



# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

## LITHUANIA



**IN 2014, 9684 CHILDREN (1.7% OF CHILDREN IN LITHUANIA) WERE DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE. 3562 OF THESE CHILDREN ARE PLACED IN INSTITUTIONAL<sup>1</sup> CARE (37% OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE AND 0.63% OF ALL CHILDREN).**

In comparison, the number of children with disabilities placed in institutions is disproportionately high: 1000 out of 15 500 children with disabilities (6.5% of all children with disabilities) in the country are placed in big institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, 19665 children are growing up in 9909 socially disadvantaged families. Services to support families and prevent their breakdown focus mainly on financial assistance and children's material conditions (living environment, clothing, food, hygiene). Social workers' involvement is limited to giving advice as there are no resources for providing substantial family-strengthening services with attention for children's emotional well-being and their relationship with their parents.

These deficiencies have resulted in a strong reliance on institutional care, poor preventative services for families and no satisfying reintegration of children from alternative care into their families.

The Lithuanian Government approved an Action Plan on Transition from Institutional Care to Family and Community-Based Services

for People with Disabilities and Children Deprived of Parental Care, 2014-2020 (Deinstitutionalisation Action Plan) in 2014. In addition, a Deinstitutionalisation Monitoring Committee was initiated by the Minister of Social Security and Labour.

However, the action plan is signed solely by the Minister of Social Security and Labour – showing a lack of prioritisation of deinstitutionalisation (DI) by the Government, in particular after the DI Action Plan was not incorporated into the National Strategy. The implementation process of the Action Plan is concentrated in one Ministry, and there is concern that the Monitoring Committee may not have the power to truly influence the process.

Although DI is mentioned in the Operational Programme for Lithuania, in the opinion of major Lithuanian NGOs for the rights of children and people with disabilities, the country's objective to reduce the amount of children living in institutions from 37% in 2014 to 27% by 2023 lacks ambition. A lot more could be done in 10 years, national NGOs say.

<sup>1</sup>Due to historic heritage most of the institutions in Lithuania have 40-150 children (separated into smaller groups – so called "families") in one building run by the principle of group-care and strict rules instead of family-based principles and individual approach.

<sup>2</sup>Ombudsperson for Children's Rights of the Republic of Lithuania. Annual report of 2013 No. 4-4, 31/03/2014. Internet access: <http://www3.lrs.lt/docs2/ATMQTAUA.PDF>



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## NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATORS



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES LITHUANIA IS A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION OPERATING IN THE FIELD OF CHILD WELFARE IN LITHUANIA SINCE 1992. THEY FOCUS ON PROVISION OF FAMILY STRENGTHENING SERVICES, FAMILY-BASED CARE, LEAVING CARE, AS WELL AS ACTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE OR AT RISK OF LOSING IT. AS A MEMBER OF SOS KINDERDORF INTERNATIONAL THEY CURRENTLY RUN AN INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN CALLED "CARE FOR ME! QUALITY CARE FOR EVERY CHILD" WITH A STRONG FOCUS ON DI IN LITHUANIA AND JOIN HANDS WITH EVERYBODY WHOSE AIM IS TO ENSURE CHILD'S RIGHT TO LIVE IN A CARING FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OR TO HAVE APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVE CARE OPTIONS.

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SAVE THE CHILDREN LITHUANIA IS NON-GOVERNMENTAL, NON-RELIGIOUS AND NON-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION WHOSE PRIMARY FUNCTION IS TO ADVOCATE FOR CHILD'S RIGHTS AND PROMOTE PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD. MAIN WORKING AREAS: REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND CHILDREN EXPLOITATION; REDUCTION OF CHILDREN SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION; CHILD'S RIGHTS GOVERNANCE; INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS. SAVE THE CHILDREN LITHUANIA IS A FULL MEMBER OF SAVE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL.

[WWW.GELBVAIK.LT](http://WWW.GELBVAIK.LT)

## NATIONAL PARTNERS

VILTIS: Lithuanian Welfare Society for Persons with Mental Disability, Global Initiative in Psychiatry, Institute of Family Relations

## FACTS & FIGURES

- **1.7 % OF CHILDREN IN LITHUANIA ARE DEPRIVED OF PARENTAL CARE**
- **37% OF ALL CHILDREN IN STATE CARE LIVE IN INSTITUTIONS**
- **6.5% OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE COUNTRY ARE PLACED IN BIG INSTITUTIONS**

## LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **ALTHOUGH THE AMOUNT OF CHILDREN GROWING UP IN FAMILIES "AT RISK" REMAINS HIGH AT ALMOST 20 000, THE DI ACTION PLAN AND OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME SHOW A LACK OF PRIORITISATION AND AMBITION**

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.

