

PRESS RELEASE

GREECE'S FORGOTTEN CHILDREN

ALMOST 3000 CHILDREN STUCK IN INSTITUTIONS, NEW STUDY SAYS

Brussels, 28 September 2015 - One year ago, the BBC published a shocking report of a Greek children's home where children with disabilities were kept in caged beds. In an effort to better understand the situation of children in institutional care, Roots Research Centre, national coordinator of the Opening Doors for Europe's Childrenⁱ in Greece has conducted the first nation-wide mapping of institutional and residential care in Greeceⁱⁱ.

The study found that Greece has a patchwork of public and private institutions and residential care with little or no oversight of quality and no monitoring of the numbers of children and what happens to them. Roots Research Centre urgently calls on the government to develop a national strategy and implementation plan to build a comprehensive child protection system based on international standards.

Key Findings

The mapping identified 85 institutions across Greece caring for an estimated 2,825 children including those placed through the child protection system and children with disabilities. Four of the institutions accommodate around 100 children. Only 2 appear to have fewer than 10. Most of the institutions are estimated to house around 30 children. Few institutions would therefore appear to comply with the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children which recommends that residential settings are small, organised around the rights and needs of children and reflect as close as possible a family or small group situation. International experts suggest the maximum number of children per unit should be fewer than 8.

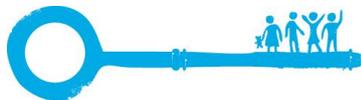
Institutionalisation before the age of 3 is widely acknowledged to be particularly damaging to children's development. Nonetheless in Greece 182 children in institutional care are babies and toddlers aged 0-3.

Foster care remains hugely underdeveloped in Greece – an estimated 309 children in care were living with foster carers in 2014. New legislation is needed to reduce the procedural burden of foster care as well as investment in public awareness, and training and supervision of foster carers.

More than one in four of those living in children's institutions are in fact over 18 (760 young people). There appears to be a lack of any financial, psychological or educational support programmes that would facilitate young people's transition to independent life.

The majority of institutions (57) are privately run, 30 of which work for profit. Many rely heavily on donations and private sponsorships. Most supplement salaried professionals with volunteers, with a few practically operating on volunteers alone.

Key Recommendations



OPENING DOORS
FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

WWW.OPENDINGDOORS.EU
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

The Greek government urgently needs to adopt a national strategy and implementation plan to support a transition from institutional to family and community-based care. The European Structural and Investment Funds offer an important potential source of finance to catalyse this transition. They should be invested in strengthening families, extended families and communities to respond adequately to child protection issues as well as to develop the suitable range of family-based alternative care options for those children without parental care.

Read all our recommendations in the [Executive Summary](#).

Find all facts and figures in our country snapshot [here](#).

ⁱ The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign is jointly coordinated by Eurochild and Hope and Homes for Children UK. It operates at EU level and in 12 countries across Europe, and calls on the EU and national governments to prioritise the transition from institutional to family-based care. In Greece the campaign is coordinated by Roots Research Centre and supported by several other partners. See: www.openingdoors.eu

ⁱⁱ This mapping exercise has been carried out by Katerina Nanou of Roots Research Center in Greece, with support from Vodafone and partners of the Opening Doors campaign - Hope and Homes for Children UK and Eurochild. The research was carried out between January and August 2015 and refers to the situation of children in institutions in 2014.