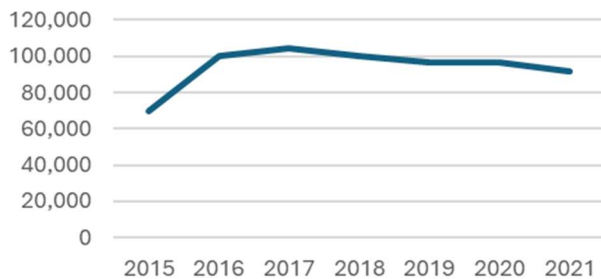




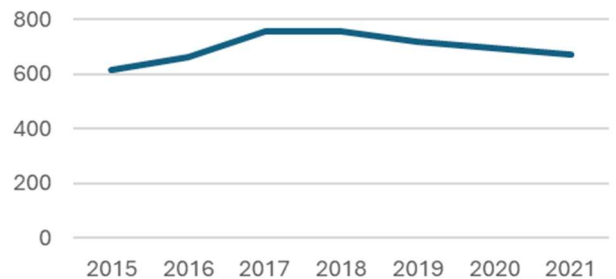
What are the key priorities facing child protection system reform in 2024 in your country?

- **Finalise care reform strategy and action plan and secure funding for their implementation**
- **Raise awareness about care reform among regions and the larger public and get them on board for the reform**
- **Start the strategy implementation and the development of community-based services**

Total children in institutions



Number of institutions



The war in Ukraine has been devastating for the country's children, particularly those in the most vulnerable situations, including children without parental care, children with disabilities, children at risk of family separation, those residing in residential institutions, as well as those who have been evacuated from such institutions during the war.





An extensive body of evidence clearly shows that residential institutions are harmful to children.¹ In its opinion on Ukraine's application for EU membership, the European Commission stated that "Ukraine has one of the highest rates of child institutionalisation in the world (ca. 1.5% of all children), which is a serious concern and needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency."² Prior to the war, over 90% of institutionalised children in Ukraine had at least one living parent with parental rights, and nearly half were children with disabilities.³ These children were exposed to the harm, neglect and abuse that are common practice within institutional systems.⁴ Recent reports have highlighted the severe risk of harm and human rights violations experienced by this group of children during the war and the urgency of the need to remove them from institutions and provide support for family and community care.⁵

Foster care:

According to the Ministry of Social Policy in Ukraine there are

- 1,305 big foster families accommodating 9,102 children,
- 2,969 small foster families caring for 5,663 children.
- 224 patronage foster families responsible for 446 children.
- Over the past four years, the country has been actively engaged in the deinstitutionalisation process, gradually transitioning children from institutional care to family-based settings.⁶

¹ Allen, S., Bulic, I., Rosenthal, E., Laurin-Bowie, C., Roozen, S. and Cuk, V., 2020. Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(11), p.e40.

² <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/Ukraine%20Opinion%20and%20Annex.pdf>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/13/ukraine-perils-war-children-institutions>

⁴ https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/unicef_iss-report_on_alternative_care_system_in_ukraine-final.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/10/un-experts-call-urgent-action-protect-ukrainian-children-disabilities>

⁶ <https://www.euro.centre.org/downloads/detail/4765> (presented in September 2023)



Given numbers and scale of children living in institutions

According to the draft care reform strategy, the government stated that:⁷

- 48 000 children lived in institutions before the full-scale invasion of Russia, 38,882 children were returned to their families without an assessment of their ability to provide care and education
- 4,292 children evacuated abroad 1,611 children evacuated within Ukraine, including 1042 children under the age of 3.
- Every third child has a disability.

In June 2023, the government of Ukraine stated that there are:⁸

- 7.3 million children in Ukraine
- 67,600 children with the status of orphans and children deprived of parental care.
- 24,600 children live in institutions of whom:
 - › 5,400 children are orphans or children deprived of parental care.
 - › 3,400 were identified as those whose parents are not interested in children.

⁷ As presented at the Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine, 30th of November and 1st of December

⁸ The UK, jointly with Ukraine, hosted the international Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC 2023) in London on 21-22 June 2023



The biggest positive change in the country over the last 12 months

Ukraine launched it's 2024-2028 draft Strategy to ensure the right of every child in Ukraine to grow up in a family environment.

"Creating a support system for children and families with children that ensures the realization of the right of every child to family upbringing in a favourable environment by ensuring the availability of individually tailored services and other support in communities, development of alternative forms of family care".

While the adoption of a strategy marks the initial step in implementing the reform of the child care protection systems, it is essential to note that this process may encounter potential obstacles and can be halted. Therefore, it is crucial to remain vigilant and proactive to ensure the actual execution of the reform, with an unwavering commitment to including all children.

The biggest negative change in the country over the last 12 months.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been devastating for the child protection and care systems of the country. Many Ukrainian children residing in institutions were initially left behind, in understaffed and overcrowded institutions, some in high-risk areas or territories controlled by the Russian Federation Army.⁹ A large number of the children once trapped in Ukraine's institutions. boarding schools and institutions were suddenly reunited with their families, without due process and best interest assessments. ^{10 11} Groups of children from institutions sought safety in neighbouring countries and beyond, their whereabouts uncertain, remaining particularly vulnerable to trafficking in the context of conflict and displacement.^{12 13}

⁹ Eric Rosenthal, Halyna Kurylo and Dragana Ciric Milovanovic et al. (2022) Human Rights Bulletin. *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*. Vol. 2(2):15-22

¹⁰ Eric Rosenthal, Halyna Kurylo and Dragana Ciric Milovanovic et al. (2022) Human Rights Bulletin. *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*. Vol. 2(2):15-22

¹¹ Eric Rosenthal, Halyna Kurylo and Dragana Ciric Milovanovic et al. (2022) Human Rights Bulletin. *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice*. Vol. 2(2):15-22

¹² Mark Waddington, Hope and Homes for Children's CEO (2022) *There is always hope: preventing a human trafficking catastrophe*

¹³ World Vision (2023) *Impact of War on Ukraine's Children: A Child Protection Report*



What are the other headlines or issues that Hope and Homes for Children are working on in terms of child protection system reform?

1. The war in Ukraine has been devastating for the country's children, particularly those in the most vulnerable situations, including children without parental care, children with disabilities, children at risk of family separation, those residing in residential institutions, as well as those who have been evacuated from such institutions during the war.
2. There is a significant number of refugee children, including unaccompanied, separated and children from institutions, who often face challenges accessing national child protection systems and benefitting from respective protection services. This, in turn, may result in gaps accessing their rights in the countries of asylum, as the displacement is becoming protracted.¹⁴



¹⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105903>



Hope and Homes for Children Ukraine are working with children in families across Ukraine through:

- The prevention of family separation (poverty, death, traumas, neglect, low parental capacity, lack of housing, IDPs),
- By Providing services for children with disabilities (day care, rehab), foster care for children with disabilities,
- Strengthening the capacity of local communities to support children and families,
- The Development of alternative family-based care (training for foster care, ongoing support to foster children and carers, including piloting specialised Services to provide narrow specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, neurologists, etc.),
- And moving children out of institutions.



What is the main thing Hope and Homes for Children wants the government or international donors to know about in 2023?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has increased the risk of children being separated from their parents. The war also led to many accounts of sudden reunifications between children from institutions and their families without due preparation, rushed evacuations, and children with disabilities confined to institutions with minimum support and without the resources necessary to evacuate to safer zones. Children in institutions are not only more vulnerable to being abducted from the Russian army but are also less likely to be retrieved by Russia. The level of access of children with disabilities to medical care, rehabilitation, psychological and social services has remained low. The war has also led to the closure of boarding schools and institutions for children with disabilities, many of whom have been sent back home without a best interest assessment.

To put an end to the systemic institutionalisation of children in Ukraine and rebuild the child protection system with community- and family-based care in its core, the EU political leadership and guidance as well as financial and technical support during the EU accession process will be key. The expert group, which is currently being set up with the involvement of representatives of the relevant ministries and authorities, and the task to develop a national care reform strategy and accompanying action plan will be a crucial actor. It is essential that civil society organisations with relevant experience participate in it, and that their advice is heard and taken into account. The child care reform strategy must include an independent and thorough review of the current system and its gaps and unveil a vision for the family and community-based care system that will replace it. The strategy must also envisage an immediate ban on the placement of children under 3 years old into institutional care and cover all groups of children in the care system, including children with disabilities and children in boarding schools.



Latest developments, e.g., Laws, policy, and moratoria

Positive

1. A new Coordination Centre for Family Upbringing and Child Care Development ("Coordination Centre") was established in 2023, with EU funding. The Centre is currently finalising a national Roadmap and associated Action Plan for the development of better forms of childcare.
2. The draft Ukraine Plan for the implementation of the recently adopted EU Ukraine Facility envisages the development and implementation of a comprehensive reform of the system for care for children with the aim of gradually deinstitutionalizing care and introducing alternative family and community-based care solutions.
3. A National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education till 2030 has been drafted and is currently awaiting adoption.
4. In 2023 the Office "Dijmo" was created by the Ministry of Social policy as a national participatory structure for children and young people.

Negative

1. Outdated legislative framework: As part of the strategy and care reform process, it will be necessary to substantially update the relevant legislative framework, including the Law of Ukraine "On Childhood Protection" and amend the Family Code and other laws of Ukraine, especially those that prescribe systems of care and forms of alternative care.
2. Lack of ownership of the reform: The Strategy and its implementation should also address the need for clarity and coordination on where responsibilities lie.
3. Insufficient community-based services: Provision and development of a comprehensive package of community-based services to support children and families is a key priority for the initial stages of Ukraine's care reform
4. Insufficient funding: it will be important to establish financial mechanisms for the implementation of the reform, notably a mechanism for financing the necessary services at the community level.



Hope and Homes for Children calls on the government to:	Hope and Homes for Children calls on the European Union/ international donor community to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a care reform for children strategy and accompanying action plan with budget and ringfence funds for its implementation. 2. Establish centralised, robust child protection mechanisms – including tracking and information management systems for children deprived of family care. This should include those children currently outside of Ukraine, to ensure their safe, managed return to family- and community-based care. 3. Review and adapt national policies and legislation so that they support a safe and sustainable care reform process, including the development of family- and community-based services. 4. Secure the meaningful engagement of civil society organisations with expertise in care reform. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Act as a champion and catalyst for care reform for children in Ukraine. 2. Ensure that the EU accession process includes the irreversible and enforceable commitment by the Government of Ukraine to put an end to the institutionalisation of children. 3. Support the Government of Ukraine in the development and implementation of a national care reform strategy and action plan. 4. Support the Government of Ukraine to establish centralised, robust child protection mechanisms. 5. Allocate the necessary resources to the development of family and community-based care services for refugees from Ukraine in the border countries whose child protection systems have been severely impacted by both the economic crisis and the influx of refugees. 6. Ensure that the civil society sector is meaningfully involved in all of the above processes in line with the Partnership Principle as well as children and young people with care experience. 7. Explore introducing the European Child Guarantee in Ukraine and the other EU candidate countries.



Hope and Homes for Children Ukraine

office@hopeandhomes.org.ua

**4 Bahhovutivska St., office 57,
Kyiv 04107, Ukraine**

Website address:

www.hopeandhomes.org.ua

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/hhcukraine/>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@HHUkraine>

Phone: (+380) 44 483 7783

About our country factsheet

This country factsheet provides an overview of the work of Hope and Homes for Children in Ukraine. It is intended to inform policymakers, donors, and the wider public about the scope of child protection system reform in each country, highlighting efforts to transition from institutions (orphanages) to family- and community-based alternatives.

Each country snapshot outlines both the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and actions within the child protection system. It provides a summary of publicly available data that we have been able to source, alongside our expert analysis of this information as it pertains to overall child protection reform. We also offer key recommendations for future interventions to drive continued improvement.

These insights are based on over 30 years of experience from Hope and Homes for Children. While significant progress in child protection reform is possible, challenges remain, especially in gathering comprehensive data and aligning definitions. Where applicable, definitions and programmes discussed are based on local legal and policy frameworks. For this reason, they are not readily comparable to country factsheets, produced by us for another country or jurisdiction.

Data disclaimer

The data is primarily sourced from official state sources. The situation with children in alternative care is dynamic, and changes may not necessarily be captured in present data set. All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data presented herein compiled. However, Hope and Homes for Children provides this data as the guidance only and cannot guarantee its accuracy, timeliness, or completeness. Nor can we be held responsible for its use.

Hope and Homes for Children – Head Office Hope and Homes for Children
The Guild, King Street, Salisbury, SP2 0RS
Tel: +44 (0)1722 790111 office@hopeandhomes.org www.hopeandhomes.org

Hope and Homes for Children – EU liaison office: Rond Point Schuman 6, 1040, Brussels, Belgium

Hope and Homes for Children is on the Transparency Register of the European Union,
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Organisation in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2019.

An NGO in participatory status with the Council of Europe as of 2021.

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