



Romania

## Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

### A Study of National Policies

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*Disclaimer: This report does not necessarily reflect the views of either the European Commission or the EU Member States.*

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## Executive summary

Poverty does not necessarily imply that a child will become a poor adult in the future. Family stability, decent housing and access to education are key factors in child welfare and, given sufficient support and opportunity, family poverty need not be inherited.

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children is a major priority for Romania. Since about 2001, Romania has made considerable political and structural efforts to address the major child-related issues of the 1990s. New policies and legislation have been adopted, new institutional structures are in place and targeted action programmes are being implemented. To a large extent, these efforts are producing good results and a significant improvement in Romania's child welfare system is taking place.

Essential social services and a safety net of means-tested social allowances are now operational and are helping to alleviate many instances of child poverty and social exclusion. However, extreme poverty is still widespread and these social protection measures provide a very basic safety net for many families and their children.

There are many families who do not benefit from the allowances they are entitled to, due to a lack of awareness and information. Romania's complicated system of modifying legislation is very difficult for most people to follow and the end-beneficiaries of social inclusion legislation are often the last to be informed about their rights. Information in plain language needs to be targeted towards potential beneficiaries. There is also a need for a more user-friendly way of getting policy and legislative information to the grass-roots staff who are at the forefront of policy implementation. These staff sometimes find themselves unaware of procedures, due to insufficient or inappropriate information dissemination and training activities.

While much progress has been made in recent years, a notable exception is housing, especially the lack of access to decent, affordable housing. Housing allowances do not exist and there is a severe shortage of social housing. A growing number of families simply cannot afford to keep themselves housed and family-orientated protection centres are not yet available.

Monitoring the implementation and impact of policies is still at an early stage, but institutional structures and reporting obligations are in place. A Child Rights Observatory has been established and should release its first indicator-based report in mid-2007. In recent years, monitoring and evaluation procedures have been weak and some child protection projects have suffered from a poorly defined set of objectives, targets and deadlines. Current activities appear to be better planned, easier to manage and include monitoring criteria. This progress would appear to be the result of a combination of an accumulation of experience and increased financial responsibility at the local level.

# 1. Extent and nature of child poverty and well-being in Romania

This section describes the extent and nature of child poverty and well-being in Romania, indicating the main trends and underlying causes.

## 1.1. Background

In Romania, in the decades before 1990, under a prosperous and optimistic economic climate, a plan to double the size of the population was put into practice. Contraception was prohibited and only the women who already had four children were allowed to have abortions. The State 'supported' poor families who couldn't afford to raise a large number of children, by taking legal responsibility for these children under a programme of mass institutionalisation, ensuring food, shelter, clothing and education. However, once the Romanian economy started to decline, conditions in these institutions dramatically deteriorated.

During the last years of the socialist regime, the economy had been in long-term decline. Among other things, the decline of the educational and health services, an increase in hidden unemployment (which hit families with many children the hardest) and cuts in social benefits for children, which had previously compensated, to a certain extent, families on low wages, had a devastating affect on the well-being of many children in Romania.

During the 1990s a number of attempts to reform the child protection system failed to achieve significant results, primarily due to a lack of funding and an abundance of discriminatory attitudes that prevented the implementation of the integrated approach that was required to break the vicious circle of abandonment and institutionalisation.

In 2000-01, the decentralisation of administration, services and responsibilities, together with emphasis being placed on children's rights, preventing abandonment and implementing family-type care rather than large-scale institutional care, restarted the process of reforming the child protection system. New policies, legislation and financial commitments have helped transform Romania's child protection system in a relatively short period of time.

## 1.2. Main trends

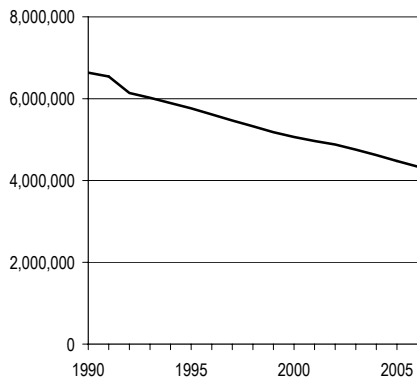
### 1.2.1. Child population

Romania's child<sup>1</sup> population is estimated to be 4 340 000 (1 January 2006) and represents approximately 20 % of the total country population. During the period 1990-2006, the number of children in Romania decreased by a dramatic 35 % (almost 2 300 000 children) due to a sharp decline in the birth rate. This situation is a direct consequence of the vast majority of the population finding themselves with insufficient resources compared to the relatively high cost of living and has led to a widespread general practice of one-child families.

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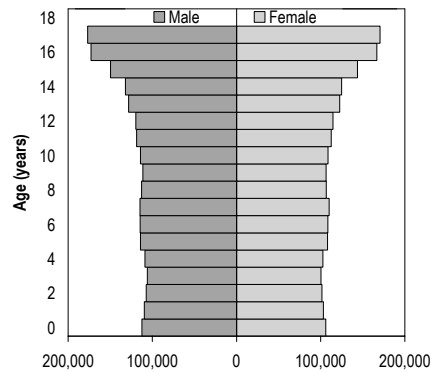
<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, 'children' are persons aged 0-17 years, which is the new Laeken definition that was endorsed by the Social Protection Committee in June 2006.

**Child population**



Source: Eurostat.

**Child population on 1 January 2006**

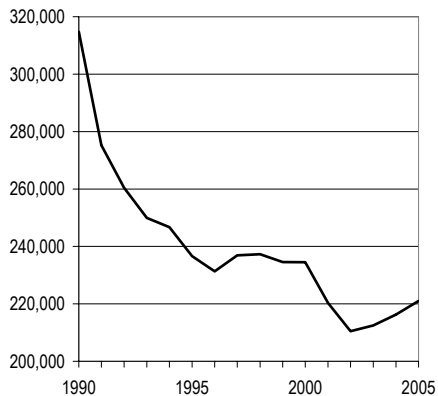


Source: Eurostat.

**1.2.2. Births, child abandonment and abortions**

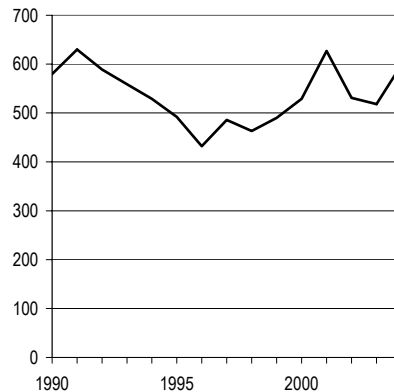
The number of live births fell by 30 % during the period 1990-2005 and in 2002 reached a low point of approximately 210 000 (or 9.7 births per 1 000 inhabitants). The birth rate started to increase slightly after 2002, partially due to pro-birth legislation which changed the basis for maternity payments.

**Number of live births**



Source: Eurostat.

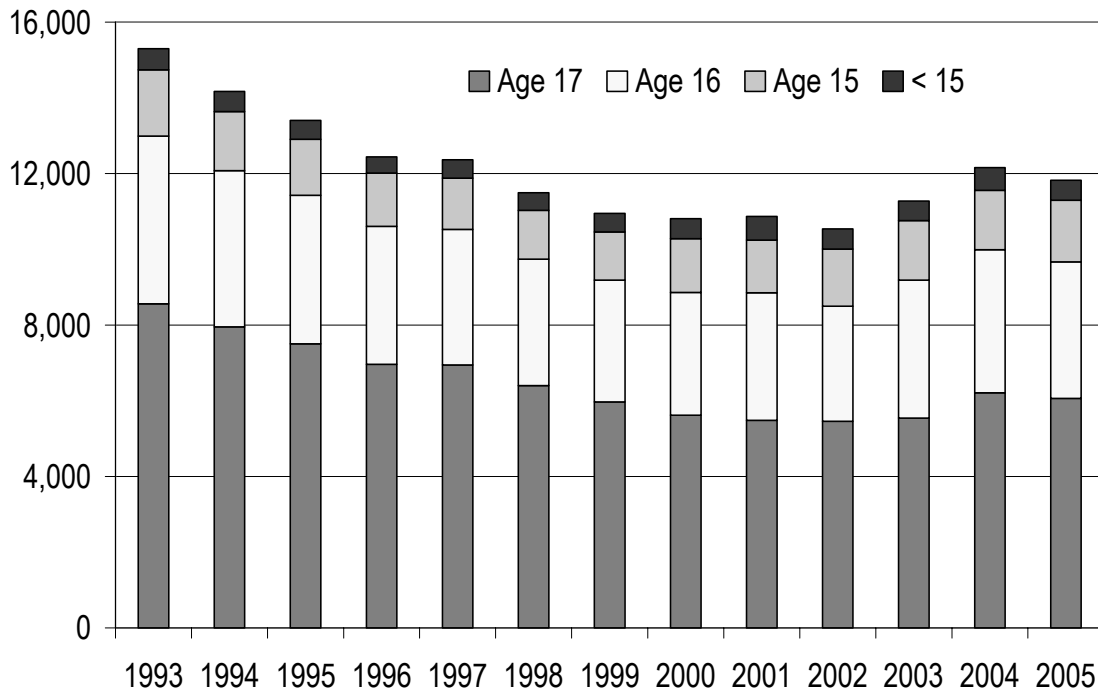
**attributed to children under 15 years old**



Source: Romanian Statistics Office.

During the period 1993-2005, an average of more than 12 000 births per year were attributed to children, while an average of almost 540 births per year were attributed to female children under the legal age of consent (15).

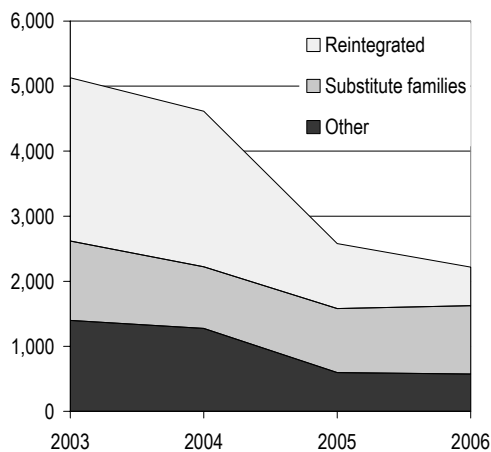
**Number of live births attributed to child mothers, by mother's age**



Source: Eurostat.

The number of children abandoned in maternity hospitals has fallen sharply in recent years (due primarily to the increased availability of services in charge of prevention of child abandonment ) but the child abandonment rate is still high. In 2006, there were almost 18 000 beneficiaries of child abandonment prevention services (which represents approximately 8 % of births).

**Child abandonment**

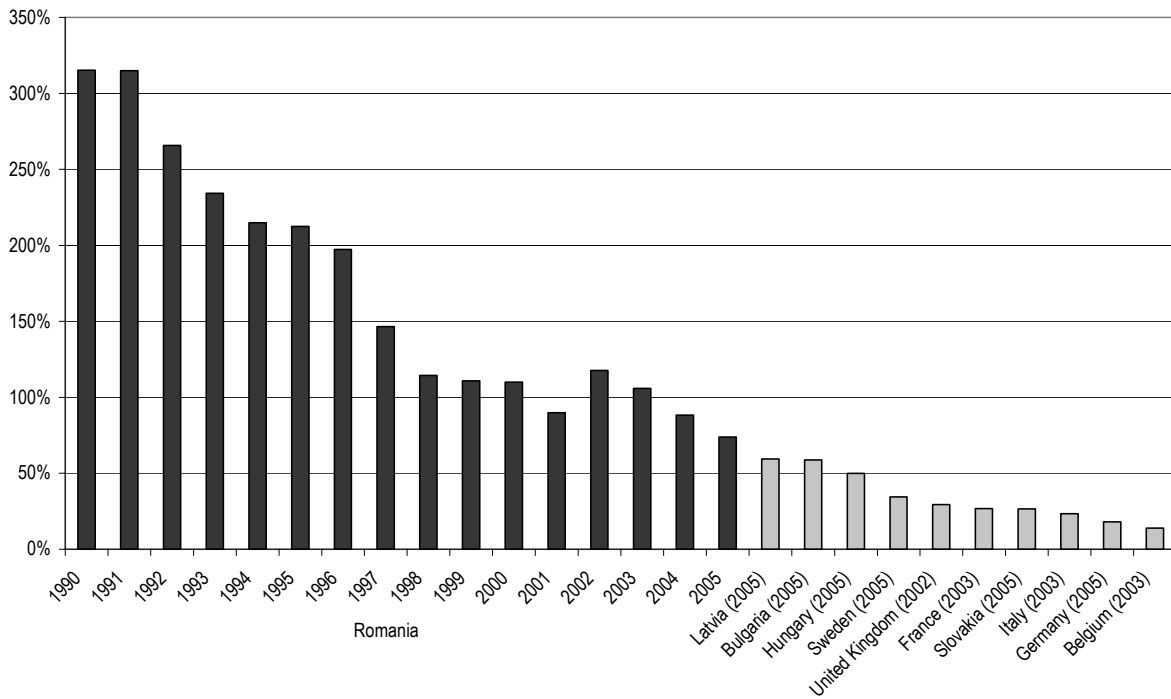


Source: National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights.

Note: 'Reintegrated' means children reintegrated with their biological family. 'Substitute families' means children placed with substitute families (relatives or foster care). 'Other' includes sick and healthy children who remain in hospitals, children sent to facilities for the disabled, deaths).

Abortion was legalised in 1990 and for many years afterwards, the legal abortion rate was dramatically higher than the birth rate, due partly to the poor availability of contraception. In recent years, contraception has become widely available but the abortion rate has remained approximately equal to the live birth rate. This ratio is significantly higher than in most EU Member States and may suggest that social and economic conditions in Romania cause more prospective mothers to decide not to raise a child, compared with those in other EU Member States.

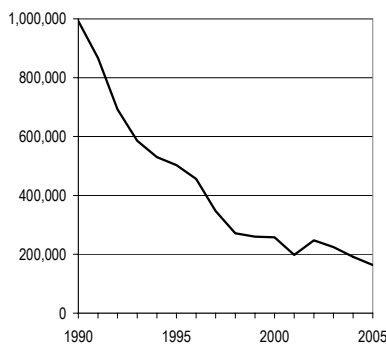
**Legal abortions as a percentage of live births**



Source: Eurostat.  
 Note: Based on available data for certain EU Member States.

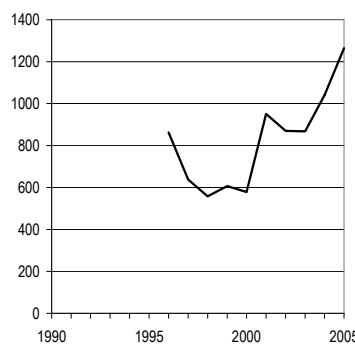
During the period 1993-2005, an average of more than 820 legal abortions were attributed to female children under the legal age of consent (15). Abortion rates for child mothers cannot be discussed in any detail because publicly available data is clustered into age groups of 'less than 15 years' and '15 to 19 years'.

**Total number of legal abortions**



Source: Eurostat

**attributed to children under 15 years old**

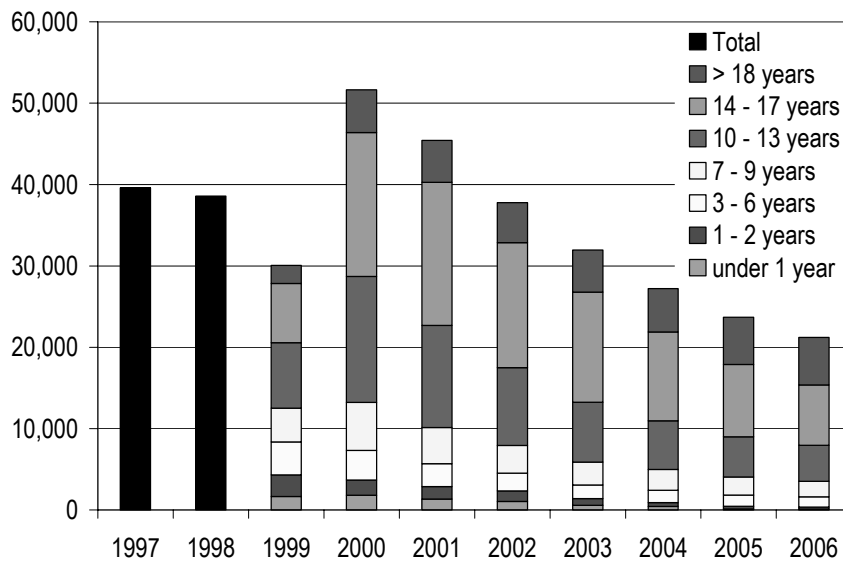


Source: Eurostat

1.2.3. De-institutionalisation

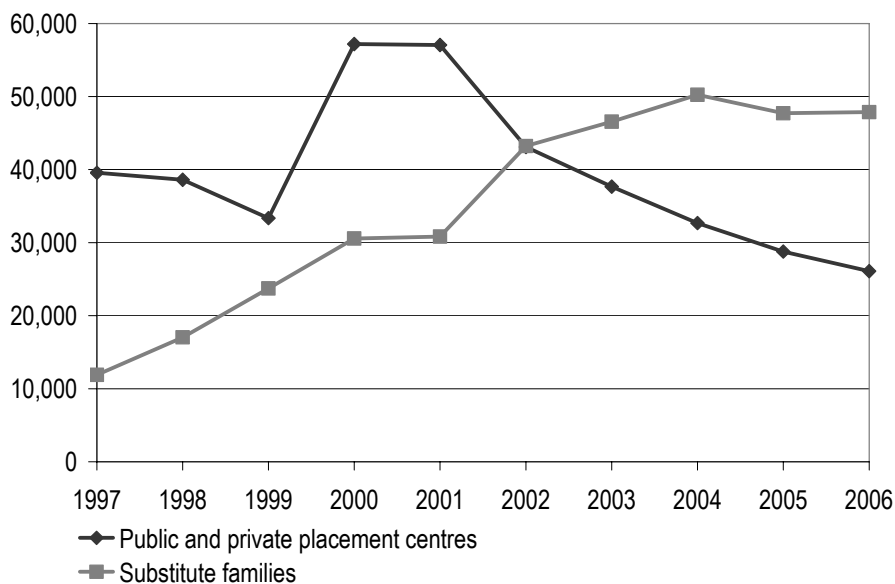
In December 2006, there were 19 613 children, up to the age of 17, in public and private residential institutions in Romania. The vast majority of institutionalised children are aged 10 and above and many are now adolescents, which makes their integration in the family-type system rather difficult. Of particular concern are the almost 7 000 young people who have reached 18 years of age and should leave the institutions, but typically lack the skills required for independent living. The law contains provisions for young people leaving the state institutional system that allow them to receive state assistance for an additional two years (whether they attend a form of education or not) during which time they receive skills training for independent living. However, during the year 2006, fewer than 1 000 people benefited directly from this programme.

**Number of children in public placement centres (institutionalised), by age group**



Source: National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights.

**Children in institutional and substitute family care**



Source: National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights.

Note: In the year 2000, child services under the responsibility of the centralised bodies for health, education and disabled persons, were transferred to the County Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (under the responsibility of the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption) hence the sudden increase in the number of institutionalised children in the year 2000.

The graphs above show the effect of policies to reduce the number of children in institutional care. Since the year 2000, the number of children in placement centres has decreased considerably while the number of children placed with substitute families has risen. This was partially achieved by increasing the number of professional foster carers. In 2001, there were 6 927 publicly employed foster carers, while in December 2006, this number rose to 14 800.

#### *1.2.4. Housing*

The availability of affordable housing is a key factor affecting child and family poverty. A large proportion of Romania's housing stock is in a poor state of repair and combined with a general shortage of housing and an extreme lack of social housing, many children live in unacceptable conditions, leading to negative effects on their health and development. Poor housing is characterised by unsanitary conditions, inadequate heating, damp and leaks, a lack of space, poor light and building materials that provide insufficient structural strength.

Many young families cannot afford to have their own house and in recent years, some families are finding themselves being evicted from previously nationalised state-owned properties that have now been reclaimed by their former owners, but without any alternative arrangements.

Some families simply cannot afford to keep themselves housed and end up living on the streets with their children or in improvised shelters, abandoned buildings, etc. Temporary shelter for a family with children is almost non-existent. Many of these families in extreme poverty use their children to help gain an income, either by begging, stealing or a variety of forms of occasional, black market work.

#### *1.2.5. Education*

Data on education is unreliable. Significant numbers of pupils are older than the official educational age groupings (e.g. may be repeating a year due to poor performance/illness) which, in some instances, leads to artificially high enrolment and attendance rates which can be greater than 100 % of the eligible population. This phenomenon presumably also has a distortion effect on non-attendance rates, possibly causing them to be artificially low. Therefore, although this data is available, in its present form, it is not considered to be a useful indicator of actual enrolment, attendance and non-attendance rates.

Access to primary and basic high-school education in Romania is both compulsory and free of charge (up to the 10<sup>th</sup> year of education at age 16). However, even though families are exempted from paying school taxes during the period of compulsory education, there are additional costs that low-income families cannot afford (e.g. clothes, shoes, stationery, alternative books, transport, etc.). In many cases, poorer families cannot afford the additional expenses of their child's education and some children suffer from poor nutrition, which has a negative effect on their health, development and learning abilities. After the 10<sup>th</sup> year of education, schools charge fees for books and stationery, which further discourages lower-income families from sending their children to attend.

The national census of 2002 showed that over 100 000 people aged between 15 and 25 years were illiterate. This may get worse in the near future as the school drop-out rate (calculated through the 'in-out' method) for primary and secondary education increased from 0.6 % in 2000, to 1.5 % in 2003 and 1.7 % in 2004. Latest data from the Ministry of Education shows that in 2004, 31 284 children abandoned school early and 13 787 children of school age were not enrolled at the age of seven. The

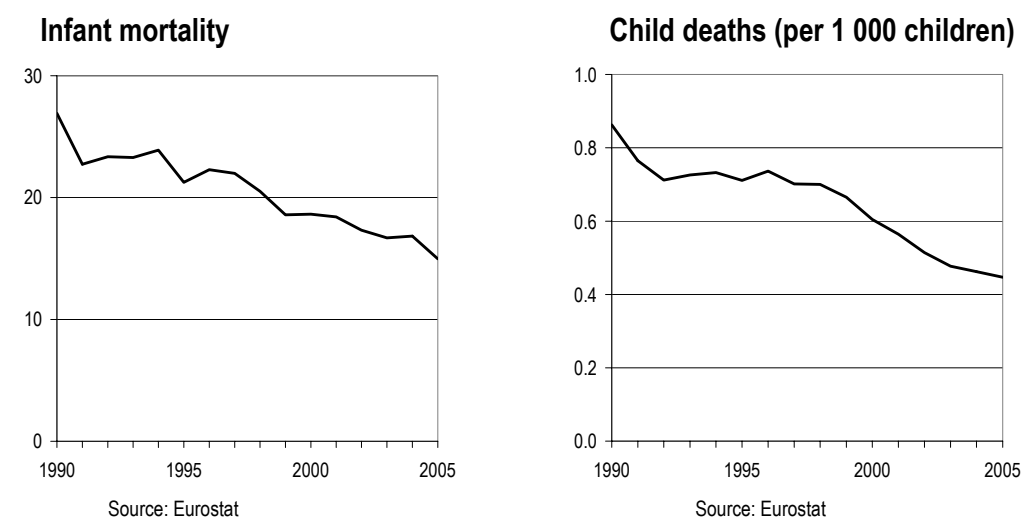
school enrolment rate for children from Roma communities is much lower than the national average and discrimination is still highly visible. Roma children also have a higher drop-out rate, especially girls.

Currently about 29 % of eligible children do not have access to preschool education and many parents are reluctant to register their children for this education due to the relatively high cost. Only about 20 % of eligible children from Roma communities are registered in preschool education, compared to a national average of about 66 %.

### 1.2.6. Health

Healthcare within Romania's social health insurance system is provided free of charge for all children up to the age of 18 (or graduation from secondary school). All medical costs for children are waived, schools have medical units which administer first aid and carry out vaccination campaigns, and most medicines are provided at little or no cost.

By 2005, infant mortality fell to 15 deaths within the first year of birth per 1 000 live births. This number is still high when compared to the EU Member States (which average less than six infant deaths). Education and health programmes are underway to try and further reduce the number of infant deaths.



Excluding infant mortality, during the period 1990-2005, child deaths (per 1 000 children aged between 1 and 17 years) fell by almost 50 %, which suggests child healthcare services are improving.

In recent years, the subject of children's health in Romania has been dominated by two main issues — HIV/AIDS and disabled children. Significant progress has been made in both these areas.

Romania has a small incidence of HIV/AIDS but it has the greatest number of cases among children in the EU. At the end of 2006, there were 2 166 children registered with HIV/AIDS. One of the reasons that the number of cases among children remains at a high level is that survival rates have increased significantly (which is also a reason for an increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases for older age groups). In 2006, a representative of the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) stated at an advocacy event in Iasi, Romania, that discrimination and social exclusion of children and young people infected by the HIV/AIDS virus is still problematic.

At the end of 2006, there were 55 121 children registered as disabled in Romania (11.3 % of the total number of registered disabled persons). At the beginning of 2007, local newspapers reported that a newly released report prepared by Unicef and the Centre of Judicial Resources in Bucharest, found that many disabled children living in Romania's state shelters are having their rights breached. Poorly prepared personnel are working with the children and many institutions do not comply with minimum compulsory standards for such services. According to the media, the report, covering the period of 2005-06, states that more than two-thirds of the institutions visited provide hosting conditions below minimum standards, in some cases providing 'inhuman and degrading' treatment.

### 1.2.7. Poverty, employment and child labour

Poverty, in itself, is not necessarily sufficient grounds for a child to be socially excluded or to become a poor adult in the future. Other factors such as family instability (due to alcohol abuse, domestic violence, or overcrowded living conditions) and poor education may combine with poverty, resulting in an overwhelmingly negative climate for child welfare and development.

Poverty-related data available from Eurostat shows that many of the so-called Laeken indicators that quantify the extent of income poverty — e.g. the at-risk-of-poverty rate by work intensity of the household or employment status of parents of children at-risk-of-poverty — are not currently available for Romania.

Data available shows that the at-risk-of-poverty rate (cut-off point: 60 % of median equivalised income after social transfers) for Romania in 2005 was very similar to the EU average at-risk-of-poverty rate for the categories 'single parents with dependent children', 'two adults with one dependent child' and 'two adults with two dependent children'. However, the rate for 'two adults with three or more dependent children' is significantly higher (44 % for Romania compared to an EU average of 26 %).

An analysis of the poverty rate of children, according to the occupation of the head of the household (based on a 2004 household budget survey), indicates that families from rural areas whose head of household has no legal working status (which for statistical reasons are categorised as subsistence farmers or 'self-employed in agriculture') are the most at risk of severe poverty.

Children living in households where the head of the household is:	% of total children	Poverty rate	% of total poor children	Severe poverty rate	% of total children in severe poverty
Employed	46.4	9.4	17.9	1.6	9.1
Business owner	1.19	0	0	0	0
Self-employed (non-agriculture)	7.47	32.7	10	12.8	11.7
Self-employed (agriculture)	15.5	46.9	29.8	17.2	32.3
Unemployed	8.81	48.6	17.5	21.5	23.1
Pensioner	18.7	27.6	21.1	8.6	19.6
Pupil/Student	0.07	31.1	0.09	28.9	0.3
Housewife	1.25	43.7	2.24	19.2	2.9
Other	0.61	54.5	1.37	15.3	1.1

Source: Catalin, Z., *Poverty and risks in child development in Romania*, Romanian Academy, Quality of Life Research Institute, Bucharest, 2005.

In 2006, 10 % of children in Romania were living in households where nobody works (source: Eurostat).

A 2003 survey on children's activities, from Romania's National Statistics Institute (the only nationwide survey to document the extent of child labour), found that between 40 000 and 80 000 children were involved in activities identified as 'the worst forms of child labour', including begging, drug dealing, stealing, prostitution, and being victims of child trafficking.

The minimum employment age for Romania is 16, but children may work with the consent of parents or guardians at the age of 15, although only 'according to their physical development, aptitude, and knowledge'. Working children under the age of 16 have the right to continue their education, and the law obliges employers to assist in this regard. In practice, however, many children were reported to occasionally forego attending school while working on family farms, especially in rural areas and in Roma communities. Parents violating child labour laws may be punished with either fines or imprisonment, however, authorities do not consistently apply these provisions, claiming that the punishment would further harm the children in certain cases.

In January 2005, the law for the protection and promotion of children's rights came into force, requiring schools to immediately notify social services if children are suspected of missing classes in order to work. Social service departments are authorised to work with schools to reintegrate such children into the educational system. The government also conducted information campaigns to raise awareness among children, potential employers, and the general public.

#### 1.2.8. Other issues

- In 2006, approximately 2 % of children in Romania received assistance from the Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection.
- In 2005, the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights received 660 requests for the repatriation of children who were unaccompanied on the territory of other states.
- The records of the Ministry of Internal Affairs show that in 2004 there were 1 344 reported victims of sex crimes against children and 3 681 reported child victims of other types of crimes.
- A children's phone line for reporting cases of child abuse, neglect and exploitation was set up in 2004. Between January and April 2005, the number of complaints received amounted to 1 766 and 504 of these cases resulted in special protection measures for the child.
- In 2005, from a total of 59 105 criminal charges, 11 400 (or 19.3 %) were against children and 2 188 of these were for violent crimes. Data from the Ministry of Justice indicates that in April 2007, out of a total of 33 368 prisoners, 715 were children and 244 of these were being kept in adult prisons. The number of children currently benefiting from probation services amounts to 10 376.

Data from the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights shows that in December 2006 there were 59 959 children in Romania whose parents were working abroad. Out of these, 2 707 are registered with the special protection system (with foster parents, child placement centres, or with relatives or other persons).

## 2. Policies

This section describes and assesses the overall framework for coordinating and developing policies in Romania, identifies the main policies in place to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, provides an assessment of some of the main policies and recommends a number of areas to focus effort in order to strengthen policy implementation.

### 2.1. Policy framework for the protection of children's rights

Alleviating child poverty and the social exclusion of children in Romania is a national priority. Since 2003, when the National Authority for Child Protection, together with Unicef, started drafting of a law on the protection and promotion of children's rights, many resources have been focused on this issue. The 'National strategy for child protection and the promotion of children's rights', provides the framework for mainstreaming child poverty and the social exclusion of children, establishes responsibilities for coordination and implementation, and sets policy objectives. The policy objectives are implemented through annual national interest programmes for the protection of children's rights. Each programme consists of a number of projects with objectives, quantifiable targets and defined budgets.

#### 2.1.1. National strategy for child protection and the promotion of children's rights (2006-13)

The 'National strategy for child protection and the promotion of children's rights' (2006-13) continues the experience of the Committee to support the Child Protection Institutions (established in 1990) which became the National Committee for Child Protection in 1993, the Department for Child Protection in 1997, the National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights in 1999, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption in 2001 and the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights in 2005. The strategy targets:

- children at risk of separation from their parents;
- children separated from their parents;
- children abandoned in sanitary units;
- young people beneficiaries of a form of protection;
- children victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- delinquent children;
- children with disabilities, HIV/AIDS and serious chronic diseases;
- street children;
- children with behavioural disorders;
- children belonging to ethnic minorities.

In order to prioritise public investments for economic and social development, the strategy was designed to be implemented in harmony with Romania's national development plan (as well as with existing action plans promoting a participative and multi-sector approach to child issues and respect for children's rights in all areas of activity). It establishes a unitary framework for intervention and promotes collaboration between the relevant public institutions, NGOs, professionals and beneficiaries, emphasising the role of the parents and family.

The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights coordinates and monitors the implementation of the strategy, while numerous institutions are actually responsible for the tasks:

- At local level, the local public administration authorities (local councils, mayors, the social assistance services, the child protection commissions and the County Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection) are involved in the day-to-day implementation of the strategy.
- At central public administration level, the following institutions share responsibilities:
  - Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (Social Assistance Department, Department for Labour Force Migration, National Authority for People with Handicaps, National Authority for the Protection of the Family, National Authority for Equal Opportunities, National Authority for Employment, Labour Inspectorate),
  - Ministry of Health (with the role to promote the right to health for all children, integrate certain medical services into the social assistance and child protection system, develop community services for children with disabilities and provide continuous training for the medical staff),
  - General Secretariat of the Government (Department for Inter-ethnic Relations, National Authority for Youth, National Roma Agency, Romanian Office for Adoption),
  - Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs (The Anti-Drug Agency),
  - Ministry of External Affairs,
  - Ministry of Culture,
  - Ministry of Education and Research,
  - Ministry of Justice,
  - the Ombudsman,
  - the National Audio-Visual Council,
  - the National Council to combat Discrimination,
  - the National Council for Adult Professional Training,
- Other partners involved in implementing the strategy include:
  - civil society representatives such as NGOs, universities, education institutions, research institutes, etc.,
  - the Romanian Orthodox Church and other legally recognised religious organisations,
  - unions and employers representatives (especially for the socio-professional integration of young people as well as for fighting child labour exploitation),
  - international bodies (European Commission, Unicef and other UN agencies, United States Agency for International Development [USAID], International Labour Office [ILO], World Bank, Council of Europe Development Bank [CEB], etc.) and various country representatives through their embassies.

The strategy's implementation plan aims to protect and promote children's rights, prevent children being separated from their family and offer special protection for children separated from their parents. The main objectives are to:

- increase the responsibility of families to bring up, care for and educate their own children;
- promote and respect the rights of children by:
  - significantly reducing the number of children without identity papers,
  - ensuring the necessary funds are available within local councils to guarantee free medical-legal advice for registering a child's birth,
  - developing and implementing a methodology for interinstitutional intervention to establish the identity of abandoned children,
  - issuing temporary identification papers to mothers who do not have a residence or identification papers, so that a newborn child is registered as soon as possible,
  - implementing a national system to report cases of children without identity papers as well as communities at risk,
  - interinstitutional cooperation to identify children without identification papers and to monitor communities where children without identification originate,
  - removing any obstacles to ensure that identification papers are issued to children within institutional care at the age of 14;
- increase access to health services (adapt medical services to the needs of children);
- provide equal access to education for all children;
- promote recreational and cultural activities for children;
- monitor children's rights;
- initiate interinstitutional, multidisciplinary action against child abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- promote and support professional training;
- increase the responsibility of the local community to prevent the separation of the children from their parents and support families to raise, care and educate own children;
- continue the reform of the social services for children and families;
- protect the vulnerable groups of children and young people who require special attention (street children, delinquent children, children with disabilities, children with HIV/AIDS and chronic/terminal diseases, young people leaving the social protection system).

The budget for implementing the strategy is allocated from:

- the state budget, through the budgets of the responsible ministries, authorities and institutions for the development and approval of legislation, professional training programmes, development of standards and methodologies;
- county budgets (and the local budgets of the Bucharest sectors) for establishing and developing special protection services for children separated from their parents;
- local budgets (of towns, municipalities and communes) for establishing and developing services to prevent children being separated from their families;

- external funds through bilateral programmes (reimbursable and non-reimbursable funds) to establish services for children and families, awareness campaigns, studies, research, technical assistance;
- donations, sponsorships and other contributions.

A draft, updated strategy for the period 2007-13 is presently being discussed.

### *2.1.2. National interest programme 2007*

Government Decision No 289/2007 approving the 2007 'National interest programme for protecting children's rights' (Official Journal No 215 of 29 March 2007) presents the programme's six projects and respective budgets.

Project 1, 'setting up family-type placement centres — houses and apartments — for children living in institutions with a capacity of over 100 places, who have not been restructured into family-type modules' aims to increase the quality of care and protection for children separated from their parents, by reducing the number of children in classic institutional care, finalising projects from the national interest programme No 1/2006 and increasing the number of family-type placement centres. At least six family-type placement centres are to be set up, which should benefit 96 children, resulting in the closure of three institutions. The budget for 2007 is RON 3 667 000 (approximately EUR 1 100 000).

Project 2, 'developing alternative services for children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS' aims to rehabilitate and socially integrate children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS, by:

- a) developing an alternative service network (family-type placement centres, day/recovery/rehabilitation centres, etc.), finalising projects from the national interest programme No 2/2006 and developing integration practices to improve chances for full and harmonised development as well as for the social integration of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS;
- b) preventing long-term hospitalisation of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS or their abandonment at clinics/hospitals;
- c) developing and diversifying methods of intervention to prevent the abandonment of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS;
- d) preventing all kinds of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS, as well as incidents that could lead to the intervention of special protection measures;
- e) continuing the decentralisation process at county and local level and strengthening the institutional capacity at local level in order to assume responsibility in dealing with the issues of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS;
- f) implementing the minimum standards of care for children with disabilities/handicap;
- g) promoting children's rights among the public and sensitising public opinion with a view to improve attitudes and behaviour in connection to the specific issues of children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS;
- h) efficiently administering the human and financial resources within the child protection system.

Four alternative services for children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS are expected to be set up, which should allow at least 24 children to benefit from individual protection plans and allow them to be deinstitutionalised from placement centres. The budget for 2007 is RON 2 373 000 (approximately EUR 710 000).

Project 3, 'developing a specialised services network for children whose parents work abroad', aims to prevent the neglect of children whose parents work abroad and help them to maintain relationships with the family, by:

- a) preventing and fighting any kind of neglect of children as well as incidents that could lead to the intervention of special protection measures;
- b) creating and developing specialised services for the rehabilitation and special protection of child victims of neglect, with a view to improving their chances for full and harmonised development;
- c) combining effort at the level of the regional social assistance and child protection general directorates, by developing a set of procedures and setting up multidisciplinary and interinstitutional teams, including community consultative councils, to intervene in cases related to the neglect of children whose parents work abroad;
- d) developing a set of measures and procedures that address the needs of children whose parents work abroad in order to facilitate the accomplishment of necessary skills for their educational, professional and social integration;
- e) sensitising public opinion with a view to improving general attitudes and behaviour concerning the specific issue of the neglect of children whose parents work abroad;
- f) efficiently administering the human and financial resources within the child special protection system.

At least 20 consultative community councils are to be established and at least 10 specialised services (counselling and information centres) are to be set up for preventing and combating the neglect of children whose parents work abroad. This should allow at least 200 children to have individual service plans developed and to benefit from these new specialised services. In addition, a set of intervention procedures will be developed and at least 20 professionals will be trained in intervention. The budget for 2007 is RON 1 278 000 (approximately EUR 385 000).

Project 4, 'promoting minimum compulsory standards in the field of child protection and monitoring the respect for children's rights', aims to increase the quality of childcare provided by staff working in services to prevent children being separated from their parents and in those services that protect children who have been separated, by:

- a) disseminating the minimum compulsory standards in the field;
- b) creating a professional training system, at regional level, to support the ongoing training for staff working in services to prevent children being separated from their parents and to provide special protection services to those children who are separated;
- c) promoting multidisciplinary and interinstitutional intervention for the benefit of the child, by using the case management method;
- d) supporting activities to monitor the respect for children's rights;

- e) supporting professional training (with a view to accomplishing the minimum compulsory standards in the field of child protection) and finalising the projects within the national interest programme No 4/2006.

At least one regional training centre for professionals in the field of protection and promotion of children's rights will be established. This will allow 47 professionals to be trained to evaluate minimum compulsory standards in the field of child protection and at the same time, to monitor the level of respect for children's rights. In addition, at least 150 professionals will be trained on case management and at least 150 cases of children's rights infringement will be monitored by the Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection. At least 30 services to prevent children being separated from their parents and 30 services to provide special protection to those children who are separated, will be evaluated for compliance with the minimum compulsory standards. The budget for 2007 is RON 1 390 000 (approximately EUR 420 000).

Project 5, 'sustaining the foster parent network for the special protection of children up to two years of age who temporarily or permanently lack parental protection', aims to create area offices to sustain the foster parent network, established through the national interest programmes, for a six-month period, by:

- a) promoting the right of children from birth to two years of age, temporarily or permanently lacking parental protection, to emergency special protection or placement in foster parent care;
- b) monitoring the evolution from birth up to two years of age for children in foster care by using the individual protection plan with the objective to reintegrate the child in the biological family, integrate the child in the extended family or ensure national adoption;
- c) preventing the long-term, unjustified hospitalisation of children from birth to two years of age who have been abandoned by their families in clinics or hospitals;
- d) preventing child abuse and neglect from birth up to the age of two.

At least four counselling and support centres for parents and children and at least 23 foster parent service area offices for children up to two years of age, will be established by the counties participating in the 2005 national interest programme 'creating professional foster parents for the emergency protection of children from birth to two years of age separated from their family' and at least 46 social assistants in these area offices will offer support services (information, counselling, etc.) to the foster parents they monitor. At least 190 individual care plans, with the objective of reintegrating the child into the biological family, the extended family or national adoption, will be developed. The budget for 2007 is RON 1 700 000 (approximately EUR 500 000).

Project 6, 'developing a network of community social services for children and family and sustaining families in crisis with a view to preventing the separation of children from their family', aims to promote the child's right to be cared for within their family and/or extended family, by:

- a) preventing the separation of children from their family in crisis situations (eviction, natural catastrophes, loss of employment, etc.);
- b) developing a services network to prevent the separation of children from their family (day centres, counselling and support centres for parents and children, assistance and support centres for children with psycho-social problems, monitoring services, assistance and support for pregnant women at risk of abandoning their child, etc.);

- c) continuing the decentralisation process at local council level, by supporting the establishment and development of public social assistance services in municipalities and towns, as well as employing people with social assistance duties within local commune councils;
- d) finalising the projects within the national interest programme No 6/2006;
- e) setting up consultative community structures.

At least 50 services to prevent the separation of children from their families are expected to be established in at least 10 counties, 200 people with social assistance duties should be employed at the level of local commune councils and 200 consultative community structures should be set up. Objective criteria to select families that benefit from the support of social assistance and prevention services will be developed, allowing 600 children and their families to benefit from service plans to prevent the separation of children from their families and to have access to social assistance services and community social services. The budget for 2007 is RON 6 392 000 (approximately EUR 1 900 000).

### *2.1.3. National interest programme 2006*

Government Decision No 532/2006, approving the 2006 'National interest programme for the protection of children's rights' (Official Journal No 411/2006) contained the following six projects:

1. establishing family-type placement centres — houses and apartments — for children living in institutions with a capacity of more than 100 places that had not been restructured into family-type modules (budget RON 3 492 000 = approximately EUR 1 000 000);
2. developing alternative services for children with disabilities/handicap/HIV/AIDS (budget RON 2 260 000 = approximately EUR 650 000);
3. developing a specialised services network for child victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation (budget RON 1 217 000 = approximately EUR 350 000);
4. promoting the minimum compulsory standards of care in the field of child protection and monitoring respect for children's rights (budget RON 1 324 000 = approximately EUR 380 000);
5. sustaining the foster parent network for the special protection of children up to two years of age that temporarily or permanently lack parental protection (budget RON 1 619 000 = approximately EUR 460 000);
6. developing the network of community social services for children and families and sustaining families in crisis, with a view to preventing the separation of children from their families (budget RON 6 088 000 = approximately EUR 1 750 000).

### *2.1.4. National interest programme 2005*

Government Decision No 166/2005, approving the 2005 'National interest programme for the protection of children's rights' (Official Journal No 221/2005) contained the following six projects:

1. socio-professional integration of children within the protection system (budget approximately EUR 600 000);
2. developing day care/rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities/handicap and/or closing old-type institutions that could not be restructured/rehabilitated (budget approximately EUR 1 500 000);

3. reintegrating and providing support to repatriated children or child victims of trafficking (budget approximately EUR 215 000);
4. preventing and fighting child labour exploitation (budget approximately EUR 150 000);
5. training professional foster carers for the emergency protection of children from birth to two years of age, separated from their families (budget approximately EUR 900 000);
6. preventing the separation of children from their family in crisis situations and supporting the child's reintegration in the extended family by allocating emergency material support for a maximum period of three months (budget approximately EUR 770 000).

## 2.2. Other main policies

The 'National strategy for child protection and the promotion of children's rights' (2006-13) complements the activities of the following other main related policies, for which the National Authority for Child Protection is either responsible or is a partner institution.

### 2.2.1. Other national strategies

- 'National strategy for the protection and social inclusion of disabled people', 2006-13. (Government Decision No 1175/2005, Official Journal No 919/2005)
- 'National strategy and action plan to prevent and fight domestic violence', 2005-07. (Government Decision No 686/2005, Official Journal No 678/2005)
- 'National strategy to supervise, control and prevent HIV/AIDS infection', 2004-07, which includes three main areas of intervention: prevention of HIV transmission, access to treatment, care, social and psychological support services for HIV/AIDS infected people and vulnerable groups, and monitoring the risk factors that influence the evolution of the HIV infection. (Government Decision No 1342/2004, Official Journal No 865/2004)
- 'National Strategy regarding migration' proposes promoting the admission and legal residence of foreigners on Romanian territory through the implementation of adequate legal provisions aligned to EU standards. (Government Decision No 616/2004, Official Journal No 406/2004)
- 'National strategy regarding the integrated management of Romania's borders' (2004-06), proposes the adoption of European Community principles to ensure an increase in Romania's security by tightening border security and improving the cross-border flow of permitted persons. (Government Decision No 471/2004, Official Journal No 325/2004)
- 'National strategy to improve the situation of Roma', 2001-10, aimed at strengthening the political objectives and increasing the responsibility of the central and local authorities to implement the actions to improve the condition of the Romanian citizens with Roma ethnic origin. The strategy also views the promotion of intellectual and economic Roma elite to function as facilitator of the social integration and modernisation policies as well as to help eliminate the stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices. (Government Decision No 430/2001, Official Journal No 252/2001)

### 2.2.2. Other national actions

- The 'National action plan to implement the national anti-drug strategy', 2005-08, includes collaboration with the child protection system for preventive actions addressing the family and community by providing training for parents, information and public awareness campaigns. (Government Decision No 323/2005, Official Journal No 376/2005)
- The 'National action plan for implementing legislation on the protection of children's rights', 2005-08, ensures a common understanding and common implementation perspective for the actors involved in implementing legislation on the protection of children's rights. (Government Decision No 1058/2005, Official Journal No 856/2005)
- The 'National action plan to eliminate the labour exploitation of children', 2004-07, includes central and local action to identify exploited child labour, interinstitutional intervention for children and families, close monitoring at central and local level and prevention measures. (Government Decision No 1769/2004, Official Journal No 1028/2004)
- The 'National action plan to prevent and fight child sex abuse and the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes', 2004-07, includes objectives and actions in accordance with Romania's commitments following the 'World congress against commercial sexual exploitation of children' at Stockholm (1995) and Yokohama (2001) focusing on changes in legislation, national and international cooperation for the rehabilitation and integration of child victims of abuse and exploitation, along with preventative actions and monitoring. (Government Decision No 1504/2004, Official Journal No 878/2004)
- The 'National action plan to prevent and fight child trafficking', 2004-07, contains specific measures for child victims of national and international trafficking to be coordinated by the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection, including:
  - creating a national database to include comprehensive information on internal and international child trafficking;
  - developing the national network of emergency protection and assistance centres;
  - developing the framework regulations for the organisation and functioning of the emergency centres network and the minimum compulsory standards.
 (Government Decision No 1295/2004, Official Journal No 802/2004)
- The 'National action plan on anti-poverty and the promotion of social inclusion', contains objectives and actions to support the local authorities with the elaboration and implementation of anti-poverty and the promotion of social inclusion programmes. It is a long-term strategy which envisages the development of a social action culture increasing the capacity to identify and solve social problems by eliminating the social exclusion sources and ensuring access to social services. (Government Decision No 829/2002, Official Journal No 662/2002)

### 2.2.3. Other related legislation

- Law No 7/2007 regarding family support for child raising (Official Journal No 33 of 17 January 2007).
- Government Decision No 5/2007 concerning the indexation of the monthly level of the guaranteed minimum income and the newborn child allowance as per Law No 416 on the minimum income guarantee.
- Law No 482/2006 regarding a newborn child allowance.

- Law No 193/2006 concerning gift and crèche vouchers.
- Government Decision No 31/2006, concerning the conditions, licensing and inspection procedures for services to prevent the separation of children from their families, as well as services for the special protection of children temporarily lacking parental protection.
- Government Decision No 1231/2005 concerning financial support for students in the school year 2005/06 within the national social protection programme 'High school money'.
- Government Decision No 882/2005 to update the amount of milk and croissants provided to I-IV grade pupils and preschool children attending the state education system.
- Ministerial Order No 756/2005 regarding the coordination of the activities to prevent child abandonment in hospitals/clinics, including in newborn and paediatric wards.
- Emergency Ordinance No 28/2005 changing and completing Law No 269/2004 concerning financial support for students to buy a personal computer.
- Ministerial Order No 123/2004 approving the organisation and operational regulations of the sub-group to coordinate and evaluate activities to prevent child trafficking.
- Ministerial Order No 80/2004 approving the methodology for developing individual protection plans for children.
- Government Decision No 1443/2004 concerning the methodology for the repatriation of unaccompanied Romanian children and establishing special protection for these children.
- Government Decision No 1442/2004 concerning services and activities run by private Romanian bodies in relation to internal adoption procedures within Romania.
- Government Decision No 1439/2004 regarding specialised services to deal with children who cannot be held legally responsible, committing penal crimes (entered into force on 1 January 2005).
- Government Decision No 1438/2004 approving framework regulations for the organisation and operation of services to prevent the separation of children from their families, as well as services for the special protection of children temporarily lacking parental protection.
- Government Decision No 1437/2004 concerning the organisation and operational methodology of the Commission to protect children's rights.
- Government Decision No 1434/2004 concerning the duties and the regulatory framework for the organisation and functioning of the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection.
- Government Decision No 1436/2004 differentiating expenditure categories for taxes imposed by the Romanian Adoption Office on services to complete international adoption procedures within Romania.
- Government Decision No 1435/2004 approving the implementation methodology of Law 273/2004 on adoption.
- Government Decision No 1432/2004 concerning the organisation and operation of the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights (entered in force 1 January 2005).
- Law No 272/2004 regarding the protection and promotion of the children's rights (Official Journal No 557 of 23 June 2004).
- Law No 273/2004 regarding the legal framework for adoption (Official Journal No 557 of 23 June 2004).
- Law No 274/2004 regarding the organisation and operation of the Romanian Office for Adoption. (Official Journal No 557 of 23 June 2004).

- Law No 41/2004 approving the Government Emergency Ordinance No 105/2003 concerning complementary family allowance and the single parent support allowance.
- Law No 217/2003 to prevent and fight domestic violence.
- Government Decision No 1177/2003 approving the amount of food provided to people infected with the HIV/AIDS virus.
- Law No 584/2002 concerning prevention measures to stop the spread of AIDS in Romania and to protect people infected with the HIV /AIDS virus.
- Joint Ministerial Order No 725/2002, 12709/2002 concerning criteria to establish the degree of child disability in order to implement special protection measures for these children (Official Journal No 781 of 28 October 2002).
- Law No 678/2001 concerning the prevention and fight against human trafficking.
- Law No 114/1996 regarding housing (Official Journal No 254 of 21 October 1996).
- Government Decision No 591/1993 concerning the measures to implement the provisions of Law No 61/1993 on the payment of a state child allowance.

## **2.3. Policy analysis**

### *2.3.1. Housing*

The housing law from 1996 gives local councils the responsibility to provide social housing. It states that the right to rent social housing is granted to families who for the previous 12 months have had an average net income below the income level which entitles them to social assistance. Furthermore, the councils should prioritise social housing for certain groups of person such as young married couples (each up to 35 years of age), young people leaving institutional care (at 18 years of age), people with grade I or II disabilities. The law also states that the level of the rent will not exceed 10 % of the family average monthly income calculated on the last 12 months. The difference up to the nominal rent value will be subsidised from the local budget of the territorial administrative unit where the social housing is located. However, social housing is almost non-existent through the local councils and waiting lists take years to be dealt with.

To help alleviate the demand for housing, the National Agency for Housing was established, with the objective of building affordable housing for young persons aged 18-35. The agency does not build social housing. However, the apartments the agency rents or mortgages are affordable for young people with well-paid jobs. The National Housing Agency has committed to build 7 000 apartments for renting to young people during the next two years. The agency estimates that about 3 500 apartments can be built each year and a further 1 500 houses can be built via mortgage credit. Since 2000, the agency has built about 1 500 housing through mortgage credit and over 16 000 housing units for young people to rent. In 2007, the agency plans an investment of EUR 210 million to build 9 500 housing units for young people to rent (EUR 140 million from the CEB and EUR 70 million from the Romanian State). The agency currently has about 100 000 outstanding rental requests from young people.

### 2.3.2. Education

Early school leaving has been linked to the educational attainment and employment status of the head of the family, ethnic origin, area of residence and poverty status of the family. In some situations, parents have occasional jobs on the black market and often involve their children in these activities, resulting in a low school attendance.

Many children attend only compulsory education and do not increase their opportunities of accessing the labour market by attending vocational/professional training or post high-school education. This is partially due to availability and affordability issues.

Preschool education is a key element for social inclusion and contributes to reducing school drop-out rates, but there are numerous issues relating to quality, availability and affordability. Formal preschool education needs to be made more widely available and developed from an educational perspective.

Granting access to education for children with special needs is important, as education is one of the main elements that allows for social inclusion. In this respect, programmes have been developed to stimulate the school enrolment of children with special needs in special education, but their enrolment in the regular education system is also encouraged, where possible (which is the main reason for the decrease in the number of children enrolled in special education in recent years).

The reform of the education system suffers from two main issues: a lack of funding on the one hand and significant differences in the quality of education and school participation rate between rural and urban areas on the other. A number of actions are being taken to ensure equal and improved access to education, providing:

- increased access to education for disadvantaged groups with a focus on the Roma population,
- improved access to education in rural areas,
- a daily food supplement for all pupils (croissant and milk) including preschool education, to encourage school participation, especially for children coming from low-income families,
- scholarships for students (orphans, students having health problems, students coming from poor families, students from rural areas attending school in a different area from their home),
- school supplies for students coming from low-income families (less than 50 % of the minimum wage),
- financial support to pupils coming from poor families, by increasing access to social scholarships and the national programme 'High school money', which encourages pupils that come from disadvantaged families to continue education after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade based on a monthly scholarship of RON 180 (approximately EUR 50),
- remedial classes for pupils who are illiterate, have had their schooling interrupted, etc.

### *2.3.3. Health*

Government priorities regarding children with HIV/AIDS are directed towards the allocation of more resources for the treatment and social protection of those already infected, as well as prevention, through education and counselling. Close collaboration between all the local and national partners is required for these children to overcome the associated stigma and discrimination and to have access to elementary rights such as health and education. Increasing the awareness of decision-makers at local level with regard to the education, professional and social integration of young people living with HIV/AIDS is essential.

### *2.3.4. Employment*

According to recent information from the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights, many children whose parents work abroad develop behavioural problems that make them easy victims of abuse or delinquency. The lack of parental care/guidance has negative effects resulting in school abandonment and social problems. Recent amendments to legislation are designed to help prevent the neglect of these children through support services for children and families and a commitment to better monitor the phenomenon. As a result, people applying to work abroad who have children in their care are required to inform their local council and nominate a person to look after the children during their absence. This is a requirement for all employment contracts obtained through the Office of Labour Force Migration.

### *2.3.5. Social services*

A 2005 study on the situation of abandoned children in Romania, by the Ministry of Health and Unicef Romania, shows that many mothers who abandon their children are very young, uneducated and live on the verge of poverty. In recent years, new institutional structures have been created, both centrally and at the local level, including services for children and families in difficulty, and services to provide support to mothers at risk of abandoning their child.

It is believed that children are abandoned because of poverty. But since poverty is not the only cause for child abandonment, financial support for families has to be associated with additional abandonment prevention methods (support services for child and family, as one reason why many children with disabilities have been placed in institutions is the absence of specialised services in the vicinity of their home). In order to be effective, the prevention of abandonment needs to go hand-in-hand with the prevention of abuse and neglect within the family (counselling, support for training/re-training, job seeking, support in crisis situations, etc.).

Romania's high child abandonment and infant mortality rates have similar causes: a lack of information/education for mothers (and fathers); limited access to basic medical and social services; discriminatory attitudes; poor communication between the parents and professionals in the health and social services departments; and a high instance of extreme poverty.

By the end of 2006, as a result of the de-institutionalisation process, over 170 large child protection institutions had been closed down and alternative accommodation services had been developed, consisting of 467 apartments, 361 family-type homes, 132 institutions restructured into apartments and 180 classic style institutions (68 of which still care for over 100 children). In addition, 578 alternative services were established to help institutionalised children find new homes and help prevent the

separation of children from their families. These services are funded by county and city councils and consist of:

- 99 day care centres/services for children from families in difficulty,
- 90 day care centres/services for disabled children,
- 60 mother and baby centres,
- 59 counselling centres/services for parents/carers,
- 47 continuing support services for young people over 18 in further education,
- 38 family placement/rehabilitation/reintegration/preparation centres,
- 31 counselling/prevention and treatment centres for maltreated, abused or neglected children,
- 23 monitoring, assistance and support services for pregnant women at risk of abandoning their child,
- 21 centres/services for street children,
- 20 supervisory services for children who have committed offences,
- 20 counselling and family planning mobile services,
- 14 supervisory services for street children,
- 13 counselling centres for abused mother and baby/domestic violence,
- 8 emergency services for children with behavioural disorders,
- 8 support services for children in exercising the right to free expression,
- 3 support services for children in exercising their rights,
- 3 counselling and drug addiction prevention centres,
- 2 therapy and support mobile services for disabled children in foster care,
- 2 emergency and support services for mothers with children with special needs,
- 2 prevention and supervision services for children/students in schools at risk to commit offences,
- 2 services for life skills development,
- 13 other, unspecified services.

#### 2.3.6. *Social protection allowances*

Most of Romania's social protection allowances are directed towards families on small incomes. The value of these social allowances is adjusted periodically, in accordance with the consumer's price index, to prevent it losing value. Most social allowances are means-tested and differentiated in order to better answer the needs of individual families, but still need to be more balanced with additional support facilitating access to health, employment services, parent education, information on rights, etc.

Increased focus on an integrated and well-coordinated approach with effective collaboration between central and local authorities, media, public and private institutions in the fields of health, education and justice, will help in breaking the poverty cycle for future generations. Raising awareness of society in general — about the issues that children and young people face while living in varying degrees of poverty and the consequences of different actions — will help to involve more actors in fighting and preventing their social exclusion.

Only recently the integration of child protection policies with policies concerning the family and social assistance policies has been reflected in new legislation and administrative structures. Individual service/protection plans now include services for both the child and the family and also state the assistance that children and families are entitled to — e.g. newborn allowance, state child allowance, supplementary family allowance, single parent support allowance, child placement allowance for children in the special protection system, etc. — as there are still children who do not benefit from these allowances because they or their parents are not aware that these are available.

Social protection policies to ensure adequate income include:

- From 1 January 2007, the national minimum wage is RON 390 (EUR 118) per month. Under normal conditions, the minimum wage could sustain a person living on the edge of poverty. From 1 January 2007, maternity payments (a monthly payment to provide better protection during maternity and child raising for up to two years, or three years for children with disabilities) is RON 600 (approximately EUR 180). In 2006, a monthly average of approximately 186 000 mothers received maternity payments, but only women earning below average wages consider this payment to be a 'benefit'. Before 2002, maternity payments were equivalent to 85 % of the mother's most recent income. Since 2002, maternity payments consist of a fixed monthly allowance, slightly higher than the monthly average net salary, regardless of the mother's income. This allowance is a strong incentive for many non-working and low-income women of childbearing age to favour child raising above employment. Higher-earning professional women often cannot afford to stop work to raise children, since these women are more likely to depend on their higher incomes and the monthly maternity allowance is insufficient, for example, to repay their mortgage. The net result is that the pro-birth policy<sup>2</sup> encourages more children to be born into poorer households and actually discourages above-average earners (typically those with a higher level of education) from bearing children until they achieve a level of financial security.
- From 1 January 2007, the newborn child allowance (a one-off payment) is RON 204 (approximately EUR 60). In 2006, 184 477 mothers benefited from newborn child allowances. From the same date, the monthly child allowance is RON 25 (approximately EUR 7.50). For the first two years (three years in the case of a disabled child) the monthly child allowance is RON 200 (approximately EUR 60). In 2006, a monthly average of 4 270 759 child allowances were granted to 1.48 million families (which averages 2.89 children per child-bearing family). These two child allowances are universally available and do not specifically target those at-risk-of-poverty. After the first two (or three) years, the value of the child allowance is very small and therefore provides the most support to very low income families.  
Since 30 August 2006, heating allowances are means-tested, i.e. based on family income. The rules state that if the net, average monthly income per family member is less than X Lei, the family will have their centralised heating (such as district heating) bill compensated by Y %.

X (RON)	125	170	210	250	290	345	390	440	500
Y	90 %	80 %	70 %	60 %	50 %	40 %	30 %	20 %	10 %

Single persons receive 10 % more compensation than families, and families and individuals who benefit from social allowances based on the guaranteed minimum income have their heating bill 100 % compensated.

<sup>2</sup> Law 7/2007 regarding family support for child raising, states that maternity payments are available for each of the first three births. Payments are not provided for subsequent births.

If the net, average monthly income per family member is less than X (RON), families who use natural gas as a fuel for heating will be compensated up to Z (RON), but not exceeding the value of their gas bill.

X (RON)	125	170	210	250	290	345	390	440	500
Z (RON)	210	130	110	90	70	50	35	25	15

Families or individuals who receive allowances based on the guaranteed minimum income are entitled to a heating allowance (of RON 50 per month during the cold season) if they use wood, coal or fuel oil for heating. In 2006, a monthly average of approximately 1 472 218 families benefited from heating allowances — approximately 35 % for district heating, 41 % for natural gas and 24 % for oil and solid fuels.

Since this allowance is means-tested, it targets lower income families, although the benefits are significantly greater for urban families using centralised heating networks and much less for families in rural areas who typically use wood, coal or fuel oil for heating.

- From 1 January 2007, the guaranteed minimum income — a minimum income threshold established by the government and based on family size — is a monthly income of:

RON 96 (approximately EUR 29)	for a single person family
RON 173 (approximately EUR 52)	for a two-person family
RON 241 (approximately EUR 72)	for a three-person family
RON 300 (approximately EUR 90)	for a four-person family
RON 356 (approximately EUR 107)	for a five-person family
RON 24 (approximately EUR 7)	for each additional person

The amount of allowance paid is equal to the difference between the guaranteed minimum income and the net family income. For example, a three-person family with an income of RON 150 will receive a social allowance of  $241 - 150 = \text{RON } 91$  per month.

The guaranteed minimum income is means-tested, based on income, household possessions and land ownership and is conditional on the beneficiary being involved in community work (in order to discourage inactivity). It is therefore a highly-targeted allowance, identifying those at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion. Approximately 380 000 families, or 5 % of the population, received this allowance in 2005. There remain a number of equity issues with this allowance. Some families who should be entitled to receive this allowance are victims of implementation ambiguities, bureaucracy, a reduced administrative capacity or lack of local financial resources or information, especially in poorer rural areas. On the other hand, some families who have been granted this allowance may neglect to report a change in circumstances, especially concerning occasional, undeclared income. The guaranteed minimum income offers a minimal safety net for families who are truly dependant on this allowance, as a typical beneficiary family would still live in extreme poverty.

From 1 January 2007, complementary family allowance —an amount given if the average net monthly income per family member is less than RON 176 (approximately EUR 50) — is a monthly payment of:

RON 36 (EUR 10.80)	for a family with one child
RON 42 (EUR 12.61)	for a family with two children
RON 47 (EUR 14.11)	for a family with three children
RON 52 (EUR 16.62)	for a family with four or more children

In 2006, more than 650 000 families received complementary family allowance.

From the same date, single parent family support allowance (an amount given if the average net monthly income per family member is less than 176 (approximately EUR 50) is a monthly payment of

RON 52 (EUR 16.62)	for a family with one child
RON 62 (EUR 18.62)	for a family with 2 children
RON 70 (EUR 21.02)	for a family with 3 children
RON 79 (EUR 23.72)	for a family with 4 or more children

In 2006, almost 250 000 single-parent families received this allowance.

These two family allowances are means-tested and highly targeted. Because these allowances target low-income families their value, despite being small, is significant. However, the allowances provide little additional support for families with more than one child.

## 2.4. Recommendations

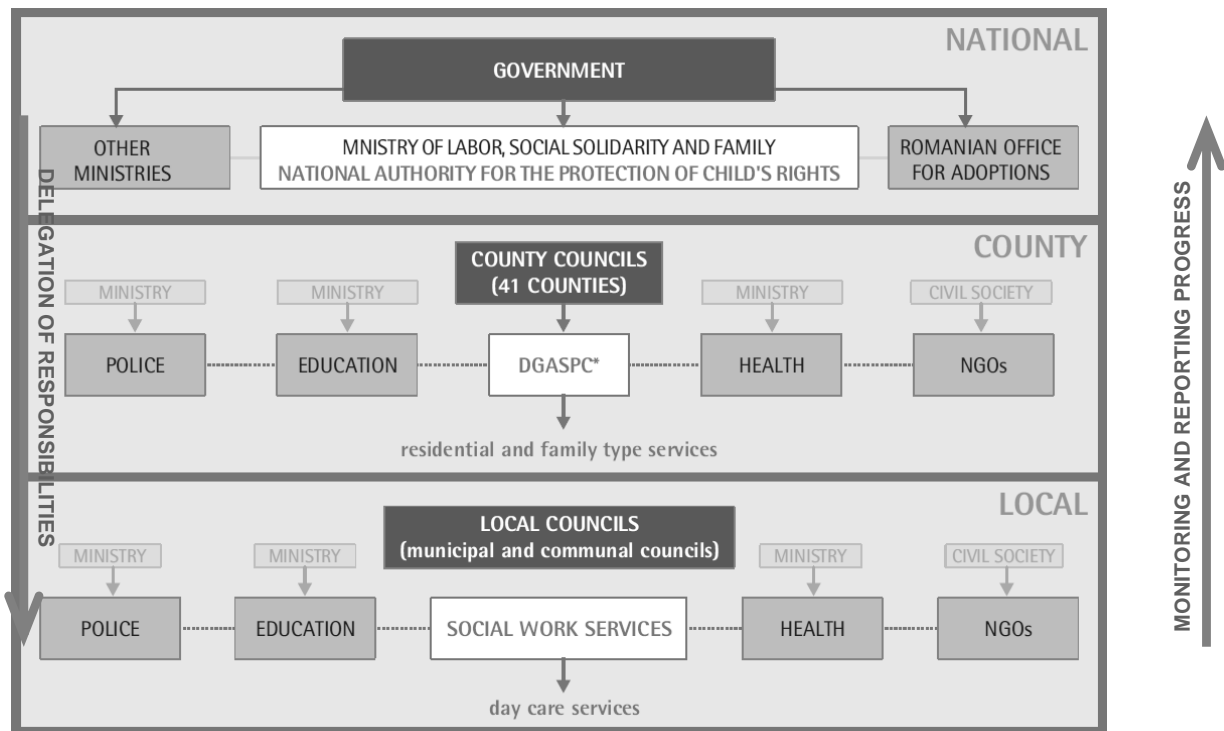
Recommendations about areas to focus effort in order to strengthen policy implementation include:

- Initiating programmes to monitor children's rights and publicising any infringements of these rights.
- Ensuring an integrated approach — taking into account all the related issues influencing a child's development, including health, education, social protection and activation (employment) policies — to address poverty and social exclusion issues. It is essential to build institutional capacity and staff professional competencies (for health, social, education, etc.) in order to be able to ensure an integrated approach to the problems of the most disadvantaged, including educating parents on issues related to health, education and child and family protection.
- Developing policies to create alternative services in the field of social assistance, education, health/community care, particularly focusing on the development of services at community level with increased involvement of the local leaders on issues related to public health, family planning, identifying risk situations, maintaining the child within the family environment, etc. There is a need to focus more on prevention rather than cure by establishing a more effective protective environment rather than a recuperative environment that does not always succeed in healing the wounds.
- Focusing even more attention to prevent separation of the child from his family providing support for families and especially young mothers (abandonment).
- Ensuring sufficient (needs-based) resources for families to provide the best care to their children, including financial and material support (access to food, clothing, housing, education, medical services, recreation).

- Attention to the need to reconcile family and professional life, ensuring increased access to support measures and services that provide childcare in accordance with the current developments on the labour market. For instance there is a high demand for nursery school places that charge an affordable price, whereas currently there is a very limited supply, even in the private sector.
- Creating a safe environment for children by developing mechanisms to protect them against violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Training and in-service training for the staff working with children to ensure better needs assessment with clear objectives and individual care plans that are regularly monitored and evaluated ensuring the child's participation.
- Ensure proper, on-going follow-up support for children and young people leaving the institutional care system.
- Basing the residential care system on standards and using objective bodies to monitor and assess these standards.
- Ensuring child and family participation in the decision-making process and offering choices based on updated information.

### **3. Monitoring the implementation and impact of policies**

Romania's policy monitoring process has been established and is operational. The necessary institutional structures centre around the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights, which delegates monitoring responsibilities to the county and local-level institutions. The County Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection are subordinated directly to the County Councils and are responsible for service provision, but are also involved in the authorisation and evaluation of services provided by other organisations (i.e. in certain circumstances they are responsible for both service provision and service evaluation). The following diagram indicates the relationships between central and local government in terms of policy implementation and monitoring mechanisms for issues relating to child poverty and the social inclusion of children.



Source: *Child welfare in Romania — the story of a reform process*, The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights.

Notes: \* DGASPC: County Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection. The Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family has recently changed its name to the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities. The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights coordinates and monitors the implementation of the 'National strategy regarding the promotion and protection of children's rights' (2007-13). County-level child protection commissions are also subordinated to the County Councils and may intervene in certain cases (e.g. deprivation of a child's rights or maltreatment) to decide whether or not a child should be removed from their parents.

Although links at national level (i.e. interministerial links) are established, links at local level (i.e. between the local police, schools, healthcare centres and NGOs) need to be improved by establishing clear roles and referral procedures to prevent delays in assuming responsibilities. This is also partly due to the need for an improved level of human and material resources. There is also concern that the pressure placed on local authorities to meet the demand for services (both in number of beneficiaries and diversification of services) is stretching resources to the limit and may result in a decrease in the quality of services being provided.

The services that some NGOs provide have begun to fluctuate, depending on the financing programmes available, as it is often the (international) financial donors who unwittingly dictate an NGO's activities, rather than the real needs of local communities — e.g. this may lead to an NGO abandoning a successful service due to lack of financial support, and instead pursuing a flavour-of-the-month service because financing is temporarily in abundance.

On 1 July 2006 the Directorate to Monitor the Children's Rights was set up within structure of the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights. The main objectives include:

- monitoring the implementation of children's rights, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to provide information on the progress in the field of child protection and promotion of children's rights;
- maintaining a national system to monitor the children's situation, to plan, implement and evaluate the necessary interventions to ensure child welfare.

The establishment of this child rights monitoring unit is a big step forward and a quarterly monitoring report has been developed, containing a series of routine indicators designed to monitor the way children's rights are being respected/disregarded. The monitoring reports will contain information on children at risk, services available, access to existing services, the level of professional training for staff, etc. and should be useful for both public institutions and NGOs. The first report is due to be available in mid 2007. However, improved data collection, setting clear targets and deadlines for project implementation and close monitoring of whether objectives have been achieved are also important measures to ensure positive results.

The local child protection monitoring services have duties that include:

- centralising and summarising the specific information resulting from the daily activities of the child protection departments within the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection;
- collecting, merging and monitoring data related to children with disabilities, children in centres for children with special needs, children in placement centres or day centres, children in accredited private care provision units within local area, children in difficulty whose parents are resident within local area, children benefiting from services supplied by the child protection department;
- collecting data regarding children benefiting from services provided by the local child protection department, into the national Child Monitoring and Tracking Information System (CMTIS) database;
- receiving and referring service requests coming through the hotline system towards specialised services provided by local child protection departments.

The local child protection monitoring units issue regular reports including:

- monitoring fiche regarding the activity of the child protection departments (within the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection) — submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- monthly report regarding the up-to-date situation of children placed in foster care who benefit from the placement allowance — submitted to the Directorates for Labour Social Solidarity and Family;
- monthly report on the situation of children abandoned by their parents on medical wards, submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- monthly report on the situation of children within the special protection system, disappearing or running away from the service providers — submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- monthly report presenting the solutions for cases reported through the hotline system and referred to the local child protection departments;
- quarterly reports on children lacking parental care while their parents are abroad at work — submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- quarterly reports on the situation of domestic violence cases — submitted to the Directorates for Labour Social Solidarity and Family;
- quarterly reports on the situation of under-age children in social protection units lacking an identity card, under age children who are not registered with the population records and persons aged 18 years or over who are not registered with the population records — submitted to the population record local community public service;

- quarterly reports on the situation of services and staff within the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection — submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- quarterly reports on monitoring the re-evaluation of all children within the child protection system and NGOs providing childcare services — submitted to the National Authority for Children's Rights Protection;
- annual report regarding the main social indicators in the field of social assistance;
- specific statistical data concerning the activity of the Child Protection Departments within the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection;
- synthesis, analysis and studies regarding various aspects related to the protection of children's rights.

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<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

Unicef Innocenti Research Centre

<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/research/>

National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights

<http://www.copii.ro/>

Campaign to promote child's rights

<http://www.drepturilecopiilor.ro/>

Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities

<http://www.mmssf.ro/>

Save the Children, Romania

<http://www.salvaticopiii.ro/>

Ministry of Education and Research

<http://www.edu.ro/>

National Statistics Institute

<http://www.insse.ro/>

The Ministry of Justice — National Penitentiary Administration

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