

OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

BULGARIA



BULGARIA HAS ALREADY STARTED ITS PATH TOWARDS DEINSTITUTIONALISATION. THE “NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE CHILD 2008-2018” AIMS TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE SHORT TERM, AS WELL AS TO CREATE ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF CARE AND TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES. THE “VISION FOR DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN IN BULGARIA” SETS THE COUNTRY ON COURSE TO CLOSE ALL ITS INSTITUTIONS BY 2025 AND REPLACE THEM WITH FAMILY-BASED ALTERNATIVES.

As a result the number of children living in institutions is decreasing, falling from 6,226 to 5,633 between 2011 and 2012. However despite the state commitments, children are still entering institutional care. 37% of children in institutions are growing up in infant homes. Data shows that the number of children entering infant homes only marginally decreased between 2011 and 2012 from 2,509 to 2,485.

According to leading national NGOs, child poverty is one of the main reasons for the high rates of placement of children in institutions: 51.8% of the children in Bulgaria are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, while 78.2% of families with three or more children are living on less than 140 Euro per person per month.

The deinstitutionalisation reforms in Bulgaria present important challenges. There is an urgent need to strengthen the child protection system. Social workers have a key role in supporting children and families and preventing family separation. However, they currently have excessive case loads, poor training and

low pay resulting in low morale and poor outcomes for children and families at risk. In addition there is a need for more focus on prevention, early intervention and family support as lack of sufficient preventive and alternative services and bad living conditions are amongst the main reasons for placement of children in institutions.

The involvement of local authorities, NGOs and other service providers is critical if the planning, implementation and monitoring of DI reforms planned under the next programme period of EU structural funds (2014-2020) is to be successful. NGOs have been pioneers in service development for several years and the Government needs to draw on this experience in the development of operations and application guidelines. They also have important knowledge on service provision and on ensuring service users are fully involved in the decision-making processes – involvement of services users is fundamental to achieving successful outcomes for the people concerned.



Hope & Homes
for Children

eurochild

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR



National Network for Childrer

THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN IS AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION WHICH UNITES MORE THAN 100 NGOS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BULGARIA. THEIR MISSION IS TO STRENGTHEN AND FACILITATE CO-OPERATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS RELATED TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING. THEY ARE ADVOCATING AND WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NGOS, BUSINESSES, INSTITUTIONS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

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FACT FILE

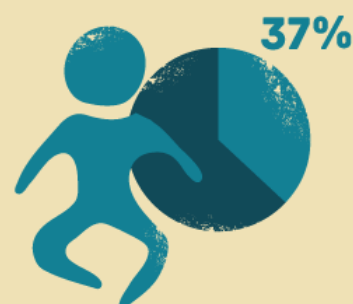
INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN BULGARIA IS DECREASING



THERE ARE 122 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN IN BULGARIA



37% OF THE CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN BULGARIA ARE AGED 0-3



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.

