

OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

CROATIA

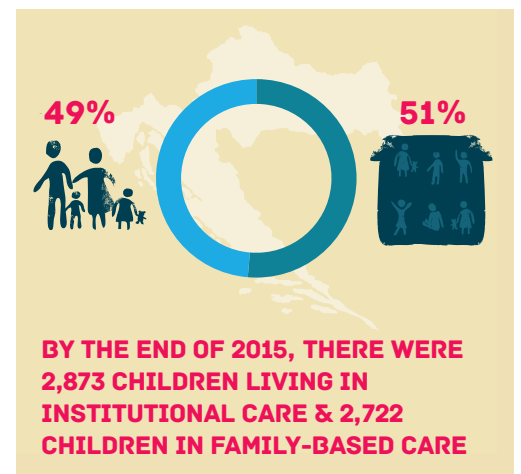


COUNTRY FACT SHEET

The Republic of Croatia started transformation of its care system in 2006 with adoption of the “National plan of activities for children’s rights and interests 2006-2012” and comprehensively continued with the so-called “Master plan 2011-2016 (2018)”¹ in 2011. The Master Plan includes measures for the transformation of institutions, development of the community-based social services for families at risk of separation and strengthening family- and community-based care solutions for children. The entire process, however, is lagging behind due to the shortage of national funds to cover the existing needs. The EU funds allocated during previous years have not been efficiently used and, therefore, stopped during 2016. Although Croatia recognises importance and shows commitment towards reforms of deinstitutionalisation (DI), transition from institutional to family- and community-based forms of care shows slow signs of progress.

In Croatia, the majority of children enter the public care system with consent from or by request of their parents. Although the 2014-2020 National Strategy for children’s rights includes measures aimed at prevention of children’s institutionalisation and provision of community support to families at risk, existing community-based services are unequally distributed across the country and are not reaching those most in need. Lack of know-how in provision of community-based services by the state providers in combination with insufficient training and support of employees of the services, as well as foster parents, delay further development of the much needed services.

By the end of 2015, there were 2,873 children living in 67 institutions for children. Despite closure of several state institutions, transition process remains very slow with the gradual transformation but not a complete closure of 6 out of 14 state institutions for children without parental care in Croatia. Furthermore, by the end of 2015, there were 897 children with disabilities growing up in 30 institutions in Croatia, whilst only 4 children with disabilities were placed in family homes and 52 children with disabilities were living in the organised housing. >>



¹ “Plan of deinstitutionalisation and transformation of social welfare homes and other legal bodies who are providing social services in the Republic of Croatia 2011-2016 (2018)”



CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 3 ARE STILL BEING INSTITUTIONALISED IN CROATIA

>> Family-type homes and organised housing are two forms of quality community-based care provided to children deprived of parental care and children with disabilities in Croatia. The Law on Social Welfare defines a family home as a service for 4 to 10 children who live with the family of service provider. In reality, family home is a foster care setting for a larger number of children with obligatory employment of the professional caregiver. Only between 2014 and 2015, 90 family homes were established to accommodate the needs of children deprived of parental care. At the same time, 17 organised housing facilities were set up for adolescents and young people transitioning to independent living. However, these two types of family-like community-based care are also unequally distributed throughout the country, with organised housing concentrated in big cities and family homes in rural areas.

During recent years, family-based care has been recognised in Croatia as the indicated type of care for children. The state pledged to accomplish 20% - 80% ratio in favour of foster care but according to statistical data, this goal has not been reached yet. By the end of 2015, there were 2,722 children in family-based care (both foster care and kinship care) in comparison to 2,873 children living in institutional care. Worryingly, some children under the age of 3 are still being institutionalised instead of being directly placed in family-based care settings.

The “Master Plan” has not seen any significant progress yet due to the lack of sufficient funding allocated for the implementation of its deliverables and full engagement and commitment from the state. EU funds that were additionally allocated for the implementation of the Master Plan were not efficiently dispersed and stopped during 2016. Currently, there are plans to apply for the new EU funded projects that will support DI reforms in Croatia.

FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS²

- **2,873 CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP IN 67 INSTITUTIONS IN 2015 CROATIA**
- **897 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WERE GROWING UP IN 30 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN**
- **183 CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP IN 11 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS, 2 REFORMATORIES AND 2 JUVENILE JAILS**
- **2,722 CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP IN FAMILY-BASED CARE (BOTH FOSTER CARE AND KINSHIP CARE) IN 2015**
- **STATE INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE HAVE STARTED THEIR TRANSFORMATION INTO CENTRES FOR PROVISION OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES. SIX OF THEM HAVE ALREADY BEEN TRANSFORMED, HOWEVER, NOT ENTIRELY CLOSED; THE CLOSURE OF 8 MORE INSTITUTIONS WILL FOLLOW IN THE UPCOMING YEARS.**
- **BETWEEN 2014 AND 2015, 90 FAMILY-TYPE HOMES ACCOMMODATED CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE; 17 ORGANISED HOUSING FACILITIES PROVIDED SHELTER TO ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE TRANSITIONING TO INDEPENDENT LIVING.**

² Although statistic data was obtained from the database of the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, it can not be 100% reliable due to the fact that institutions receive unnecessary complicated questionnaires which most of the personnel do not know how to fill in, hence, they provide only estimated information.



OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN CROATIA

FICE Croatia aims to improve life quality for children, youth, families but also professionals and communities. Special focus of its work is on children and youth in risk, as well as children and youth in alternative care. Through activities of support, experience and knowledge exchange, networking and advocating, FICE Croatia tries to strengthen and improve social services and realise its aims. To find out more visit www.fice.hr

NATIONAL PARTNERS

SOS dječje selo Hrvatska (SOS Children's Village Croatia), Udruga za kreativan socijalni rad, Udruga Ardura, Forum za kvalitetno udomiteljstvo – udomitelji za djecu, Igra – udruga za pružanje rehabilitacijsko-edukacijske i psiho-socijalno-pedagoške pomoći, Suncokret-OLJIN, Iskra – centar za edukaciju i savjetovanja, Most, Centar za pružanje usluga u zajednici “Izvor” Selce

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