DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

*Aina Joppe ⁣, Inga Būmane ⁣, Kristīne Ozola ⁣
University of Latvia, Latvia
*Corresponding author's e-mail: kristine.varnass@gmail.com

Abstract
A social security system must provide social security and support for all members of society, regardless of their age or financial situation. The elderly and disabled may face various health problems, physical and mental decline which may make them dependent on other people or on professional care. People with financial means lack the care they need; for example, older people who may not have family carers or who do not want to use commercial care services. In this case, an additional support system is needed to provide care for those with financial resources. A social program should be available so that these people can receive help from the state or the municipality. As life expectancy increases and older people become a larger demographic group in society, it is essential to provide adequate care and support for this group of older people. This includes medical and health care, as well as social care and emotional support. In this context, the state and society have a responsibility to provide appropriate care services and resources to ensure the dignity, comfort, and security for older people if they can afford private care. In old age, people deserve to live with dignity and quality care, regardless of their financial situation or social status. This requires care and attention by both the state and society to establish and maintain systems that guarantee that the needs of older people are met.
Key words: social services, social policy, social development.

Introduction

The relevance of social care services is determined by the importance of using the latest quality technologies and tools for social services, adapted to the country's internal economic conditions.

Historically, in Soviet times, social services were provided within the social security system in inpatient state institutions: nursing homes, orphanages, psychoneurological centers, boarding schools, etc. Their aim was to provide assistance to those categories of the population who could not live independently, who were unable to care for themselves. Many of them were severely disabled.

In the early 1990s, the number of people in need of social assistance and support soared. New groups were emerging in the social fabric of society: the poor, the disadvantaged, the homeless, victims of domestic violence, etc. This has forced state and local authorities to rethink the role of social services in people's lives and to change the system of service provision.

To meet the objective needs of the population for social services, networks of national and local authorities were set up to provide specialized social assistance, which made it possible to set up the current system of social services for the population.

Theoretical understanding of the relationships that are emerging in this field, the need to assess changes in the regulatory, resource and financial framework, and the need to prioritize social service provision are important.

Social services have been explored in the work of several experts, for example, Marla Berg-Weger and Linda K. Grobman provide a comprehensive introduction to the field of social work and social services, outlining their nature, history, values, and ethics (Marla Berg-Weger, 2019).

Researchers Jillian A. Jimenez, Jodi L. Jacobson, and Eileen Mayers Pasztor examine the role of social policy and social services in building and ensuring social and economic justice (Jimenez *at al.*, 2014). Experts Diana M. DiNitto and David H. Johnson provide insights into social services policies and activities aimed at promoting social justice and well-being in different policy areas (Jansson, 2015). Economists Ralph Dolgoff, Donald Feldstein, and Linda Deutsch offer an explanation of the concept of social welfare, social risks and strategies to address them, including the role of social services in this process (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2006).

Materials and Methods

Researchers John Dixon, Bob Pease, and Bill Fredericks explore future trends and challenges in social services and their role in today's society. There are many more examples of researchers who have explored the field of social services and future trends.

There is a wealth of research and literature that offers a deeper understanding of social care services and social assistance, their nature and role in society, as well as the history of their development and an analysis of existing systems.

Social care is a broad concept that encompasses a range of care and support activities provided to people with different needs to ensure their well-being and quality of life (Jordan, 2012).

This includes both physical and psychological care services, as well as social and emotional support (Vickerstaff, 2011). Social care can be provided in the home or in an institutional setting, depending on the client's needs and situation (Giddens, 1998).

Social services are the various forms of support and assistance provided to individuals or groups to improve their well-being and ensure their integration into society (Vourlekis, 2014). These services can include education, health, employment, housing, and other forms of support provided to make life easier and to address social and personal challenges (Doel & Shardlow, 2005; Adams, 2009).

Social assistance is a system that provides financial support, resources, and services to people with low incomes or other social risks to ensure their basic needs and well-being (Popple & Leighninger, 2018).

This can include cash benefits, free or reduced health and education services, and other forms of assistance (DiNitto, 2007).

The state is responsible for social stability in society. The state regulates the main parameters of the socio-economic development of socie ty, implements social reform strategies and social programs. National social models are an important aspect of political and sociological research, and their classification may vary according to different criteria. However, they can often be classified according to their respective main characteristics or priorities, e.g. the role of the state in the economy, social welfare, employment, etc. Let us mention the most popular theoretical models of welfare states.

Directions for social services

A liberal welfare state is a state whose social policies are based on liberal ideas and principles. A liberal welfare state is a model of state that guarantees the maintenance of a minimum income and relatively high quality social and medical services, education, support for the elderly and disabled, and housing and public utilities for the population. Examples include Australia, Canada, Japan, Switzerland (Galbraith, 1998).

Conservative welfare state

A conservative welfare state is a state whose social policies are based on conservative ideas and principles. This type of state places great emphasis on tradition, individual responsibility and the private sector, minimizing state intervention in the economy and social life, and offering limited, moderate social support to the people. The welfare state model is embodied, for example, in Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Barr, 2001).

The Nordic model is characterized by a high level of social welfare, a broad social security system and a high tax burden (Korpi & Palme, 1998). *The main features of the Continental model* are widespread state intervention in the economy, an extensive social security system, but less emphasis on labor market flexibility (Palier & Thelen, 2008).

Corporate welfare state. In this model, the state takes responsibility for the welfare of its citizens, but at the same time delegates a significant part of its social responsibilities to the private sector, actively forcing it to participate in the implementation of all state social programs. Under these conditions, a significant part of the social care of their employees is borne directly by the companies and organizations themselves: they pay for advanced training, run their own pension schemes, and pay for medical and other social services. A corporate welfare state is one in which the state and business are closely intertwined, and in which economic development and social welfare are provided primarily by private companies, often with corporate interests as a priority. In this type of state, state intervention in the economy is minimal and corporations often use state resources and policies to protect their interests (Fuchs, 2007).

This model has been successfully implemented for many decades in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

The main features of the Anglo-Saxon model are a low tax burden, less state intervention in the economy and less emphasis on social security (Hall & Soskice, 2001). The Anglo-Saxon concept of the minimal state, often referred to as liberalism or the liberal market economy, emphasizes limited state intervention in the economy and in public life. This type of state seeks to ensure market freedom, individual liberty and entrepreneurial opportunities by minimizing state regulation and social support (Friedman, 1962). *The Latin American model* is characterized by low levels of social security, high levels of social inequality and unequal access to health and education services.

In a social-democratic welfare state, citizens have equal opportunities to satisfy their material, cultural and spiritual needs, to realize their value orientations and social attitudes. In this context, the State guarantees civil, political, economic, and social rights, considering that the convergence of income and life chances is the main material and legal condition for everyone's freedom. Its guiding principle is the priority of citizens over the state and economic performance. Social public policy is the immediate, direct responsibility of the state.

A social democratic welfare state is one in which the ideas and principles of social democratic politics are central to economic and social policy - making. In this type of state, the state intervenes heavily in the economy and in public life to ensure broad social support, the promotion of equality and the provision of welfare for all members of society.

This welfare state model has been introduced in several Scandinavian countries, mainly Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (Hilson, 2008).

The traditional French model

The traditional French model refers to the French political and economic system, which has developed based on specific ideas and values of French origin. This model involves a high degree of state intervention in the economy and in public life to ensure broad social protection and equality (Powell, 2009). It is oriented towards full support for independent initiatives, entrepreneurship and any ability of individuals and groups to meet their own needs, while the interests of groups and communities prevail over those of individuals or companies as such: the German model is based on the priority of social interests (group, regional, national) over economic interests. *The German or Rhine model of public administration* is very specific and different from those of other countries. Germany's federal system and governance structure is complex, encompassing both federal and regional levels, and it has a rich history and culture that shape its specific governance model. This model is relevant for the study of both German and European politics and governance (Conradt & Lindenbacher, 2013).

Results and Discussion

The impact of social care on the public budget is significant, as social care services are provided through public funding or public expenditure. This impact can be positive or negative and is determined by many factors, including the type of public social care policy, demographic trends in the population and the economic situation.

The cost of social care services is significant. The state must provide funding to cover the costs of social care services, such as home care for the elderly, institutional care, care for the disabled and other forms of support. This expenditure can be a significant item in the national budget (Statista, 2021), see 'Figure 1'.

WHERE SOCIAL SPENDING IS HIGHEST AND LOWEST SOCIAL
SPENDING AS A SHARE OF GDP IN SELECTED COUNTRIES
(2019)

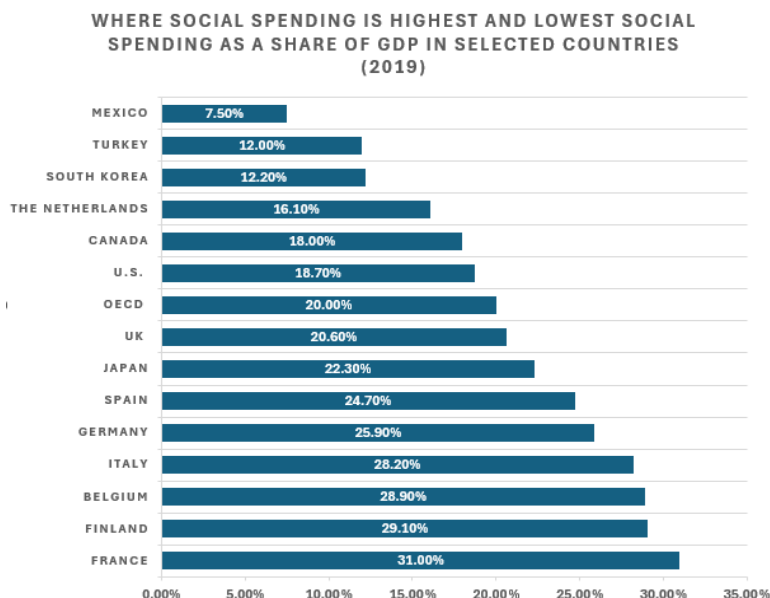| Country	%
MEXICO	7.50%
TURKEY	12.00%
SOUTH KOREA	12.20%
THE NETHERLANDS	16.10%
CANADA	18.00%
U.S.	18.70%
OECD	20.00%
UK	20.60%
JAPAN	22.30%
SPAIN	24.70%
GERMANY	25.90%
ITALY	28.20%
BELGIUM	28.90%
FINLAND	29.10%
FRANCE	31.00%

Figure 1. Chart: Statistics data where social spending is highest and lowest (Statista, 2021).

The growing number of older people and other factors can affect the tax revenue needed to finance social care. Government budget revenue and expenditure can have a significant impact on public funding for social care programs.

National policy - making and changes to social care programs can have implications for the national budget, such as cost increases or reductions in line with new program rules and priorities.

A favorable social care policy can contribute to increasing economic and social well-being in society, thereby reducing other social costs such as unemployment benefits or medical costs.

Investing in social care programs can bring long-term benefits such as improved health outcomes, reduced poverty and sustained economic growth.

Let's look at the cost of social services as a % of GDP. The cost of social services in Latvia in 2021 was 19.1% of real GDP (Eurostat, 2023), see 'Figure 2'.
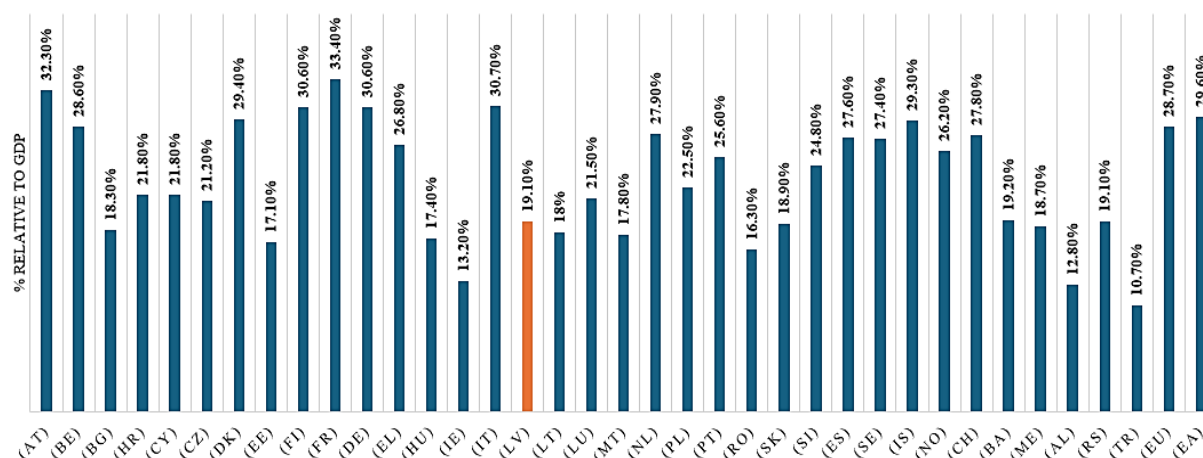
Figure 2. Chart: Expenditure on social protection benefits (Eurostat, 2023).
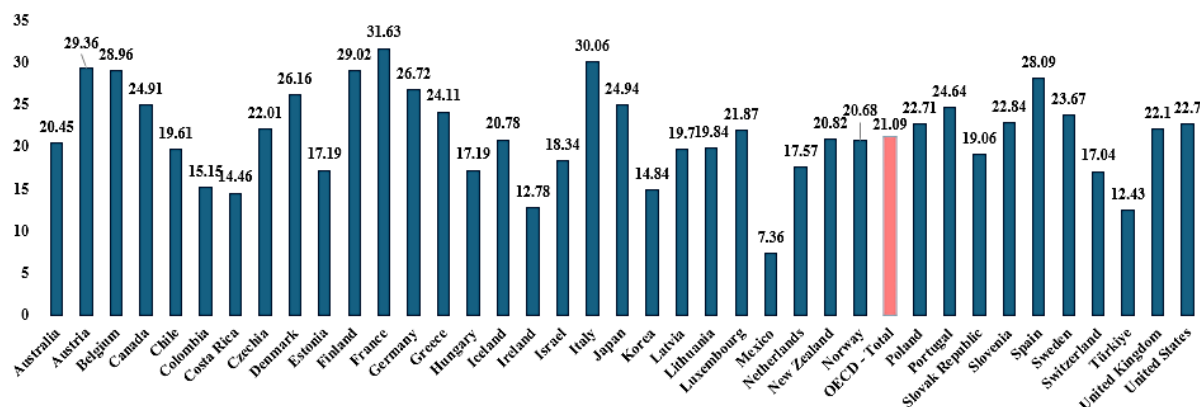
Figure 3. Chart: Social protection - Social spending - OECD Data (OECD.org, 2019).

It is difficult to clearly identify which country has the most 'modern' social care and services for its citizens, as this may depend on various factors and criteria, such as available resources, policies, and societal priorities (OECD, 2019). However, some countries are generally considered to be advanced in terms of social care and services, see 'Figure 3':

South Korea: South Korea has one of the highest standards of living and modern social care systems. The country has introduced many innovative solutions such as remote healthcare and digital health services.

Denmark: Denmark is known for its welfare system and social security, which includes high quality healthcare, education, and social care. Denmark is often considered one of the best countries to live and work in.

Switzerland: Switzerland is known for its high standard of living and modern social systems. The country offers a wide range of health and social services and has high health and quality of life indicators.

Sweden: Sweden is known for its progressive social policies and extensive social provisions, including healthcare, education, and care services for the disabled and the elderly.

The Netherlands: The Netherlands is one of the countries with a high standard of living and an advanced social care system. The country offers a wide range of health and social services, including care services and solutions for ageing.

These are just a few examples, and it is worth noting that many other countries have also introduced innovative and modern social care systems, depending on their needs and capacities. Each country may have its own strengths and weaknesses in social care and services, so it is important to carefully explore and compare the different options available. These are just some of the factors that determine the impact of social care on public budgets (Colombo, 2011). To fully understand this issue, more research and analysis of country-specific situations and policies are needed.

Social care and services in Latvia

Latvia has a growing elderly population and demographic changes, such as longer life expectancy, affect the demand and need for social care. There is a need for a shift towards home care and telehealth, considering people's preferences and the need to stay at home, considering individual needs and preferences. Recently, there has been an increase in the cost of social care in the national budget, as funds are needed to provide care services and payment for staff. Investing in social care can bring long-term benefits. Evaluating the effectiveness of social care policies and programs to ensure efficient use of resources and better management of the public budget should be carried out.

Next, let's look at social services for the elderly. In the social sphere, older people can face many problems and challenges that affect their well-being, health, and quality of life, such as social isolation. In old age, people may feel isolated from the society, especially if they live alone or have lost their social networks. As people age, their physical health may deteriorate, and they may experience mobility problems that limit their ability to move around and care for themselves.

Lack of pensions and other financial resources can make it difficult to pay for basic living expenses, including housing, food, and medical care.

Depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems can occur in old age, especially if people are facing losses such as losing a partner or friends, or health problems. For a variety of reasons, older people may find it difficult to access the healthcare and social services they need. Sometimes older people may lack the support they need from family or carers, which can lead to feelings of isolation and make everyday life more difficult. These problems can affect older people's wellbeing and quality of life, and it is therefore important to develop and offer appropriate social services and support to help address these problems and improve their lives.

Modernizing social services for older people is an important and necessary process to ensure their well-being, self-determination, and participation in society. Here are some suggestions on how these services could be modernized:

First, by introducing and offering simple and user-friendly digital technologies for older people, such as mobile apps, web platforms or video conferencing to

enable remote access to healthcare, social networks, and counselling.

Second, by offering educational courses and training. Providing opportunities for older people to learn new skills and knowledge, such as digital skills or basic healthcare knowledge, which can help them maintain their independence and improve their quality of life.

Third, mobility solutions. Developing and offering tailored transport solutions, such as shared transport services or improved public transport services to enable older people to move around easily and participate in social life.

Fourth, by setting up centers and various activity programs. Creating local centers and organizing various social and physical activities suitable for older people to promote social interaction, physical activity, and spiritual development.

Fifthly, personal care services. Developing flexible and tailored personal care services that meet the individual needs of older people and provide access to quality and empathetic care and support.

Sixth, developing information and advice services. Providing accessible and understandable information on available social services, entitlements, and benefits, and offering advice and support to enable older people to better understand and use their options.

Seven, by attracting public support and cooperation. Building partnerships with local business and community organizations to jointly develop and deliver social services that meet the needs and interests of older people.

The average age of the Latvian population is steadily rising, and the population in different regions of the country, urban and rural, is ageing unevenly, but the general trend of a high proportion of older people in the overall structure of the Latvian population will continue in the long term.

An ageing population goes hand in hand with declining health among older people. Morbidity and mortality rates are high for the elderly and seniors.

The formal and informal resources for social services, the criteria for assessing the need for services and the modernization of society's social sphere also have an impact on the development of the need for social services.

Sociological studies confirm the increasing need of the population for social services. This is due, on the one hand, to the increase in the number and proportion of people in need and, on the other, to the expansion of the range of services.

Conclusions
1. The lives of all segments of the population depend on conditions determined by the level of development of society, the state of the social sphere, the content of social policies and the possibilities of their implementation.
2. Ensuring the state approach to social work in practice implies the ability to analyze and identify socio-political development trends in public life, as well as to determine the most realistic and effective ways of solving problems in the social sphere.
3. The development of modern society, the predominance of new forms of interaction, the redistribution of powers and the modernization of the social and administrative apparatus are determined by the following factors:
   - dissatisfaction with the financial situation of crisis segments of the population,
   - the public demand for new social policies,
   - the problematic development of the social services system.
4. The modernization of principles, mechanisms and management decisions in social services, the development of the service system is linked to the need to consider new trends related to the institutionalization of social services, the creation of a single interdisciplinary space, the coordination and complementarity of the main functions of institutions, the universalization of inter-institutional norms in the context of the modernization of the social sphere.
5. Innovative social service technologies are used to meet the needs of the population and provide real assistance in the process of adaptation, rehabilitation, correction, and socialization. They extend the range of social services, improve their quality and efficiency, contribute to the activation of the individual's essential resources, and develop productive behavioral skills in complex life situations.

References

Adams, R. L., Dominelli, L., & Payne M. (Ed.). (2009). *Social Work: Themes, Issues and Critical Debates.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Barr, N. (2001). *The Welfare State as Piggy Bank: Information, Risk, Uncertainty, and the Role of the State.* Oxford University Press.

Conradt, D. P. & Langenbacher, E. (2013). *The German Polity.* UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Colombo, F. e. (2011). *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care.* Paris, France: OECD Health Policy Studies.

DiNitto, D. (2007). *Social Work: Issues and Opportunities in a Challenging Profession.* Lyceum Books.

Doel, M. S. & Shardlow, S. (2005). *Modern Social Work Practice: Teaching and Learning in Practice Settings.* Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Dolgoff, R. & Feldstein, D. (2006). *Understanding Social Welfare: A Search for Social Justice.* Published by Pearson Education.

Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and Freedom.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Fuchs, D. (2007). *The Power of Business in Global Governance.* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Galbraith, J. K. (1998). *The Affluent Society.* Mariner Books.

Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Hall, P. A. & Soskice, D. (2001). *Varieties of capitalism: The institutional foundations of comparative advantage.* Oxford University Press on Demand.

Hilson, M. (2008). *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945.* Reaktion Books.

Jimenez, J. A., Pasztor, E. M., Chambers, R. M., & Fujii, C. P. (2014). *Social Policy and Social Change: Toward the Creation of Social and Economic Justice.* SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jansson, B. S. (2015). *Social Welfare Policy and Advocacy: Advancing Social Justice Through 8 Policy Sectors.* SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jordan, B. (2012). *Welfare and Well-being: Social Value in Public Policy.* Policy Press.

Korpi, W. & Palme, J. (1998). *The paradox of redistribution and strategies of equality: Welfare state institutions, inequality, and poverty in the Western countries.* Walferdange.

Marla Berg-Weger, L. K. (2019). *Social Work and Social Welfare: An Invitation.* Routledge.

Palier, B. & Thelen, K. (2008). Institutionalizing dualism: complementarities and change in France and Germany. *Politics & Society,* 38(1), 119-148. DOI: 10.1177/0032329209357888.

Popple, P. & Leighninger, L. (2018). *The Policy-Based Profession: An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers.* Pearson.

Powell, J. L. & Hendricks, J. (2009). *The Welfare State in Post-Industrial Society: A Global Perspective.* Springer.

Vickerstaff, S. C. (2011). *Managing Community Care: Context and Practice in the Provision of Social Care.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Vourlekis, B. E. (2014). *An Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare.* Inter-Disciplinary Press.

www.data.oecd.org. (2019). *www.data.oecd.org.* Retrieved March 11, 2024, from https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm.

www.ec.europa.eu. (2023). *www.ec.europa.eu.* Retrieved March 11, 2024, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Social_protection_statistics_-_social_benefits.

www.statista.com. (2021). *www.statista.com.* Retrieved March 11, 2024, from https://www.statista.com/chart/24050/social-spending-by-country/.