

MORO Denise (CAB)

From: SCHMITT Diane (CAB)
Sent: mercredi 18 avril 2007 18:57
To: MORO Denise (CAB)
Subject: FW: Recent Domestic Romanian Press on Child Care Failings

Attachments: Antena1 13-4-07 Convicted from birth.pdf; Jurnalul 16-4-07 Children Thrown Back.pdf

Cabinetto del Vicepresidente									
FRATTINI									
VP	CP	NC	AB	LS	SB	SS	KK	DOS	FS
PA									
PI									
19. 04. 2007									
N°: 1408									

From: robin@frodokids.org [mailto:robin@frodokids.org]

Sent: Wednesday, April 18, 2007 6:43 PM

To: FRATTINI Franco (CAB); SCHMITT Diane (CAB); CAVADA Jean-Marie (EP); GIBAUT Claire (EP); ANGELILLI Roberta (EP)

Subject: Recent Domestic Romanian Press on Child Care Failings

Dear Commissioners and MEPs,

One of the specified areas in Romania to be monitored by the EU post-accession was point 16 of the report by MEP Moscovici on 27/11/06: to "carry out monitoring, from 1 January 2007, of the reforms undertaken on adoption and child protection in Romania:"

In recent years, the Romanian government (and a few MEPs) have often voiced scepticism over foreign media reports of child care abuses, stating that they were old reports or shown out of context, and reiterating that Romania is now able to care for it's own abandoned children and that the problem was grossly exaggerated.

As you will read in the attached, the Romanian public is now crying out for help.

I have attached translations of two recent reports relating to material child care failings.

I will phone your offices tomorrow to ensure you've received these e-mails.

1. Antena 1, the leading TV station in Romania, "Convicted from their birth"

This report makes 3 observations in Mures County, a medium sized county, of which there are 42, in Romania: a) abandonment continues at a "terrifying" rate, b) children are staying for many months in hospital, and c) 1 child in 45 are able to be adopted domestically.

Note: In recent weeks Romania passed a law making it illegal for maternal assistants (foster parents) to adopt children in their care. The justification was to maintain the number of maternal assistants. Passage of this law caused outrage among maternal assistants, charities, psychologists and many social services professionals who commented that this law was not in the interest of the child or maternal assistants.

2. Jurnalul National, the leading newspaper in Romania, "Reintegrations – Children Thrown Back to their Parents"

This report observes that the Romanian governments program of "Reintegration" of abandoned

9/04/2007



children is often not undertaken in the interests of the child, but, this paper argues, is "in the interest of the Child Protection Services."

The result, they argue *"is a worse curse than the orphanage"*, and often results in severe child abuse. Cases are cited of children who were sent back to parents who used the children for prostitution and torture. The newspaper has promised to publish further reports in the coming days.

Furthermore, the newspaper has stated that their statistics in 16 of 42 counties found substantial discrepancies in the number of children returned to families. In Jurnalul's words, *"the figures seem to be something out of the Communist era, indicating a success rate of 99.999%."*

The newspaper commented on EU involvement:

"Romanian authorities have been trumpeting wonderful statistics before the European Commission, while the commissioners in their turn didn't seem to have anything else to do except to congratulate Romania on her reports."

Ultimately, our objective is not to complain in order to embarrass the Romanian government. Our goal is to provide you with information to enable you to act. Because we believe that the government of Romania respects the EU and EC leadership, and will respond to stewardship and advice from you to correct the areas where they are failing.

We wish to be involved in helping Romania to find a way, but until the EU and EC follow through on their promise of monitoring, underline failings and say "Stop", change will come slowly, and too many children will continue to suffer.

Sincerely,

Robin Nydes

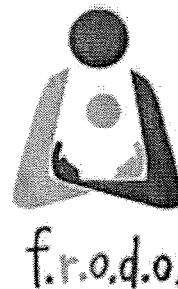
Robin Nydes
Founder and Chairman

Foundation for the Relief of Disabled Orphans

Charles House, 4th Floor – C1
375 Kensington High Street
London W14 8QH

robin@frodokids.org
Charity no: 1114639
Tel: 020 7602 7946 – Fax 020 7471 5586

www.frodokids.org



"Improving the quality of life for, and providing hope to, physically and mentally disabled orphans in developing countries."

Frodo is also the Spokesperson for www.romaniachild.org, an association of charities providing assistance to children in need in Romania.

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Convicted from their birth.

A lot of babies are abandoned in the maternity hospitals. Some of the causes are the poverty and the lack of information. In Mures county 90 babies were abandoned in the last year.

Mariana (reporter) is speaking about the tragedy of these children:

“The number of abandoned babies in the maternity hospitals is terrifying. According to the statistics for the last year, once in four days a baby is abandoned by the mother in the maternity hospital immediately after the birth. Lots of these babies are spending their first months of life in doctors’ care because their mothers are disappearing. In the mean time, just half of the babies were reintegrated in families and a quarter of them are in care of the maternal assistants. Only one child has the chance to be adopted. The rest of them are waiting for their destiny to be decided.”

This is also the case of Marius, a four month old baby boy abandoned after his birth, but he is now the pride of the Maternity Hospital from Tirgu Mures where everybody is taking care of him. Marius didn’t know in his first four months of life his mother’s love even for one day. The one who brought him to life abandoned him in the maternity hospital immediately after his birth. Now he has lots of mothers: the maternal assistants who are taking care of him day by day. “We are taking care of him as he would be our own child. We fed him 3-4 months with milk formula provided by hospital, says Dr. Eugenia Liphart, from the Clinic of new born babies. After that, we struggle to find something for him in the hospital’s kitchen”.



Article from Jurnalul National April 16, 2007

REINTEGRATIONS--CHILDREN THROWN BACK TO THEIR PARENTS

by: Alex Nedea and Paula Anastasia Tudor In the last four years, 15,000 children left placement centers and were reintegrated in their families, but many have returned to hell. After reintegration, no one cares anymore what happens to these children. These are children who have been taken out of orphanages and returned to their parents because that's what the law from the EU says. These kinds of reintegrations are the price Romania must pay for her entry into the EU. Jurnalul National will present a series of articles about the destiny of these children which Europe marked out with a curse worse than the orphanage--reintegration. We will present a series of articles about the sickness of the system of child protection. It is a system with all the vices of Communism inside European skin.

Ana is 11 years old and her "reintegration according to European standards" is a nightmare which she has lived with for four years, that is, since she was returned to her natural family. Her father allows the neighbors to go to bed with her if the father receives 5 cigarettes or a swallow of alcohol. The mother forces her to sleep overnight with a handicapped man from the village. The mother receives \$8 for the "services" which this eleven year old girl provides for the man.

In another case, Bogdan was taken back home after his mother was given promises that she would receive \$72 per month if she took him back.

The European Union wanted us in their family, but only if we didn't drag the orphanages along with us. They demanded that we find solutions for children who were in orphanages. Our four options were limited to: smaller orphanages, placement with maternal assistants, internal adoptions, or go back to the parents. But especially this last option was insisted upon. The children were forced back to those very same parents who abandoned them without batting an eye. Romania submitted to EU directives and began mass reintegrations. But behind the statistics which are spoken of to Brussels as "a model of success for the protection of children" (as Prime Minister Tariceanu has also said) there hides a painful reality which is not seen on the papers which are sent to Brussels. For the EU, cases like Ana's are merely statistics.

Every report which was submitted to the European Commission before Romania's entry, emphasized the necessity of the progress which needed to be made in the area of child protection. In 2004, the European Commissioners "dictated to us" (these are the terms used by the head of the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, Bogdan Panait) the terms of law 272/2004 which is the current legislation "regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of the child". The wishes of the EU regarding the reintegration of children from placement centers is the letter of the law.

A representative and social worker from the county offices in Bacau county tried to give this conclusion, "Much responsibility is placed on the parents." Well, this social worker could have chosen to look at a case from her own community, a case of amazing "responsibility". A natural father ended up sending both his children to his hospital because he had beaten them to a pulp. In less than a year, despite the fact that this father is notorious for these things and has a criminal



case against him, the children were sent back to this same parent who tortured them before. But they are reintegrated into their family. Only six months after the birth of the first child, this father had broken the baby's leg.

In the cases which the Jurnalul National newspaper will present in the following days, it will be shown that reintegrations are done hastily and superficially. Why do the authorities hurry so much?

Because of European directives? Because such integrations are really "in the best interest of the child"? Or maybe, they are in a hurry because such reintegrations are, in fact, in the "best interest of the CPS's". A child reintegrated in his family shield the CPS's from huge expenditures.

According to data from the NAPRC, on the 30th of June there were 27,000 children in orphanages.

Another 24,000 were in foster care with extended family. According to this same source, over the last four years, there were nearly 15,000 reintegrations. One third of the integrations, actually took place in 2003, when 4,800 children were put back in their families. The number of reintegrations continued to fall as Romania got closer to entry into the EU, thus in 2006, only 3,000 cases of reintegration took place. The huge difference between the reintegrations among the different counties is bizarre. Heading the list for 2006, was Vrancea county where 400 children were taken back to their families, while Timis brought up the rear with 0. Mehedinti county and Covasna county were near the tail end with 2 and 4 returns respectively. NAPRC representatives maintain that these figures come from the various county CPS's. We didn't quite believe them and so we selected 16 (out of 42) counties at random to give us their statistics for reintegrations. In general, the figures that we received were much, much lower than those reported by the national governmental authorities. Their figures were greatly inflated. I also asked the local county CPS directors for the number of children who returned to the system because they did not adapt to the situation with their biological parents. The figures to us seemed to be something out of Communist reports in that the rate of success is nearly 99.999%. In Mures county, of the 1,100 reintegrations, only 16 children were returned to the care of the state. According to the Alba, only 1% of reintegrations failed. In Buzau, 20% of the children were returned to the orphanages because they could not integrate with their natural families.

Romanian authorities have been trumpeting wonderful statistics before the European Commission, while the commissioners in their turn didn't seem to have anything else to do except to congratulate Romania on her reports.

The commissioners responded to Romania's country report in 2003 by saying, "Romania has continued to make significant progress in the area of child protection. More than 86,000 children from public institutions are now placed in families and there are only 37,000 remaining in institutions.

Bogdan, who lived for 14 years in an orphanage in Vrancea county, was forcibly taken back to his mother who had been laid off from work. She had never visited him in all his years in the orphanage.

This child had been tricked by the social worker to go along on the trip because the social worker told him that it was simply a visit to his parents, after which they would come back to the orphanage. However, the boy was simply abandoned at the gate of the house. Now the boy



seems to be traumatized. He quickly found words to describe his integration, "They simply threw me back at my parents." It should be understood that we really didn't torment ourselves very much to find cases like Bogdan's. We simply went to the villages without knowing what we would find, but in the majority of cases of children who were reintegrated, we found that the Mayor's offices had recommended to the CPS that these children NOT be taken back to their parents for various reason, yet in not one case did the CPS take into consideration the recommendations of the local community authorities. They went on the principle that having started these reintegrations, they must be completed somehow no matter what the people say who live daily with the biological parents.

When we told the assistant director at Bacau CPS that in two cases out of three we looked at, his institution didn't take into account the home study done by the Mayor's office. He looked amazed and said, "Have we done something wrong?" That something has surely happened in Vrancea where a child was forcibly taken back to him family despite a declaration from the Mayor's office that this not be done because of the results of the home study. This home study showed that the biological mother had no way to raise the child and that she wanted him in state care. However, it appears that CPS Bacau knows better than the Mayor's office or the mother, because in short order the boy was taken back to the very parent who didn't want him.

This is a mockery of the children by the authorities in these reintegrations. According to law 272/2004, article #70, these children are to be monitored for three months from the date of reintegration. However, we found cases where it appears that the monitoring was done through telepathy because from the day the child was taken back to the parents, no one had made any visits.

When I called this to the attention of one of the social workers, she rudely replied, "We made our report, what do you want, that we should sleep in the house with them?" In other cases, the reports were simply falsified, thus hiding a very painful reality. One of the proofs which is a witness against these forced reintegrations, is that of an American missionary who has worked for more than five years with reintegrated children in Romania. "Many times these monitoring reports don't at all show the true problems which are there. One apartment to which a child was taken back was absolutely filthy, but the report said, 'this is a nice, spacious apartment with a wonderful view of the Danube'. Yes, through the missing walls of the apartment, there was an open view of the Danube, but this apartment has no electricity, no running water, no heat, and there is not even one parent present during three out of the four weeks of the month. The children go to the bathroom using plastic bags."

