



22 RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS WILL BE TRANSFORMED WITHIN THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Within the following three years, 22 residential institutions will be reorganized

Already this year the Ministry of Education plans to close seven residential institutions, four of which do not have in present any children beneficiaries at all. The children from these institutions will be reintegrated into biological or extended families, or placed into family-type care. This was said within the press conference “Partnerships in the implementation of residential child care reform and inclusive education development”, where state high officials, local public authorities, international organizations, and NGOs participated.

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Violence in inadequate life conditions in some residential schools across the country

The results of the assessment made by the Ministry of Education in five residential institutions were discussed at a meeting with the managers of 50 residential schools subordinated to the ministry.

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“Child’s helpline” – a new service in Falesti and Ungheni raions

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A new service will be launched this week in Falesti and Ungheni raions – “Child’s Helpline”, where children and adults can report cases when the children’s rights to physical, psychological, spiritual, moral, and social development are violated.

This service will be incorporated into the range of social services provided by the Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments in these raions. The offices of these services will be incorporated

into community placement centers, where 24/24 hours access will be allowed. In Ungheni, the service will be operated by the staff of “Credo” placement center for young people in difficulty, and in Falesti – by “Casa Sperantei” [Home of Hope] Community Placement Center.

“Children and adults are encouraged to report cases of violence against children, so that the specialists can involve promptly and act as fast as possible to solve such cases. The consultants of the “Child’s Helpline” will work in close collaboration with professionals in child protection (social assistants, teaching staff, law-enforcing agencies, health-care services, various NGOs), depending on the case”, said Mariana Lupascu, Project Team Leader at “Partnerships for every child”.

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The service will be launched on April 18 in Falesti and on April 19 in Ungheni. A conference will be held in each raion, where social assistants, police officers, family doctors, teachers, support teaching staff, other decision-makers of the raion will participate. At these conferences, sector and cross-sector instructions in prevention and elimination of abuse and violence against children will be presented.



22 residential schools will be transformed within the next three years

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The goal of the conference was to make an overview of the achievements in the residential child care reform and inclusive education implementation, and to identify perspectives in ensuring child protection and development of inclusive education development.

Present at the event, Depute Prime-Minister Mihai Moldovanu said that under the residential child care reform, it is planned to reduce to the maximum the number of residential schools and baby homes in the country, and to develop community social services.

According to Tatiana Poting, Depute Minister of Education, the number of children in residential schools has reduced 50% within these five years of the reform implementation. Thus, in 2007, when the reform began, around 11500 children were placed in 67 residential institutions, while in the beginning of this year, the remaining 55 institutions hosted 5723 children.

Alexandra Yuster, UNICEF Moldova representative, underlined that although the country registered significant progress in the reform implementation, the situation remains complicated in the Transnistrian region, where the highest institutionalization ratio of children in the world is registered. In the context, the official said that UNICEF, together with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, calls states of the world to

stop placing children under 3 into residential care, as the effects of residential placement of these children are disastrous. Currently, there are 200 abandoned children of this age in residential care in our country.

Children – Doina and Anisia Neamtu, Ana Lisagor, Igor Turcan, and Elizaveta Pascari, were present at the event, sharing their life experience in the residential institution. Within the deinstitutionalization process, the children were reintegrated into the society and family. They expressed gratefulness for the opportunity of being in the family, of attending community mainstream school.

Anisia Neamtu and her younger sister lived for several years in the residential institution, and now they are together, with their family, and attend school in their birth community. Their family is provided up to 500 lei cash benefit by the state, and receives support from non-governmental organizations.

“It’s so nice at home. I like helping my mom around the house. And it is more interesting in school”, said Igor at the conference - a boy whose life was changed by a medical commission’s decision. This boy’s drama began when he, a 9 year-old child, was sent to Chisinau Residential School No. 2, due to certain health problems. Only after eight years, during the residential care system reform, the teen-ager could come back home.

Since 2007, over 900 children from Moldovan orphanages returned to biological families, relatives, or were provided family-type services.

As a rule, children were placed into residential institutions either because their parents couldn’t raise them, or because their parents are abroad, or the children are orphans.

Mr. Valentin Crudu, head of General Department of Pre-school, Primary, and Secondary Mainstream Education, coordinator of the residential childcare system reform coordination council, was satisfied with the preliminary results of the reform. He underlined that since 2007, the number of institutionalized children reduced twice. However, within this period, a set of problems were identified, that hinder the reform implementation: imperfect legal framework, resistance to change of the staff employed in residential institutions, incorrect system of psychopedagogical evaluation of a disabled child’s development.

Viorica Dumbraveanu, head of Child’s Rights and Family Protection Department of the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, said that social and school inclusion is a new chance for the children from residential care.

The MLSPF has developed a set of mechanisms and regulations within the recent years, to support the social inclusion process and help families in difficulty, thus preventing child institutionalization.

UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children became more accessible to children

Moldova is the first European country to present the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children in a child-friendly language. Natalia Semeniuc, child participation consultant, said that the main message of the booklet is that every child should live in a family, and when it is not possible, this is the state's duty to ensure child protection in alternative services, as close as possible to family environment.



Alternative care refers to the care provided by other persons than the child's parents. It can be also provided by institutions that ensure support, security, and stability to the child. This arrangement is approved by authorities, in consultation with the child and the family.

The booklet contains a set of stories of children who were provided alternative care, as well as positive practices of

child protection authorities.

The Guideline was adapted by a group of experts in child's rights protection and in communication, but also by members of Child Advisory Boards in Falesti, Ungheni, and Calarasi.

The full text of the Guideline was transformed in a way accessible to children, who are its main beneficiaries.

What do children say about the "UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children"?

Tatiana BRAGA,
tenth form student in Sipoteni,
Calarasi:

"This work is very useful for all children, especially for those who face certain problems – orphans, children coming from poor families, children without parental care. The text is accessible to anyone, and is attractive. Pictures are original, and the stories are real and captivating".

Vasile CHITOROGA,
eleventh form student in Sipoteni,
Calarasi:

"The information is presented in a simple, clear, useful manner, helping to solve everyday problems faced by children. This is an informative guide for all ages: children, teenagers, adults, grandparents, etc., who will know how to act in a situation when a child is in difficulty".

Dorina MAIMESCU,
eleventh form student, Sipoteni,
Calarasi:

"It would be good if all children, but also decision-makers, know the information contained in this guide. They should know how to involve, how to help children who have problems in the family".

Mădălina POPOVICI,
Ungheni ABC member:

"This work gives us solutions for each case when a child gets into difficulty. The goal of this booklet is to help adults correctly implement the Convention of the Rights of Children. I believe this work will be highly demanded by children and adults, as it contains extremely valuable information".

Irina GAIMIR,
Valea Mare, Ungheni:

“Every child faces entire life that is full of good and bad things, obstacles that he will have to overcome. Being the best environment for a child to grow, be educated, and develop, the family is the main help source in any difficult situation.

But what a child who does not have parents can do? The answer can be found in the child’s guideline – “Guidelines on Alternative Care”.

We can find here solutions for all problems faced by children without parental care. With this guide, children are better informed and will be able to overcome any problem!”

Octavian CIOCIRLAN,
Ungheni ABC member:

“I find this work very interesting, especially because the pictures are made by children. The information is structured in a manner accessible to children of all ages. I am glad that now we have information that we can use to help scores of children”.

Claudiu SORUNGA, Catranic, Falesti:

“The first thing that catches one’s attention is the cover – very efficient, with extremely suggestive image. The contents of the work is presented in a rather clear language, and the information is very useful. It is important for us to know the role of the family in the child’s growth and development. I like that addresses and phone numbers are presented, that children and those who know a case of child in difficulty can call. The images are a positive aspect of this book, as they are made by children themselves, and the author’s age is shown. Thus one can see the way a child thinks, what concerns he has”.

Cristina CIUPERCA, Falesti town:

“Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children” is a very useful guide for children with problems. It is good that it contains the glossary of terms, because not everyone understands all notions. The examples of children in various situations of difficulty are real, and, unfortunately, often encountered in the Republic of Moldova. I hope that this work will be distributed to as many children as possible, who have questions but are afraid to ask”.

Veronica TIT, Risipeni, Falesti:

“The language of the book is truly child-friendly, and the images are well positioned on pages, catching one’s attention (I am very glad that my pictures also were included into this work). This is a very useful work for every child who seeks solutions for his problems. The cases presented in this work inspire confidence that there are no problems without solutions.”



Limited access in schools for children with physical deficiencies

Only 3% of total number of schools and kindergartens in the country are adapted to access requirements for children with motor deficiencies, concludes a Human Rights Centre report on 2011.

According to this information, of total about two thousand schools and kindergartens of Moldova, only 30 are equipped with ramps, 16 institutions have access or elevators, and have adapted sanitary units.

There are over 17000 children with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova. About 3500 of them are children under 7. Republic of Moldova is the third country in Central and East Europe and CIS, by the ratio of institutionalization, with 6900 children placed in residential care. Almost half of all children placed in institutions are considered to have disabilities.

The results of a research performed in 2009 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.



Violence in inadequate life conditions in some residential schools across the country

The results of the assessment made by the Ministry of Education in five residential institutions were discussed at a meeting with the managers of 50 residential schools subordinated to the ministry.

Valentin Crudu, head of General Department of pre-school, primary, and secondary mainstream education, said that some headmasters do not know what happens in reality in the institutions they administrate, while the Ministry of Education learn about these problems and violations from the representatives of the civil society or from mass-media reports

A set of deviations and violations of existing normative acts were registered in five institutions: special residential school in Crihana Veche, Cahul raion; special residential school in Razalai, Singerei raion; special residential school Grinauti-Moldova, Ocnita raion; Sanatorial residential school Cineseuti, Rezina raion, and residential school for orphans and children left without pa-

rental care in Orhei raion.

According to the quoted source, the following problems were identified:

- imperfect institutional management; incoherence in the process of enrollment and placement of children into residential care;
- negligence in ensuring personal security to children; verbal, physical, sexual violence.

The managers of the institutions proved negligence in monitoring the

children's health condition, and did not provide adequate conditions for their accommodation. Besides, they did not take action in the identified cases of physical, psychological, and sexual violence.

Valentin Crudu also said that in the result of verifications and depending on severity of violations, the Ministry of Education applied disciplinary sanctions, including two cases of reprimand notes and one case of headmaster dis-



missal.

Present at the meeting, Tatiana Poting, depute minister of Education, underlined that residential institutions are permanently in the attention of the Ministry of Education, and are increasingly monitored by the civil society and mass-media. The depute minister demanded that the managers of these two institutions guarantee the children's welfare, ensure their development in environment as close as possible to family, ensuring the children's harmonious emotional, intellectual, and physical development. Tatiana Poting insisted that the headmasters of residential institutions immediately inform the Ministry of Education about any existing exceptional situations, so that prompt intervention and problem solution is possible.

The Ministry of Education made a set of recommendations to the headmasters of these institutions. Thus, they need to review their institutional management plans and staff's job descriptions. The educational program should focus on activities building life skills of the children, developing necessary competences for social inclusion, diversifying after-school activities, in order to create an environment stimulating the child's participation in school, after-school, and community activities. Besides, efficient counseling and professional orientation activities should be developed, involving children, parents, NGOs, businesses, communities.

The normative acts stipulate that a child can be placed in a residential institution only following the decision of the guardianship authority (with the positive review of the Gate-keeping commission); child's placement into residential care is temporary; the term of residential placement should not exceed 12 calendar months. The decision to extend this term should be made by the guardianship authority at the child's living place.

In those 50 residential institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Education, 4884 children are placed.



Advisory Boards of Children involve in preventing violence

The members of Advisory Boards of Children (ABCs) from Falesti, Ungheni, and Calarasi raions, participated in a training course in child abuse prevention on 6-10 March.

“The children were trained to identify abuse cases among friends, relatives, and schoolmates. At the seminars that were held in each raion, the children had an opportunity to understand what abuse is, what are its long- and short-term consequences, and what are the indicators of an abused child. The participants were also informed about a new service – “Child's Helpline” that will start working soon in all three raions”, said Natalia Semeniuc, child participation consultant.

The information communicated at the seminars will be disseminated by the ABC members among educational institutions where they study.

The ABCs were created a year ago, and are a form of children's and young people's association, allowing them to express their opini-

ons and implement their own projects that meet specific requirements and needs of their communities. The councils are partners of Social Assistance and Family Protection Departments, in the process of the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local policies and programs for children and young people

Since the ABCs were created, their members participated in a number of trainings and meetings at raion level, where they were informed in details and from the primary source about methods of child social protection.

Each of the three councils is made of about 20 members, including those with parents who live abroad, children of Roma ethnicity, children with residential care experience, etc.





Every other young person who left residential school in 2011, choose to enroll into a vocational or crafts school. Only 8% of young residential school-leavers wanted to apply to a theoretical or vocational lyceum, and only 7% of them were admitted to colleges. Every third residential school-leaver either didn't want or didn't have possibility to pursue education, said Valentin Crudu, Head of Mainstream Pre-school, Primary, and Secondary Education Department of the Ministry of Education, at the meeting of the Residential Care System Reform Steering Committee.

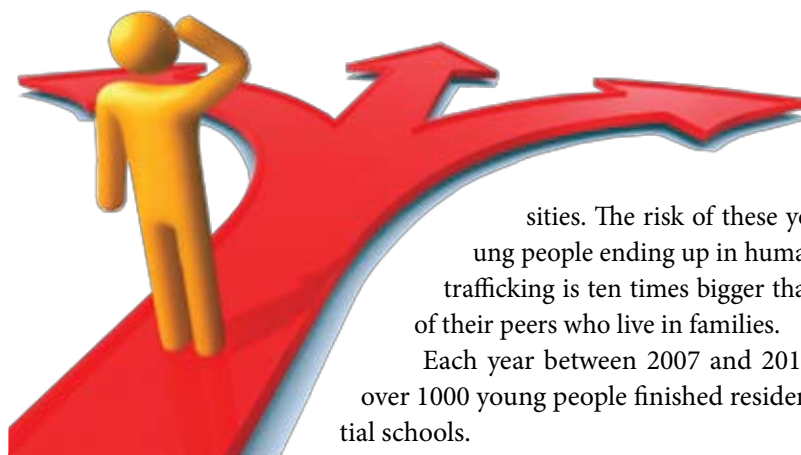
Residential school-leavers don't normally pursue university studies

In 2010-2011 academic year, 300 out of 1086 residential school-leavers returned to their birth communities and did not apply for further education. Other 296 young persons were enrolled into crafts schools/classes, and 262 – into vocational schools.

Only 95 residential school-leavers were enrolled into lyciums; 71 – into colleges, and 6 into universities. About 50 school-leavers were employed, and 6 are attending courses of the Territorial Work Force Employment Agency.

According to the information of the Ministry of Education, residential school-leavers receive a 5000 one-off payment, and are provided financial support (scholarships, payments, food allowances) all the time they attend studies. They are also provided a 10 000 one-off payment upon graduating educational institutions – vocational schools, colleges, or universities.

The results of a research show that around 40% of school-leavers become unemployed, while the country's unemployment rate among 15-24-year olds is 15,4%. Compared to young people who grow up in a family environment, twice as many residential school-leavers tend to pursue vocational training, while 8 times fewer of them choose to go to univer-



sities. The risk of these young people ending up in human trafficking is ten times bigger than of their peers who live in families.

Each year between 2007 and 2011, over 1000 young people finished residential schools.