

OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

SERBIA

THE MOST IMPORTANT POLICY REGARDING DEINSTITUTIONALISATION (DI) IN SERBIA IS THE “MASTER PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION OF RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN” (2009-2013). THIS PLAN AIMS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE BY ENCOURAGING PLACEMENTS IN FOSTER FAMILIES.

The results, according to the Republic Institute for Social Protection and UNICEF, show that the total number of children and young people (up to age 26) in residential care has dropped by 29.5% and the total number of children in fostering has increased by 27%. However, the plan acknowledges that available community-based services for children with complex and severe disabilities are inadequate, so the only plan for this group of children is to be transferred from big residential institutions into ‘transformed’ institutions with a smaller capacity. It is these children that are most likely to end up and stay in institutions. No institutions for children with disabilities have been closed.

The Serbian Government introduced a moratorium on the institutionalisation of children under three, meaning that these children cannot be placed in institutions unless there are exceptional circumstances. Furthermore a maximum limit of 50 children has been imposed on institutions for children with disabilities –although this limit is widely disregarded.

Despite these positive developments, the situation remains worrying, particularly for children with disabilities. More needs to be done to prevent family separation and to facilitate the reintegration of children with disabilities into their biological families. In Serbia only 4% of children with disabilities remain in institutions for less than 12 months. For the majority, institutionalisation is for life and the primary reason for leaving an institution is death. Alarmingly, abuse and neglect are still widespread, as well as the use of isolation and physical or medical restraint. In addition, the majority of children with disabilities in residential institutions do not attend school or receive any form of education.

At the moment, Serbia has no clear strategy on DI. A substantial amount of funds are used to renovate and rebuild residential institutions instead of being redirected to prevention and family support services. Community-based services are insufficient and mostly managed by municipalities, which lack the funds and the capacity to provide them. Support to care leavers is scarce and inconsistent as it is organised only on a project-by-project basis.



Hope & Homes
for Children

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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR



MENTAL DISABILITY RIGHTS INITIATIVE OF SERBIA IS AN ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION THAT WORKS TO PROTECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROMOTE THE FULL PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES IN SERBIA. THE WORK OF MDRI-S IS FOCUSED ON LEGAL CAPACITY SYSTEM REFORMS, DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND COMMUNITY LIVING, AND EDUCATION. MDRI-S IS AN AFFILIATE OF DISABILITY RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL.

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FACT FILE

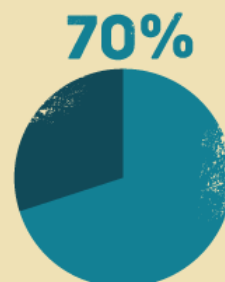
THE SERBIAN GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED A MORATORIUM ON THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN 0-3.



THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WILL REMAIN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN ADULTHOOD AND STAY THERE FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.



70% OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE RECEIVE NO FORM OF EDUCATION.



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.

