

# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN



Ending the Era of Institutional Care  
in Europe

**CALL FOR ACTION**

The Opening Doors for Europe’s Children – a pan-European campaign of leading international and national civil society organisations – welcomes the EU’s continued commitment to end the era of institutional care in Europe and calls for an expansion of this commitment to continue progress with national reforms of the child protection systems in all European countries.

As a coalition representing **124 civil society organisations** working towards improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children living in institutional care across Europe, **we have three key demands to the European Union in their preparation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**, in particular the post-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the External Action Financing Instruments:

### **1. STRENGTHEN EXISTING EX-ANTE CONDITIONALITY ON THE TRANSITION FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE**

To continue the current ex-ante conditionality 9.1 for the use of European Structural and Investment Funds which mentions “measures for the shift from institutional to community based care” in the next Multiannual Financial Framework funding cycle;

### **2. PROMOTE APPROPRIATE ALLOCATION AND SPENDING OF EU FUNDS FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS**

To continue to fund national deinstitutionalisation strategies and action plans which lead to systemic changes and to improve the effectiveness of EU spending;

### **3. IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT ON PARTNERSHIP**

To ensure active and meaningful participation and involvement of civil society organisations and service users during programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign acknowledges the pivotal role that the European Union has played over the past years in the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care.

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children welcomes:

- the current ex-ante conditionality that includes “*measures for the shift from institutional to community based care*” on the use of EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) with regard to deinstitutionalisation<sup>1</sup>;
- the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)<sup>2</sup>, which implies close cooperation between the European Commission and public authorities, social partners and organisations representing civil society;
- the Recommendation on ‘Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage’<sup>3</sup>, which calls amongst others on Member States to prioritise and use ESIF for the transition from institutional to community-based care.

However, the process of deinstitutionalisation must be continued and these important changes in EU policy and the regulations that govern how EU funds are spent should be translated into action. Deinstitutionalisation should not be simply seen as the closure of institutional care settings. The process of deinstitutionalisation concerns transformation of the whole social welfare system with links to education, housing, health, social inclusion, decentralisation, regional development, Roma inclusion and migration.

Deinstitutionalisation must become a national priority for all EU member states, pre-accession and neighbourhood countries. The sustainable and continued use of EU funds is crucial in the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care. For countries such as Romania, Bulgaria or Latvia, deinstitutionalisation has been kept high in the political agenda, whereas in other countries (e.g. Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Ukraine), deinstitutionalisation has been seen as a one-off project and not as a nationwide, systemic reform.

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1 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN>

2 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0240&from=EN>

3 [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/c\\_2013\\_778\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/c_2013_778_en.pdf)

In the majority of the [Opening Doors campaign countries](#), children with disabilities are still more likely to be placed in institutions due to a lack of flexible family support services, inclusive education and family-based alternative care settings. We also observe that migrant, unaccompanied and separated children are being predominantly placed in reception centres with limited access to quality family- and community-based solutions.

EU funds and national budgets should be allocated and spent in line with deinstitutionalisation strategies and action plans. The next MFF offers an opportunity to further strengthen the positive impact of EU spending. The social welfare reforms envisaged by deinstitutionalisation strategies are person-centred and rights-based. These reforms will benefit not only those in vulnerable situations with greater care needs but also society and the economy at large.

As a coalition representing 124 civil society organisations working towards improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children living in institutional care across Europe, we have three key demands to the European Union in their preparation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, in particular the post-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds and the External Action Financing Instruments:

## 1. STRENGTHEN EXISTING EX-ANTE CONDITIONALITY ON THE TRANSITION FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

To continue the current ex-ante conditionality 9.1 for the use of EU Structural and Investment Funds which mentions “measures for the shift from institutional to community based care” in the next Multiannual Financial Framework funding cycle and include the following:

1. Extend the provisions of the ex-ante conditionality to the EU External Action Funding Instruments<sup>4</sup>;
2. Extend the ex-ante conditionality from “*measures for the shift from institutional to community based care*” to “*measures for the shift from institutional to community-based care aimed at developing quality preventative and alternative care services, strengthening families and ending institutional care*”;
3. Include a criteria for fulfillment related to “*measures for building and improving capacity for integrated child protection systems and a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach*” to ensure protection of the rights of all children;
4. Ensure the European Commission expands the list of Member States for which they identify a need for deinstitutionalisation and child protection reform;
5. Develop specific instruments and mechanisms to ensure that ex-ante conditionalities are not a one-off exercise at the beginning of the programming period but are monitored and revised throughout the implementation of the funds.

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<sup>4</sup> Among others, Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the European Development Fund, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, the Fund for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights

## 2. PROMOTE APPROPRIATE ALLOCATION AND SPENDING OF EU FUNDS FOR DEINSTITUTIONALISATION REFORMS

To continue to fund national deinstitutionalisation strategies and action plans which lead to systemic changes and to improve the effectiveness of EU spending by:

1. Providing effective oversight of how EU funds are supporting national DI strategies and supporting Member States in ensuring the sustainability of reforms<sup>5</sup>;
2. Encouraging states to ring-fence domestic budgets to ensure that the child protection system and new services continue to be sustained by domestic means after the EU-funded intervention has ended;
3. Monitoring the implementation of DI reforms through appropriate indicators;
4. Ensuring EU funds for migrant, separated and unaccompanied children are only used for the provision of family- and community-based care;
5. Promoting deinstitutionalisation in Western European States through the use of EU Structural and Investment Funds to eliminate institutional care;
6. Ensuring that EU external funds are not used to build, renovate or support institutional care facilities, but instead are invested to promote family- and community-based care for children.

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<sup>5</sup> EU oversight is helped by regular dialogue between the European Commission and the European Expert Group on the transition from institutional to community-based care whose members include UN bodies and civil society networks working with and for groups with different care needs (including Eurochild, coordinator of the Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign). This cooperation should be further strengthened in the EU's next funding cycle.

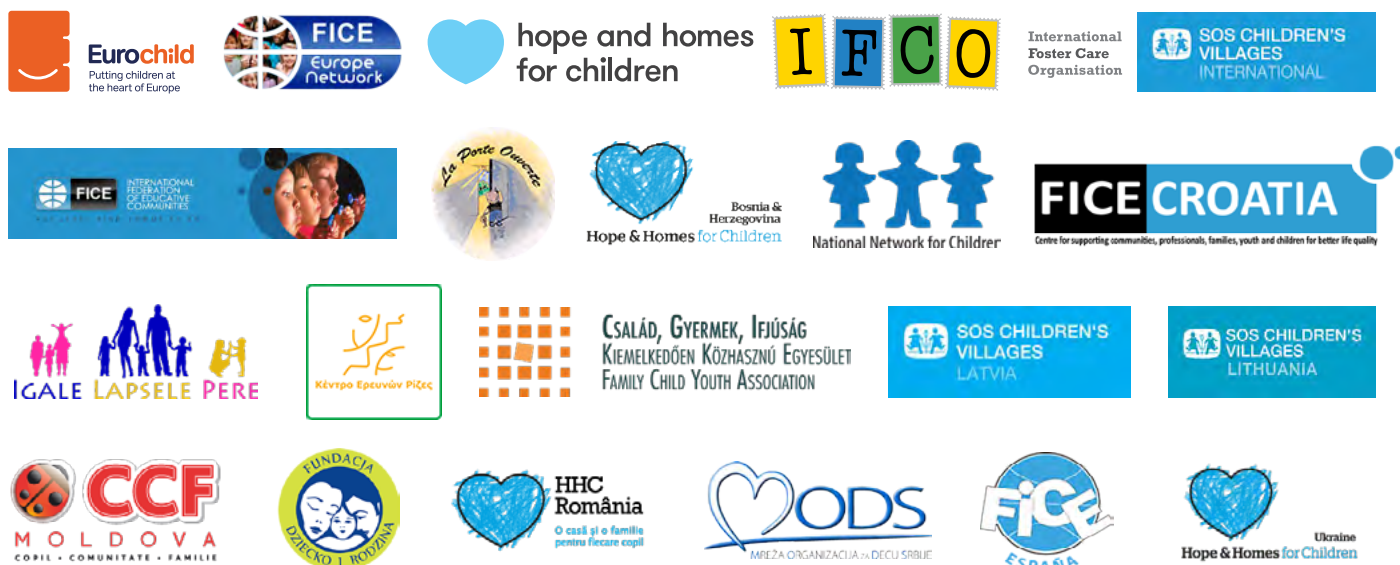
### 3. IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT ON PARTNERSHIP

To ensure active and meaningful participation and involvement of civil society organisations and service users during programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes:

1. Monitoring Committees should be representative and transparent; they should seek active and meaningful participation and involvement of civil society organisations and service users during programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.
2. Civil society organisations should be considered as equal stakeholders and should have voting rights, which should not be at the discretion of the Monitoring Committees or Member States.
3. Member States should make full use of article 17 of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)<sup>6</sup> and the possibility to use technical assistance to build the capacity of NGOs so that they can “*effectively participate in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs*”. This can be done through workshops, training sessions, supporting networking structures and by covering the costs for various meetings.
4. The advisory role of European Commission representative in Monitoring Committees should be clarified and expanded. We propose that the ECCP is revised making sure that the current observer role of European Commission representative becomes more influential and meaningful. This will ensure monitoring and transparency in procedures and that ECCP is honoured.
5. To ensure implementation of the partnership principle, we recommend to introduce ECCP as an ex-ante conditionality. We propose that failure of Member States to respect the ECCP meets sanctions with payment suspensions as provided for in the guidance related to the EU Charter of Fundamental rights and the ESIF.

<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0240&from=EN>

## THE UNDERSIGNED ORGANISATIONS



### Campaign's international partners:

Eurochild  
 FICE Europe  
 Hope and Homes for Children  
 International Foster Care Organisation  
 SOS Children's Villages International

### Campaign's national coordinators:

FICE Austria (Austria)  
 La Porte Ouverte (Belgium)  
 Hope and Homes for Children Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina)  
 National Network for Children (Bulgaria)

FICE Croatia (Croatia)  
 Igale Lapsele Pere (Estonia)  
 Roots Research Center (Greece)  
 Family Child Youth Association (Hungary)  
 SOS Children's Villages Latvia (Latvia)  
 SOS Children's Villages Lithuania (Lithuania)  
 CCF Moldova (Moldova)  
 Child and Family Foundation (Poland)  
 Hope and Homes for Children Romania (Romania)  
 The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia - MODS (Serbia)  
 FICE Spain (Spain)  
 Hope and Homes for Children Ukraine (Ukraine)

## ABOUT OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN CAMPAIGN

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children is a pan-European campaign that aims to support 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 five international organisations and civil society across 16 European countries. For further information please see [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)

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