

Child Care Systems Reforms In Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Why we need to focus on children below three years

Sofia conference November 2012

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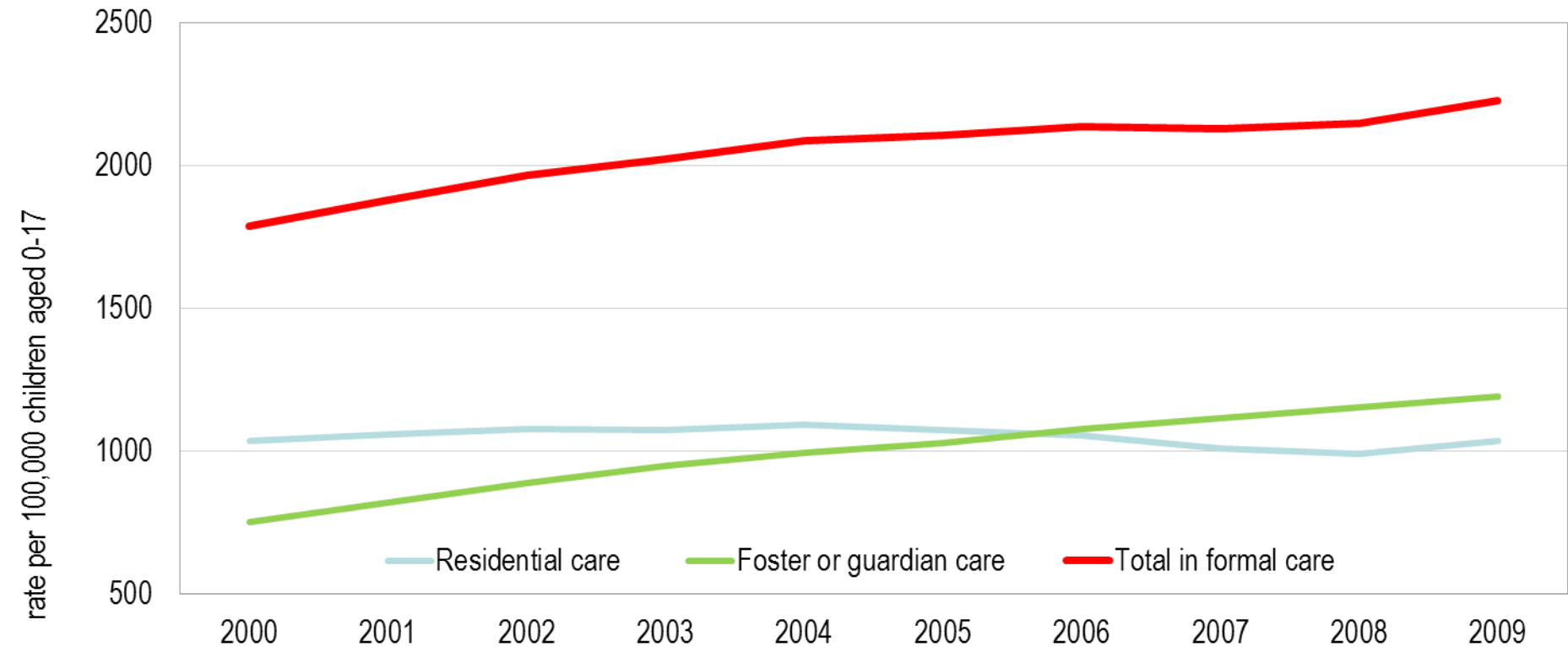
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GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS: INCREASED FAMILY-LIKE CARE HIDING AN INCREASE IN TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN PLACED IN ALL FORMS OF CARE



Source: *TransMONEE 2011 Database, UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS, Geneva*

a. Children in residential care include children in infant homes, in orphanages, in boarding homes and schools for children without parental care or poor children, disabled children in boarding schools and homes, family-type homes, SOS villages, etc. Children in punitive institutions are normally excluded. Definitions may differ among countries.

b. Foster parents are obliged to take care of the child personally. Guardian has the same rights as foster parents, but he is obliged to take care of the child personally and to replace fully the care of parents.

Key data and ... a critical conclusion

There are some 1.3 million children in formal care across EE/CA, illustrating a high level of separation of children below 18 years from their biological families.

The region has one of the highest rates of children in residential care in the world. Numbers have declined but have been compensated by demographic decline. Some 600,000 children grow up in residential care. At least 225,000 of them are children with disabilities. 31,000 children below three years still grow up in institutional care; only 2 to 5% of these are orphans.

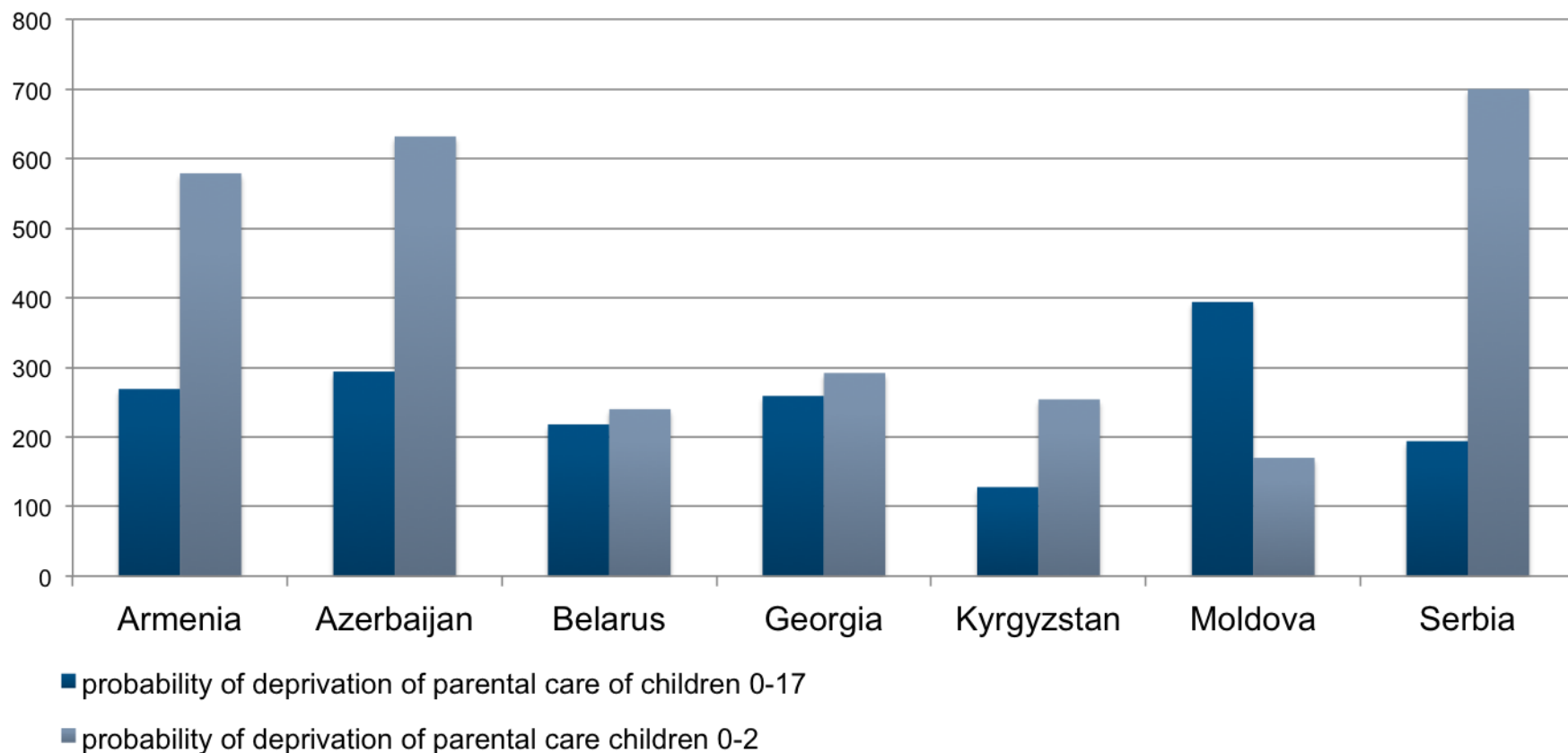
This suggests that vulnerable families are not being given the support they need by social protection systems (combining cash transfers, services and social work) in order to cope with the impact of the current economic crisis.

One of the main challenge lies with the capacity to identify the most vulnerable families, to reach them and provide them with appropriate support.

Then it is about providing the right form of care for children deprived of parental care.

Separation: More children continue to be separated from their families. Children below three are, in general, at higher risk of family separation than older children

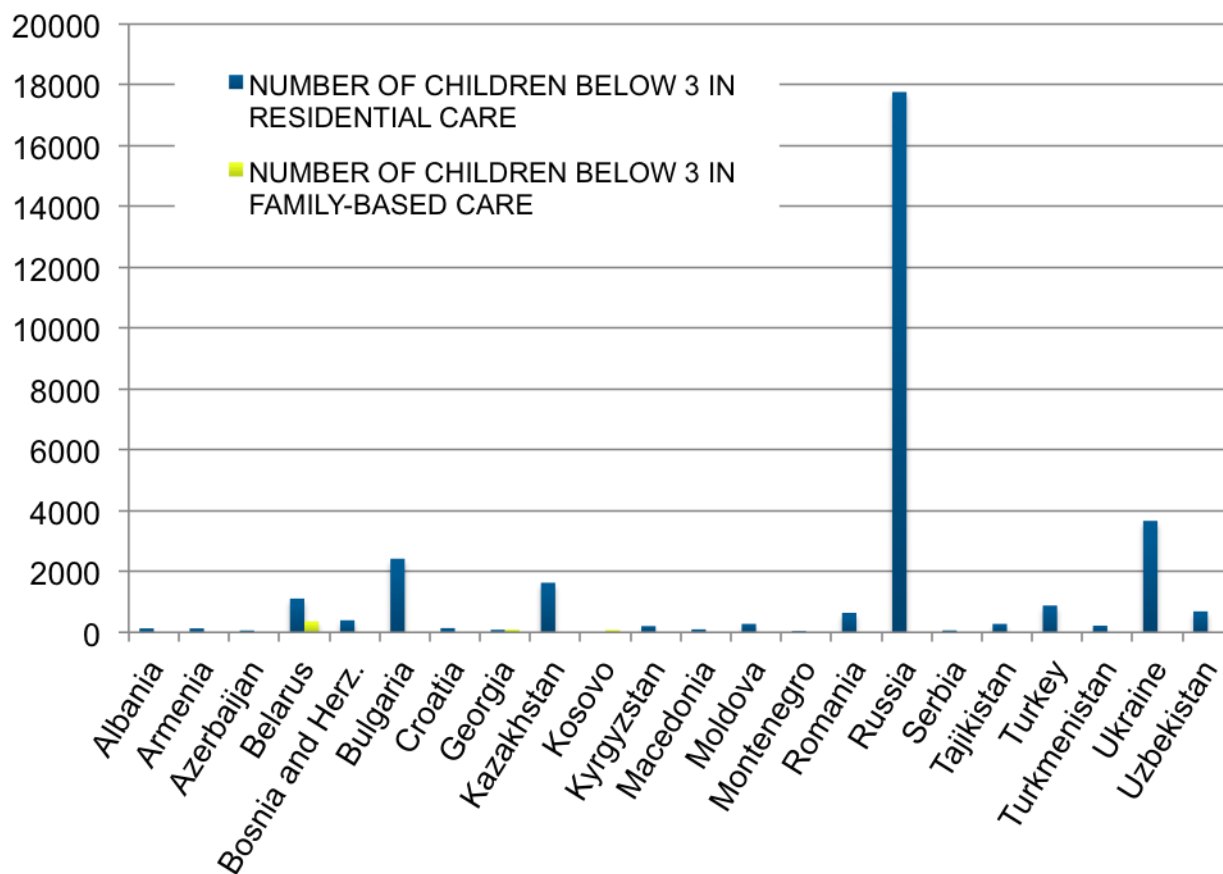
Probability of losing parental care for children 0-2 and children 0-17 in 2009 (number of cases per 100,000 children of relevant age)



NB: data for other CEE/CIS countries were not available through TransMonEE.

Numbers: The « positive » overall decrease of the rate of institutionalisation of children 0-3 hides « negative » country specificities

A look at today's numbers

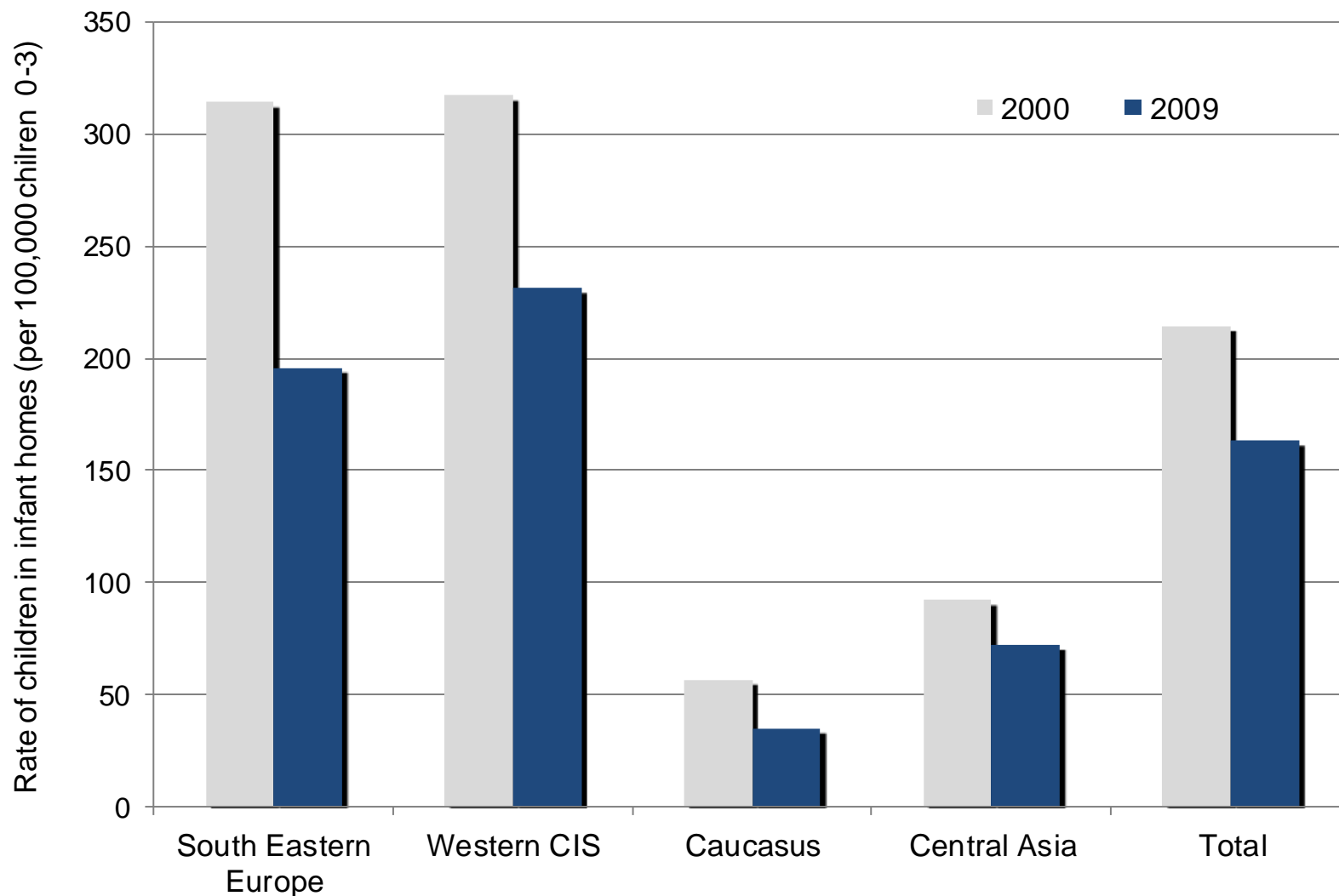


Proportion of children 0-3 in institutions by location (as of 2012)



- Russia
- Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Belarus
- Other CEE/CIS countries

Rates: Rate of children 0-3 in residential care in 2000 and 2009 by sub-regions: Clear Progress to be consolidated



Some additional concerns

Cash benefits for families of children with disabilities have been put into place in most countries. Coverage remains an issue.

Some countries in our region are becoming models for systematic enforcement of foster care in Europe like Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Turkey. In near future Bulgaria, Georgia and Moldova will be added to this list.

But at least six countries in Caucasus and Central Asia remain without any system of foster care for children below three years.

Legal obstacles remain as well in some countries to allow all children below three year deprived of parental care to benefit from foster care.

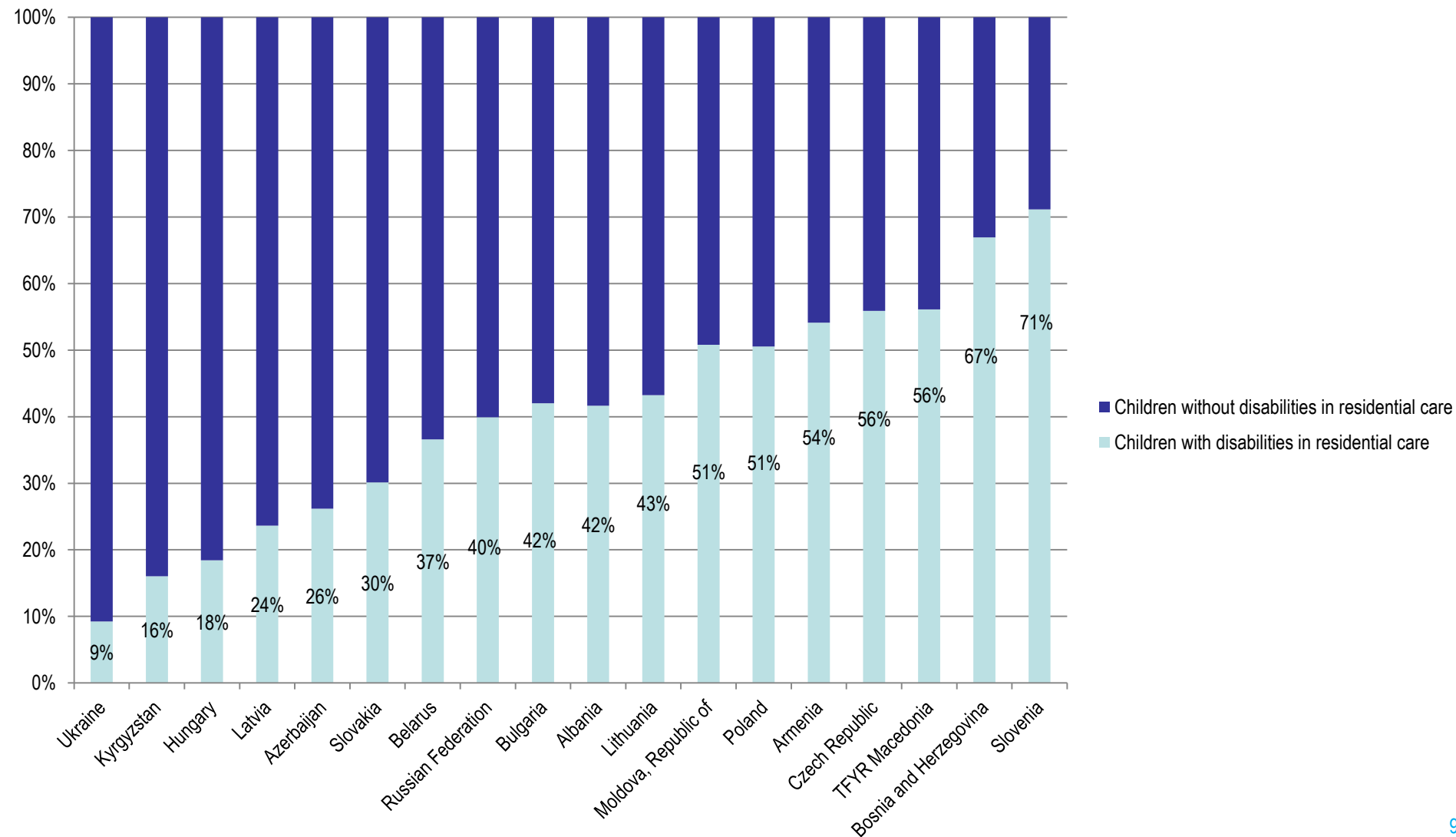
This concerns children with disabilities

Preventing the separation of children below three years requires addressing the abandonment or relinquishment of children with disabilities.

We need a stronger commitment in term of development of policies and services, particularly for young children. Croatia and Serbia provide inspiring experience.

Foster care for children below three years with disabilities is so under-developed in our region that it is not even reflected in statistics.

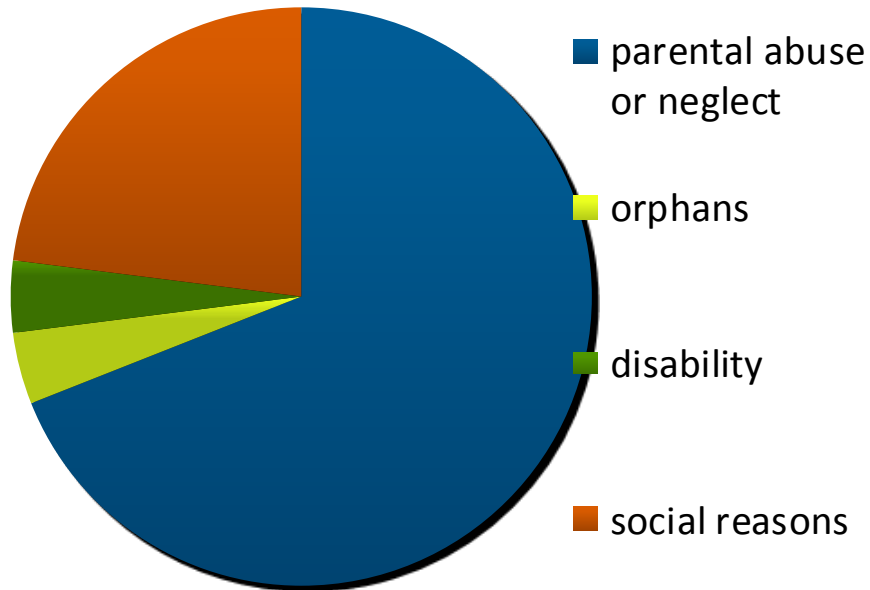
Over-representation of children with disabilities in institutions



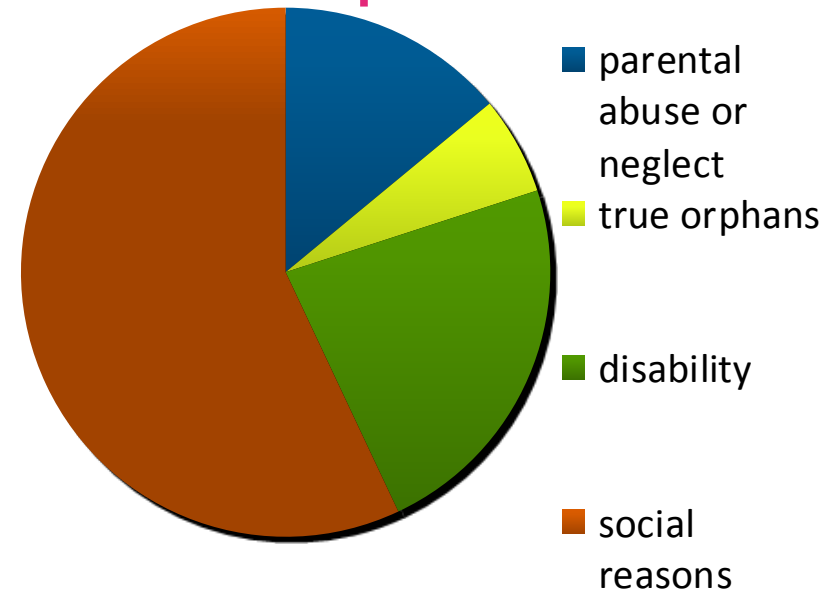
An equity issue ...

Western Europe Vs. Central and Eastern Europe...

**Reasons for the
institutionalisation of
children below 3 years of age
in **Western Europe** countries**

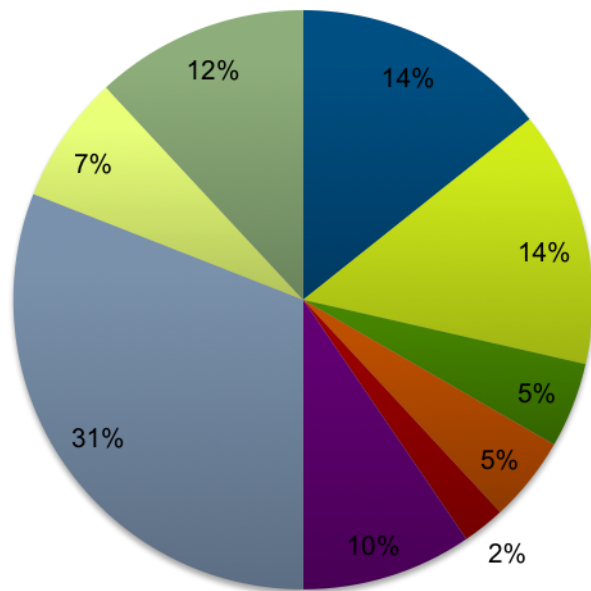


**Reasons for the
institutionalization of
children below 3 years of age
in **Central and Eastern**
Europe countries**



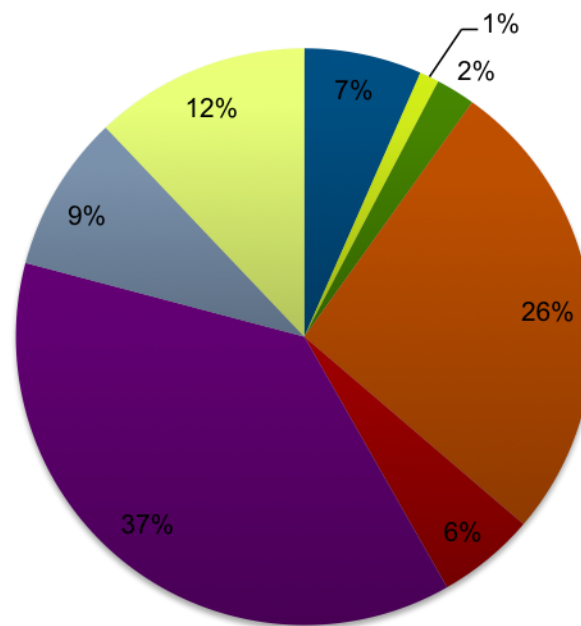
A direct consequence of stigmatisation of the most vulnerable: a case study from the Karaganda oblast, Kazakhstan (2011)

Specialists' Opinion on Causes of Children 0-3 Abandonment



- Antisocial life style of the mother
- Lack of support from the child's father/extended family
- Mother's psychosocial and social immaturity
- Young age of the mother (15-18)
- Acute family conflict
- Child's sickness/congenital pathology
- Lack of the mother's financial resources
- Unemployment
- Uncomfortable housing

Mothers' Opinion on the Causes of Children 0-3 Abandonment



- Lack of support from the child's father/extended family
- Disease of the child
- Death of close relatives
- Lack of required financial resources
- Unemployment
- No available housing
- Lack of access to social infrastructure/alternative care
- Mother of child does not have required documents

A need for further research to inform policies

Root causes need to be better understood in order to allow development of appropriate policies and responses to prevent family separation.

“The socio-demographic profile of a mother who abandons a child is as follows: aged about 25, with more than 3 children, illiterate or without completed education, unemployed before the birth of the abandoned child, with about BGN 85 monthly income per household member, with Roma ethnic identity (54.7%), living in a village or in a small town, the father is unknown or reluctant to recognize the child”.

The Call for Action! As part of the response

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**It is time to give children a better start to life
than an institution.**

Let's work together to change the system now.

**Office of the High Commissioner
for Human Rights Regional
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Cover photo: UNICEF/SWZK/00884/GIACOMO PIROZZI

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**End placing
children under
three years
in institutions**

**A call
to action**



The campaign is part of a broader reform process but with a focus on key results

Part of the reform of child care systems: transforming a system using institutionalisation as a core response to many issues, including exclusion and poverty, into a system of prevention where outreach social work, health sector responses and social policies concur to prevent family separation.

- Building from international and European Human Rights Standards: The UN CRPD, the recommendations from the UN CRC Committee, the International Guidelines on Alternative Care, the Council of Europe Recommendations, in particular on deinstitutionalisation and community living for children with disabilities.**
- Building from the wide experience accumulated in this region**

Results can be achieved.

On reducing the number of children below three years being abandoned (Ukraine) and those being placed in institutional care (Serbia)

Lead work has been done to address stigma and discrimination in countries like Croatia, Bulgaria and Montenegro through media campaigns (talents, partnership, leadership)

On developing community-based services allowing parents to care for their children with disabilities (cash allocations, day-care centers, inclusive education). In Serbia, 35% of municipalities provide some funding for day-care centers for children with disability

On implementing ambitious reform plans with the support of the international community (Bulgaria, Georgia)