



# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### 2018 COUNTRY FACT SHEET

General elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 7 October 2018. This has meant a pause in legislative progress but an opportunity to influence party political manifestos along with helping to shape the priorities of the incumbent government. Over 2018, there has been significant progress across all legal entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of the policy and legislative framework for children in institutions and the provision of alternative and preventative services.

In the Republic of Srpska (RS), a new Law on Child Protection was adopted. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), a draft Law on the Protection of Families with children was adopted by the FBiH Government in July 2018. Next step is for the Law to be adopted by both Houses of the Federal Assembly. In addition, after the adoption of the Law on Foster Care in February 2017, the implementation of this law started in March 2018 in FBiH. There has been a positive move with the development of other legislation related to child protection, including the Law on Social Services and the Law on Social Work Activities. This will work in favour of the modernisation of the child protection system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, there has been a good uptake in the deployment and implementation of foster care training as well as development, piloting and mainstreaming of new services to support families and avoid children's institutionalisation in both entities.

Despite this, the exact number of children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina is unknown due to the lack of a unified database with recent statistics at national level. Furthermore, a clear legal definition of the term "children without parental care" has been either mismatched in various child protection regulations or missing. Representatives of civil society consider the lack of unified data on children without parental care a considerable challenge in implementing child protection reform nationwide.

According to the latest estimates, there are 2,435 children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>. It is also estimated that over 70% of children in institutional care have one or both living parents. There are still 18 institutions >>

<sup>1</sup> Situation analysis of children at risk of losing family-based care and children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF BiH, 2018.

## KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



**IN THE 2021-2027 PROGRAMMING PERIOD, IPA III SHOULD BE ALLOCATED FOR DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION. THE PROMOTION OF THE TRANSITION FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO FAMILY- AND COMMUNITY-BASED CARE SHOULD BE RETAINED AS AN INVESTMENT PRIORITY IN THE 2021-2027 ERDF.**

>> for children across Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, and it is worrying that the large number of children between 0-3 years of age is still being institutionalised. Although the Law on Foster Care in FBiH stipulates that a child between 0 and 3 years of age should be placed directly in family-based care, the implementation of this law is going slowly, which is one of the reasons why Bosnia and Herzegovina is lagging behind other countries in South-East Europe regarding the process of deinstitutionalisation (DI).

The general public accepts institutional care as the core form of care and usually do not challenge it. There have been very few cases where institutional care came under scrutiny of public due to incidents, but rarely did media provide any follow up and, therefore, these were quickly forgotten.

Efforts of both entities to introduce mandatory training for foster carers and training of professionals in foster care are presented in a form of implementation of PRIDE training – a model of training for foster carers and adoptive parents. In 2018, 90 existing and new foster parents were trained using this model. Additionally, a group of 23 professionals undertook this training and became national trainers.

Under IPA II in 2014<sup>2</sup>, €1m has been allocated to UNICEF for a child protection system reform in 2016-2018. Under the project ‘Transformation Process of the Institution for Children without Parental Care into a Range of New Services to Support Children’s Right to Grow up Within a Family Environment’, UNICEF has contracted Opening Doors national coordinator, Hope and Homes for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement DI specific activities.

The EU funds are used to close down six institutions in BiH: four institutions for children without parental care in Tuzla, Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka and two institutions for persons with disabilities in Prijedor and Višegrad. As a result of this closure, several alternative services for children without parental care and families at risk of separation have been developed, including a mobile team, a day centre for children at risk and emergency reception centres. One of the specific goals of the project funded by EU is to increase the capacity of professional in order to reduce the family separation and to improve alternative services for children without parental care and families at risk of separation. Hope and Homes for Children BiH is advocating with its partners for the extension of EU funds, but there is a possibility that resources from Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) funds for the period 2018-2020 will not be used for deinstitutionalisation reform in BiH. Because the partnership principle does not extend to pre-accession countries, civil society is unable to monitor or be part of the design of programmes that have a direct impact on deinstitutionalisation in BiH. The overall lack of progress with the reform is due to insufficient resources, slow implementation of the processes that influence the reform and the lack of capacity to change the long-standing entrenched ways in child protection.

## KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



**CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION II AND III PROGRAMMES.**

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/ipa/2014/ipa2014\\_037662.08\\_bih\\_transformation\\_of\\_care\\_institutions.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/bosnia_and_herzegovina/ipa/2014/ipa2014_037662.08_bih_transformation_of_care_institutions.pdf)



**hope and homes  
for children**

Bosnia and Herzegovina

## OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Hope and Homes for Children (HHC) has been active in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) since 1994. All HHC BiH programmes are focused on replacing institutional care with family based solutions for children without parental care, such as reintegration of children with their biological families, local adoption, fostering, supporting young adults leaving the care system and the development of high quality residential care in Small Family Homes of capacity up to 12 children. To find out more visit [www.hhc.ba](http://www.hhc.ba)

## NATIONAL PARTNERS

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the campaign is supported by: Save the Children BiH, SOS Children’s Villages BiH, SUMERO Alliance, UNICEF BiH, World Vision.

The Opening Doors for Europe’s Children campaign supports national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.

It is a partnership between 5 international organisations and civil society across 16 European countries. For more information go to [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)