources see: https://www.unicef.org/albania/children_24924.html

established an Agency for Social Assistance in 2016 with responsibility for planning, developing and supporting the social service workforce across all sectors and policy portfolios, such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, social assistance and trafficking.

Other examples of the coordination and integration of social work with other disciplines can be found across the region, particularly with social protection and social assistance programmes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Bulgaria, for example, has an overall policy responsibility for social inclusion, protection and assistance. Through a subordinate Agency for Social Assistance (ASA), it also regulates the standards for social services and implements reforms in the social assistance sector, including coordinating the development of new social services by municipal and regional authorities (Rogers, 2017). In addition, the ASA has two main departments at municipal level to support integration: one dealing with cash (and other material) benefits and the other dealing with child protection and case management work.

In Kazakhstan, each Ministry has developed its own social work and social service workforce, social services standards and requirements for qualifications of social workers. It is recognized that coordinated national level inter-sectoral planning is now a priority to ensure that social workers and other social service workers with adequate training can be deployed across all sectors (UNICEF, 2017a). Many standards across sectors provide requirements for interaction and cooperation, but in general, such interaction and cooperation among professionals happens without formal guidance or established memorandums of understanding/agreement (UNICEF, 2017a).

Coordination at the level of interaction with clients is managed in some cases through professional standards for different sectors that include provisions for agencies to work together. There are also some examples in the region of legal frameworks that regulate inter-agency social work with clients, including standards for the formation and regulation of multidisciplinary teams for high-risk and high-complexity cases, as follows.

- In Albania, the Law on protection of children's rights (2017) sets out coordination mechanisms for an integrated child protection system. It gives national level cross-ministerial coordination functions to the State Agency for Child Protection and allocates local level coordination and case management functions for child protection to municipal authorities through the body responsible for municipal social services, child protection units (CPUs) and NARUs. The Law on Social Care (2016) envisages the staffing of NARUs by qualified social workers (1 per 10,000 population) with responsibilities and functions for assessment, case management and direct intervention, as well as a mandate to coordinate across sectors with municipal health, education, justice, social assistance and other relevant bodies. The NARU social workers are tasked not only with individual needs assessments, but also contribute to the social care plan for the whole municipality through regular monitoring of social care needs of the entire population.

- In Moldova, an inter-agency working mechanism is outlined in the child protection and domestic violence legislation. The inter-agency collaboration mechanism takes the form of an instruction on identification, assessment, referrals, assistance and monitoring of victims or potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and human trafficking. Community social assistants play a major role in coordinating community level activities and deciding on the timing of involvement of other social work specialists, health, education and police personnel (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

There is also a mechanism for primary prevention that aims to strengthen universal services in observing and intervening when there are concerns about child well-being.

- In Romania, community consultative structures (CCS) or boards were created in pilot communes as part of a UNICEF-supported project to model integrated, outreach community based social services (ensuring access to a minimum package of social, health and education services). The CCS were formed of professionals from the education, health and police sectors, together with social assistance personnel and representatives from the mayor's office, local council, private sector or the church (PWC and UNICEF, 2016). The role of the social worker was to identify excluded and vulnerable children and families, mobilize the CCS and coordinate packages of outreach support and interventions. This model of pro-active outreach, with multi-disciplinary coordination at the local level is reported as effective and efficient in addressing poverty and social exclusion (PWC and UNICEF, 2016). It also, however, requires additional resources if it is to become an effective multi-disciplinary team model (Government of Romania, 2015); Childonomics, 2017). The Government references this pilot in its National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty 2015-2020 and recommends that communes ensure that at least one full-time employee (preferably a professional social worker) is trained in outreach, assessment and other core competencies to deliver the package (Government of Romania, 2015).

- In Serbia the General Protocol on the protection of children from abuse and neglect, adopted by the government in 2005 (currently being revised and upgraded), has a well-defined mechanism for inter-sectoral collaboration focused on prevention and protection around violence against children. This provides a basis for the creation of local inter-sectoral teams focused on such violence. UNICEF Serbia reports that more advocacy and capacity building is required for its full implementation and that inter-sectoral cooperation on the prevention of family/partner violence has been strengthened recently with the adoption of a new Law on prevention of family violence, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities for justice, police and social welfare.

The main overlap between UNICEF's work on education and the identification of vulnerable children, social work and case management include:

- the prevention of out-of-school children and school drop-out
- inclusive education for children with disabilities
- violence in schools
- education for refugees, migrants and children on the move (UNICEF ECARO ECD section, 2018)

The task is first to identify vulnerable children who are out of school through cross-referencing administrative data from health, education and social protection. It is also to identify children in school who are vulnerable to dropout and ensure links to social services that can address their vulnerabilities and improve their participation in education (UNICEF, 2017b). Training for teachers and referral protocols ensure effective identification within education institutions and referral to relevant services.

An example of promising practice in Serbia includes both school-based initiatives (dropout prevention and response) and coordination with Centres for Social Work on case management where children are at high risk of dropout and where more complex child protection or family focused social work interventions are required (UNICEF,

2017b). This initiative is being piloted in three municipalities and UNICEF Serbia notes that local inter-sectoral committees (supporting assessment of additional needs and advising on support for education inclusion of vulnerable children are a more established, if imperfect, practice found in most municipalities. Other examples of coordination between schools and social services in Albania, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova are cited in the literature.

Key challenges identified by UNICEF ECARO education section and other sources (Rutgers, 2008; Doel et al, 2016) in terms of strengthening the social work workforce (particularly in relation to education and child protection goals) across the region include:

- lack of common vision and framework around the national desired outcomes for children across education, health and social services including child protection
- overlapping or non-existent mandates of different professionals in relation to vulnerable children
- Bias and discriminatory attitudes among the social work workforce towards marginalized or vulnerable groups such as Roma or children with disabilities
- Ad hoc and informal referral processes.

A child's non-participation in school is often their entry point into the child protection system, signalling a need to ensure planning coordination across education policies and programmes, child protection, social protection, disability, migration as well as social services.

2.2   Common challenges cited in the literature

There is **no unified understanding of how social work and social service workforces are defined** by research bodies and communities across different countries in the region in policy, legislation or in practice.

Systems tend to be fragmented, sectoral and working in silos, presenting challenges both for planning the workforce and in practice. Case management approaches that can help to support coordination are integrated into the scope of practice to differing degrees in different countries. In some countries, however, **a dedicated government agency with an explicit mandate for social service workforce planning**, development and support is in place (e.g. Moldova), which could be a promising practice.

There is **a lack of accurate data** about the numbers of social workers or other social service workers deployed in most of the countries of the region. Where compulsory certification/licensing procedures have been introduced, there is a greater opportunity to monitor the numbers of qualified social workers, but no other social service workers. There is a lack of accurate and regularly updated data on the numbers of social work or social service positions in many countries or related information about the proportion of positions that are filled by qualified workers, staff turnover and caseload.

Planning the social work and social service workforce requires an **understanding of the tasks of the workforce and the results required** across a range of sectors and policies – child protection, education, health, justice and more –preferably in the short, medium and long-term. While there may be a clear idea of the workforce requirements in child protection in many countries of the region linked to child welfare system

reforms, clarity on roles, mandates and functions across other sectors requires considerable strengthening in many countries.

There are challenges in ensuring the deployment of **qualified social workers in rural or remote areas** and a need to develop interim alternatives, at least, as the workforce professionalizes, to ensure that the staff who are deployed have adequate training and support, especially in positions requiring specialist competencies.

Most social workers and social service workers in the region are employed by government service providers (local or sub-national authorities) and are paid through state budget mechanisms. In some countries, NGO service providers are also important employers. **Many countries have mechanisms for the state funding of NGO service providers (and therefore NGO employed social workers or social service workers)**, but in most cases these do not yet represent a stable or reliable source of funding. Some NGOs cannot, therefore, offer reliable or stable employment to workers, even if they can sometimes offer better salaries or terms and conditions. NGO service provision is not fully incorporated into social sector planning mechanisms in most countries.

3 Developing the workforce

The GSSWA Social Service Workforce Strengthening Framework (Figure 1) envisages the alignment of effective planning with workforce education and training, with curricula shaped by local and indigenous knowledge as well as international best practice. This presumes the strengthening of teaching faculties and methods, but also a broad range of professional development opportunities for workers.

While social work education differs in every country, the IASSW has recommendations on the teaching of social work that offer a basic standard or core curriculum that lends itself to adaptation in each national context.[24]

3.1 Regional landscape

Social work has only been developing in the region as a profession since the post-Soviet period in the early 1990s, with the exception of the countries of former Yugoslavia. Countries are, therefore, at different stages of development in terms of both formalizing and professionalizing their workforces and in building their social work education systems.

Nearly all countries are either members or full members of the Bologna process.[25] This is an inter-governmental programme that introduces further education system standards and quality assurance to increase compatibility between education systems and ensure that qualifications are recognized across countries. The Bologna process spans three key areas:

- comparable and transferable degrees based on a three-cycle system (bachelor, master, doctorate)
- the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) which is based on a strengthened quality assurance in education standards so that credits from courses completed in one country can be transferred to a university in another country
- a rigorous system of internal quality assurance based on assessments carried out by external quality assurance agencies.

The Bologna process has introduced significant changes to the way that academic institutions design and teach curricula so that they can work towards full accreditation under the standards required by the process. This affects the teaching of social work and other social service workforce qualifications (such as psychology) in the participating countries of the region (UNICEF Albania, 2016).

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[24] https://www.iassw-aiets.org/global-standards-for-social-work-education-and-training/
[25] With the exceptions of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (for a list of members, see: http://www.ehea.info/pid34250/members.html)

3.1.1 Qualifications (and positions that require qualifications)

One of the challenges reflected across the literature is inconsistency (across the region, but even sometimes, at country level) on the minimum qualifications required to become a social worker and how a qualified social worker differs from other social service workforce professionals or paraprofessionals. This is true for both professional education/university degrees as well as for non-degree training programmes. This does not necessarily reflect a lack of consensus on whether social workers should be qualified: it is about how to manage with a workforce that is not fully qualified because there are not enough graduates leaving the universities, because graduates take jobs in other fields, or because there are not enough graduates willing to be deployed, for example, in remote or rural areas.

The question is: how can you get the people you need to fill the positions? Some countries do not require social work qualifications explicitly, even if they are committed to policies that aim for a fully qualified workforce (UNICEF Moldova, 2015). In other countries, local authorities may appoint unqualified workers as they are less expensive, more readily available and easier to recruit than the qualified social workers that are required according to national standards, particularly in rural areas (Akesson, 2016).

A 2014 assessment of Moldova's Territorial Social Assistance Structures highlights the diverse qualifications of the social assistants participating in the study, with 29 per cent having graduated in social work, 21 per cent pedagogy, 5 per cent psychology / sociology, and 41 per cent in other areas that were unrelated to social assistance (including agronomists, veterinarians and electrical engineers) (OPM/P4EC Moldova, 2014).

In Romania, Laws 466/2004 and 292/2011 define a social worker as someone with a university-level undergraduate social work degree. They stipulate that social workers should be employed in accredited public or private social services agencies and that there should be one social worker for every 300 cases. The same laws state that if the social service agency cannot retain social workers for any reason, then any other employee – even if that person is not trained in social work – can carry out the tasks that should be carried out by social workers.

A Romanian government study from 2013 found that one-third of the staff in community social work agencies have degrees in social sciences or humanities; the remaining two-thirds have an academic background in disciplines such as economics or agriculture. Case managers typically take on child protection tasks, ensuring the coordination of activities such as evaluation of needs and risks, and the development of an intervention plan. Order 288/2006 says that case management activities can be carried out by anyone with a degree in social work, social sciences or medicine (Akesson, 2016 p.17).

In Kazakhstan, a review of the education qualifications of 61 managers and staff of employment and social programme offices in two regions found that only one person had a social work education, three had educational backgrounds in psychology, sociology or teaching and the rest had qualifications in finance, economics, administration, book-keeping and other professions unrelated to social work (UNICEF, 2016). These teams were in the process of taking on social work functions at the time of the review, and they were focused only on the administration of cash assistance.

This situation does, however, reflect the considerable challenges facing the Government of Kazakhstan, with many of the staff tasked with social work functions

such as individual household assessments, drawing up, implementing and monitoring individual plans of family support and providing consultations to families (UNICEF, 2016) lacking social work qualifications at the outset of the planned reforms. A more recent review of Kazakhstan's system of social work education and development emphasizes that there are considerable numbers of staff deployed across the system of special social services who do not have a professional education (UNICEF, 2017a).

In Ukraine, those who hold bachelor degrees can be employed in a range of social services, but a master degree is required for more specialized social services or management positions (Petrochko, 2018).

In Albania many social work graduates are not subsequently employed as social workers. Many hundreds of social work graduates have been in the labour market since the first bachelor degree cohort graduated in 1996 (over 1,500 have graduated from Tirana University alone), but they continue to account for only minority of employees. This is the result of issues around employment procedures and the fragile positioning of the social work professions, among other professions in the country (Dhembo, 2015).

Different countries have different schemes and standards for what constitutes pre-service and in-service education leading to a qualification. These differ in even their basic aspects such as: what is delivered and who is accredited; how long the training lasts; the extent which it includes practice placements; and the content and description of the training.

As noted previously, it is common across the region to find that positions with functions that should require specialist social work knowledge and skills (in keeping with international best practices and standards and in some cases with national legislation), such as statutory child protection workers, are not, in fact, staffed by qualified social workers.

3.1.2 Social work academic programmes and professional degrees (pre-service education)

Nearly all countries in the region have at least one academic institution offering a bachelor degree in social work and multiple academic institutions in many countries offer degrees that are accredited under the Bologna process. Most countries also have social work master degrees and some offer PhD social work programmes. Table 4 illustrates the evolution of social work bachelor degrees in the countries of the region since the 1990s in particular.

Table 4 Social work bachelor degree programmes in the countries of the Europe and Central Asia region and year of introduction

Country	Year
Croatia*	1952
Slovenia*	1955
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*	1957
Bosnia and Herzegovina*	1958

Serbia*	1958
Turkey[26]	1961
Bulgaria	1990
Romania	1990
Belarus	1991
Kazakhstan	1991
Russia	1991
Ukraine	1991
Albania	1992
Kyrgyzstan	1994
Armenia	1996
Moldova	1997
Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)*	2004
Azerbaijan	2005
Georgia	2006
Tajikistan	2012
Uzbekistan[27]	2017
Turkmenistan	2020?

Source: Rutgers, 2008; Petrochko, 2018; Department of Social Work, Tajik National University, accessed 05082018 http://www.tnu.tj/index.php/ru/kafedra-sotsialnoj-raboty ; http://www.unicef.uz/ru/media-center/news-and-press-releases/2737 ; https://articlekz.com/article/9462
* as part of the former Yugoslavia

The only country in the region that does not have a bachelor degree programme in social work at present is Turkmenistan. The Government is, however, in the early stages of a process to develop such a programme, as well as an accredited pre-service foundational training course to eventually support the systematic development of social work practice.

In many countries, there is no uniform social work curriculum across all faculties or universities (Akesson, 2016. In some countries such as Ukraine, however, government

[26] Turkish Association of Social Workers, accessed 31102018
http://www.shudernegi.org/?pnum=148&pt=SHUDER+Hakk%C4%B1nda+K%C4%B1sa+Bilgi
[27] This is the second attempt to open a faculty. There was an institute that functioned for many years under the Ministry of Culture and that produced bachelor and master graduates. This was them closed later for political reasons (UNICEF ECARO representative, comments on first draft report).

approved standards for the teaching of social set out core subjects across all curricula (Petrochko, 2018).

Akesson (2016) notes a wide variety of social work and related social service academic degrees, particularly in Albania where Tirana University offers an MSc in Communication for Social and Behavioural Change. This is one of a range of specialist master degrees, including the MSc in Social Work with Children and Families, the MSc in Gender and Development and the MSc in Social Services in Penal Justice. Overall, three universities in Albania offer social work bachelor and master degrees.

UNICEF Albania has commissioned two reviews of the social work curricula and the institutions with responsibilities for social work education and training. Both reviews found them largely fit for purpose and acknowledge considerable attempts to reflect local developments at the level of policy, legal framework and employability of social workers. This is particularly the case where policymakers have increased their requests for social workers in such areas as: mental health (with the creation of multi-disciplinary services in the laws of 1996 and 2012); child protection (the law of 2010 stresses that CPU staff needs a social work diploma); education (the law of 2012 for school social services); and social welfare (with the building of residential institutions for child care and residential centres for abused women and victims of trafficking) (Dhembo, 2015).

These and other studies (Dhembo, 2015; Delaney, 2013; Cabran, Finelli and Bradford, 2016; Doel et al, 2016; Rogers and Sammon, 2018) nevertheless identify **constraints and challenges** in Albania's social work education that are **common to many social work education systems** in the region:

- limits on the quantity and quality of practice during pre-service education at university level
- constraints in human resources in some universities to the ability to teach across the whole curriculum
- lack of practice experience among teachers of social work
- over-reliance on research from other contexts and countries, with limited relevant links to the Albanian social context in research and practice
- lack of teaching on research skills to support evidence-based practice among social workers
- gaps in curricula related to specific areas of theory and practice e.g. in relation to disability and inclusion.

In Belarus, the standards for social work education (described in Kerimi, 2016) reflect international standards only in part, with more emphasis on the country's socio-cultural context and a medical model of practice, with language such as 'correction' in some parts of the standards that is absent from international standards (Rogers, 2018).

In Georgia, social work education has been shaped by a core group of social workers who graduated from Columbia University in the USA in the early 2000s with master degrees in social work. They then developed – and now teach –bachelor, master and PhD degrees at Tbilisi and Ilia State Universities.

Shatberashvili (2012) documents the steps that led to the three-cycle social work education system in Georgia and summarizes the core components of the social work curriculum, based on 2004 international standards of social work teaching. She also outlines the challenges to ensuring the integrity of social change goals in the foundational principles of the social work curriculum in a context where "*the view that*

social changes must be led 'from the bottom up' is not accepted, as social workers and service users are not considered high status; moreover, senior decision makers have a low level of understanding of social work and the needs and demands of the people who use social work":

> "We aimed to develop a curriculum that would safeguard the profession's autonomy and reinforce its function as a *political* actor, in tandem with the development of the quality of direct practice. Within these aims we hoped to save the profession from its "fragmentation into many different occupations (case management, care planner, personal assistant, child's advocate etc)," (Zavirsek, 2009: 228) and reinstate its primary professional function as a change agent for the benefit of those in need and, indeed, for the whole of society…. we were aware that failure to link structural work and daily practice in contemporary social work in Georgia would lead to the marginalization of structural issues in the social work curriculum, so we added another course within this module: social work and social change. We aimed to provide our students with the chance to analyse social structures (the 'social architecture'), and the role of social work intervention and its locus within broader social structures. Our curriculum was aiming to deliver to our students "knowledge grounded in theory as opposed to task-oriented knowledge" (Zavirsek, 2009: 229), in order to avoid the development of the scenario in which social worker is only the instrument for the fulfilment of state policy (Shatberashvili, 2012).

Doel et al (2016) also note the importance of innovative practice teaching in the bachelor degree social work (BSW) courses in Georgia.

In Kazakhstan, 18 universities were offering social work degrees by 2017, with the courses undergoing accreditation processes. However, there is considerable concern among a range of stakeholders – including graduates themselves – about the quality of the courses on offer and the readiness of graduates to undertake the complexities of this profession (UNICEF, 2017a) with few curricula updated since the introduction of the Law on Special Social Services in 2008.[28]

In Moldova, the curricula in four universities teaching social work bachelor and master degrees require updating to reflect the changes in policy and practice requirements since they were first designed in the 1990s. They also need unifying to ensure that graduates are equipped with core competencies necessary for the current system (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

In Montenegro, gaps have been identified in social work curricula for combatting violence against children. A national strategy and action plan on the Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence 2017-2021 includes plans to strengthen social work curricula and the curricula of other allied professionals with mandatory modules on the prevention, identification, assessment and reporting of violence (abuse and neglect) against children.

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[28] https://articlekz.com/article/9462

Romania has four universities with social work programmes: Bucharest, Cluj, Lasi and Timisoara. The country also has a number of small universities and theological faculties that provide specializations in social work. While there is no uniform social work curriculum across all these faculties/universities, all of them include courses on child protection and undergo accreditation (Akesson, 2016).

In Serbia, Zegarac (2015) assessed current programmes for the education of social workers as being, in general, based on: "*ecological, sociological, systemic and psychodynamic theories, with particular attention being paid to strengths-based approaches and anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practices. This is a change in the education of social workers, who until ten years ago were mostly educated within the medical mode of practice"* (Zegarac, 2015: p17).

Overall, the literature indicates that **curricula require considerable strengthening and updating in some countries to meet contemporary social work challenges and to reflect a unified national practice model**. Curricula in different universities in many countries are based on varying theories of social work and there is a need to unify and consolidate the model of practice. Not all curricula in the region appear to have moved away from a medical and pathogenic model of social work towards a strengths-based and ecological model that reflects contemporary international theories and practice of social work, as seen in the Serbian model cited by Zegarac (2015) and the Georgian model rooted in theories of structural and social change described by Shatberashvili (2012) and Doel et al. (2016).

Monitoring social work curricula could be part of a regional monitoring framework. However, the complexity of defining the workforce, identifying a unified set of standards and measuring compliance across differing socio-cultural and national contexts suggests that monitoring curricula content as a measure of progress in workforce development requires considerable and sustained investment.

3.1.3 Continuous professional development of social workers and other social service workers (in-service training and education)

NGOs throughout the region have been providing social work training and education courses, both accredited and without accreditation, since the early 1990s (Rutgers, 2008; UNICEF Moldova, 2015; Akesson, 2016; Zegarac, 2015; Dhembo, 2015). In some countries, these courses preceded or informed the development of academic social work curricula. In others they have filled gaps in curricula, particularly in relation to practice on specific issues such as child protection, human trafficking, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, minority communities, disability, justice and migration.

As the systems of social services and of social work professional development have consolidated, many countries now require social workers to engage in training and education as part of their continuous professional development and on-going licensing or certification as social workers. As a rule, where these requirements exist, only licensed or accredited training providers can provide such training. Some reports suggest, however, that these systems are far from functioning fully.

In Romania, for example, social service workers can enrol in trainings accredited through the National Agency of Qualification (NAQ). According to current legislation on adult education (Ordinance No. 129/2000), any public or private training institution can offer training programmes to the public, but only those who are authorized are allowed to provide nationally recognized certificates. Employers may also organize continuous

education training for their employees, but they cannot offer nationally recognized certificates unless they are legally authorized to do so. To be authorized, a training provider must demonstrate that the training programmes are conducted by instructors who have appropriate specialization in the field and a specific pedagogical background in adult learning methods.

Yet, in 2010, only 21.4 per cent of staff employed in Romania's Public Social Assistance Services (SPAS) attended some form of continuing education training. Only 13 of 100 SPAS (12.7 per cent) organized continuing education for staff. Approximately 60 per cent of SPAS do not have specified objectives regarding professional development and there is no reference to continuing training in these SPAS' strategic plans. Most local public institutions in Romania allocate few or no resources for staff training. For example, in 2010 the money allocated to training for child protection workers was approximately 41 leu (9.6 Euros) per employee, with 31 leu (7.3 Euro) actually spent on each employee. A culture of training is missing.

A similar picture can be seen in Kazakhstan, even though government standards provide for mandatory advanced training for social workers in the field of health and social protection once in five years. In reality, there is a lack of quality professional capacity-building opportunities, with current opportunities organized in an ad-hoc manner and highly dependent on the available budget, while concerns have been raised about their quality (particularly in social protection). The courses are not accredited and there is no oversight on their quality (UNICEF, 2018).

Albania is taking steps on this issue. While there are no formal requirements for continuous professional development noted in the literature, a draft Decision of the Council of Ministers is due for approval. Meanwhile, NGOs have been active employers of social workers and providers of training. For example, one of the most important non-academic courses on child protection is run by the University of Tirana's Department of Social Work, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and various NGOs led by Terre des Hommes (TdH). The course is an accredited in-service training programme that runs for 22 full training days spread across one academic year. It aims to provide the basics core skills and knowledge to ensure minimum standards are upheld when providing protective services (Akesson, 2016).

The draft Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) on 'The criteria and procedures of the certification programme of the civil service professionals' (not yet approved, 2018) sets out an ambitious vision for continuous professional development of social workers in Albania's NARUs and CPUs or social care services that requires a five-year cycle of training that is relevant to each worker's employment. The DCM requires state and non-state employers of social workers to provide direct education activities for up to 30 per cent of the compulsory number of credits for each five-year cycle. The worker should complete at least 7 credits per year and a total of 60 credits over five years. Only 25 per cent can be self-reported (such as online courses or attendance at conferences) and 50 per cent (30 credits) must be completed as part of accredited education activities.

Training and education programmes available to social workers for continuous professional development in eight countries of the region including Albania and Romania are catalogued by Akesson (2016) and by UNICEF (2017a) for Kazakhstan. Shatberashvili (2012) documents the training needs of both qualified and unqualified social work practitioners in Georgia.

As noted in section 2.1.5, UNICEF ECARO education section has found '*bias and discriminatory attitudes among the social work workforce towards marginalised or vulnerable groups such as Roma or children with disabilities*.' The other literature reviewed has not emphasized this finding and it bears further investigation. However, over-representation of children of Roma origin and children with disabilities in the region's residential institutions suggest that discriminatory practice in the child protection and education systems may need to be addressed, but structural issues such as poverty and social exclusion may also be contributing factors. Social work degrees and continuous professional development training courses that meet international standards on social work education should address questions of personal values, attitudes and behaviours, given that non-discriminatory practice is a fundamental and global principle for social work. This also applies across other disciplines and professions including health, education, police and the justice system.

3.2   Common challenges cited in the literature

The **education requirements and standards to become a social worker differ** across the countries of the region. Many social service workers are in positions and have social work functions, but lack a social work professional education.

Different countries are at different stages in their professionalization of the social services workforce and **formal academic social work qualifications and training and education programmes for other social service workers run in parallel** in nearly all countries.

All but one of the countries in the region have recognized and fully accredited social work degrees at bachelor level and nearly all have master degrees provided by the main national universities. There are fewer PhD programmes in social work across the region, but most countries with master degrees also have at least one university offering a PhD programme in, for example, social policy or sociology.

Some degree courses require consolidation in terms of the theories on which they are based and considerable strengthening to reflect changes in global theories of social work, and in the national systems of social services and policy in the years since they were first established. For example, core competencies to support non-discriminatory social work practice should be developed in all bachelor degree programmes. There is also a perception in some countries that graduates of social work bachelor degree courses are not ready for practice.

The literature acknowledges the systemic, policy changes underway in the region that will require a stronger and more professional workforce in the coming years. **Practice teaching requires strengthening** in most countries, with a good model noted in Georgia.

In-service training provision for social workers and the wider social service workforce is largely ad hoc in nature. NGOs and academic institutions both provide non-degree training and continuous professional development courses in most countries that are available to a range of social service workers. These may be accredited through the education regulatory framework, but the extent of regulatory oversight of their content and quality is not clear in some countries. Given that many social service workers are in positions with social work functions but without social work professional education, systematic in-service training is of critical importance. This is particularly true if it can be linked to **a system of continuous professional**

development and performance management that can set out a career path into full professionalization for social service workforce cadres that are already in positions. Principles of non-discrimination should be central to the competencies built by in-service training.

Continuous professional development is, however, constrained by lack of resources in most countries and the lack of a culture that values training. As a result, *"professional development of staff is not seen as an effective approach to improving the system, but rather an expensive non-necessity"* (Akesson, 2016).

4   Supporting the workforce

As shown in the GSSWA Social Service Workforce Strengthening Framework (Figure 1), support for the workforce should encompass the development or strengthening of systems to improve and sustain workforce performance. It should also develop tools, resources and initiatives to improve job satisfaction and staff retention, while supporting professional associations in their efforts to enhance the professional growth and development of the workforce.

4.1   Challenges to the workforce reflected in the literature

The regional literature reflects challenges in the **organizational environment** in which the social service workforce operates across countries. Issues such as heavy workloads, low remuneration and limited infrastructure are just some of the work environment difficulties described by social workers themselves (Akesson, 2016, page 28; UNICEF Moldova, 2015; OPM/P4EC Moldova, 2013; Shatberashvili, 2012).

> "We work in extremely difficult conditions. I share an office with a ndihma ekonomike[29] officer. For at least 10 days of the month, I have no room even to stand in my office as it is overwhelmed by people filing for the assistance…. I don't have a proper work desk, no computer, I use my personal one, and no shelves for the files. Luckily, I own a car and the back of my car is turned into my archive. This is not effective and even not professional. When the office is busy I have no other choice but meeting clients outside in hot and cold days. This looks very unprofessional too!" (Social service worker in Albania, cited in Akesson, 2016)

UNICEF Albania notes that similar challenges face other social service workforce cadres such as school psychologists and health social workers, confirming the need to strengthen planning for funding and implementation of service standards.

M**otivation** is closely linked to the organizational environment, and also features as one of the challenges described by the workforce in countries across the region. Difficult working conditions and weak supervision weaken the motivation of social service workers to enter or stay in the profession, or make progress within it (through, for example, improving and updating their skills). Challenges to motivation are, therefore, likely to have a negative impact on the interaction with, and services provided to, children and families in need (Akesson 2016, p. 29).

Supervision was also stated as a key challenge faced by the workforce. Many social workers in many countries report the absence of strong professional supervision as one of the major gaps in their ongoing education and professional development.

Staff turnover is linked closely to these issues, with the literature pointing to a high level of staff turnover in some countries. In Moldova, for example, a 2013 assessment

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[29] Ndihma ekonomike is the Albanian social assistance programme providing minimum guaranteed income to low-income households

of the Territorial Social Assistance Structures (TSAS) highlights that *"the average turnover of social assistants was nearly 20% in 2013, which means that every fifth social worker left the job during that year. There is considerable variation with some TSAS having a relatively low turnover (below 10%) and others, over 30% depending on the local labour market and availability of other employment, but could also be linked to lower turnover in better managed TSAS"* (OPM/P4EC Moldova, 2013).

This high staff turnover can be explained by difficulties in the working conditions of community social assistants, including uneven and high workloads, low pay and lack of infrastructure (office space, transport) (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

Deployment in rural areas is cited as a challenge by managers and central government authorities in many countries, and is linked to the lack of service coverage, low motivation, low pay and an overall tendency towards urban migration.

The cumulative impact of all these challenges on practice and effectiveness is considerable, as Shatberashvili summarizes in relation to social workers in Georgia:

> "Social workers in Georgia are limited in the amount of work in the field they can undertake because of poor travel expenses and high workloads. Sometimes monitoring visits are not conducted and conclusions are recorded based merely on a telephone conversation with the service user. This malfunction of the social service organization structure is reflected in the quality of service provision. The physical workplace of many social workers in state offices is not organized in a professional manner and there is no single, private space for direct practice. Therefore, social workers are not able to provide part of their core professional mission - to provide direct practice to the service user using certain social work interventions, be they consultancy or therapy aimed at helping to resolve service users' problems and supporting recovery." (Shatberashvili, 2012)

The concluding observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) noted in clauses 26 and 27 that insufficient human, technical and financial resources are allocated to the social protection system in Georgia to support or replace a family environment and therefore to see though deinstitutionalization processes. The committee especially notes the need to *'significantly increase the number, training and remuneration of social workers'* (UNCRC, 2017).

4.2   Professional associations

Generally speaking, more established professional associations can be found in countries where social work degree programmes have been established for longer (mainly the countries of the former Yugoslavia). There are some exceptions, notably in Georgia where a professional association has been instrumental in establishing the profession from the very beginning of its evolution.

Georgia's Association of Social Work (GASW) was founded in 2004 by graduates of the post-graduate MSc Social Work programme at Columbia University in the US (Rutgers, 2008), supported by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) to advocate for the introduction and expansion of the role of social work and to protect client's rights. The mission of GASW is to "protect social rights of population and support professional work and practice. The goal of the Association is advocacy of social policy based on effective governance" (GASW Georgia, 2016).

In addition, GASW advocates for social work in other related fields such as housing, child welfare, justice, school social work and with groups such as the homeless, child victims of violence, ethnic minorities, the internally displaced, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people who are substance dependent. The Association is a member of other professional organizations such as the IFSW, the International Council of Social Welfare, the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disability and the School Social Workers Association of America.

Some professional associations play a role in the licensing or accreditation of social work professionals and social work training organizations. However, this regulatory role may compromise their role as an advocacy or supporting organization. The College of Social Workers in **Romania,** for example, was named in legislation passed in 2004 as a non-profit body that licenses and accredits social workers as well as representing and protecting the interests of social workers as a professional association. Given the dual regulatory and advocacy functions of the College, some see this as a barrier to the creation of a professional social work workforce[30] rather than an effective regulatory body that can advocate and increase public confidence in the profession. A group of social workers founded an alternative professional association (ASproAS) in 2013 to advocate for changes to the 2004 legislation that regulates the profession. ASproAS and the College of Social Workers are both members of IFSW.

In some countries, including Moldova and Kazakhstan, professional associations exist in name but are either weak or their activities are almost non-existent (UNICEF Moldova, 2015; UNICEF, 2017a).

In **Albania** the law establishing an order of social work for professional licensing and regulation purposes has, in effect, created a professional body, but UNICEF Albania reports delays in issuing the Decisions of the Council of Ministers that can establish this statutory body. It is not clear from the literature if this body is also expected to advocate for social workers and the profession, or if it plays only a regulatory role. UNICEF Albania reports that there are two associations led by NGOs, formed by representatives of Departments of Social Work or Departments of Psychology, called the Albanian Association of Psychologists and 'Albanian Association of Social Workers, but they have limited influence compared to the statutory professional body outlined in the legislation. They do, however, play a role in providing inputs to the Government and representing these two professions.

Ulbricht (2008, cited in Rutgers, 2008) was cautious about licensure in Armenia and advocated for a focus on the development of a strong national association to take the lead on practice standards and methods to monitor compliance with the Code of Ethics. He further states that "licensing […] of social workers is not a prerequisite for a strong profession" (p. 10).

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[30] http://www.asproas.ro/asproas-a-inceput-procedurile-pentru-revizuirea-legii-4662004-privind-statutul-asistentului-social/ (accessed 6 August 2018)

4.3   Ethical codes

As with other professions such as medicine, education and law, a code of ethics or deontological[31] code is fundamental to establishing professional standards and enshrining the professional rules of behaviour and code of conduct. As with other aspects of professionalization of the workforce, ethical codes are more likely to be institutionalized in countries where social work has been taught for the longest period of time and where there are established professional associations.

In Moldova, for example, a Deontological Code of the Social Assistant that determined the professional training of social assistants and defined social work professional standards was developed by the Moldovan Association of Social Assistants and approved the Ministry of Labour Social Protection and Family in 2005. This ethical code sets out a value system, standards of professional conduct and practice and the ethical responsibilities of the social worker. The code aims to safeguard and promote the interests of users, as well as the professional interests of social service providers. The code is based on observance of ethical principles rooted in a broad human rights framework. It is not clear, however, to what extent this code is being used in practice by social assistants. It is of importance, nevertheless, as an indicator of the value system that has underpinned the development of the social work profession in Moldova to date (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

In Georgia, GASW emphasizes an empowerment model of social work where the social worker aims to help the clients to help themselves.

> *"The main mission of social work is to improve human welfare and meet the basic demands of population. Protection of the interests of socially vulnerable individuals and groups is a point of primary importance to social workers. Social workers try to provide the care for each individual, as well as achieve societal welfare."[32]* (Preamble to the Georgian Association of Social Workers code of Ethics)

Ensuring implementation of ethical standards can help to improve practice and raise levels of trust in the profession. A survey on violence against children in Georgia showed that many of the professionals surveyed (social workers, teachers and school guards) share some of the attitudes and behaviours of the general public in relation to violence against children (UNICEF Georgia, 2013). Training on violence and responses to violence (including as a core ethical principle) could help to increase trust in the ability of the social service workforce to provide services and relevant responses. This kind of training could also strengthen responses to violence among teachers, health system workers, police and judges.

The workforce should have the skills and knowledge to challenge and influence the beliefs and attitudes of the general public. When the workforce shares the values and social norms of the general public, this can constrain its ability to help change harmful

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[31] Deontological ethics are concerned with what people do, rather than the consequences of their actions. This means that the morality of an action is based on whether that action itself is right or wrong under a series of rules, rather than based on the consequences.

[32] http://www.gasw.org/en/about-us/code-of-ethics.html

social norms such as discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities or high thresholds of tolerance for violence against children.

4.4   Professional supervision/monitoring/mentoring

Akesson (2016) notes that, with the exception of those in Moldova, most social service workers that participated in the study reported supervision to be irregular and weak, representing a major gap in their education, support and ongoing professional development.

In Georgia, systems are in place for professional supervision, but as Shatberashvili (2012) noted, "*agencies employing social workers are often managed by people who are not social workers and supervision of practice is quite often conducted by people who are not social workers.*" She cites a State Agency for Social Welfare survey that found that 6.6 per cent of practising social workers are without any professional supervision, and that 60.7 per cent are supervised by line managers who are without any social work education or experience (Shatberashvili, 2012).

In Kazakhstan, mechanisms of supervision are not established. Where they exist at all, they are limited to UNICEF-supported projects or individual initiatives in a few selected institutions (UNICEF, 2017a).

Moldova introduced a mechanism for professional supervision by Ministerial order in 2008. The TSAS Assessment (OPM/P4EC Moldova, 2014: p30) notes that the supervision process "was considered by TSAS staff and Social Assistants alike to be useful and 'successful." As of January 2014, there were 1,142 community social workers nationwide engaged and active, and in 2013, there were 150 social assistant supervisors, who conducted 3,194 individual supervision sessions and 936 group supervision sessions It should be noted that a social assistant supervisor supports, on average, 7-9 social assistants, providing professional support to improve their professional skills, case management and planning activities, as well as emotional support (Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Annual Social Report, 2013 cited in UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

Akesson (2016) notes that participants in the research conducted in Romania emphasized the importance of professional supervision as a way to learn and ensure professional efficiency. This finding is supported by a 2015 Centrul de Formare Continuă și Evaluarea Competențelor în Asistența Socială (CFCECAS) study also cited by Akesson (2016), which shows that 66.3 per cent of respondents said they need professional supervision to be efficient, and 52.5 per cent said they need professional supervision to develop skills that help them to work better. Although there is no mechanism or specific position for professional supervision, social service workers in Romania – only one third of whom have social work backgrounds – understand professional supervision as a way to decrease stress, increase motivation to develop effective intervention approaches and strategies and manage their resources efficiently. Supervision, as it is currently established, however, serves primarily as an administrative function.

4.5 Perceptions and understanding of the social service workforce

The general public and beneficiaries have little understanding of the social service workforce, with an "unrecognizability" of the role of the profession (Akesson, 2016). Public perceptions of the workforce tend to see it as administering cash benefits, providing charity or 'taking away children' in the case of child protection workers (Akesson, 2016 Dhembo, 2015; Zegarac, 2015, UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

In some countries there is very little understanding among non-specialists and the public of its role and its level of professionalization. Across the region, the perception of social service work has tended to be negative. For example, in Kazakhstan (UNICEF 2017a, pg. 5) social worker positions tend to be seen as "low and unattractive". Social workers tend to be seen as having lower status than health or education professionals or police at the community level (UNICEF Moldova, 2015).

UNICEF ECARO advisers emphasize that, given the historical context of the region, it is important to build trust in services and to ensure that some basic ethical principles are being followed. Engaging with the most vulnerable families requires the creation of an enabling environment to deal with issues related to stigma, social rejection and mistrust of services that are seen as "inspection". Not surprisingly, where there are low levels of trust, there are likely to be low rates of service take up. While legislation and government policies and institutional frameworks can raise the profile of social workers and other social service workers, Akesson notes that if laws and regulations change too often, this can prevent successful implementation of interventions and reduce trust in the system (Akesson, 2016, p45).

Low trust in the profession is a bottleneck on the demand side. A national survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to violence against children conducted by UNICEF Georgia in 2013 found that the public has low confidence in social workers, police and other professionals to respond adequately to reports of violence against children within the family, and that this reduces the likelihood of reporting violence.

In Albania, the Law on Social Care of 2016 and accompanying reforms to local authority responsibilities for social services planning *"aimed to redefine the role of Social Worker and enable social workers to properly assess and address the needs of Albanian families and children through case management"* (Matkovic, 2016). The reformed legal and policy framework gives the social worker a clear mandate for outreach work with families and for intervening in child protection and other cases. These changes introduce clarity in the role of the social worker and may have an impact on how the social work workforce is perceived, as well as building trust in the system.

4.6 Common challenges cited in the literature

The low status, low pay and poor working conditions of social workers and social service workers is common to all countries in the region. Social service workers rarely have a suitable working space and may well have to pay for their own transport and communications costs. Social workers are often perceived as unqualified social assistance administrators, both by the public and by decision-makers and other professionals.

Professional associations in some countries are effective in addressing these issues and advocating for better conditions, but **some social service workers are not represented by any professional associations**. This is particularly the case for unqualified personnel filling social worker positions (who account for the majority of social service workers in some countries).

Low levels of trust in social service workers among the public and the vulnerable families who are the intended users of social services create demand side barriers to the take up of services.

Promising practice in supervision is noted in Moldova, a critical component of effective social work practice and continuous professional development. However, **supervision is found to be weak or non-existent in many other countries**, and performance management systems need further development.

5 Case study countries – desk review summaries

5.1 Albania

Overview of how social work has developed and the current legislative and policy framework

Social work in Albania has been developing since the early 1990s. The first social work faculty was created at Tirana in 1992 and there are now three public Universities that offer a social work degree:[33]

- University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Work and Social Policy

- University of Shkodra, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Social Work, Social Work section

- University of Elbasan, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Social Sciences

By 2008, social work positions could be found in prisons, hospitals, maternity hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centres, addiction treatment centres, community centres and services for victims of trafficking (Rutgers, 2008). Child protection units (CPUs) began to be established from 2006 at the municipal level and are supposed to employ at least one qualified social worker (although many do not). While CPUs are now established in most of the Albania's regions and municipalities, they are rarely fully functional. They may for example, have only one staff member with no social work experience and an overwhelming number of cases (Cabran, Finelli and Bradford, 2016). There is no information in the literature reviewed about the role, function and situation of social workers in the health system.

The Law on Pre-university Education (2012, amended 2015) requires the establishment of psychosocial services attached to schools, staffed by a psychologist and a social worker. The service aims to identify children with learning difficulties or behaviour issues and support their educational inclusion, working in partnership with the child, parents and teaching staff. The regulations to support the implementation of this Law set out caseload norms at different levels of the education system and stipulate that social workers must hold a bachelor degree in social work as a minimum and must complete a master degree within three years of taking up their position.

Although the Law states that all education authorities should have a psychosocial service in place by 2017, the literature does not provide a clear understanding of the extent to which this has been achieved. UNICEF (2017b) highlights as a promising practice an inter-Ministerial agreement on the identification and registration in school of

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[33] UNICEF, IPOS Social Work Curricula Analysis, 2016

all compulsory-school-age children in Albania. This agreement requires all parties to communicate regularly and share both hard and electronic information on children, such as lists of children of age to enrol in school, lists of children enrolled in school and lists of children of compulsory school age who are not enrolled in school. The idea is to triangulate the data, identify out-of-school children, and take steps towards their enrolment.

The Law on Social Assistance and Services (2005,amended 2006), the Law on Social Care Services (2016) and the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child (2017) are all important pieces of legislation that establish the regulatory and legal framework for social services employing social workers or other social service workforce. The Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (2014) and the Law on Mental Health (2012) both set out a legal framework for deinstitutionalization and the development of community based social services for adults and children. Gender equality, violence against women and children, justice and trafficking are also reflected as key social work issues in legislation. Other relevant pieces of legislation include the Law on Local Self-Government adopted in 2015, which introduced needs assessment and referral units (NARUs) as a separate unit in local government administration to serve as key entry points. Their role is to enable the prompt needs assessment and referral of cases to the appropriate forms and channels of social support.

Current policies and strategies that may affect the planning and development of the social work or social service workforce include the following.

- The National Strategy for Development and Integration (2015-2020)
- National Social Protection Strategy (2015-2020)
- National Inter-sectoral Decentralisation Strategy (2015-2020)
- Albanian National Health Strategy (2016-2020)
- National Action Plan on Persons with Disability (2016-2020)
- National Agenda for Children's Rights (2017-2020)
- Strategy on Pre-University Education (2014-2020)

State Social Services is the main government body charged with addressing social needs and overseeing implementation of the social care system by municipal social services authorities. Coverage of social services is largely concentrated in urban areas and is patchy in other areas, with UNICEF Albania estimating that NGOs provide around 90 per cent of social services. Other estimates suggest that they provide around 50 per cent of residential and day care services for persons with disabilities (UNCRPD, 2017: p.41 paragraphs 181 and 182) or around two-thirds of day services for children with disabilities (Rama, 2016).

It is clear, therefore, that most social workers (e.g. social work graduates) are employed by NGOs rather than in government positions. This situation may change in the coming years with the full implementation of the Laws on social care, on child protection and on pre-university education where numerous statutory social worker positions that require social work graduates are being created by municipalities in NARUs, CPUs and in psychosocial education units.

The State Agency on the Rights and Protection of the Child is responsible for the coordination and organization of the integrated child protection system and for implementing national child protection policies, including the implementation of interventions and measures for the prevention of, and protection against, child abuse,

neglect, maltreatment and violence. The Agency provides direct support and quality control for child protection structures, including their coordination and professional activities at local level. It is also charged with data collection and analysis related to child protection, with an emphasis on prevention. The Agency coordinates and organizes the continuous professional development of child protection workers and other professionals, working with children in need of protection (Law on Protection of Children's Rights, 2017).

The Law on the Order of the Social Worker, 163/2014[34]

The purpose of this Law is to regulate the organization and activity of the Order of Social Workers, as well as the legal and ethico-professional relations of social workers.[4]

Article 4 defines social work and social worker as follows:[35]

1. "Social work" is a practice-based profession, as well as an academic discipline that promotes change, development, social cohesion and social justice, and the empowerment and independence of people.

2. "Social worker" is a regulated occupation practiced in the field of social work, at macro, meso and micro level, serving individuals, families, groups, communities and central- and local-level institutions in the public and private system.

This definition of social work is largely aligned with the IFSW/IASSW definition.

The inclusion of social work in the list of Albania's regulated professions is of particular importance, not only because of the proliferation of professionals covering areas currently not overseen by social workers, but also because of the proliferation of areas and profiles where social work practice has been expanding, particularly in care services for vulnerable groups, including: women's, children, mental health services; services for children and families; the probation service; psychosocial services in schools; and areas of reproductive health. The Law comes into force at a time when social workers are playing a pivotal role in the country's newly reformed and integrated social services approach, where they are charged with integrating the case management model of social work in social services (Tahsini et al., 2013:5 cited in Dhembo, 2015).

Education and training

UNICEF has commissioned two reviews of Albania's social work curricula and the institutions with responsibilities for social work education and training, both of which have found them to be largely fit for purpose. The reviews acknowledge that considerable efforts have been made to reflect local developments at the level of policy, legal framework and employability of social workers, particularly in areas where policymakers are requesting more social workers such as: mental health (with the creation of multi-disciplinary services in the laws of 1996 and 2012), child protection

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[34] http://www.qbz.gov.al/botime/fletore_zyrtare/2014/PDF-2014/198-2014.pdf
[35] Google translate translation from the Albanian text of Law 163/2014.

(the law of 2010 emphasizes that CPU staff needs a social work diploma), education (the law of 2012 for school social services) and social welfare (with the building of residential institutions for child care and residential centres for abused women and victims of trafficking) (Dhëmbo, 2015).

Nevertheless (and as noted in section 3.1.2 of this report) a number of studies identify constraints and challenges in Albania that are common to many social work education systems in the region (Dhembo, 2015; Delaney, 2013; Cabran, Finelli and Bradford, 2016; Shatberashvili, 2012; Doel et al, 2016; Rogers and Sammon, 2017):

- limits on the quantity and quality of practice during pre-service education at University level
- constraints in the availability of human resources in some universities to teach across the whole curriculum
- lack of practice experience among teachers of social work
- over-reliance on research from other contexts and countries, with limited relevant links to Albania's social context in research and practice
- lack of teaching on research skills to support evidence-based practice among social workers
- gaps in curricula related to specific areas of theory and practice, such as disability and inclusion.

Many social work graduates are not subsequently employed as social workers. Indeed, many hundreds have been in the labour market since the 1990s (over 1,500 have graduated from Tirana University alone), but these graduates continue to account for a minority of employees in the workforce as a result of issues around employment procedures and the fragile positioning of social work professions among other professions in the country. A large body of paraprofessionals or 'front-line workers' do not meet the strict educational criteria set out for professional social workers, and their position also needs to be considered as the Social Worker Order regulations take effect (Dhembo, 2015).

There are no formal requirements for continuous professional development noted in the literature, although the Law on Protection of Children's Rights (2017) notes that the State Agency on the Rights and Protection of the Child has responsibilities for organizing continuous the professional development and training of child protection and other professionals working with children in need of protection. NGOs have been very active, both as employers of social workers and as providers of training. For example, one of the most important non-academic courses on child protection is run by the University of Tirana's Department of Social Work, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and various NGOs led by Terre des Hommes. This accredited in-service training programme runs for 22 full training days spread across one academic year and aims to provide the basics core skills and knowledge to ensure minimum standards when providing protective services (Akesson, 2016). The Law on the Order of the Social Worker also sets out requirements for continuous professional development of professional social workers, but it not yet being fully implemented.

Challenges relevant to the case study

In addition to the challenges identified in the literature on education and training, and given the intended focus of the case study on defining the workforce, this initial desk review has identified the following challenges in coordination, planning and data.

Defining the workforce and coordination of workforce planning

The literature indicates **legal requirements** for qualified social workers to be deployed in sufficient numbers with adequate training and support in the following areas.

- A total of 61 municipalities at a ratio of one social worker for 6,000-10,000 per head of population of the municipality (Law on Social Care Services, 2016).

- A total of 61 municipal child protection units comprised of at least two child protection workers. Some larger municipalities might also have child protection workers deployed at the sub-municipal administrative unit level as the Law on Child Protection of 2017 requires at least one full-time child protection worker per 3,000 child residents. Administrative units with a population of fewer than 3,000 children can have a social worker with functions and responsibilities beyond child protection tasks (Law on Child Protection, 2017).

- All kindergartens, primary, lower secondary and higher secondary and special education institutions in considerable numbers, at a rate of 1 social worker and 1 psychologist per 700 children in primary and secondary schools (Decision of the Council of Ministers, No.150 of 3 April 2018 – amending order No. 344 of 19.08.2013).

- Some kinds of NGO or government social care institutions (a review of the regulations on standards is required to establish legal requirements for the numbers of qualified social workers across all types of services).

The literature indicates that these legal requirements are not being met in full, but the most recent available reports on CPUs are from 2015/2016 and are now out of date. UNICEF Albania reports that implementation has progressed since 2015, but official data are still being approved by the Government at the time of writing. There are also considerable numbers of **qualified social workers deployed in a range of NGO social services providers**, without this necessarily being a regulatory or legal requirement.

In addition, the literature suggests that **other types of social service workers are deployed in considerable numbers,** either instead of qualified social workers in the above types of services or in the following other types of services/organizations:

- hospitals/health services
- social assistance administration offices
- NGO services of different kinds (other than social care institutions)
- probation services and prisons.

Coordination is, therefore, required across several ministries and departments, as well as with the **NGO and academic sectors**.

Lack of disaggregated and aggregated data on the workforce

Decentralization policies and ongoing reforms across a range of sectors – including health, education, social services and justice – have contributed to considerable challenges in mapping out the numbers within the existing workforce, the need for qualified social workers and other social service workers across the country and measuring whether this demand can be met by the supply of workers graduating in social work or other disciplines. No centrally coordinated source of data on the numbers of social workers or other social service workers was identified in the literature.

The 2014 Law on the Order of the Social Worker should have helped to establish the number and location of qualified social workers and support planning, but the literature reviewed does not provide information on progress in its implementation. Data are, therefore, limited on the numbers of social workers or other social service workers deployed across the different sectors.

5.2   Georgia

Overview of how social work and social work education has developed and the current legislative and policy framework

Social work, as understood at present, is an emerging profession in Georgia. In 1999, 18 pioneers representing different professions were trained as child care social workers through non-degree training courses offered by NGOs and were tasked to support a newly launched pilot deinstitutionalization project. The first professional social workers who had been educated in the USA at Columbia University and Washington University in St. Louis with the support of the Open Society Foundation Social Work Fellowship (SWF) programme, started to return to Georgia in 2002. The commitment of SWF alumni to support development and professionalization of social work in Georgia has driven significant progress in the country.

Several pieces of legislation since 2006 have referred to social work and its functions, including the Law on Social Assistance, the Law on Adoption and Foster Care, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence, the Law on Psychiatric Assistance, and the Code of imprisonment.

Doel et al. (2016) note that:

> "different laws have introduced a variety of definitions of a social worker, limiting the professional social work role to the specific activities pertinent to the field of regulation of the law. According to the Georgian Law on Social Assistance, a social worker is a professional requiring academic education and certification and legally representing the guardianship and care agency; the Law on Non-Imprisonment Sentences and Probation defines a social worker as a person with higher education in medicine, psychology, sociology or pedagogy. The adoption of a legal definition of social worker is a positive development, but the existence of multiple definitions risks fragmentation and allows for too broad an interpretation. The lack of overall mandatory occupational standards and current lack of regulation in social work makes it more difficult to ensure the quality of service provision."

The Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW) was founded in 2004 by the first six alumni of the SWF Programme. In 2006, the first undergraduate and graduate academic programmes in social work were established in two major state universities, as well as the university certificate training programme for practicing social workers, thanks to the support of the European Union, UNICEF, the OSF Academic Fellowship Program/Higher Education Support and other international actors, local universities and GASW. At present, social work degrees are offered in Tbilisi and Ilia state universities at BA, MA and PhD levels. Both universities produce roughly 40 social workers per year in total (all levels included).

The introduction of the academic programme in social work was followed by the recognition of the role of social worker in Georgian legislation. Social work was added to the list of professions in the 2004 Law on Higher Education. In 2006, this process was advanced by the adoption of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence and another law to combat human trafficking. The establishment of the 2010 child protection referral procedures (expanded in 2016) further widened and solidified social workers' core responsibilities with respect to the protection of vulnerable groups.

In 2007-2012, Georgia carried out a child protection reform process with a focus on the deinstitutionalization of the child care system. During this reform, in 2009, the Child Protection Unit that functioned within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), was moved to the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA) and significantly strengthened. The numbers of social workers quadrupled and their functions began extend beyond child protection issues to encompass adult and elderly care, guardianship matters, family and custody affairs and care for people with disabilities among other new responsibilities.

One strong contributing factor to the increased numbers and professionalism of social workers was the multi-year UNICEF programme funded by USAID, 'Strengthening Child Care Service and Systems'. This initiative supported the de-institutionalization process in general, and the development of new regulations and forms for social workers employed by Georgia's Social Service Agency (SSA) in particular, aiming to increase their number and introduce the social work supervision system within the agency.

Another reform that is still underway – juvenile justice reform under the criminal justice system – has also made a considerable contribution to the development of social work and boosted employment rates of social workers in the state systems of probation, penitentiary and crime prevention. Since 2010, social work in the justice system has been introduced with the support of UNICEF and the EU. The functions of social workers have been further enhanced and elaborated in the Juvenile Justice Code adopted in 2015. Two major ongoing reforms in the country – deinstitutionalization reform and juvenile justice reform – have been carried out with the increasing involvement of social workers. At the same time, however social work is underdeveloped or poorly developed in some other fields, including healthcare and education.

In the healthcare field, mental and behavioural health have the highest number of social workers, while they are virtually non-existent within primary healthcare and hospital care (with the exception of palliative care). In the field of mental health, social worker positions have emerged at state inpatient and outpatient clinics and psycho-neurological centres, with 26 individuals employed as social workers in 10 mental health service providers nationwide by 2006 (Shekriladze, 2015). In addition, relatively

new mobile teams that provide services to those who are severely mentally ill include social workers. Substance abuse and harm reduction organizations have also established such positions, although most people employed in the field have no formal education in social work.

At present, GASW reports 940 individuals with a nationwide workforce of social work practitioners, but only about 30 per cent of these practitioners have a formal education in social work, leaving 70 per cent who do not (although some may have an education in psychology, sociology, medicine or pedagogy). Around 500 of these practitioners are employed by the State and the remaining 300 by NGOs.

Among state entities, the SSA operating under the MoLHSA is the main employer of social workers, with about 270 statutory social workers who act as State gatekeepers and have the highest level of (and most numerous) legal responsibilities and mandates. The responsibilities of the SSA social workers include: responding to child abuse and maltreatment cases, domestic violence cases; handling children's entry and exit into State care, adoption and foster care, family reunification, guardianship/care of children; guardianship/care of adults/elderly; prevention of child abuse and neglect; participation in custodial disputes; handling juvenile justice related issues; and performing disability assessment and response.

The justice system is the other main employer of social workers and social work practitioners. The penitentiary department employs 116 social work practitioners (some of whom are qualified), the national probation agency employs 34 social workers and the crime prevention centre operating under the Ministry of Justice employs 14 social workers. The main roles of social workers in the penitentiary system are to conduct individual assessments, sentence planning and coordination. In the probation system, the key functions of the social worker are to perform individual assessments and deliver rehabilitative and re-socialization programmes. In crime prevention, social workers work at three levels: primary (general public), secondary (at risk groups) and tertiary (those with a history of conflict with the law).

Social workers are also employed in the State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking (under MoLHSA), the National Bureau of Enforcement (under the Ministry of Justice), the Social Housing Service, the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions (under the Ministry of Education), and the municipal shelter/housing facility.

In the NGO sector, the workforce is concentrated within organizations that provide direct services and field work, primarily in the fields of child welfare, behavioural health and harm reduction. Several international and local NGOs, such as SOS Children's Villages International, World Vision International, Tanadgoma, Georgian Center for Rehabilitation of Trauma Victims (GCRT), and harm reduction network NGOs, among others, have social workers on board, although in 2012 Shatberashvili noted that "*there are NGOs who are fulfilling social work functions without a single qualified social worker on staff.*"

Statutory social workers employed by the SSA have become increasingly overloaded to the point where the situation has become critical. Their list of statutory responsibilities has grown exponentially since 2009, when the focus was mainly on child protection and family support. Responsibilities for crisis intervention were added in 2014 followed by early marriage, procedural representation, support for people with psychosocial needs, children living on the street, violence against women, adoption procedures and cybercrime against children through to 2017. Table 5, which shows

how caseloads expanded between 2009 and 2017, illustrates how critical the situation has become.

Table 5 Number of statutory social work practitioners and caseload (2009-2017)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of SSA social work practitioners	197	197	195	225	225	239	239	240	240
Number of cases	2734	2538	2939	3118	3228	6606	7474	13400	15938
Caseload (cases pe worker)	14	13	15	14	14	28	31	56	66

Source: Data provided by UNICEF Georgia, July 2018, based on information from the Social Services Agency (SSA)

UNICEF Georgia notes that, as a result of pressing demand to better support vulnerable populations, a number of recommendations[36] have been provided to the Government to increase the number of social workers, increase their capacity and improve their work conditions. Parliament has responded by passing a Law on Social Work in June 2018 and by developing an action plan for its implementation. The ongoing case study in Georgia will focus on this new law and its implications for the social work and social service workforce.

Brief overview of the Law on Social Work, 2018

The newly adopted Law on Social work establishes a legislative framework for social work practitioners – direct service providers – and defines social work as *"a practice-based profession that aims at enhancing public welfare through strengthening individuals and promoting their free development and integration into society."* The law stipulates social work principles; generic as well as field-specific social work functions; social worker rights and responsibilities; social worker interventions/measures; social worker qualification requirements; social worker benefits; and social worker supervision, promotion and disciplinary action. The Law also introduces social work at the municipal level. The Law was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders and representatives of the professional community.

The Law on Social Work provides for protection of the title of a social worker by stipulating that only those with formal education (e.g. bachelor or master degree) in social work have the right to be employed as social workers. To prevent a workforce-related crisis, however, the Law also offers a mechanism to allow those individuals without academic degrees in social work who are currently employed in social worker positions to obtain the authority to practice as social workers by completing a certification process. The Law also defines certification as a temporary measure offered only for an interim period. After completion of the interim period, according to

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[36] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Human Rights Council, Report of Public defender's office of Georgia (2016), decree of the parliament of Georgia (2016), petition of Georgian Association of Social Workers; advocacy by UNICEF Georgia 2013-2018 and advocacy by NGOs.

the Law, only those with social work degrees will be authorized for employment in social worker positions.

As of July 2018, the Parliamentary Committee has introduced an action plan to support implementation of the Law and has launched coordination of the process. Multiple State entities are deemed responsible for carrying out various parts of the related action plan with the Ministry of Education and Science in charge of the certification process. Among other tasks, **the action plan envisages an increase in the number of social workers** employed per sector.

The adoption of the new Law on Social work in Georgia is a rare example of the successful professionalization of a newly emerging profession. The priority now is to ensure effective implementation and the allocation of sufficient resources for its full execution.

Challenges relevant to the case study

The immediate challenge for the Ministry of Education and Science (now the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport), MoLHSA (now the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs), the Ministry of Justice and non-government bodies is to **support social workers without social work degrees to go through the certification process.** While the Law allows only six months (from July 2018 until the end of the year) for the State to develop the certification scheme and only nine months (January – September, 2019) for non-degree workers to apply for the certificate, the Ministry of Education – which is tasked to carry this out – requires considerable support to understand the task and how to approach its implementation.

Several stakeholders have voiced concern about two key issues. First, the very short preparatory period reinforces the need for the State to start working immediately with universities to develop the programme for a potential exam (or whatever will be decided, given that the Law does not specify how certification will be carried out) encompassing key topics of basic academic curricula, the development of study materials and their dissemination to those who need them. Second, the very short certification period makes it extremely difficult for a full-time worker to complete certification successfully, or to try again if their first attempt is unsuccessful.

The longer-term challenge is to **develop a culture of longer term workforce planning in the state agencies and NGOs that are the main employers of the workforce**. A medium- to long-term workforce planning process is needed to support the new Law on Social Work. This could help to ensure that enough social workers with the right qualifications are in place; that pre-service education programmes meet emerging challenges in social services, education, justice and health sectors; that continuous professional development and supervision are adequately resourced; that work conditions and pay keep pace with other professions; and that young social workers graduating from BSW courses have clear career paths to follow, whether as practitioners, managers, policymakers or academics.

5.3   Kazakhstan

Overview of how social work has developed and the current legislative and policy framework

Social work first began to be taught in Kazakhstan in 1991. The Law on Special Social Services of 2008 set out a definition of social work and a framework for the development of social services and standards in social services. At the same time, however, other pieces of legislation and policy across health, education, social welfare and law enforcement have shaped the current situation significantly, with social service workers deployed across a range of sectors and a range of levels with statutory and non-statutory social work functions.

According to UNICEF, 2018:

> "there is no standardised definition of social work and social worker, which would embody and correspond to the international definition and concept of the profession. The definition of social worker in the Law on Special Social Services is limited to two basic functions (providing special social services and/or performing needs assessment), with missing broader conceptual framework underpinning key principles in social work (i.e. involvement/participation, empowerment, choice of beneficiaries, advocacy and promotion of the rights of beneficiaries, etc.). The Law on Special Social Services does not define social work, while other pieces of legislation provide incomplete and simplified definition that does not encompass the complexity and comprehensiveness of the profession."

Professional and legally regulated social worker positions are located in services for residential, semi-permanent and home care services for people with disabilities, health services and, as of 2016, in institutions providing services to victims of trafficking and domestic violence. The social pedagogue performs the role of social worker within the education sector, while child protection specialists in guardianship authorities perform social work functions and care workers and other staff provide social care services in institutions under the responsibility of the ministries of education (UNICEF, 2017a) and health (UNICEF, 2016).

Each sector has developed its social service system in parallel, without taking into account similar processes in other sectors. At the time of adoption of the Law on Special Social Services (2008), the Ministry of Health was the lead government ministry in this process and had introduced social worker positions in the health system ahead of other sectors. This was, in part, a response to the challenge of preventing and responding to infant abandonment at birth in maternity hospitals.

Later, the education, social welfare and law enforcement sectors took a similar path. As a result, every sector has built a system of social services and social work with the following main elements:

- services that are focused on prevention (primary level of support in the community); specialized assistance for specialized needs, and complex assistance for highly specialized needs
- continuous professional development training for social service staff at training institutions or through training mechanisms subordinated to each sectoral ministry

- mechanisms to monitor and inspect the quality of services and data-management systems within each ministry.

Table 6 summarizes the different types of social service workers who are deployed in each sector and at each level of response in Kazakhstan. It should be noted that some of these positions are newly established or in the pipeline (denoted in italics in Table 6) and others have been established in the last decade or have existed since the early 1990s or before (e.g. home care social workers and specialised residential care services).

Table 6 Social service workforce in each sector and each level of response in Kazakhstan

Performance levels	Social welfare sector	Healthcare sector	Education sector	Law enforcement sector
Prevention and primary assistance	*Assistants, consultants in employment centres and social programmes (1 assistant per 5 communities)* Home care social workers	Universal model of patronage for pregnant women and children under 5 (1 home visiting nurse per 2,000 population)	School-based social pedagogues	Inspector employed in the school – prevention work
Specialized assistance	Social benefits, home care. Employment assistance and social programmes NGO services	The social worker in the health clinic conducts an in-depth needs assessment, draws up a care plan, connects resources from other sectors, NGOs (1 social worker per 10,000 population)	Guardianship authority (child protection specialist – foster care, adoption, guardianship)	Probation officer
Highly specialized assistance	Social service centre for people with disabilities (residential and semi-residential medical-social institutions)	Infant homes Rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities	Children's homes and boarding schools *Service supporting school inclusion (under development)*	Centres for rehabilitation of children in contact with the law. *Social worker in penitentiary institutions (envisaged as a representative of the law enforcement structure)*

Source: OPM/P4EC consultancy group

As Table 6 shows, new models, elements of social work and socially oriented positive practices have been developed across all four of these sectors. These sectors continue to maintain a sector and operational segregation, and in some cases, there are gaps in the process of development. The legislation within which these services operate and within which the workforce is deployed is also highly sectoral and aims to address specific sectoral challenges.

For example, amendments to the legislation on social benefits were introduced in 2018 that aimed to support the 'social activation' of households receiving targeted and universal social assistance (cash benefits). The legislation expanded the functions and mandate of the social assistants and consultants employed in social assistance and employment offices to include household assessments, direct support to households in accessing training, services and other support and case management (UNICEF, 2016). This initiative is not necessarily fully aligned with legislation and policies on child protection and family support, health, the Law on Special Social Services, the inclusion of people with disabilities, early childhood education or inclusive education.

The introduction of social worker and social service worker positions into a range of sectors means that Kazakhstan has a **highly inter-sectoral social service workforce model.** However, the profession of social work is weak and fragmented across sectors and services in each sector are reduced to a limited set of functions and tasks.

Addressing the challenge of ensuring inter-sectoral planning, developing and supporting is paramount if a professional, competent workforce is to develop (UNICEF, 2018). At the level of individual children and families receiving support, for example, it is conceivable that a worker from all four sectors can be working with the same household at the same time without any coordination. Where inter-sectoral work in other countries may focus on how to support professionals from different disciplines (doctors, teachers, social workers, police) to work together, in Kazakhstan the challenge seems to be how to support social service workers in different sectors (health, education, social work, police) to work together.

As shown in Table 3 in Section 2.1.3, when all social service workers are counted across health, education, social welfare, child protection and law enforcement, Kazakhstan has one of the highest rates of social service workers deployed per head of population in the ECA region. The challenge is to clearly **define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each worker and to ensure that the qualifications and education required for each worker in each sector are commensurate with his or her role, functions or statutory mandate.** At the same time, encouraging the **development of social work as a profession** (as opposed to a job or occupation) built on common theories, practice and ethical codes, will help to ensure that a workforce can be built in the medium to long term that has the competencies to address emerging social challenges.

Education and training

Social work first began to be taught in Kazakhstan in 1991 and by 2017 there were 18 universities offering social work degrees undergo accreditation processes. There is, however, considerable concern among a range of stakeholders, including graduates

themselves, about the quality of the courses offered and the readiness of graduates to undertake the complexities of this emerging profession (UNICEF, 2017a; UNICEF, 2018) with very few curricula updated since the introduction of the Law on Special Social Services in 2008.[37]

Recent reviews of the system of social work education and development in Kazakhstan emphasize that there are considerable numbers of staff deployed across the system of special social services who do not have professional education (UNICEF, 2017a; UNICEF, 2018).

UNICEF (2018) further highlights concerns among stakeholders that *"there are only a handful of experts who can provide quality trainings that follow new concepts and methodologies in the continually developing field of social work and that this lack of expertise in the country raises serious doubts whether all 18 universities can provide quality social work programmes that would fully prepare students for the complexity of this profession."*

The Law on Special Social Services 2008 and a proliferation of ministerial orders within each sector have set the requirements for the development of standards in services and, therefore, the qualification requirements for social workers and other individuals providing those services. UNICEF (2018) documents the standards and regulations across several sectors.

While government standards in Kazakhstan provide for mandatory advanced training for social workers in the field of health and social protection once every five years, there is a lack of quality professional capacity-building opportunities, with current opportunities organized in an ad-hoc manner and highly dependent on the available budget, while concerns have been raised about their quality (particularly in social protection). The courses are not accredited and there is no oversight on their quality (UNICEF, 2018).

Article 16 of the Law on Special Social Services requires social workers in the field of health care and social protection to pass a professional examination every five years. The requirements for these professional examinations are detailed in ministerial orders that also define bodies empowered to carry them out, but guidelines on their content are very general and oblast authorities are left to prepare questionnaires themselves rather than having a standardized, unified system for the whole country. There are many workers in child protection, social care, juvenile justice, probation and other sectors outside of health and social protection who are carrying out social work functions but who are not subject to this procedure (UNICEF, 2018, p. 26).

Challenges relevant to the case study

Inter-sectoral planning and developing is recognized as the first and foremost challenge in strengthening the workforce. The Government of Kazakhstan is creating a resource centre for social service workforce strengthening that will, in theory, be under the oversight of the health, education and social protection ministries and that has the

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[37] https://articlekz.com/article/9462

potential, therefore, to lead workforce strengthening across most sectors and to coordinate implementation between central government and oblast authorities.

Within this broad inter-sectoral challenge is **an urgent need to ensure fully qualified social workers are deployed in key positions with statutory responsibilities** such as child protection specialists, social workers working with women and children experiencing violence, health system social workers and the new social assistants and consultants charged with 'social activation' tasks. At the same time, the **capacity of universities to meet the demand for qualified social workers** needs to be reviewed to ensure that enough social workers with the right qualifications for these positions are graduating to fill these positions in the medium to long term. In the short term, the planned resource centre has the potential to ensure that existing post-holders have access to training and education opportunities relevant to their social work functions, professional supervision and a career path towards becoming fully-qualified for their position.

More broadly, the development of the profession of social work in **Kazakhstan would benefit from unified legislation and a strong professional association** that can champion social work as a profession and support a move away from the current fragmentation across different sectors and tasks.

Kazakhstan has legislation and regulation on social service standards, social service worker attestation in health and social protection and mechanisms for quality control and accreditation of training and education programmes, which demonstrates the Government's understanding of the need for quality assurance in the activities of the social service workforce. The lack of a unified definition of social work and social worker, however, and the fragmentation of staff with the title 'social worker' into performers of specific functions such as assessment and coordination, suggests a need to **develop a vision and understanding of social work as a professional discipline** among policymakers and legislators. The social work academic community can play a role in this task, but may itself require strengthening and support to create and convey such a unified vision.

5.4   Romania

Overview of how social work has developed and the current legislative and policy framework

Social work has a history in Romania that pre-dates the communist regime, yet it was closed down in the 1960s (Rutgers, 2008; Anghel et al., 2013). Like other countries in the region, social work began to develop once again after the fall of the communist regime and the first social work bachelor degree was launched in 1990. The development of the social work and social service workforce was driven in the 1990s by child welfare and child protection system reform and deinstitutionalization of children's alternative care services.

Decentralization of child welfare and protection services in 1997, coupled with the establishment of a new range of community-based services, opened up new opportunities for the profession of social work to develop.

In the past 10 years or so, **policies and legislation have moved towards recognizing the systemic issues driving the high numbers of children entering**

alternative care and measures adopted have included better-targeted social assistance, more integrated social services and strengthened social inclusion and inclusive education (Childonomics, 2017).

Relevant legal frameworks for social services provision in Romania include the following:

- Law 257/2013 (amending Law 272/2004) On the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights
- Law 292/2011 On Social Assistance
- Law 466/2004 addresses the statute of social workers.

National policies are aligned with EU priorities under the Europe 2020 Strategy. The key policy documents are the National Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights 2014-2020 and the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty 2015-2020 (hereafter the National Strategy), which sets out actions to strengthen the social sector workforce including:

- increase funding for the development of social services
- improve licensing and funding mechanisms for contracting out of social services to non-state providers
- increase the number of professionals in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation as well as case management within the county General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) to strengthen support for the local-level social work services (SPAS)
- develop a continuous training system for professionals working in social services, including professionals dealing with the social services regulatory system.

The National Strategy (section 2.3 pp 46-57) notes **direct links between the impact of services and the need for social work and social service workforce strengthening**. The funding and human resources challenges facing the social services system documented in the strategy paper include:

- severe understaffing in rural and small urban areas and insufficient training of social assistance staff at the local level, with only one in four being a professional social worker
- very low salaries for social workers, making it difficult for local authorities to recruit and retain a specialized workforce, especially in rural or small urban areas
- local services that have very little effect, mostly as a result of the shortage of social workers and the inadequate professional training of those who are currently employed.

The National Strategy identifies the need to develop inter-sectoral, community-based services to deliver a minimum intervention package of support across social protection, health, education and social services (based on the UNICEF package piloted in its 'No invisible children' project 2011-2015) and to ensure they are staffed *preferably* by social workers (or at least staff with adequate professional training and support).

Current and emerging roles for social workers and social service workers

A social worker is defined in Romania as an individual with a university-level, undergraduate social work degree according to Law 466/2004. The role of the case

manager is to take on child protection tasks, ensuring the coordination of activities such as evaluation of needs and risks, and the development of an intervention plan. Law 292/2011 stipulates that there should be one social worker for every 300 cases. While the intention of the Law is that the case manager should be a professional social worker, order 288/2006 regulates that case management activities can be conducted by those who have a degree in social work, social sciences and/or medicine.

Law 292/2011 also stipulates that private and public agencies are eligible to provide social services if they are accredited for specific activities. But the same Law rules that if the social service agency cannot retain social workers, then any other employee – even if s/he is not trained in social work – can do the task a social worker should be doing.

While these caveats in the legislation and regulations permit cash-strapped local authorities and rural communes to avoid the challenge of recruiting, paying and retaining qualified personnel, they also result in the lack of effectiveness noted in the National Strategy as a key challenge to addressing social exclusion and poverty as well as a range of needs among vulnerable populations: *"the development and strengthening of capacity at the local level to provide social assistance services is essential for the entire social welfare system"* (Government of Romania, 2015, p. 53).

The National Strategy identifies the following **key functions** that should be developed at the community level and delivered by professional social workers or a <u>trained</u> *"full-time social assistance employee"*:

- outreach activities
- needs assessments at individual, household and community levels
- information and counselling services targeted to vulnerable groups
- administrative support in accessing social, medical and legal assistance
- referrals to specialized services
- monitoring and home visits for all people in vulnerable situations.

Social workers in Romania must graduate from an accredited university programme. The National Strategy, acknowledging the difficulty of recruiting professional social workers in rural areas and estimating a shortfall of 2,300 and 3,600 workers in such areas (p.52), states that:

> "…it would be useful if professionals (especially universities, service providers and the National College of Social Workers in Romania) would develop family- and person-centred tools and methodologies regarding the intake, assessment, planning, design, implementation, and M&E of services. These tools and methodologies should be taught in continuous training programmes for the personnel with social assistance responsibilities at the local level." (Government of Romania, 2015, p. 53)

Apart from professionally educated and accredited social workers, the National Strategy identifies a range of other social service or community based workers who should be targeted for training in the core competencies mentioned above, including:

- social assistance employees
- community nurses
- Roma healthcare mediators

- school mediators
- Roma mediators.

The National Strategy makes the case for investing in social services and the social work/social service workforce: *"Investing in social assistance services at the community level will enable Romania to make longer-term savings in other policy areas such as health and education, and to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives on the sectors of social inclusion, education, and employment."* (Government of Romania, 2015 p. 53)

The National Strategy cites a World Bank 'Social Assistance Services at the community Level' survey from 2014 as providing important data on the state of the social service workforce at the local level. However, the literature reviewed (Nita, 2017; Childonomics, 2017) does not provide an update on the extent to which this agenda has since been delivered to strengthen the workforce at the community level, especially in rural and small urban areas, with **training packages focused on core competencies required for the delivery of a minimum package of community-based services**.

Education and training

Social work education is well established in Romania and is a prerequisite for becoming a professional social worker, but this does not mean that all those holding social work posts, especially in rural and small urban areas, are social workers. Akesson (2016) notes that curricula vary across the four major universities that teach social work and a curricula review may be required to ensure there is a fit with the community mobilization role of the social worker envisaged in the National Strategy. This could help to strengthen social services as well as the specialized child protection and social inclusion social worker roles that are needed to deinstitutionalize child care services and services for people with disabilities (also referenced in the National Strategy). Systematic continuous professional development, both for social workers and for other social service workers, needs considerable strengthening (Akesson, 2016; Government of Romania, 2015; Nita, 2017).

Challenges relevant to the case study

The past ten years has seen a shift in social policies and legislation in Romania towards an inter-sectoral and systemic approach to tackling the root causes of social exclusion, violence and child neglect and abuse. This has considerable impact on the social work profession as there are not enough social workers, especially in rural and small urban areas, to meet the stated goals of providing community-based minimum packages of services to all vulnerable children, families and adults. The ongoing case study may need to focus on understanding whether the actions and goals of the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty 2015-2020 are being implemented or have been amended, and how this is reflected in planning, developing and supporting the workforce.

The National Strategy identifies core competencies required by community-based social service staff while acknowledging that the preferred option is to ensure fully that qualified social workers hold these positions. The case study can also explore the need for such a parallel system of professional social worker and a cadre of trained paraprofessional social service workers. If the training for frontline social service staff foreseen in the National Strategy forms part of a wider strengthening of the system of

social services, then the system could be expected to develop pathways for social workers with non-social work undergraduate degrees and unqualified social service workers to acquire education through training, as well as continuous professional development that can lead to a full social work qualification over time.

This would represent a medium to long term strategy for moving towards a fully qualified workforce. Such an approach, however, requires changes to the salaries, status and working environment of social service workers and social workers if it is to emerge as a promising practice for the region. The case study will need to explore the space between the ambitions of the policy and legislation and the reality on the ground in terms of delivering multi-disciplinary community-based packages of services led by competent social workers or social service workers.

6   Preliminary key findings

Social work has developed historically in a broad sweep from west to east in the Europe and Central Asia region. The countries of the former Yugoslavia have well-established social work professions that date back to the mid-20th century and other countries have social work professions that have been established to differing degrees since the 1990s. The development of the sector has been much more recent in some of countries of Central Asia.

There is no standard model of how social work has developed in the region and there is no one 'best practice' or single standard to which countries should aspire. Every country has its own definition of social work and its own path for the development of the social work and social service workforce.

At the same time, all countries in the ECA region face similar challenges in terms of poverty, child protection, violence, migration and other social issues and so they all require a strong workforce to address these challenges. They also face similar challenges in terms of workforce strengthening and in ensuring that there are enough qualified workers across the country who have adequate working conditions, and who are motivated, educated and supported to work effectively to address social issues with vulnerable populations, support inclusion and address violence.

Each of the four case study countries has a different model of workforce development to date, informed and shaped by differing forces, at varying stages of evolution and with different strengths and weaknesses.

- **Albania** has an advanced three-cycle (bachelor, master and PhD) social work education dating back to 1992, with social work practice dominated by non-state actors (mainly in child protection) and by state education, social protection and health services. Workers with child protection functions are supposed to be social work graduates, but often are not, and there is no professional association. Few social work graduates are deployed in the social services system, but a new (although not yet fully established) certification mechanism aims to protect the title of social worker.

- **Georgia** has had an advanced three-cycle social work education dating to 2004, and a very strong professional association influencing state policy on social work. Its social work practice is dominated by statutory services in child welfare and justice. There are growing numbers of social work graduates in the social services system and a new 2018 law on social work establishes a mechanism protecting the title of social worker, limiting it to social work graduates.

- **Kazakhstan** has social work education dating back to 1991 but this requires considerable strengthening. Its multi-sectoral model of social work/social service practice is dominated by state services across health, education, social protection and law enforcement, giving it one of the highest rates of social service workers deployed per head of population in the ECA region. There is, however, no professional association, no unified definition of social work and no protection of the title of social work, while legislation and regulation on social work is fragmented.

- **Romania** has social work education dating back to 1990 that may require review to ensure consolidation of curricula and alignment with changes in social policy goals over the past ten years. There is an established mechanism for accreditation involving a professional association that may require revision if the social worker title is to be a protected and to remove barriers to the deployment of more social workers in rural areas and in specialisms such as child protection. Chronic underfunding of the system of social services has been further exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath.

Despite the challenges in Kazakhstan, its inter-sectoral model has potential advantages over other models as it makes provision for social workers playing frontline roles across health, education, social protection and justice. Indeed, the investment by the Government in the number of workers across all these sectors appears to be considerable. In practice, without a protected title and with weak implementation of service standards and regulations on continuous professional development and professional attestation, it is not clear that the social workers in these roles have the professional competencies to fulfil their mandates. Kazakhstan is not the only country where **social service roles with important statutory social work functions in child protection, justice and probation have no legal requirement to be filled by social workers**.

In other countries, **defining the workforce is a challenge**. **Albania,** for example, has almost the opposite challenge to Kazakhstan, with its proliferation of apparently well-qualified social work graduates, but with very few deployed in the system of social services and with reforms underway to introduce social workers into the education system. **How to ensure that more social work positions can be created and funded sustainably across health, education, social protection and justice**?

In Romania, the challenges of child and social protection system reform, the inclusion of minority communities and CRPD implementation mean that multi-disciplinary teams at community level, on which the current child welfare, social inclusion and social protection reforms rely, have to be led by strong **social work professionals with the skills, status and knowledge to convene health, education and law enforcement professionals on equal terms for joint case work**. Consideration also needs to be given to how health, education and law enforcement professionals are prepared and supported by their managers for engagement in multi-disciplinary work.

While Romania has a well-established workforce with a strong tradition of social work education, there are considerable challenges in **ensuring that enough qualified social workers are deployed in more rural areas and in marginalized communities** and with the right skills to work across a range of issues at local level to have an impact on poverty, social exclusion and violence against women and children. Proposals to deploy unqualified staff, but who have training and continuous professional development opportunities, have yet to be evaluated for effectiveness.

Romania has challenges in common with many countries – such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine – that also rely on community-based frontline social workers to engage at the level of primary prevention with children, families and other vulnerable groups. Questions of certification, regulation and quality assurance remain open in all of these countries and, based on the desk review, **it is not certain that certification or licensing of social workers is necessarily an indicator of a strong workforce or of quality assurance**. If certain positions are legally required to be filled by qualified social workers, it appears to be relatively easy in many countries for local authorities struggling with funding and

human resources to re-name these positions to avoid regulation or to employ non-specialists without any consequences. These challenges speak to the need for **much stronger social work and social service workforce planning by the Government across all sectors** and the introduction of meaningful regulations and enforcement.

In Georgia, the new Law on Social Work, as in other countries with dedicated social work/social worker legislation such as Croatia, Romania and Serbia, is a major opportunity to plan a strengthened workforce with the education, status and support to engage as equals with other professionals in service delivery within communities: as managers and planners and at the policy level in decision-making and law-making. At the same time, this step to introduce social worker as a protected title can be complex as countries seek ways to regulate the profession in fast-changing and dynamic social and economic environments. According to Akesson (2016), strong professional associations play a leading role in developing advocacy strategies, supporting a culture of research on practice and policy that is accessible across the region and facilitating exchange between social service workers (Akesson, 2016:p.45-46).

This desk review has demonstrated that **literature on social work and social service workforce development across the region is relatively sparse, with only one major multi-country study** commissioned by TdH in relation to the child protection workforce in 2015-2016 (Akesson, 2016) and a rapid survey by UNICEF ECARO in 2016.

At the level of individual countries, some UNICEF offices have commissioned recent studies on the social work workforce (Kazakhstan, Moldova) and analysis and review of social work curricula (Albania). The World Bank has supported studies of the social service workforce through a social assistance lens (Moldova, Romania), but that also examine issues of relevant to the social work and social service workforce.

Some countries have access to a considerable body of research available in English focused on the social service workforce and social work education (notably Georgia), but in most countries it is extremely sparse, very focused on specific sectors such as child protection, or only available in the national language. Systematic multi-country research on the workforce is required to ensure the establishment of a valid, consolidated, regional perspective over time. Periodic in-depth country studies are required to support more strategic, long-term workforce planning in each country.

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Annex A Research questions

A. Planning (and Monitoring)

1. What is the social service workforce in each country comprised of in terms of professionals who are deployed across a wide range of disciplines and sectors including: social protection, health, education, justice, child protection, gender, minorities, migration, disability, community mobilization and youth?

   What are the statutory responsibilities for social workers/social service workers? One of the most common statutory responsibilities, is child and family assessment and representing the interests of the child or the woman in care or child protection proceedings especially when linked to violence against women and domestic violence. To what extent do social workers have authority to take action and/or recommend action to a court or other legal body? (What are the specific "gatekeeping" functions and responsibilities that social workers have in cases of abuse, neglect, & maltreatment of individuals (children and/or adults)? Other statutory responsibilities might be in social assistance – supporting access to cash benefits.

2. How many positions are there in each sector? How many of these positions are filled? How many of these positions have clear job descriptions? To what extent are staff able to realistically perform the job functions as stated in their job descriptions?

3. What is the scope of practice (sometimes called the case practice model) that guides the work of the SSW – e.g. the principles and service delivery platforms that are reflected in the policies and laws? To what degree do these reflect international social work and social service standards (CRC, CEDAW and CRPD)? For example, "families first" principle, best interest of the child, child and family participation, etc.

   To what extent are these adhered to in practice? What are the challenges in practice?

4. To what extent are the cadres of the social service workforce consistent with needed job functions?

   Are there social worker functions being carried out by non-social workers? What is the training and regulatory framework guiding these workers (especially in relation to statutory child protection functions)? Are there examples in the literature where social work functions are placed in other sectors (either by expanding the work of existing professionals in other sectors and upgrading their skills or by introducing new workers into other sectors) in order to increasing the reach of the workforce?

5. At what level are financial investments made in the social service workforce as compared to other sectors? Is there a costed HR plan for carrying out national policies and strategies? To what extent have budget allocations been made?

6. How many are employed by NGOs and how many are employed by the state (also in each sector)? How many of the NGO employed workers are financially supported through a sustainable funding source?

   Are there established referral and coordinating networks and procedures between NGO's and the state (local, regional, and/or national)? For example, there are some Coalitions of NGO's that work with state structures or networks that are made up of NGO's and states structures and services.

7. How is their social work practice regulated? Overview of legislation, standards, system of accreditation or certification for programmes and services, system of registration, certification, or licensure for practitioners, and other, regulatory framework.

8. How has this workforce evolved over time?

9. What are the gaps in the workforce noted in the literature?

10. Are there platforms or coordination mechanisms for planning the workforce across public/non-government and sectoral boundaries? Are there mechanisms for planning the workforce centrally and at the local level?

11. What are the pay scales for the social service and social work workforce? How do they compare to teachers, health professionals and police?

B. Developing

12. What are the qualifications of the workers in each sector? What does the education associated with their qualifications include in terms of social work? What are the challenges noted in the literature around education of social service and social work workforce (for example lack of practical experience among educators in social work)?

    What is the structure for pre-service and in-service training (who delivers it, what is required in terms of time, description of training, etc.). Is it internal or are there external bodies that provide pre-service and/or in-service training?

    How is pre-service and in-service training and education regulated? Are there standards and licensing for training providers? Is there a mechanism for adjusting and standardizing curriculum development to meet changing strategic priorities (e.g. migration, HIV/AIDS, deinstitutionalization)?

13. What professional social work education exists at the degree level? What capacity do the schools have (numbers of graduates each year; number of new students admitted; degrees offered, etc.). To what extent are teachers and instructors professionally trained in social work with field experience within the respective country?

    To what degree does the curricula align with the needed knowledge, values, and skills needed for practice in the social service programmes and services? In other words, are student learning what they need to for practice? Can students influence how practice is done?

What is the link between the social service agencies and the universities (professional teach as adjuncts; have appointments at the universities; serve as supervisors for students in field placements?

What is the capacity of the social service agencies to provide adequate and quality field education experiences for students? What types of internships do students have? Is there a certain model that is followed? What are challenges in providing quality internship or field experiences for students?

14. What research is being done to build an evidence-base for practice that responds to the respective country's needs and capacities?

15. What other social work training and qualifications have they/do they access? Is the system of continuous professional development institutionalised, in what way?

Is the system of continuous professional development linked to a performance management system and recognized path for career development and progression? In what way?

16. What are the challenges to the workforce noted in the literature? Are there issues with recruitment, retention, deployment in rural areas, for marginalized target groups (e.g. minority communities, persons with disabilities) or in particular thematic areas (e.g. justice, migration, health)? To what extent are those who are most marginalized being serviced?

How are the challenges being addressed?

17. How are ethics and ethical codes being incorporated into practice, as well as training and education? To what extent are discriminatory practices identified and addressed – such as discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, etc?

18. Do social work education and training programmes include components on how social workers can help facilitate and mobilise changes in attitudes, behaviour and social norms at the community, family and individual level (also known as Communications for Development or C4D by UNICEF)? How are they included?

Examples might include: are social workers (or other personnel with social work functions and mandates) trained to work with parents on non-violent discipline of children and changing community attitudes towards this issue; how are social workers trained to work on issues of discrimination and stigma and changing attitudes e.g. towards disability, minorities, migrants etc.

C. Supporting

19. Are there professional Associations? This includes National Associations as well as regional and local associations. Are there specialized associations for social workers such as school social workers, social work educators, or hospital social workers? What is its role? How many members and what are the rules for becoming a member (i.e. is it linked to accreditation, education, certification)? How is the association structured, in terms of chapters, or some other decentralized mechanism to engage members? Is there an affiliation with international groups such as IFSW, IASSW, etc.

20. Is professional supervision an acknowledged part of the system of social service workforce management? How does it work? What is the role and function of social work supervision? To what degree does supervision include supportive and educative functions as well as administrative functions?

    Is there any data in the literature on burn-out, compassion fatigue, or vicarious trauma experienced by social service and social work workforce?

21. What does the literature say about the status of the social service workforce and how it is perceived by a) government/local authorities, b) other professionals and c) the public.

22. Is there a system of performance management in place so that professional staff can have constructive feedback with assistance in their own professional development?

23. Is there a career track for social service workers and social workers? What is the usual track that they take?

D. Other

24. Do systems to support inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary working exist? What is the role of the social worker in these mechanisms or protocols?

E. Regional desk review

We also include an additional set of questions for all the countries in the region, including those not selected for case studies but which are featured in multi-country studies at the regional level.

25. Can we see any patterns in terms of the different models of social work workforce development across the region?

26. What do multi-country studies tell us about differences and similarities in the systems for planning, supporting, developing monitoring?

27. Can we see any challenges in common across the region in terms of workforce planning, supporting and development?

28. Can we identify any existing networks from the literature that could be important/useful for regional workforce development and supporting? In terms of a) SW professional or practitioner networks; b) academic networks; c) NGO networks; d) thematic networks (e.g. child protection, de-I, youth, justice, migration, etc).

29. Can we identify any innovative practices in the region on planning, supporting and development of the workforce?