

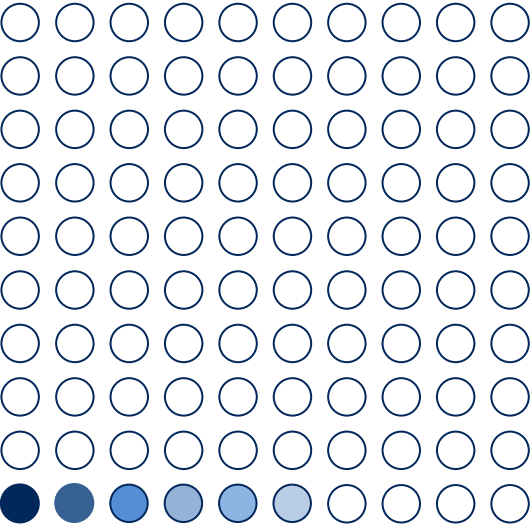


# Children with Disabilities in Residential Care

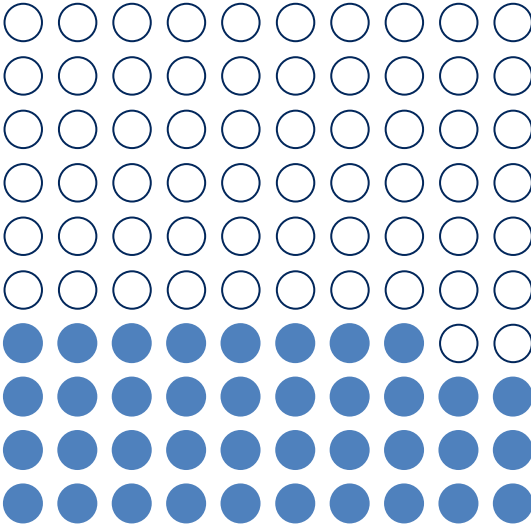
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Joanna Rogers, Consultant, UNICEF ECARO

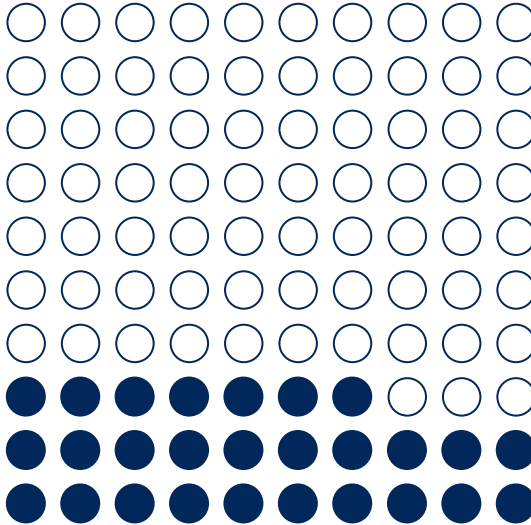
# Children with disabilities are over-represented among children in residential care in the ECA region



Children with disabilities in the child population – 1%-6% in ECA region

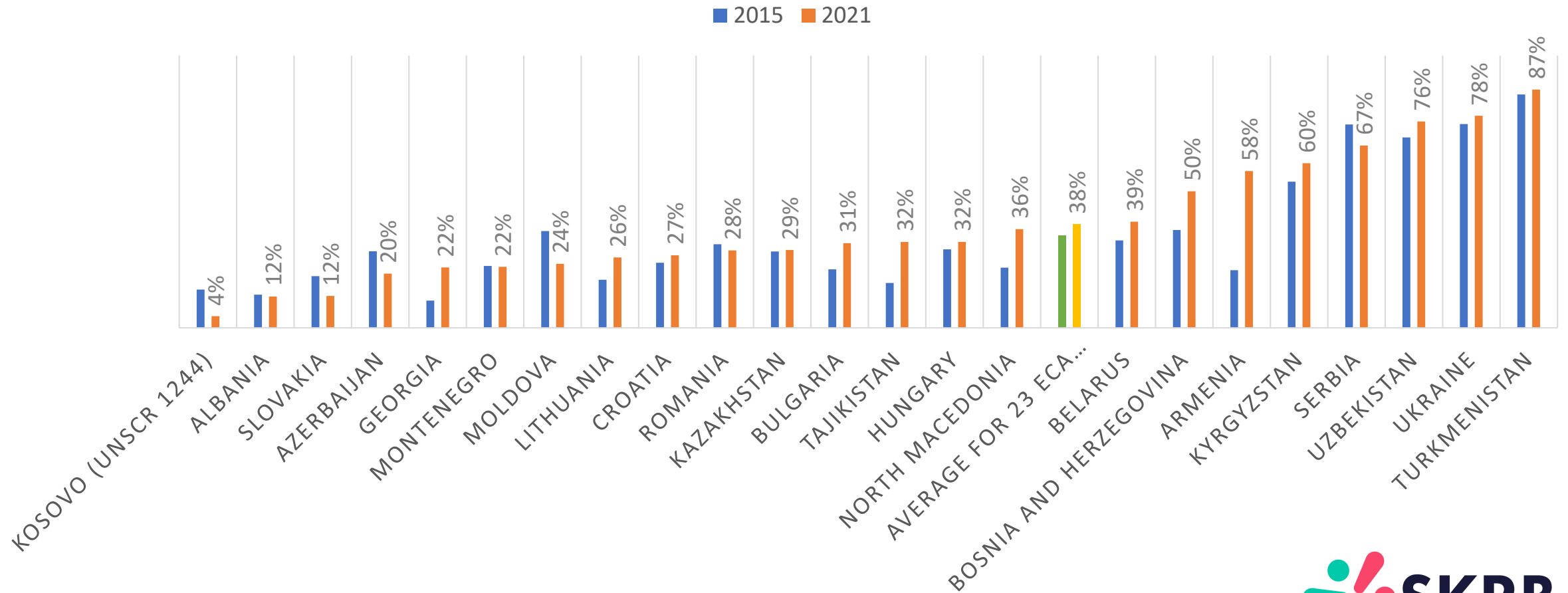


Children with disabilities in the population of children in residential care 23 ECA countries – 38%

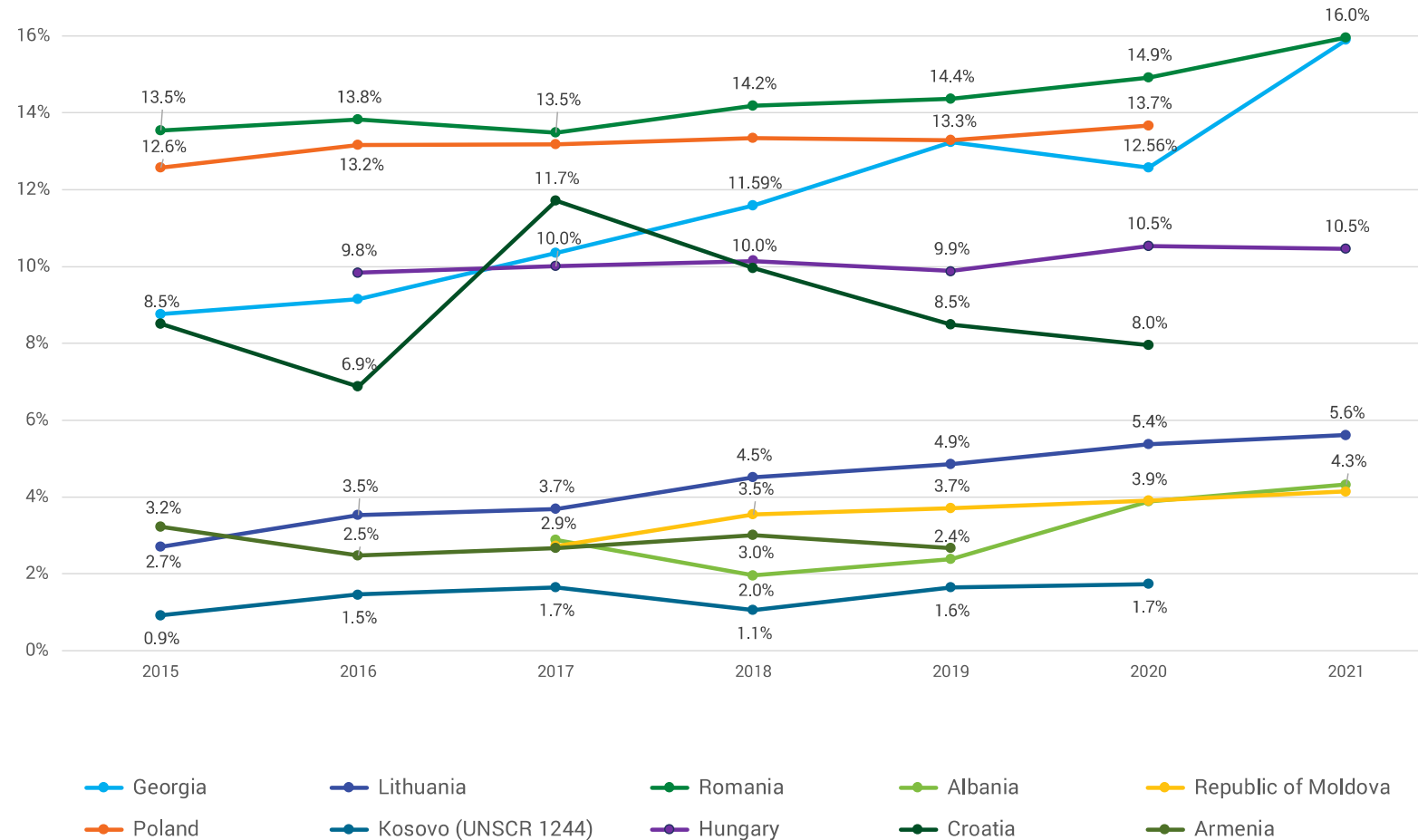


Children with disabilities in the population of children in residential care Croatia – 27%

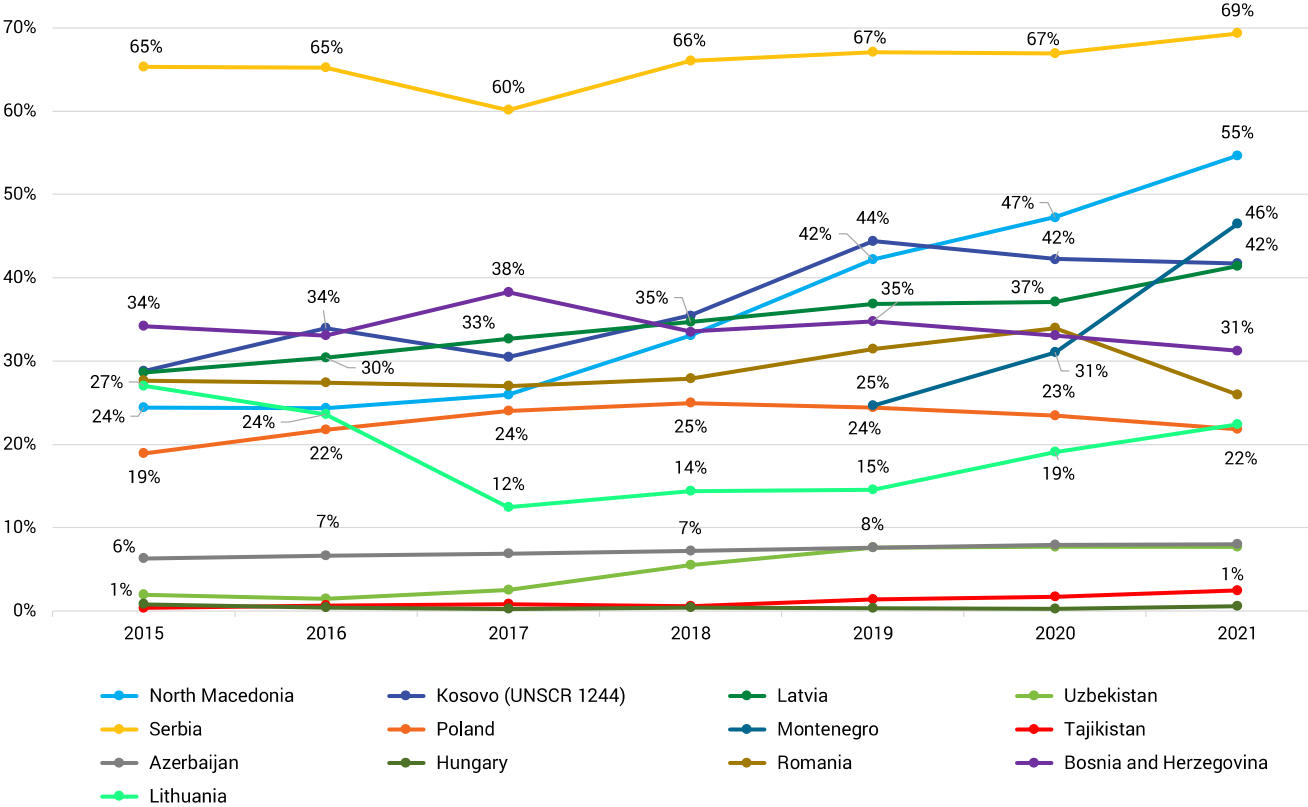
# Children with disabilities are being left behind in residential care in many countries



# Children with disabilities tend to be placed in formal family-based care to a lesser extent than children without disabilities but an increase can be noted in some countries



# Young adults (probably including many with disabilities) make a large percentage of inhabitants of residential care intended for children



# White Paper

The role of boarding schools for vulnerable children in the Europe and Central Asia region

# Key questions for the White Paper

1. Should boarding schools be classified as “alternative care”?
2. Are boarding schools an appropriate form of education and alternative care provision for vulnerable children?
3. If so, how should the concerns and challenges around their usage be addressed?
4. If not, how is demand for such provision best reduced and what is the best form of education and alternative care for affected vulnerable children?

# Defining boarding schools

## **SPECIALIZED RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION**

(or specialized boarding schools)

- For children with disabilities
- Health care and rehabilitation
- Correctional boarding schools

## **GENERAL RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION**

(or general boarding schools):  
reasons for placement

- Lack of access to appropriate education in rural areas
- Support for poverty and other social reasons
- Parents working abroad (military, civil service)
- Religious schools

## **ELITE RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION**

(or elite boarding schools)

- Private boarding schools
- Boarding schools specializing in arts, music, sport, science, mathematics
- Military boarding schools



# Do features of boarding schools mean that all children are 'vulnerable'?

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Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse by adults and harmful sexual behaviour from other children

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Pupils with disabilities in residential special schools have more in common with children in alternative care

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Evidence is limited, neutral and inconclusive on the positive or negative benefits of boarding schools for vulnerable children

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Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. 2022. [Residential Schools Investigation Report](#). Crown copyright. UK National Archives

# Boarding school use – general lack of data both from de-I and inclusive education

TM % of children with disabilities in residential special schools 2021

14% Bulgaria Replacing residential alternative care with b. schools?

38% Latvia

30% Slovakia Not included in either de-I or IE reforms

41% Azerbaijan

14% Kazakhstan But quality of education?

- De-I is progressing in many countries but only Moldova has closed all boarding schools (2 left with 15 children)
- Azerbaijan 60% increase in use of general boarding schools
- At the end of 2021 in 8 countries of the ECA region 30-60% of children in residential alternative care were children with disabilities (in three countries over 67%)

**Should  
boarding  
schools be  
formally  
classified as  
“alternative  
care”?**

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Article 31 – optional for States to apply

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No conclusive evidence, but indications that children in boarding schools, especially children with disabilities, should have the same safeguards as residential alternative care

# White paper recommendations



Boarding schools should be regulated as providers of both care and education



Boarding schools should be recognised as a form of alternative care



The choice of boarding school to meet the educational needs of vulnerable children should be used only as part of a plan to meet a child's wider developmental needs

# Are boarding schools an appropriate form of education and alternative care provision for vulnerable children?

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Not appropriate for young children under 7 years or even under 14 years

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Represent an extreme form of segregated education for children with disabilities or for children from minority communities or linguistic minorities

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In some circumstances, boarding schools can be used to meet the education needs of some children, while family and community support and inclusive education are still being developed.

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Education quality is perceived as good but evidence from ECA countries suggests poor quality

# White paper recommendations



The inclusive education programmes and policies of UNICEF and governments should aim, explicitly, to prevent the entry of children with disabilities into residential special schools (gatekeeping and integrated assessment)



Boarding schools for children under 14 years of age should not be permitted

**How is demand for such provision best reduced and how can concerns about boarding schools be reduced?**

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Gatekeeping, integrated assessment (disability, education, transport, social and family)

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Quality standards for the care element of boarding and increased accountability and inspection of the provision

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A joint approach between child protection, social care, education, health and other sectors is needed

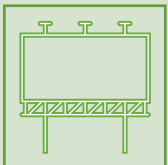
# White paper recommendations



Governments should assess the boarding school system as part of de-I and IE programmes and prioritise the closure of those that provide sub-minimum quality of care and education and invest resources in prevention, care and protection services at the community level, as well as in inclusive education.



Review and revise policies, and establish standards and inspection frameworks; involve parents and children's groups in decision-making processes



Establishing an inter-country reference group would allow for economies of scale and foster cooperation among countries



## In short...

- Inclusive education programming needs to do more on explicitly ending use of boarding (especially for children with disabilities) – gatekeeping, integrated assessment, inter-sectoral approach, family support, transport, integrated assessment frameworks
- Child protection programmes should advocate for boarding schools to be recognised, monitored and regulated as alternative care – de-I of boarding schools (prioritising preschools and sub-optimal services) - inter-agency planning and gatekeeping
- Transitional use of boarding facilities should meet child care and protection standards, involve parents and actively support family contact, open facilities, child participation, peer/mentoring and other supports within the facilities
- Improve data!

**Thank you**



# WHITE PAPER The role of boarding schools for vulnerable children in the Europe and Central Asia Region

