



Европейски съюз

GRANT CONTRACT

No. BG 051PO001-7.0.02-006-C0001

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy



Европейски социален фонд

Project “Transnational Network for Child and Family Support and Deinstitutionalisation of Child Care”

The project is implemented with the financial support of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union

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Organisation/institution/ individual	Equilibrium Association - Ruse
Partners	Municipal authorities, regional units involved in social policy and health, NGOs, service providers;
Description/justification of the practice	<p>One of the main fields in the work of the Equilibrium Association is to prevent the abandonment of children under several interrelated programmes: 'Prevention at the maternity ward level', 'Early intervention for children with special needs', parental mutual support group 'Extraordinary parents - extraordinary children', programme 'SOS - parent' and 'Family planning'. They are being implemented at the Community Support Centre (CSC) of the Complex for Social Services for Children and Families, town of Ruse. (CSSCF - Ruse)</p> <p><u>The Family Planning programme</u> - Family Planning club is a free-of-charge service that provides an opportunity for women in risk communities to increase their knowledge about family planning methods applied to preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, raising awareness as to assisted reproduction, etc. The club works with adult and underage girls or women with large families, women with reduced health culture who have been identified as women at risk of abandoning a future child or those who due to health reasons have difficulties conceiving or giving birth. The activities relating to family planning involve a team of medical professionals, social workers and psychologists. Programme activities are grouped in sessions lasting for two hours, taking place in the community. They are organised in one session per month. The topics are pre-defined in the programme, but participants in the club have the opportunity to offer other topics on the agenda.</p> <p><u>The Early Intervention Programme</u> - the programme is widely accessible to all parents who have concerns about the proper development of their child and believe that it is different from his/her peers. Children and their parents can participate as self-proclaimed customers /no need to be evaluated and referred to the social services because of a risk identified by the Child Protection Department/.</p> <p>When implementing the programme activities a team of CSSCF - Ruse, which consists of a psychologist, social worker, teacher, nurse, physiotherapist and occupational therapist, applies a family-oriented approach. The programme provides specialized care and support to families who have limited resources and access to services. Most of them experience difficulties of everyday or financial nature, have</p>



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	<p>difficulty in meeting the health and educational needs of their children, encounter problems with social attitudes and the lack of an accessible environment. For some of them home visiting is the only way to use social services, especially in winter.</p> <p>Parents are involved as partners in the work with the child and this improves significantly the efficiency of the work of specialists. Planning services are performed jointly and activities are tailored to the specific needs of family support. Parents receive comprehensive information about everything that concerns their child and any new activity is subject to discussion and agreement in advance. They are always a decisive factor and have a major contribution to the results achieved. This leads to strengthening their parenting capacity. They increase their confidence in their ability to take care for their children and manage their own lives. In addition to identifying the needs of children, parents commit to setting their own priorities, the need to support existing strengths and resources to prevent or control the risk to the child.</p> <p>Another important aspect in the Early Intervention for Children with Special Needs programme is the creation of an informal network of parental mutual support. The initiative SOS - Parent enables any family in need to connect with other parents with similar problems, to obtain information, advice, support and commitment. Activities are organised for parents and children in a group play format. This helps children learn to cooperate, share toys and make friends, and parents get to know better the feelings and actions of their children, they watch the development of other children of the same age and similar problems and witness other models of parent-child interaction.</p> <p><u><i>The Prevention of Child Abandonment at the Maternity Ward Level programme</i></u> - twice a week a CSSCF specialist visits the maternity ward at the Ruse general hospital and provides individual counselling to mothers at risk of abandoning their child. The specialist provides support also to all the other young mothers who have concerns or questions regarding breastfeeding and bottle-feeding, care for a newborn at home, recognition of the most common disease symptoms in babies, welfare, administrative procedures, etc. Mothers of large families receive information about modern contraception methods. As a result of the support of mothers at risk and their families, the majority of mothers increase their confidence in dealing with growing babies and preventing the risk of abandonment.</p>
Objective of the practice	The purpose of the practices described is to increase health awareness



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	among women at risk and marginalized groups in terms of family planning, to prevent child abandonment at the maternity ward level, to build a network of parental mutual support and support in raising children with developmental problems.
Target group	<p>The Family Planning programme targets girls and women from marginalized groups at risk in Ruse who have difficulty taking care of children aged from 0 to 3 years.</p> <p>The Early Intervention programme targets children aged 0 to 6 years with developmental problems and their families.</p> <p>The Prevention of Child Abandonment at the Maternity Ward Level programme targets pregnant women and mothers admitted to the maternity ward of the general hospital - Ruse in need of support.</p>
Main outcome	<p>The participants' increased awareness of alternative forms of help and support they can get; Promotion of the activities of CSSCF Ruse regarding abandonment prevention; Actual intervention and family planning; Active participation of specialists working on this programme in its further development and testing; Advanced knowledge of the target group about sexual and reproductive health, family planning and responsible parenting; Trained team of professionals - consultants early intervention; Parent group 'Extraordinary parents - extraordinary children.'</p> <p>Promotion of the activities of the SOS - Parent; Prevented abandonment of 80% newborns by their mothers and their placement in state institutions. Most of the children are growing up now with their biological families, some of them are placed with relatives or foster care families.</p>
Investment aspects	Earliest possible prevention and intervention; Implementation of a family-centered approach to the provision of social services
Effectiveness	Informing the public on issues of family planning, child development and early intervention of disability is an essential part of a comprehensive approach to the prevention of child abandonment. Raising public awareness is a prerequisite for the creation of supportive communities and partnerships to help children from an early age and assist their parents in the process of their upbringing.
Compliance with the national and EU goals and priorities	These practices correlate with the National Strategy for Vision for deinstitutionalization of children in Bulgaria.
Major challenges and critical success factors	Currently the programmes are being implemented within CSC of CSSCF - Ruse, which gives a great opportunity to expand their scope. Especially activities related to early intervention in respect of disability in children need to comply with a separate standard and develop as



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	independent services.
Development potential and replication of the practice	The practices described are of proven effectiveness and elements of them can be easily integrated into existing services (eg.CSC). To develop, the early intervention service has to be regulated as a separate one with its own financial standard.
Additional information	http://www.eq-bg.com/bg/