



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

SERBIA

WITH THE ADOPTION OF THE LAW ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND ACCOMPANYING BY-LAWS IN 2010, SERBIA SET THE NORMATIVE AND LEGISLATIVE GROUNDS FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION (DI), WITH DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND ALTERNATIVE CARE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

In 2013 there were 918 children in residential care in Serbia, a drop of 66% from the figures in 2000, with the most significant decrease (90%)¹ under children aged 0-3. The Serbian government introduced a moratorium on the institutionalisation of children under the age of three, prohibiting their placement in institutions unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Despite these positive developments the situation remains worrying, especially for children in circumstances of particular vulnerability. Children with disabilities comprise almost 60% of children in institutions, and most are placed in five big residential institutions with over 300 residents, where a majority are adults with disabilities. In addition, Roma children are over-represented in residential care – almost 20% of children in institutions are Roma, while they comprise only 5% of the overall population.

While the number of children in residential care has decreased substantially, the number of children placed in formal care

continues to grow, with a 36% increase recorded between 2000 and 2013. Over 6000 children are separated from their parents and placed in alternative care, showing the lack of mechanisms and programs to ensure adequate and timely support for families to help them cope in times of crisis and thereby prevent unnecessary family separations.

Although significant funds have been allocated from the Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) for DI, development of local support services, and social inclusion, there is still much more to be done to ensure adequate support to families and children in formal care. Today, Serbia does not have a comprehensive strategy on DI and the previous plan of transformation of institutions expired in 2013. The Ombudsman has produced an important document – A Roadmap to Deinstitutionalisation in the Republic of Serbia² – which has been presented to the Serbian National Assembly. However, there is still a lack of political will to adopt this document as a national strategy for DI.

¹Ministry of labour, employment, veteran and social policy of the Republic of Serbia

²Document in Serbian language available at <http://www.ombudsman.osobesainvaliditetom.rs/attachments/Mapa%20puta.pdf>



Hope & Homes
for Children



Eurochild
Putting children at
the heart of Europe

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR



NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN OF SERBIA – MODS WAS REGISTERED IN NOVEMBER 2014 AND CURRENTLY GATHERS 95 CSOS, DEALING WITH CHILDREN AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

THE MISSION OF MODS IS FULFILMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN SERBIA, IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR POSITION AND LIFE-QUALITY. THROUGH ITS WORK, THE NETWORK IS DEVOTED TO THE FULFILMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF EVERY CHILD, REDUCTION OF CHILD POVERTY, ACCESSIBLE HIGH-QUALITY FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION AND CULTURE, AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HEALTH CARE, A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN TO GROW UP IN, AND PROTECTION FROM ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE, ADEQUATE AND TRANSPARENT BUDGET PLANNING AND SPENDING, AND ESTABLISHING AND FURTHER DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY. SEVERAL OF MODS' MEMBERS WORK ON ISSUES OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DEINSTITUTIONALISATION.

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NATIONAL PARTNERS

MODS members, including: MDRI-S, VelikiMali

FACTS & FIGURES

- **60% OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE ARE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**
- **ALMOST 70% OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM**

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING FORMAL CARE CONTINUES TO INCREASE**
- **ALTHOUGH THE PREVIOUS MASTER PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATION OF RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN HAS EXPIRED, NO NEW ACTION PLAN HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT**

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.

