

*The problem of the child in difficulty is now on the agenda of the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Lately, highest-ranking decision-makers from the state government have been looking at various aspects of this issue.*

# Strategic partnership for the country's future

The president of the country said at the end of last year: "Unfortunately, we had an increase in the numbers of children placed in residential institutions in the past few years.

Local child protection inspectors and local public authorities must do everything they can to help the child remain in the family and make sure institutionalisation is a last resort. All of these problems will be possible to overcome, if a social assistant is employed in each mayoralty".

This problem was also discussed at the meeting between Vladimir Voronin and the members of the Coordination council of NGOs active in the field of children's and families' rights protection; the other participants in that meeting were decision-makers from the Presidency and the Government.

The participants exchanged opinions regarding the current situation in the field of children's rights' protection; priority actions to be taken with a view to improve the state of things were pointed out.

The representatives of

the Alliance of NGOs active in the field of children's and families' rights protection appreciated both the policies implemented by the state authorities in this field and the legal framework, on the basis of which they are being implemented.

However, objections regarding the current mechanism of collaboration between NGOs and Raion and local public bodies were expressed. Various proposals aimed at improving and developing the current system of children's rights' protection were put forward. They mostly



concerned the need to reform the institutional framework at central and local levels, develop the system of community based services, and monitor the observance of children's rights.

The president Vladimir Voronin welcomed the initiative shown by the representatives of the associative sector and their commitment to work in partnership with state children's rights protection services; His Excellency mentioned the fact that the current problems will be easier to overcome through making joint efforts.

The head of the state stressed the importance of passing the Law with regard to the child in difficulty, which, to the mind of the president, must reflect all the aspects of the system of social protection of children, the duties of central and local public authorities, as well as of parents. The president pointed to the fact that, on the basis of this new Law, which will be passed in accordance with international standards and practice in this field, it will also be necessary to update national strategies in the field of child protection.

The president also stressed the importance of paying more attention to methods of preventing and reducing numbers of cases of child abandonment by parents, by supporting families in difficult circumstances, developing the spectrum of social services for families and children in local communities, and gradually restructuring the existing residential institutions.

The provision of conditions for the harmonious development of every child's personality is the basis upon which the country's future must be built. This is why the provision for and observance of children's rights and the payment of increased attention to them are a national priority, Voronin declared.

As a consequence of the insistence and consistency of the head of the state, on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006, the specialists from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Health



and Social Protection discussed the Strategy of reforming the residential system in a joint meeting. This Strategy must be passed by April this year. Specialists say it provides for the upbringing and education of the child in the family and not in residential institutions.

It seems that the reform has started. The joint efforts are directed towards the upbringing and education of the child in the family or in a family environment. The team of the "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform project support these efforts and think that only through close collaboration can we make real, favourable changes for the future of our children and for the country's future.

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# WASTING MONEY – THE CASE FOR CLOSING INTERNATS

**David LARTER,**  
*EU Public Finance Expert*



**Much has been written about the effect of residential care upon children, explaining how and why children are irrevocably damaged by spending years in a residential institution.**

There is also a powerful financial and economic argument for their closure. In 2005, according to Government figures, the average cost per year of educating and caring for a child in a Gymnasium Internat was over 10,000 MDL.

Of that cost 3471 MDL was devoted to education. That compares with the cost of a mainstream community

school of about 2,000 MDL per child year – 43% lower. Alongside this a recent study carried out in Orhei showed that the level of educational performance in the Orhei Internat was comparable with that of mainstream community schools in the Raion. Thus, even internat education is no better than mainstream community education but it costs a great deal more.

Expressed as the return on investment in education services it can be seen that the Internat offers a poor return and is wasteful.

It is often assumed that children are admitted to internats because they are deprived of parental care or are orphans. In reality the proportion of orphaned children is very low. Equally, the vast majority of internat children go home in school holidays. The stated reasons for the existence of the internat system is not supported by the evidence of the needs of children who live in them.

That is also important when considering the amount of money spent on maintaining the internat system. The cost of caring for a child in a gymnasium internat is about 7,200 MDL per child year. The average cost of providing support for the same child in the community is about 5,500 MDL.

Thus, even the cost of caring in the internat is higher than that of caring for a child in the community. Beyond that, assessments of childrens' needs undertaken in the project Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova reveal that it is not true that all children living in internats need support services in the community. In fact, only a minority need help.

Taking that into account the gap between the costs of internat provision and the essential costs of providing education and community support is even greater to the financial disadvantage of the internat system.

One can go even further than that. Because the internat system is so expensive and absorbs money that could be better spent on mainstream community education and on child care services in the community it is possible to argue that for every child placed in residential care another child in the community is deprived of the services they need.

The financial argument against the internat system is irrefutable. The economic argument, that Moldova needs an educated workforce in order to aid its economic regeneration is equally powerful. It is well evidenced that internats damage childrens' life chances. Clearly, they waste resources which could be used to improve the life chances of all children.

With no other reason the financial and economic arguments demand that Moldova abandon its system of residential schools in favour of better investment in services which are both more benign and, for children and the community, more profitable.





*Presently Moldova faces a big number of social, economic and political problems. Naturally, all of them are important and constitute the priority for Government, but we consider that social problems, especially those of the child and family, should be approached as strategic problems in the context of the development of a democratic and prosperous country. We consider that all of the problems are rooted in the family.*

## **It's not the problem of foreigners, it's our own problem**

The values gained within the family build, brick by brick, love for the country. Patriotism is learned in the family. A strong family is a strong country – this should be everyone's slogan. Because loss of respect for the family generates loss of respect for the country and makes it possible for the idea of patriotism to vanish. The feeling of a citizen disappears in a world where parents voluntarily send their own children to residential homes and go abroad. Unfortunately, all the efforts of voluntary organizations do not find support in terms of assuring sustainability. During recent years a lot of foreign investment came to support the social sphere in Moldova. The greatest problem is that services die-out once financial support is over. Currently Moldova faces the problem, where residential care services, offered by the government to the child in difficulty, are not adequate and do not serve the best interests of the child, whereas alternative childcare services, developed by voluntary sector, are not supported financially and legally.

It is encouraging that many decision-makers appear to be interested and open-minded, which stimulates changes. However, I have to admit that there are still very many problems. The main and the most important problem here is the responsibility of local and central executive bodies. Our partners should understand that nobody is going to come to solve our own problems if we do not assume responsibility to do it ourselves. I am saying that because we consider that the problem of the child and family

in difficulty in Moldova is very sensitive and requires a lot of responsibility. This problem affects the whole of society, and we do not have the right to put off its solution. I hope and I am convinced that alternative forms of childcare, currently developed at the community level, will soon be supported by a legislative framework, namely by the Law on Child and Family in Difficulty, which is currently in line for parliamentary approval. In order to develop and promote coherent policy in the area of social protection of the child and family, we need to have strong partnership between competent governmental and non-governmental structures, as well as between the members of society.

It is indubitable that partnership at any level – family, community, society – is aimed at consolidating their capacity to fight, resist and progress, despite any obstacles and difficulties. This is even more important for a country that faces economic and social problems, and at the same time tends towards achieving European values, assuming certain responsibilities in this respect.



**Stela GRIGORAS,**  
*EveryChild Moldova*  
**Country Director**



# Why don't we invest in family?



**The lines below are full of pathos. However, when it comes to sentimental stuff, the cannons are silent. Even if such synthesized things like state policy are involved.**

President Vladimir Voronin has said on numerous occasions that each of us should care for at least one child deprived of parental care. The Head of the country did not issue a special decree in this sense, realising that love for a child or concern for the future of the country cannot be cultivated by president's decrees or by Government issues. However, important state institutions, government officials, businessmen, understood only half of the idea. Thus, we've come to face an artificial situation in the childcare system. Each institution announced its protectorate over an internat or children's home. As a result, officials and businessmen appear periodically on TV, offering gifts to

children in residential institutions. Nobody knows if these gifts reach their destination, and children are left only with an illusion – the illusion of a family. Humanitarian acts, done only to calm the public, cannot solve one of the most important problems that concerns the future of our country – the children's destiny.

Family is above everything. There are no investments or gifts that can replace the family. Features that family can give – from psychological education to morality, mentality, traditions – build up, brick by brick, the feeling of patriotism. Real patriotism, without any political games or banal sentiments. Patriotism is learnt in the family. But how can we speak about a family now, now that respect for this institution has become history? Now that bureaucrats have transformed Moldova into a virtual world, where children placed in residential institutions are humiliated by headmasters, receive a gift or two per year and have no chance for the future. The Motherland, wherever it is, does not hear you. Loss of respect for family generates loss of respect for the country, making possible the disappearance of the idea of patriotism. Whose interests are bureaucrats

and businessmen trying to protect when they encourage thousands of parents to place their own children in internats? Even a simplistic reason has been brought – an internat offers a better environment for education than a poor family, demoralised and baffled by the negative effects of transition and globalisation. The number of children placed in internats beats all the records, because their parents were told for many years, that an internat can undertake the role of the best parent for their own children. Because internats are visited by all sorts rich people, who bring a lot of gifts, while a poor family with many children is never noticed by bureaucrats and businessmen. Because there are no cameras.

There is another rhetorical question for businessmen and bureaucrats who try to “please” the president, and, being excessively zealous, distort the ideas. Doesn't the president focus on love for the country, on patriotism? Why do you then do everything the other way round? The family, sorry for the pathos, was the only national entity that preserved its identity throughout the centuries, regardless of the form of enslavement. Now the family is in danger, as is the whole nation.

*Corneliu MIHALACHE*



**Tatiana GRIBINCEA,**  
**Head of General Directorate**  
**for Social Protection,**  
**The Ministry of Health**  
**and Social Protection**

*By passing the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the “Moldovan Village” National Programme, the Parliament brought out the paramount political framework of sustainable mid-term development of the country. Under these circumstances, the state assumed the major responsibility for poverty reduction and improvement of the quality of life of the population by developing, simultaneously, the system of social insurance. Social services for families with children are a component of the national system of social protection.*

## **Community based services are a social policy priority**

was again put forward for notification. The monthly indemnity for the care of children up to 1.5 years old for uninsured persons increased from 50 to 100 lei, and until the child is three years old. On the other hand, the sum of monthly indemnity for the upkeep of a child in families with low incomes was increased from 25 to 50 lei. Currently, the possibility of increasing the corresponding maximum sum of payment to 100 lei is being examined.

On the other hand, the present system of social services is still underdeveloped and centralised. It is necessary to extend the spectrum of social services with community based ones, which would lead to a massive increase in the participation of the civil society in social life. In this context, the development and setup of new services for children at risk are stressed; it is intended that these services will serve as a gate-

keeping system. Temporary placement centres for children, family support and reintegration services, the foster care service, specialised services for children with disabilities, and community centres would be the best solution for children in difficulty. We need to mention that some of the above-mentioned services were piloted in the Raions of Orhei, Cahul, and Ungheni, with financial support of the EU via the “Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova” project. The experience gained in these three Raions serves as a serious premise for starting the process of reforming the social sector in other Raions of the country as well. Thus, we shall contribute to decreasing the numbers of children in residential institutions and set up a gate-keeping system, fully exercising children’s rights by building local and national capacity.

The research carried out over the last few years show that children and families with children in the Republic of Moldova are the poorest social groups. Analysis of the phenomenon of poverty over recent years has shown that approximately 35% of the total number of children grow up in poor or less well-off families, the majority of which are from rural areas. It is mainly families with many children or families with single parents that are at risk of poverty; thus, 50% of families with 4 or more children are poor.

Serious problems, which families and especially children have to face, in all fairness represent a priority objective of social protection.

During the last few years, we have seen an annual increase in cash benefits for families with children. For instance, the amount of the one-off cash benefit at the birth of the child has increased from 370 to 500 lei for insured persons and from 300 to 500 lei for uninsured persons. Recently, the draft Governmental Decision providing for an increase in the one-off cash benefit for every child up to 800 lei





**Valentina HOLBAN,**  
**Vice-Chair of the**  
**Parliamentary Commission**  
**for Social Protection,**  
**Health and Family**



Moldova's Europeanisation must begin with child protection in every village and town, from Giurgiulesti to Criva. It needs to be carried out so that local authorities have all the necessary levers to decide on the child's destiny in accordance with his / her fundamental interests and ensure the child's placement in an internat is a last resort, as it happens in countries with European traditions.

It is important that the implementation mechanism of reform foresees the fact that public money should follow the child and support the family at risk, in order to prevent child abandonment. It is paramount that we set up a system of childcare at the community level, so that high-quality services provided to children are brought back to Moldova's villages and towns.

## Public money must serve children's interests

The Republic of Moldova cannot afford to assume the groundless and extremely high maintenance costs of internats, which are not favourable for child development and have preserved the moral and educational norms that were in place after World War II. This money should be re-directed towards the development of child-friendly community based social services, as well as the support of families in difficulty, so that the latter can bring their children up at home, in the family. The state should bear the responsibility for supporting parents to care for their children, but the state will never be able to substitute for parents. It is only the family or the family environment that can ensure the child's harmonious development.

By investing in children and families today we invest in the country's future.

There are strong arguments in favour of the reform of the residential system. First of all, the inefficient outcomes we have prove that the current costs of residential care represent an inadequate use of public funds and, secondly, this system does not offer adequate educational opportunities, so that children can develop success in learning and, consequently, the residential system does not generate a well-trained labour force for the country's economic development.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in collaboration with NGOs and international organisations working in this field must urgently develop a strategy of reform of the residential system and set up alternative childcare services such as Day Care Centres, Family Support, Foster Care, etc. The idea of reforming the field – the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport should focus on its supreme educational role, and its current responsibilities to care for thousands of children of the country should be handed over to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The resources for the development of social childcare services should be transferred from the administration of the Ministry

of Education, Youth and Sport to the administration of Local Public Authorities, and other resources, which will appear as a result of reforming internats, should be re-directed towards the improvement of pre-University education.

These changes will contribute to the improvement of the system of childcare and education of the young generation and will be favourable for the country's economy. We admit that it will be necessary to assume additional short-term and mid-term costs typical of a transition process. These costs need to be studied in depth by the corresponding Ministries, with support from TACIS and other international organisations available. That is why we call on the competent structures to urgently initiate a dialogue, a public discussion. This is to ensure the achievement of the objectives set by the Government of the Moldova Republic itself.

We are conscious of the fact that reform can be painful. It can be inconvenient for those who will not overcome their out-of-date mentality and principles of work and, at the same time, can be favourable for others who show full commitment to modernise social protection services in accordance with European standards and the child's best interests. This is why I again call on all the corresponding state structures to collaborate efficiently and give priority to the child's and the country's fundamental interests, over and above the interests of departments or groups. On the other hand, I call on the representatives of civil society and international organisations working in the field of childcare to support the reform and become actively involved in its implementation. The success of this reform depends not only on the capacities of the Local or Central Public Authorities, but on the capacity of the whole of society, because we are talking about the future of the Moldova Republic in the first place. This is why, the Government needs to be supported and provided with assistance and commitment from all actors in society more than ever. Together we can ensure a European future for the Republic of Moldova. Together we can bring Europe home.

*Moldova has set a goal to reduce poverty and move closer to European values. Everybody, from government minister to internat educator, vow that they support serious reform. And, after that, we are again painfully reminded of the national discrepancy between words and actions. We will never embrace Europe if we do not prioritise the institute of a healthy family and do not care for children in difficulty, whose number is alarmingly high.*

## **Our national discrepancy between words and actions painfully affects us**

Jon Barrett, EU Team Leader of “Capacity Building is Social Policy Reform in Moldova” Project told mass media representatives at the conference that there is only one childcare service in Moldova – residential care. According to some studies carried out in Western Europe, the children who were placed in residential care, have generally lower achievements in their adult life, do not achieve as well educationally and therefore do not contribute fully to the qualified labour force, says Jon Barrett in line with many other experts in the area.

This being the situation, in order to pass to the system of alternative childcare services, such as foster care, family support, day centre’s, etc., we need to consolidate the efforts of specialised institutions and civil society.

This reality is not just declarative, it is based on calculations. Eugenia Veverita, Local EU expert in local public finance, has presented repeatedly, including at the conference, the results of a comparative cost-benefit analysis of residential and community services, which shows that the latter are less expensive and more efficient than the services offered in residential care. Thus, the cost of caring for a child in an internat in 2005 is estimated at 10,689 Mlei, in comparison with 5,439 Mlei in a Centre for social services for the child and family. The average cost for integration, family support, and foster care services are estimated at 4,700 Mlei.

General conclusions: graduates of gymnasium-internats face the risk of becoming unemployed, of becoming criminals and drug abusers, are 10 times more vulnerable to human trafficking, and are removed from the economic realities of everyday life. On the other hand, the implementation of alternative childcare services will contribute to gate keeping, will help the child stay in their own family or reintegrate them with the family thereby maintaining their relations with the family and society, and thus solving other problems that children face.

Cesare de Montis, EU Ambassador in the Republic of Moldova, holds a similar opinion. He warns that the residential system “undermines children’s psychological and emotional development.” “Each generation of vulnerable children can become a generation of vulnerable adults, and the existing problems will continue to exist in the future”.

Another official, Valentina Holban, deputy president of the Parliamentary Commission for social protection, health and family issues, also considers that residential care does not offer adequate services, is too costly for the public budget and does not offer relevant educational opportunities. She pointed out that the concerned institutions should develop a strategy for the reform of the residential system.

Some things are done even without a strategy. Jon Barret, EU Team Leader of the Project, within which the three regional projects have been developed, reported that in the pilot sites of Orhei, Ungheni and Cahul the number of institutionalized children has dropped by 80%.

There seems to be a strange thing here. At different seminars, meetings and conferences both, local officials and international social deputies talk about the need for reform in the area. There are good and relevant ideas, supporting European values. However, they remain only on paper – reasonable points are not heard in the rest of the country, and ideas are not transformed into action. Sweet stagnation reigns in the internats, because local bureaucrats are satisfied with what they have at present so they wait for the President of the country to let the steam off and order some reforms. Just like in the case of Chisinau minibuses.

*Stan LIPCANU*

**Social policies involving Moldovan children and families need to be reformed in order to be in line with European Standards. Thus, much is being discussed, and even more is being spent. This was the main point discussed at the conference “Harmonizing social policies for child and family in Moldova with European standards of transparency, efficiency and sustainability”, organised by EveryChild Consortium, in collaboration with the British Embassy in Moldova and the EU Commission Delegation in Moldova.**





# The target of the reform - education of the child in the family

The efforts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport are to support the reform of the child and family social protection system. The strategic directions for the reform of the residential system were created, taking into consideration the legislation in place, both at national and international levels, to ensure that the actions taken comply with European standards in the field. We will not present details of each normative act. However, we must point out that the philosophy of change entails a commitment to assuring for every child the right to a family. Consequently, all our efforts will pursue the goal of assuring every child the right to live in a family, to know his/her parents, to be cared for by them, to live with them, except where this would be detrimental to the child. This is not just a statement of purpose, but a firm decision, publicly expressed by government authorities.

One of the first steps in achieving this goal is the beginning of the deinstitutionalisation process. Thus, under decision No. 887 of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2005, of the Minister of

Education, 7 evaluation teams for residential institutions were created. Besides, in the pilot regions of Orhei, Cahul and Ungheni 5 inter-sectorial teams were created to evaluate and monitor gymnasiums-internats. A draft methodology for the evaluation of gymnasiums-internats was created, and the joint College of MoHSP and MoEYS approved the criteria for admission of children into residential institutions. These criteria were established in compliance with the international standards in the field. It should be noted that the evaluation teams are multi-disciplinary and they analyse educational priorities and child care services, human and financial resources, and the fixed assets. The evaluation reports and the information presented by these teams will determine the priorities and the implementation methods to be used in the process of reorganisation. So, very meticulous work is done, paying attention to absolutely all details. For instance, the educational component will determine the number of children in internats who will be able to attend

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**MOLDOVAN,**  
**Deputy Minister of MoEYS**



**Ministry of Education  
Youth and Sport performs  
activities in support of  
child and family social  
protection reform**



community schools, while the child care services evaluation team will determine the categories of children who need these services. At the same time the necessary community services will be developed. Additionally, as a result of the assessment of the institutions' human resources, the specialists who will offer educational and care services will be identified, while the financial component will determine the educational and care service costs. At present residential institutions offer more educational than care services, while the financial resources offered to these institutions are much greater than the resources allocated for community schools.

A child who attends a mainstream school is allocated approximately 2,000 lei, while for the education of a child in residential institution approximately 10,000 lei is allocated. Thus, the costs are big, while the efficiency is very small. Children in institutions are prone to educational failure, and after graduation find it very difficult to integrate into society. During placement the contact between the child and his/her parents, family, relatives, are discouraged, and consequently the child's fundamental rights are violated. In fact, these children have neither past, nor future. That is why deinstitutionalization is so vital.

On the other hand, it is vital that, within the reform process, a community gate-keeping system is created. This would involve the identification and development in the community of alternative services that would satisfy the needs of children who do not require residential services. At the same time, much work should be done to improve the care and healthcare conditions for children who really need state support. As a result of the reform of the residential system we expect that the rate of child abandonment by parents will drop, and, respectively, the rate of institutionalized children will greatly decrease. The restructuring of the residential system will allow the development of alternative community services, and will contribute to an increase in the professionalism of the systems' human resources. The rumours suggesting that residential institutions' personnel will lose jobs are totally wrong. Not only will the employees not lose their jobs, they will have a chance to improve their professional skills and qualifications because the human factor is essential and plays a specific role in the change process.

So, we have very much to do. The area is both very important and extremely sensitive. The success of this process depends on ownership and ways of collaboration between central and local authorities, specialists, civil society, and even mass-media. First of all this involves making the parents and the community responsible for caring about the children. At the same time, the government has to support the parents and the community to raise the children in families. This is because love for the children, for the future of the country, can never be cultivated by decrees and laws. It resides in the nation's spirit and traditions. In the nation's dignity. And we, the citizens of this country, have to prove that these values pertain to us.

**Consequently, all our efforts will pursue the goal of assuring every child the right to live in a family, to know his/her parents, to be cared for by them, to live with them, except where this would be detrimental to the child.**







**Claire**  
**WARRINGTON,**  
**EU Professional**  
**Development Expert**

In relation to the reform of service provision, training can:

- ✓ *measure and unify existing standards*
- ✓ *introduce new quality standards and methods of implementation*
- ✓ *sustain dialogues and relationships which increase the level of understanding between professionals about the service reforms*
- ✓ *increase the level of understanding of service providers regarding the needs of service users*
- ✓ *be an opportunity to reinforce the new organisational aims.*

*In any reform of service provision the personnel involved in that process can be also supported through training as it is able to:*

- ✓ *enable the development of new thinking about how to address existing problems*
- ✓ *enable the development of new methods of work*
- ✓ *provide information regarding new services and practical implementation*
- ✓ *help staff consolidate new learning through building competence and confidence in the changing professional role, which will then be reflected in their work*
- ✓ *identify members of staff that need further support, assistance and training*
- ✓ *reassure staff of the support available to them*
- ✓ *provide opportunities for feedback of information which will identify issues that may need to be dealt with in future.*

Reform and improvement of the childcare system in Moldova requires a system of continuous in-service training to ensure planned, sustainable change. In order to develop such a system of training a number of factors need to be addressed at the national level. Such as:

*There are many reasons why training is important in the process of reform. Sustainable reform requires: financial viability; organisational change; and capacity building. It is through the provision of information and training that the process of organisational change and capacity building can be effectively achieved.*

# The Importance of Training in the Process of Reform

✓ *establishing a coherent sector wide social policy and a national social protection system*

✓ *implementation of European experiences in the national social protection system*

✓ *addressing social issues through the creation of new social services which meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of society*

✓ *reorganization of current services to bring them in line with Minimum Quality Standards*

✓ *the utilisation of progress in the sciences and technologies in the social protection sphere*

A Social Assistance Training and Resource Centre is to be integrated with the Medical Training Centre of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection to ensure the sustainability of continuous in-house social assistance training. This Centre has been equipped, provided with methodical and instructive materials and a National Curriculum for continuous social assistance training in the child care sphere. The Concept of continuous training has been accepted and strengthened through the approval by the sitting of the Collegial Board of the MoHSP held 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005 of : the Social Assistants' Code of Ethics; sample job descriptions for the social assistant and social worker; and the Regulations for the certification of social assistants and social workers

The continuous training of social assistants and managers of social services aims to: develop professional competences; build the practical skills needed to carry out professional duties; improve the quality of professional standards and service provision to beneficiaries through the adoption and implementation of the Social Assistants' Code of Ethics; and to support the development of new social services.

In order to support the process of social policy reform, the TACIS project professional development component has worked in partnership with the Ministries of Finance, Health and Social Protection, Education, Youth and Sport, and the Raion Administrations in Orhei, Cahul and Ungheni. A comprehensive training programme has been provided for personnel at all levels, ranging from the development and implementation of

new community based services at the local level to change management and monitoring and inspection systems. Since July 2004 the project has delivered a total of 167 days of training in the following modules: introduction to social assistance, social services management (including financial management), capacity building to provide social services for children and families (Gate-keeping, Foster Care, Family Support and Reintegration Services). The training has been provided for social assistants, managers of social services, staff from residential institutions, teachers, local Mayors and NGOs active in the social field with the aim of strengthening their capacity to provide new social services.

The TACIS project has been running for two years and the final 10 months of activity will focus on the dissemination of best practice as established in the pilot Raions of Orhei, Cahul and Ungheni. A further 12 development Raions across the Republic of Moldova will be supported in the reform process through the training and dissemination programme developed in the project. Service managers and practitioners in both education and social protection will be provided with information, training and support for the development of new community based services to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families.

A team of 14 national trainers has been established which incorporates personnel from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The capacity of this group of trainers has been build over the last two years and they will be supported to lead the dissemination of good practice and lessons learned from the development of community based services for children and families in the pilot Raions.

In order to strengthen the practical skills of future social assistants, the project team has worked with the Universities who prepare social assistants to unify their curricula and further develop practice teaching and the improvement of students' practice placements.

Training is a key element in the process of reform. The capacity built within the TACIS project will provide sustainable training provision in the social protection sphere through the national trainers and the Social Assistance Training and Resource Centre.

# Assessment of Orhei Gymnasium-Internat

Given that one of the main forms of child protection in the Republic of Moldova is placement in residential institutions, the existence of 68 institutions of this type effectively means that there are approximately 2 internats in each Raion of the Republic. The number of children placed in this type of care constitutes 1,2% of the total number of children aged between 0 and 18 years. Consequently, the relevant ministries have to fulfil a very difficult and important task.

In light of the above, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has initiated the process of assessment of the Orhei Gymnasium-Internat. This assessment will enable an analysis of the social problems faced by children and families in the Orhei Raion and identification of the possibilities and strategies for the improvement of the family and child care system. The main principle underlying this assessment is the children's best interests, particularly the children's right to grow up in a family. The assessment was conducted within five areas or components: assessment of the quality of the education process; assessment of social services delivered by the Gymnasium and by the community; assessment of the human resources of the institution; assessment of financial resources and capital assets available in the institution; assessment of the buildings of the institution. The assessment was conducted by the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in partnership with the representatives of the local public administration from the Orhei Raion, and the TACIS Project "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform".

The assessment process is ongoing, but some characteristics of the residential care system are already obvious. The Orhei Gymnasium-Internat operates on the basis of the Regulations on operation of mainstream institutions of internat-type and mainstream institutions of internat-type (Gymnasiums) for orphan children and children without parental care, Order no. 521, from November 28, 1997.

The education process in

**Veronica MIDARI,**  
**National Consultant**



**The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection are involved in the process of reform of residential services. The reform is conducted in the context of commitments made /assumed by the Republic of Moldova to bring the services for children and families compliance with the EU standards and principles laid down in the UN Convention for Child's Rights Protection, the Law of the Republic of Moldova on Child's Rights Protection, the National Strategy on Child and Family Protection, the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the EU-Moldova Action Plan and others.**

the Gymnasium-Internat is carried out according to the National Curriculum applicable to mainstream gymnasiums. The residential care services are limited to children's accommodation and food. The services of: psycho-social rehabilitation of the child in difficulty; parents' information and education; social protection and rehabilitation of children subjected to physical and sexual abuse; children's integration in the community; reintegration with the family; and development of life skills are provided within the scope of a mainstream school. The specialists employed in the residential care system have a pedagogical profile. Therefore, the internat-type schools do not meet the beneficiaries' social needs. Almost half the staff is involved in auxiliary activities, for example, the canteen, cleaning, plant maintenance, etc. The assessment of financial resources and capital assets available in the institution shows that about 10,300 Moldovan lei are allocated for the support of one child, 30% of which is spent for education and 70% for accommodation and food. The comparative analysis shows that the education provided to a child placed in an internat is more expensive than the education provided to a child from a mainstream school, although the education programme is identical.

The general conclusion regarding gymnasium-type institutions emphasises the fact that residential institutions do not meet the social needs of institutionalised children. This fact determines the need to develop a social care and protection system which would focus mainly on the child's best interests. Therefore, it is necessary to review the criteria of children's placement in institutions, to establish and develop alternative services, to review the statute of residential institutions, and to consider the mechanisms and financial resources needed to support vulnerable children. These objectives can be fulfilled through a well-defined social policy resulting in implementation strategies and mechanisms. Social policy is implemented through a partnership between central and local governmental institutions, as well as the civil society.





**Mariana LUPASCO,**  
**Project Coordinator**  
**for Orhei, Cahul and**  
**Ungheni pilot sites**

*Only working together can we achieve real results – that's what we assume, and as it appears, this is a correct assumption. Thus, we periodically organise Steering Committee meetings within the project, with the participation of our partners, including those from pilot sites. Little by little, we see how local decision makers change their attitude. I would say, this is a conceptual progress in terms of open-mindedness, vision, and even the language used by partners representing Raion authorities. If during the first meetings only experts spoke, within two years our partners have made progress, showing initiative, courage, and professionalism. This is encouraging, as nobody knows the situation in the area better than those who come from that area.*

It is clear that successful implementation of services – Foster Care, Reintegration and Family Support – will be replicated in the whole country only if the Local Public Authorities in the pilot regions (Cahul, Ungheni and Orhei) make real achievements. When we say achievements, we mean quality services for the good of the child and family.

And if we speak about achievements, let me mention some key activities in the pilot sites. Cooperation agreements between EveryChild, the

***The Local Councils in the pilot regions Cahul, Ungheni and Orhei deliver a common message: child, family and community.***

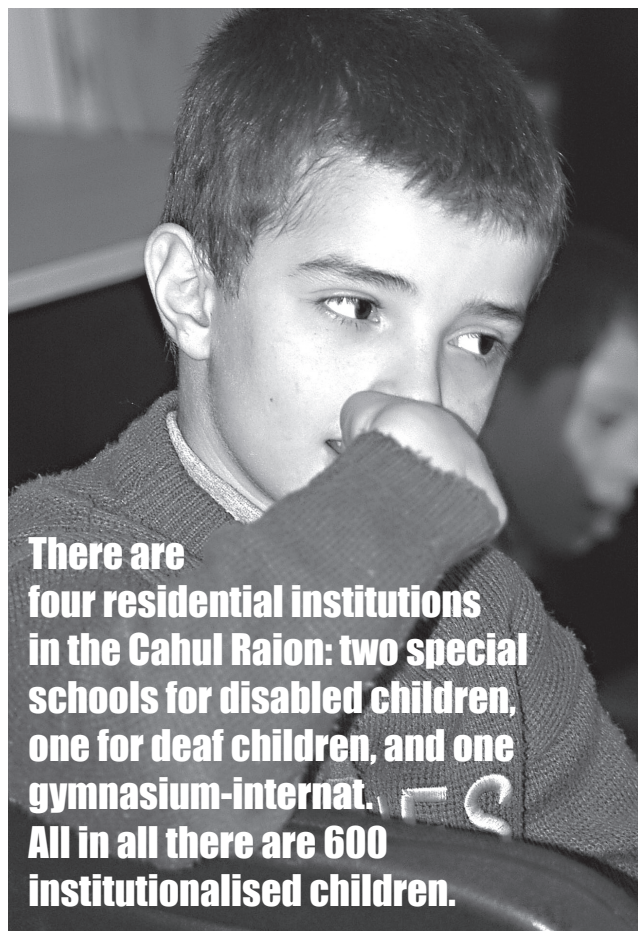
## **We are glad that little by little local authorities change their attitudes**

TACIS project, and the Raion Councils, stipulate the approval of the strategy for the development of the Child Welfare System, supported by an even more important document – the Raion Action plan. According to the stipulations of the Agreement, the Raion councils will cover 50% of services costs from January 2006. Orhei and Ungheni SACPD (Social Assistance and Child Protection Department) opened Social Assistance Centre's for the Child and Family. The social assistants' and staff employed there are paid from local budgets. In all three regions children placed in residential care – internats – have been assessed. This assessment entails a complex evaluation of the child at home, including his

psychological and emotional state.

At the same time, as a result of the assessment, the possibilities of the child's reintegration into the family environment have been determined. In order to prevent children's institutionalisation, Commissions for the Protection of Children in Difficulty were created in pilot regions. The Commission is empowered to approve, monitor and inspect the protection measures utilised in the cases of children in difficulty or at risk. We do not want to make exaggerated statements regarding the reform of the system, but we can say that this is a good start, and this start makes us believe that the situation may improve. There is always room for improvement.





**There are four residential institutions in the Cahul Raion: two special schools for disabled children, one for deaf children, and one gymnasium-internat. All in all there are 600 institutionalised children.**

very difficult and does not give immediate results. Our society will feel these results in the not too distant future.

In the three years I have mentioned above, 57 children were proposed for institutionalisation, of which only 12 were accepted. The rest of the children went to mainstream community schools. Within the "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" Project, implemented by the EveryChild Consortium in collaboration with Cahul local government, and funded by the EU within the TACIS programme, we assessed every child placed in two internats. Based on the results of this evaluation, 40 children can be reintegrated with their biological families, 7 children have been proposed for placement in the foster care service, and two children were suggested for adoption.

What does an evaluation entail?

A group of specialists perform an in-depth study of the case; considering why the child

as on the one hand we ease the parents' hard work, and on the other hand we offer children an equal opportunity for development. Our day centre provides services for 40 children with physical and mental disabilities. We have defectologists, psychologists, speech therapists, and the whole team makes everything possible to offer better chances for the children who have found themselves in a difficult situation. I will use the occasion to mention the organisations that contributed to the opening of this centre – Cahul Raion Council – food and salary, UNICEF and EveryChild – reconstruction, training and transport. In fact, we are more than a day centre, as here much training for parents and social assistants is organised.

Naturally, we have not managed to solve all the problems yet. It is painful to see 2 or 3 children staying only with the father or with grandparents, or other relatives, while their parents left the country to work abroad. It is

# **"Prevention is cheaper and more efficient"**

Due to our fruitful collaboration with a number of partners in the area, especially with EveryChild Moldova, I think I won't exaggerate if I state that Cahul Raion is a good deal ahead of other Raions in this respect. We pay special attention to the integration of children in families, either into biological or foster families. The reform or change of attitudes started three years ago, and we can already draw some conclusions. Within the last 3 years, we managed to reintegrate 70 children with their families, and to place another 12 children in foster care. It is more important to prevent placement in residential care, than to take a child out of an internat or other institution. It's like disease; the doctor will always say that prevention is both cheaper and more efficient.

What is important for us, is the fact that in Cahul there was no mass institutionalisation, like in other regions. Naturally, we work with each family separately, we explain them our reasons, invite the parents for frank discussions, and, of course, within our possibilities, offer them financial support. About 150 families in Cahul received financial support. But one should know that the problem is not always limited to financial aspects. We have many families that did not receive financial aid, but, after our discussions were persuaded to take their children home. They understood that at home the children will feel much better. Generally speaking, working with parents who, to put it mildly, do not quite adequately perform their parental duties, is

***Petru BURLACU,***  
***deputy president of the***  
***Cahul Raion***



was placed in the institution, his parents, his school records, what are the perspectives, and many other aspects. The evaluation team is made up of 7 educators, 3 social assistants and 2 supervisors. We create an individual plan for every child's integration in the family. Where possible, we go further, where integration is not possible, the child remains in the institution. This is the reality. Lately we have been working on, "finding fresh evidence" that indicate reasons why the child came to leave his family.

Opening a day centre is a real achievement of ours,

very important that we helped dozens of children regain their family. If Local Public Authorities had the money the central government spends for internats, I assure you, there would be fewer children placed in residential care, and the number of children educated in their own families or in a family-type environment would increase considerably. We have demonstrated this in Cahul, and we consider that our experience may be useful and important for other Raions in the south of Moldova.





# The future

## In Orhei, 49 children returned home from the internat

At the beginning of September several dozens of children were removed from the lists of Orhei Internat. These are the 49 children taken back home by their families, who now grow up and receive education in their biological families. The preparation for this event had taken place over many months. The specialists had worked hard with the children and their families, as well as with the mainstream schools where the former internat pupils were integrated.

Orhei is one of the 3 pilot regions within the project "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova", financed by the European Union and implemented by EveryChild Consortium.

Mariana Lupascu, EveryChild Project Coordinator, said that prior to the children's reintegration with their families, a full evaluation of each case was performed by a team of specialists, made up of internat educators and social assistants. Parents who decided to take their children back into the family signed agreements with the social assistants. The families assumed some responsibilities, while the social assistance department promised to offer necessary support for family reintegration. Within the first 6 months some families will be offered by the project small financial support, money that will be used exclusively for the children.

"Six months is generally enough time for us to get a family out of crisis while not making it dependent on this money", said Mariana Lupasco. Additionally, the social assistants will monitor the usage of these funds. The children's situation will be monitored in order to prevent further crisis situations, during which parents will be again tempted to give up their children.

"A child's reintegration with the family contains several stages", continues Ms Lupasco. In cases where the child has been away from his family for several years, he does not even have a place of his own in the parents' house, does not have a place to do his homework, a place to sleep. At the beginning we make sure that the family and the school accept the child. Social assistants make sure the child has the minimum living conditions, clothes, food.

However, in some cases, no financial support is needed in order to return the child in his family, as his parents are quite well off. For example, the evaluation performed in Orhei gymnasium-internat revealed that the parents of 59 children currently live abroad. As a rule, there are two routes for this category of children to be placed in the internat. In the first case, the parent's present forged documents that help them place their child or children in residential care. Secondly there are cases where the people who are left to care for the children do not cope with their duties.



# of the nation

## Out of sight, out of mind

"I don't need the child; let him go on living in the internat!" It's really difficult to convince a parent with such concepts to take back his own child, but specialists manage to find arguments even for this category of parents. As a rule, in such cases the problem is not only with families living in poverty, unable to rear their children but also in situations where the parents are sure that it's the government's duty to bring up their children, while they do quite well economically.

Once a child gets into an internat, he, in most cases, will stay there until graduation. Throughout many years no body monitors the case in order to find out if the family's conditions have changed and if there is a possibility for the child to return home.

In many cases, parents placed their children in Orhei internat, considering that children will be better off there than at home, as it is a "prestigious institution, with decent living conditions". With their outdated mentality, such parents do not realise that an internat, no matter how good it might be, will never replace the family, and the carers in the internat will never be able to offer the child the warmth of a family environment.

A child that grew up in an internat feels the consequences of institutionalisation his whole life. The majority of internat graduates do not have even basic life skills, cannot cook food and do not know what institution to appeal to when they have a problem.

## A little support is enough for a child to stay in his family

Internats are inefficient structures, especially because their graduates cannot integrate into society. A relevant case to illustrate this is the story of Elena, 20, a graduate of Valea Norocului internat. Elena came to Orhei, seeking better life chances. The craft she learnt in the boarding school – that of a plasterer – was of little use to her, as the employer paid her only 49 lei in her first month of hard work. When her second daughter was born, she found no better solution, than placing her children in an internat or an orphanage, although she knew from her own experience how "exciting" life in these institutions is.

"The Social Assistance Department in Orhei persuaded me not to give up my children and helped me overcome the difficulties. They offer me some aid every month, plus I work occasionally, so, I manage somehow to support my children. The girls go to the kindergarten. I hope to find some better job, and then we'll be in a better situation", says Elena.

Like other desperate mothers in Orhei, Elena receives quite modest support. However, this assistance is essential for her family, especially for the girls, who are 3 and 5 years old and live with their mother. The several hundred lei they receive help Elena buy food for the girls and pay some utility costs.

## In orphanages children sneak bread in their pockets

The case of Ludmila Burda, from Glodeni, mother of a 12-year old boy, comes to complete the array of problems that generate child abandonment. Her child stayed in an internat from a nearby village because she could not afford to support him. Her husband served time in prison, and physically abused her, which



forced her to leave the house. At present Ludmila works for an old woman in the village, helping her around the house. "Thanks to the support I now receive, I can raise my boy at home", she says. However, her and her son's problems do not end here. When her son attended the internat, he used to have very good results in studies. But, now that he attends a community school in the village, his records are very poor.

"The boy's teacher in the local school neglects him, which affects him greatly. He says he wants to go back to the internat, but how can I take him there? In the orphanage where he spent 4 years, he would always have his clothes stolen, and whenever I would go to visit him there, I would find him without his cap, or socks, or mittens. When he came home for holidays I would find him extremely thin. He told me he used to hide bread in his pockets, and mice would nibble his clothes", said Ludmila, with tears in her eyes.

Such families need both financial and psychological support. However, the most interesting thing is that Ludmila was required to pay 45 lei for the school fund, 10 lei for food and 300 lei for gym reparation.

If the three children were placed in an internat, the government would have to spend 10 thousand lei annually for each of them. The money the government has to spend when a child is placed in residential care could go to family support. Thousands of children throughout the country would have the chance not to live separate from their parents.

*Natalia PORUBIN*



*The year 2005 marks ten years of work by two major reform agencies for the rights of children in Moldova - EveryChild and UNICEF.*

# **A Unified Child Care Policy**

## **A Framework for Change in Moldova**

**Also, but not necessarily by coincidence, both organisations this year have started to working together with the European Union implementing complementary projects for the protection of children's rights and the reduction in the number of children placed in internats.**

UNICEF will be furthering this work, building for the EU on what EveryChild has so far achieved, under the current umbrella of its Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States [TACIS] development funding programme.

As we enter 2006 the EveryChild TACIS project aims, after two years of implementation, to continue its support of the national implementation strategy

for the reform of internats, proposed in July 2005 at the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights. Deputy Prime Minister Cristea, at this council meeting, tasked the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport [MoEYS] with the development of a strategy for the reform of residential services to be presented by March 2006 for the consideration of the Government of Moldova. This work will be based largely on models developed in the three pilot Raions of Orhei, Cahul and Ungheni, where the EveryChild TACIS project has established comprehensive alternative child care services. The aim being to reduce the need for institutional care in line with the Moldovan Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the National Strategy for Child and Family Protection, the National Action Plan and the Government of Moldova's agreement to meet certain child care reform conditionalities within the EU Food Security Programme.

Within all the technicalities of all the above it is essential to understand that many families of children in Moldova would not be considered unsafe, or the placement of children in institutional care necessary, with the right kind of social work assessment and where needed, social work support, carried out by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection [MoHSP]. To support the MoHSP, new systems and service delivery packages have been developed by the EveryChild TACIS project which include: gate keeping; service management



procedures; assessment and social work assistance, including family support, reintegration from internats and foster care. All of these, as well as Draft recommendations for the reform of internats, will be presented to both the MoHSP and MoEYS for consideration and inclusion in their decision making process. It would seem appropriate that the Government of Moldova will need to find a mechanism by which it can increasingly transfer funding and responsibility for the social protection and social development of children from the MoEYS to the MoHSP

During 2006 within the MoHSP the National Training and Resource Centre [NTRC] will continue to be developed as a central point for delivering in-service training to social work professionals according to their needs. The EveryChild TACIS project will continue to support the NTRC to analyse and collate best practice from across the country and ensure that it is shared regularly with all regions. The aim being that the Centre should lead future policy development through collecting, analysing, and disseminating best practice in developing community based social services.

In order to consolidate the afore mentioned actions a unified Child Care Policy must be developed. It should set the framework and constraints within which professionals' work, the type and level of service they provide if and when necessary, to vulnerable families. It should also aim to have an impact on the number of people seeking or being referred for a service. With regard to the development of social services for children, this would focus in particular on the families' ability to cope independently and be assisted only if required after a comprehensive assessment of their needs. Such a social policy should be a national one: defining the principles of child welfare within the agreed international declarations as applicable to the

Moldovan context; the process of a gate keeping system with clear management indicators; only one point of entry for a social service and it should be funded and delivered at a local level. This would be a real frame work for change and a way to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and contribution of two major child care reform agencies in the Republic of Moldova.

The achievement of the EveryChild TACIS project and its successor implemented by UNICEF will be measured by the degree to which cohesion can be reached between policy and practice, that is, the amount to which the developments and new learning from the pilot regions can be mainstreamed into a National Child Care policy. The current EveryChild TACIS project offers the Moldovan Government an opportunity to develop a new approach to services for children and vulnerable families which incorporate practical developments on the ground with systematic change of policy, in order to provide long-term sustainable impact and models of service development that can be replicated across the Republic. In order to bring the future home for the children of Moldova and all Moldova's future generations.



***Jon BARRETT***  
***EveryChild TACIS***  
***Project Team Leader***





On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February the National Theatre “Mihai Eminescu” put on stage the play “Apple Flowers”, a drama with and about unfortunate children of the Republic of Moldova. The play was written by Valeriu Țurcanu, and produced by maestro Vitalie Rusu. The script was written by Boris Golea.

The drama “Apple Flowers” was put on stage with the support of the EU social project “Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova”, implemented by EveryChild Consortium, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Here are some of the theatre reviews and comments made in the Chisinau press after the first night performance.



## **Sad but true**

# **“Apple Flowers” – a play with and about children in Moldovan internats**

## **“Săptămîna”**

The author of the play, Valeriu Țurcanu, came up with a very sad message, telling us a true-to-life story about two children, graduates of an internat somewhere in the south of the country. After many years of suffering the two children escaped from the institution. At the end of the year 2005 their frozen bodies were found in a forest near the village of Cazaclia. They become lost, both literally and figuratively. In space and in life. The subject of the story, in fact, caused tears among the audience of the Chisinau Theatre “Eminescu”, and made us think that our country faces an immense problem – that of the child deprived of parental care. Beyond sophisticated scientific research, beyond seminars and awareness raising campaigns, there is a threatening reality, hidden behind the walls of residential institutions – a heritage of the past that we, theoretically, tend to forget. But only theoretically. What is important, is that this human message will be cast in the whole country, because from this Spring the play will be performed in many localities around Moldova.

## **“Timpul”**

*Producer Vitalie Rusu: “It’s a tragedy of the children, a tragedy that we, the grown ups, hardly understand”. The message of this play is very simple, and at the same time, extremely complicated: we should never permit separation of child from his parents, and vice-versa. In an hour and a half very strange things happen on the stage, and everything ends up with a tragic ending. “Apple Flowers” is a play for all ages, and is a warning for those willing to go abroad without thinking of the future of their own children back home”.*

## **“Capitala”**

The play urges both the authorities, and civil society to think and act. It makes us understand that residential childcare appears to be an acceptable solution only in a society living in the present day, without looking ahead to future. The message conveyed by “Apple Flowers” is clear – every child has the right to grow in an average family, because only this environment presents the best chances for multilateral development.

## **“Gazeta Liberă”**

Why “Apple Flowers”? Because these children recall the orchard back home. In fact, this is a metaphor. Apple flowers is both, sadness of the parents and children, and hope for better. It’s everything. The two actors, Snejana Puică and Ghenadie Gilcă understand well the power of the word. It’s a drama that slips into a tragedy. In fact, this is a play of warning. It is worth watching in order to see what might happen if... The play will definitely, not remain unnoticed, without touching human souls.

**"Most of all I'd like to see my mother, even though I am a grown up and manage on my own, though there are many hardships. Few people can understand what I feel. In fact, they don't even have to understand."**



## **Internat graduates- no past, no future**

Sergiu Druta was placed in an orphanage after his father was imprisoned and his mother left him in a hospital. Since then, the story of a lost destiny started to roll on. After leaving the internat, Sergiu started for the big world, full of new and unknown things. Now he is 23 years old and works on a building site in Chisinau. He eats what he gets and occasionally has some relationships with girls, also orphanage graduates. Generally, Sergiu is angry with the whole world. There was a time when he worked at a private site, but everybody tried to cheat him, or to say directly, not to pay him for his work. After so many years of loneliness, he now lives in even greater isolation.

***Sergiu Druta:*** "My mom knows I live in Chisinau. If she cared, she would have found me long ago. She must be enjoying her life, while I have to suffer from surprises and difficulties in this life. Who cares about you today? Everybody is on his own! I admit, there was a time when I lived from stealing. I wasn't afraid to do that, you get used to fright when you are hungry".

### **Let's pray for our parents who left us**

Valeriu Conean left Ciadir Lunga Internat School in 1998. He came from a summer camp for orphans. The administration gave him 120 lei pocket money, he gathered his things and left for the big unknown world. Valeriu got into a minibus which brought him to his place of birth, where, naturally, nobody was waiting for him. After a short period of time he came to Chisinau, where he thought he would find a job more easily. This is where he, for the first time, started his independent life. Trying to find his parents, he studied the archives. His father,

as he found out, had left for Permi, Russian Federation.

***Valeriu lived half a year in a monastery, then in the house of a priest in Ciadir Lunga. This is what he says: "The first and the most important problem I faced was to find some shelter. However, the most painful thing is the sheer indifference with which people treat you. Everybody rejects you, everyone looks down at you suspiciously. I wanted to find my parents, to look them in the eye. 'Cuz I wasn't brought by a stork, as children are often told. I know my mother's name is Nina, and my father is Russian. I also know I was born in Chisinau, Riscani district, Spartak street. That's all I know about myself and my family. My destiny brought me to The Church. I was very lucky about this. I think we all have to pray, including for our parents who abandoned us".***

### **Many people laugh at me being a yard cleaner**

Andrei Balan graduated from the internat school in the village of Visaca, Donduseni district. He has neither friends, nor a date, nor anybody to communicate with. And he does not believe his mother had died. Like many other internat graduates, he came to Chisinau seeking a job. He found a job – a yard cleaner at Chisinau Leather Factory. It's a really modest job, very dirty and very poorly paid – he gets only 800 lei per month.

***Andrei Balan:*** "Most of all I'd like to see my mother, even though I am a grown up and manage on my own, though there are many hardships. Few people can understand what I feel. In fact, they don't even have to

*understand. Many people make fun of me, being a yard cleaner. What can I do – I have neither studies, nor a house, nor parents. I think a lot, but I can't help it".*

**Aurel CORDUNEANU,**  
**psychologist**

Graduates of orphanages and internats are generally unprepared for real life. Some get locked in themselves; others do not understand why it all is happening to them. Society rejects them. It would be natural if we treated these young people in a better manner, as citizens with equal rights. For many years educators and the school administration made decisions for them. And then there is a moment when nobody decides for them, and they find themselves in a different reality. A person, unprepared for such a life, suffers and makes many mistakes.

**Svetlana CHIFA,**  
**Head of Municipal Directorate for**  
**Children's Rights Protection**

It is impossible to organise good training and education in an institution with 500-600 children. We have got used to the idea that the internat is the only solution for a child in difficulty. But there are also other institutions that allow children to communicate with society. It's very important for us to develop a national community services strategy.



**Constantin MARIN,**  
**Dean of Department of Journalism**  
**and Communication Art**  
**Moldavian State University**

# **“Glass House”**

## **– guarantee of trust and success**



The social comfort of any institution is determined, to a large extent, by the degree to which the audience trusts it. Trust, in its turn, is generated by the institution's transparency. In other words, a person is tempted to show respect to an institution that works “with open doors”, and does not hesitate to withdraw his or her support in cases where the organization shows a lack of institutional transparency. In the post World War II era, the French, puzzled by uncertainties caused by rumours about the activity of state and private institutions, launched the idea of the “glass house”, thus pleading for institutional transparency, social control and the role of public opinion in the decision making process.

Currently the Republic of Moldova shows a strong tendency to align itself with European standards. One of these, in particular, is the option of any social agency to act in accordance with the principles of institutional transparency, that is, of the “glass house”. This happens because in modern society it is not enough to just know how to do things well, one has to also know how to talk about what can be done well. From this perspective, an institution develops its ability to communicate, which gives more credibility to its activity and makes it more useful and socially efficient. The credibility and trust we are talking about, built in the spirit of institutional transparency, have a two-fold impact. They are both valuable elements of; the institution's cultural heritage, and of the values of public opinion that determine people's social behaviour.

As communication becomes a natural attribute of any institution, the need to develop corresponding abilities among bureaucrats appears. This need is also due to the fact that the previous institutional system paid minimal attention to communication. As a consequence, the personnel, of mainly public institutions, have inadequate communication skills. In this context, any attempt to improve this situation is welcome. For example, the seminar, “Introduction in relations with mass media and advocacy” was organised

in January 2006, for the staff of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

The above mentioned seminar was organised within the TACIS project “Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova”, implemented by the EveryChild Consortium in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, with the financial support of the European Union. The participants particularly debated the usefulness of relations between institutions and the mass media, as public target for an institution. Guided by specialists in the field they: reflected upon the advantages and disadvantages of systematic communication of the institution with written and electronic media; identified the contributions of ordinary public servants and of communication specialists in creating good relations with the media; discussed the ways of disseminating the institutional message regarding the expected behaviour of the institution and the personnel in their relations with journalists during both ordinary and crisis situations; developed an understanding of advocacy and how a public institution can perform this activity. The participants at the seminar also explored: how to respond to different challenges in relations with the media; how to make journalists interested in the institution's activity; how to act when journalists are reticent towards the institution's activity; how to act if a journalist purposefully made a mistake; why it is not efficient to get

angry with the mass media; the productive ways of establishing good relations with the press, etc. Thus, the discussions contributed to raising the awareness of public officials about what information the mass media needs and how they perceive the informational needs of their target audience.

Many participants at the seminar acknowledged that they had had little experience in communicating with the mass media. They experienced some difficulty when they had to offer succinct information about their professional activity or the institution's targets and when they had to speak in front of a camera or microphone. It is for this reason that part of the seminar was organised as workshops, where the participants were invited to talk in front of a microphone or a camera. It is worth noting that for many of the participants at the seminar this was their first experience of such exercises. Some of them even admitted that they very often refuse to offer an interview because of their fear of the microphone or camera. Obviously,

we cannot claim that the training eliminated completely the lack of experience in communication with the mass media. However, it should be noted that many participants at the seminar stated that their microphone or camera fright had begun to diminish, and that they are determined not to refuse interviews in the future. This fact makes us hope that their future communication with the mass media will gain another dimension.

In my opinion, the seminar was a good lesson of communication between public officials and mass media experts. We were all convinced of the great importance of such training. This conviction was best expressed by Tatiana Gribincea, Head of Direction of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, who concluded at the end of the seminar: "I will tell my colleagues that communication with mass media should become an indispensable element of our professional duties, and to perform these duties efficiently, we need to learn to communicate".



***Anatol  
MAMALIGA,  
local public  
relations expert***

## ***Regaining the family, children will regain the Motherland***

*The reform has been tested in three pilot regions: Orhei, Cahul, Ungheni; the best practice achieved will be extended to other regions of the country. Enormous work has been done both by the implementation team, and by the project partners. It has been proved that the newly suggested system is more cost-effective and efficient, and most importantly, it meets the needs of the child to grow up in a family.*

There are irrefutable arguments for reorganisation of the residential system, despite of the critical attitude of some internat headmasters, professionals and decision makers. We are aware that critics will increase as the change process rolls on and gains power. It's a natural behaviour, specific to any reform process. It is in the minds of some people who have worked for decades, guided by the same moral and educational values, and who have been also direct beneficiaries of the old system which was created after the II World War. In such a system, the child in difficulty – who is deprived of parental care and of the warmth of a home environment, becomes a tool, an instrument used by the masters of the system to live and prosper. As the number of children in internats drops, the incomes of those representing the system will reduce. That is why resistance is inevitable. However, the resistance has a positive role as well. It strengthens and consolidates the will of those who promote the reform. The more malicious the resistance is, the greater the chances to promote the reform are. The number of people who want to offer children a past and a future will grow. A future of dignity and welfare. Regaining the family, the children in internats will regain their motherland – motherland of which they had been deprived.



# *The child and the family*

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