



Republican seminar on inclusive education

Existing practices and policies in the area of inclusive education were discussed at a republican seminar where representatives of the Ministry of Education, raion departments of education, and child protection NGOs participated.

Mentioning the importance of inclusive education, Tatiana Poting, deputy minister of education, said in her speech that "we can never talk too much about inclusion. This reform is among the most courageous in education, from the perspective of breaking certain stereotypes".

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A new service for children from Falesti and Ungheni raions

Children from Ungheni and Falesti raions have now more possibilities to protect their rights. A new service – “Child’s Helpline” was launched in April in the mentioned raions. This is a call center where children and adults can report cases of violation of the child’s rights to physical, psychological, spiritual, moral, and social development. At the new service launching event representatives of local public authorities and specialized child protection structures participated.

The Child’s Helpline was launched within the project “Creating at local level systems to protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in the Republic of Moldova”, implemented by Partnerships for every child and Terre des homes organizations, with the financial support of Oak Foundation.

“Such projects not only represent the results of joint work of two big organizations, but also a service to improve the quality of our activities for children”, said Iulia Panca, depute head of Ungheni raion.

The Child’s Helpline is a child protection service having the mission to collect notifications about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, to ensure telephone counseling and inter-

vene in emergency cases, with the involvement of the team of specialists.

Svetlana Rijicov, professional development expert within Partnerships for every child said: “Every area involved in the child development, be it medicine, education, or public order, for example, treats the problem of abuse differently, and this phenomenon is expressed differently in each area. Thus, beyond the fact that the specter of this phenomenon evaluation is vast, each area tends to reduce the real dimensions of the problem”.

Alexandru Ciuvaga, director of the General Departments of Education, Youth, and Sport of Ungheni Raion, mentioned that it is necessary to ensure the continuity of this service and prompt and professional intervention in emer-

gency cases, “although, even if a single case of neglect and abuse of a child is prevented or solved, the service already can be considered a successful one”.

To make sure the service is successful, the project experts set a series of objectives and developed a work methodology that includes receiving calls, primary evaluation of the situation, gathering statistics, information and consultation on the phone, counseling, creation of support groups, case referral to Ungheni SAFPD. At SAFPD level, the cases will undergo complex evaluation and referred either to communities, or to the specialized units of the SAFPD for solution. In addition, the SAFPD will have to ensure cases solution within cross-sector collaboration.

The Child’s Helpline is a specialized service, integrated into the raion network of services for children and families, located in the “CREDO” - Center for Social Reintegration of Young People in Ungheni. “CREDO” will ensure efficient functioning of this service.

According to the data of the Social Assistance and Family Protection Department, there are over 9000 children in difficulty registered in Ungheni raion. Every third pupil of this raion has parents who are abroad for work.

The Residential Care Reform will continue after 2012

The Government, the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, and UNICEF, launched public consultations in Orhei, for the development of a new family and child protection strategy in the Republic of Moldova.



The strategy is a logical continuation of the residential child care system reform 2007 – 2011 that registered significant progress for children. Today there are twice as fewer children in institutions than before the reform. The children were helped to return to their biological families or were placed into alternative family-type ser-

vices: community homes, family-type homes, foster care.

Nevertheless, the program was slower in the case of children with disabilities and children under 3. Today there are about 200 children in Moldova, who live in institutions, although their stay there can be dramatic: a general rule says that for each 3 months of

residential care the child loses 1 month of development.

Prime-minister of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Vlad Filat affirmed the engagement of the Government to stop gradually the placement of little children into institutions, under the new family and child protection Strategy. Thus, the Moldovan Government responded to the appeal launched in 2011 by international human rights organizations to governments of Central and East Europe.

“I insist that this is one of mid-term targets of the new Strategy”, said the prime minister, revealing that the new strategy should be closely linked to the public budget framework, so that the limited state resources are invested rationally, follow clear objectives, and produce maximum result.

Mrs. Valentina Buliga, Minister of Labor, Social Protection and Family, said that the objectives of the new child and family protection strategy include combating domestic violence, abuse against women and children, labor and sexual exploitation, creation of qualitative community services, and increasing of family welfare through the promotion and support of unity, power, and resistance of the family.

“The family and child protection system in Moldova is Currently at a stage that probably will never repeat – a stage full of opportunities, but also imposing colossal responsibility”, said Mrs. Valentina Buliga.

During the Strategy development, parents, children, specialists, and all interested citizens will be consulted. The process will be coordinated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, under the guidance of the National Council for Child’s Rights Protection, and with the support of the Prime-minister’s cabinet.

Major actions taken in the interest of the child



**Interview with Mrs. Viorica DUMBRAVEANU,
Head of Family and Child Protection Department
of the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection,
and Family (MLSPF)**

- Mrs. Dumbraveanu, what are the immediate priority directions of the department you lead?

- We are currently developing a draft law on child protection. We are focusing particularly on the attributions of the guardianship authority of Level 1 and Level 2. At the same time, we want to clearly define a glossary of terminology that is used in various interpretations in the legislation. This specifically refers to violence, sexual abuse of children, neglect, child in difficulty, etc. Our goal is to regulate very clearly child participation in all forms of protection, as well as child participation in situations when the family is in crisis.

Besides, we are developing the child and family protection strategy. This document is planned to be fully implemented by 2020. The strategy will be accompanied by a mid-term actions plan that will most probably last till 2015 and will contain clearly determined actions incorporating the recommendations of the UN Convention on the rights of children and of the UN Commissioner for the rights of children, the tasks being clearly distributed among central public authorities.

Thus, the MLSPF, partnering with a number of NGOs, including Partnerships for every child, are currently developing a training program of assistance in cases of abuse, violence, and neglect of

children. These trainings will determine a multidisciplinary actions mechanism addressed to all actors involved in child's rights protection. The trainings are primarily designed for local public authorities, guardianship authorities, community social assistants, police representatives, community doctors. This is a document that will delimitate attributions at community level, indicate the terms in which these actions should be taken, the tools that will be used, etc.

- The Government is preparing a new strategy to protect the family and the child. This strategy will continue the reforms of 2007-2011 that intended to place children from residential care into families. What are the outputs of this document?

- The child and family protection strategy will be a policy framework in family and child protection, focused primarily on maintaining the child in a family environment, on the family support provided for raising and educating these children. At the same time, the Strategy will be focused on preventing institutionalization of children and will have an engagement – quite ambitious, we believe, to gradually stop the institutionalization of children under the age of 3.

The strategy is focused on continuing the child residential care reform. According to statistics, the number of children in institutions dropped 50%, but it is important that there are still other 50%, and we are talking of contingent of children who, unfortunately, cannot be reintegrated





Steering Committee of child protection projects was created

The steering Committee of child protection projects had its first meeting

The Committee is presided by Mrs. Valentina Buliga, Minister of Labor, Social Protection and Family, and was created for the purpose of activities coordination and supervision of the implementation of three child protection projects: “Ensuring the right of the child to a family and his protection from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation” implemented by Partnerships for Every Child; “Free, strong, and protected – towards a better child protection system in Moldova”, implemented by the National Center for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and the Center of information and documentation in the rights of children; and “Creation at local level of child protection system to ensure the protection of children against abuse, neglect, and exploitation in the Republic of Moldova”, implemented by Terre des Hommes and Partnerships for Every Child.

The main activity of the Steering Committee will consist in approving work plans of the projects, monitoring of the projects implementation process, analysis of activity reports of the implementing agencies, and the impact of the projects implementation on the beneficiaries. The Steering Committee will use these observations to make recommendations for the projects activity improvement, and to ensure permanent exchange of information and experience between the projects implementing agencies, the national and local authorities involved in the projects implementation.

The Steering Committee will meet as often as it will be necessary, but not less than once in a quarter.

ted into the biological or extended family. We are talking of children with special needs, and it is necessary to develop a complex range of specialized services, even highly specialized, to rehabilitate these children and to provide them necessary help.

- Talking about children under the age of 3, there are currently about 200 such children placed into residential care. What solutions do you have for them or for the mothers who are ready to abandon their newborn children? How will you convince such a mother, if she has no money, no place to live, how will you convince her keep the child?

- The number of children abandoned at birth reduced twice, but the number of institutionalized children under the age of 3 is still the same. Obviously, alternatives are necessary, but, first of all, we need to support this mother to keep her child in the family environment. We count greatly here on promoting this year a Regulation of minimum standards of quality for a service such as family support. It includes financial support, but finances do not always solve all problems. Non-financial support is also important. And such support programs, like consultation, are inefficient yet, this is why they need to be consolidated. These are our tendencies.

We need to consolidate the institution of the family. It is true, the number of institutionalized children is dropping, but, unfortunately, we still have children without parental care. We have children that are raised by tertiary persons, without any official form of protection being instituted.

- The child and family protection strategy started with a series of consultations. How long will these consultations last, and who needs them?

- We started with consultations, so that we don't move from central to local levels, but do it the other way round. These are consultations with proposals, suggestions that need to come from the local level, with the problems existing in communities, referred to the central level. For the first time the consultations that will be rather broad, will include children, their broad participation. Their consultation will not be performed by the Ministry, but by professionals. The consultation will involve children who exited institutions, children who live in the family environment but who can also share certain opinions about forms of child protection. We still have abuse in school, we face neglect even in the family environment. This continues to be a problem, and this is why the target group of the Strategy development will be not the Ministry, but the children.

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The seminar was held in “Pro Success” lyceum, where the inclusion process was implemented in 2003. At the moment 30% of the pupils are with special needs. In the context, depute minister of education specified that the lyceum managed to create a family atmosphere through little things, communication, and, importantly, professionalism and goodwill of teachers.

Head of mainstream pre-school, primary, and secondary education department, Valentin Crudu, talked about the implementation of government policies in the area of inclusive education at the level of local public authorities and schools.

“The goal of inclusive education policies is to meet educational needs of all children, to achieve a shift of attitudes, behaviors, educational contents in order to answer the diversity of children, to apply non-discrimination practices in the process of education, in prevention and elimination of exclusion and/or marginalization in education, to centralize the educational process on the pupil’s potential, following its development”, said Valentin Crudu.



The host of the event, Nadia Cristea, director of Pro Success lyceum, said that a truly child-friendly school should be made of pupils, parents, and teachers. “Here, indulgence and tolerance are double, because we learn them every day from pupils with special educational needs who make up about 30% of total 210 pupils of the lyceum. We assumed the task to offer equal education and integration chances to all, according to each pupil’s skills, interests, and opti-

ons”, said Nadia Cristea.

There are over 17 000 children with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova, among whom about 3500 are under the age of 7. The Republic of Moldova is the third country in Central, East Europe and CIS region, by the rate of institutionalization, having 6900 children in institutions. Almost half of all children in institutions are considered to have disabilities.

The results of a 2009 research show that one out of five citizens of the Republic of Moldova believed that children with disabilities should be placed into special institutions. Less than half of parents (45,8%) accepted their own child to play with a disabled child, while 41% of the population did not accept mainstream school integration (compared to 34% in 2003) of children with special educational needs. At the same time, every second teacher accepted children with disabilities in mainstream schools, while every third pupil rejected this idea.

The Moldovan inclusive education development program for 2011-2020, approved by the Government this July, focuses on shift of attitudes to children with special educational needs, as well as on changing the organization of the educational process, new approaches to school results assessment, etc.





Census of children in difficulty is taking place in the country

Since March and till the end of May, the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family is performing a “census” of children in difficulty. The authorities intend to precisely determine how many children are in difficulty, how many are left in the care of one of the parents or relatives, and what their needs are.

According to the MLSPF data, in December 2011 about 100 national trainers were trained. In their turn, they trained in January-February all community social assistants who are currently employed in the social protection system. These social assistants will perform the mentioned social survey in every family between March and end of May.

The information on the number of children was obtained based on a preliminary list, nominal lists of children in difficulty that were submitted by each mayoralty of the country. According to

preliminary data, around 170 000 children were identified under the mentioned category.

Within this research, a questionnaire was developed, that will be filled for each child in every household, based on the information presented by the child’s carer – one of the parents, or legal representative, or the person who is taking care of the child. Besides, interview with the child will be held, focusing on the family’s composition, contacts with the relatives living abroad, the child’s health condition, for example, last visit to the

community doctor, the child’s education, living conditions, technical condition of the dwelling, number of meals the child has daily, relations with peers and with the person who takes care of the child, and the aspect of communication.

This data base will represent one of the main sources of information for the identification and assessment of the situation of children in difficulty, so that authorities of all levels, having access to actual and true data, can develop and promote more efficient policies and activities for child assistance and protection.

Besides, after the data is electronically processed, a comprehensive national report will be developed and made available to all interested authorities and institutions, and this data, in its turn, will be referred to when estimating the phenomenon of migration.

She no longer feels a stranger in her own home

Attending school daily is ordinary routine for every child – but a dream for 16-year-old Alina. And now, it seems that this dream has come true. Till recently the girl studied in a special school for children with mental disabilities, visiting her family only as a guest, two or three times a month.

Like other children who were not so brilliant at school, Alina had a chance to grow up close to her parents. But the headaches she had in childhood prevented her from doing homework. Because of her illness, Alina missed many lessons, and her former teachers did everything they could to isolate her in a residential institution. With immense buildings, with big numbers of children, with staff employed to oversee the children – not to give them affection though – residential institution are a sad remembrance of Soviet era.

Alina got into this sort of institution after her parents gave away their fight with the system. Three meals a day, a bed and a night table she shared with her friend, a basin in which all girls from the room washed – these were the utilities of the institution.

Just like hundreds of children from the Republic of Moldova, Alina was able to come back home thank to a big project reforming the residential care system, supported by Partnerships for every child charity.

The news that their daughter will be able to attend the community school was a surprise for the girl's parents. In the beginning, fearing stigma and discrimination, they even didn't want to let the girl leave the house.

People around changed their opinion following numerous discussions with the case manager and the support teaching staff, employed to facilitate the girl's integration into social and school environment.

Alina's mother says she can't recognize her child. Apparently, since the girl attends the community school in the village, she has managed to acquire more skills than during all those years she lived in the special school.

She managed to integrate rather quickly in the school. Teachers say she is as communicative child as the others, and she has made many friends. She has though to recover very much of school matter, because the special school in which she has studied

so far had a very light school program, lacking physics, chemistry, foreign language, and other school subjects. However, Alina

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is firmly decided to recover – she does homework regularly, she loves geography and dreams to travel. It is impossible to sense any visible difference between her and the rest of the children. Those 7 years she spent in residential care didn't manage to make a child with deficiencies out of her.

Family reintegration is a fulfilled goal. Now Alina studies in an ordinary community school, lives with her family, aspires to a good education and plans to help her mother. But what is most important is that now Alina doesn't feel a stranger in her home.

Nobody can say that she is a child with special needs. Seven years she spent in the close-type residential school is very much, but now Alina is at home. It is better late than never.

