REMEDIAL POLICIES AND DEPENDENCE ON SOCIAL BENEFITS

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Abstract
Lately, the dependency on the social benefits has been a concern both for the authorities and for researchers. For this paper we used theoretical documentation from the field of psychology and legislative documentation. The theories based on researches, associate the dependency on social services with social vulnerability (R. Backer), with the relation of accepted or forced obligation connected to satisfying personal needs (Day) and with a fact of social life experimented for a longer period of time. There were made categories of the social dependency and there were outlined models of manifestation according to particularities: the type of beneficiary and decisive factors. The French and Scottish model shift the emphasis from the guaranteed on temporary support, as minimum Income for Integration and as supporting income for social inclusion, following the spirit of European social – economical politics. The National Strategy Regarding the Reform in the Field of Social Assistance in Romania accomplished to identify the main problems of the social assistance system, by 2010 and proposed some solutions for diminishing the population’s dependency on social services.

Key words: models of the social dependency, social welfare, minimum guaranteed income, minimum income of insertion, social indicator reference

The development of the economy in the sense of the modernization of the technologies in all fields brings to the fore, the individual’s capacity to adapt to the new standards. The de-professionalization of the most individuals, their resistance towards re-qualification determines them to thicken the rows of those in difficulty. As the latest

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researches prove, the lack of interest to obtain material independency for the families with difficulties comes from two directions: one from too many social services\footnote{The Strategy Regarding the Reform in the Field of Social Assistance, Labour, Family and Social Protection Ministry, 3.03.2011: 7. By the end of 2010, in Romania, there were a number of 202 social rights.} that have projects of familial support, only from economical perspective or for preventing child abandon, and another from the lack of tempting jobs. When we say tempting we refer to low payment that the state offers to its employees, compared to the money support offered by the social support programmes.

\section*{1. Teories of social dependence}

In the specialized literature, some authors associate dependency to social vulnerability. Starting from R. Barker’s definition (1995:97) in which the dependency is „the state of a person who rely on another individual or thing for his existence or support” and the definitions of Bourgeois and Nizet (1995) who regard „the dependency in relation to power”, outlines the idea that any individual has a series of needs that must be gratified by some resources. These resources become in individual’s perception, means for gratifying needs that themselves become aims. Thus, vulnerability can create conditions for dependency (Barker 1995; Bourgeois and Nizet, 1995, apud Cojocaru 2004:657-658).

Malina Voicu, in \textit{Poverty Dictionary} describes the social dependency from the perspective of several authors. A.Memmi (1984) defines dependency as „the relation between an individual and an object, human being, group of people or institution, a relation, real or imaginary, that involves an obligation more or less accepted by the latter and which is connected to gratifying a person’s needs”. Another author that carried out researches on dependency is B. Day (1992), who defines dependency as „a fact of social or personal life experimented by any person in certain moments of his life and which is experimented for longer period
of times or for the whole life by certain persons" (Voicu, 1999). He distinguishes two types of dependency:

- **time dependency**, that refers to the time granted to some activities and
- **financial dependency**, connected to money or received material resources.

To conclude, he points out the fact that the dependency towards the state includes both types of dependency.

Titmuss (1963) is among the first that makes a classification of the dependency types from the perspective of causality. He identifies:

- **natural dependency**, like children dependency on their parents or the elderly dependency;
- **the dependency caused by incapacity and physical and psychological dependency**;
- **the dependency determined by social and cultural factors** – unemployment, mandatory pensioning, obstruction of the access to jobs of young people.

Supporters of this theory, in 1998, Goodin and Schmidt, suggest the terms of **non criticisable dependency** (natural) and **criticisable dependency** (not natural). If the non criticisable dependency refers to a natural dependency like the type suggested by Titmuss, too, to which the authors give as example the dependency within the family between parents and children, when speaking about criticisable dependency they refer to the dependency of persons on social protection services. The criticism of this type of dependency has two motivations:

- the fact that the beneficiaries of social services ask for unjustified support (without needing it);
- when their dependency is a voluntary one.

Of course, critics of the social dependency theory have emerged, the liberals and the conservatives expressing their concern about the fact that the social benefits for the poor produce effects on motivation and behaviour, stimulating laziness and decreasing work capacity, by de-professionalization. Other critics add to these warnings, the passiveness
of the beneficiaries and the danger of emergence of a *culture of dependency*” (Goodin and Schmidt apud. Voicu, 1999).

We can highlight the *dependency on social benefits* as a way of survival of the families in difficult situations, a side-effect of the policies of social protection. In this context, there are included both the psychological dimension and the educational – behavioural one. When we make these statements we refer to the person – family socially supported and not involved adequately in this process. Thus, once the socially supported client does not have tasks to fulfil or he does not fulfil them with seriousness (or totally), the mechanisms of independent survival are diminished. This causes the lack of motivation for involvement and professional development in social context. If the dependency period on the social services is quite long we can notice the implications that exerts on the whole family. It is about inserting some *new values* within the family. These values promote individuals’ development as dependent on social services, future maladjusted to a tough, competitive system, within the new society. From here results another aspect connected to side-effects of the social policies, namely the one connected to *cultural reproduction*[^1] which is based on the dependency on the social benefits (Bourdieu, Passeron 1977:290). The danger derives from the fact that *the social support* appears as something normal, meaning that it confuses or mixes with the image of the social supported person as a justified, real need with the image of the profiteer social supported. The latter *arranges* his general situation according to the objectives of the social assistance projects. (Mihalache, 2005).

2. **Theoretical models explanatory for dependence on social benefits**

Bane and Ellwood (1994), identifies three theoretic models of dependency on social services. Thus we have:

[^1]: *The cultural reproduction* is in Bourdieu's vision “the process through which culture is reproduced over generations by the socializing influence of some major institutions”.
- The model of the rational choice, which refers to the option that the beneficiary expresses for a certain social service and the option for period for which he wants support. For this model, the option for social services is justified by the too low difference between the level of the benefits and of the wage if they work.

- The model of the expectations is based on a triangular relation between self-esteem, control and the results obtained. Starting from the fact that failure causes loss of self-esteem and motivation to try something else / again, the loss of the feeling of control and suspicion of dependency on social services is initiated. This model includes prediction for person’s relapse, as some beneficiaries go back to the social services, not being able to take control over their life.

- The cultural model is based on the theories of poverty’s culture and the underclass of the poor. This model refers to the groups of individuals who share values, norms, attitudes different from the social context of normality. Moreover, these groups are isolated from space – geographical point of view, developing deviant or/and delinquent behaviours as well as dependency on the state. According to this model, those who were raised inside such a culture have the tendency to emphasize the role of the intergenerational transmittance both in perpetuating poverty and the dependency on the state.

Georgeta Ghebrea, described a poverty’s syndrome that refers to a cycle of poverty determined by more profound socio – cultural causes, cycle that reproduces from one generation to another. She makes a comparison between poor families that experiences a permanent state of poverty (called misery) and can benefit monthly from an amount of money that compares to that of a family of workers. That amount will be utilized in a different manner by the two families because of their specific way of life. Thus, the honourable poor person will be prudent in spending the money until he gets the next amount, taking into account the survival and development needs of the household, and the profiteering poor person will spend according to other imperatives, caused by his way of life (“it is possible that such a family spends the whole
income in one day on alcohol, cigarettes, garnishments, expensive food etc") (Ghebrea 1998:103).

3. The determinants factors of dependency

The specialized literature highlighted for the dependency on social benefits some explanations regarding the duration and the factors that influence the dependency's period of time.

As far as the dependency on social services is concerned, Bane and Elwood (1994) established three categories of beneficiaries:

- **Short term beneficiaries**, are the beneficiaries that manage to overcome the crisis situation and to equilibrate themselves by the support and the intervention of the social assistance or those who are not pleased with the offers of the social assistance;

- **Long term beneficiaries**, are the beneficiaries who do not have the personal resource for development and self care (children, elderly, sick persons, persons who are physically or mentally disabled, mono parental families) and persons who don't want to leave the system of social assistance because of various reasons;[1]

- **The cyclic beneficiaries**, are the beneficiaries who, though they try to manage on their own, they cannot keep their financial independence too long so they go back to the social services (Bane and Elwood apud. Voicu 1999).

The authors warn on the fact that some of the cyclic beneficiaries are confused with long term ones, the difference between them being given by their motivation.

As far as the factors that contribute or influence the dependency on social services are concerned, we can mention:

- **The conditions on the labour market.** We can enumerate long term unemployment, too many diplomas, uncertain jobs and low wages, the

[1] The reasons for which the long term beneficiaries will not or don’t want to leave the protection system can be found among the factors that influence the duration of the dependency on the social services.
lack of promotion possibilities, the unsatisfactory side of work, job
description’s over burden, *hierarchic* – professional blackmail, hidden
slavery, (very low wages compared to the work and its duration), young
graduates or without experience etc. All these associated with the
deficiencies of the insurances system favour both the decline of the
social assistance budgets and the social assistance dependency.

- *The number and the level of the offered benefits*. This refers to the
  fact that the level of the offered benefits is very close to that of a mini-
mum wage, reason why work and social dependency are not encour-
aged. A comparative analysis of these benefits between different states
led to the conclusion that where the state offers more alternatives for
getting hired and a better social control, though the level of the social
benefits is quite high, there are not too many people dependent on the
social services.

- *Education and work experience*. The researches referring to educa-
tion and work experience proved the fact that a high level of education
influences the duration and even the access to social assistance servi-
ces. The persons who have a high educational level only in crisis
situations, considered accidental, refer to social assistance services, and
if to this level of education is added professional experience the chances
that these persons to become dependent on the social services are
almost absent.

- *Illness and handicap*. The researches regarding the dependency of
the ill and handicapped persons proved that there are many chances for
them to develop dependency on the social services – and this is
expected.

- *The single-parent or reconstructed families*. During the recent years
has been taken seriously into consideration the issue of the dependency
of the single-parent family on the social services, regarding two direc-
tions: obtaining the economical level of the family and children’s
parental guidance.
4. Costs of social benefits receipt

A paradox of the dependency on the social services is the constraint which the beneficiaries feel when accessing social assistance services. D. Hartley and P. Taylor-Gooby (1992) describe two types of costs imposed for receiving social services:

- *The price imposed by the system*, price that establishes the level of deprivation for eligibility to which is added the completion of some embarrassing files or too long and too many forms;
- *The bureaucratic price*, which refers to hardly obtaining the necessary information for accessing some services to which is added the hostile attitude of the system’s employees (Hartley, Taylor-Gooby 1992).

There are certain difficulties in adjusting the social supported family members after the support ends. In other words, the clients can or not, evaluate by themselves the efficacy and the utility of the help they have been benefiting from, this meaning that they understand their roles as well as their direct participation into the process of support. If the social supported persons can easily detach from the social services and consider them useful during crisis situations, understanding the aims of the supporting policies, it means that they regained their independence, and the process of support was useful and understood. If the social supported persons have fears regarding the finality of the supporting process, perceiving this as a lost or an injustice, we can suspect that he is dependent on the social services. The danger resides in the fact that the social dependency might become a transgenic value, from parents to children.

5. The dependency of the poor on the minim guaranteed income

The social support has been and still is associated to social assistance dependency, representing a controversial idea of the social protection
policies. Some authors argue that “living from social support is an embarrassing source and most of people that find themselves in such a situation will probably make efforts to overcome this” (Giddens 2000:301). Carol Walker argues that living from social support is not at all an easy option, and the research she carries out highlights the fact that once they started living from the social support, the unemployed faced a decreasing of the standard of living, which does not justify the dependency on social services. There is, though, a paradox in social services dependency, which the author explains by the non existence of alternatives.

As an answer to these challenges Daniel Friedlander and Garry Burtless (1994) analysed four programmes of encouragement of those who benefit from social support in order to find jobs and they agreed with the fact that these programmes are useful, considering the social support as beneficent. Together with other analysts they agreed that there must be imposed more drastically conditions to allocate it as money and militate for reducing or suspending social supports. Thus, if a single-parent family is supported on a period of time, and during this period the family produces new situations for continuing with the social support (mortgages, other children, alcohol/drugs consumption), will be considered directly responsible for the risk situations that have been created and the support will end. This idea was not embraced by all analysts, causing controversies that bring into discussion the turning of the social support into delinquency phenomena. Certainly, creating some constraining schemes that will encourage looking for paid jobs would be advantageous for reducing social services’ dependency (Giddens 2000:300-302). For all analysts for and against, the concern is given by the passive attitude of those who benefit from the social support.

In Romania, the social support appeared in 1995 (Law 67/1995), as a social policy to support those with a low income or without any income and who don’t own land that can ensure their subsistence. The Law of the minimum guaranteed income, number 416/2010 is modified and completed by Law 276/2010 and stipulates that the minimum guaranteed income is a form of protection of the most vulnerable
categories of population.[1] The minimum guaranteed income (MGI) represents a way of promoting social inclusion and diminishing poverty. There are significant differences between the perceptions of this type of support between the urban and rural areas. The carried out researches highlighted the fact that for the urban area doing community service work has been viewed as an obligation for the amount received by the MGI, and in the rural area it is being considered that the community service work does not meet the real communitarian needs because “those activities would have been carried out anyway” (Ilie, 2003). Besides the successful situations registered by allocating the MGI for diminishing the social exclusion, there are also being identified adverse aspects of allocating the MGI. These refer to the fact that the beneficiaries’ qualification doesn’t really matter while involving in the communitarian activities recognized as being necessary. Usually the things that really matter are the parks’ and roads’ cleaning and maintenance. The MGT beneficiaries are not invited to take part in renovation or rebuilding of public institutions. To the activities accomplished, the stigma associated with getting a MGT is added. Thus, the image of a beneficiary is usually given a negative connotation, that of a profiteer or of a lazy person. Not only that this very small social support aims at supplementing the income of some families, but MGT also has a social component by compensating with community service work in order not to put an end to the relation between individual and society. The purpose of this measure is that of offering the individual the chance to be part of community, but also to raise individual’s awareness for his own wellbeing.

The social support may vary from 50-260 lei/ month, according to the amounts that the beneficiary would get from other sources (allocations for children, marketing agricultural products, daily-paid activities). In Moldova, a day of work may value 50 lei a day.

[1] In the Official Gazette no 888 from 30 December 2010 was published Law no 276/2010 for modifying and completing Law no 416/2001 regarding the minimum guaranteed income.
Some town halls are „drained” because of offering social support known as Minimum Guarantee Income given by 416/2001 Law. The people who benefit from this type of social support are called MGTists, this label also emphasizing their own social services[1].

The report wrote by the World Bank in 2008 concerning the MGI receives in a positive manner the legislative frame for MGI allocating and agrees that it follows some European models, but still there are problems concerning the minimum guarantee level. The problems are connected to the financial resources and their distribution, as the state’s resources have been consumed, while the internal and local ones have been very few or absent. Thus, for the year 2000, the minimum guarantee income represents only 18 per cent out of the minimum salary compared to 29 per cent out of the minimum salary for 2004. These figures show that the minimum guarantee income covers only 35 per cent out of the necessary amount for the main expenditure. The report shows that the minimum guarantee level is by 25 per cent lower than the international poverty rate ($2 a day) used for countries less developed than Romania. For the families that have more than four members, this rate is even lower, of about $1, 25 a day (data taken from the Budget Administration Inquiry)[2]. As a reply to the report of the World Bank it has been proposed for debate a GEO (Government Emergency Ordinance) by which the new quantum for MGI distribution to be approved.[3]

[1] Gândul Newspaper from din 19.08.2009, the statement of the minister Paul Păcuraru: „One out of two Romanians benefit from social support”. There are 35 types of social services. However, we are not a people of social supported individuals, because a number of 6 million are dedicated to children’s allocations”.

Botoșaninews.ro/19.08.2008, The Statement of Botoșani mayor / Cătălin Flutur / 19.08.2008 – „I don’t think it’s fair that some of those who benefit from social support to go by luxurious cars as Mercedes to take food or to have at their own houses aluminium joinery...MGI is offered to some lazy people who refuse to work when they are offered a job.”


As far as the counties from N-E of Romania are concerned, the number of people who asked for certificates from the County Agency for Employment (CAE) in order to benefit from the minimum guarantee income Law is increasing. In Suceava and Iaşi counties there can be noticed a decrease of the total number of certificates offered in 2007 compared to those from the previous year (3902 compared to 4094 in Suceava county, respectively 35557 compared to 438345 in Iaşi county). The data is offered by CAE from the north-east area and represents the total number of new released certificates and renewed ones released during the 12 days of the year.[1]

**Fig.1. Beneficiaries for the Minimum Guarantee Income, in the North-East area**

![The evolution of the number of the beneficiaries of the Law 416/2002](chart.png)


Before the 2009 election campaign, a newspaper editor from Iasi recounts a visit to villages in the surroundings of Iasi (Bușaga), showing, after discussion with community members several situations related to minimum income guarantee (MGT):

- **MGT for votes** – refers to the offering of these financial supports around elections period as a stimulus / conditioning for people to attend the elections.

- Furthermore, there is the idea that the MGI is an electoral invention proved by the fact that the money appear miraculously during election time.

- **Pilgrimage to bars** – stores and bars close to city halls. The owners do not complain that there is a crisis, they sell on debt, writing in notebooks these debts and the clients usually pay when the MGI comes.

- **Drinks sold using debts written in notebooks until the social support arrives** – The MGIsts are known clients of the bars in villages, and the owners have to stop selling if the debts exceed the support received. At that moment the social assisted go to several bars where they have historic accounts opened on notebooks. They don't find anything bad in drinking a beer waiting for the social support.

- **You live well if you receive the MGI** – on the day of payment of the social support, the stores and bars are full. They complain that they are too poor and that no one believes them and that the social support is too low.

- **Work is very bad for ... drinking** – for the social support all the beneficiaries should work 72 hours for the community, rule which is established by the law.

- **All I can do is to start stealing** – the fact that the payments of the social support are a bit late causes concern and nervousness among beneficiaries, most of them dependent on this unique source of income. They come daily to the City Halls hoping that they will be lucky to get some money. They threaten and cause a scandal, apply emotional blackmail and invoke illegal activities. Some of them are ill and cannot work but still threaten to steal as others do.
- **Business on social support** – on the day they have to receive their social support they gather for small exchanges or direct sales right in front of the City Halls. They consider this day of payment as an opportunity.

Alvin Schoor (1986) considers that the anti poverty policies based on supplementing the income of the poor have a low efficiency, consume a lot of resources and cause frustration among other categories of population. To all these is added the hyper bureaucracy of the state’s administration which also consumes economical resources. He gives as example, the programme *War on Poverty*, from the USA during 1964 in which the amount that was considered to cover the income of the poor was exceeded by 3 billion dollars. The real problem appears in the context in which the poor population is not able to work and in this situation the social policies should be involved. Furthermore, the idea that Alvin Schoor (1986) promotes is that „a very active policy against poverty can cause frustration in the other categories of the population. They will perceive the distribution of the resources towards the poor as a threat to their own financial situation” (Ghebrea 1998:105).

### 6. European practice models to reduce dependence on social benefits

*The French model* of the Minimum Guaranteed Income presented by Dr. Andrey Tretyak, during a workshop on social inclusion and on the fight against poverty in the North-Eastern region of Romania\(^1\), describes the effect of its allocation in time and the trials to modify the allocation conditions. The history of the MGI begins in France in 1956, when the persons unable to work were supported with this form of income, using Bismarck’s model, based on the contribution from the

\(^1\) [Workshop on Social Inclusion and Fight against Poverty in the North-East region of Romania, RTP 41274, organized in Romania by the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission in cooperation with the „P. Andrei” University Iași, during June 3-4 2010.](#)
wages. After the Second World War, only those with pension for disabilities could benefit from the MGI. In 1970 about 30% of the pensioners were under the limit of poverty, and in 2001 this number was reduced to 4% as an increase of the amount of the MGI. Starting with 1975 the number of the single-parent families increases and they become another category that benefits from the MGI. The long term unemployed detainees are added to this, which leads to a revise in the conditions and policies of allocation of this type of social support. From 1988, appears the MGI Plan for Everyone (Minimum Income for Integration), for those over 25 years of age that are long-term unemployed. Giving the MGI for all these categories of persons who are more or less in difficulty proved not to be too satisfactory for France, thus in 2008 there are imposed conditions for the beneficiaries that are able to work. The analyses proved that though the amount of this support was small there was not a decrease in the number of beneficiaries, they living a very long period of time under the limit of poverty, not being stimulated in any way to find jobs. This was considered a poverty trap that did not stimulate people to go on with their life, to have aspirations and to self-develop. From 2008 there is a new policy that encourages those who manage to find jobs, the state keeping a part of the MGI during the time they are hired. The method proved encouraging both for the state and for the beneficiaries. During time this type of support seriously diminished state’s budget and raised the number of social assisted up to 62%, which led to the revision of the objectives of the France’s Agenda regarding the future. The social self inclusion is more important than the monetary social protection policies, thus in all the decisions that regard social inclusion this objective acts as a filter. They maintain the principle of social solidarity stimulating the actions of the partnerships both at institutional and individual level.

*The Scottish model of the minimum guaranteed income*

At the same meeting Mr. Alan Milson, manager of the Education Department of the Scotland’s North Region presented a simple
explanation of the *exclusion – inclusion concepts*. Thus, if the exclusion is
the problem, then the inclusion is the solution. The Scottish outlook
starts from this simple explanation, thus they focus on the practical
solution of diminishing social exclusion and and creating policies for
social inclusion. Thus, they consider that the policies for the social
excluded bring severe damage to the image and self-esteem of the less
favoured and consider a discriminative approach towards them. They
militate for long time partnerships between employees and employers,
the job being considered a second family. From here, some working
strategies are being developed with specific objectives: combining the
time spent at work with the one spent with the family, professional
progress, financial stimulation for achieving targets. The main objective
of the Scottish policies refers to how to equilibrate the time spent at
work with the one spent with the family and not to the allocation of the
supplements as the MGI. From their point of view encouraging family
solidarity brings to the fore the support from the family and not from
the state. Thus if a person goes through a period of crisis in life
(unemployment, illness, losses, children care, of the elderly etc), the
family is the first that gives support and more opportunities when we
talk about poverty and social exclusion. Apart from these arguments they
promote friendly social policies by stimulating activism and sharing
successful information with others. This does not mean that they do not
allocate this type of minimum guaranteed income, but the area of
beneficiaries is more limited (single parents, handicapped persons or
with other difficulties) and the allocation conditions are very strict.

The idea that the Scottish promote is that every state has to consider
very carefully what is right for its people and especially to implement
the models of social policies that proved in time to be useful and had
positive results. In no way we must apply social policies, especially
those that refer to the standard / quality of life without taking into
consideration our own social structures and without a concrete analysis
of these policies connected to the population’s expectations.
Instead of conclusions

*The Strategy Regarding the Reform in the Field of Social Assistance of Romania for 2011-2013* proposes among other aspects the decreasing number of people, who are dependent on the social services, the reduction of social services number, but also stimulating the active involvement and raising beneficiaries' awareness. The report from the end of 2010 of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection identifies some problems of the current system of social services: expenses increased from 1.4% (2005) to 2.87% (2010) of the GDP; a deterioration of fair distribution, an increased level of errors and fraud (12%), an increased level of dependents[1].

The same strategy replaces the term *minimum guaranteed income* with *income of insertion* that applicable to 2013 and encompassing all the rights of social that a beneficiary may receive. Also, been established one ISR (Indicator Social Reference) at 500 RON, for which will be reported all social benefits (from 54 will remain only 9 benefits). Any change in the ISR cascade leads to changes in the amount of social benefits.

The priority objective of National Strategy for Social Reform in Romania for 2011-2013 envisages a social system based on principles of social justice that promotes social inclusion through active measures of accountability and participation of beneficiaries to increase the quality of life.

**References**


[1] The Strategy Regarding the Reform in the Field of the Social Assistance, The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection 3.03.2011 – „Out of 11 million adults able to work from the families that benefit from social support 20%, respectively 2.2 million persons do not work, do not study or do not receive any form of training.”
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*** Gândul newspaper, 19.08.2009.