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**R E P O R T**

**ON**

**A NATIONAL STUDY**

**OF**

**THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FOSTER CARE SERVICE**

**IN BULGARIA**

**SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES INSTITUTE**

**AND**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSES AGENCY**

**SOFIA, 2006**

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## **Introduction**

The child welfare reform in Bulgaria started in the year 2000. A number of secondary legislative acts were passed, the restructuring of some social institutions started in order to apply the latest child protection policies. Then and there the professional discussions on the development of foster care in Bulgaria had various shades. Some circles claimed that foster care precisely would lead to actual deinstitutionalization, while others explicitly said that this “foreign” practice was too advanced for our cultural environment and contradictory to the Bulgarian way of thinking. In the end foster care was introduced which resulted in the development of a number of standards, training sessions and not a few NGOs supporting the start of the service.

Today, in 2006 we have 64 foster families in Bulgaria, which gives reasons to undertake an in-depth analysis of the practices, attitudes, gaps in legislation, and the obstacles making the development of foster care difficult. Until now the results are in favour of the sceptics in relation to foster care and not of those who thought that deinstitutionalization would happen as a result of its implementation. It is this reality that raised the need of this study.

In fact, what we have is voluntary foster care with many unachievable social requirements to the applicants, typical for societies with well-developed middle class. Our foster care turned out to be in a disadvantaged position also in relation to the one of the most popular child protection measures – kinship care, and if we add the insufficient awareness of the population, it turns out that we spend more time in discussions than in achieving true results in this direction.

This study aims to track the reasons and difficulties in the process of implementing foster care and to give an account of the real situation as it is. Today we have too high expectations while legislation provides for very poor range of foster care variations.

The analysis and the quality assessment of the study were made by the team of the Social Activities and Practices Institute (SAPI) comprising Assistant Professor Neli Petrova-Dimitrova, Nadya Stoykova, Hadejda Deneva and Georgi Bogdanov. The National quantitative study was implemented by a team of the Socio-economic Analyses Agency (SAA) under the leadership of Docho Mihailov.

## Methodology applied

A National representative survey of the population in relation to foster care in Bulgaria was carried out between January and February 2006. A Qualitative study of the attitudes of the population, professionals, approved foster carers and existing practices was carried out at the same time.

**The goal** of the study was to contribute to the more intensive development of foster care as service in Bulgaria.

**The objective** is to research the attitudes to the existing form of regulated foster care, and at the same time to research and analyse the factors and conditions for the development of foster care in Bulgaria.

The main research questions are related to studying the reasons for the insignificant number of foster carers and to what extent this is due to:

- ❖ **Problems of the legislation** (type of foster care, requirements to the applicants, etc.),
- ❖ **Problems of its implementation** (capacity of the involved players, lacking or inadequate information campaign) or
- ❖ **Attitudes to the foster care** (the dominating family model, the attitude to the child in Bulgarian society).

The study answers these questions and at the same time formulates the relevant conclusions and recommendations for changes in respect of foster care. These recommendations focus on three main areas: legislation, foster care model and foster care implementation.

### Tasks of the study:

1. To characterize foster care as an alternative service and its place in the care system for children at risk in Bulgaria on the basis of theoretical and empirical analysis.
2. To research the reasons (attitudes, awareness, legislation) causing the difficulties in introducing and implementing the foster care in Bulgaria.
3. To identify the conditions and factors facilitating the implementation and development of foster care in Bulgaria.
4. To draw recommendations for improving the system for foster care implementation and enhancing the forms of foster care in Bulgaria.
5. To work out a profile of the foster carers who may provide this service.

### Hypotheses of the study:

- Foster care is not developed and implemented because of legislative obstacles – foster carers are not paid salaries, there is a requirement for minimal income along with overregulation of the procedures, etc.
- The campaigns are targeted to big cities while potential foster carers live in smaller towns and villages.
- Information campaigns would have been more successful had they been differentiated according to the profile of the target groups and had the approach to implementing the campaigns been changed.

- Professional foster care in small family-type homes is expected to be another more appropriate form for Bulgaria than voluntary foster care.
- We assume that the employees at institutions are more apt to foster children they know than the other people and families.
- Preferences to short-term foster care are stronger than preferences to long-term foster care.
- Attitudes to fostering children with disabilities tend to be in favour of professional foster care.

### **Objects of the study:**

1. Bulgarian population;
2. Professional groups –
  - a) staff of specialized child welfare institutions – Medical and Social Care Homes (MSCHC), Residential Care Homes for Children Lacking Parental Care (RCHCLP), Residential Care Homes for Children and Young People with Mental Disabilities (RCHCYPMD) (child carers, educators, medical nurses);
  - b) directors and staff of Regional Social Assistance Directorates (RSADs), Social Assistance Directorates (SADs), Child Protection Departments (CPDs);
  - c) Municipal Child Protection Panels (CPPs);
  - d) Social work university teachers;
  - e) NGO experts experienced in foster care development.
3. Prospective foster carers, approved and non-approved foster carers;
4. Pieces of legislation, existing topical studies, statistical data.

### **Research methodology:**

The research methodology consists of quantitative and qualitative methods. The study has national representation and covers the following types of settlements: Sofia as capital city, district centre, municipality with up to 25 000 inhabitants, and villages.

The questions in the quantitative study tool kit are focused at researching the main hypotheses formulated in the study concept. The hypotheses were verified through structured groups of questions. The questions were supposed to be formulated in every-day language, to avoid the professional jargon.

The qualitative study was carried out through in-depth interviews and focus groups with professionals and experts, approved foster families, non-approved foster carers and applicants for foster carers.

The initial data of the quantitative study show that a total of 803 respondents have been approached, which meets the initial sample size planned in the methodology. 48.9% of the respondents are male and 51.1% are female. Almost 78% are married and 18.1% are single, including widows/widowers, divorced or factually separated.

Within the scope of the qualitative study were carried out a total of 15 focus groups with representatives of all initially planned target groups and 21 in-depth interviews. Additionally,

there were focus groups carried out with foster families and a mixed focus group with foster carers and applicants for foster carers. It was identified during the study that in Stara Zagora and Gabrovo no work had been done so far, nor any foster carers exist. Only one applicant foster family in Gabrovo has passed the assessment procedure. The situation is identical in the small towns included in the study – Chirpan, Kaspichan and Tryavna, where no work has been done on foster care and the CPDs have not received any applications from foster carers. No information about non-approved foster carers has been provided by the CPDs because there are no such families in the towns covered by the study. The total number of all participants in the study is 120, 98 of them being included in focus groups and 22 in in-depth interviews. The number of the researched foster carers and applicants for foster carers included in focus groups and interviews is also 22, which is more than 1/3 of the existing foster carers in Bulgaria.

According to the requirements of the methodology, all mentioned towns have been included in the study. These are Shoumen, Stara Zagora, Gabrovo, Sofia, Varna, Plovdiv, along with smaller municipal centres such as Kaspichan, Chirpan and Tryavna. Because of the big number of institutions for children in Stara Zagora there was an additional focus group carried out with representatives of the child protection system working at the SADs from all 11 municipalities in the region of Stara Zagora. These are mainly the Heads and chief experts at the CPDs, and SAD directors. Other attendants were representatives from the municipalities of Opan, Gurkovo, Nikolaevo, Galabovo, Radnevo, Kazanlak, Chirpan, Bratya Daskalovi, Pavel Banya and Stara Zagora.

## **I. CHAPTER ONE: Analysis of the existing legislation – profile of foster care as an alternative service and its place in the care system for children at risk in Bulgaria**

According to the Bulgarian legislation, foster care is placing a child through a judiciary procedure in a family of spouses or with a single person on the basis of concluded contract. Until the court passes its judgment, the Social Assistance Directorates may place the child according to an administrative procedure.

The analysis of legislation was based on the following pieces of legislation:

- Child Protection Act (CPA);
- Implementing Regulation of the Child Protection Act (IRCPA);
- Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for applying, recruiting and approving foster carers and placing children with them;
- Ordinance on the criteria and standards for social services for children.

According to most of the professionals working on local and national level, the legislation is drawn up in detail, this being a necessary condition for the foster care development. It provides for almost all the requirements an applicant foster family should meet. The purpose of the study demands a focus on the gaps and difficulties, rather than on what works. This is something we would like to make clear at the very beginning.

### ***1. Procedures applicable to the foster family***

The procedures according to which the foster family is assessed, recruited, approved, trained and monitored, have been developed with the aim to guarantee the quality of foster care. At the same time, analysis of the procedures shows that they turn to be one of the “clumsiest” compared to any other measures. This often forces the CPD experts to look for easier and faster procedures when placing children.

We have much easier ways to place children and don't need to apply these limiting and clumsy requirements for foster care.

***Question: What are these ways?***

***Answer:***

For instance, kinship care. It doesn't require trainings, etc. But don't complicate them as well, because using them would become impossible.

**Interview with a social worker**

The research team drew a comparative table to visualize the analysis of the procedures (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

**COMPARATIVE TABLE  
of the procedures for assessment, approval, training and support procedures, required documents**

*Table 1*

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>FOSTER CARE</b>	<b>KINSHIP CARE</b>	<b>FULL ADOPTION</b>
<b>Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application to the SAD director with appendices:</li> <li>✓ Copy of the ID papers</li> <li>✓ Document from Civil Identification Number department</li> <li>✓ Written Statement pursuant to Article 32, sub-paras 4-7 of the CPA</li> <li>✓ Medical certificate</li> <li>✓ Documents for the monthly income</li> <li>✓ Self-assessment questionnaire</li> <li>✓ Other documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written statement to the SAD director from the relatives declaring an agreement for child's placement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application to the SAD director</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment / investigation procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legally provided term for the legally provided</li> <li>• No less than four interviews</li> <li>• No less than two home visits</li> <li>• Meeting with two referees and a written reference</li> <li>• Social report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legally provided term for the investigation</li> <li>• No assessment procedure</li> <li>• CPD statement about the capacity of the relatives to raise the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation within three months</li> <li>• Social report to the SAD director</li> </ul>
<b>Approval / registration procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting the social report to the CPP – 7 days after the family has been notified</li> <li>• CPP recommendation for approval or disapproval</li> <li>• Order of the SAD director</li> <li>• Entry into the Register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No approval procedure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SAD director issues a permission or refusal to issue a permission for entry into the Register</li> <li>• Validity of the permission – 2 years</li> <li>• Entry into the RSAD Register</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obligatory training</li> <li>• Training delivered according to a programme approved in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not obligatory</li> <li>• Not delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not obligatory</li> <li>• Optional – if the adopters wish</li> </ul>
<b>Placement / adoption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting appropriate carers for the specific child</li> <li>• Matching process – 4 - 6 weeks</li> <li>• Administrative and judiciary procedure for placement</li> <li>• Signing a contract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and judiciary procedure for placement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption Panel – selecting appropriate adopters for the specific child</li> <li>• Application to adopt addressed to the Regional Court and filed through the RSAD</li> <li>• Judgement of the Regional Court</li> </ul>
<b>Social assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>One-off benefits</u> pursuant to the IRCPA up to 4 times a year in cases of emergency. Annual total amount up to 5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>One-off benefits</u> pursuant to the IRCPA up to 4 times a year in cases of emergency. Annual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific assistance is envisaged. There is a possibility for granting</li> </ul>

	<p>times the guaranteed minimum income. May be granted in cash and/or in kind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social assistance benefits are granted on the basis of a request filed with the relevant authority at the permanent address of the applicants.</li> <li>• <u>Child allowance</u> on the basis of a concluded contract. The amount is determined depending on the age of the child. For children with disabilities – additional 75% of the guaranteed minimum income (BGN 41.25)</li> </ul>	<p>total amount up to 5 times the guaranteed minimum income. May be granted in cash and/or in kind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Monthly benefits</u>, if the average monthly income per family member is less than 5 times the guaranteed minimum income (BGN 275). Amount – there is an upper limit depending on the age of the child. For children with disabilities – additional 75% of the guaranteed minimum income (BGN 41.25)</li> <li>• Social assistance benefits are granted on the basis of a request filed with the relevant authority at the permanent address of the applicants.</li> </ul>	<p>social assistance benefits pursuant to the SAA.</p>
<b>Placement duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term – up to 6 months</li> <li>• Mid-term – between 6 – 12 months</li> <li>• Long-term – over a year</li> <li>• Emergency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legally provided placement duration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full adoption – practically long-term</li> </ul>
<b>Staff involved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social workers from the CPD nominated with an order, respectively one for the child and one for the family</li> <li>• Child Protection Panel</li> <li>• SAD director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAD director, CPD</li> <li>• RSAD director, child protection expert</li> <li>• Adoption Panel</li> </ul>
<b>Child adaptation monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social worker of the child – at least twice during the first month</li> <li>• Once a month after that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No monitoring procedure is envisaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two years after the effective date of the adoption</li> <li>• No less than 4 times</li> <li>• The first visit – no later than 1 week after the notification about the adoption</li> </ul>

## 1.1. Application procedure

There are some paragraphs that allow for non-motivated refusal to applicants for foster carers. Article 32 of the CPA lists the persons not eligible as foster carers. Most of the 8 criteria specified are based on specific facts, with the exception of sub-para 6 – “persons who are not fit to perform parental functions because they are lacking personal qualities to raise a child and conditions for the raising and upbringing of the child”. These preliminary conditions completely cover the parameters of the assessment which, according to Article 6 of the Ordinance on the recruitment and approval of foster carers, is to be undertaken in respect of applicants who have already met the preliminary conditions set forth in Article 32 of the CPA. ***This entails the risk that Article 32, para 6 of the CPA may be used to refuse the foster carers to apply.***

## 1.2. Assessment of the applicants for foster carers

The assessment of foster carers is stipulated in detail in the Ordinance on the recruitment and approval of foster carers. It includes assessment of the following circumstances:

1. Age of the applicants
2. Monthly income per family member – no less than the minimal salary for Bulgaria, i.e. BGN 160 at the time of this study.
3. Ability to provide personal space for the child.
4. Personal qualities of the applicants to provide foster care.

### 1.2.1. Age

The legislation does not say what exactly is understood as assessment of this circumstance and how this requirement should be applied. From legislative point of view, ***the restriction applies only to applicants who are under-aged***, without any limitation as to the upper age limit, which in itself is a statement enabling freedom for quality assessment of the suitable age.

The fact that foster care does not bring forth family relationships between the parents and the child is not a precondition for placement restrictions in respect of the age, but the existence of this circumstance in the assessment scope facilitates display of various attitudes, both of the social workers, and of the applicants, such as, for example “people of retirement age are not suitable to foster a baby”. Data from the survey of population also show that 42.4% of the people declare themselves as being in ***inappropriate age*** to be foster carers, without making it clear as relative to what are they considering themselves as being of inappropriate age to be fosterers. Application of this criterion in the preliminary selection process creates the feeling that there is some inappropriate age for being a foster carer other than being under-aged.

The study results and the legislation analysis show that there is a need to reconsider ***the place of the age requirement*** in the foster carer approval procedure. It is recommended that this requirement is to be applied only when placing a specific child with a specific family and not in general when assessing foster carers.

### 1.2.2. Monthly income

The income requirement in the legislation is regarded by some of the professionals as “legal nonsense”. The way it is formulated sets prerequisites for limiting the range of people who could potentially be foster carers as they meet all the other legal requirements.

To me this is clearly a legal nonsense. First they want some inner motivation to provide foster care and then the legislation separates people into poor and rich, the poor not having the right to be a fosterer. On the other hand, provision of such care should bring some financial dividends. Who needs such dividends more – the poor family or the one with higher income?

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system, district centre**

The study data show that in some regions it is impossible for a 4-member family to meet the income requirement if the parents work in the system of education, health care, social welfare institutions, etc. Perhaps Sofia and some of the big district centres might be an exception, at that for certain vocational branches.

The family should meet requirements related to high financial income to foster a child. Many families meet all other criteria except this one. This is a serious obstacle; there are too many requirements, discrepancies in legislation and therefore it should be revised.

Such a requirement is meant to prevent spending of the child allowance for personal needs of family members. There must be some kind of a limit but it should not be so high.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system, district centre**

According to the professionals, part of the worries of the population is related to the fact that the allowance which the family will get for the fostered child is higher than the one they could provide for their own children. This creates another type of prerequisites for intra-family contradictions and hesitation.

I'm afraid that this could put children in disadvantaged position, because the money we spend for our children are less than those granted for the foster child.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system, small town**

The income requirement could be met easier by families with grown-up children, by people who have no children, or by co-habitants. At the same time for a certain group of people – those of pre-retirement age, with grown-up children, permanently unemployed, without true job opportunities, *the income requirement is a real obstacle to become foster carers even if they have the required personal qualities to be foster carers.*

There is a group of professionals – social pedagogues, medical workers who are of pre-retirement age and don't work but would like to become fosterers. If they were given some, be it even minimal, financial incentive they would have been happy to become foster carers, mainly for short-term foster care, as there are not many applicants for it.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system, district centre**

### **1.2.3. Personal space for the child**

Legislation does not clarify what exactly is understood under “providing personal space for the child”. In many cases this is associated with separate room for the child.

I wouldn't apply for foster carer because my husband wouldn't agree. Besides, we don't have enough living space, having in mind that it has to be provided with a separate room.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system, district centre**

The lack of clarity and awareness of the population, and even the professionals working with children, sets as a prerequisite that the requirement for personal space becomes, for certain population groups, a negative-impact factor for the motivation to commit to foster care.

It is important to know that the insufficient living space is not among the significant factors influencing the motivation of the population to foster. It occupies sixth position (31.1%) out of ten factors having negative effect on the involvement of the population in foster care. This group includes people with various living space, smaller (under 19 sq.m. per family member), and bigger (over 27 sq.m.). This means that people have quite different understanding about the personal space requirement.

#### **1.2.4. Personal qualities of foster carers**

The requirement for personal qualities of the applicants for foster carers presupposes all characteristic features of foster care, including interaction with the child's birth family. The analysis dwells upon this requirement only.

The study data show that the legislative requirement "to facilitate the relation between the child and the birth parents" is supported only by 43.9% of the population. This one of the least supported requirements, which means that the need of such interaction worries the applicants for foster carers and is not accepted synonymously by the population (Attachment 1, Table 9).

On my observations, people who have decided to apply for foster carers are embarrassed by the contact with the birth parents. They are worried by the influence of the birth family upon the child and prefer to foster a child without parents in order to feel safer when the child is left at home alone. It is necessary to consider the safety of these families in one way or another.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system**

The interaction with the birth parents is essential in all cases of child placement because the foster carers have no parental rights. Often the problems are related to the need of urgent medical intervention. At the same time, the legislation does not regulate this interaction in any way.

Foster carers have many obligations and no rights. There are a lot of problems – e.g. in the cases of needed urgent medical intervention, especially in the cases of children with disabilities.

**Interview – expert from the National centre for social rehabilitation**

Also, the legislation does not regulate the responsibilities of the birth parents when the best interest of the child is to go back to the family. This is usually written in the CPD action plan and effectively does not obligate the birth family to fulfil the planned activities. A contract is

concluded only between the foster carers and the Social Assistance Directorate. Practically, this excludes the birth family from the partnership interaction.

The interaction with the birth family is also a problem, but this is not well settled in the regulatory framework – the contract is only between the foster carers and the social services, the birth parents have no obligations. This is not the case in France, for instance, where the contract is between the foster carers, the social services and the birth family, and when the child is over 13 – it is also a party to the contract. The birth family is the most important party in their contract.

**Interview – expert from the National centre for social rehabilitation**

According to the legislation, when a child is placed with foster carers it is not envisaged to conclude a contract with the birth parents, as this would regulate and facilitate the relationships with the birth parents.

This is an issue worth discussing in view of future legislative amendments, i.e.: *what are the obligations of the birth parents in the case of enforcing a child protection measure, what should be the optimum time period within which the birth parents should take over their responsibilities and the care for the child; how is the contact with the birth parents regulated in the various cases.* In the opposite case ***foster care may turn into a free service for the birth parents similar to institutional care.***

### **1.2.5. Other assessment factors**

The legislation does not clarify how to assess applicants for foster carers who *are not a family in the meaning of the Family Code (FC)* – parents who have children and live together without being officially married. From the FC view point, the two cohabitants form two autonomous families and if they have a child, s/he is part only of the mother's family. If a child should be placed with foster carers who are not a family, the assessment and approval procedure should only apply to one of the persons because the legislation does not provide for placing a child in two families at the same time. **This entails certain risks because the other partner of the cohabiting couple might remain out of the investigation.**

### **1.3. Approval of the foster family**

Distinctive feature of foster care is the different approval process, which resembles the one in adoption, but is additionally complicated because the decision of the SAD director is made on the basis of recommendation by the CPP where practically the foster carers are being approved. The procedure of investigating the family in the cases of adoption is easier, no matter that the child is placed on long-term basis (See Table 1 above).

The comparative table shows that foster care is one of the most strictly regulated services with the most complicated placement procedures. The foster care training and required time to be spent in acquainting and matching the child and the parents are obligatory only for the foster carers. *No such requirements exist for kinship care or adoption.* In fact, such time is needed in all cases, since for the child the protection measure does not matter at all after it has been taken out of the birth family or the institution.

**Legislation suggests different criteria and procedures for foster carers compared to adopters and relatives, no matter that there are similarities in the placements of children outside the birth family. The criteria and procedures are not focused on the needs of the child, but rather on the needs of the adults and the institutions.**

## 2. *Procedures applicable to kinship care placement*

The qualitative study shows that placement with relatives (kinship care) is used as a hidden way to place with foster carers. That is why we analyze kinship care in this study. The “kinship care” child protection measure is not strictly regulated and practically gives two options:

- placing the child with the extended family in which case there are kinship ties;
- placing the child with a close family without kinship ties.

The common feature of these two options is the relationship with the child – kinship or emotional. *Kinship placement procedure is easier in terms of investigation and recruitment and there is no requirement for approval and training compared to foster care.*

Compared to placement with foster family, kinship care involves:

- No assessment procedure;
- The decision is in the competence of the CPD;
- No required time for adaptation of the child to the family and for monitoring the process;
- No specific procedure to monitor the post-placement period.

The strict regulation of the procedure in relation to the “placement with foster carers” protection measure gives the applicants for foster carers the opportunity to appeal against the assessment prepared by the CPDs. This opportunity does not exist in relation to the statement the CPD gives about the capacity of the kin to raise the child.

The definition for foster family given in the CPA, i.e. “Foster family is a family of two spouses of a single person with whom a child is placed to be raised on contractual basis” has three parts – the first one focuses on the fact that foster family could only be physical persons – spouses or a single person; the second part – the aim of the placement; the third part – the placement of the child is contractually bound. The first two parts of the definition for foster family allow for including the relatives of the child in this broad definition. This, in turn, makes it possible to change or replace the protection measure “placement with foster carers” with “kinship care” and vice versa due to the following considerations: the easier procedure for recruiting and assessing the kin families or the higher amount of the monthly allowances for foster carers. The change of the protection measure “placement with foster carers” with “kinship care” and vice versa is possible for the same child and the same parents.

**In these circumstances it is possible to place a child with foster carers who do not meet all the requirements and have not gone through the obligatory process of approval. CPD retains all the powers without having obligations for assessment, training and monitoring.**

Foster care works, but in a different variation. The “Article 26 variation”.

**Focus group, Representatives of the child protection system**

**The existence of these possibilities practically allows for avoiding the legislation related to placing a child with foster carers and makes pointless the clumsy foster care placement procedure.**

### ***3. Possibility for a licensed service-provider to provide foster care services***

The possibility for a licensed service-provider to provide foster care is set forth in the following cases:

- Training of applicants for foster carers;
- Family-based services for the child and the foster carers following the child's placement in the family;
- Services for foster carers prior to the child's placement in the family.

If the child is under the "placement in specialized institution" protection measure, it is practically not possible to provide certain services in the institution, e.g. preparing the child prior to placing it in the foster family because the services are provided for only in family-type environment, i.e. the reintegration needs to be complete or in progress.

## II. CHAPTER TWO: Difficulties in implementing foster care in Bulgaria

This chapter considers foster care from the point of view of the people and the actions of the professionals contributing to the development of public attitudes to fostering. The awareness and attitudes of the population outline the problem areas and difficulties for the professionals in order to restructure the social policy and provide the necessary quality of foster care.

Public knowledge about fostering is essential for the development of the service. This chapter reflects the clash of opinions of a number of public circles as to whether financial or moral motives should be leading for the people to become foster carers. Two view points have been considered – whether to give an opportunity to the people to provide foster care as profession or to support voluntarily a child who can not live with the birth family.

The accumulation of public experience and knowledge could be accomplished if there is a profound policy providing the necessary tools and resources for its implementation. The scarce information about foster care results in various fantasies and clues in the public space, and this rather prevents its introduction than helps. This holds true both for the ordinary people and for the professionals.

The data analysis leads to some specific features in the attitudes of the population, which allows for making a general profile of the possible target groups who would become potential foster carers. It is necessary to bear in mind that there is no unified attitude towards foster care. This brings the need that foster care policy is tailored to various groups of people so that their weaknesses and strength are taken into consideration before disapproving them as fosterers.

The comparatively low level of awareness of the people and the ineffective information campaign at this stage result in poor knowledge about the essence and purposes of foster care as a child protection measure. This leads to low interest of people to the problems of children at risk and lack of willingness to get involved with foster care.

### 1. *People's awareness about foster care*

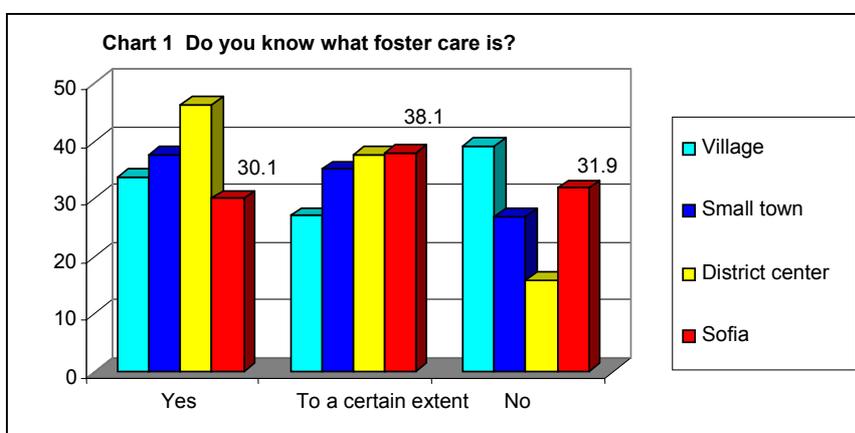
One of the tasks of the study is to examine **to what extent people are informed about existing foster care in Bulgaria and how this affects their motivation**. For this purpose the general awareness of people is examined in the following directions:

1. **By means of a complex self-assessment of the people** about their own awareness. The questions are: how do people assess their knowledge about foster care (Attachment 2, Table 1); to what extent can they recognize correctly the definition of foster care (Attachment 2, Table 2); what part of the people states they have seen foster care advertisement in the last two years and of what type.
2. **By means of an expert assessment carried out by the research team** in relation to the level of knowledge about the essence of foster care. The expert assessment has been made on the basis of the information obtained using additional questions, related to the current knowledge of the essence of foster care, legal procedures and conditions for involvement in foster care (child allowance, age requirement, opportunity for children in institutions, which agency to approach for applying);
3. **Indirectly through the information** which people would like to receive about foster care.

### 1.1. General awareness of people about foster care

The data from the national representative survey show that **there is no uniformity in relation to people's awareness** – 38.4% respond that they know what foster care is. About 34% say they know “something”, and the other 27.5 % say they know nothing or give no answer at all (Attachment 2, Table 1).

People's awareness *varies for the various groups*. Women prove to be more aware than men. Similarly, more aware tend to be the people with higher education and those who run their own business. There is no significant difference in the awareness according to **the type of place of residence although best informed are the people living in district centres (46.3%), then come those living in small towns – 37.3%** (Attachment 2, Table 5). Most probably this fact is related to the Child Welfare Reform Project, as within the framework of the project in the pilot district centres have been carried out information campaigns, and also to the activity of non-government organizations and some projects implemented in the field of foster care in the bigger towns around the country. It is surprising that smaller towns turn out to be better informed about foster care than the people in Sofia (Chart 1). As a whole, people in Sofia and in the villages are *least informed about foster care* (Attachment 2, Table 5).



**The awareness of the professionals**<sup>1</sup>, the people working in various child care agencies and organizations, is also surprisingly low. The study involved most of all staff (managers, educators, support staff) of specialized institutions for children, but also representatives from schools, local structures of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoIA), etc. The results of the qualitative study show that the “foster care” concept is not unfamiliar amongst them, but when it comes to its content there are numerous interpretations, which could be generalized as “semi-adoption”. The understanding is about long-term, even life-long, care for one child only. This is where the significant fears about attachment, separation and pain come from. With the exception of CPD representatives and the RSAD child protection experts, this statement holds true for all other specialists.

<sup>1</sup> The study involved managers, educators and support staff of the specialized child welfare institutions, and also representatives of schools, local structures of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, etc.

Particularly interesting is the attitude of the people working at the specialized child welfare institutions.

I know about foster care from comments and discussions with the CPD, from the director who attended seminars on this topic. I think this is a kind of a service where a family looks after a child against remuneration.

My only information comes from the media and I have no special information. Most efforts are needed to motivate foster carers.

I'm not familiar with the details and specifics of foster care. We think foster carers need financial stimulation, because nowadays this service is not paid.

**Focus group with representatives of specialized institutions**

So this is a huge responsibility. Minimal payment given by the state, I haven't asked about a child with disability. Could I get such payment?

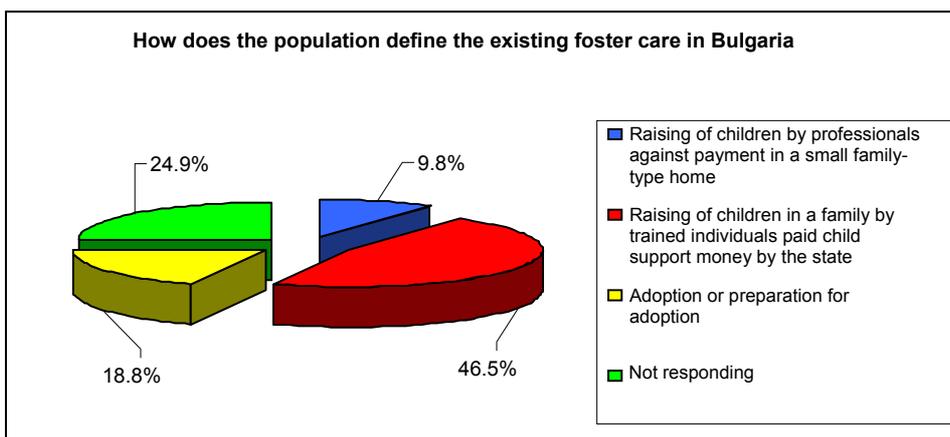
**Focus group with members of a municipal Child Protection Panel**

## 1.2. People's understanding about foster care

The study shows that *there is no uniformity in the understanding* about foster care among the population and that *more than half* of the people *can not say what is the current foster care in Bulgaria* – 53.5% (Attachment 2, Table 2).

Young people up to the age of 37 and those with higher education are most familiar with the essence of foster care – 46.5% of the respondents. They define foster care as „*raising children in a family of trained people to whom the state pays child allowance*”. 18.8% of the respondents closely relate foster care with the process of adoption. The data show that 13.6% of the people *understand foster care as adoption* and another 5.2% think that it is *preparation for adoption*. In this group (nearly one fifth of the population), understanding foster care as adoption or preparation for adoption, the highest share is of people aged 38-50, mainly with not more than basic or secondary education, and there is not much gender difference. Such understanding about foster care as part of the adoption process is relatively frequent, both among women, and among men.

The understanding about fostering as “*raising children by professionals against payment, in a small family-type home*” is shared only by 9.8% of the respondents. Such understanding about foster care is shared mostly by people aged over 50 years – these are mostly people with their own business or retired people. It is also more common among men, than among women.



Although, at first sight people seem to be clear with the fostering definition – 46.5% have stated correctly the definition of the existing foster care, still there are study data bringing forth some concerns in relation to *the understanding of the meaning and essence of foster care*.

The data cross-analysis shows that more than half of those 46.5%, who give the definition of foster care (about 60% of them), state the following (Attachment 2, Table 6):

1. they would become foster carers, if child allowance is provided (*actually it is provided for in the law*);
2. about half of them relate foster care with adoption;
3. according to them, the institution they would approach, if they want to apply, is the Juvenile Bureau (87.7%) ranked first, followed by the Regional Education Inspectorate of the MoES. Apparently, these data give evidence also about the general lack of awareness of the population about the child protection system.

This shows that *there is a lack of understanding among the population of the meaning and essence of the currently existing foster care*. The situation is similar with the group of people who consider becoming foster carers.

The relative share of the people who answered the question “Are you considering becoming foster carers?” positively is 3.5% (Attachment 2, Table 26), and the hesitating are 5.6%. This is *almost three times less* than the stated general willingness of the population to become foster carers. Between 8.1% and 12.5% are the people who said they are willing to become foster carers without any conditions regarding finances, specifics of the child and duration of foster care. To consider becoming a foster family is now more definite attitude and willingness, that’s why it is interesting to see how this group (3.5% of the interviewed) understands foster care.

The data show that *within the group of those considering becoming foster carers the biggest is the share of people who understand the foster family as preparation for adoption* (Table 2.).

Table 2

		3. Which one of the following four definitions corresponds most to the existing foster care in Bulgaria?				Total
		Raising of children by professionals against payment in a small family-type home	Raising of children in a family by trained individuals paid child allowance by the state	Adoption	Preparation for adoption	
25. Are you considering becoming a foster family?	Yes	6.3%	3.8%	1.8%	11.9%	3.5%
	We are hesitating	10.1%	6.5%	4.6%	4.8%	5.6%
	No	83.5%	89.8%	93.6%	83.3%	90.9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

These data raise the question whether the population tends to perceive foster care as hidden adoption or the misunderstanding of the meaning of foster care results from the lack of information and hence people associate foster care with something familiar, i.e. adoption. Since foster care is not exactly adoption (because it has a different name), it is most probably preparation for adoption. ***It turns out that the share of those who consider becoming foster carers and understand the essence of foster care is only 3.8% out of the 46.5% of the population.*** This shows that a very small part of people stating willingness to commit to foster is clear about its essence.

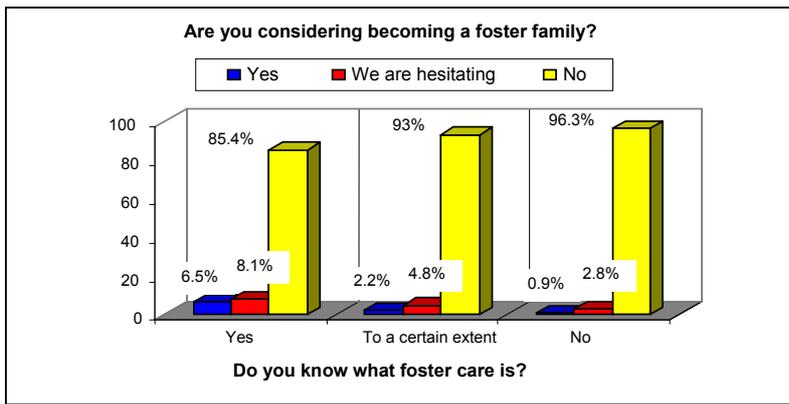
### 1.3. People's awareness as a factor affecting the development of foster care in Bulgaria

The study data show that awareness of the people is an important factor for the development of foster care. ***There is a relationship between the attitude of the people to become foster carers and their awareness.***

When we became foster carers, no one talked about this, no information was available. It is not that people don't want to become foster carers, but that they are afraid. Many people would take children; simply there are no media campaigns and information. These are our children, not other people's kids – this should be our attitude towards them.

**Focus group with foster families, district centre**

The less people know about foster care, the more they hesitate and do not want to become foster carers. And vice versa, the more they know about foster care, the more they consider becoming foster carers.



The biggest is the share of those respondents who state that *the lack of money* is the main reason why they would not take this responsibility. These are 72% of all the 69.2% who ranked this factor first. At the same time, however, these are the people who claim *they do not know* what foster care is. The other frequently given answer (33.6%) is related to *the lack of confidence of the people in their own abilities* to become foster carers. Here, again, the share of those who *do not know* foster care is higher. For them this is obviously a major difficulty.

***Why, in your opinion, foster care did not develop in Bulgaria?***

Firstly, because the PR campaign is poor, very poor. Sporadically they made couple of photos, of our children, posted them up and so what – did anyone understand what is it about? Everyone hears, but no one understands what it all about. Secondly, this is more like anti-advertisement, so much money were spent on foster care training, and, in fact, foster carers are counted on the fingers of the hand. And how many projects were used for that. What we need is a positive PR campaign, so that people could see examples here, not abroad. To see that there are Bulgarian people who are doing it.

**Interview with a RCHCLPC director**

***What are the main difficulties in the foster care implementation?***

The CPDs carried out the information campaigns without having the preparation for this. It requires certain knowledge and skills. They did campaigns, but only in the district centres, in the smaller settlements there is no information, not even the leaflets have reached them.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

**Summary**

Public knowledge about foster care is essential for the development of the service. It gives people the opportunity to perceive foster care as a job or voluntary support to a child who can not live with its birth parents. The accumulation of public experience and knowledge could be accomplished if there is a profound policy providing the necessary tools and resources for its implementation. ***The poor awareness about foster care results in various fantasies and clues in the public space and this rather prevents its introduction than helps.***

## **2. People's attitudes towards foster care**

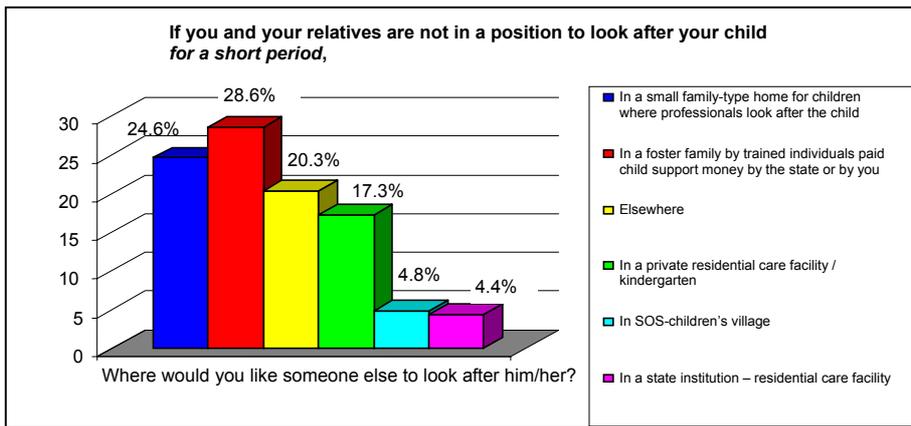
The study of the attitudes towards foster care is done by determining the *relation between the motivation* to become a foster carer *and groups of factors affecting this motivation*. This gives the opportunity to cover several specific groups of factors related to the attitudes when studying the attitudes of the people in relation to foster care. The assumption is that the general attitude of people could be divided into *various groups of attitudes* affecting to different extent the motivation of the people to apply or not to apply for foster cares. Such groups of attitudes are:

- 1) attitudes related to the child,
- 2) attitudes related to the financial conditions,
- 3) attitudes related to the foster care duration,
- 4) other important conditions.

Among the professionals working with children and the social workers from the child protection system is common the perception that people trust more the raising of children in institutions, i.e. they trust the state, in terms of responsibility and duty, and respectively, they have fears, mistrust towards the foster care. The study checked out the trust towards *the various types of care* by means of examining the *expressed personal choice for own children* if short-term care is needed (Attachment 2, Tables 11-12, Questions 19-20).

The most preferred type of care, according to the study data, is *placement in a small group home, of family type*, where children are cared for by paid professionals. This service is preferred by 25% of the people aged up to 37 years, 23.1% of those aged between 38 and 50 years and 26.1% of the people aged over 50. According to their education level, 23.8% of the people with lower than basic education and 28% of those with secondary education have ranked first this type of care, and only those with university education or college graduates give preference to private foster care – 18.9% versus 18% to small family-type home. Similar is the situation by the social status – again the most trusted type of care is the small family-type home.

The data show that compared to the year 2000 there is a serious change in the situation with the trust of the people towards raising children at risk in a state institution-residential care home. The respondents, no matter of their age, social status, gender, employment situation, incomes, ethnic origin, rank last the placement of their own child in a state institution among all other options.



## 2.1. Attitudes related to the child

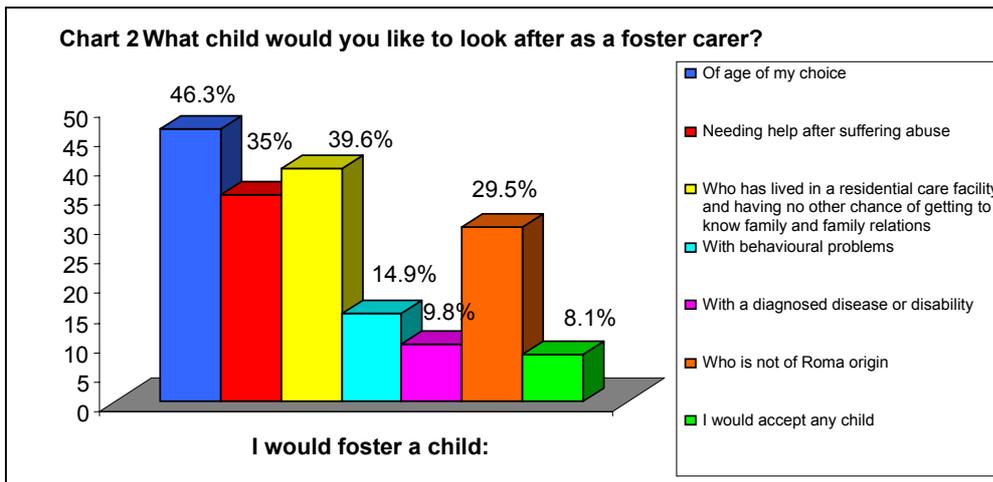
When examining this group of attitudes, the study tries to answer the question *to what extent specific characteristics of the child “are” or “are not” a significant factor motivating people to become or not foster carers*. When examining this correlation, the following characteristics of the child have outlined: age, abuse, institutional background, behavioural difficulties, illness or disability and ethnic origin of the child.

Another group of factors influencing the preparedness of the people to commit to foster care is also examined here, in particular “knowing the child in advance”. The data show that ***the fear of the unknown*** has a very strong influence on the willingness of the people to become foster carers (Attachment 2, Tables 21-25).

### 2.1.1. Relation between the child’s characteristics “age” and “institutional background” and the willingness of the people to become foster carers

The data show that ***the “age” factor*** is the most important one for the motivation and the willingness of the people to accept a child, and more specifically, the opportunity to choose the age of the child – 46.3% state such readiness (see Chart 2 below). Second comes ***the “chance” factor***. Important proves to be the fact where for a child raised in an institution the foster care is the “only chance” to become familiar with family and family relationships. This is much more motivating for people than problems like abuse, disease or behavioural difficulties. These conclusions are supported also by the data about the leading motives to become foster carers – the biggest is the group of people who would become foster carers to make good – 72.5% (Attachment 2, Table 13).

More than one third (39.6%) of the respondents state willingness to foster children whose only chance to get familiar with family relationships is the foster family. This information is very positive in the foster care context because part of the meaning of foster care is to give a chance to institutionalized children to get to know the family relations. For some children this is the only chance.



The research of the professionals, however, shows that *they are afraid* to place children from institutions with foster carers. Such data are available from focus groups carried out with professionals from the district centres. It also became clear at the time of the study that there are towns where there are approved foster carers waiting for children. Social workers would rather not place children from institutions and most probably, “keep” these families for children coming from families. This is confirmed also by the data from the focus groups and interviews with foster carers and applicants for foster carers. They claim that foster care is not related to the integration of children from institutions.

The problem with the slow procedure when taking a child is that they don't place children who are already in an institution, but wait for a child who might go to an institution.

**Focus group with foster carers and applicants for foster carers**

One of the reasons is that the professionals working with children and those from the child protection system regard these children as not suitable for fostering.

Work should be done with the children too. If foster families are ready, children are not prepared. Do you know what is to place a child from an institution into a family? You know, I have brought such children home and I know what it is like. They start liking it so much and don't want to go back to the institution; at the same time they are so vulnerable, that ... only people who have never worked with such children could undertake the economical hardship to foster such a child. Even if I was paid three salaries I would never foster such a child, this is my attitude. I have no racial prejudices because we work with Roma children and I am even more impressed with them than with some Bulgarian children. I have no such attitudes.

**Focus group with professionals working with children**

There are children who grow in an institution ever since they were born. And it turns out that they are not prepared and they accept placement harder, than the society. You can't force a child out of the institution. Some children are suitable for adoption and firmly refuse to be adopted.

**Focus group with child protection specialists**

Another reason is the resistance of the institutions which sometimes succeed to convince even the professionals.

In our case the strongest resistance comes from the institution for young children. We have no child placed in a family immediately after birth, although it is the CPD who makes the decision. They think that the younger the child is, the better to place it in an institution, and the older the child is, the easier to place it with a family. The institution staff is resistant, the director of this institution is a member of the Child Protection Panel, the Adoption Panel.

**Interview with a CPD social worker**

This attitude of the professionals towards the children from institutions is at variance with the attitude of the society and the existing foster carers. When studying the motivation of the foster carers it turns out that the first time it occurred to them to become foster carers was when seeing a specific child in difficulty or child from institution on the TV.

**How did you find out about foster care? Where from did you hear?**

We found out from the TV. We watched a programme about children left for adoption and it occurred to us that we could help somehow.

**Interview with applicants for foster carers, district centre**

The study gives reasons to draw out yet *another reason* for this fear and it is related to the conflict of interests between the institutions for children and the foster care. Taking a child out of the institution is connected with many obstacles, resistance and very often the social workers are not sure that they would get the necessary support to do their job. This is understood even by the foster carers.

There is no cooperation between the agencies. Why the Director doesn't give us a child when he has at least 150 children? They have a different view on the issue. They want to keep the children, not to close the institution. If you have the authority, why don't you go to the Director and ask why two families are waiting and he doesn't give them children?

**Focus group with foster carers and applicant foster carers**

### **2.1.2. Relation between the child's characteristics "illness or disease", "ethnic origin" and "behavioural problems" and the willingness of the people to become foster carers**

The study data show that in relation to *the characteristics of a child* who needs a foster family *there is lack of willingness* to foster children who are ill or have disability, and children with behavioural problems. This is the least preferred group of children. The results of the study show that the "ethnic origin" indicator affects people's motivation to foster to a less extent than the "illness/disability" and "behavioural problems" indicators. People are more willing to support Roma children than children with disabilities or behavioural problems. The reasons for rejection or unwillingness to foster children from these two groups (with disabilities and behavioural difficulties) could be different. The data of the qualitative study with professionals and foster carers show that one of the major reasons for the

unwillingness of foster carers to involve with disabled children is *the lack of services* and suitable conditions for care provision to the children with disabilities.

***What would be your reaction if you were given a child with a disease?***

I wouldn't mind, but we don't have appropriate conditions to look after such a child. We live far away from the town, the doctor is 3 km away. As you know, such children need more specific conditions and care. As far as abused children are concerned, there is no problem. The idea of foster care is to make the child feel good, isn't it? I went to see the children in the institution.

**Interview with applicant foster carers, district centre**

It could be said that the existing form of foster care in Bulgaria most probably will not be able to meet the needs of children with disabilities and behavioural difficulties. These are two categories of children who need also other alternative forms of foster care. Furthermore, foster care for children with disabilities and behavioural difficulties should be accompanied by development of additional and supporting services for the foster carers of children with disabilities and behavioural difficulties. The opinion of the professionals coincides with the one of the people.

At this stage of development of the society I don't see how a foster family could manage with a disabled child. They would have such difficulties that I don't see how they would cope. These children are abandoned by their own parents because of the disability. I don't see how they could be looked after.

**Focus group with child protection specialists in a district centre**

As a whole, people are least willing to foster a child without any requirements towards its characteristics. The total share of people willing to foster any child is 8.1%. This fact could have different interpretations. On one hand, bearing in mind that this is a national study, the absolute number that would correspond to this share of the population, in fact turns out to be not a small figure of families willing, without imposing any requirements as to the child's specifics, to foster a child in need of such care. Of course, here come two other questions: are these realistic figures and, if so, what was the reason why these people were not approached as potential applicants. On the other hand, these data show that in fact this group is the smallest in terms of the relative share of the population. This could also mean that the existing foster care, which tries to find foster carers who have no requirements and expectations to the child, is unrealistic and does not correspond to the attitude of the people. When assessing foster carers enough place and significance should be given to the preferences of the applicants, i.e. they should not be undervalued, because they are a fact and could turn into a serious risk factor leading to the failure of the foster placement.

In relation to this a number of questions could be asked about the perceptions of the professionals about "*good enough foster carers*" – what are they?, in particular:

- Whether there is some idealized perception of foster carers with high expectations that are hard to be met?

Study data indicate that such "idealized perception" and expectations towards foster carers exist among the social workers.

***What about the third family?***

They were in a process of assessment when we brought the case to supervision because we had some reservations. They were authoritative. They didn't meet our ideas of foster carers.

**Focus group, district centre**

**Representatives of the child protection system**

- Whether we should think about making a *profile of the foster carers* when recruiting, i.e. to identify clearly their strengths and weaknesses and judge properly the type of the child for whom the carers could provide the best-quality care to the greatest extent (match them with the child in the best possible way)?

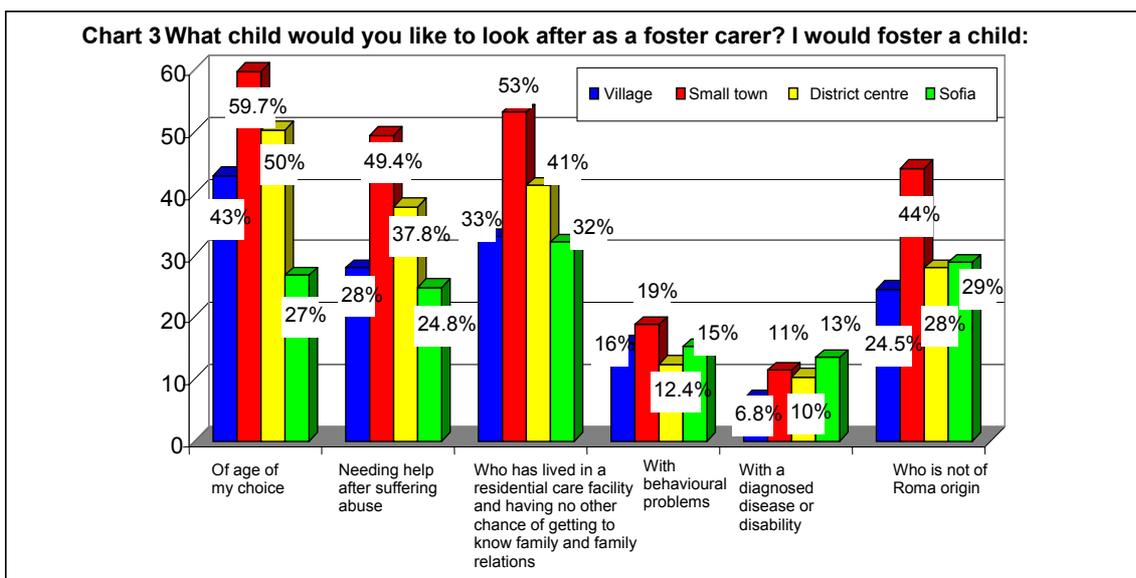
This, however, requires good knowledge of the needs and specific features of the children who need foster care in order to make a good choice. And this would mean a more difficult professional task for the child protection specialists: on the one hand, better competence, on the other, the system needs to be changed, so that social workers are given bigger opportunities to concentrate on foster care as a protection measure.

The data show that the characteristic features of the child, besides having a stopping effect on the willingness of the people to become foster carers, particularly some of the features, have a motivating effect for certain groups. If the child has been abused and needs help, people tend to be inclined to foster, especially those (72.3%) who have financial difficulties. Even those (42.2%) who have no time, agree to foster *an abused child* and help in a case of emergency.

The data of the quantitative study show that the group of people who define themselves as of inappropriate age is the next group motivated by some of the child's specific features. Less than half of them would foster *a child with disability* or a child with a disease.

### **2.1.3. Relation between “child’s characteristics” and the willingness of the people from the “various types of settlements” to become foster carers**

The study data show that there is different level of willingness to foster depending on the *type of the settlement*. As a whole, we could say that *the willingness in the small towns is greater* compared to other types of settlements. People from district centres are less willing to become foster carers, least willing are the people living in Sofia. Even in the villages people are more positive towards fostering.



Another feature related to the type of settlement is that *the willingness to foster varies according to the characteristic features of the child* (age, abuse, institutional background, behavioural difficulties, illness or disability, Roma origin). Most willing to foster a child with disability are the people from Sofia. Most tolerant towards Roma children are village people (Chart 3 – the question is asked negatively, that is why the data is interpreted the other way round). In terms of the characteristic features of the child, people from Sofia are most willing to foster children whose only chance to get familiar with family relationships is foster care. Village people are least willing to foster a child with an illness or disability. This fact confirms to certain extent the thesis that the lack of support services for children with disabilities is most probably the serious reason why this group of children is rejected. The willingness of village people to foster children with behavioural problems is higher than in Sofia and the district centres.

#### 2.1.4. The fear of the unknown child

**The fear of the unknown child** is the biggest restraining factor, according to a study on the motivation to foster. *This fact is in deep disagreement with the existing foster care philosophy in Bulgaria* (Attachment 2, Tables 21 - 25). Several factors give us the reason to formulate this difficulty and obstacle for the development of foster care in Bulgaria in the way it is provided for in the existing regulatory framework.

Firstly, the data of the study show that people have the attitude and the need *to get to know the child before making the decision*. 53.1% of the respondents answered the question “What other conditions would you impose to become a foster carer?” by ranking this condition first. The condition ranked second is “to be able to choose the child myself” – 51.8% of the respondents.

Secondly, the qualitative analysis of the data from interviews with existing and experienced foster carers shows that *experienced foster carers* demonstrate willingness to foster an unknown child and have overcome this fear. And still the first children they had fostered had been as a result of established contact, meetings, knowing the child, even little.

Thirdly, the possibility to choose the age of the child is the most important one for the motivation and willingness of people to foster – 46.3% have stated such willingness.

Fourthly, people are not willing to foster a child with disability or with deviant behaviour.

This information necessitates reconsidering the legislation and the foster care implementation practice or, at least, the child protection experts have to bear it in mind this reality when campaigning and recruiting foster carers.

## **2.2. Financial conditions and motivation**

When analyzing the first group of attitudes, the study tries to answer the question *to what extent the financial conditions “are” or “are not” an important factor motivating people to become foster carers*. Financial conditions, as a factor affecting the people’s willingness to get involved in foster care provision, are studied in several directions:

1. *Under what financial conditions would people become foster carers* – here are included indicators of the people’s preferences related to the financial conditions.
2. *What would stop them from becoming foster carers* – here, again, financial conditions are studied in an attempt to find the relation between the stated willingness to become foster carers and other specific conditions stated by the population. This allows to identify the so-called “brake factors” and respectively the place of the financial conditions among the “brake factors”.
3. *What would encourage them to become foster carers* – this group of factors allows checking what are the other critical factors affecting positively the attitudes of the people and to what extent they depend on the financial conditions. This is the group of the so-called “motivating factors”.

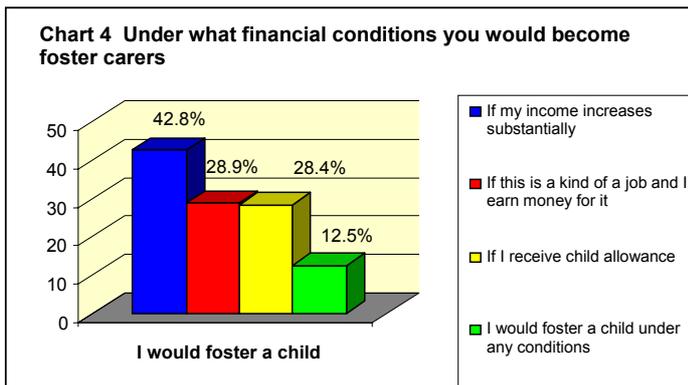
### **2.2.1. People’s preferences related to the financial conditions**

When researching the relation between preferences to financial conditions and willingness to become foster carers, the attitudes are divided into 4 sub-categories depending on the financial conditions:

- *1/ Foster care as a paid job* – the existing legislation does not provide for payment for foster carers, e.g. the time and efforts of the foster carers are not paid for.
- *2/ Foster care which includes child allowance* – the existing legislation considers the expenses for the child and provides for allowances according to the child’s age.
- *3/ Foster care only if the foster carers’ income is considerable* – this reflects the understanding that there is a major relation between the financial conditions and the willingness to become foster carers.
- *4/ Foster care under any financial conditions* – this sub-category outlines the attitudes to foster care without assigning primary importance to the financial conditions.

The analysis of the information from the quantitative study, in respect of the relation between finances and attitudes towards foster care, gives the opportunity either to confirm or to reject one of the hypotheses of the study, in particular, the fact that foster carers are not paid makes the development and implementation of the service more difficult.

Generally, the study data indicate that the financial conditions are an important factor influencing the development of foster care (see Chart 4).



The data show that the largest group of people is the one which *defines its motivation as closely related to the existence of substantial incomes* – 42.8% have stated these financial conditions as influencing their motivation. In a way, for the major part of the population, only the better financial security of the family could make them consider becoming foster carers. Other data show that Bulgarians perceive foster care as a very expensive service provided only by well-off people.

**What was the reaction of your colleagues?**

They just could not believe that this could happen. They also think that we are financially secure to afford it, which is true, but they are afraid they would not have enough money. They think this would harm their own children. Some children might be jealous too.

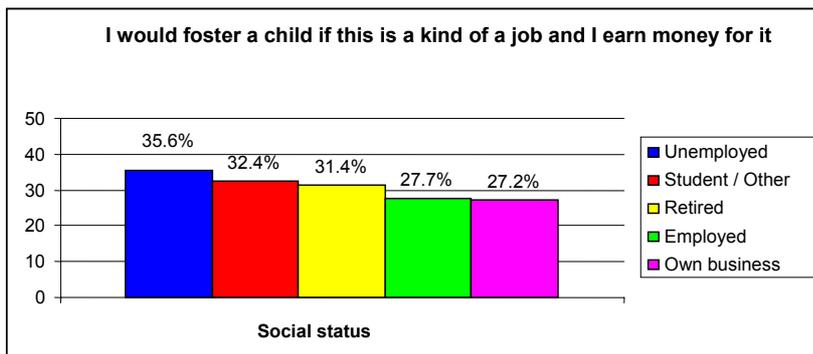
**Focus group with foster carers, district centre**

And yet 12.5% of the people would consider fostering a child without having financial conditions as a leading factor. This group, though small, makes in fact a considerable referral and potential human resource which could be involved in foster care (Attachment 2, Table 10).

Relatively similar is the number of people who would foster, if paid – 28.9%, and if they receive allowance for the child – 28.4%. The study accounts for the social desirability in the answers to this question, so the attitudes of the people to become foster carers are checked with another question in the questionnaire, i.e. “*Are you considering becoming foster carers?*”. There we have a smaller group of people who consider becoming foster carers. Those who consider becoming foster carers, if paid, are 7.3% and the ones who are hesitant are 10.3%. The people who consider becoming foster carers, if they get allowance for the child, are respectively 8.8% – considering and 11% – hesitant. The data of the study allow for making a profile of these groups.

**The first group**, i.e. those who would become foster carers if this is a kind of paid job, comprises *predominantly people aged over 50. Their education is lower than basic or secondary and they are mainly women. They live in a small town or village; have their own family and children.* In relation to the influence of the ethnic origin on the financial motivation, it is the representatives of the Roma community who predominate – 37%, compared to Bulgarians – 30.2% and Turkish – 22.2%. Still, the differences are not

statistically significant. In relation to their social status, these are most often unemployed people meaning that foster care could be perceived as an employment motivation.



The opinions of the child protection system representatives support this attitude on the basis of observations in their practice.

**What exactly do you mean by financial security – to introduce it as a profession, as a job, how exactly do you see it?**

Not exactly as profession and job, but they should have social securities, tax concessions, some assistance.

It is really insufficient. We are not talking Samaritans, but to do something like this you need to have a heart and a soul. There is nothing wrong in receiving financial support, though it should not be the leading motive.

People who have lost their jobs rely on foster care to provide them with a new job, they take it as business. The system does not work otherwise and this is the attitude and public mentality of the Bulgarians. Although this is not so only in Bulgaria. Many countries give up foster care.

**Focus group, district centre**

**Representatives of the child protection system**

**The second group** consists of representatives of the population who would become foster carers, if they get an allowance for the child. As we already mentioned above, the relative share of this group is 28.4%. This is comparatively high percentage and the group could be regarded as having good potential to be trained or motivated to foster. The data of the study allow for outlining some **characteristic features of this group**. First, in relation to age and social status, these are *people aged over 50 who live in a small town, have grown-up children of their own, usually live with a partner or on their own* – this is almost 70% of the respondents. In relation to education, there are no much variations, and still the share of people with university or college education is higher – 30%, than those with lower than secondary education – 29.5%, and secondary education – 28.9%. This leads to the conclusion that *the education factor is not so significant for this group of people*. In relation to ethnic origin of the people who took part in the study, Bulgarians hold the highest share – 31.1%, then come the Roma community – 22.2%, and the Turkish– 14.1%. Generally, factors such as the living space and number of family members can not be categorized as leading in the motivation to foster.

What is specific is that the existing foster care is exactly of this kind at the moment, i.e. the state provides allowance for the child to the willing and approved foster carers. And here come the logical questions, why the members of this group *have not effectively applied for foster carers yet*; why is the discrepancy between the stated willingness of the people and the real situation, in which we have between 50 and 60 foster carers in Bulgaria. Of course, we may assume that there is certain social desirability and that the actual number of these people is smaller. Various interpretations are possible here, but the fact that most of the people say they do not know or know very little about foster care should be taken into consideration. This high share of uninformed people is also a very realistic reason why people are not active.

People know little about foster care. We, the Bulgarians, prefer to play safe and take a new step only when we are familiar with it. Maybe there is a need for more information.

Focus group, district centre

Representatives of the child protection system

### 2.2.2. Critical factors of negative and positive impact

Data from the study show that a critical factor for the population is the financial motivation. This result is more or less predictable considering the socio-economic situation in Bulgaria. However, open remains the important question as to *what extent the financial factor's impact is unchangeable*, i.e. is the impact of the financial factor on the population's motivation manageable or not? The study attempts to measure the "burden" of the financial factor within the negative and the positive motivation. This analysis will support the manageability of the process associated with the financial motivation.

Factors of negative impact are the so called "brake factors". This study views as "*brake factors*" a set of considerations which influence negatively the motivation and willingness of the people to become foster carers. These factors have a stopping effect on the foster care implementation and, hence, are defined as "brake factors". Furthermore, the study has identified several factors amongst these with substantial negative impact. The analysis also tries to define the place of the financial conditions within the group of factors with significant negative impact.

The following statements fall within the group of negative impact factors:

- *inappropriate age,*
- *I will not manage,*
- *somebody else's child may bring about problems with my child,*
- *I don't have time,*
- *my family will be under continuous surveillance of the social services,*
- *my family will not agree to that,*
- *we don't have space,*
- *the legislation is restrictive,*
- *I simply don't want somebody else's child at home.*

Study data indicate that *the reasons quoted most often* are (Attachment 2, Table 14-16):

- 1) *I don't have money* – 69.2%,
- 2) *inappropriate age* – 42.4%,
- 3) *I don't have time* – 39.1% of the respondents.

These results come to say that among negative impact factors the three mentioned above are the most significant ones for the population. The financial factor is again appearing at the top. **The thesis that financial motivation is a wrong motivation in order to be a foster carer remains unjustified and is a major obstacle for the development of the service.** The people have realistic idea about raising a child and it is exactly their parenting experience which determines that the lack of money will make them inefficient parents. That is precisely the reason for which the respondents are not willing to take the responsibility of becoming foster carers and 69.2% respond that the key reason is the lack of financial resource. The same part of the population to a greatest extent states being ready to become a foster carer if this is “a kind of a job and I earn money for it”.

A more detailed analysis enables concluding that for the population group for whom the **“lack of money”** factor is the leading one the largest is the share of those respondents who are ready to become foster carers if this is “a kind of a job and I earn money for it” – 80.1% of all respondents stating that the key obstacle to becoming foster carers is financial one. The demographic profile of this group shows a prevailing proportion of unemployed and retired people.

Except for the hindering effect for some population groups, the financial factors also appear as incentive for their willingness to become foster carers. Within the 42.4% of the respondents considering themselves as being of **inappropriate age** to be foster carers, some also state that they would foster a child if the foster care is some kind of a paid job – more than half of all 42.4%. The group of those identifying themselves as being of “inappropriate age” comprises mainly people above the age of 50 and retired – 62%. These facts are to a great extent explanatory for the contents of “inappropriate age” concept. Even though this concept is not explicitly defined by the law, the population applies it massively for people over their 50ies. These facts show lack of understanding and knowledge of the essence of foster care rather than lack of motivation to commit to foster care.

Result from the population's motivation study show that the **financial conditions are a determinant only for certain population groups**, in particular: unemployed, retired and individuals over the age of 50. For these the *financial motivation is firm* and the readiness to commit to foster care largely and critically depends on financial conditions such as: “foster care being kind of a paid job”.

This study regards as **motivating factors** those which have positive impact on the population's attitudes. Also, these are considered important whenever they prove to have a strong incentivising effect for the respondents. Such effect is assumed whenever these factors reduce the effect of other critical factors with negative impact on the population's motivation. Analysis of the data attempts to define the place of financial conditions within the “motivating factors” category.

The motivating factors comprise:

- *satisfaction by the good done,*
- *the house will live up – our children are grown-ups and they are not at home,*
- *there will be someone to look after me in my old age,*
- *I will be able to stay home and look after my own child/children as well,*

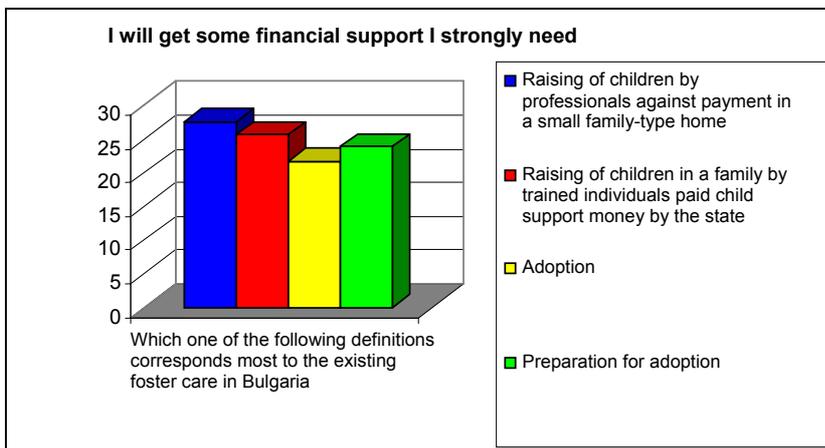
- *I will get some financial support I strongly need,*
- *the foster child could make friends with my own child,*
- *this will give new meaning to my life,*
- *help in the household work or in the yard,*
- *I can not imagine life without kids.*

Study results show that most often, as motivating factor to commit to foster care, the respondents state the following (Attachment 2, Table 13, 13.1, 13.2):

- 1) *“satisfaction by the good done”* – stated by 81.8% of all respondents;
- 2) *“this will give new meaning to my life”* – 31.9% of the respondents have stated this as another reason which may incite them to become foster carers;
- 3) *“I will get some financial support I strongly need”* – 28.2% of the respondents admit that this may incite them to become foster carers.

This comes to say that the leading positive motivation is yet not financial. It turns out that, within the group of population for whom the leading factors is the satisfaction by the good done and the new meaning of their life, the proportion of respondents stating that they would foster a child without imposing any financial requirements is the greatest. In terms of financial motivation, significant impact has to a great extent the condition “to get child allowance” (*data show an increasing proportion of respondents stating “I would foster a child”*), rather than “a kind of a paid job ...” or “income increases substantially”. As a matter of fact, this result shows once again that, event though the population has positive attitude and readiness to get involved in foster care, it is not well informed about the conditions and regulatory framework applicable to the foster care implementation.

Naturally, there is a relatively permanent proportion of the population for whom foster care is basically and to a great extent a tool for securing financial means, but the data do not provide us any grounds to consider that this is the sole and the leading motivation. A more detailed review of the study data indicates that ***the population group which perceives foster care as an opportunity for securing financial means is to the greatest extent not familiar with the nature of foster care.***



Results show that the *importance of financial conditions is due to several factors: economic status of some of the population and unawareness of the population regarding the nature and regulatory framework applicable to foster care implementation*. The population group perceiving the foster care primarily as a toll for securing financial means is smaller than the other part of the population which has positive attitude and is ready to involve in foster care but is not aware of the nature and regulatory provisions. The conclusion is that *population's awareness may be regarded as a tool for managing the so called financial factor* driving the motivation and readiness of the people to commit to foster care. The *financial motivation must not be considered alone*, but in a relation to the other factors for ensuring effective foster care.

**Generally, improvement of the population's awareness may be regarded as a tool for managing the so-called financial factor driving the motivation and readiness to commit to foster care. This may happen if there is an effectively operating system for campaigns for recruitment of foster carers and public awareness about the objectives and philosophy of foster care.**

### **2.3. Attitudes (preferences) relative to the foster care duration**

By examining this group of attitudes the study tries to answer the question as to *what extent is the foster care duration a critical factor influencing the motivation and readiness of the people to become foster carers*.

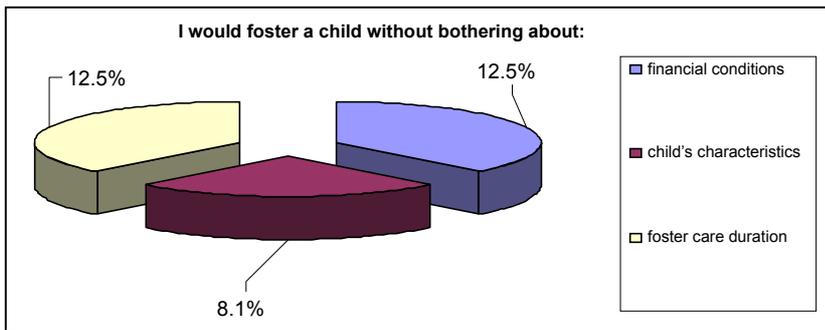
Foster care duration is a critical factor and the extent to which it influences the professional circles, foster families and general public was one of the major issues of this study.

The time frame and duration of foster care is important for the population's motivation for fostering. It is less critical in terms of the people's readiness compared to the factors associated with the child's characteristics, but has relatively the same weight and importance as the "financial conditions" factor.

One of the study's hypotheses is that *prevailing are the population's preferences to commit to short-term foster care*, rather than preferences for long-term foster care. When studying the "duration - motivation" relation outlining are the following time-related features of the foster care:

- *for a few days (including weekends, public or school holidays);*
- *for about a month;*
- *for about six months;*
- *for about a year;*
- *for more than one year;*
- *forever – accompanied by willingness to adopt the child;*
- *regardless of the time frame.*

Study data show that the time frame and *duration* of the foster care is of importance for the population's motivation for fostering. It is less critical in terms of the people's readiness compared to the factors associated with the child's characteristics, but has relatively the same weight and importance as the "financial conditions" factor.



### 2.3.1. Relation between short fostering time frames and preferences

*The readiness to become a foster carer within short time frames is the greatest and is contradicting with the assertions of the specialists working in the child protection system.*

Short-term foster care includes “fostering for a few days” – 42% of the population state readiness to accept a child for weekends, public or school holidays. Readiness to accept a child for about a month comes second – 26.5%. Longer fostering is preferred by smaller number of people. Interesting is also the group of people stating willingness to accept the child forever and, preferably, to adopt it. These represent 14.6%; one may assume that this is a relatively permanent population group which somehow perceive the foster care as something similar to or as an opportunity for adoption (Attachment 2, Tables 17-20).

In respect of the foster care “duration” factor one may establish certain dependencies with regard to the preferences of various age groups. Most prepared to accept children within short time frames (weekends and for up to one month) is the younger part of the population aged below 37. People aged over 50 prefers to accept children for about six months or one year. The people aged between 38 and 50 prefer to accept children for more than one year and forever. Once again this reconfirms to some extent that long-term foster care is perceived as an opportunity for adoption, as the most common age group for adopters is precisely the one of people aged between 38 and 50.

The results obtained for the population’s preferences for the foster care duration are in grave contradiction with the perceptions of professionals with regard to these preferences. Child protection professionals are regarding seriously the issue about the public’s attitudes towards fostering and the qualitative data from the study indicate that the *specialists attribute the difficulties in their work to the population’s attitudes*. Interesting is the issue, referred to by the professionals as “public mentality of the Bulgarian”, where according to this mentality the Bulgarian does not understand the meaning of caring for a child within a short time. Study showed that majority of the child protection specialists and professionals working with children tend to think so. According to them, the Bulgarian can not absorb the idea to regard looking after somebody as service. He understands such care as a life-long commitment. They believe that Bulgarian is afraid of attachment, of separation and this is the reason for him to consider fostering strange. As a matter of fact, the results obtained for the public preferences to the fostering duration indicate otherwise and raise the issue as to what are the underlying reasons for this contradiction.

*Where is the problem, in your opinion – in the legislative framework, in the attitude, in the values of people, where exactly?*

It is rather in the public mentality, and in the values, simply the people are seeking greater security. There are very many people who are willing to adopt children and they adopt because adoption generates permanent relations and secure, secure rights granted to them by the law. They are not embarrassed any more by the contact with the birth family because the law more or less protects the confidentiality of adoption. People are apprehensive of becoming attached to the child, start being fond of it and that at a certain point of time the child might leave them, therefore they prefer adoption – it gives them greater security.

**Focus group with child protection specialists in a district centre**

Perhaps the explanation of such perceptions of the professionals can be found in some study data which indicate that the group of people who, by the time of this study, identify themselves as “considering” becoming foster carers, are mainly people who understand fostering as preparation for adoption and, to the greatest extent, are willing to adopt. However, this problem is once again associated with the poor awareness of the foster care and its nature.

***What are the main difficulties obstructing foster care implementation?***

Our municipality has many villages and patriarchal traditions are well rooted. Foster care in such a community will hardly be launched smoothly, but even though we have one foster family. Thinking along this line it is appropriate to mention the Bulgarian public mentality that a family will hardly ever take a child and then separate with that child few months later.

**Focus group with child protection specialists in a small town**

***Why it is so that foster care in Bulgaria is not launched easily? What are the reasons for that?***

In my opinion, this is a model imposed from outside and it does not match the Bulgarian mentality. This mentality tends not to look after its own children, let alone somebody else’s kids. On the other hand, because of the existing risks I will take this child but it has parents – will they cause trouble for me or not. Will this child take away my belongings in the house or not – this is another aspect of the existing wide-spread perceptions.

**Interview with an Assistant Professor in social work methods at a University**

The more in-depth interpretation of data obtained from the interviews and focus groups and their comparison with the data from the interviews and focus groups with already recruited foster carers indicated that such statements are most often made by social workers, educators, pedagogues not having personal practice in foster care implementation, these being the majority. Therefore, as evident also from the quantitative study, quite possible interpretation might be that professionals tend to attribute such attitudes whenever seeking an explanation of their professional failure primarily outside themselves.

Another possible explanation may be that the social workers meet basically applicant adopters who tend to prefer using the fostering as preparation for adoption because the procedure is less burdensome, in their opinion.

***Are these the key motives for you to apply as foster carer?***

Not only that, I have very good communications with the children, when I had no job I was a teacher. I prefer to take a child for long-term care. Initially I wanted to adopt a child, that’s why I want to have it longer and adopt it as a matter of priority.

***Why didn't you apply as adoptive parent rather than as foster carer?***

Because the waiting is less long. This is the true reason, if I have to speak directly. People from the CPD explained to me that I have to wait for years because preference is given to childless families. I am not married and I don't have a child of my own, so for me applying as foster carer is a better alternative. Instead of waiting for three years, as foster carer I wait for one year.

**Focus group with foster carers and applicant foster carers**

The data obtained from the quantitative study of preferences with regard to the foster care duration are confirmed also by the outcomes of the focus groups, i.e. that foster carers who already have certain experience are better prepared to accept short-term fostering. They realize better and accept that family environment does not necessarily mean family connections and relationships, but an opportunity for the child to be together with a family.

We should not think firstly about ourselves, what do we want and that we will experience pain of the child leaves our home. For instance, I am fond of the child we took as if it was mine, it will definitely be painful when it leaves, but it is better if her mother takes her back.

If the child goes to a nice place, like in my case ... I looked after a child for 6 years and then it was adopted. I felt good because the child goes to an even better place. It will have mother and father and it will be happy, the kid was grieving for my family, but they brought it to our place every week. Now it has grown up, got its university degree. We should not be egoists and insist that we still love him, I still love her.

**Focus group with foster carers**

In other words, one may conclude that we have no sufficient reasons to claim that the Bulgarian does not accept such form of care. **One may claim that it is not so much about unusual attitudes resulting from the unique public mentality of the Bulgarian, but about lack of information and sufficient practice enabling rationalization of the essence of foster care**, which truly is a task of the professionals.

***People do not distinguish between foster carers and adopters. Foster care is understood as a variant of the adoption, so do you think this is a reason for the difficulties in its implementation?***

Exactly and this is why publicity through the media must go on.

One should explain what is one and what is the difference.

Yes, this needs to be disseminated, as information, to distinguish between adoption and fostering, that the expectations to the foster carers and their responsibilities are not so big.

**Focus group with child protection specialists**

It is a paradox to see that the understanding of foster care as something like adoption is quite common among major part of the specialists working with children, even among those sitting on the local Child Protection Panels.

***What do you think about foster care in Bulgaria?***

The foster care has the moral power of adoption, the change in the life of a child is the same no matter whether it will be adopted or fostered. The child will have to accept these people as closest to him/her.

**Focus group with specialists in a small town**

*The social status* has a relation to the preferred foster care duration. Short-term fostering for the “weekend”, for about a month and for about six months are preferred by people having their own business – at the first place, and on the second place – by people in hired employment. To some extent, this creates the feeling that this is rather a form of entertaining the children, than willingness to provide care. The people with a business of their own display much lower general willingness to be foster carers. At the same time, again, these are the two population groups displaying the greatest willingness to be fosterers, when it comes to multi-year fostering expected to develop into adoption.

This provides grounds to conclude that *the time factor turns out to be important for the motivation and willingness of the people in employment, and especially of those with a business of their own, to be foster carers*. And yet, willingness of the people having a business of their own to be involved in some kind of short-term fostering should not be neglected. The opinions of the specialists in respect of such “other” forms of fostering a child are different and often one excludes the other.

***What is your attitude to the possibility that various people (educators, teachers and other employees) take institutionalized children home for a day or two and for the public holidays?***

Let me tell you about such taking of children home for a day or two, I had a favourite child and took him home often, then I became strongly attached to this child, it also became attached to me. After that child I decided never to become attached strongly to any child and love them all equally. The child becomes divided in its mind when seeing the other environment, the other atmosphere, it sees the family and expects that we will become its family. It starts behaving differently at the institution, wants to leave the place. It is very different, there should be various duration, so that anyone could decide for how long s/he can look after that child.

It knows that I am the teacher and can not accept me. It will be good if the child could go out and see another atmosphere, but will never call me “mom”.

**Focus group with professionals working at child welfare institutions, district centre**

When analyzing this fact one should keep in mind a number of other data obtained from the qualitative study.

1. The largest is the relative share of foster families who have established such incidental connections with children as a result of programmes such as “Granny and grandchild”, “A child for Christmas” and other available opportunities to take a child for weekends or holidays in the locations where directors have been open for such forms of fostering.
2. Such forms of fostering will perhaps be the only possible ones for certain categories of children, if we keep in mind the opinion of those child protection system specialists who think that institutionalized children adapt with difficulty to the families. It possible that these are the only probable forms of fostering disabled children as well, if no changes are made in the existing foster care having in mind the attitudes to the children with illnesses and disabilities.
3. We should not underestimate the specialists’ concern as to what extent this is appropriate for the children and whether it is the form of fostering or it is rather the pattern of its accomplishment that causes the problems to a greater extent.

Apparently, the idea of fostering as service which provides a child for a certain period of time with a family environment is quite far away from the perceptions of even the professionals.

What is more, the data obtained from focus groups and interviews provide grounds to assert that educators and other specialists at the institutions have serious difficulties in understanding the boundaries in the relationships with the children, this being displayed with greater intensity in their attempts to be “short-term foster carers for weekends, public holidays, etc.”. The difficulties and arguments they give to justify their negative attitude towards such kind of fostering a child in a family come as a proof to that.

**Question: What is your attitude to the possibility that various people (educators, teachers and other employees) take institutionalized children home for a day or two and for the public holidays?**

**Answer:**

Let me tell you frankly about such taking of children home for a day or two, I had a favourite child and took him home often, then I became strongly attached to this child, it also became attached to me. After that child I decided never to become attached strongly to any child and love them all equally. The child becomes divided in its mind when seeing the other environment, the other atmosphere, it sees the family and expects that we will become its family. It starts behaving differently at the institution, wants to leave the place. It is very different, there should be various duration, so that anyone could decide for how long s/he can look after that child.

**Focus group with representatives of specialized institutions**

In other words, it is better for the child to stay at the institution and never see a family to prevent it from understanding how unhappy it is. These data may also be interpreted in the direction of understanding the meaning of foster care as serious commitment to the child's future. Such attitudes among people working with children should not surprise us, if after all they are shared also by young teachers at universities preparing social workers.

**So in some institutions there is a practice to take the children for the weekends and public holidays.**

I know and I am absolutely against it. There is some kind of informal division among the children – I am the child for the weekend. On the other hand, there is something else about the social worker: shall I take it every weekend or take it for a particular task and let it know that it fulfils a task. We put the child in a situation where it sees some normal relations, a family model and then it has to go back – how it would feel.

**Interview with an Assistant Professor in social work methods at a University**

Even among professionals working with children are common certain statements displaying willingness to get out of the scheme “throw the baby away with the dirty water” – a definitely negative practice to repudiate a potential foster care which may be the only possible one for some of the children.

**In some institutions it is common for the staff to take children home for weekends and public holidays. What do you think about this practice?**

I absolutely do not approve it because this creates certain expectations in the child, which are often too unrealistic, it creates a strong need of home and family in the children. Such practices influence also the performance of the staff because they choose certain children. The employee is committed to it also in the off-work time. This disturbs his/her recovery and efficiency with the other children.

**And how do you regard letting external families take children for the weekends?**

Yes, but only if carers pass through some kind of mini-training, become familiar with the specifics of children raised in institutions. This is something very special and there must be control, the families should meet certain

criteria. Naturally, this would have been also very helpful for the children because they would become familiar with the roles in the family.

**Interview with a RCHCLPC director**

The opinion of NGO experts who have worked for development and provision of foster care is definitely in favour of availability of care forms such as fostering during weekends, school holidays, etc..

***How do you feel about short-term fostering forms?***

At that time we started with exactly this type of care – for the weekends. This was a chance for the child to smoothly get accustomed to the family, it gives the family an opportunity to judge whether it has enough willingness, strength and skills to handle the child, even in some way it is helpful for the grown-up children (16-17 year-olds) that are difficult to be integrated. In my opinion, this is one of the things to be reconsidered.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

The hypothesis that *existence of various forms of access to institutionalized children becomes a precondition for establishing close connections with future foster carers* deserves attention. Study data show that among people are existing attitude and need ***to get to know the child before making a decision***. 53.1% of the respondents rank this condition first when answering the question “What other conditions would you like to impose to become a foster carer?”. The condition ranked second is “to be able to choose the child myself” – 51.8% of the respondents.

The factor ***“knowing the child”*** is critical for the motivation of foster carers. This should be kept in mind, especially for the foster care implementation. In its aspirations to meet the best interest of the child, the concept “we are seeking parents for the child and not a child for the parents” entails the risk to throw “off board” nearly half of the potential foster carers, if we do not take into account the natural psychological need of security expressed in getting to know the unknown. Qualitative study data collected from foster carers and applicant foster carers show that for majority of them knowing the child in advance, even though cursorily or fortuitously, had also played an important part in making the decision. To some extent, knowing the child is a mechanism of “infecting”, in other words becoming empathic to the specific child’s faith. On the other hand, the training of applicant foster carers may be regarded as a factor for changing the attitudes and motivation of the family and helps the family to give a new meaning to their fears and concerns associated with the future new role.

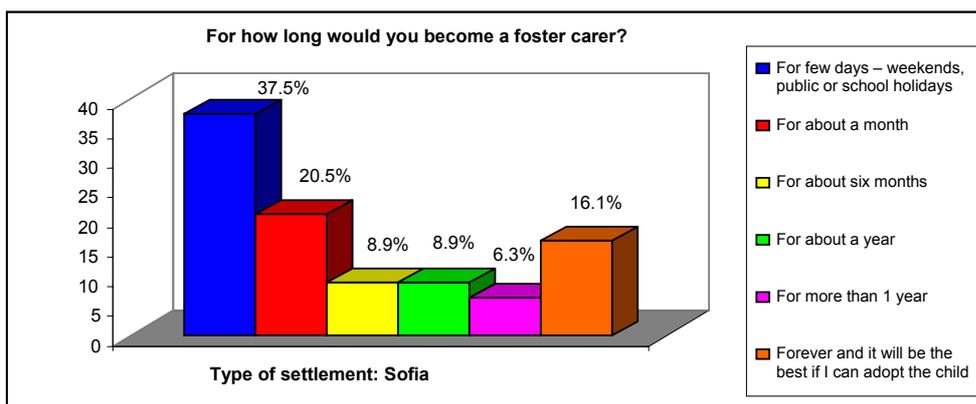
**The tendency for the specialists to believe that it is in the better interest for the child to stay at the institution and never see a family to prevent it from understanding how unhappy it is is dangerous for the child. Such an attitude influences the foster care development as well.**

**2.3.2. Relation between demographic data and willingness of the population which is dependent on the foster care duration**

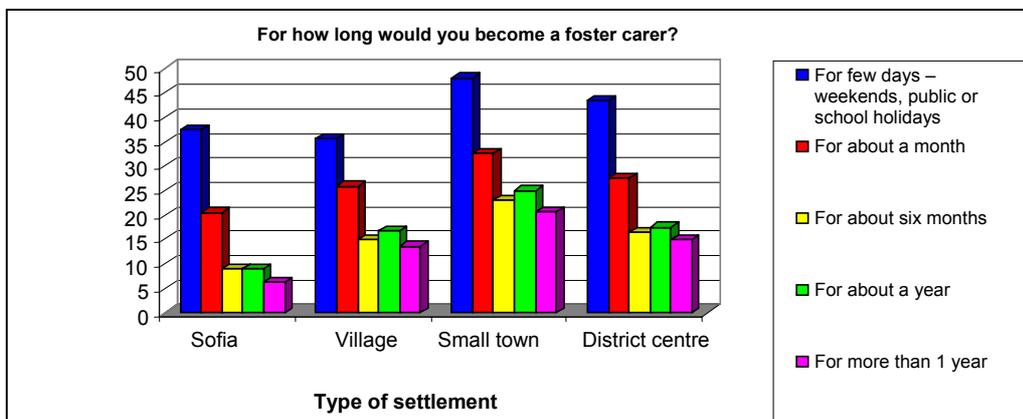
As far as the relation between the *size of the household and the foster care “duration”* is concerned, one may say that the families with households comprising more than 3 members are more willing to foster compared to those with households comprising up to 3 members. In any case, the difference is not statistically significant. However, as far as the living space is concerned, it proves to be a factor influencing the willingness to foster within limited time

frames. Data indicate no specific difference in the willingness to foster a child within short time frames (for weekends, for about a month) stated by population with different living space. Such a difference comes forth when it is about fostering for about six months, one year or more. The people with bigger living space (more than 27 sq.m. per person) are more willing to become foster carers. This, however, is not valid for the willingness to foster a child forever and adopt it, if possible. The living space as factor does not have strong influence in respect of this willingness.

Analysis of the *“type of settlement” and foster care “duration”* relation shows that there is such a connection, but just for one specific settlement and this is Sofia. The willingness to foster in Sofia is inversely proportional to the foster care duration. The longer the term is, the smaller the willingness of the population in Sofia. Naturally, the willingness to foster forever and adopt it, if possible, is an exception.



People from small towns are *more willing* to foster a child for duration of about six months, one year and more than one year compared with the other population groups in the other types of settlements.



It is good to keep this willingness in mind when identifying future strategies and plans for development and implementation of foster care in Bulgaria.

### ***3. Capacity of the structures involved in foster care implementation***

One of the important questions which the study aims to answer is how the capacity of the structures involved in foster care implementation influences the level of its development in the country. The Child Protection Departments have a number of tasks related to the implementation of “placement with foster carers” measure; some of the obligations can not be fulfilled because of staff shortages, especially in the smaller municipalities, in particular:

- the provision that the child and the family should have different social workers;
- the procedure for recruitment, assessment, training and monitoring.

The capacity is assessed within the scope of the qualitative study on the basis of the **self-assessment of the representatives of the SADs** and CPDs, the **assessment of partnering agencies and organizations** and the **assessment of the so-called beneficiaries** of the services provided by the CPDs – the foster carers and applicant foster carers.

One of the most surprising facts for the study team during the field study was the discrepancy between the figures for the approved foster carers and for the placed children. According to SAA data by the end of February there are 64 approved foster families and 45 placed children.

***What is the situation in your town, how many foster families are there?***

Till now there are 20 registered foster families, all the 20 have been trained and 10 children have been placed with them. With some of the families we still have not made any placements, and with others we are placing a second child.

**Interview with a social worker from a CPD**

It turns out that there are families waiting nearly two years for a child nevertheless that they have completed the entire quite time-consuming recruitment and training procedure.

There is a major discrepancy between the assessment of the capacity of the CPD made by both the beneficiaries, and the partners, and the self-assessment of those working in the child protection system.

#### **3.1. The self-assessment of child protection specialists**

Majority of those working in the protection system think they have capacity, and, what is more, they believe this is by priority their job, when it is about capacity meaning competence and obligations. When inputting a meaning of capabilities and available human resources, we can see opinions standing on both diametrically opposite ends – from explicit opinions stating full preparedness, to sharing serious concerns if many applicant foster carers turn up. It is interesting to note a link between experience and preparedness, i.e. those with experience realize they do not have enough capacity, unlike those who have no practice.

***Do you think that authorities to whom this task has been assigned have capacity and preparedness to handle the situation if there are many applicants?***

We are prepared; we can do anything necessary, should there be applicants.

*So far you did not have any applicant foster carers, what if suddenly 50 foster families from the villages turn up?*

We are just two employees in our Department. We will rely on support for the training of foster carers.

**Focus group with professionals in a small town**

*Do you think that CPDs have sufficient capacity and are capable of handling foster care development?*

The way they are now I believe they would not. If there is a change and if there are more people interested in fostering, there will be difficulties. In our Department we are three social workers. We hardly manage with the present volume of work and extra influx would be too much for us. If we have to do our jobs properly, make the investigation, the meetings and make us certain about the qualities of these families and know what child will be proposed.

**Focus group with protection specialists in a small town**

The social workers at the CPDs share their feeling of being overloaded and the high risk of burning out. In this situation they assess anything they need to do not from the perspective of its importance and meaning for the child, but as excessive burden.

*Do you believe that CPDs have capacity to handle the foster care development in Bulgaria?*

I don't think that by law all these duties have to be imposed upon us, including the dissemination. One should be able to rely on the support of NGOs, the Complex, because ultimately it is our responsibility to abide by the law and that is why we should have the support of others.

**Focus group with child protection specialists in a district centre**

The study showed that those working in the small municipalities have little resources and hardly anyone could expect that they will be a key factor for foster care development. What is more, should the number of applicant foster carers increase they will turn into an obstacle to this development, like it already happened even in some of the big municipalities.

*Do the CPDs have capacity for an active work in the field of foster care?*

At the CPDs there are not enough social workers, especially in the small municipalities. How will just one social worker in a small municipality manage, if there are foster families, who will work with the child and who – with the parents? If at this stage there is a great influx we will not be able to handle both foster care and our other obligations.

**Focus group with specialists in a small town**

The worries of the social workers originate also from the need to ensure a supporting social worker both for the child and for the family in the period after the placement.

*Are the CPDs prepared to take over greater influx of foster carers?*

No, in the smaller Departments we are not prepared.

At the regional Departments it is not a problem, especially in respect of information and training; also, better coordination between the agencies is possible there.

Very few people work in the field of foster care and that is why there are few foster carers. It not possible to work simultaneously both with the birth parents, with the foster carers and with the child. The child is placed on long-term basis because there is no one to work with the birth family, even if it has capacity. The child can stay with its family but we send it to an institution because it is easier.

**Focus group with child protection specialists in a district centre**

### 3.2. The assessment of NGO partners

Study data show that the opinion of the partners in the face of NGOs experienced in foster care development is categorical and it is that CPDs do not have capacity to be the principal and only authority in charge of foster care development. They believe that it is too much for the CPDs to take over and ensure the quality of both the assessment of the carers and the child, and of the follow up monitoring and support, while restricting the NGOs' involvement only within the role of trainer. This function of the NGOs is too inadequate and is not in line with the requirement to ensure quality of the foster care, because, on one hand, the CPD structures are too overloaded and, on the other hand, the quality requires specialization of those working in the field of foster care and this is beyond the powers of the CPDs.

*Why it is so that foster care in Bulgaria was not launched easily? What are the reasons for that?*

The service is scattered and the process of its provision is disorganized. The capacity of foster carers is lost because there is a gap, foster carers get different messages because the assessment and recruitment are performed by the CPD, on the other hand, the training is provided by NGOs and the carers get different signals about foster care.

**Interview with an NGO manager**

One may reckon that this current role they have is one of the reasons for the failure of the service in our country. The NGO specialists justify their view first of all with the **extreme workload** of the Departments and their inability to perform this activity up to the quality requirements.

*Is there sufficient capacity at the CPDs for work in the field of foster care?*

CPDs don't have enough capacity to work in the field of foster care, they are overwhelmed by documents, deadlines, monthly reports. They don't have enough time and staff. In the smaller towns social workers are better motivated but they hardly manage – how will they meet the requirements for separate social workers to be working with the child and with the family. The CPDs do not have the physical ability to work in the field of foster care.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

The NGO representatives question also the **competence of the social workers at the CPDs**, both in terms of their qualification, and professional identity.

*What are your impressions from the performance of the agencies involved in the foster care development in Bulgaria?*

Foster care development is left to people who don't believe in it, fostering is regarded as something unrealistic, and this is so on all levels – both at the Child Protection Departments and “upstairs”. It is similar at the child welfare institutions: people also don't believe in foster care and they quote the US experience: child abuse, exploitation, placement failures.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

***What are the major difficulties?***

The CP Departments are not trained and adequately prepared for foster care – there is no identity of the social workers and this reflects on the applicants. Departments take themselves as powerful, penalizing structures, and this is how they approach the foster carers.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

***What needs to be done in order to facilitate foster care development?***

Foster care methodology is not taught at the universities and no one has developed such an overall methodology. Young people learn the things after the university. Foster care should not be centralized – it should develop in line with the needs of the region. It should be included in the universities' curricula preparing for work with foster carers; the professionals must over-jump their own feelings and emotions and put the child in the focus – there is rivalry between the specialists from various agencies and this affects the decisions made in respect of the child.

**Interview with an NGO expert**

### **3.3. The assessment of beneficiaries – foster carers and applicant foster carers**

Foster carers trust the CPDs and in most cases they are satisfied by the help they get from them.

***Would you like to ask something or say something that we missed?***

I address all my questions to the Department. I have my social worker and the child has its social worker and I am very satisfied.

**Interview with a foster carer**

***Do you need support?***

I get support from the Child Protection Department, I used to know the former psychologist. There is one social worker for the child and another one for me.

**Interview with a foster carer**

Foster carers believe that the slow and time-consuming procedure is due to the lack of sufficient human resources and enough time, and perhaps this has resulted also in some of them changing their minds about fostering a child.

***Do you think there are other reasons preventing the social workers from preparing the documents faster?***

They are too overloaded and sometimes when we have to set a meeting, it happens after 2-3 weeks. This makes me think that social workers are too busy. Another think that needs to be noted is that there is no social worker whom we can call after 5 p.m.

**Focus group with foster carers**

According to the foster carers, the basic reason for delaying the placements of children with approved foster carers is that CPDs do not work enough with the institutionalized children.

***What needs to be done in order to develop foster care in Bulgaria?***

The procedure for placement of a child is very long, the system is clumsy. A mechanism should be found such that will accelerate the procedure without neglecting some of the steps. The CPD must have greater resources.

The problem with the slow processes when placing a child comes from the fact that CPDs wait for children who might now be sent to an institution instead of taking already institutionalized children.

If I learn more details of this kind I might change my mind. What a paradox – we have so many institutionalized children, parents are waiting and no one does anything.

I know two families with whom we attended the training courses, they are waiting for children since 2004.

There is a gap in the coordination between agencies and institutions, why is the director of the institution not giving us a child, he has at least 150 children after all. They have another view about this issue. They want to keep the children to avoid closure of the institution.

**Focus group with foster families**

According to the foster carers, accelerating the process requires also inclusion of the NGOs, and not independently but rather under the control of the state authorities.

***Do you think that someone else should do this work in order to intensify the procedure?***

It would be best if the state institution and NGOs go along hand in hand.

Then there will be the best control and no conflict of interests.

I support the idea that NGOs should lead those processes, but there must be a quality control.

**Focus group with foster carers and applicant foster carers in a district centre**

On the other hand, the qualitative study data show that there are various practices for recruiting foster families, yet there is information which is often concealed from the foster families on purpose, in particular, that the law has envisaged an allowance for the child intended to help the foster family.

***You are not aware, but the state will provide you with money for the child. How would you comment this policy of the state, would this encourage more families?***

Whoever has decided to foster a child is not interested in the money, but I guess there are applicants who might be short of financial means and may be they afraid also of that.

***What should be changed in the approach of the institutions, the state, to make sure that more people are willing to be foster carers?***

In my opinion, it is basically the financial difficulties that prevent people from applying as foster carers. I know someone who is willing to become foster carer but she does not have money.

**Interview with an applicant foster carer, district centre**

The justification for the application of such a practice by the CPDs may have various origins, but one may reckon, after the focus groups and interviews carried out, that this is done rather as a result of the fear that applicant foster carers will have primarily financial motives, that many inappropriate applicant foster carers will turn up with mercantile intentions and, most of

all, that the CPDs will not be able to make a decent investigation and there will be much higher risk of assessors making a mistake.

***What bothers you?***

There will be a massive influx of people who don't have jobs right now, who have nothing to do, who don't work and here they are "Gim'me a child or two to look after". The child is left in the background.

It will become much more complicated.

***For whom will it become more complicated?***

There will be vicious practices. We will do placements and when we see that things are not working well, we will take the child out of the family, we will place it in a second family, then in a third one.

**Focus group, district centre  
Representatives of the protection system**

As far as the financial motivation is concerned, one may say that it is regarded as extremely important, even critical, for the foster care development.

The service is not adapted to the conditions and lifestyle in our country. For example, teachers who have lost their jobs who were eligible, with secured living space and support money provided by husbands, were willing to become fosterers but lost interest when they understood that they will not get social security paid for their services or any other benefit. People expect they will have some benefits from that work, not financial ones, but rather some other kind of support.

**Focus group with representatives of the protection system, district centre**

I think this needs to be well thought through, the unemployment is massive, there are many pedagogues, psychologists, they could be paid a salary if they want to foster and raise such a child, but make sure that there is an amount for food, clothing, shoes, to guarantee that the lady who looks after the child will be composed and work for a decently growing young individual, look properly after him/her.

**Focus group with representatives of the child protection system, district centre**

At the same time specialists express also fears of possible misuse, should there be any financial motivation. Many specialists think that payment should be envisaged for the so called professional foster care, which should be provided to children with disabilities and behavioural problems, etc. In other words, professional foster care is associated not only with pay for labour, but first of all with availability of specialized competency and training.

This information raises the issue about preparedness of the system and whether the system has capacity to handle an increased volume of work related to assessment of applicant foster carers. By virtue of the law such powers have been delegated solely to the Child Protection Departments in the country. Let us purely theoretically imagine that this share of the population – 28.4%, which states initial willingness to become foster carers, along with the share of those stating that they would become foster carers without imposing any financial conditions – 12.5% (theoretically, this makes more than one third of the population), show up at the Departments to get introduced into the procedures and prepare their documents to initiate an assessment procedure. The big issue then is: will the system be able to take them

over. The logical answer to this question is NO. This answer can be seen clearly in the qualitative study of the causes and factors which obstruct the development and implementation of foster care in Bulgaria.

Form the point of view of the Department I would like to share something about the workload – it is really too high at the Departments. Me and a colleague of mine have been trained in-depth in foster care but we are practically dealing with many other things, like our other colleagues and our workload is high too. There is a need for extra staff at the Departments – to ensure better performance.

We are waiting for the foster care to develop first and then think about the capacity of the Departments.

**Focus group, district centre  
Representatives of the protection system**

No matter what the reasons for this fact are, the study shows that this inadequacy in the capacity of the existing system and attitude of the population may be regarded as one of the key factors for the difficulties in foster care implementation in Bulgaria.

In the process of carrying out the study were raised numerous issues, answers of which are beyond the scope of the study and require further research and analyses. Such issues are: what could be the explanation for the higher willingness of the population in the smaller towns to get involved in foster care than the population in the big district centres; whether this is due to the specifics of the life in the small town or to other socio-economic or cultural factors. On the other hand, the study is not able to give an explicit answer in respect of the resource of the staff at the child welfare institutions as future foster carers and whether there is high willingness among the staff to get involved in foster care; also, whether the entire staff would get involved in professional foster care or just part of it. At this stage our study ascertained that the staff at the specialized institutions for children has no clear idea about the essence of foster care and therefore it is difficult to make any projections in respect of their future activeness and attitudes towards involvement in foster care. Yet, there is one undeniable fact – this will be a process where various roles will be played by various factors such as age, education, socio-economic situation, family situation and others, and different factors will be dominating for the different professional groups. Therefore, this requires a separate analysis only of the staff at the institutions.

Sofia, January – March 2006.

## ATTACHMENTS

### *Attachment 1: Analysis of the regulatory framework*

#### 1. Do you favour that applicant foster carers are selected according to the following legal criteria?

##### Age of the applicants

Table 1		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	623	77.6	78.0	78.0
	No	79	9.8	9.9	87.9
	I can not say	97	12.1	12.1	100.0
	Total	799	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		803	100.0		

##### Provided personal space for the child at the applicants' house

Table 2		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	687	85.6	86.0	86.0
	No	34	4.2	4.3	90.2
	I can not say	78	9.7	9.8	100.0
	Total	799	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		803	100.0		

##### Applicant's personal qualities for upbringing and educating a child

Table 3		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	716	89.2	89.5	89.5
	No	8	1.0	1.0	90.5
	I can not say	76	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	800	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**Applicant's personal qualities for collaboration with the Child Protection Unit**

Table 4		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	576	71.7	72.1	72.1
	No	35	4.4	4.4	76.5
	I can not say	188	23.4	23.5	100.0
	Total	799	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		803	100.0		

**2. Is it necessary to set certain minimum income per family member below which the family should not have the right to be a foster family?**

Table 5		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	671	83.6	83.9	83.9
	No	53	6.6	6.6	90.5
	I can not say	76	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	800	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**2.1. If the answer is YES, what should this minimum monthly income per family member be?**

Table 6		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	50 BGN	2	.2	.3	.3
	100 BGN	25	3.1	3.6	3.9
	160 BGN (minimum salary)	85	10.6	12.3	16.2
	200 BGN	134	16.7	19.4	35.7
	More than 200 BGN	444	55.3	64.3	100.0
	Total	690	85.9	100.0	
Missing	System	113	14.1		
Total		803	100.0		

**3. Do you support the following legal norms for foster care?**

**The foster family receives just money for child support and not remuneration**

Table 7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	322	40.1	40.3	40.3
	No	278	34.6	34.8	75.0
	I can not say	200	24.9	25.0	100.0
	Total	800	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**The foster family is obligated to provide access for inspections by the Child Protection Department as a minimum once a month**

Table 8		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	603	75.1	75.4	75.4
	No	37	4.6	4.6	80.0
	I can not say	160	19.9	20.0	100.0
	Total	800	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**The foster family is obligated to ensure that the child meets regularly its birth parents and facilitate the child's connections with them**

Table 9		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	351	43.7	43.9	43.9
	No	177	22.0	22.2	66.1
	I can not say	271	33.7	33.9	100.0
	Total	799	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		803	100.0		

**The applicants are obligated to fill a questionnaire for self-assessment of their capacity**

Table 10		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	554	69.0	69.5	69.5
	No	36	4.5	4.5	74.0
	I can not say	207	25.8	26.0	100.0
	Total	797	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	6	.7		
Total		803	100.0		

**The applicants undergo mandatory training in foster care**

Table 11		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	560	69.7	70.1	70.1
	No	66	8.2	8.3	78.3
	I can not say	173	21.5	21.7	100.0
	Total	799	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.5		
Total		803	100.0		

**Attachment 2: Issues relevant to foster care implementation**

**2. Do you know what foster care is?**

Table 1		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	308	38.4	38.5	38.5
	To a certain extent	274	34.1	34.3	72.8
	No	218	27.1	27.3	100.0
	Total	800	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**3. Which one of the following four definitions corresponds most to the existing foster care in Bulgaria?**

Table 2		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Raising of children by professionals against payment in a small family-type home	79	9.8	13.1	13.1
	Raising of children in a family by trained individuals paid child allowance by the state	373	46.5	61.9	75.0
	Adoption	109	13.6	18.1	93.0
	Preparation for adoption	42	5.2	7.0	100.0
	Total	603	75.1	100.0	
Missing	System	200	24.9		
Total		803	100.0		

## CROSS-TABULATIONS

Table 3		Age			Education			Total
		< 37	38-50	> 50	Below secondary	Secondary	University / College	
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
2. Do you know what foster care is?	Yes	36.5%	45.0%	33.7%	20.2%	35.8%	54.7%	38.5%
	To a certain extent	35.8%	32.7%	33.7%	20.2%	38.5%	33.8%	34.3%
	No	27.7%	22.3%	32.5%	59.7%	25.7%	11.6%	27.3%

Table 4		Social status					Gender		Total
		Student / Other	Unemployed	Employed	Own business	Retired	Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
2. Do you know what foster care is?	Yes	34.4%	34.9%	39.6%	50.6%	27.8%	30.1%	46.6%	38.5%
	To a certain extent	25.0%	27.7%	36.2%	30.6%	45.8%	37.0%	31.6%	34.3%
	No	40.6%	37.3%	24.2%	18.8%	26.4%	32.9%	21.8%	27.3%

Table 5		Ethnic origin			Type of settlement				Total
		Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Village	Small town	District centre	Sofia	
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
2. Do you know what foster care is?	Yes	41.3%	19.7%	14.8%	33.8%	37.7%	46.3%	30.1%	38.5%
	To a certain extent	36.3%	18.3%	22.2%	27.1%	35.2%	37.8%	38.1%	34.3%
	No	22.3%	62.0%	63.0%	39.1%	27.0%	15.9%	31.9%	27.3%

Table 6		2. Do you know what foster care is?			Total
		Yes	To a certain extent	No	
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
3. Which one of the following four definitions corresponds most to the existing foster care in Bulgaria?	Raising of children by professionals against payment in a small family-type home	13.8%	11.5%	23.1%	13.1%
	Raising of children in a family by trained individuals paid child allowance by the state	61.3%	63.7%	46.2%	61.9%
	Adoption	17.7%	17.4%	30.8%	18.1%
	Preparation for adoption	7.2%	7.4%		7.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## Population's attitudes to foster care

### 7. Under what financial conditions you would become a foster carer?

#### If this is a kind of a job and I earn money for it

Table 7		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	232	28.9	29.7	29.7
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	372	46.3	47.7	77.4
	Can not say / Other conditions	176	21.9	22.6	100.0
	Total	780	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	23	2.9		
Total		803	100.0		

#### If I receive child allowance

Table 8		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	228	28.4	29.2	29.2
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	386	48.1	49.5	78.7
	Can not say / Other conditions	166	20.7	21.3	100.0
	Total	780	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	23	2.9		
Total		803	100.0		

#### If my income increases substantially

Table 9		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	344	42.8	44.1	44.1
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	294	36.6	37.7	81.8
	Can not say / Other conditions	142	17.7	18.2	100.0
	Total	780	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	23	2.9		
Total		803	100.0		

**I would foster a child under any conditions**

Table 10		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	100	12.5	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	703	87.5		
Total		803	100.0		

**19. If you and your relatives are not in a position to look after your child for a short period (for example, when travelling), where would you like someone else to look after him/her?**

Table 11		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In a small family-type home for children where professionals look after the child	185	23.0	24.6	24.6
	In a foster family by trained individuals paid child allowance by the state	106	13.2	14.1	38.7
	In a foster family by trained individuals paid by you	109	13.6	14.5	53.2
	In a private residential care facility / kindergarten	130	16.2	17.3	70.5
	In SOS children's village	36	4.5	4.8	75.3
	In a state institution – residential care facility	33	4.1	4.4	79.7
	Elsewhere	153	19.1	20.3	100.0
	Total	752	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	51	6.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**20. If you and your relatives are not in a position to look after your child permanently, where would you like someone else to look after him/her?**

Table 12		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In a small family-type home for children where professionals look after the child	216	26.9	28.7	28.7
	In a foster family by trained individuals paid child allowance by the state	124	15.4	16.5	45.2
	In a foster family by trained individuals paid by you	105	13.1	14.0	59.2
	In a private residential care facility / kindergarten	111	13.8	14.8	73.9
	In SOS children's village	50	6.2	6.6	80.6
	In a state institution – residential care facility	42	5.2	5.6	86.2
	Elsewhere	104	13.0	13.8	100.0
	Total	752	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	51	6.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**14. What would encourage you to become a foster carer?**

**Satisfaction by the good done**

Table 13		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	582	72.5	72.5	72.5
	No	221	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**I will get some financial support I strongly need**

Table 13.1		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	200	24.9	24.9	24.9
	2.00	603	75.1	75.1	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**It will give new meaning to my life**

Table 13.2		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	227	28.3	28.3	28.3
	2.00	576	71.7	71.7	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**13. What would stop you from becoming a foster carer?**

**Inappropriate age**

Table 14		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	337	42.0	42.0	42.0
	No	466	58.0	58.0	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**I don't have time**

Table 15		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	312	38.9	38.9	38.9
	2.00	491	61.1	61.1	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**I don't have money**

Table 16		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	550	68.5	68.5	68.5
	2.00	253	31.5	31.5	100.0
	Total	803	100.0	100.0	

**10. For how long would you become a foster carer?**

**For few days – weekends, public or school holidays**

Table 17		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child for this period	325	40.5	41.6	41.6
	I would not accept a child for this period	326	40.6	41.7	83.2
	I can not say / Other conditions	131	16.3	16.8	100.0
	Total	782	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	21	2.6		
Total		803	100.0		

**For about a month**

Table 18		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child for this period	213	26.5	27.3	27.3
	I would not accept a child for this period	414	51.6	53.0	80.3
	I can not say / Other conditions	154	19.2	19.7	100.0
	Total	781	97.3	100.0	
Missing	System	22	2.7		
Total		803	100.0		

**Forever and it will be the best if I can adopt the child**

Table 19		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child for this period	117	14.6	15.0	15.0
	I would not accept a child for this period	492	61.3	63.1	78.1
	I can not say / Other conditions	171	21.3	21.9	100.0
	Total	780	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	23	2.9		
Total		803	100.0		

**I would foster a child no matter for how long**

Table 20		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child for this period	100	12.5	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	703	87.5		
Total		803	100.0		

**11. What other conditions would you like to impose to become a foster carer?**

**If I could choose the child**

Table 21		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	411	51.2	51.8	51.8
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	259	32.3	32.6	84.4
	Can not say / Other conditions	124	15.4	15.6	100.0
	Total	794	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	9	1.1		
Total		803	100.0		

**If I could get to know the child before making a decision**

Table 22		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	423	52.7	53.1	53.1
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	258	32.1	32.4	85.4
	Can not say / Other conditions	116	14.4	14.6	100.0
	Total	797	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	6	.7		
Total		803	100.0		

**Be trained and get help from experts**

Table 23		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	337	42.0	42.3	42.3
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	292	36.4	36.6	78.9
	Can not say / Other conditions	168	20.9	21.1	100.0
	Total	797	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	6	.7		
Total		803	100.0		

**If I could adopt it**

Table 24		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	140	17.4	17.6	17.6
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	447	55.7	56.1	73.7
	Can not say / Other conditions	210	26.2	26.3	100.0
	Total	797	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	6	.7		
Total		803	100.0		

**If it is a child of people I know or of my relatives**

Table 25		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would foster a child	299	37.2	37.8	37.8
	Nevertheless, I would not accept a child	298	37.1	37.6	75.4
	Can not say / Other conditions	195	24.3	24.6	100.0
	Total	792	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	11	1.4		
Total		803	100.0		

**25. Are you considering becoming a foster family?**

Table 26		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	28	3.5	3.5	3.5
	We are hesitating	45	5.6	5.6	9.1
	No	728	90.7	90.9	100.0
	Total	801	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.2		
Total		803	100.0		

**28. What kind of information about the foster care is needed?**

**About the laws, the regulatory framework in Bulgaria**

Table 27		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	49	6.1	6.3	6.3
	Somewhat needed	164	20.4	21.1	27.3
	Very needed	566	70.5	72.7	100.0
	Total	779	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	24	3.0		
Total		803	100.0		

**About the agencies acting as mediators for the applicant foster carers**

Table 28		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	45	5.6	5.8	5.8
	Somewhat needed	165	20.5	21.2	27.0
	Very needed	568	70.7	73.0	100.0
	Total	778	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	3.1		
Total		803	100.0		

**About children who need foster care in Bulgaria**

Table 29		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	44	5.5	5.6	5.6
	Somewhat needed	148	18.4	19.0	24.6
	Very needed	587	73.1	75.4	100.0
	Total	779	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	24	3.0		
Total		803	100.0		

**About children who need foster care in other countries**

Table 30		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	281	35.0	36.1	36.1
	Somewhat needed	239	29.8	30.7	66.8
	Very needed	258	32.1	33.2	100.0
	Total	778	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	3.1		
Total		803	100.0		

**About foster carers in other countries**

Table 31		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	274	34.1	35.2	35.2
	Somewhat needed	251	31.3	32.3	67.5
	Very needed	253	31.5	32.5	100.0
	Total	778	96.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	3.1		
Total		803	100.0		

**About foster carers in Bulgaria**

Table 33		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not very much	62	7.7	8.0	8.0
	Somewhat needed	221	27.5	28.5	36.5
	Very needed	493	61.4	63.5	100.0
	Total	776	96.6	100.0	
Missing	System	27	3.4		
Total		803	100.0		