Deinstitutionalisation and a Child’s Right to a Supportive Family Environment

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UNICEF Evaluation: a regional picture

- Multi-country evaluation of child care reform in 11 countries - AZ, BY, BG, HR, GE, MD, ME, RO, SR, TR, UA
- Measuring and accounting for changes in children’s lives as a result of child care reform
- Reference period: 2005-2012
- 5 criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact
- Desk review, quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, focus groups
Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics?
Rate of Children in Care per 100,000 child pop 2005 - 2012

Rate of Children in Care, W. Balkans 2000-2014 per 100,000 child pop.
Critical findings

- Fragmented and inconsistent approach to reform
- Insufficient attention to financial flows and budgets
- No continuum of flexible alternative care services
- Rapid expansion of small-group homes (re-institutionalisation or trans-institutionalisation) and foster care (with no follow-up)
- Lack of development of range of meaningful preventive services
- Significant equity gaps remain and may be growing (poor, rural, ethnic minority households, children with disabilities)
- Time-limited ‘Projects’ rather than accessible, sustainable, quality services
- The social work paradox – mostly under-investment but sometimes too much emphasis on over-professionalised responses
- Disconnect between child care and social protection ‘reforms’
- User voice is virtually nowhere or highly fetishised
- Evidence-base is much less solid than it seems
Conclusions – points for discussion

- Importance of strategic approach linking: political will; stakeholder engagement; clear responsibilities across levels and between agencies; public support; clear advocacy messages; targeted transitional financing mechanisms
- Combination of approach linking system-level and individual plans
- Importance of NGOs and social movements — especially including or led by users
- EU Funding needs to be carefully planned, implemented and sequenced (importance of full domestic ‘buy in’)
- Reforms which are top-down, technocratic, over professionalised or externally-driven are destined to fail – new community development approaches may be needed
- Beware of net widening ... need for a new consensus on what the child care system is for (prevention, support, reintegration ... Or surveillance and control)
- Work on building user, family and community support for change (N. Macedonia)