



# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

[WWW.OPENDINGDOORS.EU](http://WWW.OPENDINGDOORS.EU)

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

## UKRAINE



## COUNTRY FACT SHEET

There are almost 100,000 children living in institutions for children across Ukraine, and the number is increasing. There are 38 infant and baby homes housing nearly 3,000 children under the age of three or four if they have any special needs. 50 children's care homes host children with severe disabilities who can't live independently and need round-the-clock supervision. There are 218 special boarding schools of general education that host more than 27,000 children. These are also the children who have light or moderate severity disorders like deaf, bad eyesight, speech problems, and delay in mental development. Disorders of many children are not so crucial but these children usually come from poor families and communities without available services so they stay in special boarding schools.

According to a public opinion poll on solving the problem of orphanhood in Ukraine<sup>1</sup>, 53% of Ukrainians supported the development of a network of institutions. There is an on-going change in societal attitudes, where through awareness raising activities, including the Opening Doors campaign, there is a significant increase in public understanding of deinstitutionalisation (DI) and the detrimental effects of institutional care on child's development.

There has been a massive increase in the number of children placed in foster care across Ukraine: from 397 children in 2015 to 13,408 children in 2016. There are large numbers of children placed in kinship care arrangements, but the numbers have remained relatively stagnant at around 50,000 children over the past two years.

### KEY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION REFORM



IN 2017, THE GOVERNMENT OF UKRAINE ADOPTED THE NATIONAL DI STRATEGY & THE ACTION PLAN FOR 2017-2026. THE NATIONAL DI REFORM OFFICE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED UNDER THE PRESIDENTIAL OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

<sup>1</sup> The Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, 2014 (unpublished).

## KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



**TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD INVESTMENT FUNDS SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS IN UKRAINE.**

The legislation stipulates that an orphan child or a child deprived of parental care by a court decision can be placed in an institutional care only if all steps to place a child in the family-based care have been taken. The local social services have to continue searching for the new families for a child even after he or she was placed to an institution. Only 9% of children stay in institutions because of the loss of parents or because their parents have been deprived of their parental rights; the remaining children were institutionalised due to social factors (so called “social orphanhood”). The most common reasons for children entering institutional care are poverty, unemployment, alcohol or drug dependence of parents and state of health or developmental issues of children.

There are 235,600 children from the eastern regions of Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk oblast) who have been internally displaced since the beginning of the military conflict with Russia in 2014. This, coupled with the general deterioration of social and economic situation in Ukraine have put the work of social services under greater pressure. Furthermore, low professional capacity of the staff and cuts in the number of social workers have negatively affected situation with preparation of potential foster families and their support after the placement of a child, resulting in the increased number of children who return back to institutions from family-based care placements.

In 2017, the Government of Ukraine adopted the National Deinstitutionalisation Strategy and the Action Plan for 2017-2026. The National DI Reform office has been established under the Ukrainian presidential ombudsman for children's rights. Two new forms of alternative care have been legislated across Ukraine in 2017: small group homes and ‘patronage caregivers’ (emergency foster carers). The latter enables children's placement to a family-based care without having to wait for an official status of the orphan or a child deprived of parental care, which in some instances may take up to 6-12 months.

## KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



**TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS AND SENT INTO INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS.**



**hope and homes for children**

### OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN UKRAINE

HHC Ukraine aims to reform the state childcare system through piloting models and developing legislation in partnership with authorities and NGO's. In 1998 they developed family type homes and introduced work on the prevention of child abandonment in Ukraine. Now they are focused deinstitutionalisation which includes the closure of institutions and the creation of a wide range of supportive and preventive services for families and children. To find out more visit

[www.openingdoors.org.ua](http://www.openingdoors.org.ua)

### NATIONAL PARTNERS

All-Ukrainian civil organisation ‘Magnolia’, All-Ukrainian Charity Fund “Child Well-Being Fund Ukraine”, Caritas Ukraine, Charitable Foundation ‘Bethany Social Services’, Charitable Fund ‘Blagomay’, Charitable Organisation ‘Rodyna’, Council of Europe in Ukraine, East Europe Foundation, Educational and Culture Center ‘Master-class’, Foundation ‘Development of Ukraine’, GURT Resource Center, HealthRight International Ukraine, International Charitable Fund ‘Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising’, La Strada Ukraine, League of Social Workers of Ukraine, Lviv Municipal Rehabilitation Centre ‘Dzherelo’, Partnership for Every Child, Project ONE HOPE, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine, ‘Toshkin Dom’ Charity Organization, Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF), UNICEF Ukraine

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](http://www.openingdoors.eu)