

ALTERNATIVES TO THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN

MILOSLAVA YANKOVA

SENIOR ASSISTANT PHD
IN SHUMEN UNIVERSITY "KONSTANTIN BISHOP OF PRESLAV"

BULGARIA
MILA60@MAIL.BG

ABSTRACT: THIS TEXT PRESENTS THE ALTERNATIVES TO THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN IN BULGARIA. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL STRATEGY "VISION FOR DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CHILDREN IN BULGARIA" IN OUR COUNTRY RAPID PACE INSTITUTIONAL CARE SHOULD BE REPLACED BY ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN. AS A RESULT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY IS EXPECTED IN THE LONG RUN, GOING THROUGH REDUCING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS, TO REACH COMPLETE CLOSURE OF THE CLASSICAL TYPE OF INSTITUTIONS, WHILE TERMINATE INSTITUTIONALIZATION FOR CHILDREN 0 TO 3 YEARS AFTER COMPLETION OF REFORM. AS MAJOR FORMS OF ALTERNATIVE CARE, THE REPORT EXAMINES: ADOPTION, PLACEMENT IN A FOSTER FAMILY, BIOLOGICAL FAMILY REINTEGRATION, CENTERS FOR FAMILY-TYPE ACCOMMODATION, PROTECTED HOMES, ETC.

KEY WORDS: DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION, SOCIAL SERVICE INSTITUTIONAL TYPE OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE PATH, ADOPTION, PLACEMENT IN A FOSTER FAMILY, BIOLOGICAL FAMILY REINTEGRATION, CENTERS FOR FAMILY-TYPE ACCOMMODATION, PROTECTED HOMES.

IN Bulgaria the childcare as a social service is performed primarily in state or municipal social institutions.

FOR them it is characteristic that in them [6], [23] children live in an environment that is in many ways different from the family. In this setting, they eat, sleep, studying, making contacts with their coevals. The contacts with elderly relatives are restricted in clear time limits and in most cases not systematic. Children live in isolation, without full contacts with the community. The relationships with people outside the institutions are rare and related to specific events. Most often they are on the occasion different holidays, as well as visiting cinema, theater, meeting other children or visitors.

MOST closed and isolated are the so-called "total institution." These are the institutions in which the whole life of the child pass by - takes place education, self study, leisure time and etc.

THIS condition requires changing the model of the care for children as a social service.

IN 2010 the government adopted a National Strategy "Vision for deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria" [15]. Based on the policy in the interest of the child, it is aimed at creating the best conditions for their development and implementation their full potential. Planned measures aim primarily regulate the institutions through family support and development a services for the prevention of abandonment as risks prevention in the family, early intervention and support for the child, family planning services and family mediation.

Entering foster care nationwide as a major alternative to accommodation in specialized institution and to promote the adoption is basic task of caring for children as a social service.

ACCORDING to a report from a study of FICE Bulgaria and Synovate Bulgaria the status of children in institutions, expressed through their marital and health status, and ethnicity is as follows [20]:

FIRST. The largest percent institutionalized children are on single or divorced parents. Another basic part are the children whose parents have low social status or are unemployed. Following are the children of large families, with serious chronic or mental illness; parents deprived of or with limited parental rights, deceased parents; of unknown parents, parents refugees and underage parents.

SECOND. In homes for medical-social care and homes for upbringing of children deprived of parental care prevail healthy children - without damage and / or chronic illnesses. Clinically healthy are 55% of children in the first type of institutions and 72% of children raised in the second type.

THIRD. 47% of the residing in institutions are children with Roma ethno-cultural identity, 35% of Bulgarian ethno-cultural background, 6% - with Turkish, 2% - with other, and 10% are of uncertain ethno-cultural identity.

THE activities on deriving the children leaving institutions in a family or family-like environment over time is increasingly shifting towards activities for prevention of abandonment and to create new opportunities to support children and families in the community.

THE approach to such a process is specifically outlined in the strategy 'Vision to the deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria ":

- Assess the needs of each child, which includes an assessment of parental capacity and the potential of the child to be cared for in his own family.
- In the searching the services alternative to placement in an institution when appropriate and do not endanger the child's life every effort are make to reintegrating the child in his native family. Where this is not possible, is looking an opportunity for long-term solution in the best interest of the child by family accommodation close relatives, and where this can be not done by adoptive or foster parents.
- Only when family accommodation is impossibility, the children are placed in residential type services for small number of children whereupon the demand for family-based care in the system of protection is not suspended.
- Neither one child cannot leave institution without an action plan and care co-developed with people who care and in the future will take care of it, and with the participation of their nativet family when possible.
- A key element of providing constant care for every child, regardless of the possibility of a future reintegration is maintaining contact and emotional connection between child and its native family .
- For all children in the institutions for closing must be provided accommodation in a family or family-like environment.
- Institutions are not obscured by moving children from one institution to another.
- In order to minimize moving it from one form of care in another important part of the Action Plan is to seeking a permanent solution for the child.

- As far as possible, children should be included in making decisions about the form of care that will be selected.
- Siblings should be growing together, unless it is not appropriate or impossible.
- After taking out of children from institutions, their capacity must be reduced to their final closing.
- With priority will be closed institutions for children with disabilities in parallel with the homes on medical -social care of 0-3 years because the stay of the children in institutions of this type and on this age is the most detrimental to their development.
- Active involvement the staff of the institutions in the process of deinstitutionalization and with purpose to use existing capacity and human resource, elaboration and implementation programs for retraining and targeting the staff to alternative social services.

IN 2010, by all municipalities are adopted municipal strategies for social services for the period 2011-2015. In the context of the National Strategy "Vision for deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria" [15] and the Regional and Municipal strategies is outline following alternatives institutional care for children:

REINTEGRATION IN THE BIOLOGICAL FAMILY [21]

THIS is the best option for the child. The successful and lasting reintegration requires very long and hard pre-social work with both parents and child. The preparation of the integration and reintegration happens to drafting an individual plan for each child. The risk factors in the preparation of reintegration into the family are reported in it.

IT is necessary to work on the process of leaving the relevant institution from the child. It must be prepared to meet again with his own parents or relatives. Therefore to make contact with family is very important. Since 2002 in biological families average annual number reintegrated children is 2,000.

ACCORDING to data to the State Agency for Child Protection in 2005 are reintegrated 2032 children, in 2006 - 2488, but only in the first half of 2007 - 1509 people.

ACCOMMODATION the child in family of relatives or close [21], [22]

THIS is another opportunity for the return of the child in the family. According to the supplementary provisions of the Child Protection [5], the family environment is the biological family of the child or the adoptive family, grandparents or relatives of the child or a foster family. Successfully running the process family accommodation with relatives or close friends. At the end of March 2013, the total number of children in country living in families of relatives is 6532. Nevertheless, there are cases where problems occur - when the child has to formally move to live with relatives (obtaining parental rights) and when the new family because of age or health problems was unable to care for the child.

ADOPTION [22], [10]

THE adoption provides the family environment and adequate care appropriate to the child's needs. The Government efforts are aimed at national adoptions. Bulgaria observes the introduced by the Hague Convention requirement the international adoption be undertaken only when no suitable candidates adoptive another opportunity to rearing the child in the country. A child who has received at least three refusals from Bulgarian candidate-adoptive parents or has been entered in the register more than one year is included in the register of international adoptions. Moreover, it continues to be registered in the national register for full adoption and the demand for a suitable family in Bulgaria continues.

THERE is public discontent with the slow process of adopting children. In 2008, changes are made to the Family Code, by which is shortened the period within which a child may be given up for adoption if is not contacted by parents from 6 to 3 months.

THE overall number of adoptions in the period 2004-2007 is 2597. Should be noted the relatively large number of national adoptions - mainly Roma children and children with disabilities who find more difficult own families in the country.

ACCOMMODATION IN A HOST FAMILY [9], [24]

THE process of reintegration of children in foster care families in Bulgaria is going much slower and with a number of difficulties. Currently in the framework in the foster care in this country are grown several hundred children.

THE foster care is a social service for children, an act of state policy for child protection and be submitte to the a unified established criteria and standards set out in the Law on Child Protection [5], Rules for the Implementing of the Protection of Children [18] Ordinance on the terms and procedure for application, selection and approval of foster families and accomodation in them [12] Ordinance on the criteria and standards for social services for children [13].

THE foster care provides temporary alternative care in a family environment to children who for various reasons cannot live with their own families. Children who are the subject of foster care are children disconnected to the birth family, abandoned children, families in which the parents cannot take good care of the child when the child is at risk to be injured in your home or the child is a victim of violence in the family, parents are ill, deprived of liberty or died. Foster care can be short, medium, long-term or urgent.

THE type of accommodation is determined by the child's needs and the purpose of accommodation. For short-term accommodation is accepted six months to be support the biological family and the child returned to him. At him between the child and his biological family itself make regular contacts if it is in his interest.

THE medium-term accommodation is accepted for a period of 6 months to 1 year. The long-term accommodation is for more than one year for children whose parents are deceased, unknown, deprived of parental rights, with limited rights or whose parents consistently fail to take care of them and could not return to their biological family.

THE selection and evaluation are carried out by the authorities for child protection at the local level - the departments "Child Protection" in the directorates in "Social Assistance."

AS of end of March 2013 1479 children were placed in foster families (178 - in volunteer foster families and 1301 children - in professional foster families), the total number of approved foster families 1506 (156 and 1 voluntary 350 professional foster families). Only the first three months of 2013 successful cases of prevention of abandonment of children 640. From the beginning of the calendar year to the end of March 2013 the total number of successful cases of reintegration is 308. In the same period 189 children were adopted under the conditions of full adoption.

SOCIAL services, residential type [19], [11]

ACCORDING to the Social Assistance Act [4] and the Rules its Implementing [17] residential care services are services that offer a living environment as close to the family and in it live no more than 15 clients.

THE placement in social residential care services is the last possible stage of deinstitutionalization of a child by an institution. A child is placed in residential care services only if it is impossible family accommodation.

IN the country were developed next quick residential care services - center for family-type accommodation, temporary accommodation center, crisis center, transitional housing, sheltered home, supervised housing, shelter.

OVER the last decade in Bulgaria was built hundreds of resident services. They take children from institutions for which is not provided a family environment. This type of services are already part of the lives of all the major Bulgarian cities.

SHELTERED HOMES [11] (small houses or apartments scattered throughout the city) is considered a very good conceptual platform as they work on the principle of the small group, develop independence, enabling to build a positive relationship with a significant other.

IN the Centers family type [11] the children living in "little house", they go to school, have neighbors, play and meet friends in the neighborhood. The first center was opened by the state in 2007. By June 2009 the total number of such centers in the country is 26.

UNTIL 2009 year the financed by the state budget social services are 310. Important role as a provider of such services increasingly play NGOs.

INCREASINGLY strengthens the role of the civil sector to deinstitutionalization and the development of alternative services for children.

NGOs are a peculiar of engine of this process. They give strong signals to the public about the need for reform of institutional care. A number of organizations are showing significant activity for the closure of institutions that offer inadequate living conditions and development of children in the bits, psychological and pedagogical plan.

BUT there are cases in which workers in certain homes meet representatives of the civil sector with hostility, because fearing that the problems of children's lives will come out to light.

MANY social residential care services have been created by NGOs. For this purpose are solicit funds from foreign donors and programs. The majority of these projects are negotiated at intergovernmental level funders and play the role of pilot projects that implement and test in practice a leading European experience.

AT the initiative of the Alliance of NGOs working to reform childcare in Bulgaria in 2008 under the framework in special document are introduced General principles of reform in the care of children [19]. Of particular importance are the following from them:

- United approach - requires in each pursued policy to following the common goal of building conditions to the children at-risk to live in their own families, benefiting from support services according to their needs;
- Coordination of the actions - the realisation of policies for children at risk requires policies at central and local level that are relevant to them. The lack of coordination would doom the efforts of one-way and will not lead to achieving the objectives;
- Priority of the family - policies for children at risk are conducted primarily as a priority to support families caring for a child which minimize opportunities for abandonment of children, building social and educational environment corresponding their needs;

- According to needs - successful implementation of policies for children at risk requires both knowledge of the needs and planning the opening and development of social and educational services according to specific needs. The process of discovery of services requires planning and going out of the stage of chaotic state and dependence on the goodwill of local authorities;
- Provide for funding the policies for children - without resourcing of individual policies, the reform of child care can not be achieved.

IN conclusion it can be stated that the NGOs in the country more sharply raise the issue of inequalities between municipalities and other service providers. It is to be considering the question of setting general requirements for registration and licensing to all providers, including the municipalities, which are now exempt from such requirement. NGOs urge to take a decision that will not put them totally dependent on the will of the mayor, who decides whether to announce a competition for private provider or to leave the municipality to provide the service. It is difficult to overcome the distrust between the public and private sectors and the inertia in the way of thinking in this respect.

REFERENCES

1. WHITE PAPER: EFFECTIVE SUPPORT THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS IN BULGARIA. BASIC PRINCIPLES. STRATEGIC DOCUMENT PLATFORM "SOCITHE AL POLICIES", 2009. (IN BULGARIAN)
2. PRIMACY OF THE INTERESTS OF MINORS IN ADOPTION, PRACTICAL APPLIANCE. PUBL. FOUNDATION "INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE - BULGARIA" VELIKO TARNOVO, 2007(IN BULGARIAN)
3. **DERIZHAN I. 2001:** TECHNOLOGY OF SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN, BLAGOEVGRAD (IN BULGARIAN)
4. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT, PROMULGATED. SG. ISSUE. 56 OF 19.05.1998. (IN BULGARIAN)
5. LAW ON CHILD PROTECTION, PROMULGATED. SG. 48 OF 13 JUNE 2000. (IN BULGARIAN)
6. **ILIEVA, S. 2009:** INTRODUCTION, IN: INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN - "FOR" OR "AGAINST", PROCEEDINGS STUDENT ESSAYS PUBL. SHU "EP. PRESLAVSKY ", SHUMEN (IN BULGARIAN)
7. CONCEPTION TO PROMOTE THE DECENTRALIZATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES, BULGARIAN CENTER FOR NON-PROFIT LAW. (IN BULGARIAN)
8. MEMORANDUM ON SOCIAL INCLUSION, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, 2005. (IN BULGARIAN)
9. **MEHMED, V. 2008:** ADVANTAGES THE FOSTER CARE, DUTIES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, IN: PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL AND THE SPECIAL PEDAGOGICS, COLLECTION OF ARTICLES, ED. OF SHU "EP. PRESLAVSKY " (IN BULGARIAN)
10. **MILTICHEVA, V. 2009:** ADOPTION, SOFIA (IN BULGARIAN)
11. METHODOLOGICAL GUIDANCE FOR THE CONDITIONS AND ORDER FOR THE PROVISION OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE "CENTER FOR FAMILY TYPE ACCOMMODATION IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH" - SACP, SOFIA, 2014(IN BULGARIAN)
12. ORDINANCE ON THE CONDITIONS AND ORDER FOR APPLICATION, SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF FOSTER FAMILIES AND PLACEMENT IN THEM, PROM. SG. BR. 100 OF DECEMBER 12, 2006. (IN BULGARIAN)
13. ORDINANCE ON CRITERIA AND STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, APPROVED BY CM DECREE № 256 OF 7.11.2003. PROMULGATED IN SG. 102 OF 21.11.2003, EFFECTIVE FROM 21.11.2003. (IN BULGARIAN)
14. NATIONAL REPORT ON STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION 2008 - 2010, MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY. (IN BULGARIAN)
15. NATIONAL STRATEGY "VISION FOR DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE CHILDREN IN REPUBLIC BULGARIA".(IN BULGARIAN)
16. **POPOV, V. 2007:** THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION - MYTHS AND REALITIES (IN BULGARIAN)

17. RULES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT, PROMULGATED. SG. 133 OF 11 NOVEMBER 1998. (IN BULGARIAN)
18. RULES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW ON PROTECTION OF THE CHILD, PROM. SG. 66 OF JULY 25, 2003. (IN BULGARIAN)
19. PRINCIPLES OF THE CHILDCARE REFORM, DOCUMENT: ALLIANCE FROM NGOs WORKING IN THE REALM FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, 2012 (IN BULGARIAN)
20. FIRST STAGE OF REPORT STUDY OF FICE BULGARIA AND SYNOVATE BULGARIA, 2006. (IN BULGARIAN)
21. REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN TO THEIR BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES, MATERIALS OF INTER-REGIONAL MEETING ON THE SUBJECT, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF 10 DISTRICTS IN THE COUNTRY - VELIKO TARNOVO, GABROVO, LOVECH, PLEVEN, SHUMEN, TARGOVISHTE, HASKOVO, SMOLYAN, ROUSSE, SOFIA, 2013 (IN BULGARIAN)
22. FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD, UNICEF MEDIAL REPORT OF JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER, THE EXPERIENCE WITH HMSCC - G. SHUMEN, 2011. (IN BULGARIAN)
23. **SPASOV, K. 2002:** SOCIAL POLICY. II ED. SOFIA: "STAFF GRH" M. POPOV " (IN BULGARIAN)
24. **SHANTI, J. 2004:** VAN AUDENHOVEN, N., FOSTER CARE - PARTICIPANTS AND INTERACTIONS, SOFIA (IN BULGARIAN)