

MREŽA ORGANIZACIJA ZA DECU SRBIJE - MODS

NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN OF SERBIA - MODS

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia - MODS currently brings together 75 organizations which by their actions contribute to the realization of rights, improvement of the status and the quality of life of children in Serbia.

The mission of MODS is the exercise of rights, improvement of the situation and the quality of life of children in Serbia.

The objectives of the Network of civil society organizations for children are:

- Increase the participation of civil society organizations and children in the formation of policies for children;
- Developing the capacity of organizations to improve the status of children and strengthening of cooperation;
- Establishing a channel of communication between the Network and the local, provincial and national authorities and institutions, the institutions and bodies of the European Union and other international bodies;
- Establishing cooperation with other networks and organizations;
- Increasing the visibility of the contribution of civil society organizations to improvement of the situation of children.

In their work, the Network will strive for:

- The exercise of the rights of all children;
- The life of all children in a family environment and improvement of family support;
- Increase of social inclusion and development of an inclusive society;
- Reduction of child poverty;
- Improving the availability and quality of formal and informal education and culture;
- Improving the availability and quality of health care, environmental protection and safety of children;
- The protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence;
- Increased allocations, adequate planning and allocation, and transparent budget spending.

## 1. REALIZED ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TASKS OF THE MODS STRATEGIC PLAN

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### 1.1 MODS Assembly

The Annual Assembly of MODS was held from 31 October to 1 November 2015 in Kragujevac.

MODS Assembly discussed and adopted the annual report on the activities and the financial report for 2014. The Assembly considered and adopted the Strategy of MODS for the period 2015-2020; discussed and adopted the action plan; adopted the Rules of Procedure, the Code of MODS; a decision was made on the amount of the membership fee for the next year. The Assembly made a decision on the admission of eleven new members to MODS.

### 1.2 MODS Steering Committee

MODS Steering Committee has nine members and takes care of the implementation of the objectives of MODS laid down by the Statute. In 2015, there were two meetings of the Steering Committee, one in Belgrade and the other in Vrnjačka Banja. At the meetings of the Committee, its members discussed proposals for strategic priorities and directions of development of MODS, drafted a strategic plan and adopted the Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee.

### 1.3 MODS Thematic Groups

The Network of Organizations for Children established four thematic groups according to the following priorities: social inclusion and poverty reduction, protection of children from violence, inclusive education, and participation of children. 70 MODS members are included in the work of the thematic groups. During focus the group meetings, MODS members got informed with the relevant policies and agreed joint activities.

The coordination of the thematic groups was carried out by:

1a) CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Know How Centre, Tatjana Lazor Obradović

1b) PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

CSO Step Forward, Radomir Jevtić

2a) QUALITY EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

Initiative for Inclusion VelikiMali, Valentina Zavišić

2b) PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN

Open Club, Jelena Mihajlović

Thematic groups had four meetings in 2015:

**The meeting of the TG for Child Poverty and Social Inclusion** was held in Novi Sad, organized by the Know How Centre. The objectives of the meeting were: making the action plan of the thematic group for Child Poverty and Social Inclusion for the period until the end of 2015. It was agreed to extend an invitation to the members of MODS to be involved in the consultation process for legislative changes, to draft legislative changes with integrated member proposals (agreement on proposals for amendments to the Law on Social Protection). A round table "Empowering families with children who face multiple deprivations" was announced for 30 March in Belgrade, organized by MODS in cooperation with the SOS Children's Village and FICE Serbia; organizations were invited to gather stories of children living in poverty; simplicity campaign was promoted. The information on relevant current events was exchanged.

**The meeting of the TG Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence** was held in Belgrade, organized by the CSO Step Forward. The meeting discussed the action plan for the thematic group; the members got familiar with the results of the survey of organized protection of children from violence in local communities in Serbia; the Child Protection Index and the results of the Index for Serbia were presented to the members of the thematic group.

**The meeting of TG Quality Education and Inclusion** was held in Belgrade. The meeting discussed the proposal of the action plan of the thematic group "Quality Education and Inclusion" for 2015. It was concluded that our society is not inclusive and that it is necessary to work as MODS to promote an inclusive culture. Part of the discussion was devoted to the issue of upbringing because schools neglected their upbringing function. It was emphasized that schools need to bring up children in the spirit of tolerance and acceptance of diversity which is essential for the development of an inclusive society. The draft proposal and initiative for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between MODS and the Ministry of Education were presented. In the final part of the meeting a brief presentation was given on the programs that provide free technical support to families of children with disabilities and educational institutions. The participants of the meeting were informed that Working Group 18 was formed dealing with the Negotiating Chapters 25 (Science and Research) and 26 (Education and Culture) within the National Convent on the European Union (NKEU).

**The Meeting of the TG Participation of Children** was held in Nis, organized by the Association for Development of Children and Youth - Open Club. The meeting was attended by representatives of member organizations of the thematic group "Participation of Children," the Council of Children of MODS, the Peer Support Network for Inclusive Education, the Youth Network of Open Club, the Union of High School Students. The objectives of the meeting were: 1. Adoption of the action plan of the thematic group "Participation of Children" for the year 2015; 2. The initiative for the ratification of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; 3. Exchange of information and agreements on other joint activities. The following activities within the plan were discussed and agreed on: Creating an online questionnaire on the participation of children, UN KPD, OP3; The announcement of the competition for children on the topic of participation and rights of the child (photo/short film); Presentation of the survey and competition results; Making recommendations of the Council of

Children. It was agreed that the Council of Children of MODS drafts a statement on inclusive education, and it was also agreed that a final document be made containing the opinion and the standpoint of children in relation to inclusive education, all that in consultations with the Peer Support Network for Inclusive Education, the Panel of Youth, and the Youth Network.

#### **1.4 The Council of Children of MODS**

The Council of Children of MODS is an advisory body that protects interests of children, consisting of children aged 13 to 18 years, as well as representatives of children on behalf of the member organizations. Members of the Council of Children are involved in the activities of the Network, the processes of making the annual activity plan and other documents. The Council of Children of MODS participated in the meeting of the thematic group on Participation of Children in Niš; participated in drafting the document on inclusive education from the perspective of children; representatives of the Council of Children took part in the conference dedicated to inclusive education in Belgrade.

#### **1.5 MODS Secretariat**

The Secretariat of MODS was established to provide technical support and to assist further work of MODS. The role of the Secretariat is to provide conditions for the exchange of information, logistic and technical support for the activities of MODS and its members.

In addition to its regular activities, the Secretariat of MODS prepared organization of the annual Assembly of MODS, organization and realization of two meetings of the Steering Committee and four meetings of the thematic groups of MODS.

There is an effective system of communication established with representatives of member organizations of MODS as well as delegated members of the thematic groups, the Steering Committee, and the Council of Children of MODS. MODS has its website [www.zadecu.org](http://www.zadecu.org), with an updated list of member organizations, and is represented on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. For internal communication between members of MODS, there is a Google Group "zadecu" where members regularly exchange relevant information.

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## 2. REALIZED ACTIVITIES AIMED AT REACHING THE GOALS SET BY THE NETWORK

The second part of this report refers to the activities of MODS that were implemented in the period from January 2015 through December 2015. Implemented activities and results achieved are divided into four parts, according to the strategic goals set by MODS.

### 2.1 Increasing the participation of organizations in the formation of policies on children

In cooperation with the SOS Children's Villages and FICE Serbia, MODS prepared and sent recommendations to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy regarding prevention of separation of children from families;

MODS prepared and sent to the Ministry of Social Policy recommendations and suggestions for changes to the Law on Social Protection;

MODS included its member organizations in the consultation process for the draft amendments to the Law on Financial Support for Families;

MODS participated in the initiative, design and implementation of the Index of Child Protection in cooperation with the regional coalition network ChildPact;

A recommendation of practical policy guidelines was made for the planning and provision of adequate intersectoral support for inclusive education in a local community;

In cooperation with the networks of children's rights and women's rights MODS made an initiative for the Republic of Serbia to join the Program for the Rights, Equality, and Citizenship -REC;

MODS participated in the public debate on the Law on Textbooks;

MODS filed a case with the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media – REM regarding the program "DNA" on TV PINK;

#### **Campaign for deinstitutionalization: "Opening doors for Europe's Children"**

MODS is involved in the campaign, "Opening Doors for Europe's Children" coordinated by Eurochild and Hope and Homes for Children, a campaign including organizations and networks of organizations for children from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Polish, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia. The aim of this Pan-European advocacy campaign "Opening Doors for Europe's Children" is to improve the quality of life of children and youth who are at risk or in the process of leaving the alternative care throughout Europe, through the promotion of deinstitutionalization.

The campaign in Serbia is coordinated by MODS in cooperation with the Initiative for the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities MDRI-S. At the national level, the goal is to start development of a comprehensive strategy and an action plan for deinstitutionalization that will clearly operationalize objectives, activities, steps and actors in the process of transformation of institutions, as well as the provision of funds from the European Union from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and its use for the development of local support services in order to prevent further institutionalization and ensure the return of children in institutions to local communities

## **2.2 Establishing a channel of communication between the Network and the local, provincial and national authorities and institutions, institutions and bodies of the European Union and other international bodies**

### **The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia**

In the National Assembly in Belgrade there was a public hearing held on the topic "Protecting children in Serbia - from legislation to implementation", organized by the Committee on Labour, Social Issues, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, at the proposal of the Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia and the Association for Development of Children and Youth - Open club.

The topic of the public debate was the reform process and the results achieved in the field of child protection in Serbia and improvement of the legislative framework in the interests of children and vulnerable groups which are at the margins of society and socially excluded. Also, the Child Protection Index was presented at the meeting as a contribution to the development of policies that are based on evidence and data.

### **Contribution to the progress report of Serbia for 2015**

The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia prepared and submitted a letter with the recommendations to the EU Delegation in Serbia on Serbia's progress in 2015.

## **2.3 Establishing cooperation with other networks and organizations**

### **MODS cooperation with Eurochild**

MODS was represented by the member of its Steering Committee Jasmina Miković (Praxis) at the General Assembly of the European Network for Children Rights Eurochild and its Policy Forum in Brussels, 23-24 April 2015.

### **MODS cooperation with ChildPact**

The Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia – MODS, in cooperation with the international regional network ChildPact, prepared the Child Protection Index which should show the status of reforms at the national level and serve as the basis for the creation of a regional platform for monitoring and implementation of the reform of child protection measures. The Child Protection Index measures the degree of development and performance of a country in the field of child protection and provides the ability to compare results across the region. The Index allows discussion on policies based on



evidence linking different actors and sectors, encourages new efforts to collect data, and provides a platform for mutual learning at the regional level.

Andy Guth, a regional expert in the field of child protection and Mirela Oprea, the Secretary General of the organization "ChildPact," presented the Index of Child Protection and the results they obtained at the regional level in a public hearing organized at the National Assembly in Belgrade. Guth explained that Child Protection Index contains over 626 indicators which measure the degree of development and the impact of a country in the field of child protection and provides the ability to compare results across the region.

MODS, with the Open Club and ChildPact, announced a competition for a true short story of children and youth who are at risk of social and economic marginalization.

### **Cooperation with Agapedia Foundation**

Representatives of the Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia - MODS participated in an international conference Jugend im Wandel / Youth in Transition from 21 to 23 June 2015, jointly organized by the Foundation Agapedia, Network of Organizations for Children of Serbia - MODS, Breza Association with the support of GIZ and the Europäische Akademie Berlin;

The centre for working with children, youth and family "Vrdničak" from Vrdnik represented MODS at the international forum Jugend im Wandel by Agapedia Foundation from 4 to 6 June 2015.

## **2.4 Increasing the visibility of the contribution of civil society organizations to improving the situation of children**

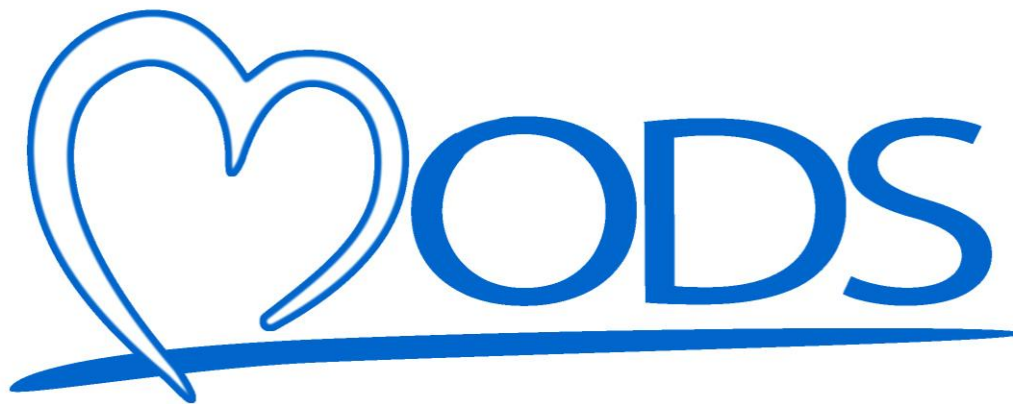
### **Press releases and press clipping**

MODS prepared and published the following announcements:

- PREVENTION OF RELOCATION OF CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES (30 March 2015)
- INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY (01 June 2015)
- Unaccompanied children – the most vulnerable ones (29 September 2015)
- All children in Serbia are equal, but some are more equal than others (20 November 2015)

### **Exchange of information through social networks**

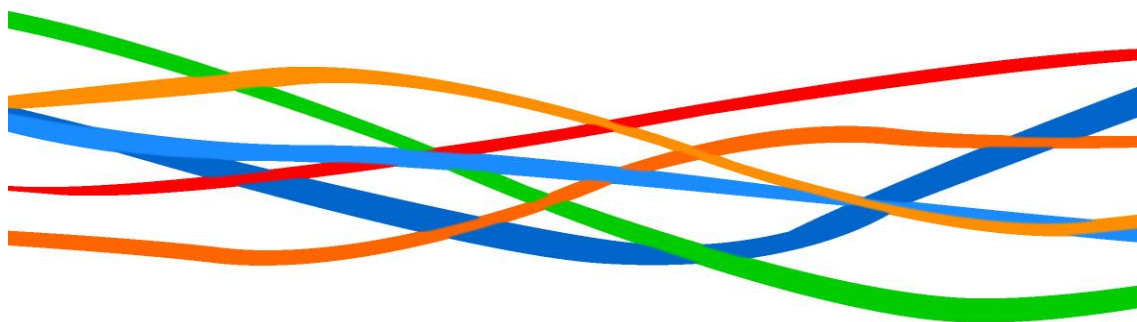
In addition to the site [www.zadecu.org](http://www.zadecu.org), MODS actively uses its Facebook page, Twitter account, and YouTube channel to promote the activities. In addition to this news, there is an open group on Google "zadecu" where more than 200 members of the group regularly exchange information and news, making faster, easier and simpler communication with members of the Network. MODS issues electronic newsletters containing information and news that may be of importance or interest to member organizations, as well as information on the activities of member organizations. All organizations are still invited to send news to the Secretariat of MODS on the e-mail [office@zadecu.org](mailto:office@zadecu.org).



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