



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

ROMANIA



COUNTRY FACT SHEET

Romania has made significant strides towards total eradication of institutions for children over the last years, with several key pieces of legislation enacted and policy documents prepared. The overall number of children in institutions for children has fallen again from 7,915 in 2016 to 7,353 in 2017. Further closure of institutions for children followed. In part, this is due to the continuing pressure of civil society organisations, the commitment from the state and external pressure from the European Union amongst others. A key step is the on-going change in societal attitudes to 'old style institutions for children'. Significantly, in 2017, the EU allocated approximately €100mln to Romania for the closure of 50 old-style institutions for children and for the development of prevention services in the community. The implementation of the reforms will start in 2018.

Services for the prevention of separation of children from their families are growing across Romania. While the quality of services in the child protection system has increased, equal attention is given to limiting the admissions into the institutions for children. This is a strategic vision, as the prevention programme is very important in the process of deinstitutionalisation, which is completed by a better cooperation with the local authorities.

However, more efforts are needed as it is difficult for many families to access prevention services. According to the World Bank and UNICEF study, only 24% of such services are located in the rural areas (where the needs are the greatest) and only 6% of the total funding goes to such services in rural areas.

KEY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION REFORM



IN 2017, MORE THAN
€100MLN WERE
ALLOCATED THROUGH
THE EU STRUCTURAL
FUNDS TO CLOSE 50 OLD-
TYPE INSTITUTIONS FOR
CHILDREN IN ROMANIA.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE REGULAR MONITORING OF THE USE OF EU FUNDS FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS. A REGULAR DIALOGUE BETWEEN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE USE OF EU FUNDS IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.

Therefore, services are scattered in different parts of the country, most of them being concentrated in and around cities or richer areas of the counties, while in other parts they are being difficult to access or non-existent. The lack of information regarding such services is also a factor that prevents children and their parents from accessing them. In many instances, parents are either not aware or they do not know how to access such services.

In Romania, there is only a moratorium for banning the institutionalisation of children under the age of three and not a universal one for all children, despite the progress in closing many old-style institutions for children over the past years. In 2017, there were 7,353 children in 191 large-scale institutions for children in Romania, out of which 3,533 were children with disabilities.

Although the number of children in institutional care decreases year by year, the number of children in alternative to institutions forms of care for children has kept relatively equal, with about 18,000 children placed in foster care and 14,000 children in kinship care. Both the local authorities and the county authorities see kinship care as the main placement when children are at risk of being separated from their birth families; foster care is considered as a viable option for children and is preferred by authorities. Furthermore, even though Small Group Homes are considered a quality care alternative for children without parental care in Romania, there are currently upper limits on the number of children in small group homes to 12, with some discussion in 2017 about increasing this to 16 against the will of civil society and experts.

According to the Romanian National Strategy for the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights, all the old-type institutions must be closed down and replaced with community care. In this respect, a big step forward was the fact that the Government approved the closure of 50 institutions using EU funds. Romania is one of the 12 European countries that have been identified by the European Commission with an identified need for deinstitutionalisation reforms.

In 2017, it was announced that approximately €100m from the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund will be used for the closure of 50 institutions and the development of preventative services according to the country's Strategy. It is crucial that the Romanian government consults with the civil society, especially those with significant practical know-how on institutional closure and development of alternative services, in order to ensure that funds are being used in the best interest of children. Consultation can either take place via the meaningful participation of civil society in the Operational Programme's Monitoring Committees or through the recently established NGO Council for monitoring the implementation of the European Union Funds for deinstitutionalisation reforms.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE MEMBER STATE



TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT CIVIL SOCIETY IS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN THE MONITORING OF EU FUNDS EITHER THROUGH THE MONITORING COMMITTEES OR THROUGH THE NEWLY FORMED NGO COUNCIL FOR MONITORING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS.



**hope and homes
for children**

OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN ROMANIA

Hope and Homes for Children Romania focuses on transforming a child protection system based on institutional care, by preventing child separation from families, and developing family-based alternatives. They believe that attachment, love, individual care and stimulation are essential for every child. To find out more visit www.hhc.ro

NATIONAL PARTNERS

In Romania the campaign is supported by: ASSOC, FONPC – Federation of NGOs in, Child Protection, Fundatia FARA Romania, SERA Romania, Terre des Hommes

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