

Child Welfare Reform





Until 1997
Centralized system for Child Protection

- Overlapping responsibilities of government structures (MoE, MoH, MLSP, etc);
- Services for children limited at residential care in institutions;
- Institutions for infants (0-3) having a strictly medical approach and those for 4-18 having a limited educational approach;
- Large institutions with large numbers of children

ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Initial situation (1997):

- **Children in:**
 - **Infant homes (Ministry of Health) – 58 institutions; 9,309 children**
 - **Children's homes (Ministry of Education) – 230 institutions; 35,165 children**
 - **Schools for children with special needs (Ministry of Education; 238 institutions, 47,107 children**
 - **Other institutions – 54 institutions, 2,818 children**
- **Total: 580 institutions, 98,872 children**



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Characteristics that triggered the reform

- Noncompliance with child rights
- Severe social effects
- High costs, with escalation trends
- Negative image with repercussion on other fields
- Inadaptability of the system, incapacity to face the needs





Child Protection

- **National priority – firm commitment of Romanian Government**
- **UN Convention on the rights of the child**
- **Political criterion in the process of Romania's accession to the EU**
- **Chapter within the process of Romania's accession to NATO**



Principles of Reform

- **Reform of the legal framework for child welfare and protection**
- **Decentralization of financial and administrative responsibilities from central to local level**
- **Promoting community-based services and family type alternatives**
- **Increasing the role of the civil society and the participation of NGOs**



1997

Beginning of the reform process

- **Decentralization of services and delegation of responsibilities to the local (County) authorities;**
- **Reducing the duration of stay of children in institutions;**
- **Reducing the number of children in institutions and changing the environment to one closer to the “family type” environment;**
- **Developing prevention and alternative services**

ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Legal, institutional and administrative reform steps

- Establishment of a single central authority in charge with coordination, strategy, regulation
- Analysis of existing situation; issuance of strategy
- Adoption of new framework legislation
- Decentralization and creation of local structures (County Child Protection Directorates with Specialized Public Services for Child Protection)
- Adoption of punctual legislation (NGOs' accreditation, foster care, adoption, standards for services etc.)
- Transfer of institutions to the responsibility of the local (County Council) authorities



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Difficulties facing the reform

- Lack of institutional capacity and mechanisms
- Difficult coordination of the institutional actors
- Lack of expertise and specialists for NGOs and local authorities
- Incomplete or inadequate legislative and administrative framework
- Bureaucracy
- Different paces of various related sectors (e.g. Health, Education, Social Protection) in achieving decentralization
- Lack of adequate informational system

 **ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE**

Challenges and risks

- Risk of failure due to over ambitious objectives and lack of adequate resources
- Overlapping or divergence of objectives between programs (e.g. Phare, World Bank)
- Perpetuation of negative image in media
- Tendency to preserve old institutions; resistance to change
- Lack of reliable data on institutionalized children and children at risk
- Frequent changes of legislation, decision makers etc.
- Slow or no replication of best practices



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Specific characteristics of the new approach

- Financing based on competitively selected local projects
- Separation of child welfare from education, health etc.
- Systemic approach and local dynamic (Local strategies developed in line with the National Strategy; Local implementation of services tailored to the local needs)
- Long-term child welfare solutions, in the interest of the child (emphasis on family, social integration etc.)
- Developing services addressing needs at local level, allowing for proactive intervention in the community for prevention



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

Preliminary results of the Child Welfare Reform Project (Dec. 2001)

Type of institution	No of children May 1997	No. of children Dec 2001
Infant homes	9,309	21,859
Children's homes	35,165	
Schools for children with special needs	47,107	23,563
Other type of institution	2,818	4,543
Total	98,872	49,965

 **ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE**

Other results of the Project, as of Dec 2001

- Reduction of entrances into institutions with 19.9%
- Increase of outflow from institutions with 48.9%
- Increase to 35.3% the percentage of the central budget for child protection allocated for alternative community based services
- Incorporation of expertise from subprojects in various programs like PHARE 1999, National Interest Programs (2000, 2001, 2002)
- Transfer of competencies to the local administration

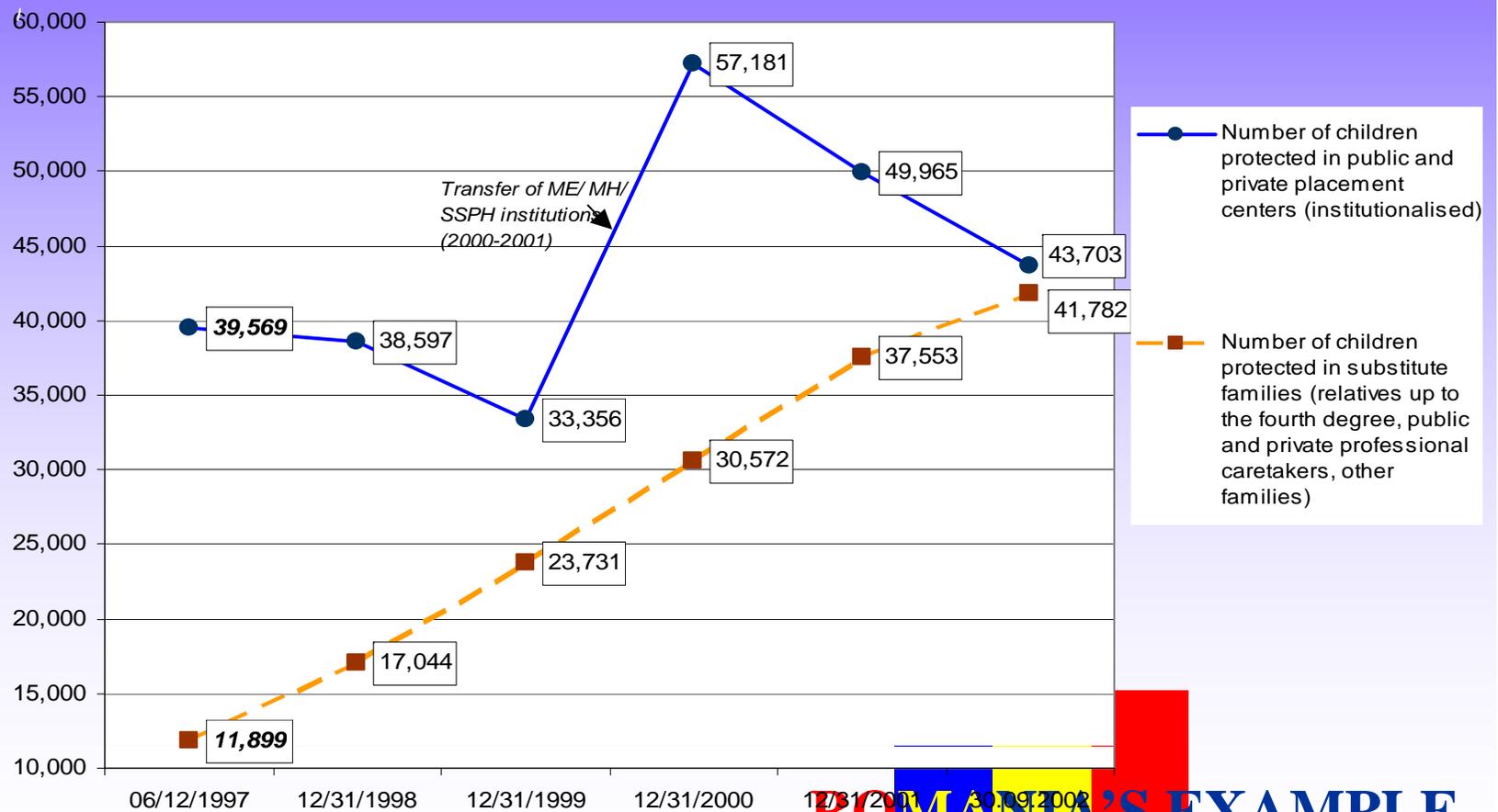




NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION

Specialized Public Services for Child Protection

Number of children protected in family type care and in placement centers 06/12/1997 - 09/30/2002



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE

06/12/1997 - the beginning of the reform of the child protection system in Romania, through Emergency Ordinance no. 26/1997 regarding the protection of children in difficulty; Law no. 3/1970 was abrogated;

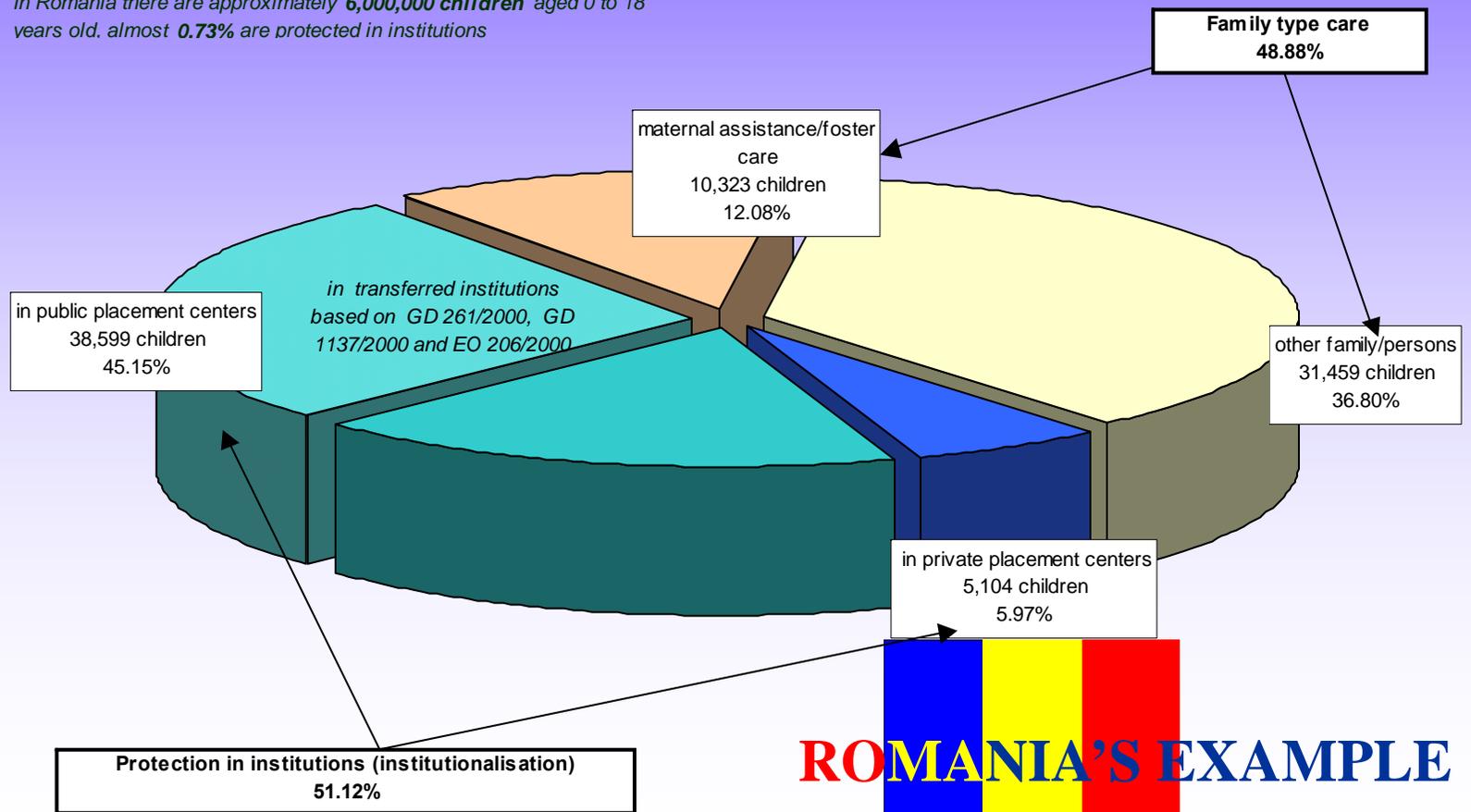


NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION

Specialized Public Services for Child Protection

Number of children temporarily protected in substitute families and in placement centers - active cases at 09/30/2002

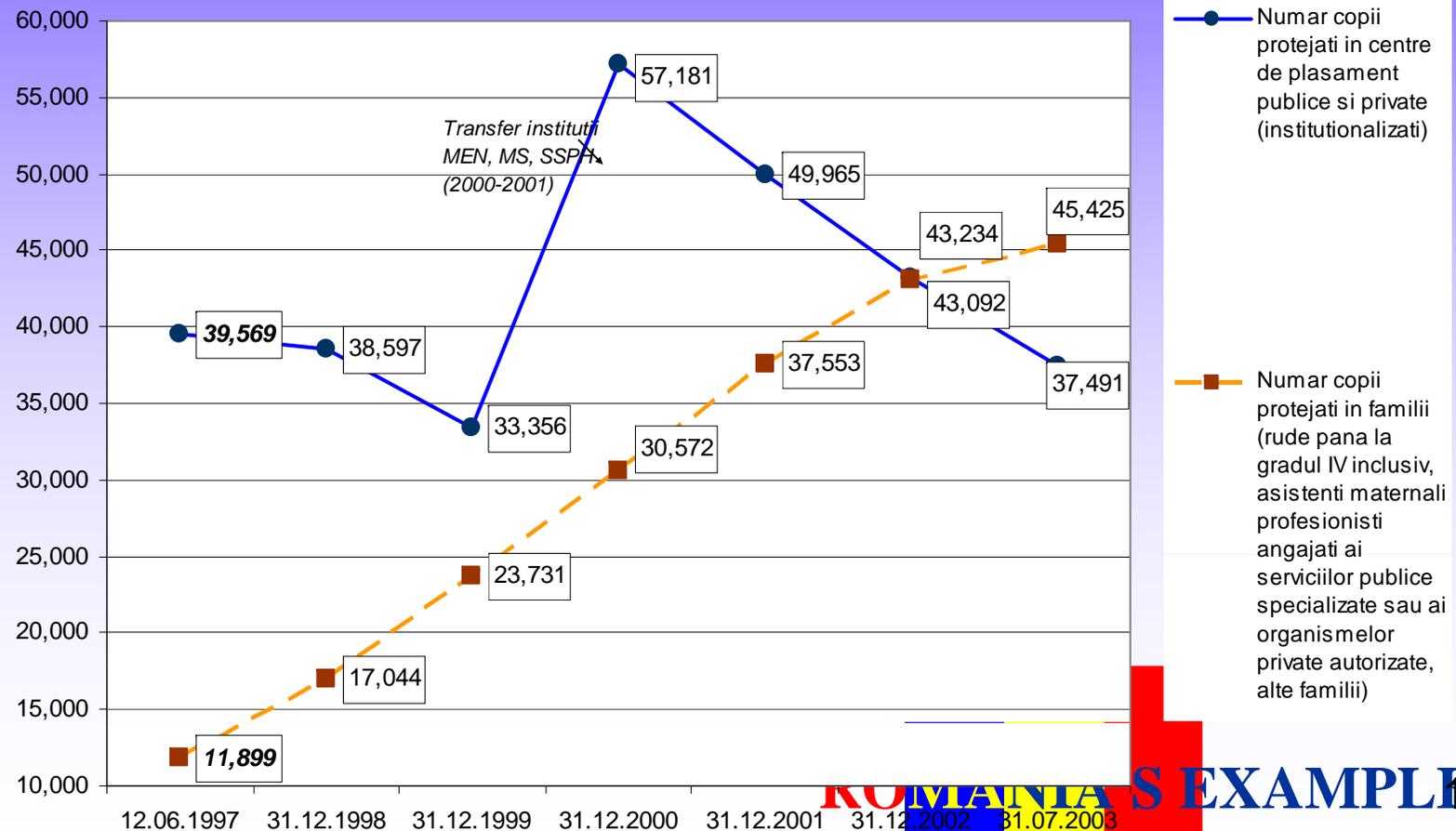
In Romania there are approximately **6,000,000 children** aged 0 to 18 years old, almost **0.73%** are protected in institutions





Specialized Public Services for Child Protection

Evolution of the number of children in residential care and in family care 12.06.1997 - 31.07.2003



12.06.1997 - reforma protectiei copilului (OUG 26/1997)

Key elements for success

- Recognition of the problem, allocation of adequate resources and generalization of good practice
- Systemic approach, decentralization, cooperation with civil society
- Establish priorities in elaboration of legal, administrative and institutional framework
- Keeping the momentum of the reform
- Keeping the possibility to intervene in crisis situations, for limited period of time
- Institutional capacity building

 **ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE**

Advantages of the new child welfare system

- Increased quality of child welfare services
- Sustainability, adaptability and credibility of the system
- Facility in initiating new programs, including attraction of external funds



ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE



NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND ADOPTION

Priorities in the Field of Child Protection – 2003

- **Preventing abandonment;**
- **Continuing the development and diversification of community services, the restructuring or closure of old type residential institutions;**
- **Continuing the integration into mass education of children attending special education;**
- **Global and unitary approach of child protection issues, in the spirit of the UN Convention;**
- **Strengthening the institutional capacity of the DCP – all child care issues, including children with handicap living in families;**
- **Harmonizing/ correlating the reform processes;**
- **Partnership with civil society.**

ROMANIA'S EXAMPLE