**Abstract**

**RS-166**

Title: «Improving living standards and quality of life of families with children, expert and analytical condition assessment and development of proposals for public policy measures»

Head of the Project: Pishnyak A. I.

Department/Institute: Institute for Social Police

**The object of the study** is families with children.

1. **Goal of research:** analysis of the current situation in the sphere of living standards and quality of life of families with children, including in the context of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, as well as development of proposals for improving the system of public policy measures for families with children and children in Russia.
2. **Methodology:** analysis of open data of Federal State Statistic Service;analysis of frequency distributions of responses collected in sample surveys; multidimensional statistical analysis of sample surveys; mathematical modeling; model family method; analysis of legal acts and other documents; analysis of qualitative sociological data of focus groups.
3. **Empirical base of research:** the data of Statistical Survey of Income and Participation in Social Programs (VNDN) conducted in 2017; the data from the survey "Parents and Children, Men and Women in the Family and Society" (RiDMiZH) conducted in 2011; open data of Federal State Statistic Service and other organizations that provide the relevant information; empirical materials from 14 focus groups; databases of regulatory legal acts and official Internet sites of authorities at the federal level and in the regions of the Russian Federation.
4. **Results of the research**:

During the epidemic, the Russian government took several emergency measures to support business and the population, half of which are related to short-term income support programs. Income support for families with children was provided at the federal level, at the same time, a number of payments were provided without taking into account the means test. Regional initiatives to support families with children during the pandemic were generally aimed at compensating for unequal access to benefits caused by the differentiation of proposed measures by the age of the child. The study revealed that regional measures to support families with children taken in response to the problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic are mainly aimed at solving three tasks: 1) supporting family income and consumption; 2) ensuring children's access to education during distance learning; 3) satisfaction of the specific needs of families that have arisen under quarantine restrictions.

Since most of the support measures taken in response to the pandemic are aimed at families with children, it is expected that the greatest effect of these measures is found in these families. However, as the results of the analysis show, this does not make their situation at the moment more prosperous compared to families without children, since before the pandemic, the income deficit in families with children was significantly higher than the average for all households (especially in families with children under 3 years – 34%). As a result, measures for families with children perform the function of compensating for dropdown income, but do not allow such families to return to the pre-crisis standard of living.

According to focus groups, participants note that "survival" in the period of isolation and recovery after the removal of restrictions largely depend on the individual's initiative, and therefore public support measures are assessed as ineffective and insufficient. In the context of negative assessment of state support measures by focus group participants, support of families with children (primarily monthly payments for children from 3 to 7 years old and lump sum payments for children under 16 years old) is perceived as more effective, necessary and fair.

Analysis of the international experience of social support for single-parent families shows that in most European countries there is a system of support for families with children, and single-parent families are allocated large amounts of assistance. These are, first of all, additional payments to the existing benefits for all families with children, provided that their incomes are relatively low. In France, social support for poor single-parent families takes place under the general social contract system, but with an increased payment for single-parent families.

Analysis of regional legal acts has shown that social support for single-parent families in most regions of the Russian Federation is on the periphery of legislative priorities. This is especially noticeable in comparison with families with three or more children, for which at least three to five measures are implemented in each region to support current and target consumption, including compensation for housing and communal services, allowances for preparing pupils for the beginning of the school year, monthly payments for the third child up to three years, and so on. The review conducted by HSE experts highlights several normative practices in the field of social support for single-parent families, which can be identified as best practices and recommended for wider use in the regions. The following measures are identified as such practices: 1) monthly allowance for a child with disabilities raised in a single-parent family; 2) school preparation allowance for children from single-parent families with low income; 3) application of regional standards that make it easier for single-parent families with children to access subsidies for housing and utilities.

The study assessed the impact of social support measures on the standard of living of single-parent families with children using the "model families" method. Calculations show that currently federal social support measures play the most significant role for the family budget if the family has a child under the age of three. Federal payments to children after the age of three and up to the age of seven also provide some support to the family, but do not provide the minimum needs of the child. There are no special federal payments for older children, because it is believed that the child's school age already allows the mother to return to the labor market. As for regional social support measures, their size depends on the region's resource availability: the richer the region, the higher the payments, and they are mainly aimed at supporting families due to the birth of a child and families with three or more children with young children (up to three years).

Modeling the effect of applying international practices to support single-parent families with children in Russia shows that the deterioration of the general economic situation during the pandemic can only be partially compensated by the introduction of increased benefits for single-parent families with children and additional payments – the share of poor among them remains at a high level.

The analysis of the social position of child-orphans showed that in the period 2005-2019 the structure of placement of children left without parental care changed. The share of children left without parental care, who are being raised in families, in the total number of children left without parental care has increased, and the risks of losing parental care have decreased. In general, the system of measures aimed at reducing the number of children left without parental care is assessed as effective. At the same time, with the development of the practice of implementing various preventive services and technologies, the prevention of social orphanhood is a significantly less effectively regulated area of activity.

The analysis of the main problems in the field of prevention of social orphanhood and the functioning of the system pointed to a whole set of critical points that need to be systematically worked out. They relate, in particular, to the mechanism for identifying families in a socially dangerous situation; protecting the rights and legitimate interests of children, their social support, economic and pedagogical support, and other areas. Based on the analysis, we identified priority proposals for the modernization of the system of prevention of social orphanhood and the implementation of state policy in this area. They relate to the issues of systemic reorganization of normative legal regulation in the field of protection of children's rights, guardianship of minors, prevention of social orphanhood, as well as the development of steps for the use of social contract technology.

1. **Level of implementation, recommendations on implementation or outcomes of the implementation of the results:** particular results and recommendations formulated as a result of the project implementation can be used to advise public authorities and improve existing or developing legislation in the field of providing social support measures directly to children and families with children in order to increase their effectiveness. In addition, the results of the study can be used as a basis of a set of measures to restore the living standards and quality of life of the population in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.