



Session 2

Exchange on effective policies, strategies, and systems to strengthen families, protect children, and prevent child-family separation



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**



Session 2: Exchange on effective policies, strategies, and systems to strengthen families, protect children, and prevent child-family separation

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Ukraine's Roadmap for Reform Strategy Implementation 2024-2028



Objective 1. Strengthen the capacity of families with children to care for and raise their children



Objective 2. Provide children in need with family-based alternative care



Objective 3. Create conditions for the return and integration of forcibly displaced, deported and evacuated children



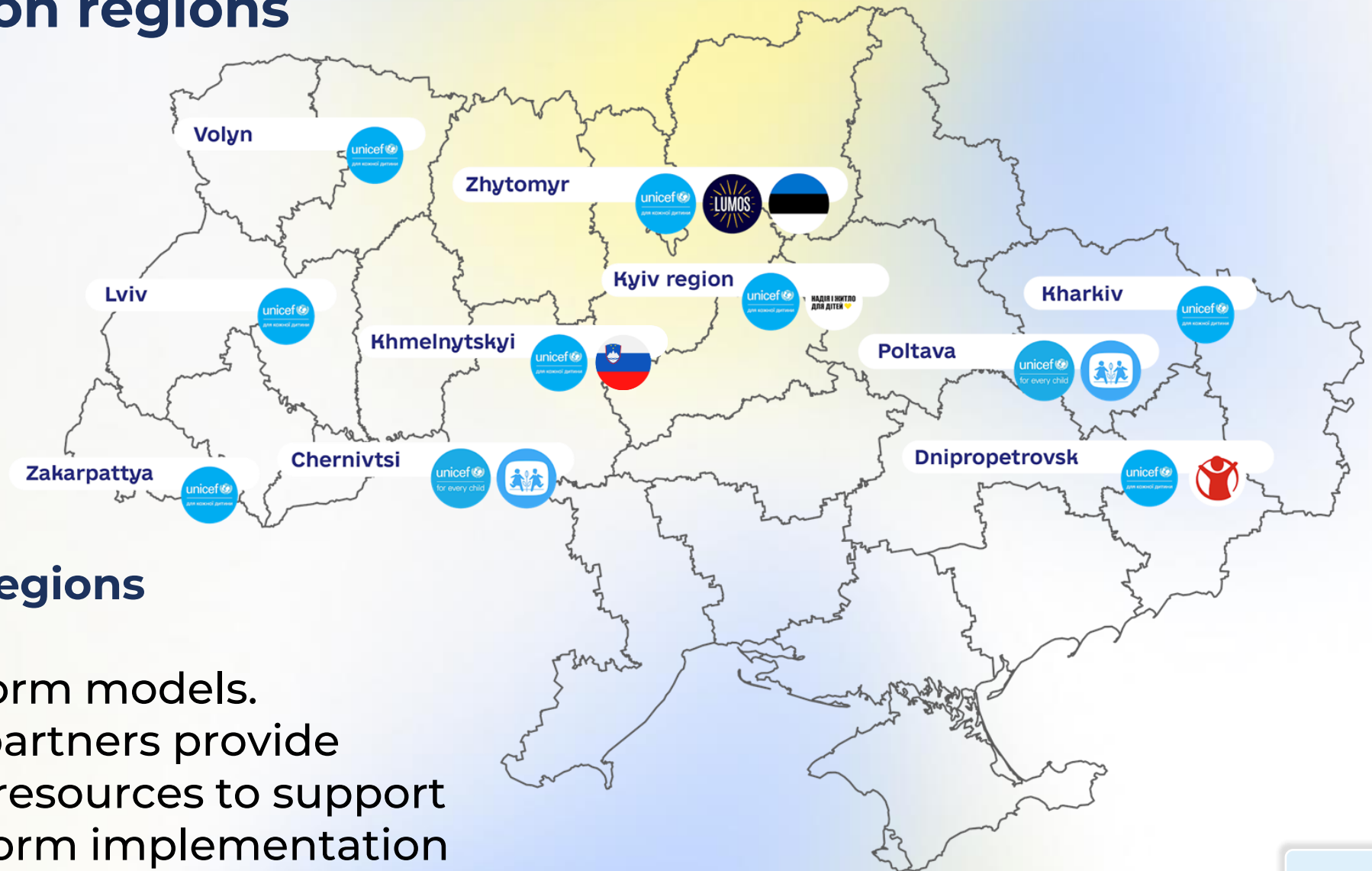
Objective 4. Transform the institutional system of child care, prioritizing children at the highest risk of harm



Objective 5. Ensure socialization and inclusion of children with experience of institutional care

A support system for children and families that ensures every child's right to be raised in a family environment

10 demonstration regions



10 demonstration regions

have been selected
to pilot scalable reform models.
UNICEF and other partners provide
their expertise and resources to support
these regions in reform implementation

Towards Strengthening Families: Key Priorities and Challenges



Investing in Family Support

- Ensuring child welfare remains a top priority for every community leader, despite competing demands



Changing Mindsets

- Shifting focus from institutions and alternative care placements to family strengthening and reunification



Strengthening the Workforce

- Increasing the number of social sector professionals and establishing continuous professional development and motivation systems



Ensuring Access to Integrated Community-Based Services

- Providing families with holistic support to help children develop and thrive within their own families

Examples of Initiatives Launched

Minimum Package of Integrated Social Services aimed at preventing the institutionalization of children through targeted support for:

- vulnerable families
- children with disabilities
- foster families
- youth with lived experience of institutional care

Scope:

- 66 municipalities across 12 regions supported by UNICEF
- Additional 20 municipalities to be trained and supported by other partners

Coverage:

- Over 76,000 children already receiving services from the package

Early intervention

Crisis intervention

Resilience Services
(MHPSS, positive parenting, non-violent conflict resolution)

Day care for children with disabilities

Social support for families in difficult life circumstances

Assistance during inclusive education

Social integration for care leavers

Independent living for young care leavers with disabilities

Social support for alternative families

Examples of Initiatives Launched

Universal Progressive Model of Home Visits

Offering medical, psychological, and social support to pregnant women and young children during critical early development stages, promoting healthy family environments and preventing future crises.



The Home Visits Pilot Program is implemented by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in 12 oblasts and Kyiv city. A total of 515 Child Health Nurses have been trained to conduct visits to families. The program covers 8,546 children aged 0 to 3 years.



The Coordination Centre
for Family Upbringing
and Child Care Development



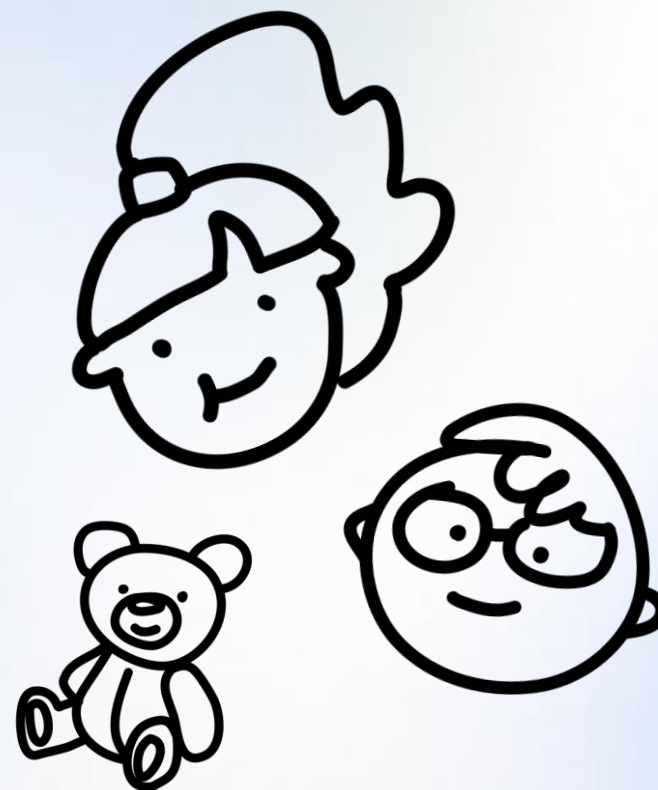
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unicef 
for every child

Join us in supporting reform through advocacy, resources, or expertise to ensure every child grows up in a safe, loving family.

Contact information:

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Child Protection Reforms, Deinstitutionalization and the need to accelerate Family Support Services

Aaron Greenberg, Regional Advisor Child Protection
UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

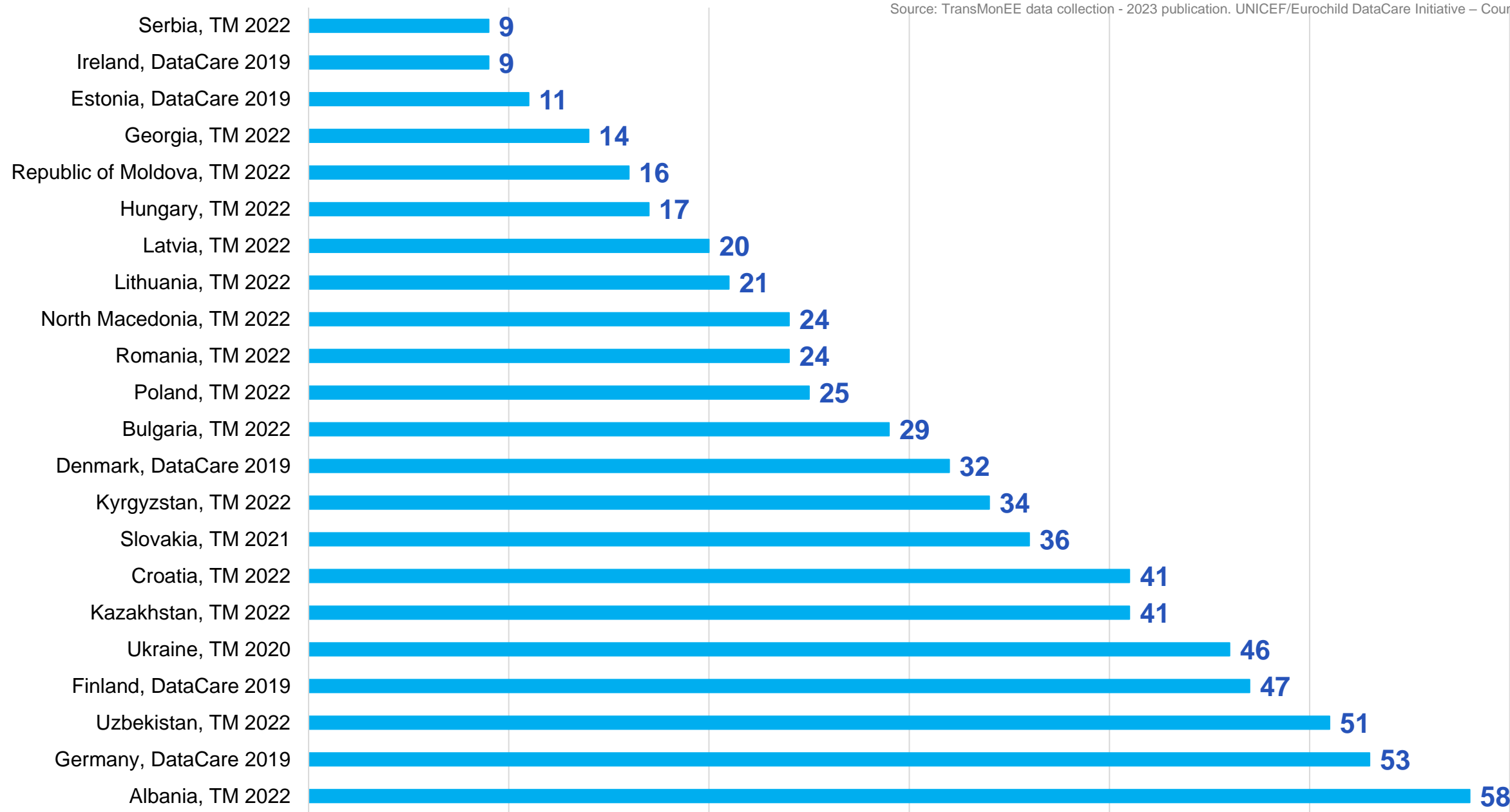
Every child has the right to grow up in a nurturing family environment

Yet around **400,000 children** aged 0-17 years **across 41 countries in Europe and Central Asia** are growing up in residential care facilities – including large scale institutions

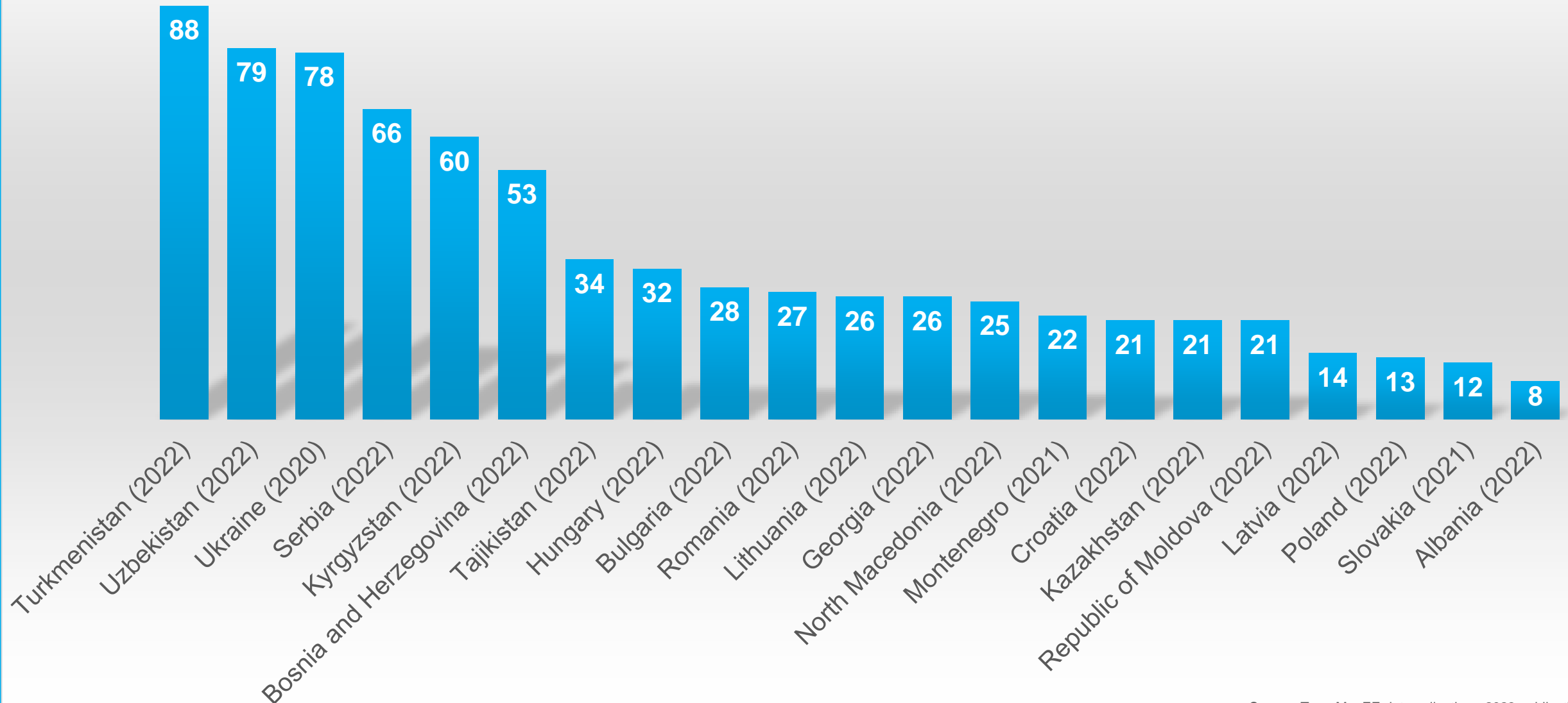


Children (0-17 years) in residential care as a % of the total number of children in formal alternative care at the end of the year, data from 22 countries in Europe and Central Asia (2019-2022)

Source: TransMonEE data collection - 2023 publication. UNICEF/Eurochild DataCare Initiative – Country overviews, 2021

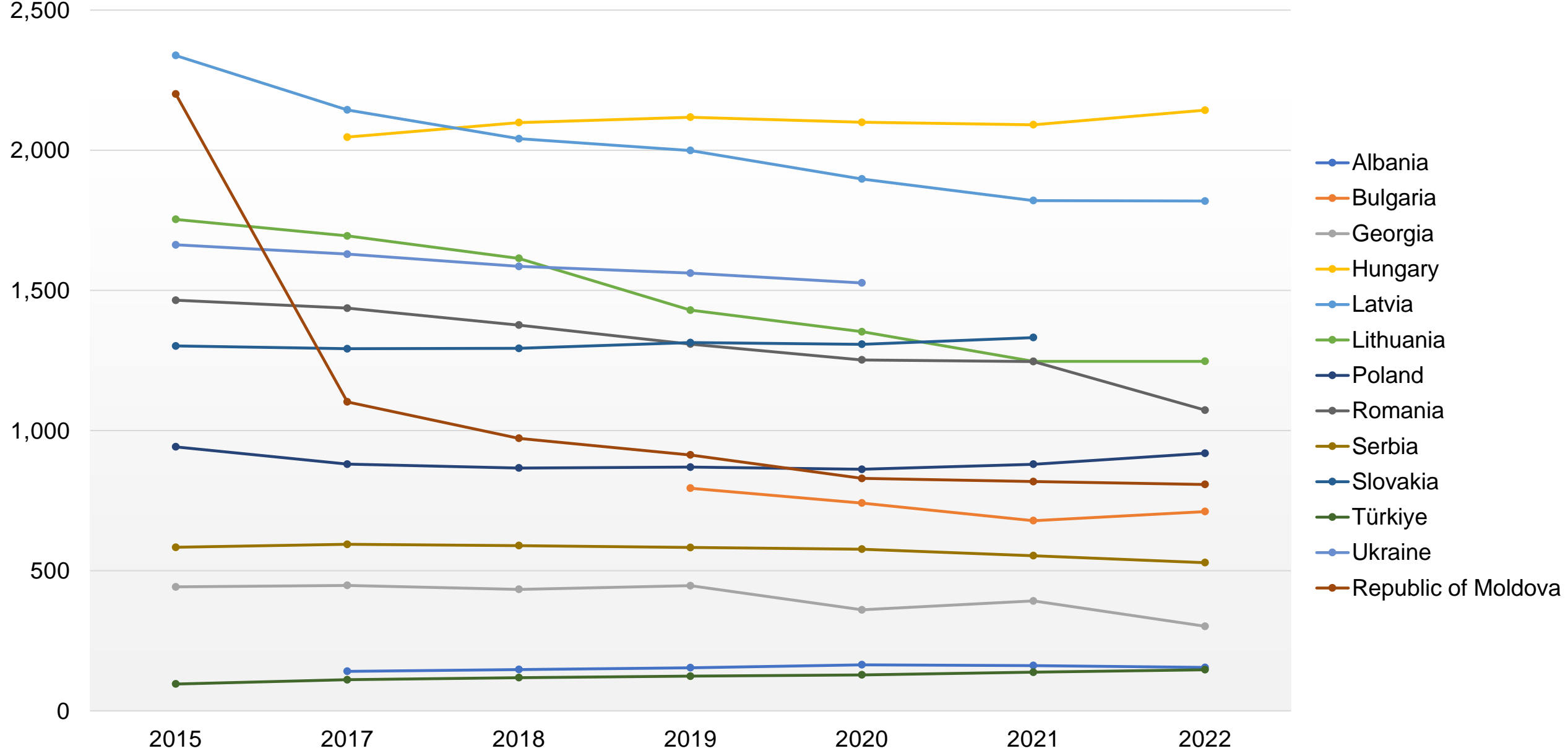


Children with disabilities (0-17 years) as a % of the total number of children in formal residential care at the end of the year, data from 21 countries in Europe and Central Asia (2020-2022)



Rate of children in formal alternative care at the end of the year (per 100,000) in selected countries in Europe and Central Asia region for which data is available for the period 2015-2022

Source: TransMonEE data collection - 2023 publication



What are we learning – Where are we headed?

Children with disabilities, children with so called 'challenging behavior', children as victims of violence abuse and exploitation, migrant and refugee children... Care and support systems are not currently prepared.

Pressures to increase residential placements will continue, unless:

- Social work, and the social services that social workers can use to prevent family separation are significantly strengthened and modernized.
- Inclusive education is deliberately linked to the phasing out of residential boarding schools / special schools.
- Foster care is professionalized, diversified, and supported at scale.
- Small scale residential care is limited, used only in exceptional cases for no more than 4-6 children, and is of high quality.
- Data systems are improved and modernized, and data is used to inform programming and policy shifts.
- Financial allocations to social services (family support services, alternative care, social work) are commiserate with the needs.
- Accountability for reforms which are complex and involve multiple sectors and coordination is secured at the right level.

White Paper on Family Support Services

Statutory family support and child protection means measures or services that are prescribed in legislation to support families and protect children. This means that all children and families have a right, in law, to receive these services and support measures and that they are intended to strengthen families, improve care provided to children, and prevent unnecessary separation. This means they will be linked closely to the factors driving separation of children in each country.

Community social work specialist

Purpose: rights realization, prevention, protection, inclusion



Functions

- **Identification and outreach**
- **Needs assessment**
- **Individual support plan** including:
 - Information provision
 - Direct psychological support and counselling
 - Referrals to other services
- **Case management**
- **Protection** – children, adults with disabilities and older people, women, young people including care leavers
- **Family support**
- **Inclusion and participation** – children, youth and adults with disabilities, older people
 - Intersectoral mediation with health, education, employment, transport, housing
- **Early intervention** and early childhood support
- **Parenting support** and training
- **Youth work**

Other roles and responsibilities

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Community resource mobilization
- Service mapping and identification of gaps

Thank you.

unicef 
for every child



EU strategy on the rights of the child

‘All children (...) have an equal right to live with their families’

To prevent family separation:

- Integrated child protection systems (e.g. effective prevention, early intervention and family support) (cf. Commission’s Recommendation on Integrated child protection system, 2024)
- Ensuring that poverty is never the only reason for placing children in care.

Fight against child
poverty

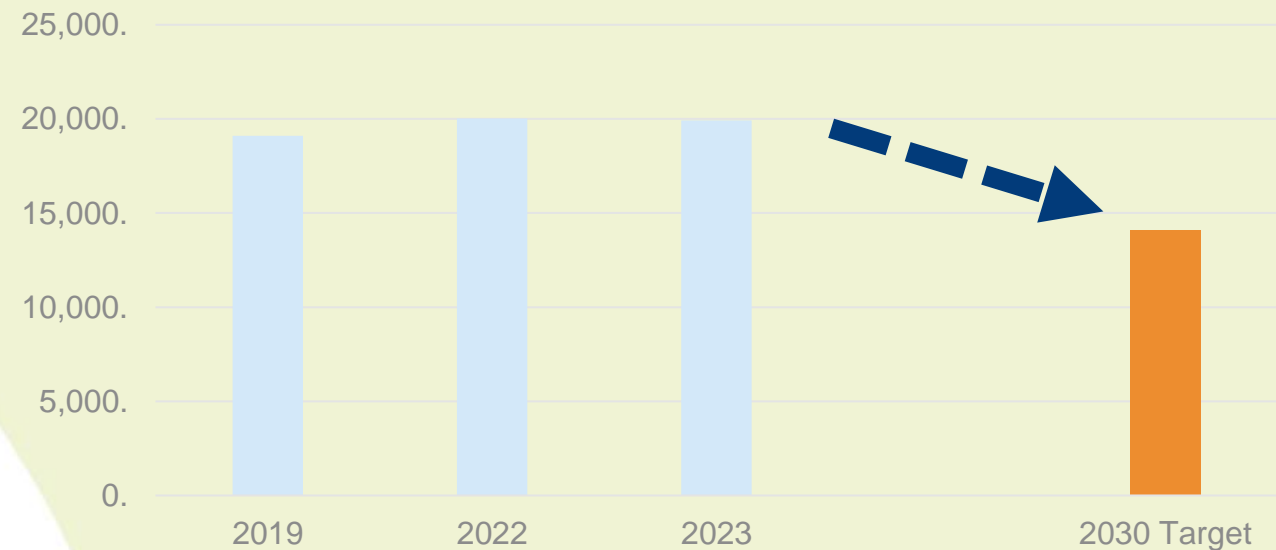
European Child
Guarantee

European Pillar of Social Rights and child poverty reduction

European Pillar of Social Rights:

- Principle 11: Children have the right to protection from poverty
- Action plan: EU target of reducing the number of children in poverty by at least 5 million by 2030
- Examples of policy: minimum wage, minimum income...

EU number of children AROPE in thousand



Source: Eurostat (ilc_PECs01), break in time series in 2020

European Child Guarantee

According to the **Council Recommendation** establishing the Guarantee, **Member States should guarantee children in need...**

...free and effective access to:



early childhood
education
and care



education and
school-based
activities



at least
one healthy
meal each
school day



healthcare

...effective access to:



healthy
nutrition



adequate
housing

European Child Guarantee and prevention of family separation

The Recommendation guides Member States to implement an enabling framework:

- Parenting support
- Cooperation between educational establishments, social, health and child protection services
- Taking into account the best interests of the child as well as the child's overall situation and individual needs when placing children into alternative care

Some national examples :

- Improvement of child benefits – PT
- Online counselling services helping parents deal with conflicts within families – DE
- Improvement of data exchange between services – EE
- Support of network of community-based services – RO



SOS Children's Villages International – strategic directions

1

Scale up

Family Strengthening is THE GROWTH area **(around ONE million children and caregivers globally)**

2

Programme approaches:

Direct Family empowerment
Community empowerment

3

Coordinated case management approach

Full time case manager supports a max. 30 families

4

Impact

Families and communities to be self-reliant when exit FS

5

Nexus approach in emergencies

Longer-term, integrated interventions going beyond immediate humanitarian relief

6

Qualified social workforce

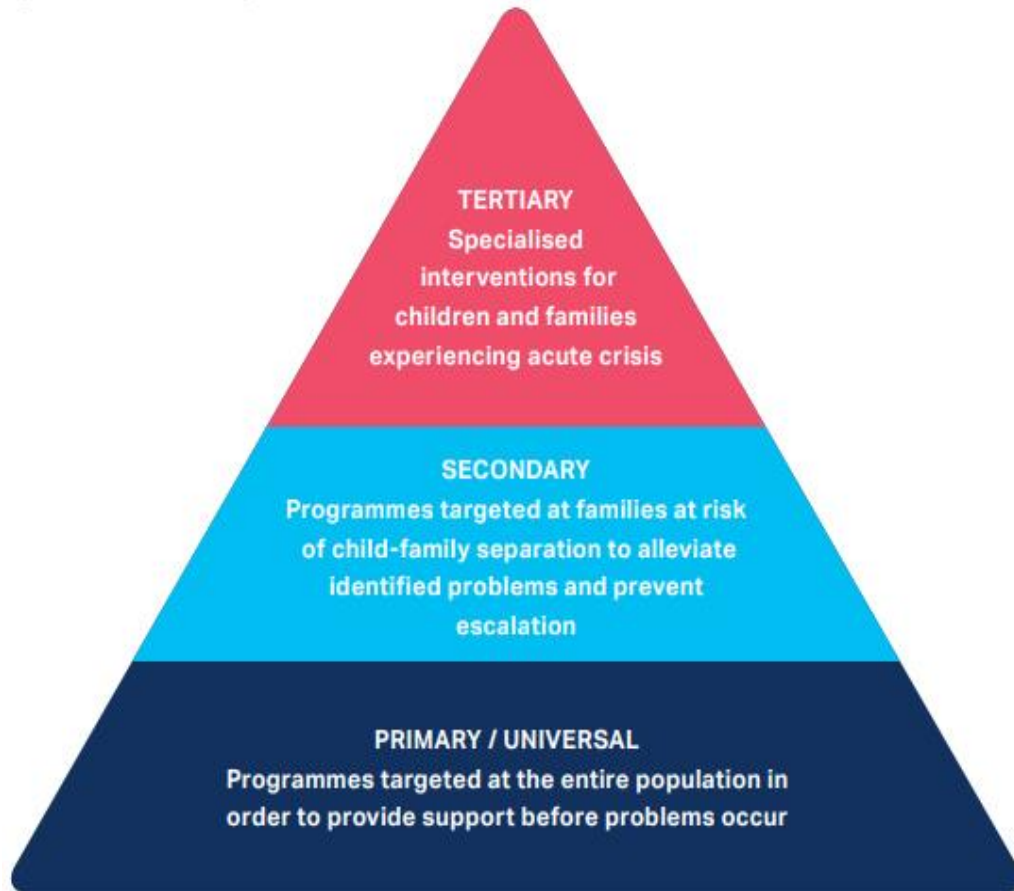
Multidisciplinary team
Volunteers





Multi-sectoral community-based family support services adapted to the local context

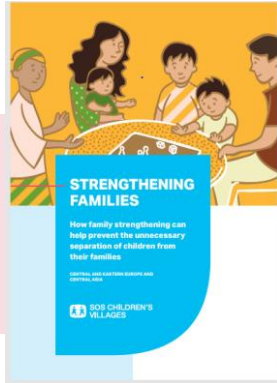
[Strengthening families-External-publication-2023.pdf](#)



The three levels of prevention (Gale et al. 2023)

Pilot innovative specialized interventions and methodologies:

- Mother and baby units
- Safe houses for women and children who are victims of domestic violence
- Therapeutic centers



Case management approach - individual, tailored, holistic services to reach self-reliance of the families:

- Centers for family consulting and support
- Day care centers
- Mobile teams
- Parental skills training, MHPSS, livelihood

Fill the gap in access to the universal services for vulnerable groups

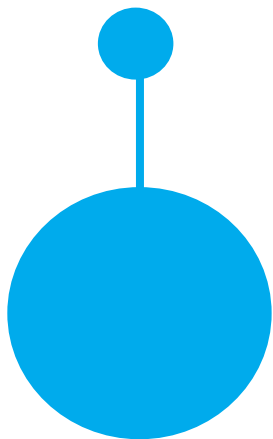
- Awareness raising
- Capacity building of CBOs and CYC practitioners
- CVA in humanitarian crises and emergencies



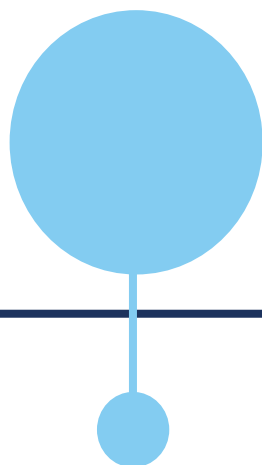
Calls for action for quality family strengthening services



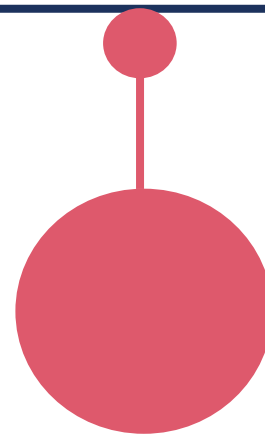
**A multi-
sectorial
approach and
delivery of
coordinated
and integrated
services**



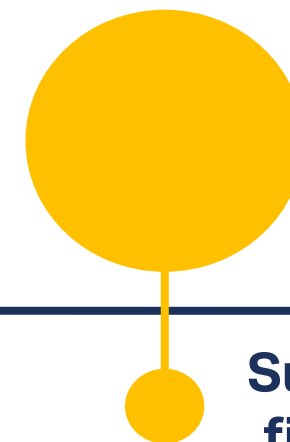
**Use of
effective
gatekeeping
and case
management**



**Invest in social
services
workforce and
their
professional
development**



**Sufficient
financial
resources
for high
quality
services**



What is the most important support families and young people should receive to overcome effects of poverty and discrimination?

- Educational support is most important



The Youth Can Project: Mentors help young people to choose the right career path motivate them. Young people could choose courses to follow and have a good career

- Psychological support is important

Many children and young people suffer from mental health issues (due to discrimination, difficult family situations, lack of motivation and support).

A younger psychologist seems to be closer to young people, have a better understanding and relevant solutions)

The choice between professionals is important for the quality of the service.

How young people and families can participate?



- Young people want to be part of the decision making and they need their opinion to be valued
- They should know that their opinion is valid, and they shouldn't be told "you're too young to make decisions"
- We are not experienced, but we have ideas, and we want to make innovation

