



Human Resources in Romanian Child Protection Social Services. A Regional Analysis

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Abstract. Efficiency and cost effectiveness of human resources implied in social services in general and in child protections services specifically is a taboo subject in Romanian social policy. On the following pages, I will make a general analysis of human resources included in the Romanian social services sector, starting from the topic of territorial coverage with professionalized social workers. After a regional- and county-level analysis of this, linked to the social and economic situation of the regions, I look at the specific field of child protection to see if there exists any cost effectiveness in the volume of human resources implied in these services. In the final part of my study, I will make considerations about the quality of the personnel within child protection services.

Keywords: child protection, human resources, regional analysis

Introduction

The quality and quantity of human resources implied in social services is the most important element of this activity. If in the case of industrial, or even agricultural production the technology and technical equipment play a more and more important role or in the case of other services where procedures are essential to assure a constant quality, then in the case of social services the quality is assured notably by the human relationship built between professionals and beneficiaries. On the other hand, the costs connected with human resources constitute the biggest part of the functioning costs of social services, and there are very limited possibilities to reduce these costs. Just as an example: the 2016 total budget of child protection services of Harghita County's (Romania) Child Protection and Social Assistance Department was 25 million RON (5.5 million euros). Human resources were budgeted with almost 19,000,000 RON (4.2 million euros) and the functioning costs (including food, energy, etc.) with 6 million RON (1.5 million euros). This means that 75% of the social service budget is used to cover the costs

of human resources. Even if this is a singular data, the situation is similar, with some deviances, in the case of other social services, too.

There are very few researches and systematic studies on the role, situation, and efficiency of human resources in the social services. The existing rules which establish the necessary number of employees in different services start from the the required minimum number of employees but do not speak of the efficiency criteria. Generally, the efficiency of human resources is a taboo subject in Romanian social policy, starting out from the very general reason that assisted persons in social services usually need complete and 24 hours/day services, seven days/week. At the same time, there are very rare discussions about the quality, motivation, competences, and qualifications of these employees. In the last few years, the majority of public debates were about the demotivating salaries of the personnel working in social services. Surely, the very low wages in social assistance have contributed to a stagnation or, in the worst cases, to a deterioration of quality, motivation, and qualification of employees in the last 15 years, but the newest measures promise a normalization of salary levels in this field. Maybe, there is time now to start discussing subjects of quality and efficiency in terms of human resources in the Romanian child protection system. The following study tries to have a contribution to this debate, using the data which can be obtained from official reports, statistics, and studies made in the past few years by different institutions or individuals.

Professional social workers and other categories in the social services system

The Romanian Law of Social Assistance (Law 292/2011) – the basic law of the field is relatively weak in references to human resources implied in social assistance activity. Even if it contains a separate chapter dedicated to this topic, from the overall 146 articles of the law, only 7 refer strictly to the question of human resources. The above mentioned articles contain more general aspects, and there are no specific regulations in order to clarify or refine the case of human resources. The main profession in social assistance is considered to be that of the social worker. In fact, professional social workers represent a minority within the totality of employees. There are several other professions included, most frequently psychologists, educators, carers, medical assistants, and physicians. Some of these professions are regulated by special laws, and there are special professional bodies which control, protect, and promote these professions.

The National College of Social Workers of Romania (NCSWR) is created based on the Law 466/2004, and it is the most important professional body in the field of social assistance. There were 6,625 registered social workers members of the

college nationwide on 28 January 2017. Even if this appears to be a big number, the real need of the social assistance system is much greater. According to the study of the World Bank (Stănculescu et al. 2016), there was a need of 11,000 qualified social workers in the primary and specialized services in Romania. In a study made by Florin Lazăr in 2015, he estimated that 35,000 people finished their university studies of social work in the last 20 years (Lazăr 2015). If we are looking at the coverage of the general population by qualified social workers, taking into consideration the above mentioned data and the Romanian census data (the last one in 2011), we can calculate a number of 3,000 people/1 social assistant on the national level. If we accept the general idea in social legislation that one social worker can work efficiently in the same time with 25 cases (families or individuals), we can conclude that only around 1% of the population is covered by specialists in this field.

Eurostat statistics (Eurostat 2016) show that almost 40% of the Romanian population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion and almost 25% is living in severe material deprivation. The situation becomes even more complicated if we make a regional and county-by-county comparison. There are important regional differences concerning the share of population at risk of poverty. Generally, the Southern and Eastern part of Romania seems to have bigger problems; the highest poverty rates are in the South-Eastern region (53.4%) and in the North-Eastern region 48.9%, but also in the South-Western region the rate is higher than the national average. The regions of the capital city of Bucharest and the Central, North-Western and Western regions in the Transylvanian part of Romania have lower rates of poverty than the national average.

Even if, logically, more social problems mean a higher need for social workers, the figures calculated by myself showed a different reality. The lowest number of social workers are present in two of the most poverty-stricken regions (South-Eastern, Southern, South-Western), and, at the same time, the regions with lower poverty rate managed to attract more specialists in this field. The sole exception to this rule appears to be the North-Eastern region, well known for its huge social problems but also having the second best coverage with affiliated social workers (*Table 1*).

Table 1. *Poverty risk of population and social worker density across Romanian development regions*

Region	Population rate at risk of poverty	Population for one affiliated social worker
North-East	48.9%	2,444
South-East	53.4%	4,257
South	40.9%	4,908
South-West	45.6%	3,946

Region	Population rate at risk of poverty	Population for one affiliated social worker
West	37.5%	2,487
North-West	30.9%	2,443
Central	32.8%	2,571
Bucharest	30.3%	3,200
National	40.3%	3,037

Source of data: calculated by the author based on the 2011 national census data, Romanian Social Workers College data, and World Bank poverty data

The differences are even higher if we calculate this ratio county by county. The worst situation is in Gorj County, where there is one social worker per 12,200 inhabitants, and Giurgiu with 10,050 inhabitants/one social worker. But there is a very poor ratio in the case of Teleorman (7,127) and Galați (7,054) too.

The problems of coverage by social workers of the Romanian population shows another important disparity: the coverage in rural areas is much weaker than in the case of cities.

Table 2. *Rates of affiliated social workers by specific county groups*

High risk of poverty counties	Population for one affiliated social worker
Călărași	5,897
Teleorman	7,172
Suceava	5,52
Vrancea	2,597
Botoșani	1,664
Vaslui	1,883
Low risk of poverty counties	Population for one affiliated social worker
Bucharest – Ilfov	3,2
Cluj	2,867
Argeș	2,944
Brașov	4,324
Hunedoara	3,348

Source: calculated by the author based on 2011 national census data, Romanian Social Workers College data, and World Bank poverty data

The Romanian social assistance system is built on three levels. The central/governmental level is responsible mainly for strategies, legislation, social policy, and financing of the system, while the middle/county level is the host of the specialized (in most of the cases, residential) social services. These include a big part of child protection facilities (children's homes, family-type homes, employed foster parents network, family placement, and adoption procedures) and specialized services for people with disabilities (residential centers, protected

homes, rehabilitation centers). The main trend in the European and Romanian social policies in the last decades was the prevention of institutionalization and the strengthening of local communitarian services, the so-called primary services network. These services are in the responsibility of the third level, i.e. the local authorities (to create, administrate by themselves or by NGOs), and their most important role is to urge the individuals, families, or communities to find solutions for their social problems as close as possible to the family and community to avoid extreme social exclusion situations when the institutionalization looks to be the sole solution. From this point of view, the role of the local (villages, cities) level is essential in the efficient functioning of the national social assistance system. I have showed above the situation of coverage with professional social workers on national, regional, and county level, without taking into consideration the types of services they provide.

At the same time, in order to have a more appropriate image, it is very important to analyze the situation of human resources implied on local level in social services and charitable activities. The World Bank's Background Study for the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2015–2020 of Romania (Stănculescu et al. 2016) based on a survey made in more than 3,000 localities showed that almost half (47%) of the smallest villages of Romania do not have even one specific job for social work duties in their organizational structures. On average, in the case of rural localities, 34% of these have no specialized job for social work. This figure is 4% in the case of urban localities. 40% of the communes (rural localities) have only one job for social work and only 6% have 3 or more jobs in this field. In the case of urban localities, 67% of these have 3 or more jobs for social work and 20% have two jobs. If in rural localities or small cities the employees of public social services (SPAS – Romanian abbreviation) are mostly implied in administrative work for social benefits, in the bigger cities, the SPAS has social services in its administration such as soup kitchens, day-care centers for different vulnerable groups, shelters for homeless people, elderly homes, etc. The World Bank (Stănculescu et al. 2016) estimates that 2,300–3,600 new employees are needed in these local structures (preferably qualified social workers) in order to have a minimally necessary coverage of the population (especially in rural areas with social services and benefits).

Another important issue is the quality and qualification of the existing workforce in the SPAS. Research shows that only a quarter of the 4,800 employees in social departments of communes and small cities (with up to 50,000 inhabitants) are professional social workers even if three-quarters of them have university degrees – most of them in other fields (Stănculescu et al. 2016). Professional trainings, qualification courses reach very rarely this category of employees because there is not any organized and financially sustained adult education system for these professionals. These conditions are not helping employees to form a larger and

more comprehensive view about the social welfare system, the social problems, and community needs and to take a more active role in the creation of necessary new social services.

The number of employees in the social welfare system generally and at the local authority level specifically is not a publicly known data. The data series of the Romanian National Institute of Statistics do not contain specific data about the total number of employees in the social assistance sector because the domain is evidenced together with the health sector. On the other hand, regarding social protection, there are data only about the number of employees in public residential institutions for people with disabilities, which number represents a small part of the total employees of the sector. Thus, in order to approximate the number of total employees in social welfare, we have to put together all the data that we can obtain from different sources.

Going back to the number of employees at the local authorities' social services (SPAS), we know from the study of the World Bank (Stănculescu et al. 2016) that roughly 4,800 people are employed in communes and small cities. Considering that there are 40 cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants plus Bucharest, which are not included in this census, we can conclude that there are not more than 6,000 total employees in the SPAS nationwide. The above mentioned data about the employees in public residential care institutions for people with disabilities show that 12,414 people worked in these institutions at the end of 2015, most of them (7,347) in rehabilitation centers for people with disabilities. Even if this is a big number compared to that of the employees of the SPAS, it does not contain all types of residential institutions and is much lower than required by legislation. Due to HG (governmental order) no 867/2015, which establishes the list of accepted social services and their organizational rules, the residential institutions for adult people with disabilities must have at least one employee/one assisted person.

If we take into consideration the official report of the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice, a total number of 17,844 people were living in residential institutions at the end of 2015. This means that these institutions are also understaffed. According to the data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice (database of Ministry of Labor 2018), 342 elderly homes were operated in 2018 with 15,283 places. As far as there are no official data about the number of employees in these institutions, we can make a general estimation based on the above mentioned HG, which establishes the assisted persons/employees rate at 1.5 in this system but also based on the information we have from elderly homes that up to 10,000 people can work in there.

The biggest employer in the Romanian social assistance system is the special child protection system, in which 32,708 employees were active on 30 September 2016 (Ministry of Labor 2016). This is more than five times bigger than the number

of employees in communitarian services of the local authorities. These numbers show that the Romanian social assistance system is overturned with very few, small, and weak primary, communitarian services, and at least eight times more people work in public residential services.

At the policy level and even at the social legislation level, the European Union and Romania agree that the preventive communitarian services must have the main role in the social assistance system, while specialized residential services must act only in exceptional situations when communitarian services cannot provide enough for that specific case. If we discuss about primary communitarian services, we have to mention that local authorities are not the sole service providers on the local level. Non-governmental organizations take a more and more important role in this field, in many cases co-operating with authorities by using public funds. From the starting point of the Romanian revolutionary social changes, NGOs took a very important role especially in the field of social services. If at the start, in the early 1990s, they activated mostly in the distribution of external donations (direct social benefits) for different disadvantaged categories (institutionalized children, elderly or disabled persons, poor families), they gradually started to develop constant social services first of all based on the experience and financial support of their Western partner organization. This process also meant the start of the professionalization of the organizations and a base of staff expansion, too.

According to a study published in 2010 by the Foundation for Civil Society Development about the NGO sector in Romania in 2008, of 21,319 active organizations, 1,543 NGOs had a social assistance profile (Lambru & Vameşu 2010). If we also add to these the organizations which have a non-specific profile, we can estimate that between 7% and 10% of the Romanian NGOs are active in social services. These NGOs hired almost 10% of the employees of the NGO sector in Romania. The sector has in 2008 a total number of 89,450 employees; so, we can estimate that less than 9,000 people were hired in NGOs with a social assistance profile. Unfortunately, there are no data on how much of these employees worked in residential or communitarian services, but an important data is that almost a quarter of the organizations assured residential services. If we agree that residential services generally need more employees than communitarian ones, we may conclude that there are not more than 5,000 people in the communitarian services of NGOs in Romania.

Normally, the idea of voluntarism is also worth speaking about. Even if voluntarism in social services does not refer to working solely in NGOs but also in public institutions, the experience in Romania shows that public institutions generally do not have a systematic approach to this topic, while in many NGOs voluntary workers are considered an important resource in the context of constant underfinancing of their services. According to the same study (Lambru & Vameşu 2010), 3.7% of Romanian citizens declared that they had performed voluntary

activities in NGOs. Even if this number is 10 times lower than in case of the western European countries, where voluntarism is considered to be part of a normal life in many families/communities, we cannot be sure that the respondents' statement regarding this question reflects the Romanian reality or a desirable behavior for them. Volunteer-hosting or volunteer-intermediating organizations and institutions maintain that volunteers cannot replace employees in social services, but they can complete and improve their work. Social services, where the constant or regular presence of the staff is needed, cannot base their activity on the limited time or wavering willingness of the volunteers. On the other hand, volunteers usually bring fresh energy, motivation, and new ideas in the social service sector, especially in the case of residential services where beneficiaries could enjoy the new faces and the new connections with the external world.

Human resources in the child protection system

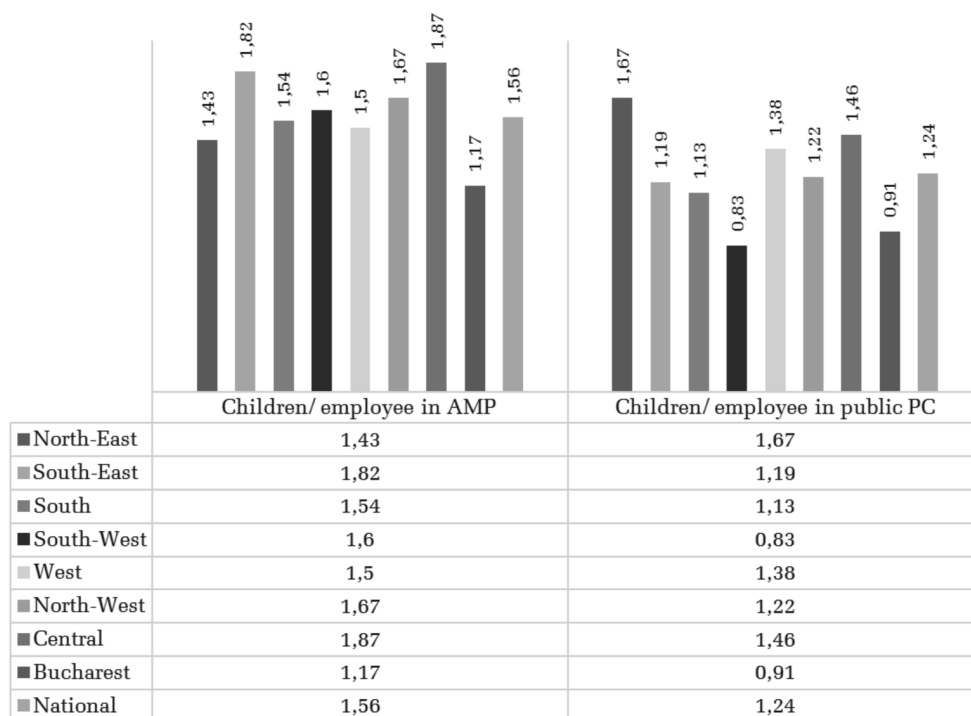
According to all of my estimations, the biggest employer in the Romanian social service sector seems to be the child protection system, especially the residential and employed foster parents (AMP) network of County Departments for Social Assistance and child protection (DGASPC). According to the statistics of the Romanian child protection and adoption authority (Ministry of Labor 2016), a total number of 32,708 employees were working in these structures on 30 September 2016. More than one third of them (12,470) worked in placement centers (family-type houses or regular centers) and almost the same number (11,937) in the employed foster parents network. 4,470 employees are considered to be the own staffs of the departments; these include case managers, administration, in many cases probably the adoption services, etc. The remaining 3,830 employees are in other services of these county departments, but all these people are involved in the child protection activity.

As these statistics contain data only about the employees of public service providers, we have to take into consideration that more than 3,800 children are assisted in private placement centers (administrated by NGOs and churches), which means that a plus of estimated 2,000 employees are involved in these activities. If we make a first calculation on the two main protection forms, the assisted children/employee rate is appreciatively 1.56 children at one foster parent at the national level. At the same time, in the case of placement centers, the rate is 1.24 (see *Graph 1*). At first sight, the maternal foster parents network (AMP) seems to be more cost-effective than placement centers (PC). If we go down with our calculations on NUTS II or NUTS III levels (regions and counties), we can see that the situation looks very different from region to region, from county to county (*Table 3*).

Table 3. *Children and employees across development regions in the Romanian child protection system*

Region	Number of children in AMP	Number of employees in AMP	Children in public PC	Number of employees in public PC
North-East	5,354	3,738	3,183	1,900
South-East	2,638	1,449	2,281	1,908
South	2,299	1,488	2,079	1,835
South-West	1,795	1,115	1,207	1,446
West	1,979	1,321	1,115	804
North-West	2,092	1,252	1,831	1,496
Center	1,765	941	2,565	1,751
Bucharest	742	633	1,217	1,33
National	18,709	11,937	15,478	12,47

Source of data: Statistics of Ministry of Labor and Social Justice on Children Rights Protection (2016)



Source of data: Statistics of Ministry of Labour and Social Justice on Children Rights Protection 2016

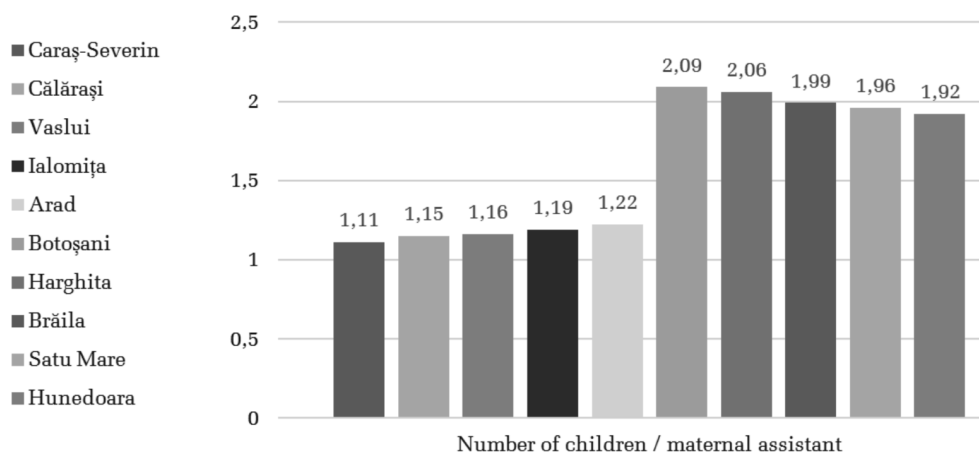
Graph 1. *Assisted children/employees rates across the development regions*

Based on these calculations, it is visible that the Bucharest region has the most cost-inefficient system from this point of view. I can identify two kinds of explanation for this situation. On the one hand, the Bucharest local administration, which sustains the child protection system of the capital city, is by far the richest local administration from the country; so, they are not strongly interested in cost efficiency. On the other hand, it is relatively hard to find workforce for the very low salary levels applicable in this system, and for this reason the employers are also more tolerant towards the employees (they accept, for example, one child for a foster parent).

We cannot have the same explanation if we are looking at the data of other regions. The North-East region, the poorest in Romania, has, after Bucharest, the lowest rate of children/maternal assistant, below the national average, especially in Vaslui County, where 1,480 maternal assistants are hired to take care of 1,723 children. The rate in this case is 1.16. The Central Region, with a general rate of 1.87 children/one employed foster parent, has a relatively good economic situation, having the third lowest rate of poverty after Bucharest and the North-West region, while with a similar rate (1.82) the South-East region has the highest poverty rate in Romania.

In the case of placement centers, we can see two regions with a ratio of assisted children/employees less than one. Bucharest and the South-West regions are in this situation, again a rich and a relatively poor region. The highest ratio in this field is in the North-West region, but, as we will see, the results are affected by some (in my opinion non-realistic) data of the two counties. If we do not take into consideration this region, we will find the highest ratio in the Central and Western regions.

If we want to have a more detailed approach of the situation of human resources involved in child protection activities, we can analyze the situation on the county level (*Graph 2*). In fact, this level is responsible for managing the special protection system for children. The observable differences are even higher on this level than they were in the case of regions. The lowest rate of children/employed foster parents is in Caraş Severin County (1.11), but very low rates are in Călăraşi, Vaslui, Ialomiţa, and Arad counties as well. Three of these counties are among the counties with the lowest GDP/capita (Vaslui has the lowest level in Romania), while Caraş Severin and Arad are among the well-situated counties in the GDP/capita ranking. At the same time, among the counties with the highest ratio of children/employee in the foster parents network, we can find four counties which are in the middle of the GDP/capita ranking and one which has the second lowest rate of GDP/capita (Botoşani).



Source of data: Statistics of Ministry of Labor and Social Justice on Children Rights Protection 2016

Graph 2. *Assisted children/employee rate in Romanian employed foster parents network by county*

If we make the same calculus in the case of placement centers, we see that the statistical data of the Romanian child protection and adoption authority probably does not reflect reality in all of the cases. In the case of a few counties, the assisted children/employee rate is very high (9 in the case of Vaslui, 5.39 in the case of Suceava, or 4 in the case of Alba). This ratio does not meet the minimum standards asked by the specific legislation and surely does not cover the necessities of placement centers. We can just suppose that despite the statistics on children in public residential institutions some of the counties also introduced children in their statistical reports, who are placed in subcontracted centers administrated by NGOs, and in this way they could benefit by the allocated fund from VAT also for these children. Otherwise, NGOs get only allowances for material costs (food, energy, clothes, etc.) but nothing for salaries.

The county-level analysis of this sector has its limits. Taking out the extreme values, we can see again an important variation also in the case of the remained counties. In the case of counties from the South-West region (Oltenia), all five counties have more employees than children in placement centers, the lowest rate being registered in Olt County (0.76 – on average, four employees for three children) and the highest in Dolj (0.87). Bucharest city has a ratio below the national average (0.89) in this case too. Iași, Covasna, and Harghita counties are on the opposite side, having a ratio between 1.60 and 1.73 children/employees. Again, there is no visible relation between economic status and the functioning efficiency of the child protection placement centers.

What possible explanations exist for the above described situation? It is hard to believe that different social policies could be the background of this variation – even if at county level and local level the elaboration and implementation of social service development strategies is a legal obligation and in the last years there appeared new county-level strategies (some of them through a large consultation, while others just to fulfill this obligation); however, there were no visible changes in the public social service network in the last 10 years. The system was set up in the first half of the first decade of the third millennium and is functioning relatively with the same services and employment structure. The number of employees in the placement centers slowly decreased (from 15,262 in 2007 to 12,572 in 2017) in the same time with the decreasing number of assisted children (from 20,532 in 2007 to 15,335 in 2017) (Statistics of Ministry of Labor 2007–2017). The number of employed foster parents follows the same trend; after a maximum of 15,225 in 2007, it decreased year by year to 11,781 in 2017. The number of assisted children in foster families also decreased from 20,194 in 2007 to 18,673 in 2017.

If we calculate the employer/assisted children ratio for these numbers, we can see two different trends. If in the case of placement centers the evolution of the ratio shows less cost efficiency in 2017 (1.21 assisted children/employee) than in 2007 (1.34), in the foster families system the trend is in the opposite sense (in 2007, there was an average of 1.32 children/employed foster parent, while in 2017 this number was 1.58). Even with this positive evolution, the gap between the counties remains, mostly because the financing system of the government does not stimulate counties to take steps in the direction of improving cost efficiency. In the last 10 years, due to the national budget laws, almost 90% of the running costs of the child protection services were covered by national budget through VAT redistribution to the counties based on the standard costs of the services and the number of assisted children in these. An interesting characteristic is that there are different standards for a child who is alone with an employed foster parent and for two or more children in a family. In these conditions, the counties who have more foster parents with only one child have received bigger amounts of funding year by year in comparison with counties which tried to keep two or more children in a foster family. The situation looks different at the moment, in 2017, when, due to the growing employment costs and the same allocations, the national budget covers a smaller part of the functioning budget of the services.

The quality of human resources included in child protection services

In order to get a picture of the cost effectiveness of child protection services, it is important to have the results of the calculus made above. Even if these data were collected by the National Authority of Children's Rights Protection, the Authority did not start to analyze or discuss about the cost differences of the same services in different counties. It is very hard to calculate or show the real efficiency of these services (e.g. how many lives have become better because of child protection services, how many people changed their course of life and became tax-paying citizens, for example) because in the child protection system there are assisted children, youths with different backgrounds and different results in their social integration, dragging along their own dramas into the new, adult life.

A possible but not a sure and complete way to approach this question of efficiency is to find out more about the quality of human resources included in the social services. At first sight, we can see that the legislation does not tell too much about and does not give too much answer to the working conditions in child protection institutions or for maternal assistants. The educator job is not defined in the child protection law but only in the occupations' classification. According to this classification, the specialized educator job can be assimilated with the educational activities in child protection institutions, and so it needs a secondary-level education. Based on the legal salary grid, educators can have secondary-level studies but also higher-education-level studies, their salaries being different in these cases. Governmental Act no 679/2003, which establishes the applicable rules for recruiting professional maternal assistants, is even more relaxed. There are no study conditions for this profession; so, theoretically, even with primary studies, it is possible to be employed in taking care of abandoned children. Some counties apply their own rules, trying to select the potential candidates. In Harghita County, for example, at least 10 classes are required, but there are some exceptions even to this rule. The majority of the employed maternal assistants have secondary-level education, and there are some people with university degrees as well. One condition is linked to the qualification of the maternal assistant: to follow at least a 60-hour training organized by the counties' Child Protection and Social Assistance Departments or by an accredited organization, based on an analytical program accepted by the National Child Protection Authority. The training is followed by an examination regarding the material studied here, and finally the counties' Child Protection Commission gives a three-year accreditation for the person to practice as maternal assistant.

If we take a look at the qualifications of the educators in the specific case of Harghita County, we can see that only 43 of the 237 educators working in the placement centers of the County Department have higher education degrees,

while 194 have a secondary-education level. At the same time, there are again 39 people who work directly with children, but they are employed as night-time workers or cooking, cleaning personnel in the majority of the cases because they have no secondary-level degrees. 35 of these people have general-level studies or professional school degrees. In the case of educators, there are not any previous professional conditions to hire them; generally, they do not benefit from a previous training, and they have to learn the job during the work. Even the tutoring of the newcomers by the older educators is almost impossible because they usually work alone during their 8–12 working hours in a group of 6–10 children.

An important step in the professionalization of the employees in child protection institutions was the introduction of the new quality standards for residential centers. Due to these standards, all the employees of these centers have to participate annually in at least 42 hours of training. Starting from the behavioral problems of the youths, training of the personnel became an urgent need in the placement centers. Because of the lack of adequate training materials and specialized, experienced trainers in this specific issue, the Harghita County Child Protection Department participated in several EU-financed learning projects in which there were elaborated and piloted training materials in subjects such as: preventing youth violence, communication and cooperation in the foster parents–biological parents–social assistant relationship, supported employment for disadvantaged youths, agricultural and entrepreneurial basic knowledge for disadvantaged youths, behavioral problems and disorders, prevention and intervention of burn-out, learning difficulties and learning motivation, or crisis intervention in placement centers.

The elaboration of the training materials was preceded by research and needs analyses in the participating countries' child protection systems. The experience of Romanian, Hungarian, Croatian, Austrian, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish, French, English, Irish, Slovakian, and Polish partners was used in this work. The resulted materials were used at county level, but they were disseminated also on national level. In spite of all these efforts, the lack of specialized education of the employees working in the child protection system remains a serious problem on county and on national level as well.

Conclusions

I started this study by showing that human resources can be considered the most important resource needed in social assistance in general and in social services in particular. This importance seems to be overlooked by the responsible institutions and people who have shaped the Romanian social assistance system in the last 25 years. In the case of primary-communitarian services, the lack of human resources

is an evidence, and it is an urgent problem: in order to understand this, we have to look at the very low number of qualified social workers hired in these services.

In the case of specialized services, the quantity of human resources included is relatively high, but there remains the question of efficiency. The legal standards are relaxed, they establish the required minimum number of employees, not the maximum, and they are relatively generous too, the highest number of employees in the Romanian social sector being in specialized services.

Due to the central allocation system for financing these services, there could not be shown any relation between the ratio of employees/beneficiary and the socio-economic situation of different regions and counties. What is evident is that there are important differences in this ratio among regions and counties, starting from a 1 to 1 beneficiary–employee ratio to ratios exceeding 2 to 1 in various child protection services. But quantity is not equivalent to the quality of human resources included in the work with the beneficiaries. In child protection, we find very relaxed regulations regarding study and qualification requirements. Even if the new quality standards applicable for the services ask for at least 42 hours of training/year, the majority of educators and maternal assistants have only secondary-school-level education, without too much specific knowledge necessary for a good-quality work.

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(http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion)

Statistics of Ministry of Labor and Social Justice about Protection of Disabled Persons
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