

## **Concept Note: Challenges of Social Registries in Social Policies.**

### **Introduction.**

With the relaunch of the Mercosur Journal of Social Policies (RMPS), the ISM seeks to promote the production and dissemination of knowledge and inputs for the formulation and implementation of public policies, as well as for the promotion and exchange of social policies in MERCOSUR. The relaunch of a periodic scientific publication is a fundamental mechanism to consolidate a community of academics and practitioners that promotes the development of relevant knowledge necessary for the consolidation of the MERCOSUR Social Dimension (DSM).

The RMPS is a space for the publication of scientific works related to social policies for the exercise of social rights in Mercosur. It offers a specific approach to the development of various themes prioritized by the States, but at the same time, a comparative perspective to understand the advances and challenges of each State in terms of social policies. Comparability is an added value provided by approaching social policies from the regional perspective, identifying existing asymmetries with the aim of reducing them as one of MERCOSUR's priority objectives.

In line with the Biennial Plan of the Meeting of Ministers and Social Development Authorities of Mercosur (RMADS), the central theme of the RMPS is Social Protection Systems in Mercosur. In particular, the 2025 edition of the journal will focus on the challenges of social registries in social policies as an indispensable element for reflecting on the challenges of strengthening social protection systems in Mercosur.

### **Context and Justification.**

In recent decades, an increasing number of developing countries have adopted social protection programs that offer monetary benefits and services targeted at the most disadvantaged segments of the population. For these programs to succeed, it is essential to establish a national registry that supports the processes of identification, registration, dissemination, admission, monitoring, and determination of the potential eligibility of beneficiaries. Social registries have been consolidated as essential tools for policy management and the socioeconomic inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, enabling transparent identification of people living in poverty and vulnerability, and monitoring changes in their well-being. They are inclusion systems that facilitate the registration and



assessment of households' socioeconomic needs, as well as information systems that consolidate and store relevant data for more effective management of interventions.

The history of social registries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) goes back four decades. Over the years, these systems have evolved significantly, with notable proliferation in the last two decades. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, accelerated dynamic developments in social registries, demonstrating their usefulness by requiring interoperability with other databases to keep information updated.

Nevertheless, despite the advances, social registries face persistent challenges such as the fragmentation of social protection systems, the need for technological and institutional consolidation and a robust legal framework, optimization of mechanisms for data collection and updating, and the promotion of effective interoperability. A fundamental challenge is the transition from static registries, updated periodically (on average every 3.7 years), which run the risk of containing outdated information and exclusion/inclusion errors, to dynamic registries that allow continuous and on-demand registration processes, capturing changes in household poverty and vulnerability.

**Based on the above, some guiding questions arise that this edition of the Journal intends to address:**

- How can social registries combine territorial and technological strategies to reach populations in extreme exclusion?
- In what ways does interoperability between systems strengthen or weaken the ability of registries to respond to climate emergencies?
- What tensions arise between data protection and the need for traceability in monitoring vulnerable populations?
- How can social registries adapt to dynamic contexts without losing accuracy and legitimacy?
- What regional lessons can be drawn on mechanisms for updating, verifying, and accessing registries?

**Challenges of Social Registries in Social Policies.**

Within the framework of the evolution mentioned and current challenges, this edition of the Journal seeks to deepen reflection to strengthen analysis on:



- The structural functions of social registries (identification, targeting, interoperability, territorial management, data protection, accessibility, among others) that allow recognition of their existing structural and common limitations; the institutional and technological conditions affecting vulnerable populations; as well as promoting comparability and exchange between countries.
- Incorporating a cross-cutting approach by emphasizing the challenges faced by certain specific populations based on the following critical aspects of social registries:

### **1. Challenges of Social Registries for identifying people in poverty:**

- Accurate identification of people in poverty is a continuous challenge. Transitioning from static to dynamic registries is crucial to avoid outdated data and exclusion/inclusion errors.
- The high rate of informality in the labor market makes it difficult to obtain reliable income information solely from administrative data, requiring direct data collection from households.
- Since poverty is not only a monetary issue but a complex set of deprivations, other social dimensions must also be recorded and monitored, such as health, education, access to water, and sanitation, among others.

### **2. Challenges of Social Registries for identifying and registering children in early childhood:**

- Registering vulnerable groups such as children in early childhood is fundamental for social inclusion. Social registries support eligibility and access to programs.
- The challenge lies in ensuring coverage and continuous updating, responding quickly to life-cycle events and leveraging dynamic registries' ability to capture changes in families.

### **3. Challenges of Social Registries for identifying and registering homeless people:**

- Social registries are crucial as “entry points” for government programs.
- Identifying and registering particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, such as homeless people, represents a significant challenge.

#### **4. Challenges of Social Registries as tools for prevention, adaptation, and preparedness for climate emergencies:**

- Social registries are vital tools for adaptive social protection and rapid interventions in the face of shocks. They proved crucial in responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling rapid expansion of social assistance.
- Their usefulness is enhanced when they capture information on households' vulnerability to shocks, link to early warning systems, and inform post-disaster loss assessments.
- The flexibility of dynamic registries allows rapid expansion of coverage when necessary. Interoperability with risk and disaster data is key to these response strategies.

#### **5. Challenges of Social Registries for identifying the specific needs of groups requiring assistance policies:**

- Social protection programs offer specialized services to meet the specific needs of groups such as children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- Social registries serve as information systems that support dissemination, admission, registration, and determination of candidates' potential eligibility. They are fundamental for assessing families' needs and conditions, and for informing case management, referrals, and follow-up actions across multiple programs.
- A major challenge is ensuring accuracy in determining household composition, which often depends on self-reported data and may face incentives to underreport household size. Integrating social registries with case management systems can provide access to critical socioeconomic data at the point of service, enabling social workers to focus on delivering tailored support and services more efficiently.

This concept note seeks to bring together authors of articles that analyze the structural functions of social registries, with a transversal focus on one or more of these challenges and innovative solutions to strengthen the role of social registries as fundamental pillars of social protection systems in the region, driving their evolution into more dynamic, inclusive, efficient, and resilient systems. To participate in the relaunch volume of the [Journal Mercosur of Social Policies](#), authors may submit contributions that address these topics through different methodological approaches: comparative studies of social registries in countries of the region, analyses and impact evaluations of implemented public policies, original research using quantitative or qualitative methodologies, case studies of successful or challenging experiences, systematic reviews of specialized literature, and theoretical-conceptual essays that contribute innovative



interpretative frameworks for understanding social protection systems in Latin America and Mercosur.

Contributions that foster regional integration through articles comparing national experiences, regional case studies, or proposals for regional coordination of registries will be especially valued, strengthening a regional narrative on social protection in line with the objectives of Mercosur's Social Dimension. More information about the RMPS:

<https://revista.ismercosur.org/index.php/revista/index>