

# **DENSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN IN BUGARIA – REAL AND IRREVERSIBLE**

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# CONTEXT...

- The child care institutions are part of the difficult legacy
- The lack of clear political will for the closure of institutions resulted in “reforming” and “restructuring” them for more than 10 years
- The economical, political and social changes accompanying the transition have lead to emerging new challenges and deepening the existing problems.

# MAIN CHALLENGES...

- Insufficient number and uneven distribution across the country of services for children and families, meeting the range of needs
- Opening of community-based services alongside the still existing large institutions
- Lack of developed system of alternative community based care
- Prevailing medical attitude towards the child's disability based on the assumption that the institution would provide the best possible care
- Modified model of family behaviour, which resulted in increased number of children born out of wedlock and parents who are single caregivers
- Insufficient use of EU funds for supporting the care system reforms

# TOWARDS NEW POLICY...

The implementation of efficient deinstitutionalisation policy required a change in the philosophy of child care with a focus on:

- Risk prevention
- Early intervention
- Support for the families
- Provision of family or close to family environment

# VISION FOR THE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

- In 2010 the Government adopted a **National Strategy *Vision for the Deinstitutionalisation of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria*** which outlined the political commitment to the reform in the child and family care system in Bulgaria
- Deinstitutionalisation as a process of replacing the institutional child care with a family or family-type child care. This is a process of supporting the families and prevention of placing the children in institutions.

***The state and the NGOs in an open dialog and agreement on the new Vision and change***

# VISION FOR THE DEINSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

- **The main aim** of this policy document is to guarantee the right of the child to a family environment and access to quality care and services based on their individual needs.
- **Objectives:**
  - Closure of the existing child care institutions within 15 years after the adoption of the document
  - Not allowing placement and raising of children aged 0 to 3 in residential care of any type after the reform is completed.

## **Priority actions:**

- A process of closing down the institutions for children with disabilities in parallel with the infant homes.

# STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- In order to meet the Vision objectives the Council of Ministers adopted an **Action Plan** with specific measures, responsible institutions, time-frame and indicative allocation of the required financial resources
- With the implementation of the Vision and its Action Plan Bulgaria is applying a **unique model**

# BULGARIA – A DIFFERENT MODEL

All the programmes and projects targeting deinstitutionalisation and child care and family services, financed by the European Union or the national budget are governed by the general aim of the Strategy.

For the first time in Europe we use financing from **3 EU Funds** in order to implement complementary measures – cross-financing from the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development



# COMPONENTS OF THE REFORM

- Planning and coordination at regional level
- Development of the capacity of the child protection system
- Development of family support services
- Development of alternative family care
- Closure of specialised institutions
- Changing the public attitudes

# PLANNING AND COORDINATION AT REGIONAL LEVEL

**2009** – pilot planning of regional services at regional level in 3 regions – ASA and UNICEF

**2010** – amendment to the Social Assistance Act and introducing regional planning

**2010** – drafting regional and municipal strategies for social services in the whole country using a participatory planning process – MLSP, ASA, UNICEF

**Outcome:** 5-year regional strategies, based on local needs and following the national priorities for deinstitutionalisation

# PLANNING AND COORDINATION AT REGIONAL LEVEL

***Regional deinstitutionalisation teams*** – structures to support work at regional level, sustainable work model, formed within the framework of *Childhood for All* Project, renewed under the *Support* Project, **28 regional teams**

***Development of the Planning System and Provision of Social Services at regional Level*** Project – development of the capacity of the Regional Directorates for Social Assistance (RDSA) for planning, coordination and monitoring of social services at regional level

# DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

***Strengthening the ASA Capacity for Enhancing the Quality and Efficiency of Social Work*** Project – aimed at the career development of social workers – (2011 - 2014)

Employed 400 social workers

# DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Number of family support social services opened in the recent years -

Under the *Social Inclusion* Project the main services for children aged 0-3 and their families are:

- Development of parental skills
- Early intervention in case of a disability by means of opening Early Intervention Centre for Disabilities
- Family Counselling and Support
- Health Counselling
- Day child care
- Full or partial payment of nursery fees

# DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Services under ***DIRECTION: Family Project***

- Family Counselling Centres
- Maternal and Child Health Centres
- Day care Centres for Children with Disabilities
- Centres for Child Mental Health
- *Mother and Baby Units*

# RESULTS FROM THE FAMILY SUPPORT WORK

The child protection system together with the services – a strong trend for reducing the number of children placed in institutions

<b>Activity/ year</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Work on abandonment prevention</b>	<b>3 597</b>	<b>3 660</b>	<b>5 005</b>
<b>Successfully closed prevention cases</b>	<b>1 227</b>	<b>1 193</b>	<b>1 456</b>
<b>Reintegration cases</b>	<b>2 469</b>	<b>2 432</b>	<b>2 135</b>
<b>Successfully closed reintegration cases</b>	<b>1 400</b>	<b>1 534</b>	<b>1 423</b>
<b>Children placed in kinship care</b>	<b>1 435</b>	<b>1 461</b>	<b>1 623</b>
<b>Children placed in foster care</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>Adopted children</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>952</b>

# Children placed in institutions in Bulgaria

SI – social institution

SI type / year	No of SI	2009 - children	No of SI	2010 - children	No of SI	2011 - children
Infant Home	32	<b>2334</b>	31	<b>2046</b>	31	<b>1820</b>
Home for children with disabilities (intell., physical)	25	<b>956</b>	24	<b>871</b>	24	<b>768</b>
Homes for children deprived of parental care	80	<b>3440</b>	75	<b>2778</b>	72	<b>2167</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>6730</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>5695</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>4755</b>



# Alternative family care

- Foster care project in cooperation between MLSP, ASA, SACP and UNICEF - 9 regional foster care centres, development of a training programme
- Introduction of foster care for newborns and infants
- Campaigns for changing the public attitudes
- Implementing placement in kinship care

# Development of alternative family care

***“I too, have a family”*** Project – aimed at the development of a new model of foster care in Bulgaria (2011 – 2013)

Foster care – decentralised service and alternative for newborns and children aged up to 3

# Closure of specialised institutions

- *Childhood for All* Project – aimed at children over 3 and young people with disabilities from 55 specialised institutions (Infant Homes, Homes for Children with Intellectual Difficulties, Home for Children with Physical Disabilities), (2010-2014)
- Implementation stage: Updated child assessments, developed National Map of Residential Services, targeted work with the families, detailed assessment and preparation of children for moving out of institutions, launched infrastructure component

# Closure of specialised institutions

***Direction: Family Project – Ministry of Health (MoH)***, aimed at the children in the Infant Homes (2011-2014) – 8 pilot homes, preparation for assessment of children and families

## ***Interaction between the state and the NGOs***

- *A Family for Every Child* Project – UNICEF in partnership with MLSP, MoH, SACP, ASA and the local authorities – development of network of services and closure of the Infant Home in Shumen
- Closure of the Infant Home in Shiroka Luka – MoH together with *Hope and Homes for Children*
- Closure of the Infant Home in Pleven – MoH in partnership with national and local institutions
- Closure of the Infant Homes in Varna and Dobrich – together with LUMOS - Bulgaria

*The policy for deinstitutionalisation in the country showed that there is already a consensus between the politicians, the involved experts from the government institutions, the local authorities and the NGO sector that the family is the best place for a child, where children can reach their full potential and can demonstrate their real achievements.*

***THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!***