



Country fact sheet for the CRC

COUNTRY: BULGARIA

REPORT N°	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third, Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report (UNCRC)
PRE-SESSION/SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-sessional: 72nd (October 2015) Sessional: 72nd (May-June 2016)
LAW (THC-1993, GUIDELINES, DOMESTIC LAWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: 2002 1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection Measures: 2006 Family Code 2009 Child Protection Act 2000 Social Assistance Act 1998 Family Allowances for Children Act 2002 Ordinance No. 2 of 24 October 2014 on the Terms and conditions of granting and withdrawing a license for intercountry adoption mediation, and for carrying out and terminating the activity of accredited organisations Ordinance No. 03 of 24 October 2014 on the Terms and conditions for keeping intercountry adoptions register and granting consent by the Minister of Justice Order No. LS-04-1754 of 6 November 2014 on Terms and conditions for providing, gathering, and using information about children, for whom special measures for adoption have been undertaken, and for submitting adopters' applications and documents Regulations on the terms and conditions related to measures for child abandonment prevention and prevention of child institutionalisation as well as child reintegration 2003 Regulations on the conditions and the order for approval of intercountry adoptions and for keeping registers of intercountry adoptions 2009 Regulations on the criteria and standards for social services for children 2003 Regulations on foster care 2012 National Strategy for the Child 2008 - 2018
GENERAL SITUATION OF CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF THEIR FAMILY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention of family separation: Establishment of family assistance services, such as Community Support Centres, Mother and Baby Units, Social Rehabilitation and Integration Centres for Children, and Day-Care Centres for Children with Disabilities. According to UNICEF Bulgaria, 'the network of integrated family support services and alternative care, developed at local level, proved its effectiveness for preventing the separation of children from their families'. This resulted in a 'significant reduction of proportion of children age under three in residential care, from 0.78 per cent at the end of 2009 to 0.43 per cent at the end of 2013'. According to UNICEF, in the pilot region of Shumen, 'since 2010, a network of Family Centres has been established in partnership with three municipalities in the Shumen region to facilitate access of the most vulnerable families to public services, strengthen parental capacities and address harmful practices, thus contributing to the prevention of family separation, child abandonment and neglect. (...) The model of the Family Centres has been designed and implemented in close partnership with national and local authorities, NGOs and communities, which ensures national ownership and commitment to its sustainability and replication.' This project has been further strengthened through a

	<p>home visiting service for expectant parents and families with young children, which was established in 2013 in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Agency for Social Assistance as part of the health care system.</p> <p>Sources: ISS/IRC Country Situation: Bulgaria, 2012; UNICEF Bulgaria, Annual Report 2014, http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Bulgaria_Annual_Report_2014.pdf; UNICEF Bulgaria, Annual Report 2013, http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Bulgaria_COAR_2013.pdf.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foster care: In April 2010, UNICEF Bulgaria launched a national public awareness campaign on foster care Every Child Wants a Family in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Social Assistance Agency and the State Agency for Child Protection. As a result, hundreds of queries have been submitted to the regional centres, and 211 candidates for foster parents have attended training. Babies up to 3 years of age and children with disabilities are placed in foster care as a priority. A Foster Care Resource Centre has been functioning since May 2010 providing training to specialists from the child protection departments and providers of foster care, supervision and assessment of their work. The project achievements also include the elaboration of a 73-class uniform training programme for candidates for foster parents and trainers. In 2011, regional foster care centres had been created in nine regions in the country. According to UNICEF's 2014 review of the deinstitutionalisation strategy, there were 1,943 children in foster care in 2013, with over 1,000 new foster carers approved in 2013 alone. ▪ Family-type centres for up to 15 children. ▪ Specialised institutions: (a) homes for babies 0-3 years; (b) homes for children deprived of parental care (4-6 years and 7-18 years old); and (c) homes for children with mental disabilities (7-18 years old). The institutionalisation of children in Bulgaria has been the historical form of alternative care, with the latter remaining in institutions until adulthood, but the latter has been gradually replaced with family-type care. There remains, however, a need for further professionalisation of staff. According to the above-mentioned review of the strategy, the numbers of children in formal care overall have not fallen, in fact there were slightly more children in formal care at the end of 2013.
<p>ALTERNATIVE CARE OPTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deinstitutionalisation process: Adoption of the 2010 National Strategy 'Vision of deinstitutionalisation of children in Bulgaria' (subsequently reviewed in 2014 with the support of UNICEF) and the National Action Plan to reform institutionalised care for children in Bulgaria 2008 – 2011 (also reviewed in 2014). Hope and Homes for Children and the EU has been assisting the country in closing several institutions for children by 2014, and to place these in a family environment, and this project is nearing completion. Research on gatekeeping mechanisms has also been undertaken. ▪ Leaving care: ISS Bulgaria, in partnership with ISS Switzerland, initiated the Care Leavers Integration Programme (CLIP) in 2002. ▪ Statistics: According to UNICEF Bulgaria, in 2013, 'reform of the child care system continued and at the end of June 2013 there were 3,592 children in residential care institutions, compared to 12,609 in 2001 (www.sacp.government.bg). During the last five years, the number of foster families increased tenfold, and now exceeds 1,200. However, policies and practices are still not sufficient to prevent the risk of family separation and the risk of institutionalisation remains high for children from the most disadvantaged and minority groups. One bottleneck that remains is that social services are funded based on service capacity and often do not take the actual number of beneficiaries, the quality of service, and results into account. Children with disabilities still represent almost half of the total number of children in residential care'. <p>Sources: ISS/IRC Country Situation: Bulgaria, 2012; Hope and Homes for Children, 2011, http://www.hopeandhomes.org/media/media-releases/bulgaria-to-close-harmful-baby-institutions; UNICEF Bulgaria, Annual Report 2013, http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Bulgaria_COAR_2013.pdf; Petrova-Dimitrova, N., <i>Development of alternative services, including foster care, within the framework of reforming child protection system – Experience of Bulgaria</i>, November 2009,</p>

	<p>www.unicef.org/ceecis/Family_based_care_-_Nelli_Petrova_ENG.doc; UNICEF Bulgaria, '106 children found foster parents for the past year thanks to UNICEF', 2011, http://unicef.bg/en/article/106-children-found-foster-parents-for-the-past-year-thanks-to-UNICEF/248 and '332 Children Find Foster Families through UNICEF Bulgaria's Foster Care Project', 2012, http://unicef.bg/en/article/332-Children-Find-Foster-Families-through-UNICEF-Bulgaria-s-Foster-Care-Project/347; High level lunchtime discussion on the <i>Right of Children to live in a caring and supportive family environment: Examples from Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia</i>, September 2014, http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/BCN/details.asp?id=32587&themeID=1000&topicID=1000; UNICEF Bulgaria, Deinstitutionalization of Children in Bulgaria: How Far and Where to?, 2014, http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/BCN/details.asp?id=32585&themeID=1002&topicID=1017; Bilson, A. and Larkins, C., Providing Alternatives to Infant Institutionalization in Bulgaria: Can Gatekeeping Benefit from a Social Development Orientation?, 2013, http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/BCN/details.asp?id=31401&themeID=1003&topicID=1022.</p>
ADOPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is very positive to note that the principle of subsidiarity is clearly set out in the Family Code and that its effectiveness is guaranteed by several procedural mechanisms. With regards to consent, the Family Code's provisions clearly set out the wish to fight against improper financial gains. In this regard, it is also very positive that the legislator has precisely and transparently set the costs associated with the process ▪ However, some concerns remain, in particular, in relation to the fact that, even though the legislation mentions that siblings should not be separated in adoption proceedings, this may occur after some time. In addition, there are limited provisions that allow for the implementation of the right to access one's origins. ▪ New provisions have been published in 2014 in relation to the matching of children with special needs and older children to be adopted internationally (Order No. LS-04-1754 of 6 November 2014 on Terms and conditions for providing, gathering, and using information about children, for whom special measures for adoption have been undertaken, and for submitting adopters' applications and documents), to the functioning of accredited adoption bodies (Ordinance No. 2 of 24 October 2014 on the Terms and conditions of granting and withdrawing a license for intercountry adoption mediation, and for carrying out and terminating the activity of accredited organisations) and to adoption registers (Ordinance No. 03 of 24 October 2014 on the Terms and conditions for keeping intercountry adoptions register and granting consent by the Minister of Justice). <p>Source: ISS/IRC Country Situation: Bulgaria, 2012; for the new legislation, see: http://www.adoption-bg.com/post/translated-version-of-the-latest-regulations-introduced-in-nov-2014.</p>
STATISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ According to the TransMONEE database, 1,134 children were adopted in 2012, of which 739 were adopted domestically and 395 were adopted internationally. It is worth mentioning that the proportion of intercountry adoptions with respect to all adoptions in Bulgaria has been increasing in recent years. ▪ With regards to intercountry adoption, in 2013, 5 children were adopted Canada, 1 to Denmark, 49 to France, 1 to Ireland, 105 to Italy, 3 to Norway, 7 to Sweden, and 159 to the U.S.A.. <p>Source: TransMONEE, Database: Bulgaria, http://www.transmonee.org/Databases.php; Australian InterCountry Adoption Network, Statistics: Bulgaria, http://www.aican.org/statistics.php?region=0&type=birth.</p>
RISKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reported discrimination against Roma children in alternative care and adoption. ▪ Reports of trafficking of Bulgarian children. <p>Source: 'A second case of Bulgarian child trafficking case emerges in Greece', <i>Standart</i>, 12 March 2014.</p>
POTENTIAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What priority actions will be undertaken to implement the recommendations and the conclusions of the review of the deinstitutionalisation strategy? ▪ How will the positive increase of foster care measures be ensured and provided sustainability?

