



Executive summary of the public audit report

DO THE SOCIAL SERVICES AVAILABLE SATISFY THE INCREASING NEEDS OF ELDER PERSONS

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DEFINITIONS

“Elder person” refers to a person who has attained the pensionable age and who, by reason of his age, has partially or completely lost the abilities to independently care for his private life and to participate in the society¹.

“Social services for elder persons” refer to services provided for persons who, by reason of their age, have partially or completely lost the abilities to independently care for their private life.

“Social services establishment” refers to a legal entity or an organisation or a division providing social services in the Republic of Lithuania or another member state of the European Union or another state of the European Economic Area, which meets the requirements defined by the Law on Social Services (their services meet the standards of social care and the establishment has a licence to provide social care).

“Social services of general interest” refer to services provided without permanent specialist assistance: providing information, consultations, intermediation and representation, as well as social and cultural services, organising transport, catering, provision of necessary clothes and footwear and other services.

“Special social services” refer to social attendance and social care.

“Social attendance” refers to the services aimed at providing a person with complex assistance, which does not require permanent attendance by specialists. Social attendance includes assistance at home, social skill development and maintenance, etc.

“Social care” refers to the services aimed at providing a person with complex assistance, which requires permanent attendance by specialists. According to its length, social care may be classified as one-day, short-term and long-term care

“Social services employees” refer to directors of social services establishments; social workers; individual care staff, etc.

“Individual care staff” refers to an assistant social worker; visiting carers; personal assistant.

Licences for providing social services for elder people: institutional social care (day) for elderly people, institutional social care (long-term, short-term) for elderly people, social care for adults with disabilities or elderly people at home. An establishment may be issued licences of several types.

“Evaluation of financial possibilities” refers to a procedure of evaluating a person's (or family's) financial possibilities to pay for social services, which includes evaluation of the person's (family's) property and determining the sources of financing the social services.

“Sources for financing social services” refer to personal (or family) income, property expressed in monetary units, or personal monetary income of the person's adult children or other interested persons, which, by the agreement of the persons, municipality and the receiver of services is used to finance the costs of social services provided to the person (or family).

“MSSL” refers to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

“Department” refers to the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

¹ The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 19-01-2006, No. X-493, Art. 2.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lithuanian society, just like that of the majority of European states is growing older: In 1990 retired citizens constituted 19.1% of the entire population of the country and the percentage increased to 22.4% in 2014. Because of the increasing life span (the average life expectancy in 1990 was 71.4, in 2012 – 73.98) in the future the percentage of elder people of the society will increase even more. It is predicted that in the yearly 2060 elder people will constitute as much as 37% of Lithuanian society. Thus will increase the demand for social services, which is a great challenge for the country's social service organisation system – it must adapt to the increasing demand of services, rearrange the current or even create a new service infrastructure.

In order to implement the human right to live in a community, it is necessary to ensure available community services that are easy to access and enable people to participate in the daily life. The object of the audit is related to the integrated priority *Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion* of the EU strategy *Europe 2020* and is an inseparable part of the general European commitment to respect fundamental human rights and the values of social inclusion.

The public performance audit was included into the public audit program, because the increasing numbers of elder persons increase the demand for social services, while the infrastructure of social services is underdeveloped and differs in all municipalities. The majority of these municipalities are even unable to provide complex social services for elderly people.

Municipalities plan and provide social services, establish and maintain social service institutions autonomously, while social care for persons with severe disabilities must be ensured by the state (the state transfers this function to municipalities)⁴. The state social care policy is implemented by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

Social services are funded by the state, municipality budgets, social service institutions, European Union structural funds, foreign funds, charity, personal (family) payments for social services and other sources. The financing for social services in 2012-2014 shows a gradual increase: 63 000 000 euros were allocated in 2012, 68 000 000 EUR – in 2013 and 81 800 000 EUR in 2014. According to the integral support development program⁷ in 2013-2015 21 municipalities received 5 800 000 EUR from the European Social Fund.

The goal of the audit is to assess the efficiency of the social services provided for elder people in municipalities. In order to reach this goal, we have evaluated the following:

- whether the demand for social services for elderly people is appropriately evaluated;
- if the infrastructure of social services can satisfy the increasing demand for social services;
- the quality of social services provided.

² Based on the predictions of the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat)

³ European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, Common European Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, Brussels, November 2012.

⁴ The Law on Local Self Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 07-07-1994, No. I-533, Art. 6, pt. 12 and Art. 7, pt. 32.

⁵ The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 19-01-2006, No. X-493, Art. 11, pt. 1, para. 1: gives suggestions to the Government regarding the development of the state system of social services and social work, prepares draft laws regarding determining the demand for social services, allocation, provision and financing of social services, payment for social services, also analyses and evaluates the condition of social services in the country and gives suggestions for municipalities, etc.

⁶ The data for the year 2014 provided by municipalities is preliminary.

⁷ Approved by the order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania No. A1-353, 20-07-2012.

We performed the audit at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The data and information was collected from the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Statistics Lithuania and 60 municipalities. Additional auditing procedures were performed in six municipalities (Vilnius city, Alytus city, Marijampolė, Plungė district, Palanga and Klaipėda city).

The audited period – 2012-2013, the data analysis included the data from earlier periods and the year 2014.

Auditing conclusions were formulated after the analysis of the information provided by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Department of Supervision of Social Services, Statistics Lithuania and 60 municipalities, as well as the data gathered during the additional auditing at the six municipalities.

We have found that the organisation of social services for elderly people in municipalities is inefficient and cannot satisfy the increasing demand: there is not a single municipality, which could provide the infrastructure of all types of social services provided for elderly people and meet the norms of social service development. Municipalities do not identify all elderly people that need support. Due to underdeveloped infrastructure of social services provided at home and lack of appropriate criteria for choosing the services, the application of social care does not include the priority of giving the person an opportunity to stay at home as long as possible. Therefore, the waiting list for long-term social care services at social care institutions is the longest (47% of all people on the waiting list needed this service in 2014). There is a lack of qualified employees providing social care and day care services at people's homes, which has a negative impact not only on the availability of services, but their quality as well. There is no efficient control of the quality of social services provided.

In order to increase the availability and quality of social services, we recommended the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to analyse the demand for social services in municipalities and provide specific development directions for the social services provided to elderly people; also to improve the methods of determining the demand for social care for elderly people and the order of payment for long-term care; also to specify the services and working guidelines for social services employees providing social care and day care services at people's homes. The Department of Supervision of Social Services must ensure more efficient quality control of social care services. We also gave suggestions to municipalities on how to improve the efficiency of organising services for the elder persons living in their territory.

Having evaluated the collected evidence, we provide the conclusions and recommendations of the public report.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Social workers of municipalities are unable to determine people's needs for social services properly, therefore not all that need support can get it on time, because:

1.1. Not all elderly persons that possibly need services are identified – two thirds of municipalities do not accumulate information on elderly people living in their territories and do not make any assessments if they need support if the people do not apply for it themselves. The Law on Social Services provides that health care employees and police officers are obliged to provide information for social workers about elderly people that need support, but in three years 14 out of 43 audited municipalities did not get such information from these institutions or such cases were very rare. There is a lack of information about social services provided at municipalities, it is not provided in a user-friendly way (not only on the internet, but also at healthcare facilities, by mail, etc.), there is no centralised and publicly-available information about social care establishments for elderly people operating in the country (the number of vacancies, service prices, etc.), therefore the people or their relatives do not apply for social services (subchapter 1.1).

1.2. The decision to provide a person with a specific social service depends on social worker's subjective assessment and the infrastructure of services in the municipality, because there are no criteria, which would clearly define when one or another type of service should be applied (a wholly dependent person may benefit from 5 different social care services, provided at a social care establishment or the person's home). Therefore, when choosing social services for a person, the priority not always falls on services than enable the person to stay at home for as long as possible: in all cases assessed (79), the persons assigned with long-term social care at a social care establishment, are not offered alternative social services that could be received at their homes (subchapter 1.2).

2. Inappropriate evaluation of personal financial possibilities to pay for long-term social care services – social workers at municipalities do not have any possibilities to evaluate the person's financial assets, while the persons filling applications for social services do not indicate their assets or do not indicate all of their assets. Municipalities apply different practice in calculating the payment for people that have signed life annuity contracts. Therefore in some cases the share of the compensation provided by the municipality or the state is too large (subchapter 1.3).

3. The current infrastructure of social services at municipalities does not satisfy the increasing demand for social services (at the end of 2014 there were 1 222 persons on the waiting list: 571 applied for long-term social care, 399 – for assistance at home, 155 – day care services at home), because:

3.1. Neither of the municipalities has an infrastructure for all types of social services provided for elderly people, which would meet the norms of social service development, the majority (2/3) of municipalities do not provide complex services (subchapter 2.1).

3.2. Institutions providing social services in municipalities lack of qualified employees: 11 institutions needed employees providing day care social services, not all of the institutions can provide services according to the norms (nurses, physical therapists/masseurs/ergotherapists) and the services are not allocated from other institutions either. No improvement of the employee's competencies – more than half of the employees working in the field of social services have never improved their competencies, one third do not even have appropriate qualifications or have not attended introductory training. This has a negative impact not only on the availability of services, but their quality as well – there were cases, when the services, which,

according to medical standards, should be attributed to the competence of nurse or nurse assistant (giving prescribed medicine, etc.), were performed by an assistant social worker with no appropriate qualifications (subchapters 2.2 and 2.3).

3.3. There are no norms to define the services provided by a social worker providing services at the person's home. The working standards of a social worker providing services at home are too low, while the standards of the individual care staff providing assistance at home are based on inappropriate criteria (according to the total number of the citizens in a municipality) and do not meet the demands of the elderly people. This results in failure to ensure appropriate numbers of staff in municipalities (subchapter 2.2).

3.4. In 34 municipalities individual care staff does not have transportation. In 23 municipalities it is difficult to reach the recipients of services, because some of them live very far (and it takes up to 2 hours to reach them), in some municipalities social workers have to walk long distances, because there is no public transport. Therefore, the organisation of social services for elderly people at home is ineffective, because it takes too long to visit one recipient (subchapter 2.4).

4. There is not enough control of the quality of social services provided.

4.1. The Department of Supervision of Social Services is supposed to carry out periodical⁸ inspections of the institutions providing long-term care for elderly people, but the majority (60 out of 99 institutions) were not inspected for 5 years or longer and not a single institution providing social day care services at people's home was inspected. The elimination of inconsistencies was supervised only during a certain period, without considering the fact that some of these inconsistencies remained unimproved (40% in 2012, 65% in 2013, 33% in 2014). There was also no distribution of examples of good practice in implementing social care standards at institutions for elderly people (subchapter 3.2).

4.2. Although municipalities are legally obliged to implement quality control of social care services, the control remains unmonitored in all six of the audited municipalities (subchapter 3.3).

⁸ At least once every 5 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

In order to increase the availability and quality of social services, it is necessary to reduce the infrastructure development differences in municipalities:

1. To analyse the demand for social service development in municipalities and to determine specific social service development directions and measures, which would ensure that each elderly person can remain at their own home and community for as long as possible. To create conditions for municipalities to apply for investments or support from EU funds or other alternative financial mechanisms for the development of long-term social care at institutions and other social services – providing integral support for elderly people, improving staff qualifications, etc. (conclusion 3.1).
2. To specify the work standards of employees working in the field of social services and providing social care and day care services at home, which would ensure that the staff numbers in municipalities meet the demand for social services and create opportunities to provide psychological support for elderly people at home (conclusion 3.3).
3. Seeking to improve public information about social services provided to elderly people and its availability, to take specific measures to publish important information about social care institutions for elderly people operating all over Lithuania (social care fees at social care homes, available vacancies, the number of people on the waiting list) (conclusion 1.1).
4. In order to select social services that meet the needs of the elderly person best and in order to create a possibility for the elderly person to stay at his/her home for as long as possible, it is necessary to improve legal acts:
 - 4.1. to make sure that the social worker, having evaluated the elderly person's need for social care, gives priority to social services alternative to long-term social care at an institution;
 - 4.2. to make sure that in the conclusions regarding recommended social services, the social worker suggesting long-term social care at an institution indicates the reasons for not choosing alternative social services;
 - 4.3. people applying for social services should be provided with an opportunity to indicate the preferable long-term social care institution (conclusion 1.2).
5. In order to enable municipalities to make appropriate evaluations of a person's financial possibilities to pay for social services, it is necessary to improve legal acts: to determine the order of paying for social services for persons, who have entered into life annuity agreements (conclusion 2).

To the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Health

6. To determine the functions and responsibilities of individual care staff – assistant nurse, providing integral support for people at home (conclusion 3.2).
7. To organise staff trainings for employees providing day care social services (conclusion 3.2).

To the Department of Supervision of Social Services

8. Seeking to ensure efficient quality control of social care services it is necessary to: implement periodic inspections of institutions providing social care services for elderly people; to supervise the elimination of inconsistencies until they are eliminated; to take preventive action against certain inconsistencies and promote examples of good practice by implementing social care standards, as well as announce this information on the website of the department (conclusion 4.1).

9. To provide municipalities with recommendations to ensure appropriate quality control of social care and develop general practice of applying social care standards in all municipalities (conclusion 4.2).

To municipalities:

In order to satisfy the increasing demand for social services for elder people and ensure appropriate quality of social services, it is necessary to:

1. look for opportunities to increase the proportion of social services alternative to long-term social care at institutions, provide complex integral support services (conclusion 3.1);
2. to plan the number and composition of the staff at social service institutions according to the standards of working time costs and considering the increasing demand for these services (conclusion 3.2).
3. to organise trainings of the employees working in the field of social services (conclusion 3.2);
4. to organise quality control of social services (conclusion 4.2);
5. in municipalities with service recipients living in remote locations that are difficult to reach by public transport, it is necessary to equip the visiting employees with transportation; in municipalities, where the service recipients can be operatively reached by public transport, employees should receive compensation for their transportation costs (conclusion 3.4);
6. to take specific measures in order to ensure that personal healthcare and other institutions inform the municipality about people that require social services (conclusion 1.1);
7. to accumulate information about elderly people living in the territory of each municipality and use various means (internet, mail, providing information at healthcare facilities, etc.) to inform them about available social services (conclusion 1.1).
8. to take specific action to ensure that persons applying for long-term social care provide information about their financial assets (conclusion 2).