

UNICEF's GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COMMONS

#BOURE2020 Webinar Series

Wednesday, 7 April 2021 | 15:00-16:30 BG time

Ending institutionalization and strengthening family and community based care for children in Europe and beyond



Deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria – child care reform, main achievements and challenges

Summary and a main message

- In order for a policy to be sustainable, consistent and successful, it needs to be supported by:
 - a clear strategic framework;
 - an action plan that allows not only following-up the policy implementation, but also provides opportunities for constant implementation monitoring.
- A focus of policies on ensuring a decent life for every child, quality of education and a real access to modern integrated social and health services is needed.
- Deinstitutionalization (DI) has been implemented on a large scale over the past more than 10 years in Bulgaria.





Policy On DI in Bulgaria

- In 2010, a National Strategy "Vision for the deinstitutionalization of children in the Republic of Bulgaria" was adopted.
- At the moment, measures of the Updated Action Plan for implementation of the National Strategy are fulfilled. The Action Plan was adopted in 2016 and its leading priority is "ensuring the right of children to family environment and access to quality care and services according to their individual needs".
- The plan focuses on 6 main groups of measures.
- The emphasis at this stage of the process is placed on supporting children and families in order to prevent risks.



Results of the reform for DI of child care

- Reduction in the number of children in specialized institutions by over 96%.
- The number of specialized institutions for children has significantly decreased to over 97%.
- The number of social services for children has significantly increased.
- Predominance of care in family environment.
- During the 2017-2021 period, draft proposals for construction of 112 new services and 35 activities for repairs/ furnishing/ equipment of existing services have been agreed.



Measures Related to DI of child care, supported by the ESF and Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014-2020

Since 2017, 7 operations related to deinstitutionalization of child care have been implemented under the OPHRD, which worth 309.7 million BGN in total.

The measures in the context of the National Strategy, which outline reform in the system of child care and families, under the OPHRD cover prevention of abandonment, work with children in social services and work with parents:

- “Early Childhood Development Services” with a budget of over 61.3 million BGN;
- “Accept me” with a budget of over 136.4 million BGN;
- “Increasing the capacity of employees in the field of child protection, social services and social assistance” with a budget of 28 million BGN;
- “Find me” with a budget of 4 million BGN;
- “Ongoing support for deinstitutionalization of children and youth” with a budget of 3 million BGN;
- Ongoing support for the deinstitutionalization of children and young people - STAGE 2 - provision of social and integrated health and social services for children and families” with a budget of over 74 million BNG;
- “Professional integration of young people from residential and community services” with a budget of 3 million BNG.

Challenges

- To not lose the focus and continuity of politics;
- To work in partnership with local authorities and the non-governmental sector and international organizations;
- To overcome suggestions from fake news and attacks against the targeted DI policy;
- To continue the deployment of measures and reform in the social sphere, incl. children services;
- To believe that “Mission is possible”.





Bulgarian ESC activities in terms of child care

- On 24th March 2021, the EC adopted the first comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, as well as a proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee.
- The European Child Guarantee complements the second pillar of the Strategy on the Rights of the Child and it is a key deliverable of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and also answers directly to Principle 11 of the Pillar: Childcare and support to children.
- In this context, in 2021 the ESC will develop:
 - An opinion on the European Action Plan to Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights;
 - A resolution on the Partnership Agreement and the Operational Programmes for the 2021-2027 Programming Period;
 - Opinion on the National Recovery and Resilience Plan: Implementation and Mechanisms for Monitoring and Participating of the Organized Civil Society.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

ZORNITSA ROUSSINOVA

PRESIDENT

OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL