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Better data for better child protection systems

The DataCare Project - Mapping Child Protection Data Systems in Europe

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Background to DataCare project – our rationale

EU commitments: deinstitutionalisation, transition to family and community-based care, EU Child Guarantee

But: lack of reporting obligations and relevant monitoring indicator framework

Consequently: lack of comparable statistics and quality data, so the project sought to better understand:

- **National indicator frameworks and data systems** producing statistics on children in alternative care (who, what, when, how)
- **Factors** impeding or furthering data quality and comparability
- **Opportunities** for including relevant indicators into EU and national monitoring frameworks, and strengthening statistical systems to produce quality data

Research Methodology

Mapping alternative care data systems in 28 European countries incl. the UK in 2020-2021

Tools: Research Protocol, National Template, Glossary

Who? Research team (Maria Herczog, Florence Koenderink, Gaspar Fajth, Ciaran O'Donnell, Anja Teltschik), Research advisory group, National Correspondents



Key research questions:

1. Do national systems collect the data needed for family-centred policy on alternative care?
2. What alternative care definitions are used in the countries, and are there common grounds to establish comparable definitions reflecting international concepts?
3. What promising practices exist in different countries?





Key results & outputs



Policy brief outlining full recommendations for EU and national policymakers

Visualised country factsheets on data for CIAC



Technical report on the full findings

Ongoing advocacy updates published on Eurochild & UNICEF website



Key Findings (I)

No internationally accepted standard definitions or classifications for statistics on children in alternative care currently

National definitions and classifications vary and reflect diversity of alternative care systems

The alternative care population is not fully captured in all countries – some exclude children in specific types of care

Disaggregation variables are not standardized or consistent across countries

Commonly used disaggregation variables: age, sex, disability status, reason for entry/exit, who decided placement



Key Findings (II)

All countries are collecting data on stock – meaning children in alternative care at a specific point in time

Most countries collect data that can be grouped by two main types of alternative care: **residential and family-based care**

Much more data collected than published
Main data source: administrative data

Responsible agencies:
National Statistical Offices – 9
1 + line ministry – 12
Child protection agency/authority – 17
NGOs – 1

Issues are recognised – high interest in data reform:
19 out of 28 countries surveyed are reforming, or have recently reformed their alternative care data system





Key results & outputs – indicators

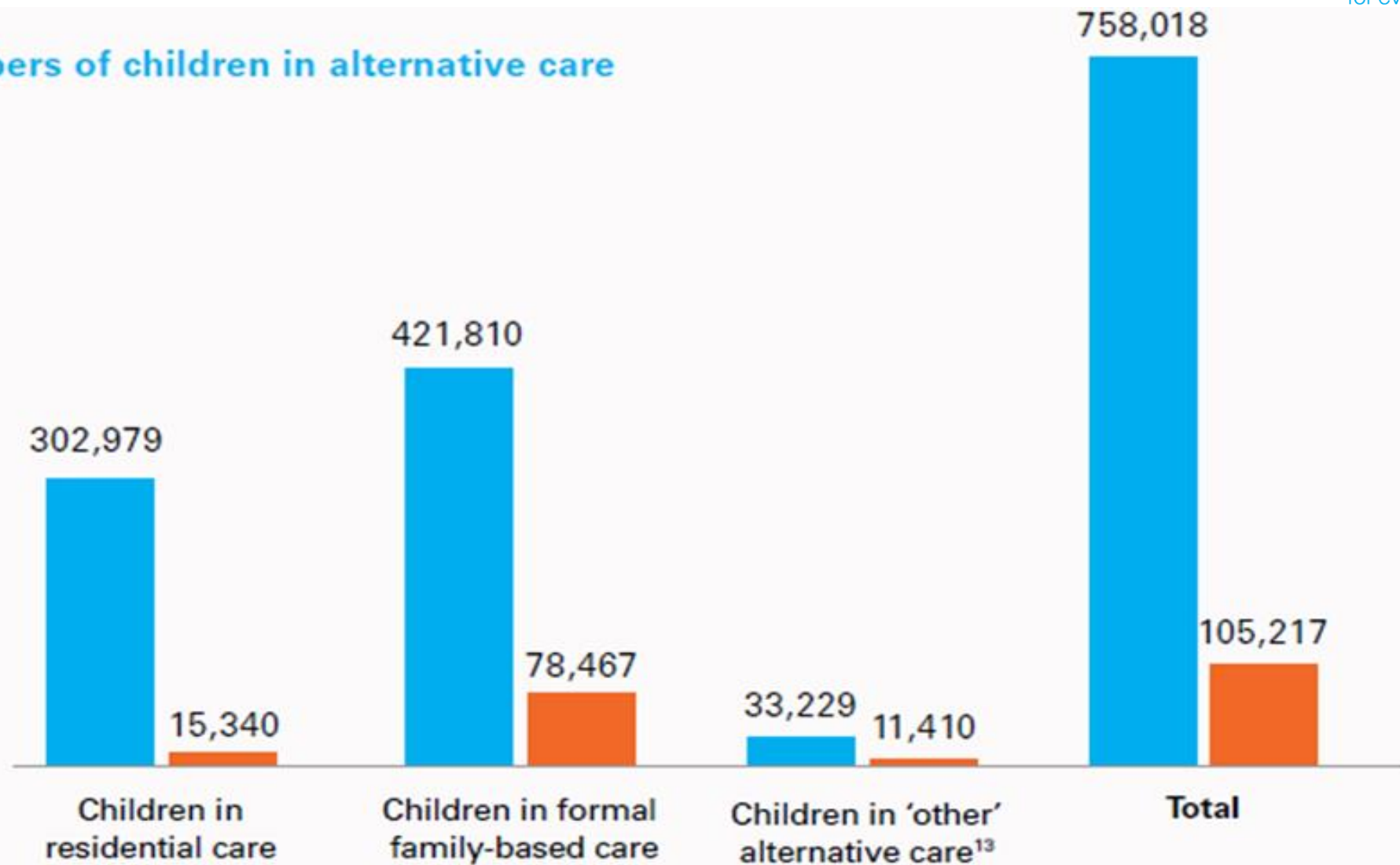
Enough data are being gathered at national level to establish these comparable indicators across the European Union countries

- 1 The rate² of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- 2 The rate of children aged 0-17 in residential care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- 3 The rate of children aged 0-17 in formal family-based care at a specific point in time (per 100,000)
- 4 The percentage of children aged 0-17 in residential care (of the total number of children aged 0-17 in alternative care at a specific point in time)



FIGURE 1. Total numbers of children in alternative care

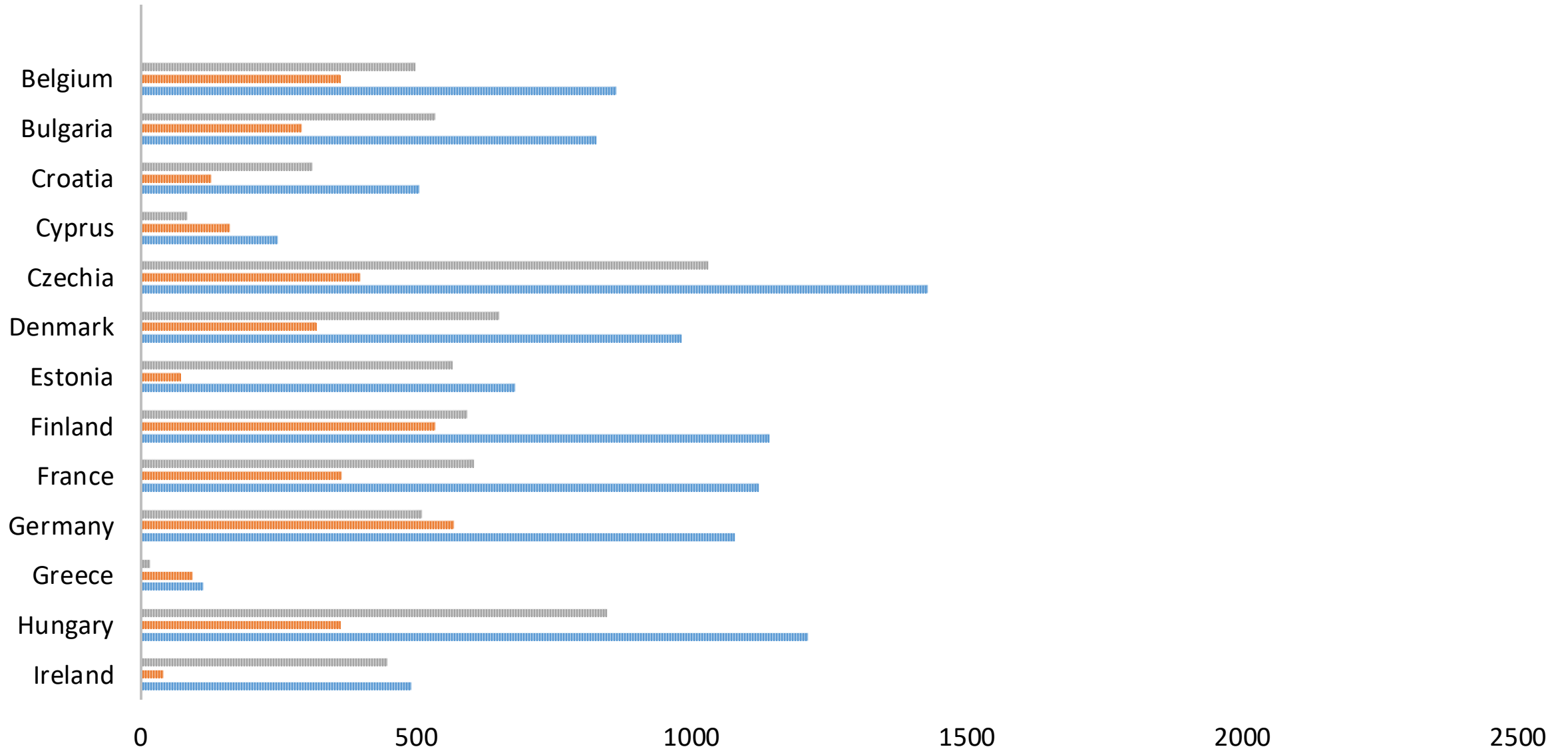
■ EU-27
■ UK





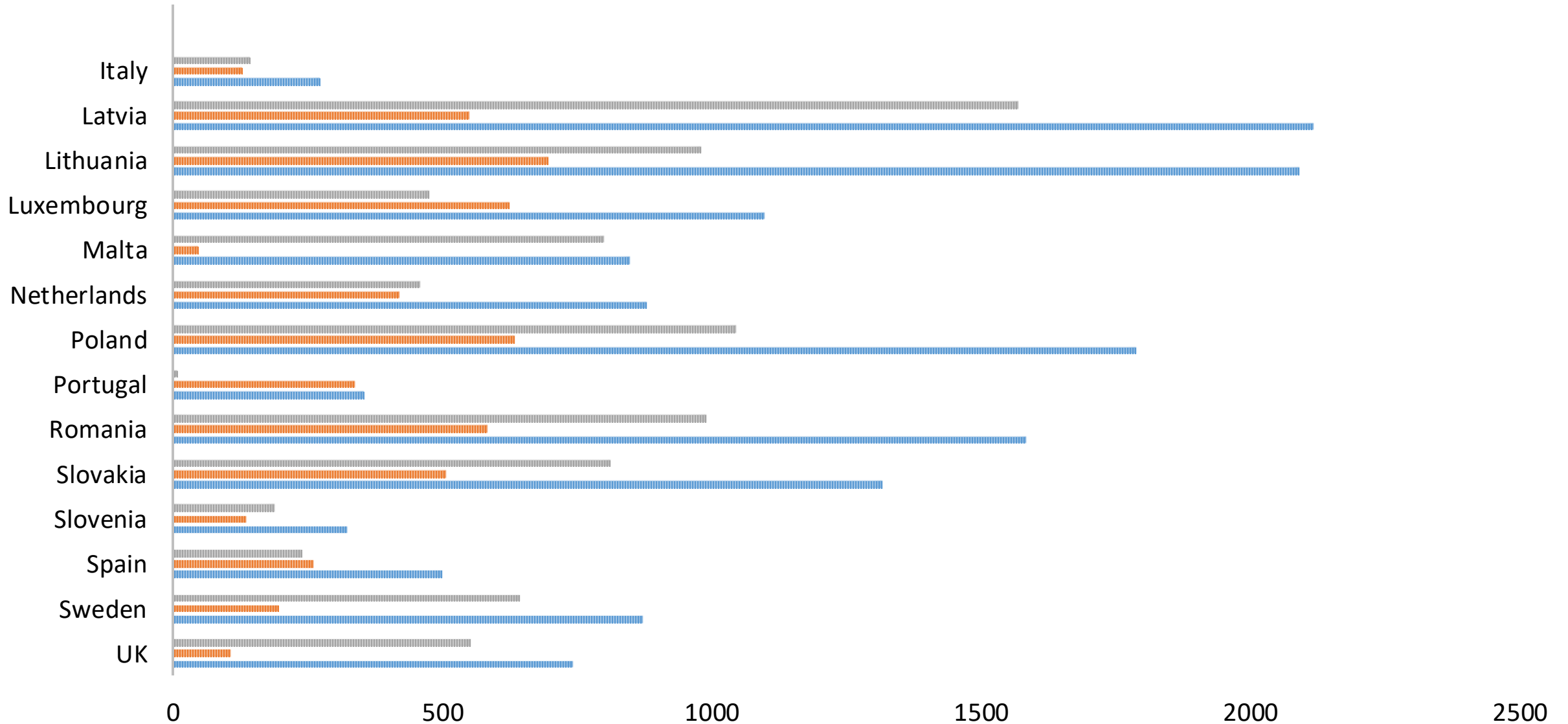
INDICATORS 1-3: RATE OF CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE CARE AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME (PER 100,000)

▒ Rate in formal family-based care ■ Rate in residential care ■ Rate in alternative care



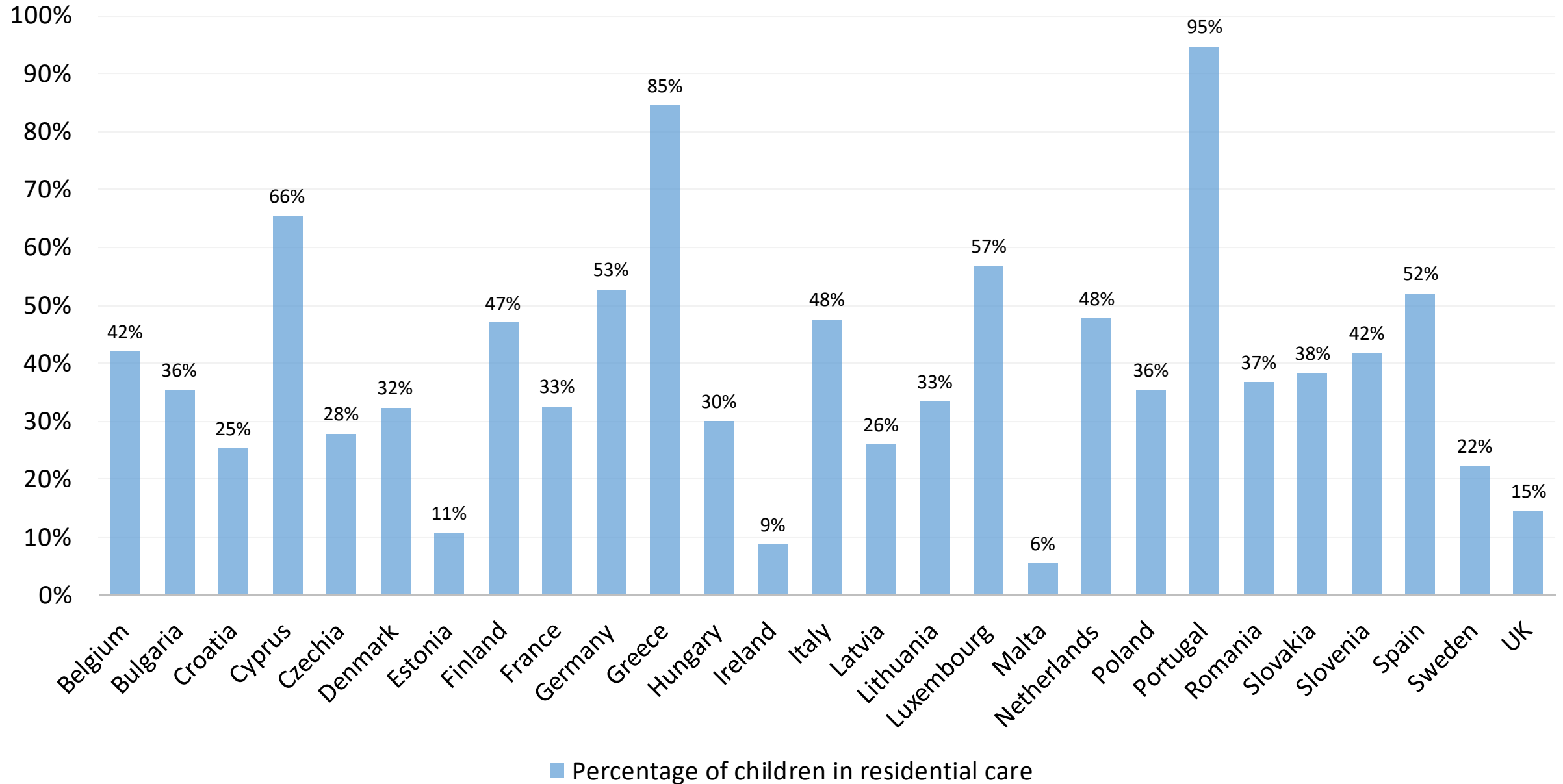
INDICATORS 1-3: RATE OF CHILDREN IN CARE AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME (PER 100,000)

Rate in formal family-based care
 Rate in residential care
 Rate in alternative care





INDICATOR 4: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN ALTERNATIVE CARE AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME



Room for Improvement



Closing data gaps on children in alternative care: Is care genuinely necessary and suitable? Effectiveness of prevention and gatekeeping systems? Institutional/residential care replaced by other forms of care/reintegration? Quality of care and outcomes for children.

Achieving comparability and statistical coherence of indicators: Not all countries cover all children in residential care. The existence of 'blurred categories' of care provisions limits comparability. Agreement and approval of core indicators and disaggregators. Investing in data system strengthening and data quality.



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Room for Improvement

There is a clear need for shared understanding on definitions of alternative care: The term ‘alternative care’, or a close equivalent, is not widely used at the national level – comparable at higher aggregated level

Disaggregation hampered by: wide diversity of care provisions, lack of definitions on different types of residential care, and confusion about the meaning of terms like ‘foster care’.

Nation	Alternative care	Formal family-based care	Foster care	Formal kinship care	Residential care
Definitions	Authorised care away from the child's parents, incl. all residential care	Authorised care away from the child's parents, in a family	Authorised care with person/ family unknown to the child	Authorised care with family members/ friends	Collective non-family setting with children cared for by paid adults
Austria	Volle Erziehung		Pflege familie		Sozialpädagogische Einrichtungen
Belgium: Flanders	Uitvoeringsplaatsing in het kader van Jeugdzorg	Pleegzorg	Bestedingspleegzorg	Netwerkpleegzorg	Residentiele opvang/ zorg
Belgium: German-speaking Community	Stationäre Unterbringung	Pflegefamilien	Pflegeschaft	Verwandschaftspflege	Einrichtung
Belgium: Wallonia-Brussels	Du placement d'enfants; Mesure d'éloignement du milieu de vie	Accueil familial	Accueil familial	Accueillant familial- famille ou familial (famille élargie)	De prise en charge résidentielle ou hébergement

Source: DataCare's International glossary of alternative care categories

Helpful Examples



Standardised national data collection and reporting – Country example: Spain (decentralised context)

Benefits of communication and cooperation between organisations, sectors and countries – for example: education and health (Sweden)

Agents of change: National Statistical Offices in collaboration with line ministries – for example: Conference of European Statisticians Task Force, TransMonEE network

Policy Recommendations - EU

1. The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee - Indicator Sub-Group can develop indicators for measuring Member States' progress in the transition to family and community-based care, **using the four indicators proposed**. These indicators can be **integrated into the existing set of EU indicators** on social protection and social inclusion. Accompanied by **work with Member States towards clear definitions and comparability**.
2. The European Commission can provide Member States with the **guidance and support needed to assess the maturity of their data systems on alternative care** and with the **space for mutual learning and exchange** in this area.



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Policy Recommendations - National

1. Governments can **assess the strength and maturity of their data systems** on children in alternative care, and include system strengthening actions and the proposed indicators into relevant national action plans and monitoring frameworks (e.g. European Child Guarantee).
2. **In the assessment and planning processes, Governments can pay particular attention to:** sound legislative basis; central agency with clear mandate; fully captured alternative care population; disaggregation and overrepresentation; data accessibility and other data quality dimensions.

The 'Bigger Picture' – what is this work informing?



Eurochild: Pushing the European Union to start measuring progress towards deinstitutionalisation



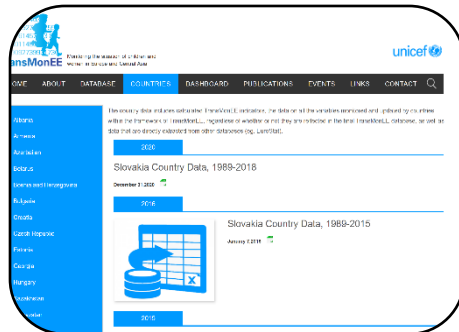
Conference of European Statisticians
Task Force on Statistics on Children, Adolescents and Youth



Transforming Children's Care
Global Collaborative Platform:
Common care reform
measurement framework



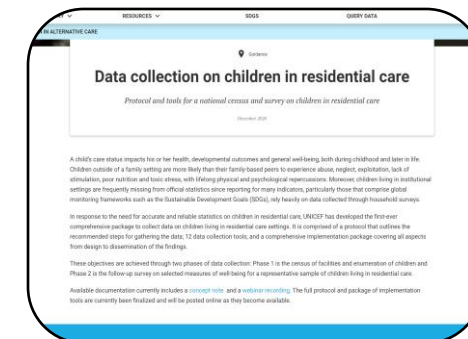
USAID-funded
Data for Impact (D4I) –
Palladium (indicators)



Revisiting **TransMonEE:**
Child protection indicators



European Child Guarantee:
National Action Plans and monitoring
frameworks: EU and national level)



UNICEF: Global guidance, tools,
indicators and country-level work
(strengthening data systems)



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Thank you for your attention!

Download the DataCare Technical Report, Policy Brief & Country Overviews at:
eurochild.org/resource/better-data-for-better-child-protection-systems-in-europe/

You can find a longer video presentation of the full findings at the above link as well

Further questions? Contact details:

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