



SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Original scientific paper

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary states take a variety of measures, ranging from economic, social, cultural, and health to legal ones, to ensure the protection of the individual and the family. Social protection is substantially a form or a field of fulfilment of human needs. Economic assistance, social services and social care are considered social programs which aim to alleviate poverty, eliminate social exclusion, provide social care, enable the reintegration of all individuals, families and groups in need. The Republic of Kosovo, through positive law, has undertaken a series of economic and social measures which ensure the protection of the individual and the family. Social protection in the Republic of Kosovo is not defined by a special law, but it is defined by a package of laws. Thus, currently, in Kosovo there is necessary legal infrastructure for social protection beneficiaries, although not complete in the desired form and quality.

Keywords: social protection, situation of social need, social insurance, democratic transition.

INTRODUCTION

Social protection as a concept means the right that aims to protect the weak and the right that has the source in the right of survival of each individual. The term “weak” means, inter alia, economically and socially weak persons. According to the authors of social law, social protection is based on the idea of justice and on the principles of equality and freedom. It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest, and in the name of that interest, the state intervenes in the economy and social life. Thus, if the state assumes the role of caring for the economically weak, then this care, which is the purpose of this function, actually ensures their existence. In essence, this understanding is that the concept of economic freedoms means that the state must protect the individual from social risks and provide every

citizen with minimum living conditions. With the intervention of the state, the legal protection of the weak part in the economic life has been enabled. In terms of Kosovo’s integration policy to the EU and other International Organizations, the orientation and goal of the state is to build a sustainable system of social protection in function of equality and social justice. Indicators of the development of democratic transition in Kosovo show that evident results have been recorded in this process despite the symbolic state budget, low economic development, high unemployment, high poverty and other difficulties. During the work on the study, I have utilized various scientific and professional resources, including university texts, scientific papers and articles, analyses, domestic constitutional and legislative acts and international acts on social law. The study was conducted with various scientific methods which are typical for scientific research in the social sciences and humanities, respectively social law.

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The study was conducted using the empirical method and based specifically on statistical data in order for it to be as objective and substantive as possible. The study contains official data and documents of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, related to social protection, which are presented with figures and tables that reflect the categories of social protection and the direct involvement of the state in providing social protection to beneficiary individuals according to positive law. Also, the process, results, and state capacity on the inclusion of a number of social categories as subjects of social protection are examined and analysed. The official data collected during the study show that in Kosovo, according to the current legislation, not all social categories that should be subject to social protection are included.

DISCUSSION

The notion of social protection

Social protection, which is carried out through the action of state bodies, is the protection of persons affected by a social event. From this protection, one must distinguish the protection which is fulfilled individually and privately (Stupar, 1960). Social protection is an appropriate expression for its content which it identifies and which is used as a technical designation. Social protection includes social insurance, respectively social insurance, as well as social protection in the narrow sense (Djordjevic, 1986; Heller, 1981; Jelcic, 1982). The term social protection is defined as a group of activities of state, social and other bodies aimed at fulfilling the conditions for life and progress of those persons who for various reasons are not able to provide themselves with such conditions (Djordjevic, 1986; Heller, 1981; Jelcic, 1982). Social protection is a form of social insurance for employed people and citizens based on certain principles. However, on the other hand, there are authors who emphasize that social protection is aimed at those persons or groups of individuals who are in a situation where the need for protection by society is necessarily required (Tintic, 1977). Social protection is a particularly important social function and is part of social policy based on the principles of solidarity and reciprocity, social humanism, equality and rights and obligations, as well as the principles of self-defence (Milosavljevic, 1982). Social assistance and protection services are a form of assistance provided by the state to individuals and groups in need who cannot meet the basic needs of life due to limited economic, physical, psychological and

social abilities (Çuçi-Peto, 2007). Through social services, the state tries to alleviate the level of poverty and social exclusion for individuals and families and to create opportunities for their integration by providing a system of interventions, services, and care for the improvement of life (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

The purpose of social protection

Social services are a form of assistance provided by the state for groups in need who cannot provide for their basic needs due to the loss of economic, physical, psychological and social abilities. Thus, the purpose of organizing and providing economic and social assistance is to provide assistance to all individuals affected by the social event (Law on the Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo, 2007, 2012, Article 1; Law on Social and Family Services in Kosovo, 2007, Article 1-2; Law on Insurances of Kosovo, 2015, Article 1; Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo, 2012, 2017, Article 2; Law on Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities, 2009, 2016, Article 2). Economic assistance, social services, and social care are considered social programs that aim to alleviate poverty, eliminate social exclusion, provide social care, enable the reintegration of all individuals, families and groups in need (Ibid). Also, through these protection programs, more opportunities are created for the integration and improvement of the lives of individuals with social events. Through social services it is intended to achieve the following main goals: elimination or reduction to a certain extent of undesirable social status; reactivation of the individual in social life; regaining the ability to provide for all their needs, through personal work activity (Ibid). It is not claimed that the individual solves the problems of their life through economic assistance, services, or social care. Social assistance is considered assistance through which the individual faces a difficult moment in life. By difficult moment we understand the impact of the individual by a social event. Through social benefits, individuals in need are given the opportunity to be part of social life. To regain the ability to integrate, the individual must be assisted throughout the period of difficulty in order to meet basic living needs. A very important element in the rehabilitation of the individual is the way social assistance is provided. Referring to various studies in this field, it was concluded that assistance for the benefit of individuals in need should be provided in such a way as to avoid the conservation of the unwanted social situation (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

Through social assistance, it is intended that the individual have an incentive to get out of the predicament and be active in society, or be active in a personal activity from which they can derive income for living (Todorovic, 1990; Lakicevic, 1978; Herman, 1990; Zelenovic-Lakicevic, 1987; Vrcan, 1984). Employment or engagement in a personal activity is realized through employment programs by the state, but also through projects organized by non-governmental organizations.

The function of the state in social protection

Social protection is in the function of the state which is obliged to take care of the social vulnerability of citizens. It is financed by taxes or other state revenues and not by contributions. Researchers think that it is more justified for social protection to be financed from this income, because in this case the burden is shared by a larger number of taxpayers and those who have more (Sudjum, 1990). The socio-political community (state) decides on the provision of social protection funds (Bakraçi, 2007). The state also oversees the work of social welfare institutions. Realization of rights is performed by administrative bodies or administrative organizations. The state community should oversee and control the work of social protection institutions. From this point of view, the concept of social insurance has been built as a system of different events (social risks) (Robaj, 2018). Social insurance aims to provide citizens with protection against certain risks which would manifest a reduction or loss of professional ability, lower their standard of living, or impose new obligations or burdens (Caen-Lyon, 1955). In the view of Francis Netter, social insurance represents the totality of guarantees (of rights) against a certain number of events which are similar in either reducing or destroying their activity or for the burden of the additional burden. Guarantee is about ensuring material gain for everyone, especially for employees (Netter, 1959; Cronston, 1967; Stojanovic, 1989; Jovanovic, 1924). In addition to the state-building process, the democratic transition in Kosovo includes the construction of a sustainable system of social protection, of international standards for freedoms and human rights. However, Kosovo, although with a weak economy compared to EU countries, with high unemployment, low state budget and other difficulties, has begun the progressive phase of building a social protection system. In terms of Kosovo's integration policy in relation to the EU and other international mechanisms, the orientation of Kosovo institutions is also aimed at

building a sustainable system of social protection, in the function of equality and social justice.

Social protection and provision of social insurance

Human and civil rights and freedoms represent a special segment of the democratic transition. In this sense, the obligation of social protection is to guarantee basic social and material security for vulnerable persons. Social protection grows and arises from the social contradictions of class society, as a primary need of the civil class, in order to maintain class peace and the balance of class relations. Social protection, in essence, is a form or area of satisfying (fulfilling) of human needs. The needs of social insurance are not sui generis needs, but part of the general social needs of people, social groups, and social communities (Milosavljevic, 1982). Social protection deals with the satisfaction of human needs, and above all, the fulfilment of primary human bio-psycho-social needs (Dejvis & Seklton, 1978; Rot, 1980). The permanent character of social protection derives from the character and content of social needs (Leon, 1963; Rigaux, 2009). On the other hand, Professor Pusic emphasizes that protection, in the broadest sense of the word, is a condition in which some of the certain needs are met. The question is, when is it considered that social protection is fully met? Professor Pusic describes this situation as "a positive state of well-being", which means: developing individual skills; creating and maintaining satisfactory human needs; constructive participation in community life; creative work and recreation; as well as the constant establishment of a dynamic balance between new experiences and security. Social protection is guaranteed through social insurances (Law on Insurances, 2015, Article 1), which are primarily focused on the broad organization of prevention of social insecurity (social risks), provision of assistance, protection of security for those who find themselves in these conditions, who cannot cope with them and overcome them (Tintic, 1977). The quality of what direction the service and the social system will go, will depend on the degree of development of a society (Rivero & Savatier, 1991). Therefore, it must be directed in such a way as to provide citizens with a certain level of wealth, namely physical well-being (Tintic, 1964). The needs of the individual for social protection include the needs of wealth and the needs of existence, as well as the needs of public institutions (Law on the Social

Assistance Scheme in Kosovo, 2012, Article 1; Law on Social and Family Services, 2007, Article 1-2). Erich Fromm states that “human existence requires that we possess, preserve, care for, and use certain things in order to survive” such as belief, food, and clothing to meet needs (Fromm, 1979).

Social protection and human needs

The term “social protection” is also used to denote the right that aims to protect the weak and the right that has its source in the right of survival of each individual (Tasic, 1934; Dupeyroux, 1978; Labus, 1992). The term “weak” means, inter alia, economically and socially weak persons. According to this understanding, the essence of social protection must be “to protect socially and economically the weakest and the right of every individual to survive” (Tasic, 1934). State intervention must ensure the principle of justice, that is, it must be carried out in the spirit of justice and the elimination of social contradictions (Law on Social and family services, 2007, Article 1-2). It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest, and in the name of that interest, the state intervenes in the economy and social life. In essence, this understanding is that the concept of economic freedoms means that the state must protect the individual from social risks and provide every citizen with minimum conditions to exercise other human rights (Saliu, 2004; Markovic, 1982).

Social insurance scheme income

Income is the main and most important element of financing and functioning of the social insurance scheme (Robaj, 2018). Social law protects the special category of people who perform certain functions of national interest for society. For example, the protection provided to the women

during the period of maternity, childbirth, and child growth. This protection, in economically developed countries, is provided not only to employed women but also to unemployed women. With these rights, the state shows its interest in increasing births, and in this way influences the increase in births. Moreover, there are states that provide children allowances regardless of the family financial status. Also, the right to an old-age pension is acquired regardless of the wealth and condition of the beneficiary. Through the fair determination of the relation that exists between the income from the contribution percentages and the income that social subjects benefit from the social insurance scheme, we will be able to achieve continuity in payments for illness, maternity, maternity allowance, etc.

Income to be benefited

The social insurance scheme recognizes and implements several types of income. Income in the form of contribution percentage constitutes the main source for the social insurance scheme because contribution percentages are considered the basic source for the social insurance fund. Whereas, the Social Assistance Scheme differs from that of social insurance despite the fact that both schemes aim at the social protection of certain categories. Both schemes are defined by separate laws where each defines the beneficiary categories. Thus, in order to benefit from social assistance, all family members must meet the conditions for classification in one of two categories: First category: Families in which all members are dependent and none of them is employed; Second category: Families with a member able to work, but who is unemployed, with at least one child under the age of five, or who have in permanent care an orphan under the age of 15 years old (for more see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo
Source: GAP Institute, 2022

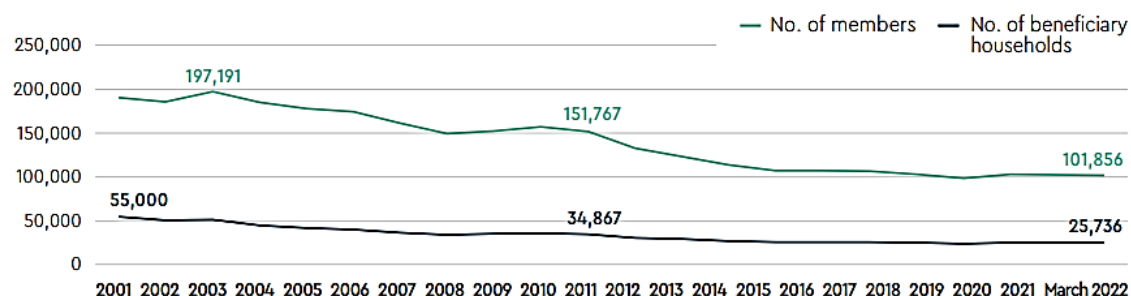
According to these criteria, from 2001 to March 2022, on average, about 34 thousand families received social assistance, as well as on average 140 thousand members of these families. The number of beneficiary families and members has decreased since 2003 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). This decline was also influenced by the amendment of the Law on Social Assistance

Scheme in 2012, especially the selection criteria in Category II, despite the fact that the parameters of poverty and unemployment do not show improvements. The number of social assistance beneficiaries has marked a significant decrease, from 26.302 families (2016) to 25.736 in the first months of 2022 (See Table 1 and Figure 2).

Table 1. Number of families benefiting from social assistance by region 2016-2022.

Region	Years						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Gjakova	2.191	1.998	2.010	2.010	2.005	2.063	2.085
Gjilan	2.741	2.633	2.418	2.418	2.139	2.292	2.195
Mitrovica	5.972	6.156	6.107	6.107	6.099	6.504	6.742
Peja	2.395	2.376	2.276	2.276	2.266	2.309	2.340
Prizren	2.758	2.635	2.537	2.537	2.365	2.476	2.536
Prishtina	7.502	7.631	7.408	7.408	7.018	7.430	7.387
Ferizaj	2.743	2.688	2.589	2.589	2.460	2.605	2.610
Total	26.302	26.117	25.345	25.345	24.352	25.679	25.895

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

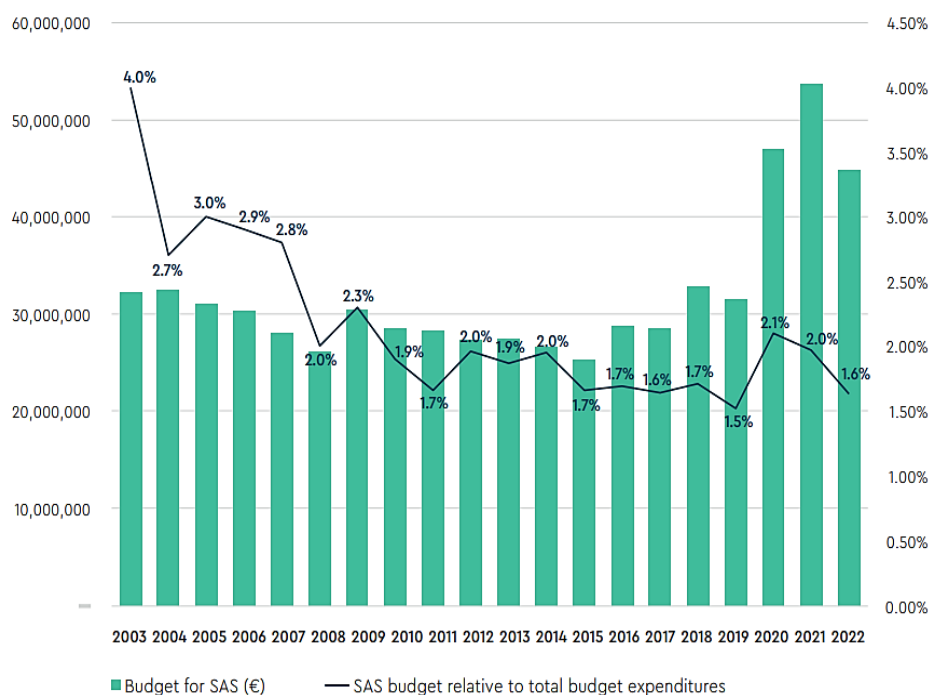


Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

Figure 2. Number of households and members in the Social Assistance Scheme from 2001 until March 2022

From 2003 to 2022, an average of 32 million euros per year were spent on SAS (Social Assistance Scheme, GAP Institute, 2022) from the state budget, or 641 million euros were spent in total for two decades. Despite the fact that the budget

for SAS has remained almost the same (with the exception of the years 2020-2022, where due to the pandemics, transfers for this category increased with various government decisions), the share of SAS in the total state budget has been decreasing.



Source: GAP Institute, 2022

Figure 3. The budget for SAS and its share in total annual expenditures from the state budget, 2003-2022 (GAP Institute, 2022)

Also, the budget for SAS (Social Assistance Scheme) has remained almost unchanged, despite the fact that the budget for social subsidies has increased continuously as a result of the establishment of new social schemes. According to the WB (World Bank), social assistance in Kosovo as a share of social protection spending nearly tripled between 2009 and 2019. Spending on SAS fell by 8.4% in real terms and from 0.69 to 0.45% of GDP. Only about 7% of the total population benefits from SAS, while the official poverty rate is about 20% (World Bank, 2022). Social insurance basically recognizes and applies these types of income:

Income for illness

Benefits from area of illnesses fall into the category of short-term benefits due to the fact that the benefits for illnesses cannot last more than 3 months but never 12 months. Subjects covered by insurance from the social insurance scheme receive payments for: a). income for illness; b). income for compensation for illness when changing workplace (Robaj, 2018). Based on the fact that Kosovo still does not have a Law on Health Insurance, this category of compensation does not exist in Kosovo.

Maternity income

From the maternity income, the subjects of the social insurance scheme, benefit payment for:

1. maternity income;
2. income for maternity compensation when the workplace is changed;
3. childbirth allowance.

Every woman, who has been employed, enjoys the right to benefit 9 months of income in the name of childbirth. The first 6 months of maternity leave, the payment is made by the employer with compensation of 70% of the basic salary. For the next 3 months, maternity leave is paid by the Government of Kosovo with compensation of 50% of the average salary in Kosovo. An employed woman has the right by law to extend her maternity leave for another 3 months without pay (Law on Labour of Kosovo, 2010, Article 49). Due to the fact that Maternity Leave (Op.cit) still remains a burden to businesses for the first six months and not to the state as it is regulated in the countries of the region, the number of employed women unfortunately remains very low, where specifically from 616,209 working age women only 98,756 are employed (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). According to the same

source, the employment rate among working age women is only 16%. From the latest data of the Statistics Agency, it results that 84% of working age women are unemployed. Unlike Kosovo, which continues to face such problems, in the countries of the region, this issue has already been settled, including in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, etc., where the burden of maternity leave is 100% under the responsibility of the state.

Pension income

Pension is the amount of income benefited by a subject when becoming incapable of work due to age or an illness. Retirement age is determined

by law (Currently a draft law, Article 77). The retirement age in most countries (states) is 65 years. The right to a pension is a permanent right. This right does not have a statute of limitation. The payment of the pension will start from the day when the person claims it. The right to claim a pension starts no later than 1 year from the day of its recognition. According to the legislation in force, mandatory pensions consist of two forms of Pension: Basic Pensions and Individual Savings Pensions. Employers may also provide Supplementary Employer Pensions to their Employees. Individuals may purchase Supplementary Individual Pensions through Pensions Providers (Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo, 2012, Article 2).

Table 2. Number of beneficiaries of basic old-age pensions in the regions 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	13.320	12.570	12.500	12.804	13.513	14.224	14.748
Gjilan	19.199	17.100	15.709	16.085	16.833	17.677	18.073
Mitrovica	22.326	18.634	18.907	19.398	20.467	21.991	23.035
Peja	14.645	13.926	14.595	14.885	15.874	16.696	17.146
Prizren	22.201	21.417	21.852	22.732	23.893	25.049	25.994
Prishtina	27.617	24.687	26.608	28.010	29.733	32.216	34.050
Ferizaj	12.692	11.683	12.545	12.974	13.604	14.427	15.116
Total	132.000	120.017	122.716	126.888	133.917	142.280	148.162

Table 3. Number of beneficiaries of contribution old-age pensions by regions 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	4.712	4.892	4.635	4.896	5.130	5.308	5.473
Gjilan	3.207	3.312	2.936	3.035	3.183	3.305	3.366
Mitrovica	6.509	6.667	6.427	6.692	6.973	7.142	7.143
Peja	4.495	4.659	4.670	4.830	5.016	5.208	5.213
Prizren	6.259	6.437	6.700	7.098	7.420	7.624	7.750
Prishtina	11.869	11.884	14.227	14.951	15.618	16.543	16.591
Ferizaj	3.314	3.464	3.705	3.889	4.146	4.321	4.336
Total	40.365	41.315	43.300	45.391	47.486	49.451	49.872

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

Disability pension

Disability means an inadequate health condition, persistent for a relatively long time, often for a lifetime, which has consequences for social, professional, and economic life. The term disability in practice has been used with several meanings. In the medical meaning -

it is the phenomenon that shows the connection between the illness and its possibility for treatment. This group includes those individuals who, as a result of an illness, despite the maximum medical efforts for rehabilitation, fail to be treated. In the *economic* meaning – it means the change of status from an employed person to a retired disabled person, which as a result aggravates

the economic situation of the disabled person. He/she cannot provide the same standard of living he could previously provide. In the *social* meaning - disability is related to various social reasons, which are followed by damage to the health of the person. In the *legal* meaning – it has to do with the establishment by the state of the legal conditions determined by law. In order to obtain the status of a disabled person, every person must meet the legal requirements (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

Special pensions

Special pensions are provided by law. These pensions are awarded to martyrs, invalids and veterans of the KLA, as well as civilian victims and their families (Law on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Civilian Victims of War and their Families, 2011, Article 6). According to the positive law, the state provides special benefits to the above-mentioned categories, which are considered as social rights, respectively these special rights enter the domain of social law.

Table 4. Pension scheme for families of war martyrs and invalids 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	2.401	2.378	2.330	2.477	1.627	2.507	2.473
Gjilan	270	264	261	400	312	401	392
Mitrovica	2.534	2.454	2.401	2.356	2.100	2.386	2.323
Peja	1.191	1.456	1.423	1.498	1.002	1.569	1.527
Prizren	1.699	1.665	1.648	1.640	1.419	1.700	1.670
Prishtina	3.778	3.686	3.639	3.931	3.280	4.115	4.048
Ferizaj	779	777	770	779	688	792	778
Out of Kosovo	:	:	:	57	65	80	82
Total	12.652	12.680	12.472	13.138	10.493	13.550	13.293

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

Family pensions

In circumstances where there is no support from the family or when it is not sufficient to ensure the wellbeing of an individual, the state has the duty to provide social and family services to those people

who would otherwise not be helped in a way that would respect their dignity as human beings and their basic rights based on Kosovo legislation and international conventions on human rights (Law on Social and Family Services, 2007, Article 1-2).

Table 5. Number of families benefiting from social assistance by regions 2016-2021

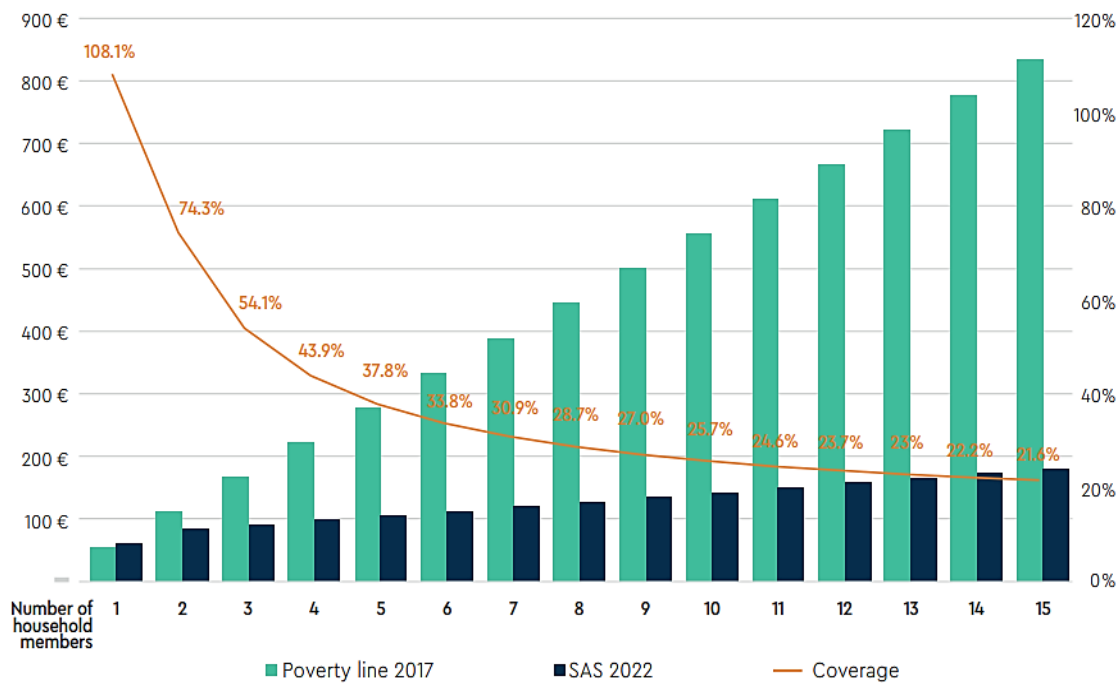
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Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

Poverty rate

The poverty rate in Kosovo has been continuously declining since the post-war years. In the first poverty assessment, made in 2000, the WB (World Bank) findings showed that over half of the population (50.3%) lived in poverty, while 11.9% of the population lived in extreme poverty. Seven years later, poverty levels had declined slightly, with 45% of the population living in poverty, while extreme poverty had risen

to 15% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). According to WB (World Bank), poverty in Kosovo at the end of 2021 was 20.9%. The increase of consumer prices and the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine are expected to increase poverty in Kosovo even more. If we get based on the monthly compensation based on the size of the family and the 2017 poverty rate of 1.85 euros per day, it turns out that all families with two or more members continue to remain poor even after receiving social assistance.



Source: GAP Institute, 2022

Figure. 4. SAS poverty coverage according to household size

Supplementary pensions

Supplementary pension is the amount of money that benefit the persons who perform constitutional functions. The President of the Republic of Kosovo acquires the rights defined by law after the end of the mandate for which he was elected (Law on the President of the Republic of Kosovo, 2009, Article 18-18). The President of the Republic of Kosovo after the end of his/her term in accordance with the law is entitled to a pension, the amount of which is 70% of the salary which the president receives (Ibid).

After the end of the mandate, deputy is entitled to a supplementary pension, if he/she has exercised the duty of deputy for at least one mandate and has reached the age of 55. The deputy who meets the conditions set by law realizes the supplementary pension in the amount of 50% of the basic salary of the deputy (Law on Rights and Responsibilities of the Deputy, 2010, Article 22). To the family members of the beneficiary of the supplementary pension who has died, the family pension is determined in the amount of 70% of that pension on the day of death. The spouse and

children up to the age of 18, respectively up to the age of 22, are entitled to a family pension if they continue their higher education (Ibid, Article 27). The Law on Benefits to Former High Officials defines the beneficiaries as: the former President of the Assembly, the former Prime Minister, and the former President of the Supreme Court of Kosovo (Law on Benefits to Former High Officials, 2008, Article 2-3).

Unemployment income

Unemployment is an involuntary event which may come as a result of low economic development or as a result of the irresponsibility of the individual. Either way, unemployment is associated with negative consequences, both in the economic situation and in the social situation of the individuals affected by it. This is due to the fact

that with the termination of the employment relationship, the benefits deriving from it are also terminated. One of the main benefits of employment is the salary. Salary is a very important means of livelihood. Termination of employment brings negative consequences not only for the individual but also for his/her entire family. To avoid the negative consequences of salary termination and unemployment, the state, in addition to other ways used to avoid the negative phenomena brought by this problem, has created a system of protection in case of unemployment (Robaj, 2018). The system of protection against unemployment aims at providing monthly, temporary economic assistance, in order to meet basic living needs. The unemployment protection system operates through assistance which is part of the social insurance system (In Kosovo, under positive law, unemployment benefits are not currently included).

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Initiative for the Social Assistance Scheme Reform

Issues with the social assistance system were observed long before the pandemics. The Sector Strategy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) 2018-2022, approved in December 2017, had identified issues with the SAS (Social Assistance Scheme). According to the Strategy, the monthly value of social assistance is not adjusted to the prices, as provided by law. The monthly payment amounts are even lower than the poverty line. The social protection system is characterized by inconsistencies and inequalities between schemes in terms of adequacy of material benefits. The SAS monthly amount per person is lower compared to all other schemes (Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, Sectorial Strategy

2018-2022). The one child under the 5 criteria for the same category of beneficiaries in particular poses a problem in covering poor households from the scheme, given that the financial situation of households worsens when children attend education. According to a UNICEF study, the highest risk of child poverty is for children where the main household income comes from social assistance (94.8%), which accounts for 16.5% of poor children and 8.5% of all children in Kosovo (UNICEF-Kosovo Programme, Children Poverty, 2022). Households from minority communities, particularly those from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are most at risk of poverty. The Sector Strategy also envisaged amendments to the SAS (Social Assistance Scheme) legal framework and drafting the analysis to review the social assistance scheme.

CONCLUSIONS

It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest and in the name of that interest the state intervenes in the economy and social life. However, the quality of society will depend on the degree of development in which direction the service and the social system will go. Kosovo, although with a weak economy compared to EU countries, with high unemployment, small state budget, and other difficulties, has nevertheless begun the progressive phase of building a social protection system. Currently, in Kosovo, there is the necessary legal infrastructure for social protection beneficiaries, although not complete in the desired form and quality. In terms of Kosovo's integration policy in relation to the EU, and other international mechanisms, the orientation of Kosovo Institutions is also aimed at building a sustainable system of social protection, in the function of equality and social justice. Indicators of the development of democratic transition in Kosovo show that evident results have been recorded in this process, however, Kosovo still has a lot of work to do in achieving the standard of EU countries, related to social protection, namely equality and social justice. The economic situation in which Kosovo is today, the slow economic growth, the high rate of unemployment at over 45%, and the high rate of extreme poverty are factors that directly affect the difficult life of certain categories of Kosovo society. Kosovo has drafted social policies for the protection of social categories in need, however, these policies do not properly address the elementary needs of some of the social categories. The sectoral strategic documents of the Government of Kosovo identify the current problems, while the legislation in force needs intervention and possible clarifications. By reducing the number of beneficiaries of social schemes, it would be possible to increase support for those who need it. As a conclusion, it should be noted that the state of Kosovo, since it is in the period of democratic transition, and it faces many challenges, the biggest challenge for it is precisely the dignified provision of social protection to legal categories, as well as the expansion of subjects-categories of social protection, in order to include all economically and socially weak persons.

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