GÜNTER VERHEUGEN

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Focus on Romania
Mr. John Mulligan
3, Kirkfield Cottages
Clonsilla Road
Dublin 15
Ireland

Dear Mr. Mulligan,

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2002, by which you express your concern about the situation in the camin spital of Negru Voda in the judet Constanta (Romania).

As I wrote to MEP John Cushnahan, MEP in the year 2000, the general issue of childcare in Romania is a serious and difficult problem, which cannot be solved overnight, and to which the Commission has devoted considerable funds, most recently under the Phare 1999 Programme for Child Welfare Reform with a budget of 25 M €. Under this programme over a hundred projects on child welfare will be implemented by the local authorities, sometimes in partnership with non governmental organisations.

However serious the situation in some camin spitals might be, I do not consider it justified to base one's opinion on Romania's child welfare policy by focusing on one institution. On average, conditions in camin spitals have improved over the last years. In July 2001, the responsibility for camin spitals has been decentralised to the local Departments for Child Protection. Therefore, the camin spitals have now been included in the general strategy for child protection, and gradually children can be moved to a more appropriate environment. A number of old style camin spitals will be closed this year, and consequently children will be moved to smaller-scale facilities with better conditions (also thanks to Phare funding).

In my view the Romanian Government has shown commitment to address the situation in camin spitals as a priority, by making it an integral part of the decentralised Child Welfare system. As for adults in similar situations, the Romanian Government is working on a national strategy for handicapped persons.

Yours sincerely,