



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

MOLDOVA



COUNTRY FACT SHEET

Moldova is well on its way to the eradication of all institutions for children but very many stumbling blocks still exist in the country. Due to joint efforts made by the Government, NGOs and international organisations, the number of children in residential care decreased five-fold from 11,500 in 2006 to less than 1,300 in 2017. This significant progress in reducing the number of children in residential institutions was achieved by guaranteeing access to services and appropriate family support and ensuring their adequate social inclusion and development.

In Moldova, the number of children in institutions has almost halved, from 2,214 children in 2015 to 1,324 children in 2016. A similar pattern is demonstrated in institutions for children with disabilities with the number reduced from 200 children with disabilities in 2015 to 120 in 2016. Worryingly, there are still institutions for children, specifically for very young children, contrary to international law and the opinion of civil society and experts that care in institutions for children is detrimental to their well-being and development. Currently, there 104 children less than 6 years of age in two institutions for children in Moldova. Although the Government is committed to lead the deinstitutionalisation process, there is still no ban on the institutionalisation of children under 3 as this is a political decision.

KEY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION REFORM



THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN
IN INSTITUTIONS
DECREASED BY 87% SINCE
THE START OF DI REFORM
IN 2007 IN MOLDOVA

Societal attitudes about the negative effects of institutions for children on the welfare and development of children are still mostly unchanged. Politicians and wider society are very slow to the dangers of institutions for children. As a legacy from the Soviet past, some parents and professionals still believe that institutions could provide better care for children who come from difficult circumstances such as single parents, poverty or disability. Importantly, businesses and celebrities are continuing to support institutions through charitable activities. Some local authorities (especially the ones which have/had institutions on their >>

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



THE EU HAS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS IN MOLDOVA. THIS COMMITMENT SHOULD BE CONTINUED IN LINE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRENT CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN IN MOLDOVA.

>> territory) are resistant to the reform. The key arguments are lack of services, lack of alternative solutions for complex cases, lack of funds to support families in distress, few or no re-employment opportunities for institutions' staff, political reasons (fear of not been voted) etc. Due to strong commitment of the government to support the deinstitutionalisation reform, a big push has been made to change the general attitudes and behaviour in the society, particularly by opinion leaders, businesses and media.

From 2006 to 2016, the number of professional foster care families increased 9 times, with more than 1000 children (a 10% increase on the previous year) placed in foster care and with 10,887 children (including children of migrated parents and 3,958 abandoned children) placed with extended family in kinship care arrangements.

Prevention services aimed at reducing the need for alternative care and institutions for children are maintained by local authorities in Moldova. However, given the recent decentralisation agenda of the government, the funding has not filtered down to these services and local authorities. Gate keeping committees exist at district level, although these mechanisms are relatively new (regulations revised in 2016) and their capacity is not equally strong in every district. According to UNICEF, prevention services are still lacking currently, and laws, policies, practices, and mind-sets do not fully incorporate and facilitate their creation and use. Financial crises and shocks, existing social norms and the stigma surrounding vulnerable families and children with disabilities, as well as the lack of funds for social services for families, remain leading causes for continued institutionalisation of children to this day. The capacity of child protection professionals is still low, with only an estimated 8% of social workers having a university background in the social assistance field.

Until practical action is taken to redirect the savings arising from the closure of institutions to financing the local public authority alternative services, there must be some doubt about the level of sustainability by the government and the further development of services if and when external financial support stops.

If international donor funds currently supporting NGOs to implement reforms are redirected elsewhere, it cannot be assumed that NGO activity will continue at the same level, unless the central government takes on a more active role to support less active administrations to contract the supply of prevention and deinstitutionalisation services from local NGOs.

An urgent review of the arrangements for the financing of preventative services aimed at providing support to family where it is needed is required across Moldova. The decentralisation process has not sufficiently considered that local authorities cannot afford nor are willing to finance these services from their own coffers.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



TAKE ACTION TO IMPLEMENT MORATORIUM ON THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE OF THREE AND TO ENSURE INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.



OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN MOLDOVA

CCF Moldova – children, communities, families was founded in 2004 and has represented HHC UK in Moldova since 2005. During this time, they succeeded in closing six residential institutions and returned 940 children back to their families. CCF Moldova also managed to prevent the separation of 1 350 children from their families. They have not entered into residential institutions anymore thanks to their prevention programmes. Family support, day care, nurseries, foster care – are other types of services developed or supported by CCF/HHC in Moldova to advance the reform. To find out more visit www.ccfmoldova.org

NATIONAL PARTNERS

In Moldova the campaign is supported by: Amici Dei Bambini (Moldova Office), APSCF – The Alliance of active NGOs in the field of child and family social protection, The Association for Child and Family Empowerment “AVE COPIII”, Keystone Human Services International Moldova, Partnerships for Every Child, Speranta Resource Centre

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