

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT ON THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN

<sup>1</sup>DIANA MÂRZA, <sup>2</sup>ALINA CRISTIAN

<sup>1,2</sup> "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu

**Abstract:** The article highlights the family environment of origin of the institutionalized children of Romania and the effects that it exerts on their integration in society.

**Keywords:** family, institutionalized children, integration  
**Rezumat:** Articolul evidențiază mediul familial de proveniență al copiilor instituționalizați din România și efectele pe care acesta le exercită asupra integrabilității lor în societate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** familie, copii instituționalizați, integrare

## INTRODUCTION

The family is considered to be the "cell of society" and it consists of a group of people between which there are legally certified rights and obligations: marriage, adoption, kinship or other situations assimilated to the family relationship, guardian, family placement, etc.

There are two fundamental types of families according to the role of their structure:

- Normal families, typical, which are lawfully constituted, and made up of both parents and children divided into two or more generations between which there are several relationships.
- Abnormal families, atypical, which do not include an element of structure: parents, children, those without children, without a parent - single parent families or even without both parents.(1,3)

A child's personality is shaped in the family and thus the initial emotional environment in which the child grows up helps him to substantiate the concept of society in which he develops.(2)

In 1996 a study was conducted on the causes of children institutionalization in Romania which showed that 70% of the institutionalized children between 0-3 years came from maternity hospitals and paediatric hospital wards. Over the years alternative services have been established and developed that provide basic services to families that experience difficulties in staying together and in keeping children in the bosom of the family. New types of residential centres have been set up, following the abolition of many of the old institutions. The impact of the child protection reform is evident in the statistical data indicating a significant decrease in the number of abandoned children.

- children abandoned in hospitals:

- in 2003 -5130 children
- in 2004 -4614 children
- in 2005 -2580 children
- in 2006 -2216 children

(Source: Romanian statistical yearbook 2006)

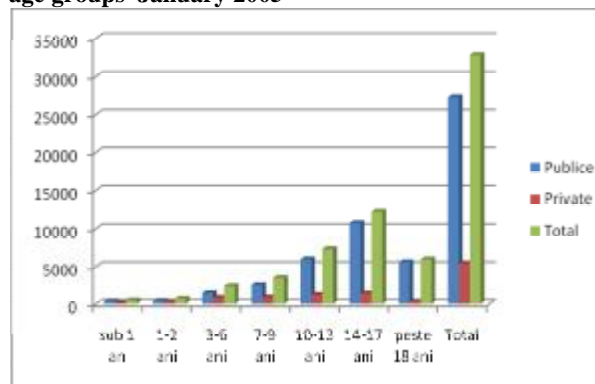
Institutionalized children are placed in a position to face the challenges of life and try to survive at the emotional level. They are in a constant search of safety and sense of belonging, trying to understand why they do not have opportunities to live like other children do, together with their families.(4)

In Romania there are more than 5.600.000 children aged 0 to 18 years, of which approximately 1.5% are registered with the Specialized Public Services for Child Protection.

Number of children by age group (years) in foster care centres – January 2005

- Public
- Private
- Total
- under 1 year
- 1-2 years ....
- over 18 years

**Picture no. 1. Number of institutionalized children per age groups–January 2005**



In February 2007, the number of children in substitute families or in institutions amounted to 73.913 of which

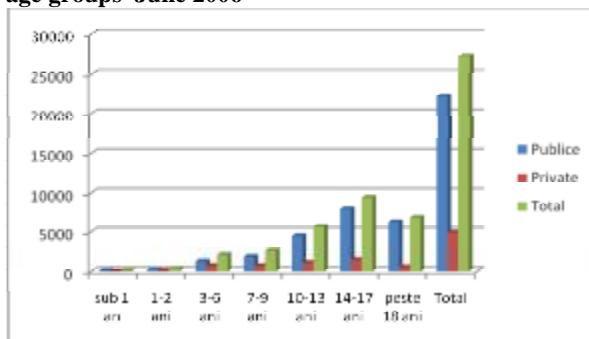
- 47.746 children are cared after in substitute families
- 26.167 children are cared after in foster centres

## ESSAYS

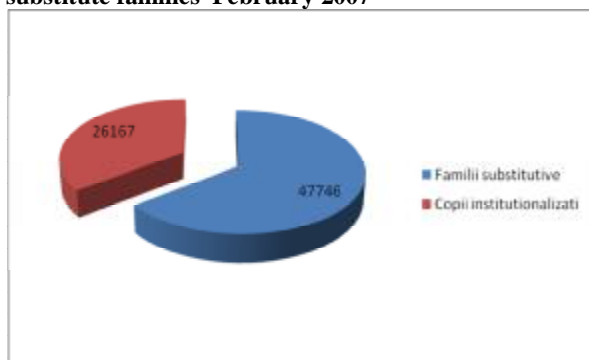
Number of children in substitute families or in institutions in February 2007

- Substitute families
- Institutionalized children

**Picture no 2. Number of institutionalized children per age groups–June 2006**



**Picture no. Number of instituionalized children or in substitute families–February 2007**



### CONCLUSIONS

- Children who are left in the state's care cannot cope with life experiences and there comes a time when they feel overwhelmed by the evolution of society because they do not have enough security.
- The unstable family environment can lead to emotional instability and to a low capacity to understand and adjust to the surrounding world.
- Institutionalized children withdraw in an exclusive interior world in which they develop their own ways of understanding people, things and phenomena around them.
- Substitute families successfully contribute to the reintegration of children in society

Changes resulting as a consequence of initiating reform programs of child protection systems are clearly beneficial both by decreasing the number of children in institutions but also by increasing their educational level.

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