



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

BULGARIA



BULGARIA HAS ALREADY STARTED ITS PATH TOWARDS DEINSTITUTIONALISATION (DI). THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE CHILD 2008-2018 AIMS TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE SHORT TERM, AS WELL AS TO CREATE ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF CARE AND TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES. THE VISION FOR DI OF CHILDREN IN BULGARIA SETS THE COUNTRY ON COURSE TO CLOSE ALL ITS INSTITUTIONS BY 2025 AND REPLACE THEM WITH FAMILY-BASED ALTERNATIVES.

As a result, the number of children living in institutions is decreasing, falling from 6226 in 2011 to 2721¹ as of December 2014. Despite state commitments however, children are still entering institutional care. There are 975 young children growing up in infant homes – 36% of the overall number of children in institutions. There is also a significant increase in the number of children placed with foster parents – 2322 foster parents by the end of 2013 as compared to less than 100 in 2010.

DI reforms in Bulgaria present important challenges. Despite the reduced number of children entering institutional care and the increased number of children placed in foster care and other alternatives to large-scale institutions and residential care, the overall number of children in formal care has remained the same. There is little or no synergy between project-based interventions and other mainstream sector processes, which is hindering the effective implementation of the deinstitutionalisation process.

According to leading national NGOs, child poverty is one of the main reasons for the high rates of placement of children in

institutions: 51.5% of the children in Bulgaria are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, while 78.2% of families with three or more children are living on less than 140 Euro per person per month. There is an urgent need to strengthen the child protection system, and to increase focus on preventive measures, family support and early intervention. Social workers play a key role in supporting children and families and preventing family separation. However, they currently have excessive caseloads, poor training and low pay resulting in low morale and poor outcomes for children and families at risk.

The involvement of local authorities, NGOs and other service providers is critical if the planning, implementation and monitoring of DI reforms planned under the next programme period of EU structural funds (2014-2020) is to be successful. NGOs have been pioneers in service development for several years and the Government needs to draw on this experience in the development of operations and application guidelines. Finally, the involvement of service users is fundamental to achieving successful outcomes for the people concerned.

¹Agency for Social Assistance data: 1249 homes for children deprived of parental care + 497 children with disabilities +975 infant homes = 2721



Hope & Homes
for Children



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR



National Network for Children

THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN IS AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION WHICH UNITES MORE THAN 100 NGOS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BULGARIA. THEIR MISSION IS TO STRENGTHEN AND FACILITATE CO-OPERATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS RELATED TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING. THEY ARE ADVOCATING AND WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NGOS, BUSINESSES, INSTITUTIONS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

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NATIONAL PARTNERS

Members of Coalition "Childhood 2025": Bulgarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (BAPID), Bulgarian Center for Not-for-profit Law, Bulgarian Clinical Psychology Association, De Passarel Bulgaria Foundation, Equilibrium Association, FICE Bulgaria, For Our Children Foundation, Haralan Alexandrov, Hope and Homes for Children Bulgaria, International Social Service Bulgaria, Karin Dom Foundation, Know How Centre for Alternative Care for Children, SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria, The Cedar Foundation, Tulip Foundation

Members of the National Network for Children: <http://nmd.bg/tchlenove/>

FACTS & FIGURES

- **98 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN AS OF DECEMBER 2014**
- **2721 CHILDREN LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS**
- **2322 PLACED WITH FOSTER PARENTS**
- **36% OF THE OVERALL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS ARE INFANTS**

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **3505 FEWER CHILDREN LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS (IN PERIOD 2011-2014)**
- **OVER 2200 MORE CHILDREN PLACED WITH FOSTER PARENTS (IN PERIOD 2010-2013)**

The Opening Doors campaign operates at EU level and in 12 countries across Europe.

Working with a network of national partners in each participating country, we are building civil society capacity to advocate at national level.

We are calling on the EU and national governments to prioritise the transition from institutional to family-based care and deliver quality care for children across Member States, pre-accession countries and within the EU neighbourhood.

We believe that the end of institutional care for children in Europe is possible and within our reach – putting the best interests of children back at the heart of Europe's child protection systems.

