



OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

CROATIA



COUNTRY FACT SHEET

The Republic of Croatia is one of the 12 Member States that have been identified by the European Commission as a country with a need for deinstitutionalisation reforms. Croatia started transformation of its care system in 2006 with adoption of the “National plan of activities for children’s rights and interests 2006-2012” and comprehensively continued with the so-called “Master plan 2011-2018”¹ in 2011. However, deinstitutionalisation reforms in Croatia have not seen significant progress due to the lack of sufficient funding for the implementation of the Master Plan and the lack of commitment from the state. EU funds that were allocated in the past for implementation of the Master Plan were not efficiently dispersed and stopped during 2016. In 2017, however, five new calls for proposals funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) to support deinstitutionalisation (DI) reforms and family strengthening in Croatia were launched.

Although Croatia has recognised the importance of deinstitutionalisation reforms, the transition from institutional to family- and community- based forms of care shows slow signs of progress. Main challenges include inconsistent political will to transform care system fully and transparently, lack of know-how in the area of community-based social services by the state providers, combined with prejudices against foster care and the inefficient use of EU funding to support DI reforms.

As of July 2017, there were 1,459 children living in 56 institutions in Croatia. The process of transformation of state institutions for children remains very slow and incomplete. Furthermore, by the end of 2016, there were 715 children with disabilities growing up in 30 homes or centres for children and adults with disabilities or in homes for children without adequate parental care.

¹ “Plan of deinstitutionalization and transformation of social welfare homes and other legal bodies who are providing social services in the Republic of Croatia 2011-2016 (2018)”.

KEY DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS CHILD PROTECTION REFORM



IN MAY 2017, FIVE
CALLS FOR PROPOSALS
FINANCED BY THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL
FUND WERE LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT
DEINSTITUTIONALISATION AND
STRENGTHENING OF FAMILIES IN
CROATIA.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE EU



TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND SERVICE USERS IN THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME MONITORING COMMITTEE AND TO ENSURE THAT FUNDS ARE USED IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CHILDREN AND IN LINE WITH THE MASTER PLAN ON DEINSTITUTIONALISATION.

It is of worry that children under the age of three are still getting institutionalised instead of being directly placed in family-based care solutions.

Family-type homes and organised housing are two forms of quality community-based care provided to children deprived of parental care and children with disabilities in Croatia. The Law on Social Welfare defines a family home as a service for 4 to 10 children who live with the family of service provider. In reality, family home is a foster care setting for a larger number of children with obligatory employment of the professional caregiver. Only between 2014 and 2015, 90 family homes were established to accommodate the needs of children deprived of parental care. During the same period, 17 organised housing facilities were set up for adolescents and young people transitioning to independent living.

Six of the state children homes for children without parental care were transformed to centres providing community-based services. During recent years, family-based care has been recognised in Croatia as the indicated type of care for children. The state pledged to accomplish 20% - 80% ratio in favour of foster care, but according to statistical data, this goal has not been reached yet. As of July 2017, there were 2,301 children living in foster care in comparison to 1,459 children remaining in institutions.

In May 2017, five calls for proposals financed by the European Social Fund were launched to support deinstitutionalisation and strengthening of families in Croatia, in line with the Master Plan 2011-2018. This includes support to the DI process and transformation of 18 state institutions into homes for adults and children with disabilities; prevention of institutionalisation of children and youth for 13 state institutions; social inclusion and employment of marginalised groups of people, and expansion of the social services network in the community.

KEY RECOMMENDATION TO THE MEMBER STATE



TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS SIGNIFICANT DELAYS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ESIF FUNDS AND TO SECURE THEIR EFFICIENT USE. NATIONAL BUDGET MUST BE RING-FENCED TO ENSURE CONTINUATION OF THE EU-FUNDED INTERVENTIONS AFTER THE END OF THE FUNDING PERIOD.

FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE HAS DECREASED BY 50.7%: FROM 2,873 AT THE END OF 2015 TO 1,459 IN 2017.**
- **DURING RECENT YEARS, FAMILY-BASED CARE HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS THE INDICATED TYPE OF CARE FOR CHILDREN IN CROATIA.**
- **CALLS FOR PROPOSALS FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND AIM TO SUPPORT DEINSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN AND STRENGTHENING OF FAMILIES IN CROATIA.**



OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN CROATIA

FICE Croatia aims to improve life quality for children, youth, families but also professionals and communities. Special focus of its work is on children and youth in risk, as well as children and youth in alternative care. Through activities of support, experience and knowledge exchange, networking and advocating, FICE Croatia tries to strengthen and improve social services and realise its aims. To find out more visit www.fice.hr

NATIONAL PARTNERS

SOS dječje selo Hrvatska (SOS Children's Village Croatia), Udruga za kreativan socijalni rad, Udruga Ardura, Forum za kvalitetno udomiteljstvo – udomitelji za djecu, Igra – udruga za pružanje rehabilitacijsko-edukacijske i psiho-socijalno-pedagoške pomoći, Suncokret-OLJIN, Iskra – centar za edukaciju i savjetovanja, Most, Centar za pružanje usluga u zajednici "Izvor" Selce, AMBIDEKSTER KLUB.

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