

# The future begins in the family



Newsletter of the Project "Protecting children of Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation", implemented by EveryChild in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Education



## The reform goes on in force

**Interview with the Head of the Directorate for preschool, primary and secondary general education of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Valentin Crudu**

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## UNICEF Regional Conference at Moscow:

The Governments have to speed up the reforms in the educational field for children with special needs

Over a million of children with disabilities in the Central and East Europe and the CIS are kept at home or are placed in residential institutions. The UNICEF representatives declared at a regional conference in Moscow that these children are exposed to the risk to be excluded from the educational process and are vulnerable to neglect, exploitation and abuse.

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## UNICEF Regional Conference at Moscow:

### The Governments have to speed up the reforms in the educational field for children with special needs

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The UNICEF Senior Consultant on the issues of children with disabilities, Mrs. Rosangela Berman-Bieler asked the Governments to rectify the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities and to support policies for inclusive education. In the whole region, 18 countries signed the Convention and other 12 countries have approved it, including the Republic of Moldova, fact that confirms the commitment of our countries and other states in the region to address at the highest level the issues of children with disabilities.

The conference organised by UNICEF with the support of the Moscow's City Hall on the 27th -29th of September there were present experts and governments representatives from 20 countries. The Republic of Moldova was represented at the conference by the delegation formed from representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Education, Health, Social Protection, UNICEF and the NGO Lumos Moldova. The Conference offered a framework of discussions and exchange of good policies in the inclusive education field for children with disabilities from the legal, political, and financial points of view. The disabled and non-disabled children expressed their opinions at the event, through online media and blogs.

The UNICEF Consultant for the issues for children with



disabilities at Moscow, Mrs. Rosangela Berman-Bieler stated: „As it is mentioned in the convention, the children with disabilities have to have access at the qualitative, free inclusive primary and secondary education, and at equal conditions with the other children in the community they live in. It is all our responsibility to ensure that this children's right is accomplished”.

“We also believe that a continuous effort is required in order to control the stigmatization and the discrimination of children with disa-

bilities; to achieve a change in attitudes and social perceptions towards these children. From helpless persons, that inspire mercy and sadness, to see persons with abilities, that can contribute, equally as their peers, at the progress of the society they live in”.

An evaluation of the Global Health Organization show us that the number of children with disabilities in 22 countries is 2,6 millions, namely 2,5 percent from the population. Meanwhile, the national statistics show that this number is 1,5 million children, a fact

that certifies a serious system problem – 1,1 million children are invisible. Most likely, they are hidden together with other 600.000 of children placed in residential institutions.

The research shows us that children remaining inside the residential institutions for a long time have a damaged health and development. When the children with disabilities are not placed in institutions, but live in families and attend normal schools, they also are placed in separate class groups. They are taught a simple curriculum or are not taught at all. Children with disabilities do not receive the necessary support in order to develop as their colleagues do.

The same research also shows that the inclusive education leads to better educational results for all the children, not just for the children with disabilities. The inclusive education promotes the tolerance, social cohesion and equal participation in the society. The inclusive education is more profitable from the financial point of view, in comparison with the separate schooling for children with disabilities.

The Republic of Moldova approved the Convention on the Rights of Persons for Disabilities in 2010. In summer of the current year the Government legitimated the Development of the National Program on inclusive educational for 2011-2020. According the statistics, in the Republic of Moldova there are 17,000 children with disabilities, 3,500 of them being younger than 7 years.



## The residential institutions from Călărași, Ungheni and Telenești become history



**The** results of the reforms are felt in the raions where the partnership between the NGOs and local public authorities turns out to be an efficient one. Thanks to all these conjugated efforts tens of children have the possibility to grow together with their parents or to benefit from an environment as close as possible to a family one.

*The vice-president of the Ungheni rayon, Mrs. Iulia PANCU:*

Recently the Ungheni rayon council decided to close two residential institutions – auxiliary school from Sculeni and the boarding school from Ungheni.

After the implementation of a project supported by EveryChild in a partnership with the local public authorities, the majority of the children from these two institutions returned to their families and communities. In cases when this couldn't be achieved, alternative family based services were applied – foster care, family-type homes, guardianship, etc.

As a result of the social work assessment of children from these institutions it was found that around 85% of the institutionalized children from the auxiliary school in Sculeni didn't meet the institution's statute, that according to the Ministry of Education's regulations, it is for people with mental disabilities. And for the boarding school from Ungheni, institution for orphans and children without parental care, the percent of the children who didn't have to be institutionalized is around 70%.

The most of the children had parents, but the living conditions were not the best

ones. Some families left their children at the boarding school with the thought that they will feel like at home in there. Parents do not consider the fact that these children face very difficult situations, and not being ready for the independent life.

The desinstitutionalized children attend the community schools, being provided with all the necessary support both from the community social assistants, and from the schoolteachers. We can provide really good examples of family and community reintegration, and this fact proves that the reform is carried out in the child's best interest.

*Specialist in Child's Rights Protection, Călărași rayon, Mr. Vasile GÎLCĂ:*

**At** the beginning of the 2010-2011 scholar year, over 80% of children from the Călărași rayon were placed in residential institutions from the Ungheni, Fălești, Drochia raions. Around 60 children were studying at the auxiliary school from Călărași.

After the implementation of a project supported by EveryChild, where Călărași is a pilot-raion, it has reached the situation when the majority of the institutionalized

children were reintegrated in their natural families or in alternative protection forms as foster care, family-type homes. Thanks to the common effort, of the project's experts and foster carers, all the children from the auxiliary school Călărași came back home. From the children's total number, 44 were reintegrated in their natural families, 11 - in extended families or in alternative protection forms. A small number of children benefit from the services of a center for children in difficulty, attending general education schools from their localities.

The building of the auxiliary school is the property of the Calarasi Town Hall, and most likely, it will be transformed into a kindergarden. This is due to the fact that at the moment the town lacks enough places in the preschool institutions.

*Specialist on Child's Rights Protection, Telenești raion, Mr. Petru GOJAN*

**At** the Boaring School for orphans and children without parental care from Căzânești, Telenești raion there are institutionalized 17 children at the moment who live in the institution's building, but attend the school from the village. At the beginning of the transformation process, at this institution there were 73 children.

After the efforts of the authorities, supported by the experts from EveryChild, 31 children were reintegrated in their natural families, 6 – in their extended families, 1 child was placed under guardianship, 2 children were placed in foster care, other 2 children were placed in family type homes.

Thanks to efforts of the teaching support staff, the school integration process is carried out without any difficulties. Children have benefited of curricular and extracurricular educational support. In order to facilitate the school integration process, different common actions were organized, the children being enrolled in different extracurricular groups of interest.

We will mention that in this raion three foster care families work. The Telenești raion is the leader at the national level by the number of orphanages they have, existind 11 similar structures.

# The reform goes on

## Interview with the Head of the Directorate for preschool, primary and secondary general education of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Valentin CRUDU

- Mr. Crudu, which are the most recent actions undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the context of the reforming of the residential care system.

- In 2010-2012 the Ministry of Education is transferring in the management of the local public authorities three residential institutions – two from the raion Florești (Mărculești and Napadova) and one from Ialoveni. Now the boarding school for orphan children from Cupcini, Edineț, the auxiliary school from Sărata Nouă, raion Leova and the orphanage from Cernoleuca, Dondușeni are in process of closing.

In the nearest future we will decide which institutions will be included in the transformation plan for the next year. In this respect, we have some proposals from the local authorities. It is about merging the schools from Albinețul Vechi and Socii Noi from raion Fălești. At the moment in

these institutions are 40 children left, for whom we have to identify a placement solution during 2011-2012.

Recently there was approved the National Program on the development of the inclusive education for the 2011-2020 period. A national plan on the implementation of this program will be in place no later than in one month. The draft of the document was handed to all the education institutions, partner ministries, NGOs and international organizations that support the reform, all the partners further having to express their opinions.

The institutions with inclusive activities will benefit from a bigger financial support... In all this type of institutions teaching support staff will be engaged, different recuperatory activities will be organised...



- In how many institutions is piloted the concept of inclusive education? When it will start be implemented on the national scale?

- The Inclusive education Program follows to be piloted during one year, mostly with the ONGs' support. So „Lumos” will work in the institutions from the Florești and Ialoveni raions, „EveryChild” - in Ungheni, Falesti and Călărași, CCF Moldova - in Leova, and „Speranța” - in institutions from eight rayons. „Keyston” proposed a formula in which will be involved about 20 in-



# in force

stitutions from 9 rayons. In total, in the piloting project will be involved more than 200 institutions. This will allow us to identify regulations that need to be developed, developed or modified, regulations that will further be cancelled and completed. We will have to think how to develop the financing formula per pupil, so that starting from 2014 the residential institutions to be interested to accept children with disabilities or with special educational needs. The institutions with inclusive activities will benefit from a bigger financial support, as the expenses will be bigger. In all this type of institutions teaching support staff will be engaged, different recuperatory activities will be organised; these changes that require additional expenses. Funds will also be necessary for the modernization of the institutions' infrastructure, so that the children with special need can move freely in the school.

***- How the children and teachers are trained for the integration of children with special educational needs?***

- The staff from the educational institutions received a range of trainings on inclusive education. This theme was largely discussed also during the traditional pedagogical conferences in August.

! It is important that the services for children to be qualitative and to assure that these children have equal acces to qualitative education.

In some school from the Edineț, Dondușeni, Criuleni rayons were created Resource Centers for inclusive education. At the moment we work to elaborate the judicial basis that will allow establishing the taching support function.

***- How many children with special needs are outside the educational system at the moment? Do we have estimates in this respect?***



- There exist some statistics in the field, but they do not fully reveal the situation at the moment, so that in the first year of the inclusive education piloting will be carried out a complex evaluation. Its results will show us how many children remain outside the educational system and how many of them can be integrated even from the first stage. It is likely to need more time to identify the optimal solutions for more serious situations.

***-After the reorganization of these institutions some money will be saved. How will the Ministry of Education ensure that this money will follow the child and will not be removed from the circuit?***

- The new financing formula that will be implemented starting with 2013 will not allow using the existent resources for other purposes than the educational ones. At the local level these resources may be redirected, if needed, from the educational system towards the social assistance and vice versa. The economies created after the reforming of the residential care system are directed towards the development of the didactic material basis of the educational institutions. It is important that the services for children to be qualitative and to assure that these children have equal acces to qualitative education.

***- Thank you very much for the interview.***



## In the republic 55 residential institutions continue to operate

The residential childcare system on the 1st of September this year consisted 55 residential institutions. From the total number, 50 institutions are under the Ministry of Education (14 boarding schools for orphans and children without parental care; 2 orphanages; 3 sanatorium boarding schools, 7 special institutions for children with physical and sensory deficiencies; 24 auxiliary boarding schools), 2 institutions under the Ministry of Health; and the last two institutions under the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family. The Municipal Directorate for Child's Rights Protection also has got under its responsibility one residential institution.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education, during the period of 2007-2011 there were closed 11 residential institutions, one institutions being reorganized into complex of social services for children.

At the moment, two institutions are in the closing process: the orphanage from Cernoleuca, Dondușeni and the boarding school for orphans and children without parental care from Cupcini, Edineț.

From all these 55 institutions, 34 are financed from the republican budget, the rest 21 institutions – from the local public authorities' budget.



## Other three boarding schools will be closed by the end of this year

Starting with the 1st of January 2012, the Ministry of Education will transfer to the property of territorial-administrative units three residential institutions. It is about the boarding school for orphans and children without parental care from Cupcini, Edineț, the boarding school for orphans and children without parental care from Căzănești, Telenești and the auxiliary school from Sărata Nouă, Leova.

The closing/transforming process of the institutions from Edineț and Leova started respectively in 2009 and 2009 by the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF and CCF Moldova. The reorganization of the institution from Că-

zănești was carried out on the basis of a project supported by "EveryChild".

According to the data provided by the Ministry in charge, all the children living at the boarding school from Cupcini were reintegrated in their natural, extended families or placed in alternative care services. At the auxiliary school from Sărata 49 children are left, other 67 being reintegrated in their families or placed in alternative care services. At the moment, at the institution from Căzănești there are 17 children, the rest of them were reintegrated with their biological families. The authorities assure that by the end of this calendar year, no child will be remaining in this institution.



## International seminar on problems of the inclusive education

A delegation of the Ministry of Education, led by the Head of the Direction of pre-school, primary and secondary general education, inside the Ministry, Mr. Valentin Crudu, participated on the 4-25th of September 2011 at the international seminar "The integration of children with special educational needs in basic education", organized by the Center for Cooperation and Development, in the framework of the project run by MASHAV Ministry of External Affairs from Israel.

The objectives of the seminar targeted the dissemination of the good practices in developing the inclusive education services and the identification of the cooperation mechanisms on forming a culture and an inclusive society.

The successful practices identified on the social inclusion will serve as examples for the Republic of Moldova, in order to implement the National Program for the development of the inclusive education for the 2011-2020 period.



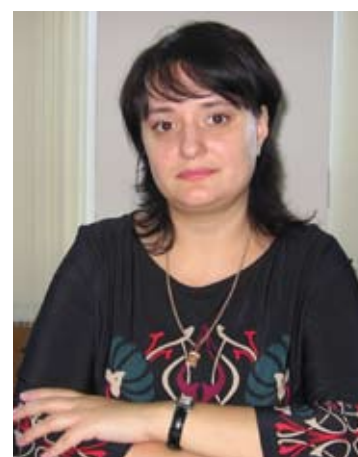
## A census will be carried out for the children without parental care

At the beginning of 2012, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family will carry out a census of the children without parental care. The census will be carried out in all the localities of the republic.

The Head of the Directorate for Child's Rights and Family protection inside the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Mrs. Viorica Dumbrăveanu stated: „At the moment we are in the process of developing a questionnaire, that will be implemented at the community level by all the social assistants; they will walk from home to home in order to identify children without parental care”.

The study will concern not just the orphans, abandoned children or whose parents were deprived of parental rights, but also the children that temporarily are without parental care due to their parents' migration.

Mrs. Viorica Dumbrăveanu stated: „This questionnaire emphasizes children's profile, in whose care they are, how much and how well their



rights are respected, if they are in sight of the authorities, if they lately benefited of assistance and what this assistance was. All the gathered data will be processed in the raion level database; then we will carry out an analysis of this quantitative data”.





## They were isolated from their family because they couldn't cope with the school programme

**M**aria, a 13-year-old teenager is a real celebrity at the school where she does her studies. Her drawings are so beautiful that all the people from the school want to see them. The drawing teacher always uses her as an example for other children from the school and several times promised her to organize for her a personal exhibition. Maria recently discovered her talent at drawing. At the auxiliary school from Albișel Vechi, the school which she used to attend till the last year, people didn't really appreciate the artistic skills that one has.

It has been more than a year since Maria and her older brother Vitalie came back home. Even though there is a big age difference between them two, they are in the same class group, the same as at the auxiliary school.

The children's mother says that she has been wishing for several years her children to come back home. She claims that her children were taken to the auxiliary school in an abusive manner, without the parents' agreement. Maria remembers how one day the auxiliary school director came at the school in the native village and drove them to the auxiliary school. The only thing the two children were thinking about was how terrified their mother will be when they don't come home from school. Since that day, their mother asked the help from different authorities trying to bring her children back home. The authorities remained being relentless and didn't change their verdict – the children are not able to cope with the community school's requirements and have to study at a special institution.

The mother says that „No one was paying attention to me and they all were saying to calm down and to get over it and live my life, because they live better there”.

Maria and Vitalie indeed had problems at school, but not because of an alleged mental retardation, but rather because of the teachers' negligence. Being busy with her everyday work, their mother “forgot” to take them to the kindergarden. The two children went to the kindergarden just a year and in this short

period didn't learn a lot of things. Maria says that „At school I always was sitting at the last school bench, and the teacher has never called my name when talking to me. Before being taken to Albișel school I knew just one letter”.

At the auxiliary school these two children learned really fast how to read and count, with the hope that they will be able to go home. But their dream would become true just in a few years. Finding out about the reorganization of the institution from Albișel Vechi, their parents

**... „It was difficult without our mother and father. No one was there to defend or to mourn us when we were in pain or when someone would beat us up. I was more lucky, because I had Vitalie...”**

didn't hesitate a second and went and took their children home. Now they are a family and share everything they have – worries and happinesses.

Maria talks about the years at the residential institution „It was difficult without our mother and father. No one was there to defend or to mourn us when we were in pain or when someone would beat us up. I was more lucky, because I had Vitalie”.

After the children came back home, her mother finds time to help them with their homework everyday. The auxiliary school was a good lesson for both the children and their parents, them learning not to give up so easy when facing difficulties and to work if they want to obtain something.

