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## Targeting the Principle Implementation in the System of Social Support

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The article aims to identify the actual problems of implementing the principle of targeting in the social protection system in Russia and to develop a set of measures to transform the mechanism of its provision based on a differentiated approach, which implies not only differences in the size of social transfers, but also on various forms of such support.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** As the basic approaches of the study there were chosen the theory of social investment and the conception of result-based budgeting. The study suggested the development of a more effective financial support system, the substantiation of a differentiated approach to the organization of a social system based on a single method by determining the degree of financial vulnerability of citizens and the development of methodological recommendations on the use of financial instruments to strengthen the targeting of social protection of needy citizens.

**Findings:** The article substantiates that the necessary condition for the transformation of the social protection system to strengthen the social and financial security of needy citizens is the development of a differentiated approach in the provision of social support measures.

**Practical Implications:** The results of the study can be implemented into the management of social protection in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness by using the targeting of social transfers based on clear criteria of need, the differentiated approach implementation in determining the measures of social support through the use of "map of social support of citizens", expanding the application of social contract technology.

**Originality/Value:** The set of measures proposed in the study will make it possible not only to adjust and direct social support to really needy recipients and to differentiate the volume of the support provided, but also to create conditions for the recipients of targeted protection to self-sufficiency, which, in turn, will contribute to the poverty reduction.

**Keywords:** Social policy, digital economy.

**JEL Codes:** H53, H55, H75, I3.

**Paper type:** Research article: Social System.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the fundamental tasks of social policy in Russia is the creation and improvement of a social protection system for the population. One of the priorities of its development is to identify and ensure sustainable financial and social protection of vulnerable citizens, who, due to the loss of ability to work, loss of breadwinner, disability and other objective reasons, are in a difficult financial situation. In this connection it is necessary to search and implement new organizational bases and financial instruments aimed at the implementation and development of a targeted approach in the social protection system. A review of the literature in economics connected with this problem showed that the first scientific works investigated the targeted social support (it is the targeted social support that is designed to most effectively solve the problems of social protection of needy citizens), appeared in Russia in the late 90-ies. Since this period, Russian social protection system is characterized by increased interest mainly from the point of view of Sociology and Law and not from the Economic point.

From the financial point of view, the issues of targeted social support are investigated in the works of a rather narrow circle of scientists (Bobkov *et al.*, 1998; Rimashevskaya, 1999; Misikhina, 2011; Tikhomirova, 2013; Grishina, 2014; Bychkov *et al.*, 2015; Andreeva *et al.*, 2016; Nazarova *et al.*, 2017; Cristea and Thalassinou, 2016). One of the first studies in this sphere is the work by Liborakina (1998), who substantiates the need to implement targeted forms of social support of the population, that is the only way to increase the efficiency of costs of limited budget funds and to help really the most needy people. The paper analyzes the costs of budgetary funds for social needs and proposes methodical recommendations for the assessment of income and the calculation of targeted subsidies, used in various regional and municipal targeted programs.

The collective work under the direction of the Fund "Institute of Economics of the City" presented the in-depth analysis of the international experience of the organization and financial support of targeted programs (Alexandrova *et al.*, 2001). Most investigations are devoted to individual financial instruments and technologies to strengthen the targeting of social protection (social contract, social vouchers, technology of targeted consumer subsidies, program-target method, etc.) as proposed in the works of several scientists (Chagin, 2007 and 2009; Prokofieva, 2010; Bobkov *et al.*, 2011; Tikhomirova, 2011; Korchagina *et al.*, 2013; Klimantova, 2014; Ovcharova *et al.*, 2017; Karpenko *et al.*, 2018). A lot of researches are devoted to regional practice of organization and financial support of targeted social support (Nikonov *et al.*, 2003; Grishina *et al.*, 2007; Sevastyanova *et al.*, 2012).

In foreign investigations, the financial aspects of targeting social support measures for needy citizens are much more studied than in Russia (Fiszbein *et al.*, 2009; Chris de Neubourg *et al.*, 2007; Gross *et al.*, 2008; Devereux *et al.*, 2015; Minas *et al.*, 2018; McCartan *et al.*, 2018; Margitic *et al.*, 2019). Representatives of the Maastricht Higher

School of Management (Chris de Neubourg *et al.*, 2007) carried out a comparative analysis of the financial provision of targeted social support to the poorest segments of the population in nine European countries, analyzed the effectiveness of the financing of targeted programs, their role in reducing the level of poverty of citizens, substantiated the necessity to reform existing approaches to the organization and financial provision of targeted social protection in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

In 2014, the International labour office published a world report on social protection, which, in addition to analytical materials describing the current situation of social protection in the world, considered possible options for the development of targeted approaches to the system of social protection based on the redistribution of public costs and optimization of existing financial flows.

The foreign team of authors from the Institute of Development Studies presented a critical analysis of targeted social support programs in the world practice, in terms of their accuracy and the degree of risk of making so-called "inclusion errors" or "exclusion errors". It also presents the assessment of available data on the amount of costs based on the necessity of the implementation of the principle of efficiency of the use of available financial resources into practice (Devereux *et al.*, 2015).

Thus, the literature review leads to the conclusion that there is no a clear understanding of the essence of targeted social protection in Russia. There are no integrated approaches to issues of organizing and financing the targeted social support. There are no conclusions on the experience of the implementation of promising financial tools for improving the targeting, including successfully applied international practices, into the domestic social protection system.

Issues of targeted social support in the studies of Russian authors are also considered in terms of organization and they do not have a clear financial aspect. At the present stage, there are no comprehensive studies covering theoretical, methodological, organizational and financial issues for the social protection of financially vulnerable citizens.

## **2. Methodology**

It is possible to develop theoretical bases of social protection of citizens just considering the new provisions reflected in modern scientific researches and providing the change of approaches to social policy of the state - the theory of economics of social investments. Russian scientists have not yet rethought its postulates regarding social protection of citizens, whereas they imply the need and possibility for the use of new methods and tools in the social protection system aimed at forming conditions that contribute primarily to achieve the self-sufficiency by needy citizens, and only then - the provision of social transfers.

In the development of theoretical ideas about the financial support of the system of social protection of needy citizens, the study is based on the conception of results-based budgeting, which should be the basis for the modernization of the social protection system in the light of increasing the efficiency (efficiency, profitability) of state costs on the basis of program-target methods of financing, which has not been fully achieved and therefore requires further scientific research. The research was carried out based on the study of the scientific literature, materials of official websites of state bodies and organizations that provide social protection to the population.

### 3. Results

One of the main purposes of socio-economic policy of the state is the full financing of the effective system of social support, focused on the comprehensive development of citizens and social equalization. The task of timely and complete financing of the population's social protection is one of the most important for the further development of the state policy, which is aimed at the implementation of socially oriented reforms in Russia. Nowadays, financing social policy measures is almost entirely provided by the state from all the levels of the budget system. State bodies annually provide for an increase of costs on social policy, which over the past 10 years increased in more than 3.5 times. At the same time, the number of recipients of social support measures increased. In 2006 about 6.6 million people were provided with financial support, by 2019 their number increased almost in 7 times and reached 46.53 million people.

At the same time, despite the growth of state costs on the payment of social transfers, it is possible to talk now about their low efficiency, because, according to the statistics, those social support measures that are funded by the state, have no longer a positive impact on the level and the standard of life of the population. At the end of 2017, there were 19.3 million people in Russia with income below the subsistence minimum. In comparison with 2013, when there were 15.5 million poor people (Table. 1).

**Table 1.** *The population number in Russia with monetary incomes below the subsistence minimum in 2013-2017 (Compiled by the authors based on GKS, 2018)*

Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
The population number in Russia with monetary incomes below the subsistence minimum, mln people	15,5	16,1	19,5	19,5	19,3
In percentage of total population	10,8	11,2	13,3	13,3	13,2
In percentage relating to the previous year	92,3	103,9	117,4	100,0	99,0
The deficit of monetary income, bln Rub.	417,9	478,6	700,8	706,8	716,6
In percentage of total cash income of the population	0,9	1,0	1,3	1,3	1,3

According to experts, the effectiveness of targeted measures in terms of reducing the income deficit of the poor people is on average 25%. This means that only 25 kopecks of every 1 ruble allocated for the support of targeted measures go to reduce the income deficit of the poor people. As a result of the implementation of all social payments (except pensions), the number of the poor people is reduced by 26% (Nazarova, 2017).

In our opinion this situation is connected with the fact that social protection measures in the Russian Federation are currently not depending on the degree of need, but to encourage citizens for merit to the state, to ensure the attractiveness of service in high-risk conditions (military personnel and their family members), as well as to support citizens whose health and property have been damaged. This makes the existing system of social protection ineffective for most needy citizens, while it forms excessive and ineffective state costs (Andreeva, 2017). In order to reduce poverty in the country and to increase the efficiency of financial support for social protection measures, the development of a financial mechanism of social protection is necessary to strengthen targeted forms of social protection and support needy citizens.

The first attempts to introduce targeting into the Russian system of social protection were made at the end of the XXth century. Only since the middle of 1990's, the mechanisms of social protection to the needy people, considering the level of their income, gradually began to be applied. More than 20 subjects of the Russian Federation have targeted social programs to support the poor. However, almost 20 years after the beginning of targeted social protection in Russia, its content and understanding of key principles are still fuzzy. There are still no provisions in social legislation that define the principles of targeting and need, and recent legislative innovations do not eliminate the ambiguity of these principles' interpretation.

In the literature, this issue is also not investigated enough. It allows differences in understanding the essence of this category, several approaches and mechanisms for providing targeted protection. In this regard, we propose the authors' definition for targeted social support as a system of measures to provide differentiated protection to financially vulnerable citizens, aimed at overcoming or mitigating life difficulties, keeping their social status, an acceptable standard of life, based on checking the needs of potential recipients of social protection and implemented through targeted state funding. Currently, one of the main disadvantages of targeted social support in the country is the lack of a unified technique for determining the need, that does not allow to assess qualitatively the degree of financial vulnerability of citizens and to determine the social protection measures adequate to the situation on the basis of a differentiated approach.

In accordance with the order of the President of the Russian Federation, in the country there was developed and adopted Federal law No. 388-FL from 29 December 2015 "On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation in terms of accounting and improving the social support measures based on the obligation to

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comply with the principle of targeting and applying the need criteria", which came into force on 1 January 2016. The analysis of the document showed that the wording "need criteria" is found only in relation to two types of social transfers to the population: child benefits and compensation to parents who pay a fee for a child attending kindergarten. Thus, this law closes its action only on a strictly limited category of citizens – families with children. In this regard, it is necessary to develop legislation of a unified technique for determining the degree of vulnerability of everyone based on clearly criteria. The authors propose two groups of criteria for assessing the financial vulnerability of citizens.

The first group - economic criteria - includes:

- 1) the level of income of citizens/family, determined based on indicators of monetary income and economic potential of the family/citizen (income that a citizen/family can have from additional housing, subsistence farming, suburban areas, etc.);
- 2) the level of consumer costs of citizens, the determination of which should consider socially vulnerable groups in the family and the level of dependency load;
- 3) labour potential - the ability of family members to work depending on age and health.

The second group – social criteria – includes:

- 1) indicators and living conditions;
- 2) the ability to self-service;
- 3) the level of socialization of citizens.

In our opinion, the development of a unified technique to determine the need based on the proposed criteria will allow to adjust and send social support to the recipient who really needs it. It should be noted that the current system of social support is based on the principle of equalizing the protection provided within the target group of recipients. Meanwhile, it is necessary to apply a differentiated approach to determine the amount of cash payments, depending on the degree of the recipient need. We believe that for the most vulnerable categories of citizens it is necessary to provide increasing coefficients to the standard level of cash payment.

It is clear, however, that the implementation of this proposal will be rather difficult. This is due to the fact that providing the targeted protection has been shifted to the level of the subjects of the Russian Federation, the vast majority of which have limited financial resources. Different economic and financial situation of the subjects of the Russian Federation determines the different rights of citizens (families) to receive targeted social support, the conditions of its appointment, types and sizes. The development of targeted social protection is hampered by the lack of effective tools for collecting, processing, analyzing and monitoring personalized information about the participant of targeted protection programs, which makes it difficult to assess changes in their financial situation, and, consequently, the effectiveness of social protection measures and the effectiveness

of budget costs. Currently, in order to improve the quality of accounting and social support measures based on the principle of targeting and need criteria, new tools are being implemented into the social protection system, for example, the unified state information system in social support, which allows to assess the income and property of households and citizens on the basis of integration of information from various registers, consolidated by the unique number of the individual personal account of the insured person in the system of compulsory pension insurance.

Structurally the unified state information system in social support consists of three components. The first component – the federal segment – is a more aggregated body of information about social support measures and their recipients. The second one – the regional segment – is the information resources from service providers, as well as regional authorities on the social measures that are provided in each region. The third level is information processing and receiving services.

At the heart of the unified state information system in social support is the classifier of social support measures, on the basis of which, there is the formation of information about the system of social protection in the country in general or in some region in particular. The classifier contains categories, classes, types of social support measures and other criteria. During the implementation of the unified state information system in social support, state bodies faced several problems:

- today not all the subjects of the Russian Federation work in system of interdepartmental electronic interaction, there are outdated parks of computers in some municipalities, there is no necessary modern server equipment;
- there is no clear link between the subjects and municipalities; the subjects often do not know what social support measures are provided at the municipal level, therefore they cannot upload reliable information to the common database;
- the main identifier of the unified state information system in social support is the system of compulsory pension insurance of a citizen, however, as shown in the regions in social support measures, social security number is not used, therefore in some regions there is a large number of beneficiaries without the social security number.

Thus, nowadays, the existing database in the system of social protection is aimed at collecting the information on the protection measures provided within its framework, and not at forming the information on the degree of vulnerability and need of beneficiaries. We believe that such information database should be formed on "individual (family) cards of social support", reflecting the accumulated and recorded information on the socio-economic situation of citizens and/or members of their family who appealed for help to social protection authorities. At the same time, an individual social support card can be opened for a lonely citizen, and for citizens who have families can be opened a family card, since the number of dependents, the presence of pensioners, disabled, unemployed citizens in the family, etc., have an important impact on the degree of financial vulnerability.

Application of this document will allow to form the complex information on the change of the social and economic situation, level and standard of life of citizens appealed for help to social protection authorities that, in turn, will give the chance to estimate efficiency of measures of targeted social protection and to react quickly to any changes in life of its recipients.

One additional problem of targeted social protection in Russia, in our opinion, is that targeted social protection measures are "supportive" and they do not encourage citizens to refract the current situation, and therefore targeted social protection provokes the dependency. In this regard, it is important to expand the use of tools aimed at stimulating the activity of citizens to get out of a difficult life situation (difficult financial situation) and their self-sufficiency (Sukhoveeva, 2017). Such an instrument in the Russian Federation is a social contract, based on contractual relations on mutual obligations between the poor citizen (family) and social protection bodies. According to this contract, the social protection bodies of the population of this subject of the Russian Federation undertakes to provide the applicant with help in cash or help in so-called natural form (including help in the form of a set of social services).

According to experts, the technology of social contracts meets the requirements of a market-oriented economy and it is aimed at improving the standard of life of citizens, smoothing social disparities and social differentiation, overcoming social dependency, as it allows financially vulnerable citizens through the provided "start-up capital" or professional potential to change completely their financial situation.

In Russia, according to the research, the implementation of experiments on targeted social support based on a social contract began in the early 2000s. The work of social protection bodies under the new system was carried out in Syktyvkar, Komi Republic and Perm, Perm Region (since 2005 in Perm Region). Later, according to the results of the experiment, the technique was officially approved and finally led to the adoption of new laws on targeted social protection in several regions.

It should be noted that in many cases the experience of foreign countries, where such systems have been operating for several decades, is an example for the implementation of social contract technology. The system of social protection of the population, based on the system of mutual obligations, was called the program of conditional cash transfers. According to the generally accepted definition, it is a program in which money is transferred to poor households if they make a predetermined investment into the human capital of their children. At the same time, funds are allocated only if poor households comply with the conditions by the contract.

In Russia, there are various names for programs of targeted social support based on social contracts as: "Self-sufficiency", "From allowance to salary", "Social contract on mutual obligations", "Targeted social benefit for social adaptation", etc. Each program implemented by this technology has its own features. However, in Russia, the effectiveness of this tool in the fight against poverty is still



quite low. According to the Ministry of labour and social protection for 2017, citizens of the Russian Federation signed 111.7 thousand social contracts. Considering all family members, the social contract covered 299.8 thousand people, i.e. 1,5% of the total number of citizens with monetary incomes below the subsistence minimum. We agree with the opinion of some authors who believe that the biggest problem in the implementation of the social contract is that there is still a lack of understanding of technology in the regions. *"In many subjects, contracts are signed for small amounts with many recipients. At this stage, unfortunately, in most regions the idea of coverage is more important than the idea of quality of technology implementation"* (Tatarintsev, 2016).

Thus, today there is an objective need to improve and develop the technology of social contract as a promising tool for targeted social support including the experience of the best foreign practices.

#### **4. Conclusions**

According to researchers, it is necessary to discuss the system of targeted social support in details in order to make it more effective and flexible. The system of targeted social support should help those citizens who really need it, that is, those who cannot cope with the circumstances that worsen or may worsen the life conditions of the citizen. To create such a system, it is necessary to:

- form an appropriate legislative base in the system of targeted social protection, to consolidate clear and unambiguous formulations of several concepts and terms used in the field of targeted support of the population;
- develop at the federal level unified requirements for the definition of need criteria and technique of their application;
- inform on the needy and the degree of their need by systematizing the existing databases, as well as by implementing the monitoring of collecting the information, which will simplify the assessment of changes in the financial situation of recipients of payments and will contribute to the effectiveness of social protection programs;
- develop and improve the legislation for regional social protection bodies. In such a way regional social protection bodies can obtain information from various official sources without hindrance in order to create personalized databases of actual and potential participants in targeted protection programs;
- to develop the implementation of social support based on the technology of the social contract.

The implementation of these directions, in our opinion, will increase the effectiveness of the principle of targeting in the system of social protection of citizens, the effectiveness of the use of budget funds by really needy citizens, and, at last, reduce poverty in the country.

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