

OPENING DOORS
FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

WWW.OPENINGDOORS.EU

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

HUNGARY



COUNTRY FACT SHEET

For the last 30 years deinstitutionalisation (DI) has been part of the Hungarian government's agenda. Despite significant developments in the family- and community based care, children are still entering care due to poverty and the lack of community-based prevention services. 130,000 of children under the age of 7 (44.2% of the total population of children) live in material deprivation. Foster parents are neither sufficiently trained nor adequately supported. The majority of foster carers live in the rural areas where unemployment rate is high. As a result, motivation for fostering is often and to a growing extent the foster care allowance. Small group homes (SGHs) are frequently built in isolated communities, with poorly qualified staff and no access to schools or services. Given the long distances between children in placements and their biological families, reintegration becomes even more difficult. DI in Hungary seems to be important only in terms of declarations and receiving EU funding. It would also require a widespread public awareness campaign.

The Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship clearly defines the need to develop family strengthening programmes and prevention services to ensure that children grow up in their biological families, and where this is not possible, that the family-based care is prioritised. However, the range of services that could support families at risk in the communities is severely under-resourced and often non-existent, especially in the rural, remote and poverty-stricken areas where most of the vulnerable families live.

Although DI has been a priority since the mid-1980s, and significant developments have been achieved since then, there are still 8,098 children growing up in 67 institutions¹ in Hungary today. According to the Act XXXI of 1997, all children under the age of 3 must have been deinstitutionalised by 2014. >>



¹ Data for the year 2015

>> Still, by the end of 2015, there were 3 institutions for children aged 0-3 years housing 289 children, some of them as old as 6 years old. Institutions remain understaffed and often cannot meet even basic children's needs.

As part of the DI reforms in Hungary, only 41 SGHs were opened in 2015 to meet the needs of children deprived of parental care – a total of 200 SGHs across the country in 2015. It is of concern, however, that the majority of SGHs are located in smaller villages due to much lower costs of building them there. There is no transportation available in these villages nor the guarantee that the children are able to access basic services. In many instances, the staff is underqualified, staff numbers fluctuate, supervision of staff is needed and the burnout rate is high.

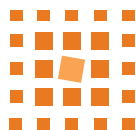
Despite the fact that according to the Act on the Protection of Children and the Administration of Guardianship (1/2014), foster care is made a priority for children without parental care in Hungary², there is still a shortage of suitable foster carers, particularly for children under three and those with complex needs. It is worrying that the majority of foster care applications come from the poorest regions of the country where prospective candidates in many cases are mostly motivated by the financial incentive due to the high level of unemployment. As a result, 50% of the foster families in Hungary live in the isolated, small rural communities that lack access to services, medical care or education especially for children with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Most importantly, children lose contact with their biological parents due to considerable distances between placements and their homes of origin. With poverty being the main reason for separation of children from their families, shortage of suitable foster care placements is caused mainly by the insufficient funding. In Hungary, local authorities tend to refer clients to institutional care – under the financial authority of national Government – rather than invest in community-based services. It is also a political issue reflecting broad public opinion when voters prefer the taxpayers' money to be used to fund state care rather than community family strengthening programmes.

FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **130,000 OF CHILDREN IN HUNGARY LIVE IN MATERIAL DEPRIVATION. BETWEEN 50,000 AND 60,000 OF CHILDREN IN HUNGARY REGULARLY GO HUNGRY**
- **THERE WERE 8,098 CHILDREN LIVING IN 67 INSTITUTIONS IN HUNGARY IN 2015**
- **IN 2014, THERE WERE 14,486 CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**
- **IN 2015, THERE WERE 1,778 CHILDREN LIVING IN 200 SMALL GROUP HOMES**
- **THE NUMBER OF HOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN CARE HAS INCREASED. HOWEVER, YOUNG ADULTS ONLY RECEIVE SUPPORT UNTIL THE AGE OF 21 IF THEY DO NOT ATTEND HIGHER EDUCATION**
- **NEW INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX NEEDS WILL ACCOMMODATE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WHO ALSO HAVE A LONG-TERM ILLNESS. THIS WILL BE A NEW TYPE OF INSTITUTION**
- **IT WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTER OF STATE MR KAROLY CZIBERE THAT 'ALL LARGE CHILDREN'S HOMES WILL BE CLOSED BY 2019'³ BUT NO COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY OR CONCRETE PLAN HAS BEEN DEVELOPED YET**

² Act on the Protection of Children and the Administration of Guardianship (1/2014) specifies that "Children deprived of parental under the age of 12 should be placed in family-based care, unless the child has a long-term illness, is severely disabled or if siblings cannot be placed together."

³ <http://magyaridok.hu/belfold/megujulnak-hazai-gyermekotthonok-667246/>



CSALÁD, GYERMEK, IFJÚSÁG
KIEMELKEDŐEN KÖZHASZNÚ EGYESÜLET
FAMILY CHILD YOUTH ASSOCIATION

OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN HUNGARY

Family Child Youth Association since its foundation in 1993 has been supporting the rights, welfare, and protection of children and family strengthening, helping professionals, raising awareness, conducting research and publishing materials accordingly. Participating in several EU and domestic projects, providing training, adapting good practices, translating and publishing materials in different related areas.

To find out more visit www.csagyi.hu

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