



Balkan countries and KINSHIP CARE

Serbia- North Macedonia-Bosnia and Herzegovina

EUROPEAN PRIDE TRAINERS CONFERENCE 2021.

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ZOOM PLATFORM

Balkan countries and Kinship care



Until the 1990s, these three countries were part of the one state -Yugoslavia.

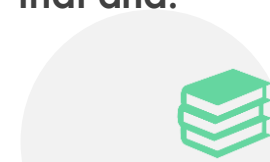
Their co-habitation lasted more than half a century



In the Balkan, for many centuries been an “unwritten law” on the obligation of close relatives to take care of children who happened to be left without parental protection due to wars, natural disasters, extraordinary family tragedies or other specific issues



Similar cultural background and traditional values have also influenced on development of the concept of caring the children without parental care in that area.



Former Yugoslavia had developed system of protection children without parental care based more on residential placement, but some regions had long tradition in foster and kinship care of children.

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Specific phenomenon in Balkan

From the early 1970-s last century thousands of citizens from former Yugoslavia, young people and couples, left own country and children, due to rising unemployment and the opportunity to find work in Western European countries



Grandparents and/or close relatives took care of the (grand)children with all the responsibilities and risks that this role imposed. It was specific sort of kinship caring, regulated on family agreements.

The state authorities never officially recognized, regulated or supported this specific way of (kinship) familycare

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- ▶ In previous slide we **introduced one curiosity of care** observed on these areas, came by the relatives,

but

really **kinship care** as well foster care **are based on absence of parental care** caused by the **loss** of one or both parents, the breakdown of the marital union, loss due to illness, family conflicts, violence, etc.

Background-letters and numbers

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Republic of Serbia

Foster care in Serbia has a long tradition – officially since 1937 in the famous village Milosevac, where the families opened the doors of their homes to” orphans”

After 2000, in Serbia, reforms of social welfare included alternative care

Today – we have well developed foster care, about **5600** children and youth placed at the end of 2020.

Among them, **1079** are in kinship foster care (about 20%)

1061 children is placed in guardian families' accommodation without compensation, but with other forms of support

Differences in the level of state support and monitoring

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Republic of Serbia

Significance of kinship care recognized in Serbia through the legal solutions:

- **Family Law**
- **Law on Social Protection**
- **Rulebook of Foster Care**

The rights of children in kinship foster care **equalized** with the rights of children in foster care

Kinship foster families are in the **system** of selection, training and licensing of foster-families

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CENTERS FOR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

- **Seven regional centers for foster care and adoption**, provide services for slightly less than **2/3 children**
- **Preparation, education and selection** of foster families
- **Ongoing support to children and foster families** during the fostering
- **Monitoring** of foster families
- **Promotion** of foster care

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THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN FOSTER CARE:



- **Compensation** for child support
(enhanced when child has developmental difficulties)
- **Counseling** and other forms of professional support
- **Other benefits on the national and local level** - pocket money, transportation to school, compensation for school supplies, for vacation, scholarships, support for leaving care etc...



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THE RIGHT'S OF FOSTER CARERS



- **Financial compensation for the work of foster carers** (it is not recognized to closest relatives as kinship families)
- **Ongoing profesional support** in strengthening their competences for foster care
- **Ongoing training** of foster families is provided during foster care
- **Psychosocial support in crisis**

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KINSHIP FOSTER CARE – DIFERENT PERSPECTIVES



- **Child** - I want to live with my relatives - grand parents / aunt / uncle, not to be “case” in social care
- **Relatives** - We need support, but also we want to maintain our privacy as family and our way of life
- **Professionals** - Family connections are important, but can we rely on relatives with such hard family history



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- ❖ Kinship foster care **is not completely legally defined** as a separate kind of foster care
- ❖ That gap is now overcome by the **Guidelines for kinship foster care**
- ❖ Initiative for Changes **in Rule Book on Foster care**
- ❖ **PRIDE values** which can connect different perspectives and be base for the adequate approach to foster families

Background-letters and numbers

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The beginning of foster care dates back to 1961 when the first foster family was registered in the country.

Later in 1979, this form of care was formalized and regulated through a sub-legal act which defines the conditions that the foster parents were supposed to meet.

Foster families are concentrated in the capitol Skopje. With the start of the deinstitutionalization in 2000, the network began to spread to other towns in the country.

In the period 1995-2005, placement with close relatives was identified as placement within "other family". Kinship caregivers received compensation for the costs of accommodating a person and compensation for the childcare.

The 2019 Law on Social Protection formally recognizes kinship care, formally identifying it as a separate type of foster care.

In the period 2005-2019, the social protection legal framework did not formally foresee/regulate kinship care.

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- The new 2019 Social Protection Law sets the legal framework for all social services and service providers;
- Legal framework in the country foresees the licensing of service providers;
- One of the “**out of family” services** according to law is a **foster care**;
- Foster care is divided on: general, specialized, occasional, interventional and **kinship care**;
- According to law, **kinship care** means protection of a child without parents and without parental care in the family of his grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, uncle or aunt;
- Apart from the Law on Social Protection, the standards and norms for the kinship care are elaborated in a sub-legal act (by-law);
- The new law, for the first time, foresees the establishment of Foster Family Support Centers, tasked to provide professional assistance and support to foster and kinship families;

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Background-letters and numbers



- In North Macedonia, 91 kinship foster families are registered that provide placement for 119 children without parental care. Kinship families are present in 21 cities in the country;
- According to kinship relation of placed children with caregiver, most are placed with **grandparents (46%)**, then **uncle (23%)**, **aunt (13%)**, and **sister (6%)**;

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Background-letters and numbers



Key statistic indicators for kinship families:

- **29%** are over the age of 60;
- **32%** are with secondary education;
- **18 %** have incomes between 81 – 244 euro;
- **out of 91**, 38 are unemployed;
- **out of 91**, 24 are with secondary education;
- **out of 91**, most are women (55);
- **out of 91**, (71) kinship families fully meet the spatial requirements for a kinship care;

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Advantages of Kinship Care



Advantages of kinship care:

- Kinship care provides care in the **wider biological environment** of the child that is in the interest of every child;
- It enables fast two-way adaptation, firm emotional connection, established communication that leads to a greater sense of security, familiar living environment, existing social network of support and so on;
- Kinship care **contributes increasing security, belonging, identity building, continuation of family history and reducing stress and trauma in the child;**

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Advantages of Kinship Care



Advantages of kinship care:

- losses are prevented and continuation of child development is secured;
- cultural identity is ensured;
- calm and non-turbulent period of placement and adaptation;
- easy and quick adjustment;
- children can easily express their feelings, fears, desires, needs in various life situations;

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Key points of kinship care support

- Development of a “Child Support Plan” and measures for child protection;
- Strengthening the competencies of the kinship caregivers;
- Supporting the development of the child according to needs (health, education, upbringing, behavior, social environment, contacts and relations, etc.);
- Supporting the contacts of a child with family of origin and preparing for his/her reunification;
- Supporting and connecting kinship caregivers with community services and institutions;
- Building a partnership and mutual cooperation with all parties involved in childcare;
- Psycho-social support and counselling.

Background-letters and numbers

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Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

From 1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) consisting of two entities and a district:

I Administrative unit „Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina" (FBiH, approx. 51% of the area), divided into 10 cantons and 79 municipalities. These cantons have their government, ministries and authorities.

II Administrative unit „Republic Srpska" (RS, about 49% of the area) with a centralized government and 62 municipalities.

III District Brčko, a separate district with its government and leadership

EVERY ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT HAS ITS LAW FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION.

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Foster care as protection of children without parental care was **identified** as **placement in other family**

In 1978 Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina formalized and regulated this form of care through a Law on Placement of children in other families which regulates conditions of placement of children and as well obligations of foster parents

From 1995 Foster care, as one of the forms of alternative care for children is regulated in domestic law:

1. **Republika Srpska:** Social protection Law through sub-legal act Rulebook on Foster Care;
2. **Federation BiH:** Foster Care Law;
3. **Brčko District:** Social Protection Law as a accommodation in another family

It is a form of protection that consists of taking care of a child outside biological family, in another - a foster family, in which he is provided with protection, care and assistance.

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In Federation BiH placement in kinship families from 1999 – 2017 was regulated within Social protection Law **as placement in „another family“**

This Law did not recognize compensation of cost for placement of children and compensation for childcare to kinship caregivers

2017 in Federation BiH was adopted Foster care Law

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Foster care Law which has been in force since **March 2018**, **unlike other laws in the field of social protection**, does not differ from canton to canton, regulates the right to place children without parental care in another family and foster care development in those cantons of FBiH where this has not been the case so far.

This enables equal quality and access to foster care services throughout the FBiH, equal identification procedures and a uniform method of selection and education of foster carers, as well as a unique system for monitoring the work of foster carers.

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The new law in FBiH is also important because it equalizes foster care benefits for child and foster parents throughout the FBiH

Centers for social work in FBiH (79) are the carriers of implementation of Foster care Law and have obligation to promote Foster care on local level.

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The Law on Foster Care also determines the obligatory continuous education of foster parents, which was not the case before.

In the period from 2017 – 2021 in cooperation between Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and SOS Children's Villages B&H **was conducted training of foster and kinship families according to the licensed international PRIDE model of education**

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**Republic of Bosnia
and Herzegovina**



Result of this proces is that in FBiH today there are more than 300 certified foster parents (162 kinship families) and 38 PRIDE trainers (21 trainers from CSW) in the field of foster care

Benefits of this process have about 240 children placed in foster families

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Despite all improvements that new framework in Foster care system in FBiH brought there are still lacks that are related to kinship caregivers – they do not have right on foster care allowance

80% of kinship caregivers are grandparents and in practice, it has been shown that grandparents who want to accept grandchildren into foster care sometimes do not do so because they **live** on a minimum pension (190,00 EUR) and are afraid that they will not be able to afford a normal life for their children.

„**Grey zone**“ – centers for social work find a way to provide support to kinship caregivers in matter of foster care allowance

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Kinship (foster) care exists for a long years, it is recognized and used form of family based care **in region of Balkan, but still is not enough formally regulated** trough the official state frameworks, as an natural way of overcoming absence of parental care and supporting and recommending by the state.

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Recommendations

- **Improving the legal framework** in Kinship care (equal rights with foster parents);
- **Development and improvement of supervision**, as a form of support for Kinship families;
- **Introduce a “Peer support”** as a model of good practice;

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Recommendations

- **Ongoing support of service providers** to kinship families (centers for social work, foster care agencies, NGO's, Associations...)
- **PRIDE in-service modules use in practice on regular basis**
- **Awareness raising about the significance and importance of family based care (kinship care)**

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Thank You for Your
Attention



The family is crucial for the child's development!
Despite of the different circumstances that lead to the need
to place the child in another family, **it is crucial for the
child to stay in the familiar environment**, if it is possible.
It is an opportunity for one less trauma.
I am **IN MY FAMILY!!!**

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