

# *Actual Problems of Social Policy in Russia*

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**Keywords:** Constitution 1993, social policy, problems in implementation, immediate prospects.

**Abstract:** The Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993 proclaimed our country a social state. The Constitution implies that the main goal of a social state is to create conditions that ensure a decent life for all citizens. In addition, the social state, according to the Constitution, is obliged to direct its activities towards the free development of a person, the provision of guarantees for the social protection of the population, and the development of the social sphere. The author set his goal to analyze the implementation of social policy in modern Russia. Based on this analysis, an attempt has been made to answer the following basic questions. Firstly, how much does state social policy comply with constitutional provisions. Secondly, what are the main social problems that have not yet been solved by the social state. Thirdly, what should be done to implement President Vladimir Putin's decree on a substantial reduction in poverty in our country. The statistical data presented in the article, the results of sociological researches, other arguments and facts confirm the author's conclusion that the state could not implement the provision of the Constitution on creating conditions for a decent life for citizens.

## 1. Introduction

The conceptual provisions of the study are based on the fundamental developments of domestic and foreign scientists: economists, sociologists, lawyers, and historians devoted to the problems of state social policy. Conceptual approaches to the study of social policy were founded by an in the writings of N. Volgin, E. Zhiltsov, V. Zhukov, V. Kazakov, T. Parsons, V. Radaev DRaitsky, V. Rakoti, N. Romemashevskoy, V. Roika J. Rawls, P. Savchenko, S. Smirnov, S. Shishkin, O. Shkaratan, L. Yakobson, etc. Russian scientists note that in the process of transition to market relations in the Russian economy, in the social sphere, many acute social problems have arisen that are holding back social and economic development. This, first of all, concerns such phenomena as the enormous scale of poverty, excessive differentiation of monetary incomes of citizens, reduction of social expenses of the state, criminalization and corruption [1].

The Constitution of the Russian Federation (the Basic Law of the country) calls our country a social state. Article 7 states that the main goal of the welfare state is to create conditions "for a decent life" of citizens. In addition, the social state, according to the Constitution, is obliged to direct its activities towards the free development of a person, the provision of guarantees for the social protection of the population, and the development of the social sphere [2]. Dmitry Medvedev, the president of Russia in 2008-2012 in his first message to the Federal Assembly did not quite accurately quote the Basic Law of the country. In a public speech, the guarantor of the Constitution

ignored the most important constitutional provision, namely: “the creation of conditions ensuring a decent life” to all citizens. Of course, one can refer to the dishonesty of Kremlin speechwriters and numerous assistants who prepared the Message of the ex-president. But, in the end, D. Medvedev, a lawyer by training, could himself correct the mistake in the text of the Message, in order to bring it into line with the constitutional provisions. And if he did not do this, then we have the right to assume that the “decent life” fell out of the text of the message of the head of state by chance. It is not by chance that the social state, with the available financial possibilities, has done very little for the decent life of its citizens. So, it formed budgets with a surplus of 1.5–2 trillion rubles, bought \$ 129 billion in US mortgage bonds, and allocated social interest for social needs. According to Vladimir Kashin, Academician of the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences, total government spending, originally planned under the Social Policy section in the crisis year of 2009, did not exceed 3.3 percent of the state budget expenditures [3, p. 32]. Well, how could 3.3 percent of the budget be a priority in financing the social sphere? But it was precisely this that was confirmed by Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, presenting the budget to the State Duma deputies.

It cannot be said that the country's leadership, the government, the State Duma do nothing for a decent life of citizens. Both the president and the legislature, together with the executive branch, are taking measures to improve the level and quality of life of Russians. Thus, in May decrees in 2012, quite specific and important tasks were set, namely: to achieve by 2018: 1) an increase in the average life expectancy of Russians at 74 years (the cumulative age of men and women divided by half); 2) an increase in the real wages of public sector employees by 1.4–1.5 times, and for certain categories, by 2 times [4], etc.

In Russia in the past two decades, certain attempts have been made to create conditions for improving the lives of citizens. The state has formed a general concept, main directions and priorities of social policy, has created a legislative basis for their implementation. However, the presence in the country of 20 million citizens who are below the poverty line, other arguments and facts show that the political leadership, the government have failed to provide with conditions for a decent life for Russians.

Unfortunately, the government has not fulfilled most of the social tasks set in the presidential decrees in 6 years. For example, it was not possible to increase the average life expectancy of Russians to the planned age, it was not enough to the planned indicators for almost 2 years. Despite the fact that teachers, doctors, scientists and other state employees received a certain salary increase, it was only felt until 2014: because of the crisis, sanctions, and devaluation of the ruble, this increase in salaries was eaten by inflation. Moreover, university professors, doctors and researchers were promised a salary increase of 200% compared with the regional average, and in fact, for example, in the Belgorod region, professors and associate professors, not to mention the simple teachers of state universities, received a premium for all six years not more than 60%. With the rapid rise in prices in early 2019, their real incomes also turned out to be very modest, not corresponding to the letter and spirit of the May (2012) decrees of the head of state.

Thus, in fact, many of the promises of President V. Putin, set forth in his 2012 decree, were not fulfilled. However, the Prime Minister D. Medvedev, reporting to the State Duma, said that the government “practically fulfilled” [5] all the tasks set in the presidential decree. D.A. Medvedev publicly claimed that “the salaries of teachers, medical workers, university professors and cultural workers, pedagogical workers of kindergartens and social workers reached the indicators specified in May decrees” [5]. As for university teachers, this, to put it mildly, is not true. The author of this article, Doctor of Historical Sciences, professor at a state university (Full Professor) receives a salary of 38,700 rubles per month, or less than \$ 600. In accordance with the May decrees of President V. Putin, the salary of a state university professor should be 200% higher than the average salary in the region [4]. Now the average salary in the Belgorod region, where author of this article works as a

professor, according to official data of the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), is 31163 rubles [6]. It is not difficult to calculate that 200% of this number is 62326 rubles. The difference or how much the state does not pay the professor every month, ignoring the presidential decree, amounts to 23626 rubles (283512 rubles year-on-year). If we calculate the percentage, the government and the Ministry of Finance failed to fulfill the professor's salary increase of at least 38% that is, more than a third.

The RIA Rating study states: a third of education workers in 51 out of 85 regions of the Russian Federation still earn less than 15 thousand rubles. per month, which is significantly lower than the regional average [7].

Crimean residents complained to President V. Putin about low wages, high food prices, poor quality and lack of drinking water. Responding to complaints from residents who he visited on the 5th anniversary of the annexation of the Crimea to Russia, the head of state assured that all problems would be solved. And he even called the approximate term: when the economy and incomes of citizens will grow [8].

Under Soviet power, the professor's salary was only 50 rubles less than the salary of the minister. For comparison: in 2016, the salary of Finance Minister Anton Siluanov was 1730000 rubles per month [9], which is 44 times more than the professor's salary. And the head of the state corporation Rosneft, I.I. Sechin got an official salary that reached payments of various bonuses, 1 million rubles a day, including weekends and holidays [10, p. 35], twice the annual professorial salary. This is how capitalist Russia today assesses the work of an official and a professor differently.

The conclusion from these facts suggests a simple one: with such remuneration of teachers and professors it is difficult to expect from them a full return in the transfer of knowledge to their students, high results in science, and patriotism. Therefore, it is difficult to reproach those doctors and candidates of science who left in different years and continue to leave Russia in search of better conditions for work and rest. In October 2009, scientists, who left Russia in the early 1990s and made a successful career abroad, wrote an open letter to the President and the Prime Minister, in which they had already drawn political attention to the plight of basic science in the country. "Due to the age structure of scientific and pedagogical personnel, Russia has 5-7 years left for qualified scientists and teachers of the older generation to prepare a new generation for science, education and high-tech industries. If in these terms the youth in the scientific and educational sphere cannot be attracted, then plans to build an innovative economy will have to be forgotten", scientists V. Putin and D. Medvedev warned. Due to the fact that both V. Putin and D. Medvedev, being in turn the presidents, did not take due organizational, financial and other measures, in order to change the situation, at least 200 thousand scientists left Russia [11].

It seems that these actions of those in power are contrary to the constitutional provision of a social state, which is obliged to create conditions for a decent life.

An example for the Russian authorities is the payment of professorial work at Harvard University, which occupies the top positions in all world rankings. The average income of a full-time professor in only one academic year (9 months) was \$ 198,400 [12]. When translated into Russian money, the Harvard professor received at least 1,432,888 rubles a month in Russian money. From these data it follows that the Russian professor today receives only 1/37 of the salary of his American colleague. At the same time, the academic load of a Russian professor is 2-3 times more. The Taylor System was invented in the USA, and it is used today in Russia.

The report on the work of the government also contained other inaccuracies, the purpose of which was to embellish the reality, to show the work of the cabinet of ministers from the advantageous side. For example, D. Medvedev stated: "Now, approximately every third family can afford to take a mortgage loan" [5]. However, statistics, confirmed by sociological studies, indicate other indicators in this area.

According to a survey of the Public Opinion Foundation, the majority of Russians exclude the likelihood of obtaining a mortgage loan - this was stated by 71% of respondents. This possibility allows only 19%, and 7% - already paid. Among the reasons that do not allow to use a loan for housing, the answer is "low standard of living, low wages, problems with work" (22%). Another 19% of respondents prefer to look for other options, while 9% do not trust loans at all and consider them bondage. In addition, 8% stop high interest on the loan.

According to economist Mikhail Delyagin, while the population is not able to buy even small household appliances without a loan, it's too early to talk about such a heavy burden as a mortgage. "According to Russian sociologists, we have beggars and poor, i.e. people who cannot buy simple household appliances from their incomes, 75%. It is clear that if a person from current incomes cannot buy, for example, a coffee grinder or a microwave, then he should not even think about a mortgage," says M.G. Delyagin. According to him, the standard of living of Russians cannot improve, because all state policy is aimed "at suppressing Russians and reducing their incomes" - starting from the daily practice of the Bank of Russia and ending with pension reform. "Therefore, there can be no illusions here. People can not raise revenues when the state destroys the economy. This does not happen", - said the scientist [13]. Professor N. Krichevsky also agrees with him. He believes that the Russians do not have some kind of distrust of the mortgage, they simply do not have the opportunity. "Low wages, problems with work, and with disbelief they retouch and cover up. Rates can be any, the question is that the mortgage must be extinguished. And there is nothing for people to extinguish, therefore 71% have no interest. They have no savings"[13].

Moreover, a high percentage of mortgage lending pushes sensible Russians. It is known that by 2019 the indebtedness of those who believed the government and risked turning to mortgage loans is growing out and has reached 5.5 trillion rubles 84.6 billion US dollars (+ 20% over the same period last year). This means that the credit burden is still beyond the means of most Russians. More than 3/4 of the population of Russia receive an average wage of less than 500 US dollars. The monthly payment for an average mortgage apartment and the loan period of 15 years is about the same. Therefore, the lion's share of Russians is actively perekreditovyaetsya, and for this purpose microfinance and other organizations with a predatory interest are involved. According to statistics, the debt of Russian citizens in consumer loans exceeds 3 trillion rubles. or 46 billion US dollars.

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mortgage must be extinguished. And there is nothing for people to extinguish, therefore 71% have no interest. They have no savings ”. Moreover, a high percentage of mortgage lending pushes sensible Russians. It is known that by 2019 the indebtedness of those who believed the government and risked turning to mortgage loans is growing out and has reached 5.5 trillion rubles 84.6 billion US dollars (+ 20% over the same period last year). This means that the credit burden is still beyond the means of most Russians. More than 3/4 of the population of Russia receive an average wage of less than 500 US dollars. The monthly payment for an average mortgage apartment and the loan period of 15 years is about the same. Therefore, the lion’s share of Russians is actively perekreditovyaetsya, and for this purpose microfinance and other organizations with a predatory interest are involved. According to statistics, the debt of Russian citizens in consumer loans exceeds 3 trillion rubles. or 46 billion US dollars [13].

What kind of mortgage can we talk about, if, according to the statistics department of Russia (Rosstat), today 80% of families living in our country have a hard time making ends meet. According to Rosstat from April 3, 2019, more than half of families (53.1%) cannot replace worn out furniture; 49.1% do not even dream of at least a week off from home; one third of households (35.4%) cannot afford to each family member two pairs of shoes for the season; 11% are not able to pay for vital medicines. Well, the purchase of fruit in any season is not available to every fifth family (21.1%) [14].

Thus, the above arguments and facts convincingly refute the regular statements of Prime Minister D. A. Medvedev, with which he seeks to embellish the real situation in Russia.

The social tension generated by the feeling of injustice is compounded by the natural fatigue of the population from three decades of reforms. The most painful and acutely perceived by the society is the extremely inequitable distribution of the burden of economic reforms in the country, the evidence of which, first of all, is excessive social stratification. According to official statistics, the decile ratio (the ratio of the incomes of the richest 10% to the incomes of the 10% of the poorest) in Russia is one of the highest in the world and is close to 17 units. According to unofficial authoritative estimates, the scale of social stratification in the country is even higher. And the welfare state is removed from the solution of this social problem. Proof of this is the growing gap between the rich and the poor in Russia: the rich are getting richer year by year, and the incomes of the poor are significantly reduced by increased taxes, excise taxes, tariffs for utility services and inflation. Over the past ten years, the cost of housing and communal services has increased almost 5 times. Only for 2014-2018 The tariffs for heating and electricity increased on average in the country by 40%, for hot water - 45%, for gas, cold water and drainage - 43% [15]. The trend of the capitalists is clear: under any pretext of forcing the population of Russia to pay even more for their goods and services, despite poverty. Due to the constant growth of tariffs against the background of a decline in real incomes of the population, only in the first half of 2018, Russians owed almost 65 billion rubles for utilities, according to statistics. or 1 billion dollars.

Due to these and other reasons, including the large-scale devaluation of the national currency, the real incomes of Russians have been falling for five years in a row. At the same time, Russia has recorded a steady increase in prices for essential goods, including food. Thus, according to experts, for the period from 2014 to 2018 prices increased for certain types of food by 1.5-1.8 times. Even according to official statistics, the average price increase for products from the Rosstat consumer basket over five years was 30–40% [16]. But the income of the Russians over these 5 years has not increased by so many percent.

Moreover, the depreciation of the Russian ruble against the dollar and the euro 2-2.5 times led to a new round of wholesale and retail prices, especially for imported goods, to the depreciation of savings and the rise in the cost of loans.

## 2. Purpose and Questions of Research

The purpose of the study is to analyze the course of the implementation of social policy in modern Russia. Based on this analysis, answer the following key questions.

1. How state social policy complies with constitutional provisions.
2. To determine the main social problems that have not yet been resolved by the social state.
3. Formulate proposals for the modernization of state social policy in order to implement President Vladimir Putin's decree on halving the level of poverty in our country.

## 3. Research Methods

The following methods are used in this study. Comparative method that allows to compare the social policy of Russia, the level and quality of life of its citizens with developed European and even Asian countries. This method, together with the method of historicism, allows us to show a significant difference in social policy pursued under Soviet power, that is, under socialism and under modern Russian capitalism.

The system and structural-functional approaches allow us to form a holistic view of the social policy pursued by President Vladimir Putin, its achievements and shortcomings, mistakes and miscalculations made in 2000–2018.

Institutional approach allows analyzing the influence of various state institutions on the formation of social policy in Russia, eliminating the causes of social inequality and growing poverty, which already exceeds tens of millions of citizens.

## 4. Conclusion

Thus, проведенное исследование позволяет автору сделать следующие выводы.

1. The main constitutional principle of the social state - the creation of conditions ensuring a decent life for all citizens - has not yet been implemented.
2. One of the contradictions of Russian reality, which arose during the period of the restoration of capitalism, is that the welfare of the overwhelming majority of Russians does not directly depend on high prices for oil and other energy sources. Therefore, social policy needs modernization.
3. While the statistics tells us about the increase in wages, the reality reports that the population's debt on loans is growing, and the opportunity to find a part-time job is almost exhausted.
4. People are constantly annoyed by the growing gap between glossy pictures on TV and what they are watching around them.
5. It is necessary to change the strategy of social policy, its priorities and financing of measures, so that Russia can rightly be called a social state that creates conditions for a decent life for citizens.

As a conclusion, the author notes the following. The May presidential decree of 2018 on the socioeconomic development of the country for the next 6 years provides for the solution of social problems in the following areas: demography and life expectancy, health and education, housing, environment, growth in real incomes of the population and poverty reduction, etc. [17].

How these will be solved tasks, time will tell.

But in order to have more chances for positive results, it is necessary to significantly increase the financing of social policy, and for this, the authors propose to reduce constantly growing defense spending (according to this indicator, the country ranks third in the world), as well as to maintain a huge bureaucracy, law enforcement agencies, find other sources of funding for the full implementation of the planned activities in order to fulfill a number of new promises to improve the level and quality of life. At the same time, it would be right to refer to the earlier given promises, including those outlined in the Government-approved "Concept of the socio-economic development

of the Russian Federation until 2020", the May decrees of 2012, annual messages to the Federal Assembly and other election promises of V. V. Putin's

Only in this case, the Russians will be sure that the state cares for them not in words, but in practice and does not distribute numerous unsupported promises.

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