

# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

## LATVIA



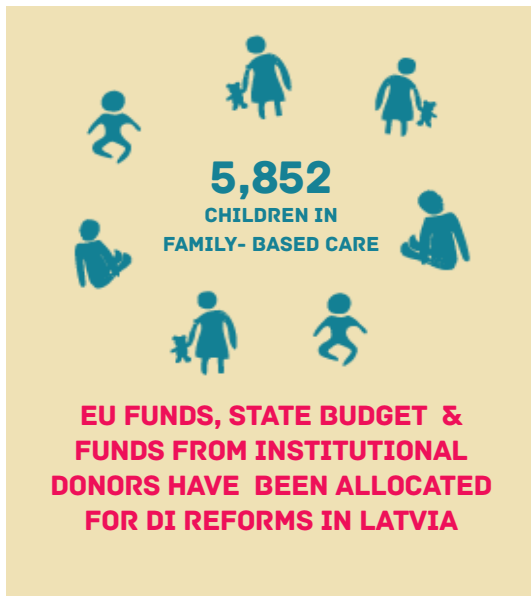
### COUNTRY FACT SHEET

There are still 1429 children living in institutional care facilities in Latvia. NGOs working in the field witness that there is a lack of quality family and community-based services to support children without or at risk of losing parental care. 2015 marked an important year to reform the child protection system in Latvia, as key documents, such as a Cabinet Regulation on the Implementation of De-institutionalisation (DI) and an Action Plan on DI were adopted. It is key that the government allocates sufficient funding to support the implementation of these policy documents and ensures that funding is spent according to local needs and in line with the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

Poverty and a lack of quality social services to prevent family breakdown are still compounding factors to place children in alternative care in Latvia. Municipalities are currently responsible for the development and provision of services to prevent family separation. Due to disparities in human resources and financial capacity between the 119 local municipalities, the availability, quality and diversity of social services and family support measures differ greatly from municipality to municipality. Particularly in rural areas, there is a lack of specialised social workers who can respond to the individual needs of children and families at risk of breakdown.

The Latvian government has taken important steps to improve and professionalize the foster care system. In June 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a Regulation on Foster Care (Regulation number 1036). This regulation introduces mandatory training programmes for foster families. Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare has committed to work in 2017 on the concept, regulative basis and funding of specialised foster families. A key concern is that support services to help foster carers to respond to the specific needs of children still have to be put in place. >>





>> We welcome that the Latvian government has undertaken efforts to make the policy framework to support DI processes for children in Latvia more robust. We also acknowledge the importance of the allocation of funding of the EU, the State Budget and other institutional donors (such as OAK foundation) to support the implementation of these plans and regulations. However, efforts to make changes on the ground have been delayed significantly. Attention should now shift from the development of plans and communication strategies to the actual development of quality care and community-based services. Furthermore, a long term perspective on planning, developing and financing new services should be in place to secure the sustainability of these new services.

## FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **1429 CHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE FACILITIES.**
- **5,852 CHILDREN ARE PLACED IN FAMILY-BASED CARE.**
- **2909 CHILDREN ARE GROWING UP IN FAMILIES WHERE THE DEVELOPMENT AND UPBRINGING OF THE CHILD IS NOT SUFFICIENT GUARANTEED (FIGURES 2015 OF ORPHAN'S COURT). THESE CHILDREN ARE AT DIRECT RISK OF BEING PLACED IN ALTERNATIVE CARE.**
- **IMPORTANT REGULATIONS AND PLANS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY THE LATVIAN GOVERNMENT TO REFORM THE CHILD CARE SYSTEM AND DEVELOP FAMILY AND COMMUNITY BASED CARE SOLUTIONS.**
- **FUNDING OF THE EU, STATE BUDGET AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL DONORS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO IMPLEMENT THESE PLANS.**
- **IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE LATVIAN GOVERNMENT SPEEDS UP THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DI PROCESS AND ENSURES THAT THIS HAPPENS IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY AND ACCORDING TO THE UN GUIDELINES FOR THE ALTERNATIVE CARE OF CHILDREN.**



### OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN LATVIA

SOS Children's Villages Latvia is a social charity non-governmental organization providing long-term family based care for around 150 children who have lost their parents and carries out family strengthening programs supporting more than 700 children in 350 families each year. SOS Children's Villages Latvia started its work in July, 1997. They are a member of SOS – Kinderdorf International, operational in 133 countries worldwide. To find out more visit [www.sosbernuciemati.lv](http://www.sosbernuciemati.lv)

### NATIONAL PARTNERS

In Latvia the campaign is supported by: NGO AzoteFoundation Grasu Children's VillageFoundation Social Service Agency NGO Zvannieku MājasLatvian Foster Care UnionFoundation Association Dzīvesprieks NGO Drošā LigzdaAlliance Latvia without OrphansZīļu Family Childre's Home

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 15 European countries. For more information go to [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)