



FACT SHEET

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide the media a series of comparative statistics about children in public care from various European countries, in order to compare the system in Romania and to put into context the progress that has been made. These statistics were compiled in July 2005 and are based on the most recently available information.

It should be noted that there is a lack of reliable comparative data on the number and situation of children in public care in the different European Countries. However, there are a few international studies as well as national statistics on children in care (these can be seen in the reference section of this report). But these sources of information can be problematic; for example different countries have different definitions of residential care. As regards data from the former Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the TransMONEE database of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (Florence, Italy) is generally considered to be the most reliable source.

HIGHLIGHTS

The following key findings (or highlights) are considered to be of interest to the media. More details about these facts can be found in this fact sheet, and in the reference materials:

- The rate (proportion) of children in institutional care in Romania fell by approximately 43.8% between 1997 and 2002;
- In Romania the number of children in foster care and guardianship (extended families) increased by 86% between 1998 and 2002;
- Research shows Romania places a higher proportion of children in care to substitute families (foster and extended families) than does Italy, Spain and Greece – see below for more details.

THE COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

Table 1. Rate of children in residential care (per 10,000 population, aged between 0-17). The six countries with the highest rates in 2002 are presented here. Source: UNICEF Innocenti Social Monitor 2004.

	1997	2002	Number in 2002
Czech Republic	83.4	95.9	19,000

Lithuania	77.3	91.0	7,300
Romania ¹	95.9	90.9	43,000
Bulgaria ²	141.0	83.1	12,100
Latvia	58.4	71.9	3,500
Poland	75.1	68.7	59,500

Table 2. Rate of children in care of foster parents or guardians (per 10,000 population, aged 0-17). The six countries with the highest rates in 2002 are presented here. Source: UNICEF Innocenti Social Monitor 2004.

	1998	2002	Number in 2002
Latvia	138.2	197.8	9,600
Estonia	112.6	171.1	4,900
Poland	156.0	167.3	144,900
Lithuania	79.4	95.1	7,600
Slovenia	80.6	85.5	3,200
Romania	31.6	64.9	30,900

OBSERVATIONS

From these tables the following trends can be noticed:

The rate of children in public care care in Romania is similar to some of the other countries in the region. A number of countries had a higher rate in 2002 than Romania. Latvia had a rate of 269 children in public care per 10,000, Poland 236, Lithuania 186, and Romania 155.

The progress in Romania since 1997 can be considered as exceptional compared to the rest of the countries studied. In the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the rates of children in institutions have increased between 1997 and 2002 except in Poland (where the rate fell by 8.5% between 1997 and 2002).

One has to also to take into consideration that the 1997 figure for Romania does not include the approximately 25,000 children who were in institutions run by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the State Secretariat for Persons with Handicap. These children were included in the figure for 2002.³ If we consider these 25,000 children in the overall rate of children in residential care in 1997, it shows a decrease of 43.8%.

In Romania the number of children in alternative care (foster care and guardianship) increased by 86.1% (from 16,600 to 30,900 children) between 1998 and 2002. This is a remarkable achievement compared to any other country in Europe. The only country with a similar level of progress in this

¹ It should be noted that Romania changed the way it counted children in institutions in 2000. From 2000, children in institutions run by the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education and the State Secretariat for Persons with Handicap began to be included in the statistics. This led to a short term spike in the statistics (an increase of 25,000 in 2000) and implied that the rate in 2000 increased to 108.9 (from 69.6 in 1999).

² In Bulgaria, in 2002, a new legal definition of children in residential care was applied, resulting in the reported rate of children in residential care decreasing from 146.7 in 2001 to 83.1 in 2002.

³ Coman, 2003

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regard is Estonia, where the number of children in alternative care increased by 36.1% (from 3,600 to 4,900).⁴

According to the 2003 Social Monitor, in the early 1990s there was an increase in most countries of the number of children in infant homes (children aged 0-3). In 2001, the highest rates are recorded in Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and the Czech Republic (in that order). In this comparison, the figure for Romania is from 2000 and is based on the results from the MONEE project country report on the country. According to the information in the Social Monitor, Romania had just above 50.0 per 10,000 in infant homes. The figures for the other countries are as follows: 123.8 in Bulgaria; 87.6 in Latvia; and 46.0 in the Czech Republic.⁵ In the late 1990s a positive trend was observed in Romania but not in the other countries.⁶ In another study it is noted that the number of children aged 0-3 in institutions in the Czech Republic increased by 31% between 2001 and 2003 (from 1,244 to 1,630).⁷

According to the EU Daphne Project (on children aged 0-3 in institutions in 32 European countries) some of the established EU Member States have similar numbers of children in public care as the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Some of the findings are presented below. It is important to note that this data is regarded as “provisional” and in need of official confirmation, and the data for the various countries have been calculated in different ways. The statistics on the nine worse off countries in this regard are presented below.

Table 3. Proportion of children under 3 in institutions for more than 3 months in 2003. Source: Browne et al. (2004b)

	Proportion per 10,000	No. in institutions
Czech Republic	60	1,630
Belgium	56	2,164
Bulgaria	50	1,238
Lithuania	46	458
Latvia	42	395
Romania	33	2,915
Slovakia	31	502
Finland	28	466
France	27	6,143

⁴ UNICEF 2004a:Annex, section 8

⁵ UNICEF, 2002:16; UNICEF, 2003a:25 (Figure 4.4)

⁶ UNICEF, 2002:16

⁷ Browne *et al.*, 2004b

In the 32 European countries 23,000 children under three are in institutional care for more than three months. According to this research, 12 countries including Belgium, Finland and Spain have more than 20 children in every 10,000 under three in institutions.⁸

There are significant differences between the original EU Member States (EU-15) and the EU Accession States (EU 12)⁹ as regards the causes of institutionalization. In the EU 15 countries, it was observed that 69% of the children were placed in institutions due to abuse and neglect (4% due to abandonment, 4% disability, 23% social reasons). In the EU 12 accession countries it was noted that 32% of the children were placed in institutions due to abandonment, as well as the following reasons: social problems in the family (25%); disability (23%); abuse and neglect (14%).

According to the Daphne project, research on children under five leaving residential care in eight European countries (Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) shows that the average child spends just over two years in institutions.¹⁰

Many of the post communist countries, including Romania, are relatively advanced when it comes to the number of alternative services that have been developed for children. For example, according to one research project, in France the number of children in public care has remained constant since 1989 at approximately 135,000. A lack of foster placements is noted and the environment in the institutions is criticized. In Greece, the main reason for institutionalization is still poverty; residential institutions are relatively large in size (25-80 children); and in 2003 only 25% of the children in public care were placed with foster parents.¹¹ According to other studies, in 1997 only 26,5% of the children in public care in Spain were in foster care and the remainder were in residential institutions. In Italy (in 1999) only 26,6% were placed with foster parents – and both Italy and Spain are considered countries which have managed successful deinstitutionalization processes.¹² This can be compared to the situation in Romania. According to the data in the UNICEF Social Monitor, in 2002 a total of 41.7% of the children in public care were placed with foster parents and, according to the statistics of the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights (NAPCR), in January 2005 60.5% of the children are placed in a substitute family, i.e. foster care, extended family or entrusted for adoption.

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⁸ Browne *et al.*, 2005

⁹ Please note that this figure (EU 12) includes the 10 countries who were admitted to the EU in 2004, as well as Bulgaria and Romania who are expected to join the EU by 2008 at the latest.

¹⁰ Browne *et al.*, 2005

¹¹ Browne *et al.*, 2004:6-7

¹² UNICEF, 2003b:vi; 38; ANFAA, 2004

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