

Childcare Reform in Moldova

Achievements and Challenges

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Moldova: Map and Basic Data



Official name: **Republic of Moldova**

Location: **Eastern Europe**

Area: **33,846 square km**

Land boundaries: **Romania and Ukraine**

Population: **3.553 million people (2016)**

Annual population growth rate: **- 0.1% (2015)**

Capital city: **Chișinău**

Administrative divisions: **32 districts, 3 municipalities, and 2 autonomous regions (Gagauzia and Transnistria)**

Constitution: **adopted by the Parliament in 1994**

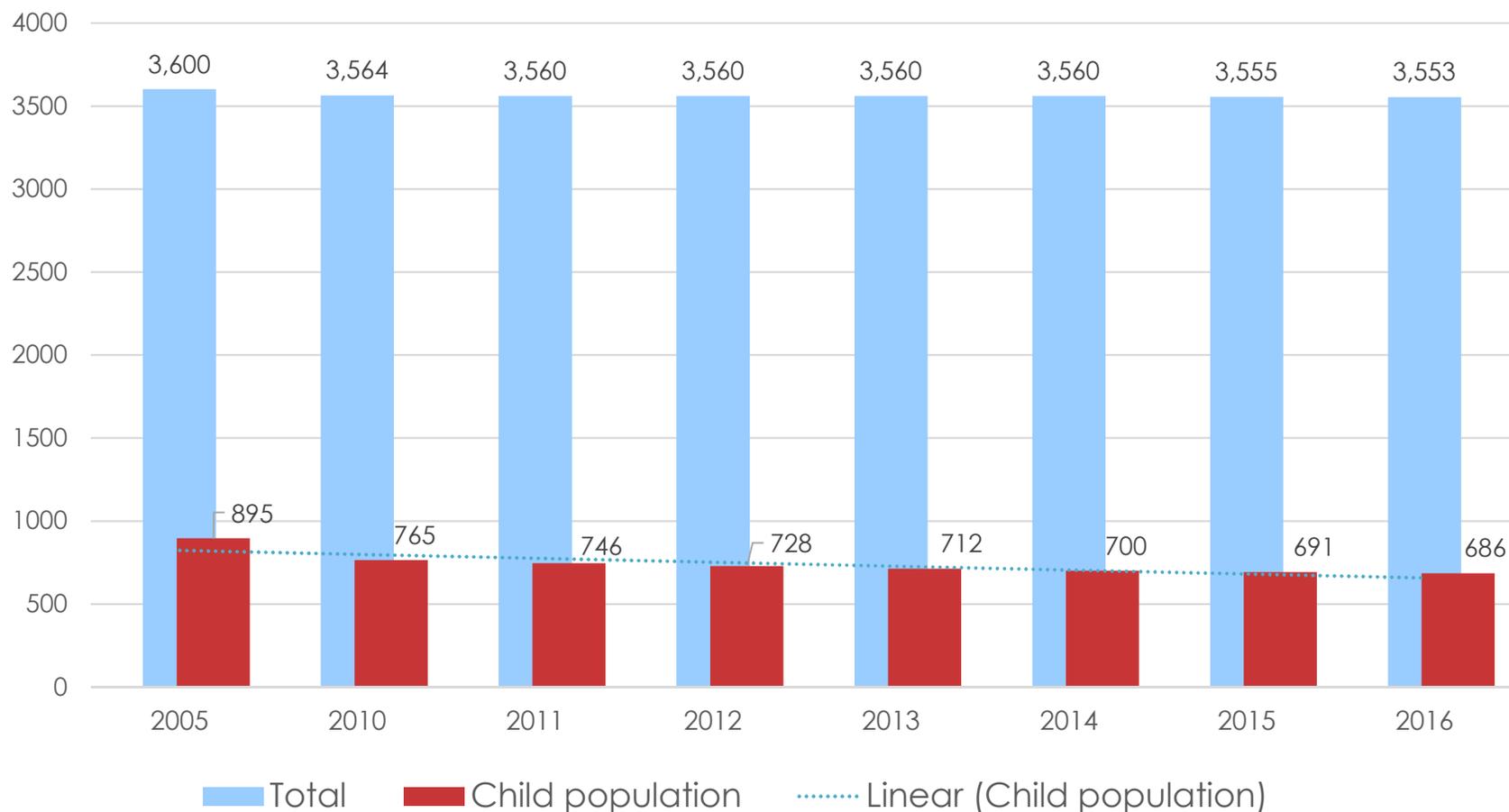
Political system: **republic**

European Union status: **associated country, 2014**

Demographic Trends

Shrinking child population—less than 20% of total population in 2016 compared to 25% in 2005

Dynamics of child population, 2005–2016 (thousand children)



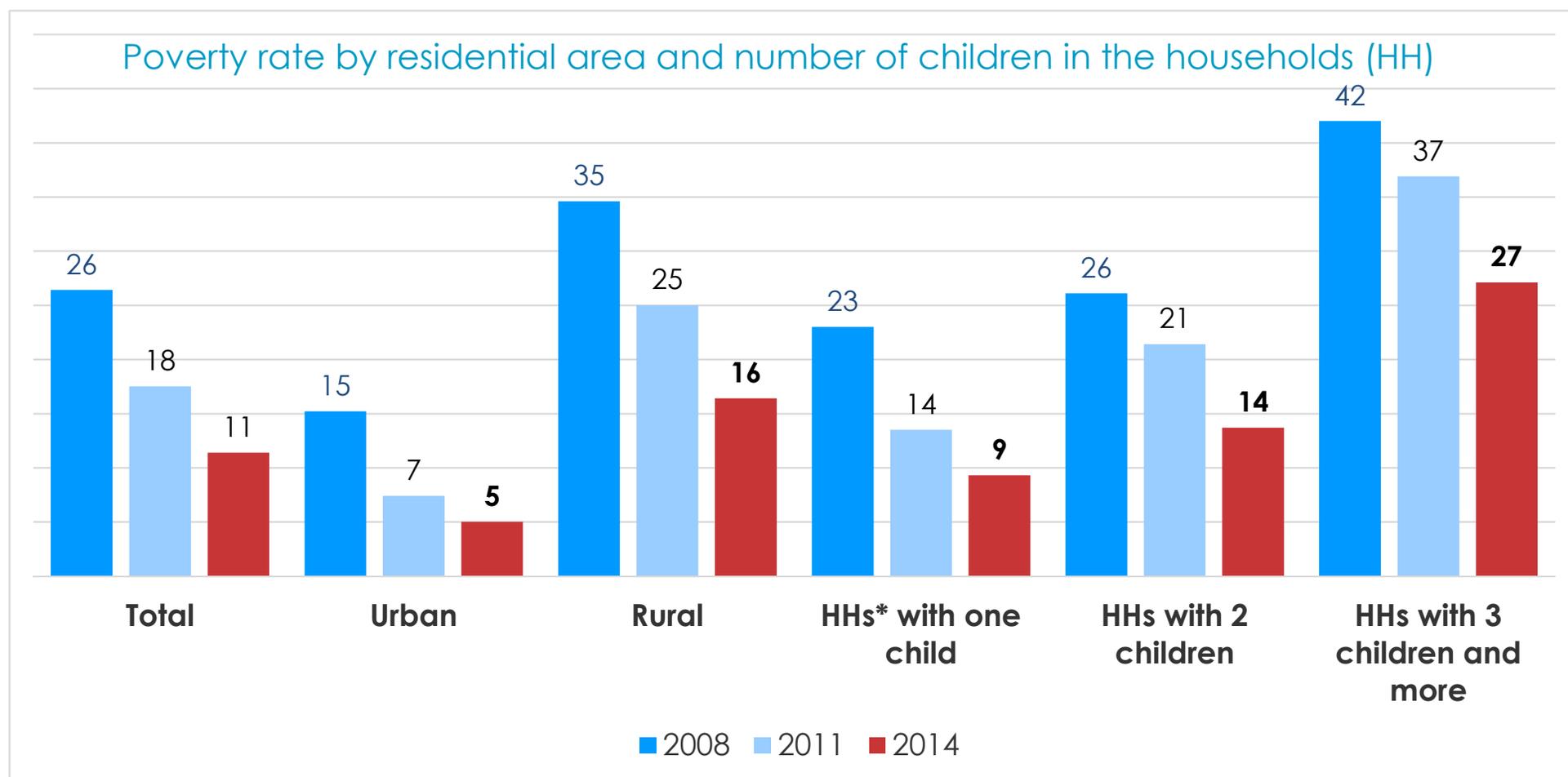
Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Main Economic and Social Indicators (2015)

Indicator	Value
GDP per capita:	5,036 USD (purchasing power parity)
Life expectancy at birth	71.5 years
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	9.7
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	11.7
Maternal mortality (deaths per 100,000 live births)	20.9 (three years average)
Human Development Index	0.696; rank: 107 out of 188 countries
Inflation rate	9.1
Absolute poverty rate	9.6 (11.5% for children)
Expected years in education, 7–18 years	9.69
Enrolment rate in compulsory education (children ages 7–15 years)	88.2
Enrolment rate in preprimary education (children ages 3–6 years)	85.1
Children left behind by labour migrant parents (both parents)	38,921 (5.6% of all children)
Employment rate	40.3
Unemployment rate	4.9

Main Economic and Social Indicators (Continued)

Poverty is in decline, but children remain disproportionately poor.



Source: Ministry of Economy (2015). Briefing note. Poverty in the Republic of Moldova, 2014

Cultural and Historical Influences on Childcare



Primary responsibility for raising children vested in the paternalistic state

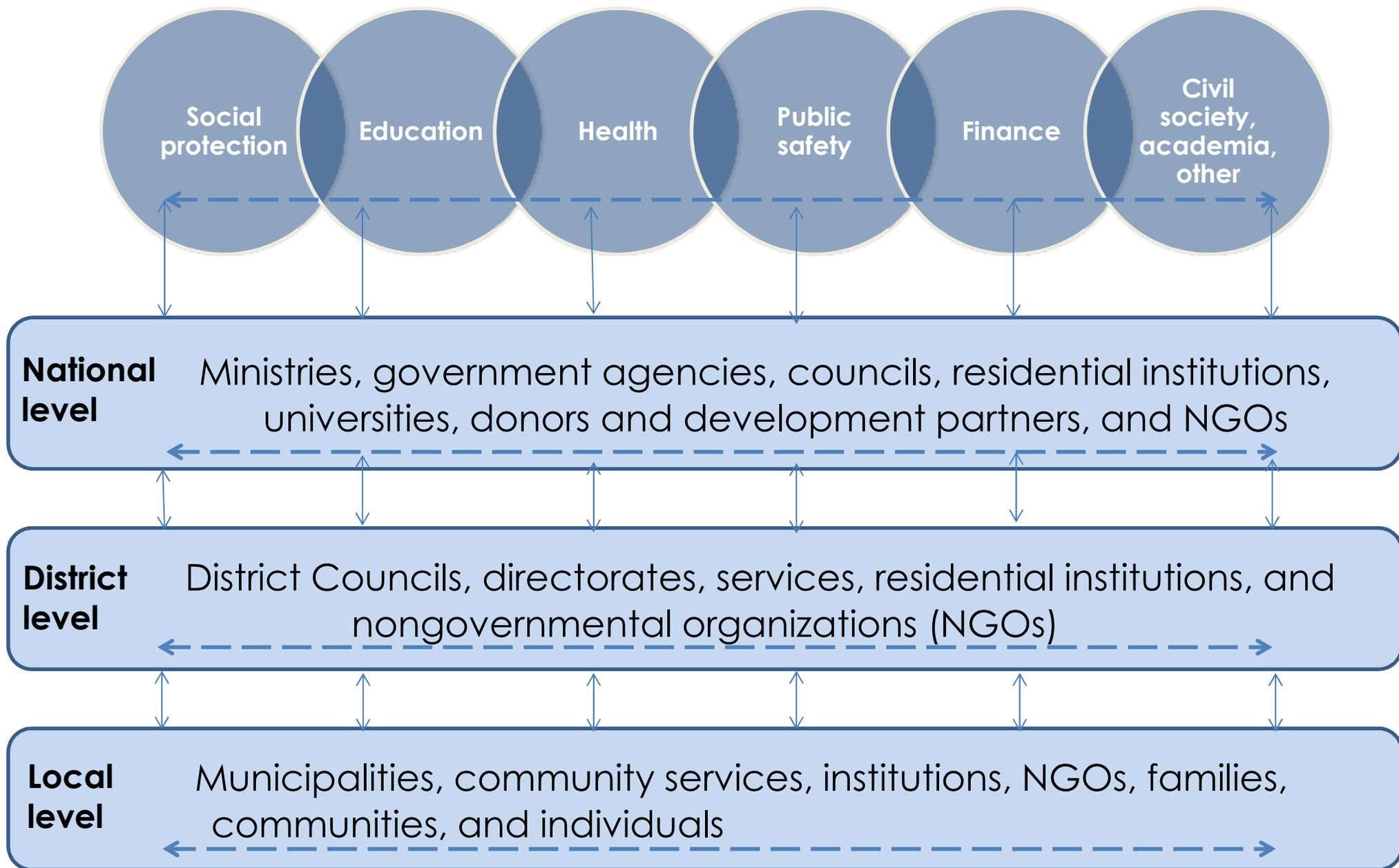
Poverty and social norms—key factors for family separation and institutionalisation

Dependency on residential care; no alternative care family-type services or community services

Fragmentation and lack of coordination in policy development and implementation

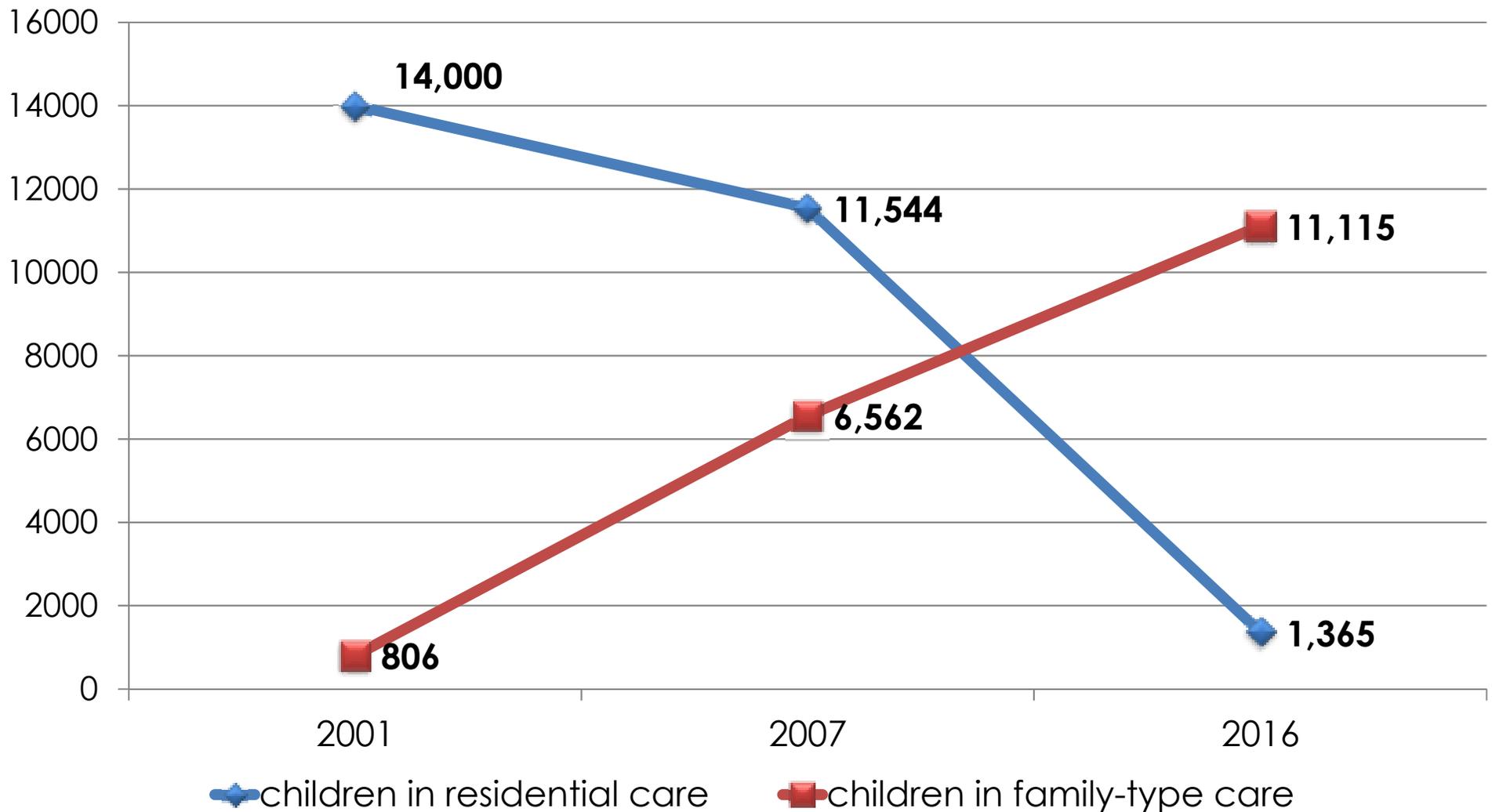
1995
17,000 children in residential institutions, most of them “social orphans”

Key Actors in Childcare Reform



Major Outcomes for Children

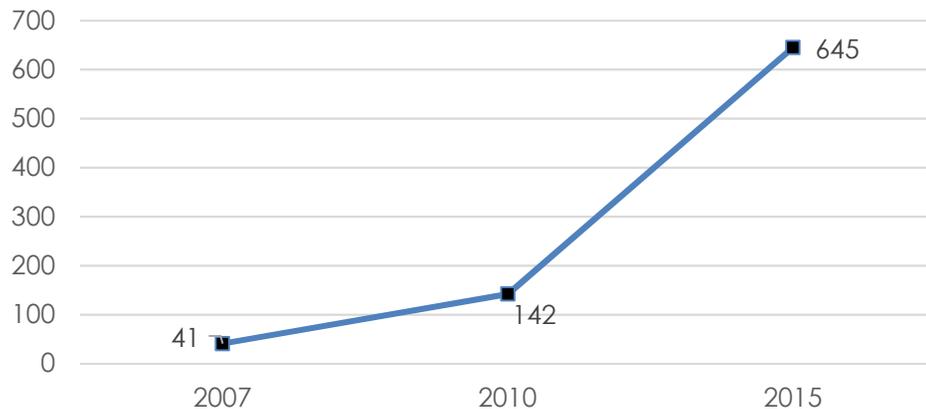
By 2016, the number of children in residential care decreased **tenfold** compared to 2001.



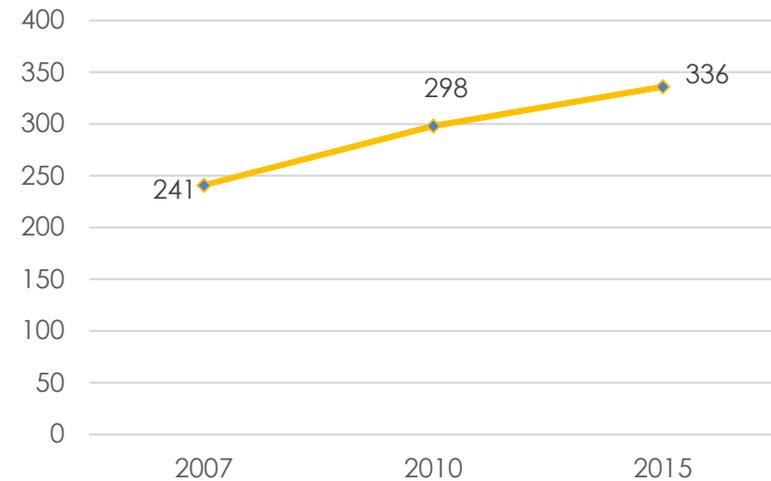
Major Outcomes for Children

More and more children have been placed in family-based care.

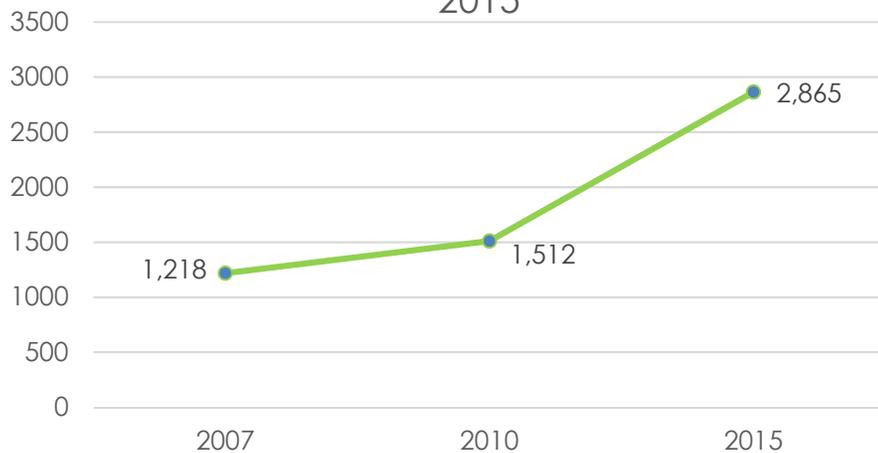
Number of children in foster care, 2007–2015



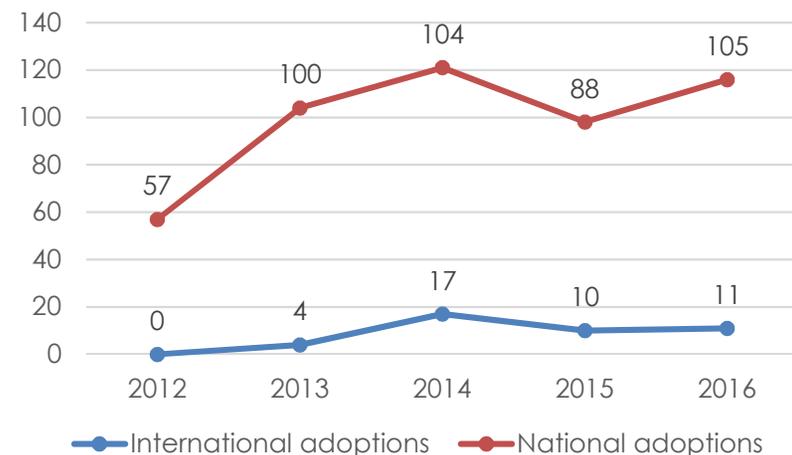
Number of children in family-type homes, 2007–2015



Number of children in kinship care, 2007–2015

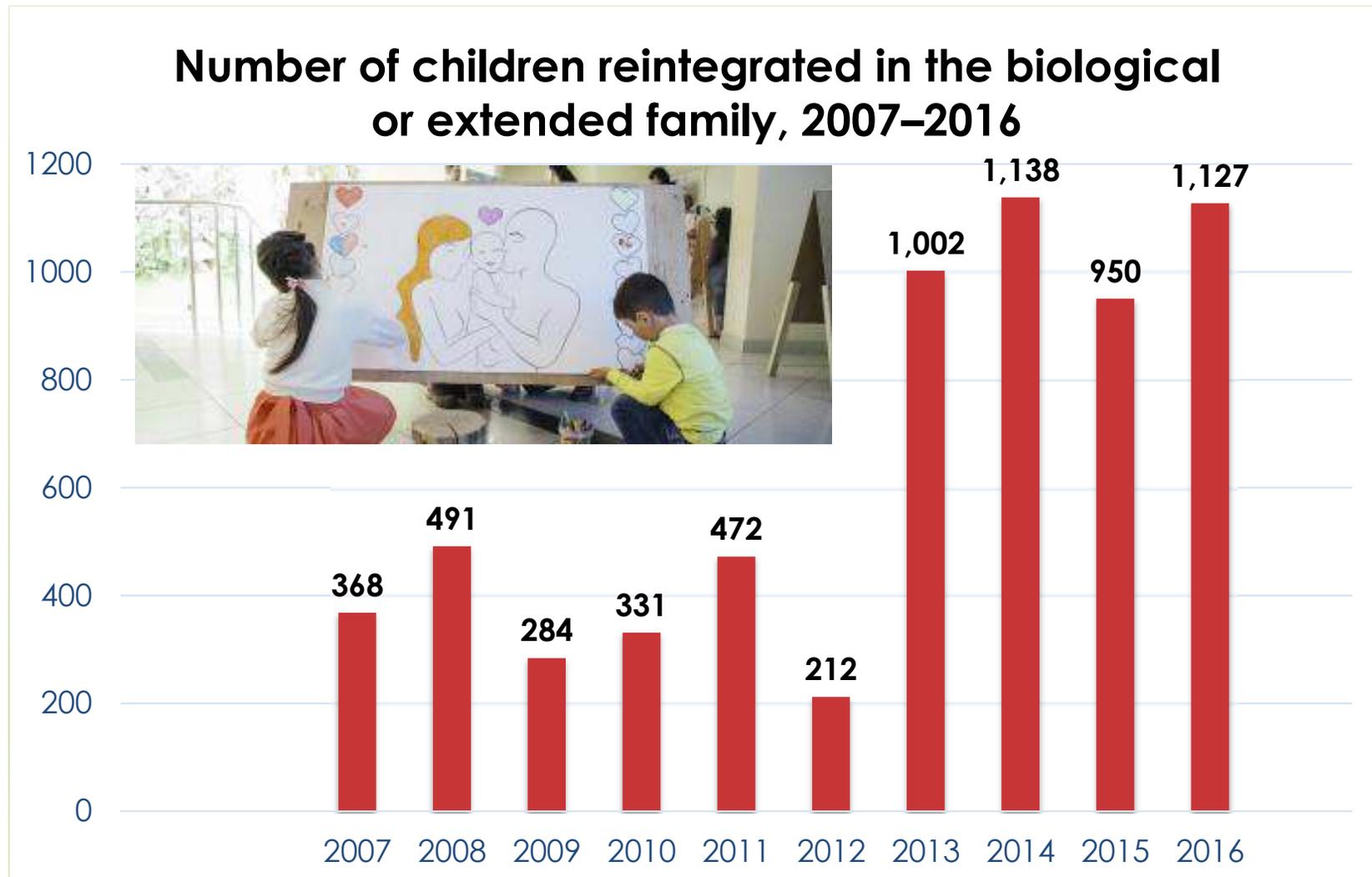


Number of adopted children, 2012–2016



Major Outcomes for Children

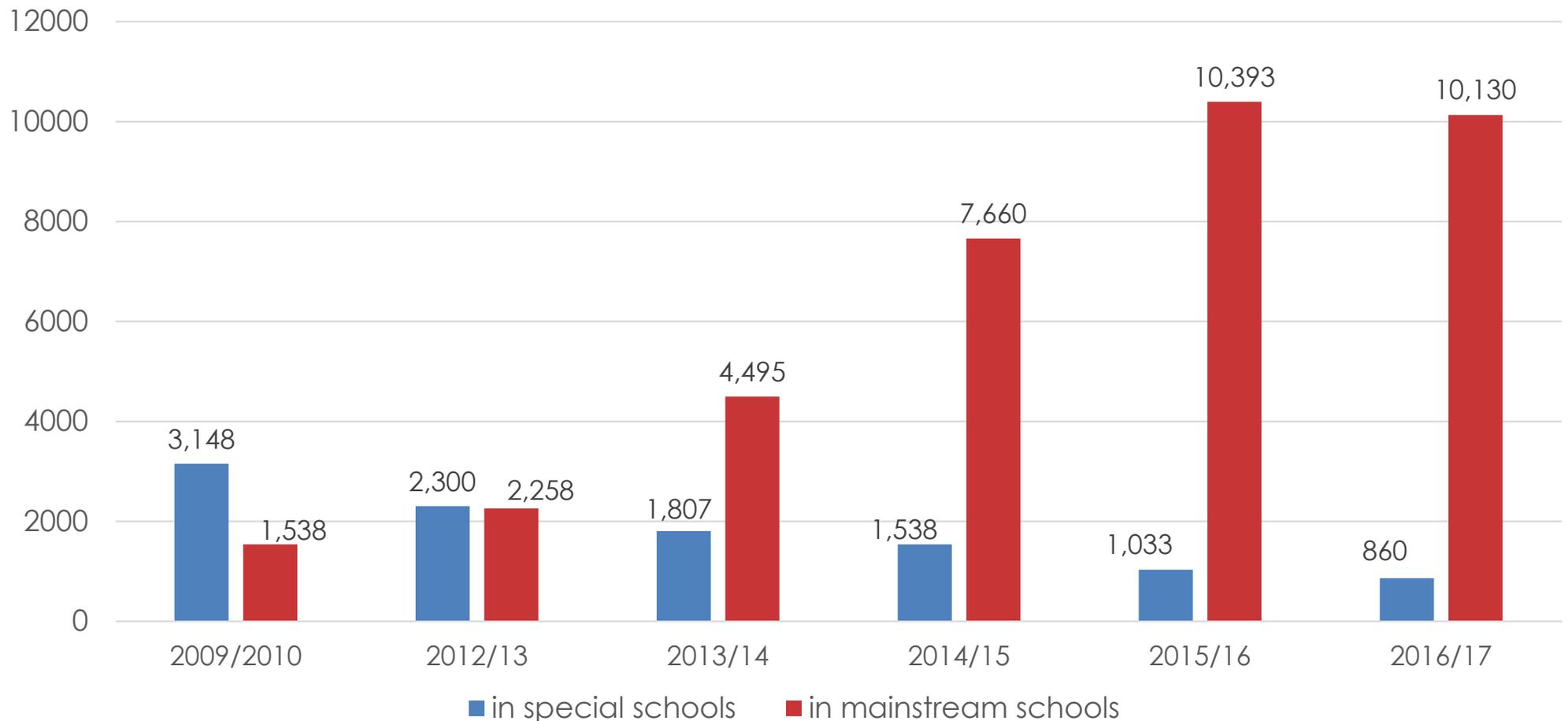
6,375 children have been reintegrated in families since 2007.



Source: www.statistica.md

Major Outcomes for Children

Owing to closure/reorganization of residential institutions, and promotion of inclusive education, the number of children with disabilities and special education needs in mainstream education increased by more than **five times** since 2010.



Main Features of Child Care Reform

Ensure and respect the right of the child to grow up in a family environment.

Principles

- Best interest of the child
- Family environment for every child
- Nondiscrimination and equal chances for all children
- Respect for the opinion of the child
- Accountability and involvement of parents
- Partnerships and intersectoral cooperation

Objectives

- Prevention of family separation
- Reduction of children in residential institutions
- Ensuring access of children deprived of parental care to family-type and community-based services
- Professionalisation of human resources in the care system
- Changing social norms

Key policy areas of action

- Legal & institutional framework
- Residential institutions: closure/restructuring with reallocation of funds to services
- Capacity building of professionals
- Gatekeeping system
- Services and cash benefits
- Inclusive education
- Intersectoral cooperation mechanisms
- Communication, advocacy, and social mobilization

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Prevention of Family Separation—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Prevent child separation and improve gatekeeping and parenting
- Set up interagency cooperation mechanisms to reduce child mortality & support children victims of violence, neglect, exploitation, or trafficking
- Promote reproductive health and risk-free pregnancy



Service provision:

- New services developed: family support, foster care (and other alternatives), early intervention, special needs assistance, perinatal services, and youth-friendly health centres
- Cash social benefits



Workforce:

- New positions introduced: community social worker, teaching support staff, psychologist, social worker, and legal adviser in perinatal centres
- Nationwide capacity building



Finance:

- Resources resulted from deinstitutionalisation redirected towards developing social and inclusive education services

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Prevention of Family Separation—What Is Underway



Policies needed to:

Strengthen early intervention and family support services

Set up interagency cooperation mechanism on primary prevention

Implement the Strategy on parental skills (2016–2022) i.e., action planning

Improve guardianship legislation



Service provision:

Pilot & implement new models for primary/early prevention, i.e., National Model of Practice (NMP), home visiting, inclusive preschool education

Develop education services for children with severe/sensory disabilities at risk of institutionalization

Pilot specialized targeted programs: mellow parenting, panda, portage, music therapy



Workforce:

Employ community child protection specialists

Introduce “home visitors” in health centers

Build capacities of professionals from universal services to observe child well-being concerns and provide appropriate support

Public/parent **education** and awareness campaigns



Finance:

Develop mechanisms for financing family support and targeted programmes from state budget

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Residential Care—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, action plans) approved in order to:

- Close/ transform 39 of 67 large-scale residential institutions
- Discourage placement of children in residential institutions unless in exceptional circumstances and for a limited period



Service provision:

- Old services reorganised and new services developed, e.g., boarding homes for children with mental disabilities, small group homes, temporary placement centres, psycho-pedagogical service, and resource centres for inclusive education



Workforce:

- Staff working in former residential institutions trained to take up a new role in reorganized institutions or new services (actors of change)
- Inclusive education module embedded in the training curriculum of teaching staff; teaching support staff introduced in schools



Finance:

- Saved resources in the process of reorganisations redirected towards developing family care and inclusive education
- Inclusive education fund created

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Residential Care—What Is Underway

Policies needed to:

Implement the strategic vision for developing the education system for deaf and hard of hearing children (DHHC); expand reforms to all children with sensory disabilities

Close/reorganize institutions for children with severe mental disabilities and special health care institutions i.e., for children affected by tuberculosis

Service provision:

Set up a national resource & support centre for children with sensory disabilities

Reorganize placement centres for small children by decreasing the number of children in care in parallel with developing support services, e.g., mother & child units, rehabilitation daycare services, social creches, and respiro services

Workforce:

Improve capacity of professionals involved in the reorganization process of the residential institutions (residential staff, foster carers, staff of the newly-developed services, etc.)

Finance:

Reallocate resources saved in reorganization process to new services, including improved residential care services i.e., National Centre for Children with Sensory Disabilities

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Foster Care—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Prioritise family-type care instead of residential care
- Improve the gatekeeping system
- Align legislation and practices to UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children



Service provision:

- Foster care developed for the first time and family-type homes
- Minimum quality standards for both services implemented
- Children participate in decisions that affect them
- Children Advisory Boards involved in monitoring the quality of care (10 districts)



Workforce:

- Training curricula and training materials developed
- Foster carers trained (initial and continuous training)



Finance:

- Financial norms (salary for caregivers, monthly allowance for fostered children, etc.) approved and resources provided from the local budgets

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Foster Care—What Is Underway



Policies needed to:

Improve the regulatory framework and financial provisions: i.e., merge foster care with family-type homes to make benefits and allowances more equitable and minimize confusion on eligibility



Service provision:

Ensure a better coverage of foster care services across the country and for all types of foster care placements

Continue to **involve** children in the monitoring of the quality of services in their communities



Workforce:

Further **train** foster carers for all types of foster care placements and for various groups of children

Review service procedures and documentation in line with new case management



Finance:

Adjust the corresponding financial norms

Secure the financial sustainability of local services

Develop a mechanism to finance services from state budget

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Kinship Care—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Prioritise family-type placement and improve gatekeeping
- Regulate kinship care as a statutory protection service
- Amend the Civil Code concerning guardianship (kinship)



Service provision:

- Family support service regulated and implemented, including minimum quality standards
- Children Advisory Boards involved in the monitoring of quality of care (10 districts)



Workforce:

- Capacities of the social work staff responsible for service provision improved
- Intensive work with extended family for kinship placement carried out



Finance:

- Mechanism for setting and payment of allowances for children in kinship care adopted

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Kinship Care—What Is Under Way



Policies needed to:

Amend regulatory framework on child legal representation, kinship care, legal responsibility, and custodial placement

Improve the organization & functioning of kinship care service and custodial placement



Service provision:

Adjust the service implementation to newly approved case management procedures

Continue to **involve** children in monitoring the quality of services in their community



Workforce:

Develop training curricula for social work staff responsible for kinship care & guardianship

Deliver training in new legislation



Finance:

Unify the financial provisions related to kinship care

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Supervised Independent Living—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Develop the framework for the preparation of graduates for independent adult life (in line with UN Alternative Guidelines) i.e., life skills and professional orientation skills to support continued education and integration in the labour market and community



Service provision:

- New services developed for deinstitutionalized youth with disabilities, i.e., protected homes and community houses
- Minimum quality standards enforced
- Aftercare services for orphan children leaving the care system piloted



Workforce:

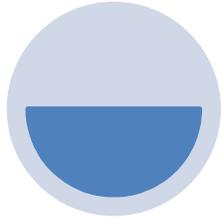
- Staff of new services and social work teams responsible for service provision trained



Finance:

- Financial norms for new services developed

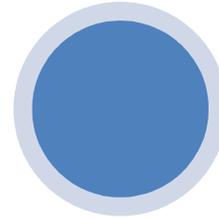
Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Supervised Independent Living—What Is Under Way



Service provision:

Develop and implement aftercare services for children leaving care at the age of 18

Monitor the residential and family-type alternative services to ensure the implementation of the quality standards regarding the preparation of children and young people for independent life



Workforce:

Build capacities of professionals for the provision of appropriate support to children and young people leaving care



Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Family Reunification/Reintegration—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Prioritise family reunification and reintegration
- Increase the efficiency of gatekeeping
- Improve family support and encourage parents' participation



Service provision:

- Family support—key resource in child & family reunification
- Individualised assistance plan developed for each child, based on a complex evaluation carried out by a multidisciplinary team
- Multiagency team/specialized services involved in supporting child & family reunification and integration into mainstream school



Workforce:

- Staff engaged in the reintegration and post-monitoring process trained to provide appropriate support to the child and family



Finance:

- Mechanism for better targeting of cash benefits to needy families implemented

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Family Reunification/Reintegration—What Is Under Way



Policies needed to:

Strengthen the family support service

Operationalise the strategy for the development of parental skills and competences 2016–2022, i.e., action planning



Service provision:

Implement a new case management strategy using a family strengthening approach

Develop education services for children with severe/sensory disabilities and short break foster care for children with disability at the highest risk of institutionalization



Workforce:

Continue to implement capacity building programmes for staff involved in the reintegration process and post-monitoring

Carry out promotional activities, public/parent education, and awareness raising campaigns



Finance:

Develop a financial mechanism to finance the family support service from the state budget

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Adoption—What We Have Done



Policies (strategies, legislation, and action plans) approved in order to:

- Regulate procedures for assessing moral & material guarantees of adoption seekers
- Fight against corruption and faulty practices (e.g., separation of siblings)
- Prioritise adoption of children by Moldovan citizens



Service provision:

- Evaluation methodology of international adoption seekers approved
- Post-adoption procedures approved



Workforce:

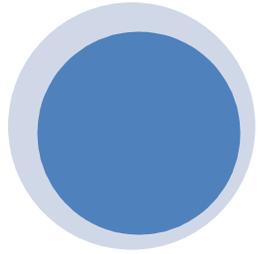
- Staff trained to apply new adoption procedures



Finance:

- Monthly allowance allocated for adoptive parents

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Adoption—What Is Under Way



Policies needed to:

Improve the legal and institutional framework, i.e., diminish the role of the judge, reduce deadlines and ensure their observance, increase transparency and access to information for adoption seekers, and further reduce the possibility for corruption



Key Achievements of Childcare Reform: Information Systems

What we have done:



Administrative data of key ministries involved in the care reform made available (social protection, education, health, and internal affairs)

Automated information system social assistance (AISSA) developed and put in operation (module on cash benefits)

Education management information system (EMIS) comprising relevant student data for the care system

Health statistics information system including data on mother and child health

Monitoring indicators introduced in policy documents & quality standards of services

What is under way:



Develop indicators for interagency cooperation and a unique data collection mechanism based on common indicators

Modernise information systems i.e., AISSA—development of a module on children at risk and children separated from their parents, EMIS, and information system for primary health care

Motivate and train case managers and service providers in the use of information systems

Develop the state registry on adoptions & inclusion in AISSA

Develop a national database on training providers in social work

Adopt a Government research agenda of priority topics for informing the advancement of reforms

Key Achievements of Childcare Reform:

Factors That Made Change Possible

Political will to pursue an ambitious and unpopular reform

Lobby and advocacy of international organisations and NGOs for deinstitutionalisation

Dedicated resource allocation for reform implementation

Cross-sector cooperation in identification, referral, & assistance of children deprived of parental care

Transformation of child care system in the wider context of social protection reform, based on research & analyses

Local authorities taking the lead in the process of system reorganization, based on well-coordinated partnerships

Reform measures taken in consultation with all stakeholders, including children and families

Partnerships with NGOs in taking over and adaptation of international good practices

Information, awareness raising, and education campaigns for changing social norms and practices

Key aspects in De-institutionalisation

- Ensure a nurturing environment for the upbringing and development of every child, away from residential care
- Child interest is at the core of the DI process
- Poverty and special education needs must not be reasons for family separation.
- Avoid child transfer from one institution to another, except for family reintegration or placement in alternative care, based on a clear plan of assistance and for a limited placement duration.
- Mobilisation of existing local resources to ensure effectiveness of reintegration.

Key Challenges

Uneven functioning of the gatekeeping mechanism across the country

Deinstitutionalisation and inclusive education of children with severe disabilities

Recent trends towards institutionalisation of children 0–3 years old for poverty reasons only

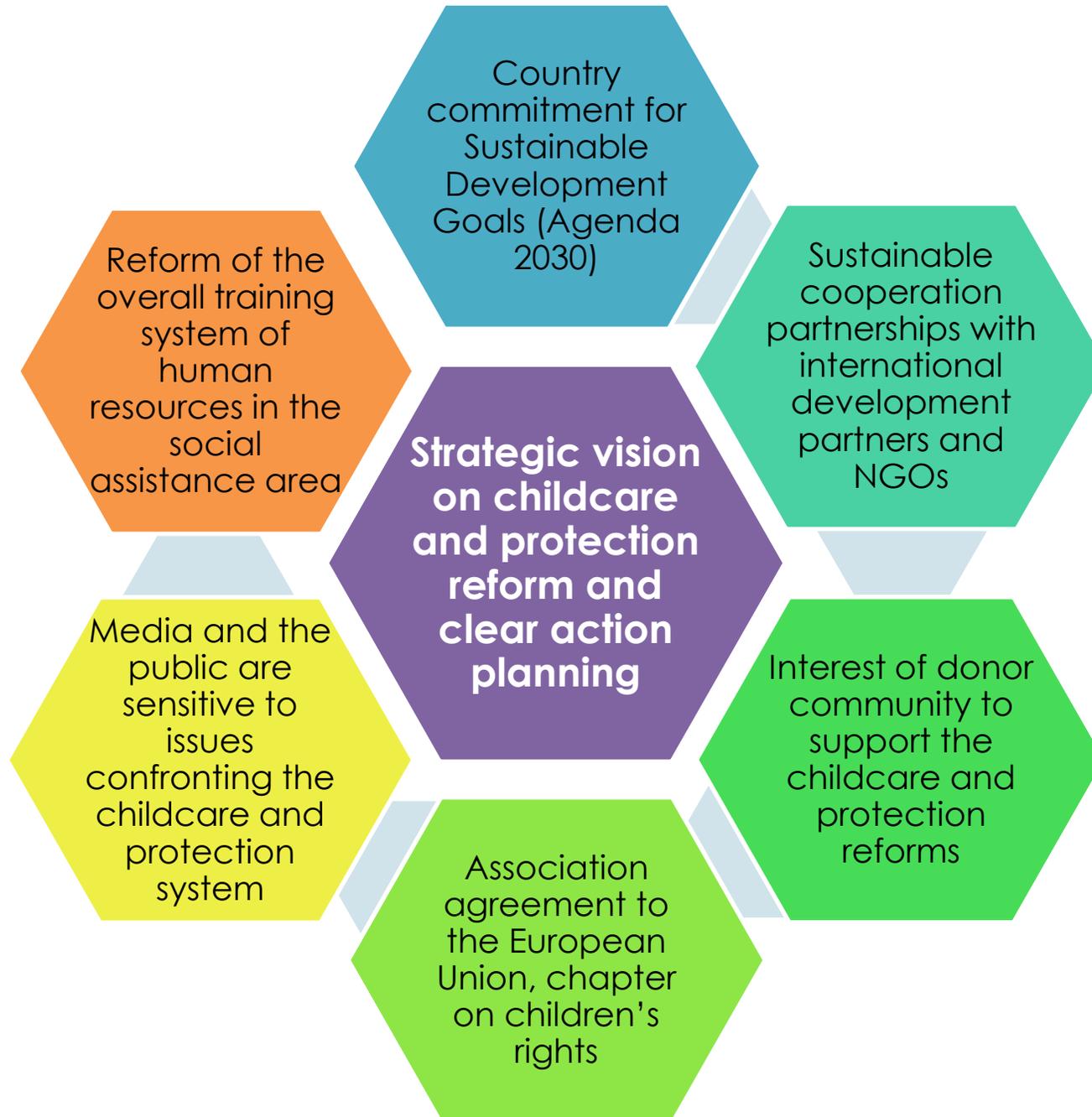
Uneven development of services for children & families at risk across the country

Poor financial sustainability of some services on the background of public finance decentralisation and reduced local capacity for resource planning

Staff turnover; lack of a national system for initial & continuous training of human resources in child protection

Weak monitoring and evaluation governance structures, information systems, & data quality assurance

Opportunities



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