

Violence Against Children in ROMANIA

Relevant extracts from an NGO alternative report presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

CRC Session 32, January 2003 - Federation of NGOs Active in Child Protection – English
www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.32/Romania_Federation_ngo_report.doc

[...]

In 1999, 41.2% of Romania's population was living under the poverty line, which is defined as the level under which less than 60% of the basic needs of a household are met. As for 2000, statistics show an increase up to 43%. This negative indicator has direct repercussions upon children; 80% of the families with more than three children live under the poverty line, in these families living over 50% of Romanian children.

[...]

The right to life, survival and development is many times disregarded when we talk about children with disabilities. They don't have access to quality medical services and they are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect, abandonment. The social visibility of children with disabilities, and especially of those with learning difficulties, is very low. We can evaluate the efficiency of governmental programmes only by the number of children with disabilities, which have access to play grounds, museums, public transport, etc.

[...]

the number of child victims of sexual offences was of 582 in 2000, and increased up to 745 offences in the first 9 months of 2001.

It is to be mentioned that, out of the total of 18,773 victims of the offences perpetrated against persons, 437 were underage children up to 14 years of age, and 616 were aged between 14 and 18 years.

[...]

It still remains a big number of children in institutions for children without parental care. The statistical data provided by The National Authority for Child Protection shows that in Romania there are approximately 6.000.000 children with ages between 0 – 18 years, from which 2% are in the record of the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection. At the end of the year 2001, 49,965 children protected through temporary measures were in placement centres and 36,336 children in family type protection and 1,217 children were entrusted for adoption. In the first month of the year 2002 was registrated the same trend of increasing the number of children protected by the Public Specialized Services for Child Protection in residential centres (49,750 children in February 2002), as well as in substitutive families (38,615 children in February 2002).

The difficulties faced by the families with children during the transition period, but also the reduced social protection practiced at the level of social policies to support children and families, have as consequence the constant increase of the number of institutionalized children. So, the 1995 – 2000 period is characterized by an increasing of the number of children protected in residential centres from 33,129 children in December 1995, to 33,600 children in March 2000. During the year 2000 there were some important legislative change in the field of child protection (The Governmental Decision no. 261/2000, no. 1137/2000 and The Governmental Ordinance no. 206/2000). Those legislative changes impose the taken over by the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection of a 40,700 children, which were until that moment under the protection of the Ministry of National Education (35,000 children), the State Secretary for Persons with Disabilities (3,500 children) and the Ministry of Health (2,200 children).

After this moment, at the end of the year 2000, under the protection of the Public Specialized Services for Child Protection were 57,181 children in placement centres and 30,572 children protected in a family system.

Number of children in childcare institutions or substitute families (National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption – December 2001):

The reference moment	Number of children in childcare institutions	Number of children in substitute families	Total number of children protected in childcare institution and in substitute families
June 997	39,569	11,899	51,468
December 1998	38,597	17,044	55,641
December 1999	33,356	23,731	57,087
March 2000	33,600	25,433	59,033
There are taken place several legislative changes that have as a result the taking over by the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection of 40,700 children from The Ministry of National Education, The State Secretary for Person with Disabilities and The Ministry of Health			
December 2000	57,597	30,572	88,169
December 2001	49,965	37,553	87,518
February 2002	49,750	38,615	88,365

[...]

Beginning with 2001, an intensive programme of disinstitutionalization of the children in childcare institutions has started, such a 13,366 children have been disinstitutionalized in 2001 compared to 7,861 children in 2000. Out of them, 6,961 children have been reintegrated in their natural family, 514 have been adopted, 2,904 have been disinstitutionalized as result of being of 18/26 years of age, and 2,987 for other reasons. Children reintegrated in the natural families are monitored in accordance with the applicable law for a 3-month period after their reintegration, a very short period of time that doesn't allow a good re-evaluation of family environment.

Disinstitutionalization has been done without performing a complete assessment of children (physical and psychic development level, adaptation and relationship capacity), or of the possibilities of readaptation in the family environment and the financial and psychological possibilities of the families to reintegrate their children. It is estimated that in many situations children will be subject to improper conditions for a harmonious development, unsuitable treatment and will be exposed to less or more serious types of **abuse and neglect**. These families and children are not included in assistance and counselling programmes in order to cope with the situation and to prevent abuse or neglect or other situations when the child could be exposed to circumstances that could jeopardize his/her physical and psychic development or even life. The specialists dealing with counselling and rehabilitation of children exposed to abuse and neglect estimate they will be confronted with many cases of child abuse.

[...]

Children from single-parent families are also in difficult circumstances. There is a higher risk of child abandonment, school drop out or exposure to abuse and neglect situations within this type of family. In a certain weight, this is due to the difficult socio-economic situation (only one income), but also to the lack of a family environment that by presence of both parents could provide the stability and safety necessary for child development. The programmes carried out by the Departments for Child Protection for this category of children provide support according to the budget of that service and assistance according to the available human resources. Special protection measures for this category of children should be included in the legal framework.

[...]

One of the factors that have negatively affected the education process is poverty. On the background of a higher poverty degree (80% of the families with over 3 children are living under the poverty line, and over 50% of Romanian children live in these families) school drop out has increased and school enrolment has decreased.

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Poverty rate %	25.27	19.85	30.81	33.82	41.2	43

School drop out rate has recorded an increase in 1998 compared to 1994, from 2.0% to 2.2% (Statistic Yearbook of Romania – 2002). The percentage of students who have dropped out compulsory education shows an increasing trend from 0.6% in 1993 to 0.8% in 1998.

The highest school drop out rates are accounted for vocational schools, apprenticeship schools and foremen post-high school units:

Ministry of Education and Research 1999

School drop out %	1993/1994	1995/1996	1997/1998
Vocational school	4.2	4.6	5.6
Apprenticeship school	6.8	6.9	7.4
Foremen post-high school	3.9	5.3	7.6

[...]

Unemployment rate for young people is still at high levels: 20.8% in 1998 compared to 19.4% in 1996. The number of the unemployed aged under 25 was of 44.6% of the total unemployed in 1998.

[...]

A special category to be had in view is street children. This phenomenon spreads more and more not only in Bucharest, but also at national level, being associated with juvenile delinquency, child sexual exploitation and particularly with school drop out. From the quantitative and qualitative studies conducted by NGOs it comes out that there are 600 children living in the street in Bucharest, and 2,500 at national level. Most of the children living in the street dropped out school or have never been enrolled. Most of them do not have identity documents, what makes more difficult their enrolment in a type of education.

[...]

Compared to other ethnic groups, the risk of school non-attendance at Roma children is about 6-7 times higher, 80% of the children who are not enrolled being Roma, and 23% of the Roma children cannot read at all (Ministry of Education and Research, National Institute for Statistics, 2002). A research conducted by Copiii (Save the Children Romania) - "Roma children in Romania" has drawn the following conclusions: school non-attendance reaches about 25% of Roma school aged population; most of Roma children do not succeed to graduate primary education; illiteracy accounts for over 50% of total Roma population.

[...]

The Romanian legislation on child labour prohibits any form of employment of children under 15.

[...]

Table 1: Comparative table on age categories

14 years	15 years	16-18 years
Compulsory education	No compulsory education	No compulsory education
	Secondary education continued in vocational schools	Secondary education continued in vocational schools
	Written consent of parents for employment	No parental consent
	Medical certificate	

Household, artistic and sporting activities only	Light work	Industrial work
		Banning of hard or hazardous work

[...]

The types and incidence of child labour

In 2001, a rapid assessment of the situation of working street children was conducted in Bucharest. The study indicated the following distribution of the worst forms of child labour for a sample of 150 children:

- Begging: 75 cases;
- Car washing/parking: 29 cases (17%);
- Selling goods: 25 cases (15%);
- Loading/unloading goods: 16 cases (9%);
- Household work: 14 cases (8%).

The rest of the interviewed street children were classified by the type of performed activity as follows:

- Collecting waste products: 9 cases;
- Stealing: 3 cases;
- Engagement in prostitution: one case.

[...]

Through non-governmental initiatives (Salvați Copiii in co-operation with the International Social Service), research has been conducted and programmes have been implemented in order to determine the extent and the problems in connection with this phenomenon of illegal travelling of children and assist children in such situations. Within these programmes 998 international cases were solved during the period 1991-2001, out of which 515 cases of unaccompanied children.

From the point of view of case type, the international cases mainly refer to unaccompanied children abroad, new-born babies abandoned in maternities abroad, separated families (children separated from their parents) asking for family reintegration, failed adoptions, medical treatment, sexual commercial exploitation, child labour exploitation, etc.

Due to the fact that the number of Romanian unaccompanied children in Europe, particularly in Italy, is increasing, Italian authorities have decided to provide assistance to Romanian Government in order to limit this phenomenon.

A collaboration agreement was concluded in August 2001 between the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption and Salvați Copiii (Save the Children Romania) for an assistance programme for the unaccompanied children/teenagers on the Italian territory. As a consequence, beginning with July 2001, Salvați Copiii (Save the Children Romania) has received assistance requests from the Italian Branch of the International Social Service for 36 Romanian underage children between 4 and 17, out of which 26 boys and 10 girls. By the end of October, 88 cases were recorded, out of which 75 in Italy. As concerns cases of trafficked children, 4 cases were noticed in 2000 and 5 cases in 2001.