

**EU-CHINA SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM PROJECT
COMPONENT 3**

DRAFT REFORM PROPOSALS

on

2018 research topics

Social Assistance:

Providing services for social assistance beneficiaries

Publicity of social assistance laws and regulations - Techniques and instruments used for dissemination of information



EU-CHINA
Social Protection Reform Project
中国-欧盟社会保障改革项目

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FOREWORD

Component 3 of EU-China SPRP based on the cooperation with Chinese partners mainly MoCA and EU authorities and experts is intended to provide policy reform proposals for the social assistance in China. This report covers issues related to social services and information policy on social assistance.

The policy recommendations are a final output of the research done by Component 3 and discussion from the C3 4th Workshop held in Beijing in September 2018.

This report provides a complex policy recommendation for MoCA based on the Chinese and EU expertise after several knowledge and practices exchanges at technical level performed mainly in China.

The full output of the Component 3 research will be published in the C3 Volume on 2018 research topics: <http://www.euchinasprp.eu/en/components-en/component-3-en/2018-reports>

All other outputs of Component 3 are available from the Project website:

<http://www.euchinasprp.eu/index.php/en/components-en/component-3-en>

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RESULT 11: Efforts of the MoCA in improved care for poor rural people and disabled people are strength-ened, and public information and transparency of social assistance policies are raised at pro-vincial level.

Topic 3.3.2 Providing services for social assistance beneficiaries¹

- **Top-down Policy Guidance and Financial Support**
- **Improvement of Social Assistance Service Workers**
- **Formulation of Standards and Norm of Social Assistance Services**
- **Establishment of Integrative Family Service Centers, Integration of Social Assistance Resources and Promotion of the Coordination Mechanism**
- **Establishment of Social Assistance Service Information Platform**
- **Combination of Social Assistance Services and Employment Support Services**
- **Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Social Assistance Services**

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- **Standardization and simplification of the decision-making process related to dibao**
- **Allocating appropriate means to centers for social welfare**
- **Anonymisation of procedures in the management of social benefits**
- **Collection of data and development of statistics**
- **On-line accessibility to social benefits**
- **Strengthening the participation of beneficiaries in the definition of services in order to improve their effectiveness**
- **Reinforcing the legal and financial partnerships with Third Parties**

¹ Excerpt from Tian Rong, Professor, report, October 2018 & Camille Lambinon, EU-China SPRP expert, report October 2018.

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations submitted by Chinese expert on providing services for social assistance beneficiaries have been defined as follows:

■ **Top-down Policy Guidance and Financial Support**

First of all, top-down policy and continuous financial guidance can help grassroots communities to cultivate professional workers in the field of SA and build an integrated service delivery network based on the community. China can establish standards for SA services at the level of the central government and set up special funds to subsidize local SA services. Through the implementation of pilot projects, China will train grassroots SA service professional, construct a community-based SA service network and establish a special fund for SA services.

Governments at all levels should increase their input in SA services, involve the SA procurement into their budgets, establish a long-term and stable mechanism for financial input, and strengthen the government's role in supervision. The SA procurement should, based on China's basic national conditions, give priority to ensuring the basic livelihood of vulnerable groups and meeting people's most urgent needs. At present, most funds from governments at all levels for venture philanthropy are supported by welfare lottery public welfare funds. Venture philanthropy should strengthen the support for SA service projects to timely respond to the urgent needs for SA from recipients.

■ **Improvement of Social Assistance Service Workers**

Grassroots communities arrange SA service workers in communities according to a certain number of households and population ratio, and recruit professional social workers to undertake administrative management services, such as the examination and approval of SA, demand assessment, service tendering and supervision. To address low professional degree of community personnel, communities improve the professional level of its management services through centralized training and further learning. In addition, the communities employ permanent or temporary professional social workers through government procurement of services. The government purchases the services from professional organizations of social workers and encourages institutions specialized in social work to enter the field of SA services, so as to establish and improve the SA service standards and strengthen the third-party evaluation of SA services, thus gradually forming the service brand of SA.

■ **Formulation of Standards and Norm of Social Assistance Services**

The government should, with discussion with the public, issue social service standards suitable for China, and urge the grassroots government to formulate service-effect-oriented evaluation standards to facilitate supervision. China need to establish a series of standards for the procurement, treatment and evaluation of SA services and train SA service workers at the grassroots level. The central government can also establish a quality standard framework for basic SA services. On the basis of this framework, the grassroots governments can sign contracts with social service providers when procuring SA services, and supervise and evaluate the service providers. At present, as for the routine work and service provision in the field of SA, China encourages and fosters more social service agencies to undertake service work.

■ **Establishment of Integrative Family Service Centers, Integration of Social Assistance Resources and Promotion of the Coordination Mechanism**

Starting from the complementary integration of SA service resources from all sectors, the government can focus on the significant SA service problems needed to be solved for vulnerable groups, and explore various forms of cross-sector collaboration in grassroots management, so as to gather all participants in SA services and comprehensively enhance the capacity of SA support. On the other hand, the government should also perfect service guidance mechanism, give full play to social work organizations and personnel's unique role in resource integration and professional guidance, and organize volunteers and other professionals to provide services for SA objects, in

order to further expand the social participation in social work, expand types of SA services included, and better meet the diversified demand of SA recipients.

The government should promote the integration of resources among relevant departments of SA, clarify their responsibilities, and establish a cooperative mechanism to more effectively tackle poverty and social exclusion. At present, in view of the decentralization of resources in the field of SA and social services, integrative family service centers can be set up at the administrative level in streets. Family support, family counseling and family resource services can be provided within the center to assess the personalized needs of SA service recipients and integrate service design and provision.

■ Establishment of Social Assistance Service Information Platform

In order to promote the professionalism of social work in the field of SA, China can use surveying and mapping technology for reference to sort out the service needs and service supply information of each grassroots area, and specifically cultivate social organizations and social work talents that meet the needs of grassroots communities. It can also establish a national SA service information database, forming a SA service information sharing mechanism and providing the basis for the decision-making, data query and dynamic management of SA service procurement. Moreover, China can build various information management and docking platforms for special assistance, to ensure the effective and timely intervention of professional social workers. These platforms can also ensure that social organizations can use information base to obtain accurate information of recipients, which helps screen service objects, evaluate requirements and problems of recipients, design assistance services, etc.

■ Combination of Social Assistance Services and Employment Support Services

The EU's SA projects are closely related to employment projects, and the positive inclusion policy is supported by designed projects with three dimensions, i.e., income support, employment integration and service providing, which jointly address poverty and social exclusion. Hong Kong's social services for beneficiaries also focus on how to help them return to the job market. How to classify the SA services for those who are capable of work and those who are not need to be considered when developing China's subsequent SA service projects. Among them, it is important to provide employment support services for those who are able to work. At present, importance needs to be attached to figure out how to integrate the SA work of the departments of civil affairs and the employment support work of departments of human resources security, so as to provide effective services and employment integration support for the service recipients.

■ Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Social Assistance Services

The development of SA services for urban and rural low-income groups is uneven. Compared with those in urban areas, social organizations and social work resources are underdeveloped in rural areas. In rural areas, mutual assistance organizations formed by residents can be guided and promoted, thus to advocate and support mutual assistance services among residents. The employment integration of SA recipients in rural areas can also be combined with the current rural revitalization in Chinese society.

Considering the EU experiences following recommendation have been proposed for providing services for social assistance beneficiaries in China:

■ Standardization and simplification of the decision-making process related to dibao

It is recommended to continue the standardization of dibao application and approval processes. Besides, the Democratic Evaluation Conference, which is composed of 9 members who are supposed to know well the overall situation of the person applying for dibao, also plays a role in the decision-making process. This process is problematic as the approval decision can depend on affinities between potential beneficiaries and the members of the Democratic Evaluation Conference and be therefore partial and biased. For these reasons, it is recommended to simplify

even more the decision-making process by decreasing the number of people entitled to decide whether dibao should be granted. Furthermore, it is recommended to continue the standardization of qualifying conditions for receiving dibao in order to strengthen the rights of vulnerable populations.

■ **Allocating appropriate means to centers for social welfare**

In order to make the management of dibao in centers for social welfare more sustainable, it is recommended to increase the number of staff members in charge of dibao. In the rural center for social welfare, one person was in charge of processing all dibao applications.

Furthermore, in order to decrease the turn-over of the staff working in the social sphere, it is recommended to increase salaries of the staff.

■ **Anonymisation of procedures in the management of social benefits**

It is recommended to be cautious in making public dibao beneficiaries' names. Though there is a global tendency for more transparency in the economic and social fields, it is important not to stigmatize social recipients.

As disclosure of names can influence the decision-making process, anonymisation could be a way to standardize procedures. Besides, some social benefits are linked to a personal situation such as a handicap. By disclosing the names of recipients and the social benefit they receive, confidential information is also indirectly revealed. For these reasons, it is recommended to develop anonymisation processes in the management of social benefits.

■ **Collection of data and development of statistics**

It is recommended to further improve the mobile application used for means-tests and for statistics. Indeed, this mobile application has the potential to make procedures more standardized if some objective data about beneficiaries can be entered and processed by the software application. This information could include gender, age, education, characteristics of the household and housing conditions. The final data should have two purposes:

Guiding social workers and empowered staff during means-tests in dibao beneficiaries' houses/flats.

■ **On-line accessibility to social benefits**

The pilot region has developed a website where people can have information about the 8 existing in-cash benefits. It is recommended to consider the possibilities of communication with beneficiaries through modern communication methods, like web applications, in order to accelerate the process of providing services to beneficiaries and at the same time decrease the workload of social service providers. It would also partly sort out the issue of accessibility to centers for social welfare, especially during winter time. Therefore it is recommended to consider setting up an online application system for in-cash benefits.

■ **Strengthening the participation of beneficiaries in the definition of services in order to improve their effectiveness.**

Following a national Chinese law that went into force in 2014, the Ministry for Civil Affairs is currently working on the preparation of a new law. It is recommended to strive to include centers for social welfare and the beneficiaries of social services in the creation and implementation of services in order to improve targeting and efficiency.

■ **Reinforcing the legal and financial partnerships with Third Parties**

As the pilot region has started an important process of delegating major tasks to Third Parties (NGOs), it is recommended to strengthen their financial and human capacities. In order to increase them, public authorities could plan to increase the duration of secured funding to Third Parties. This would make the work performed more sustainable as it would provide for increased visibility and time to reinforce the staff skills. Another way to support Third Parties would be to set up a legislation allowing tax-deduction for individuals and private companies giving money to Third Parties.

3.3.3 Publicity of social assistance laws and regulations - Techniques and instruments used for dissemination of information²

- Promoting comprehensive and balanced development of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance
- Standardization of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance should be improved
- Strengthen the guidance of Internet public opinion and build the spokesman system for social assistance information network
- Introducing innovation in information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance
- Improving professionalization of social assistance, and providing better human resources as guarantee for good information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance
- International and domestic exchanges and cooperation in the field of social assistance should be more for sharing experiences from all over the world
- To further enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of information dissemination for social assistance
- To promote the information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance in strengthening community governance
- Further strengthen the innovative development for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance

² Excerpt from Gang Shuge report, Professor, October 2018.

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations submitted by Chinese expert on publicity and information policy of social assistance have been defined as follows:

■ **Promoting comprehensive and balanced development of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance**

In response to the unbalanced development of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance among regions, the central government should go on taking the lead in top-level policy design. In areas where information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance is lagged behind, efforts must be strengthened, and exchanges and studies of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance across different regions should be more. The objective for this is clear: to promote the comprehensive and balanced development of information dissemination of social assistance. It is necessary to further coordinate the relationship between the central and local governments, and to attach importance to information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, viewing it as a key starting point and effective vehicle for the publicity and implementation of social assistance policies. The areas with relatively backward information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance should make more efforts and learn from experiences of the regions where the work is better. In particular, information dissemination and policy publicity for social assistance in rural areas in China are weaker. For rural regions, this field should be strengthened through institutional and personnel development. This will lay foundation for standardized and legalized social assistance in rural areas, and it will of course help social assistance to reach its goals.

■ **Standardization of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance should be improved**

It is necessary to formulate a nation-wide approach to manage information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance to work in this field, and authorities should strive to standardize information dissemination for social assistance. In particular, there should be unified regulation on the contents, forms and duration of publication of information on Dibao beneficiaries. The border between the public's right to know about the implementation of social assistance and the right beneficiaries to protect their personal privacy should be clearly defined. In disclosing of social assistance information, it is necessary to perfect norms on information disclosure, and make efforts on standardizing the style, texts, and duration of disclosure, and realizing consistency among different agencies.

■ **Strengthen the guidance of Internet public opinion and build the spokesman system for social assistance information network**

The social assistance is directly related to the harmony and stability of the society and therefore has important social and political significance. In recent years, the political importance of social assistance has increased significantly. It has played an important role in the promotion of social equity, justice, and poverty governance. At the same time, with the development of social assistance, more social policies have been introduced in recent years, making this period fulfilled by social assistance policies. The society pays more attention to social affairs, especially social assistance programs and events such as Dibao, charity, and disaster relief. For this, it is urgently needed to actively respond to public concerns, and use correct way to lead the public's opinion online. This helps to promote disclosure of government information, and protect citizens' right to information and expression. Finally it will establish a good image of social assistance, on the basis of time and accurate information disclosure for social assistance. This is the right way to respond to the public. New channel should be established for interaction between the public and the government. All these would create a favourable environment of public opinion for social assistance

■ Introducing innovation in information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance

In recent years, following the development of social assistance, information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance has been strengthened, which is represented by the increase and perfection of regulations on and guidance for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance. However, compared with the demand of building up a legalized and standardized social assistance system, there is still a gap in the reality. It is therefore necessary to develop social assistance with the objective set under rule of law. It is right to further improve the institutions for information disclosure and policy publicity in the field of social assistance. The process involves better work norms and managerial methods. Effect of policy publicity should be incorporated into performance evaluation of social assistance. In addition, it is suggested to improve the quality of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, which should focus on wide coverage of publicity and result in high-rage awareness of social assistance policies among the general public.

■ Improving professionalization of social assistance, and providing better human resources as guarantee for good information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance

To enhance social governance and strengthen management and services of social assistance, there must be good team built up for social assistance. The team should be made up of good members who are able to integrate professional knowledge with practical capabilities. This is necessary for the modernization of China's social assistance and governance. Since its establishment, China's new social assistance has involved human resources whose quality is better and better. However, following the trends of modernization, professionalization, and legalization of social assistance, it is still necessary to strengthen the human resources to provide efficient and effective social assistance. With scientific and high-quality services, it is easier to improve the publicity, communication, and interpretation for social assistance policies. In the principle of service and under the rule of law, human resources for social assistance should be improved accordingly, so as to provide the necessary guarantee for ensuring high-quality information disclosure and policy publicity for social assistance. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen multilevel human resources training for social assistance and especially to strengthen education and training for social workers at the grass-roots level (including philosophy, methods, professional knowledge, operational skills, professional ethics of social work etc.). Of course, the conception of rule of law should be promoted among the staffs and better legal system should be established for social assistance. Experts in relevant areas could be invited to give lectures to trainees, and special training on laws and regulations should be conducted. Funds should be prepared for these training, and it should be the regularized and institutionalized. Thus, professional training in the field of social assistance can better adapt itself to the new context resulted from enhanced rule of law in China and meet the requirements of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance.

■ International and domestic exchanges and cooperation in the field of social assistance should be more for sharing experiences from all over the world

Since its establishment, the Chinese social assistance system has experienced rapid development. In the process of legalization of social assistance and, China has gradually formed a special policy system for social assistance, and has also generated special culture and philosophy of social assistance. At present, the political importance of social assistance has grown and it is necessary to further improve China's social assistance policies through continuous reform. Among others, the studying and learning from the policy experiences of social assistance in developing and developed countries is significant. It helps to promote policy and institutional innovation for China's social assistance and anti-poverty practice in the international context.

Many aspects of social assistance require in-depth research and exchanges. These include theoretical issues and policy issues. Policy dialogue should be conducted for different countries to jointly explore ways to achieve goals of global poverty governance. Achievements in different

civilizations and policy practices should be exchanged. The rapid development of social assistance in China and its extensive international influence have also triggered foreign scholars' interest in China's social assistance policies. Thus they are all facing some issues and difficulties in the governance of poverty and related fields, including: developing social assistance systems in the context of aging; the issue of welfare dependency in social assistance; building a child-centred social assistance system through reforms; the relationship between social assistance and active labour market policies; the adjustment mechanism of social assistance benefits etc.

■ **To further enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of information dissemination for social assistance**

Information is very important to the goal of social assistance, and it is also an important working mechanism for the operation of social assistance system. In this respect, we need precise policies and targeted governance. In particular, "targeted identification is the prerequisite for targeted governance. targeted identification is the precondition of targeted governance. In social assistance, due to the different problems between urban and rural areas and among the different social groups, targeted social assistance should be classified into different measures and classified governance. This is very important for the information dissemination of social assistance. We need to adhere to the concept of targeted policy publicity and implement targeted governance. At present, many people who are covered by the Dibao system are the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill people. They have great difficulties and obstacles in obtaining information. The elderly do not want to use the Internet and some of them can not be accessible to the Internet for various reasons,. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen social surveys, through which we can better understand the real situation of the poor and social needs, and then put forward targeted different ways and methods of information dissemination.

■ **To promote the information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance in strengthening community governance**

China's Dibao system is community-based social assistance. According to this situation, the role of community in the governance of poverty, especially the information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, is fully brought into play. Community is the living place of residents. Residents' committees of urban and rural communities have direct contact with residents, especially the poor, and have unique advantages in information dissemination and policy publicity. Authorities must give full play to communities in establishing information platform handled by community workers and social workers responsible for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance. Through approaches like policy bulletin boards in community, compilation of social assistance policies, social assistance manuals and leaflets, provision of social services, posting social assistance laws and regulations, conducting community social assistance policy lectures and talks, face-to-face exchanges of officials with people in difficulty, We should further expand the awareness rate of social assistance policies for the public, especially the poor families. Efforts should be made to enhance the social workers' ability to interpret and interpret social assistance policies. It is necessary to dissolve social concern for special groups of social assistance living in community. There should be some regularized approaches for community officials to contact Dibao recipients, introducing relevant social assistance policies to them in a timely manner, and doing a good job in interpreting the policies. Psychological counsel mechanism should be adopted in social work services. Institutions and other professional social organizations should provide more humanistic care and social assistance to urban and rural communities, especially to poor populations, poor children, people with mental disorders, community prisoners, released prisoners and left-behind children, women, and the elderly. For meeting the needs of vulnerable groups for information and policy, there should be also strengthened efforts, which is also for better community governance. In addition, efforts should be made on developing a smart community, strengthening the informatization of urban and rural communities, and expand the coverage of policy publicity of social assistance through the use of new media such as Weibo, We-chat, and

mobile clients, so as to increase the level of information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance.

■ **Further strengthen the innovative development for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance**

In respect of the information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, focus should be put on innovations for management and tools. It is necessary to strengthen exchanges in the policy publicity for social assistance. Today, the tools for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance needed improved further. Authorities must make efforts on this. Regular or irregular meetings should be hold for exchanging experiences on information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance. Some useful practices and innovative experiences can be found in different regions. Thus it is especially needed to strengthen the exchange of experiences with them. This helps to promote innovations in both management and institutional design.

We should further strengthen the innovative development for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, and raise awareness of social assistance policies through various channels. In this regard, the ways should be diversified. Firstly, Traditional ways, like banners, Information bulletin board and slogans should fully utilized for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance. Secondly, social assistance should be adapted to the Internet era, which means a new ecology of “Internet + social assistance” should be established. Local civil affairs departments should be encouraged to set up WeChat public accounts to strengthen the policy publicity and information dissemination of social assistance, and realize the organic combination of social assistance and the development of Internet. Thirdly, Resident’s community should be considered fundamental in information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, and its special functions should be adopted. The Chinese social assistance system is based on communities, and this must be recognized. For implementing the work on information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance, community is important. For this, the staff of community for information dissemination and policy publicity of social assistance should improve their capacity of interpreting and implementing social assistance polices, as well as assisting community residents. This is the foundation for better social assistance.

Standards in social assistance benefits and services - legal framework, stakeholders, implementation, governance and administration³

- **Development of the social assistance database**
- **Reducing the weakness or the inadequacy of the social work and its unclear link with the labor market**
- **Fulfilment of the need of stable targeted social assistance based on national rules and the too narrow dependence of the social benefits on the wealth of the region**
- **The involvement of volunteers and NGOs**

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- **Development of Social assistance in general**

The level of Dibao is low compared with European countries. There is no clear division of responsibilities which leads to fragmentation at the lower levels of social assistance administration. This fragmentation has several effects:

- Inefficient use of resources, high administrative costs,
 - System is complex and not transparent for the citizens, they are not aware of what they may apply for and where,
 - There are overlaps in social assistance, i.e. different benefits covering basically the same need while other needs are not covered,
 - Systems even within the same province or even city seem to be different place to place.
- **Investing in Social services**
 - **Skills improvement of Social assistance staff**
 - **Increase participation of social forces/non-governmental sector**
 - **Better information dissemination**
 - First, the obvious and essential information flow from the public administration to the citizens so that they are aware of the existing social assistance schemes, the eligibility conditions for the benefits and services, the transparency of the system.
 - Second, top-bottom information sharing which would provide the front-line authorities with up-to-date and complete information on the policies and regulations and their changes.
 - Third, bottom-top communication and information assessment.
 - Fourth, information sharing between the different stakeholders.
 - **Investing in IT use**
 - **Reducing inactivity traps**

³ Excerpt from Christian Moutier, EU-China SPRP expert report, October 2018 & Pavel Janecek, EU-China SPRP expert report, October 2018

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations for Standards in social assistance benefits and services - legal framework, stakeholders, implementation, governance and administration have been defined as follows:

- ✓ The lack of a large and detailed database.
- ✓ The weakness or the inadequacy of the social work and its unclear link with the labor market.
- ✓ The need of stable targeted social assistance based on national rules and the too narrow dependence of the social benefits on the wealth of the region.
- ✓ The involvement of volunteers and NGOs.

■ **Development of the social assistance database**

All social protection systems depend on the quality of the database they use. Its main purposes are:

- ✓ The storage of personal information, updating it and monitoring the history of situations.
- ✓ The computation of the rights and related actions (control, payment).
- ✓ The analysis of data available for cohorts of beneficiaries to studies of social situations and phenomena in specific territorial areas (Actuarial).

The usefulness of a solid database is not just limited to its sole use, calculating fees and making payments. It is also used to control the accuracy of rights and to limit the risk of fraud. In this respect, it must not only be enriched by the data provided by the beneficiaries but also exchange information with the databases of other administrations (national, regional and local) such as the tax services, or even with databases. private sector, such as banks.

We can therefore suggest an alternative proposal consisting of the creation of a unique database model developed at national level and adapted in each region. This model should include all the data needed to calculate the various rights and a comprehensive knowledge of the sociology of the population. Such a single model would allow authorities and researchers to perform sophisticated analyze and sophisticated data cross-checks to study social phenomena, anticipate developments and propose adapted measures.

As far as the calculation itself is concerned, an alternative may be considered:

- ✓ Either each region develops its own calculation programs,
- ✓ Or the legislation is standardized and developed at the national level, and the calculation programs could be developed at the national level.

■ **Recuding the weakness or the inadequacy of the social work and its unclear link with the labor market**

The brevity of the contacts with the Chinese colleagues did not allow to deepen in detail the problem of the social work.

Thus, it is recommended that the Chinese authorities implement the following:

- ✓ Analyse and review the social workers curricula. The Chinese authorities most probably have a clear conception of social work. Depending on the field they are assigned to, social workers should have clear and detailed objectives to reach, procedures to follow and concrete results to obtain. Therefore, their basic education – and their vocational training throughout their careers - must be adapted, on the one hand, to the objectives assigned and, on the other hand, to the rapid evolution of social phenomena and problems.
- ✓ Include more efficiently social work in social protection. Contrary to popular belief in European countries for more than a century, it has become clear that benefits in cash are not sufficient to ensure the reintegration of people into society and allow them to acquire, or re-acquire, their autonomy.

As a result, most countries have adopted social support approaches to help people. These approaches are largely based on individual social work and the provision of services.

For example, it is difficult to refer a person to employment if you do not know both your skills and your potential abilities. Relevant services to enable people to know their potentials

are often not easily accessible or even understood by a large part of the uneducated population.

In this case, the role of the social worker will be to orient the person, to establish the links between him and the competent services, and to follow step by step his evolution.

- ✓ Make a clear split between the ones who are in charge of the people's rights and the ones who are in charge of helping people to reinstate social life and the society, including job market. The skills required to manage the cash benefits of the population are very different from those required of social workers who individually support people in their integration and empowerment process.

The first - the technicians - are essentially specialists in social law, administrative procedures and relations with populations in difficulty.

The latter have skills in individual coaching. They have a global, general approach, and knowledge of the different services that can be mobilized to help the person. Their skills are essentially in the field of psychology, sociology, although it is essential that they have a solid knowledge of the procedures, the services available and the law.

- **Fulfilment the need of stable targeted social assistance based on national rules and the too narrow dependence of the social benefits on the wealth of the region**

It seems that social regulation is essentially the responsibility of the regions and local authorities. This characteristic introduces strong disparities of rights between the different regions. In addition, the financial capacities of each region strongly influence the setting up of in cash benefits and social services. Therefore, it seems clear that the poorest regions - whose populations are most in difficulty - are also the regions with the most limited means to assist people.

It is therefore strongly recommended that:

- ✓ Basic social regulations should be put in place for the People's Republic of China as a whole, to guarantee equivalent and just rights for the entire population of the Republic.
- ✓ An equalization system is set up to ensure that the poorest regions have the financial means to cover the social rights of their population. It goes without saying that the regions could retain the right to provide financial services and additional services according to their financial capacities.
- ✓ Social regulations established at the national level should be sufficiently flexible to allow for local adaptations. For example, based on international experience, there are two basics of addressing the issue of social minima:
 - A statistical approach based on the median income of the population as a whole. In Europe, the poverty line is set at 60% of the median income of the population of each country. Anyone with an income below this level is considered poor.
 - A more concrete approach, based on a "basket of the housewife", including everyday consumer goods (food, housing, heating, current consumption) and basic services (transport, health). This approach is common in Russia and the USA.

This model can also be refined by taking into account the local context: The heating needs are different in the north and south, the cost of housing differs depending on whether the person resides in rural areas or in the city, the local production of food products is self-sufficient or highly dependent on distant supplies

- **The involvement of volunteers and NGOs**

NGOs represent the engagement of civil society in the community. Most often they drain many people who feel concerned by their purpose (health, integration, homeless, lone women, lone children, disabled people).

Overall, there are 3 types of NGOs, depending on the sources of their funding:

- ✓ NGOs exclusively financed by the State where they are located. They are highly dependent on the policy orientations of governments, but when they achieve significant results, they are an excellent relay of public policies initiated by governments.

- ✓ NGOs exclusively funded by their members and patrons. They have more autonomy but - most of the time - adapt to local contexts and participate in the resolution of problems that concern them.
- ✓ NGOs receiving mainly international funding. In most cases, they are mainly involved in international actions outside their country of origin.

The first 2 categories are excellent field relays, highly involved and, most often, very competent in their field of activity. They allow - through their field activities and their networks - to gather information and concrete experiences that allow a fine evaluation of social policies and their improvement. According to their ability to communicate and the financial means they allocate to communication, they are the ones who are most able to attract the support of civil society and citizens who are sensitive to different social issues. For example, in France, there are about 13 million people involved in associations, all categories combined (out of a population of about 66 million citizens).

Other EU expert submitted following policy recommendations (based on the experience in a transition country):

■ Development of Social assistance in general

In the EU, much of social assistance, be it benefits in cash or services, is regulated by national legislation and standards set on the national level. The debate in European countries is rather on the generosity of social assistance. In comparison with China, social assistance in terms of GDP percentage is more robust in the EU. The level of Dibaio is low compared with European countries. There is no clear division of responsibilities which leads to fragmentation at the lower levels of social assistance administration. This fragmentation has several effects:

- Inefficient use of resources, high administrative costs,
- System is complex and not transparent for the citizens, they are not aware of what they may apply for and where,
- There are overlaps in social assistance, i.e. different benefits covering basically the same need while other needs are not covered,
- Systems even within the same province or even city seem to be different place to place.

On one hand, this allows for multiple trials of innovative ways to administer social assistance, on the other hand, there are obvious disadvantages. On different levels, efforts has been undertaken to overcome the fragmentation.

It may be considered to appoint one single central government authority responsible for the general issue of social assistance administration. This does not necessarily mean that the chosen authority will carry out all social assistance work. It will be rather in charge of coordination efforts to streamline the administration.

Such a step would also enable for setting of some general standards which may help with streamlining of social assistance on the lower levels of administration. Such standards may include definition of a basic set of social assistance benefits, rules for procurement of social services or what facts must be ascertained during the means test. Such a step will also increase the transparency of social assistance scheme. The central standards is recommended to be set in a form of law as it is done in European countries.

■ Investing in Social services

European experts have repeatedly mentioned that focus on the income and benefits in cash is to be complemented with social work and social services. In Europe, this is the general approach, as cash benefits sometimes cannot solve the situation and may even become a part of the problem rather than the solution. People would sometimes prefer the services to the increase in income. Example is described above from the area of family support when benefits and tax reliefs were not accompanied with sufficient capacities of childcare facilities and promotion of flexible working arrangements. The resulting situation – that woman stay for 3 years at home with one child – has unfavourable impact on the labour market, especially on women employment.

Mutual help may also be promoted (even through some cash benefits, discounts etc.) to broaden the scope of possible provision of care and assistance as well. This may be helpful especially with regard to people who are in need of assistance but that need is not of the intensity requiring 24-hour care.

■ Skills improvement of Social assistance staff

Lack of staff and/or the qualification of the workers was repeatedly mentioned by the Chinese partners during the mission. This is also an obstacle to greater participation of non-governmental organizations or social forces as they also lack workers with experience and qualification in the field. In China, however, universities do have such courses, but the graduates seldom work for the social assistance authorities. Often mentioned fluctuation of the staff hints that the possible or current employees often chose a job they see as more attractive.

In this regard, it might be beneficial to take stock of existing study programs within the secondary and tertiary education in terms of their content and the profile of graduates. The specifics and needs of the Chinese social assistance systems could be included in the curricula.

Special attention could be given to training of those who are already working in the field, i.e. to provide the current workforce with skills it may be lacking in a series of short-term, focused courses. Such courses would also be essential for the system of life-long learning of the social workers.

Staff fluctuation seems to be a challenge in social assistance which must be faced effectively. Otherwise, the upskilling of the workforce would fall short of the desired results. Perhaps an anonymous survey among the current staff (anonymous so that the workers would more freely to express their real views) or asking the leavers what is the reason for their leaving could reveal where is the potential to make working in social assistance field more attractive. Supposedly, low wages may be the one reason and that can hardly be solved without additional resources but if the leavers seek also other advantages which do not require substantial increase in costs, those may be seriously considered.

Given the process of population ageing in China, the need for social workers is likely to be more acute in the future, which is a feature shared with the European countries. Care sector in general will probably be one of the few sectors where the demand for workforce will increase in the decades to come in both relative and absolute terms in all industrialized countries. Participation of non-governmental sector and volunteers may alleviate some of the burden but it is to face the same challenge as NGOs will also need social workers to provide services that are needed. The volunteers will also need to gain at least the basic skills in social work area.

■ Increase participation of social forces/non-governmental sector

This is a developing sector and several ways of involvement of organizations outside the government are being pursued. However, non-governmental sector remains limited compared to the European Union. The European experience has showed that non-governmental sector is very important in social services provision but also in other areas. Non-governmental organizations of various sorts in Europe provide wide range of services, some of them almost exclusively. Local NGOs provide services tailored to local and individual needs and fill the gaps left by public authorities. The Czech experience showed that setting the same conditions for all social services providers regardless their founder status by adoption of the Social Services Act in 2006 opened space for rapid development of NGOs engagement. Nowadays, non-governmental organizations and church organizations provide more than 60 % of social services in the Czech Republic. Before that, the preference of organizations founded by public authorities resulted in focus on residential care services and neglect of other services which were often a less costly alternative of residential care, including services of prevention.

Issue of the assessment of the activities carried out by the non-governmental organizations has also been raised during the training session in Beijing. It was mentioned that Shanghai has system in

place evaluating the contents of the activities implemented and that it could be inspiration for other places in China.

■ Better information dissemination

- First, the obvious and essential information flow from the public administration to the citizens so that they are aware of the existing social assistance schemes, the eligibility conditions for the benefits and services, the transparency of the system. Information could be available online and also in the form of brochures which may be received in the local offices. The information must be comprehensive and also simple enough to be understood. As seen during the pilot site visit, this has already been implemented at least at some places.
- Second, top-bottom information sharing which would provide the front-line authorities with up-to-date and complete information on the policies and regulations and their changes. This is also necessary for the front-line workers to be able to provide citizens with exact information.
- Third, bottom-top communication and information assessment. This basically means a mechanism for receiving feedback, its assessment and analysis. Feedback would include information received from the citizens (presumably, large part of such information would be queries and also complaints which – in their bulk – could hint at some deficiency of the system) as well as from the front-line offices. Higher up within the administration hierarchy, information from different areas may be compiled and assessed with the aim to identify possible issues which may be addressed.
- Fourth, information sharing between the different stakeholders. As the system is still fragmented, there are several institutions providing social assistance – in some places, their number may be higher than 10. This makes the system even more complex. Some sites have adopted policy of integrating the tasks under one authority, or to establish joint offices in order to create “one-stop-shop” or “one window” for the citizens. Even without organizational integration, at least information sharing is desirable for several reasons. Information sharing would decrease overlapping when different institutions pay benefits covering the same or similar need. The different offices may at least provide a citizen with information where he/she should apply for particular assistance. Closer integration of data on social assistance recipients would also provide the authority deciding on granting a benefit with information on other social assistance benefits received by an applicant. Such a feedback would be very useful for fine-tuning of the relevant regulations and practice.

One important aspect of information dissemination is the sharing of examples of good practice which may help in places where reforms are yet to be implemented in social assistance area.

■ Investing in IT use

Development of IT and proliferation of devices such as smartphones enables huge saving of costs and time when processing applications for benefits. Several pilot sites have already introduced such system, often along with establishment of the “one window”.

However, there is no standard set for such applications and all the places which introduced such applications had to make separate procurements. Perhaps setting a central standard or a procurement of one single platform which may be adapted to local specifics (and would enable addition of specific modules) could save much of the future costs of development of separate applications.

■ Reducing inactivity traps

As presented on various examples from the EU, social assistance schemes may include several inactivity traps. Avoiding them would often require complex coordination of several policies at once – social benefits, social work, employment policies, social services. For the able-bodied recipients, motivation measures could be put in place. When setting the level of benefits, minimum wage (if applicable) should be also taken into account along with the principle “to make work pay”. Specific attention may also be paid to low income earners, who may be eligible for some income-tested benefits as earning a small amount more in work may mean losing a higher amount of a benefit (one of the solutions may then lie in income tax reductions for low-income earners).