



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

ESTONIA



THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN IN ESTONIA IS DECREASING, BUT THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE HAS NOT DECREASED. AT THE END OF 2014 THERE WERE 1052 CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE, INCLUDING 459 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, AND 44 CHILDREN BETWEEN 0 AND 2 YEARS OLD. IT IS HARD TO DETERMINE ANNUAL PROGRESS ON DEINSTITUTIONALISATION (DI), AS AVAILABLE STATISTICS DEFINE ONLY ONE TYPE OF CARE, RESIDENTIAL CARE, WHICH INCLUDES INSTITUTIONS AS WELL AS SMALL GROUP HOME PROVIDERS, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO TRACK REAL CHANGES.

The Estonian Government has introduced reforms aimed at transforming larger institutions into Small Group Homes. The process should be completed by 2017. The existing Small Group Homes are set up to offer an appropriate alternative to institutions, and a legislative proposal sets a target of maximum six children in each unit. A swift commitment to and implementation of this target is needed in order to guarantee the best interest and human rights of every child.

The quality of new services differs from region to region, as local authorities have very different levels of resources available to support this work. Therefore, the reforms are often limited to restructuring the facilities without parallel training programs to upgrade carers' competences. This difference is particularly notable between well-resourced services in the capital Tallinn and those in more rural areas. New and professionally trained carers are needed, together with much better social and psychological support for children. Furthermore, there are gaps in labour and employment regulations to allow group home employers to act according to "family-type care" requirements to support children's rights, welfare and developmental needs.

At the end of 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs introduced a Green Paper on Alternative Care, which aims to improve the development of family-based and family-type care, to increase the quality of alternative care and to support care leavers. The accompanying detailed action plan is not yet available but the next steps will be an analysis of existing training programmes using the European Social Fund, to then proceed with the development of services for improving family-based and family-type care for children, in accordance with the Green Paper.

Both the government and NGO's have stated that, after the selection of proposed implementation projects, good monitoring will be needed. To this end, the National coalition Child Advocacy Chamber formed a working group that involves the key stakeholders in alternative care, this will informally monitor the implementation, by mapping the needs identified by NGO's and coalition members and comparing them with government strategies in order to offer appropriate proposals for further improvement.



Hope & Homes
for Children



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR



IGALÉ LAPSELE PERE HAS A VISION TO CREATE POSITIVE AND LASTING DIFFERENCE IN THE SYSTEM OF ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND UNITE FOSTER CARERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

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NATIONAL PARTNERS

Child Advocacy Chamber coalition members (Lapse Huvikaitse Koda), Estonian care workers union (Eesti Asenduskodu Töötajate Liit), Lighthouse Foundation (SA Tuletorn), Child Welfare Union (Lastekaitse Liit), SOS Children's Villages Estonia

FACTS & FIGURES

- **WHILE THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS IN ESTONIA IS DECREASING, THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE REMAINS THE SAME**
- **43.6% OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE ARE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**
- **4.2% OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE ARE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 3**

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN IN ESTONIA IS DECREASING**
- **A GREEN PAPER ON ALTERNATIVE CARE, INTRODUCED IN 2014, AIMS TO IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY-BASED AND FAMILY-TYPE CARE, TO INCREASE THE QUALITY OF ALTERNATIVE CARE AND TO SUPPORT CARE LEAVERS**

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.

