



**OPENING DOORS  
FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN**

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**STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.**

**SERBIA**

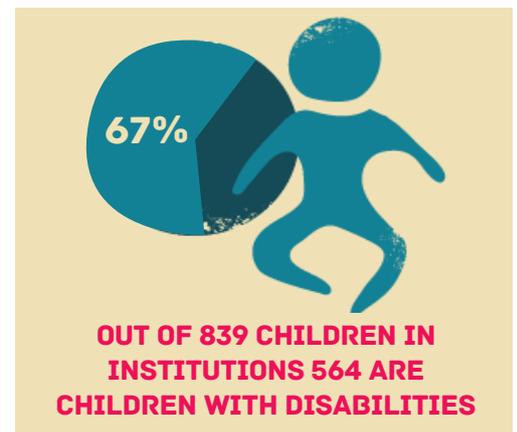


## **COUNTRY FACT SHEET**

Although, there has been significant reform of Serbia's system since 2000, until today there is still no comprehensive DI strategy and here is no clear plan of transformation of children's institutions. Children grow up in overcrowded institutions, often in the same settings as adults. Children with disabilities are overrepresented in institutions in Serbia and are also those who remain the longest in institutions, sometimes even all their lives. During recent years, one of the positive developments to take place in Serbia includes children deprived of parental care are now mainly cared for in family based care rather than in institutional care settings. Although, less children enter institutional care and more children enter foster care (851 children entered foster care in 2015 and 124 children entered institutional care) the total number of children entering care has not decreased, which means there is an urgent need for investment in prevention services in Serbia.

The main reason children in Serbia enter care is due to neglect from their parents. Other reasons include abuse and maltreatment. However, children also enter care due to lack of social services within communities, poverty, and discrimination especially in the case of children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are at a higher risk of entering care as they do not have access to education and only some have access to day care centers. This is also reflected in the number of children in institutional care in Serbia. Out of the 839 children in 21 institutional care settings for children in Serbia, 564 are children with disabilities.

The number of children within institutional care settings for children in Serbia can be up to 50 children, however the actual number exceeds the prescribed norm and institutions do not follow the set standards. Often, children with disabilities reside in the same institutions as adults. There are currently 4 large institutions with approximately 290 people of all age groups, children included.





>> On the other hand, Small Group Homes house a maximum of 12 children. However, in reality they do not function as quality community based care settings. 5 SGHs are developed for children with disabilities and although pleasantly decorated and clean, they are located in remote areas, they lack trained professionals and they do not offer personalized care to children. For these reasons they are considered as smaller institutional care settings. They do not provide children with a real chance to re-integrate into society and often when these children turn 26 (the maximum age of children to leave care) they are at great risk of returning to large institutional settings.

Family based care has significantly contributed to deinstitutionalisation reform of Serbia and more and more children that grow up in foster care tend to reintegrate in their birth families or are adopted and young people who leave foster care are able to successfully transit to independent living. However, due to limited resources within authorities, only half of the foster care families in Serbia are supervised and subsequently quality of care cannot be measured. There is also an insufficient number of foster carers especially for children with disabilities and children with severe health problems.

With regard to the funding of DI reforms in Serbia, there is insufficient state funding allocated to such reforms. According to data from the EU Delegation, programming of the IPA II 2016 is still on-going and within the IPA II 2015 there are no funds allocated for DI implementation for children. In recent years multiple private donors have been also funding DI projects in Serbia.

## FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **6,088 CHILDREN WERE IN CARE IN 2015.**
- **839 CHILDREN WERE IN 21 INSTITUTIONS, OUT OF WHICH 564 ARE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**
- **5321 CHILDREN WERE IN FAMILY BASED CARE.**
- **1/2 OF CHILDREN WITHOUT DISABILITIES AND ALMOST ALL CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES GROWING UP IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN SERBIA ARE EXCLUDED FROM EDUCATION.**
- **DURING THE LAST YEAR CASES VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE ARE NOW REPORTED AND HAVE BEEN MADE KNOWN PUBLICLY ; THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO LEAVE INSTITUTIONAL CARE TO RE-INTEGRATE WITH THEIR BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES IS INCREASING (35.3%) AND CHILDREN RARELY LEAVE ONE INSTITUTION FOR ANOTHER.**
- **THE NEW DRAFT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN (OLD 2005-2013) HAS NOW EXPIRED AND THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR ITS RENEWAL.**



### OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN SERBIA

The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia (MODS) advocates for the the rights of the child in the country. MODS gathers 75 CSOs and focuses in particular on child poverty reduction, available high-quality formal and informal education and culture, affordable and quality health protection and healthy environment for children to grow up in and be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. MODS also campaigns for adequate and transparent public spending, and for the establishment and further development of inclusive societies. To find out more visit [www.zadecu.org/en/](http://www.zadecu.org/en/)

### NATIONAL PARTNERS

In Serbia the campaign is supported by: MDRI-S, VelikiMali, IDEAS , Commissioner for Protection of Equality

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 15 European countries. For more information go to [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)