

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Community Psychology,  
Lisbon, Portugal 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008

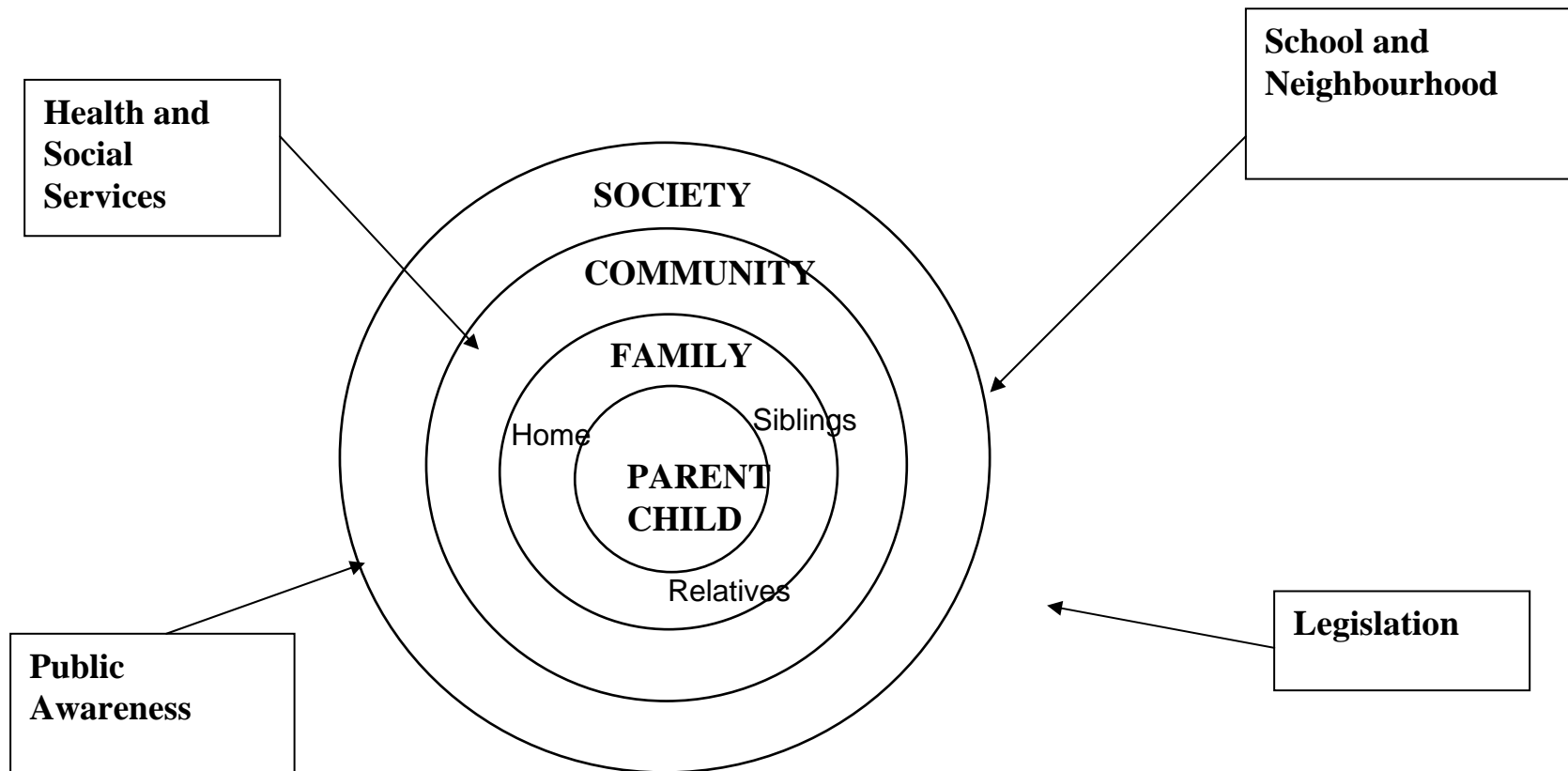
# The Overuse of Institutional Care for Young Children in Europe

Browne, K.D., Hamilton-Giachritis, C.E., Johnson, R. and Ostergren, M.  
(2006). **British Medical Journal**. 332, 485-487 (25/02/06)

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# Ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)



## Definition of an institution or residential care home for children ('Children's Home')

- Group living for more than 10 children, without parents or surrogate parents (for more than 3 months – ie: not a boarding school, hospital or emergency care).
- Care is provided by a small number of paid adult carers (European average is **1 day staff to 6 children** of a similar age).
- Organised, routine and impersonal structure to living arrangements
- professional relationship, rather than parental relationship, between the adults and children.



samoobkarczono-  
ne, krępowane  
kaftanem bezpie-  
czeństwa, milczące,  
zastraszone – mówi  
Kevin Browne.  
Na fot: dom dziecka  
w rumuńskim Vaslu

**dziecka nie są dla dzieci**

Ludzie



# Placement Decisions



Keep balance  
between  
child protection  
and  
family  
preservation

## **The danger of institutions for young children has been known for 50 years**

**Both Bowlby (UK) and Vygotsky (Russia) have emphasised the following:**

- **(a) infants need one to one interaction with sensitive and caring parent figure to which they develop a secure attachment.**
- **(b) the negative consequences of children growing up in an institution with attachment disorders and later antisocial acts**



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# Attachment theory: Internal working model

<b>Parenting</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Positive model of self</b>	<b>Positive model of others</b>
<b>Available &amp; co-operative</b>	<b>Secure</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Rejecting &amp; controlling</b>	<b>Avoidant</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Neglecting, unreliable</b>	<b>Ambivalent</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Frightening &amp; unavailable</b>	<b>Disorganised</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

- **New relationships are created in light of internal working model, defined from previous relationships.**

# The dangers of institutional care

- Young children who are institutionalised before 6 months suffer long term developmental delay.
- Those who are placed in a caring family environment by the age of 6 months catch up on their physical and cognitive development
- Improvements are seen in cognitive ability when children are removed from institutional care at an any age and placed in a family
- Difficulties with social behaviour and attachments may persist, leading to a greater chance of antisocial behaviour and mental health problems.
- it is recommended that children less than 3 years, with or without disability, should not be placed in residential care without a parent or primary caregiver

# Effect of Institutional Care on the Infant Brain

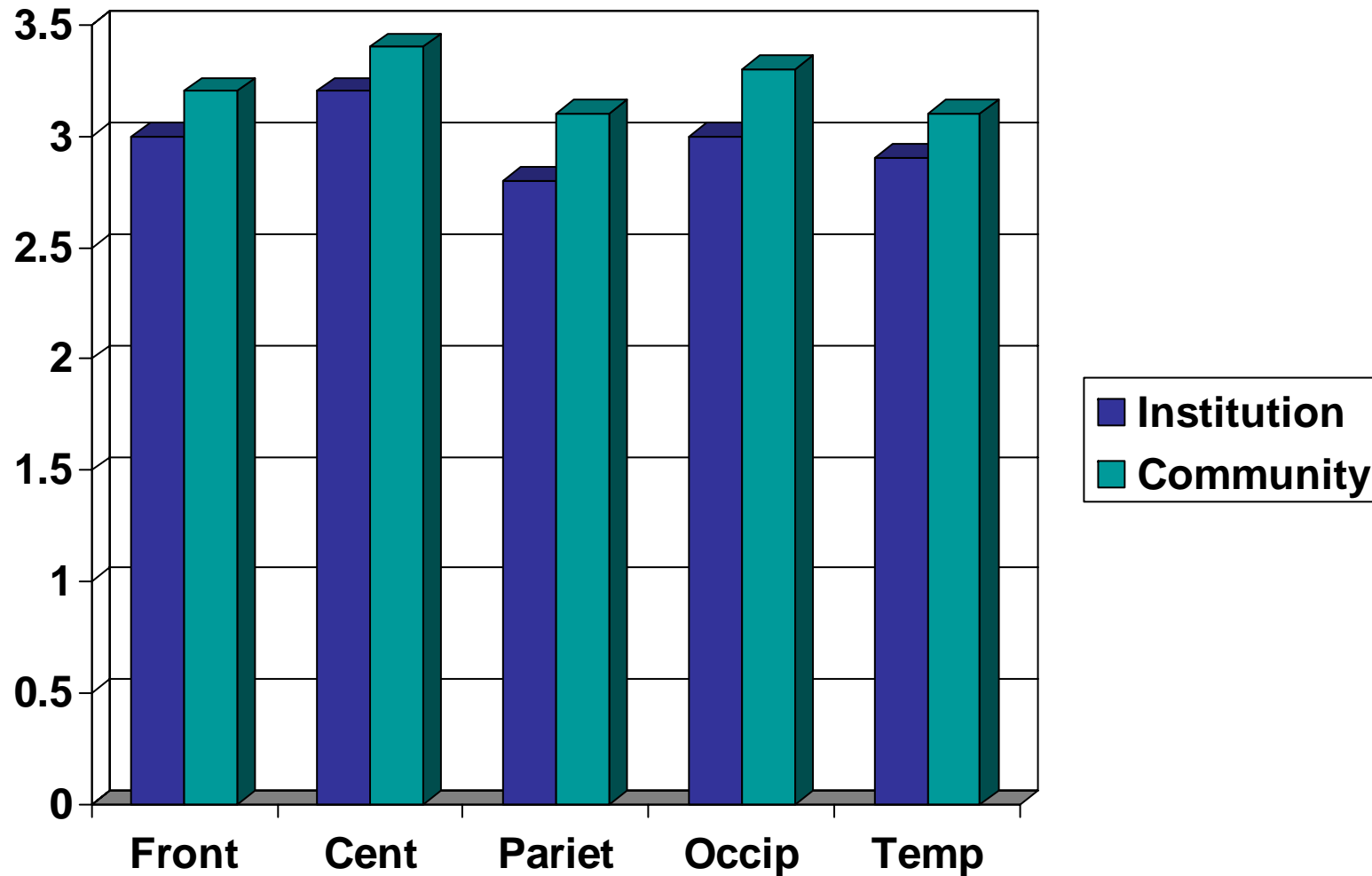


# EEG Recordings from a Young Child



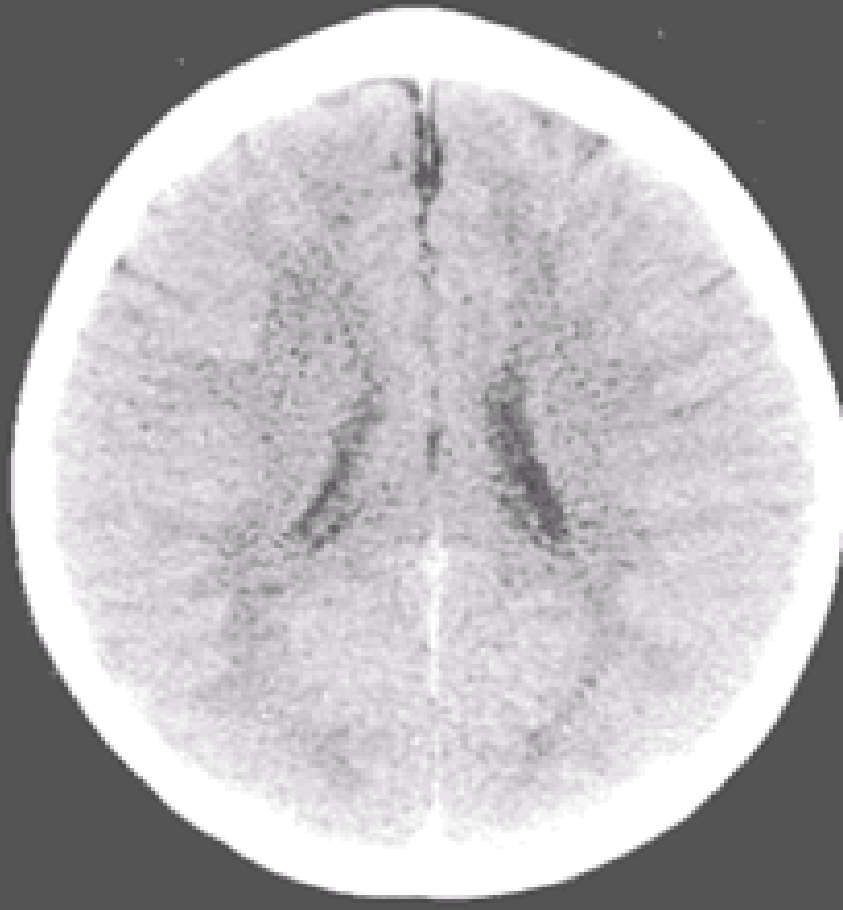
# EEG Activity Across Regions of the Child's Brain

(Bucharest Early Intervention Project - Nelson and Koga, 2004)



# Evidence from Brain Scans

## 3-Year-Old Children



Normal

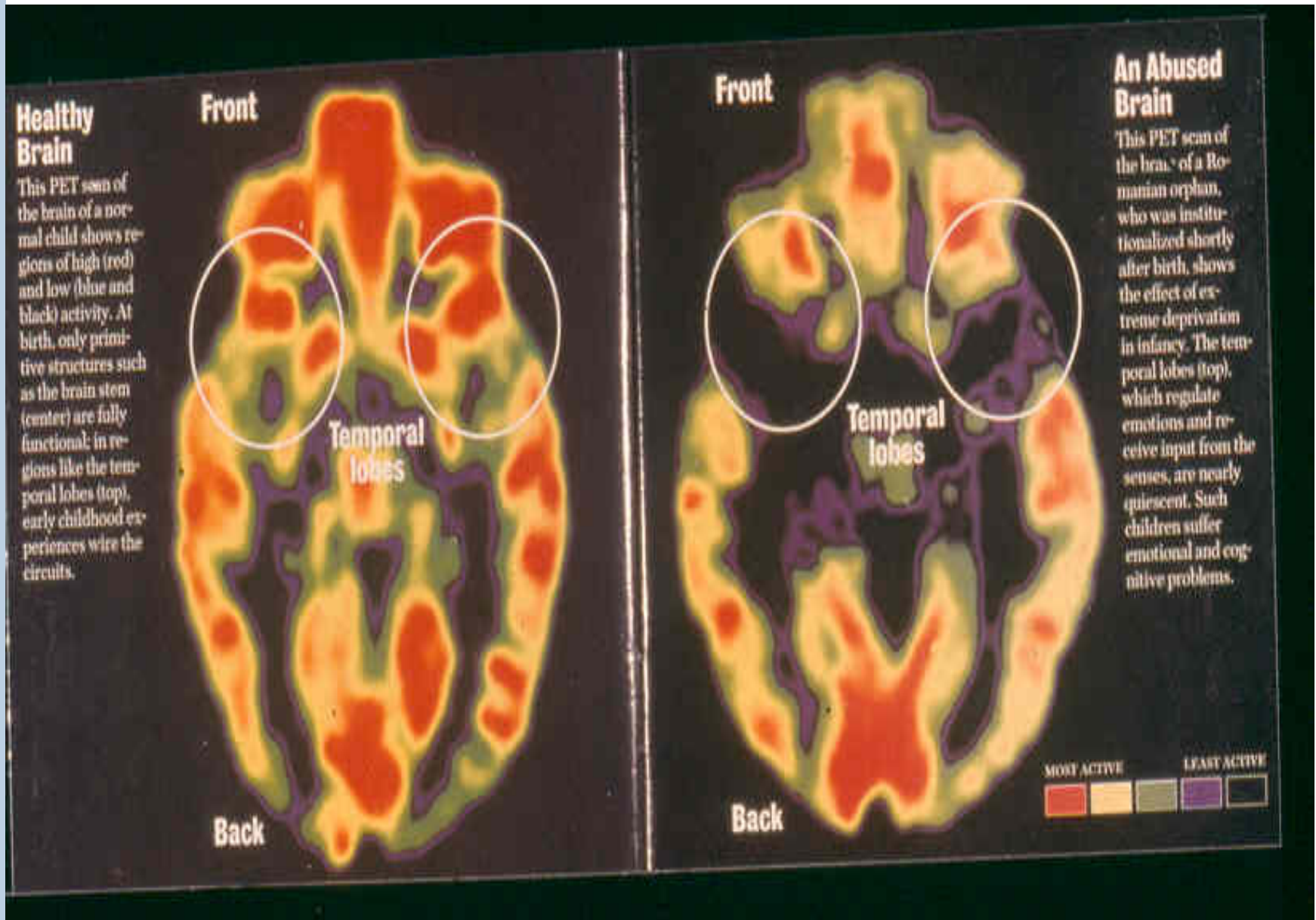
Child Trauma Academy



Extreme Neglect

1997 Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.

# Evidence from Brain Scans



# The myth of 'infant homes' and 'orphanages'

- '*infant homes*' often provide a non stimulating clinical environment for toddlers and young children up to 4 years of age.
- Vast majority (94 to 96%) of children in '*orphanages*' have at least one living parent, often known to the authorities
- In conflict or disaster zones only a minority of children in institutions are true orphans, most are displaced and separated from a living parent or relative whose whereabouts may be unknown.
- 59% of HIV children from Zimbabwe living in institutions have at least one parent alive.

# Extent of Institutional Care of Children (0 to 17 years) in 2002

- UNICEF claim **2.2 million children officially reported worldwide to live in institutions without a parent (25% are with disabilities).**
- **715,000 children officially reported in eastern europe and former soviet union** but NGO Everychild estimate true figure at 1.3 million children in this area alone.
- **In USA, 48,780 (9% - range 1.3% Hawaii to 27.2% Arizona) were placed in residential children's homes** from total of 542,000 children under 12 years in public (*foster*) care.

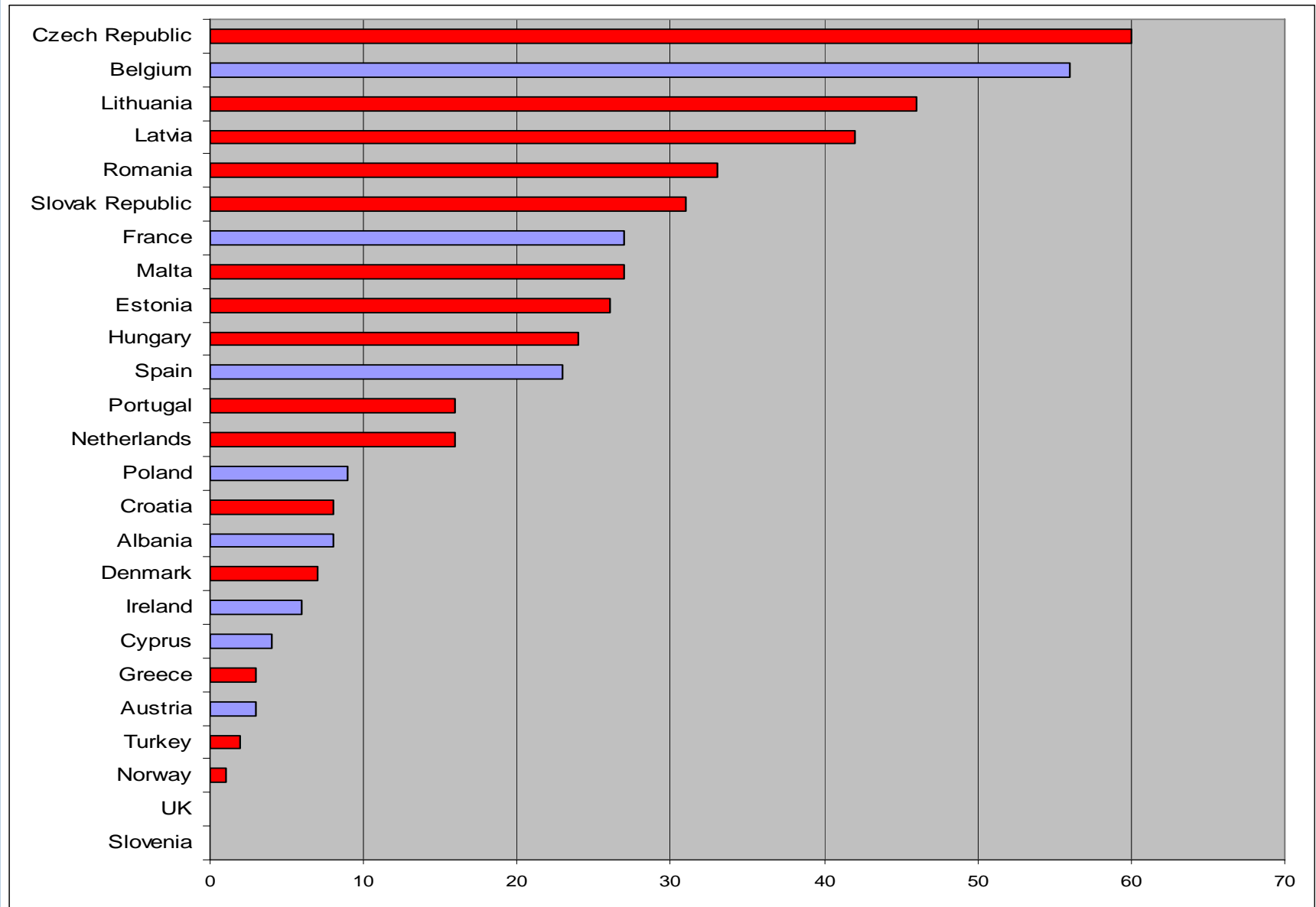
# Extent of Institutional Care of Infants and toddlers in 2002

- It was estimated that **11,777 young children under 5 in USA residential care** (9% of 130,187 under 5 in public '*foster*' care - which is 24% of total under 12).
- EU/UNICEF estimate **44,000 young children under 3 in Europe and Central Asian 'Children's Homes'**.
- EU survey of member states and accession countries showed **23,000 young children under 3 without a parent in institutional care (for more than 3 months) in EU.**

# Proportion of children under 3 years in institutions \* refers to estimates,

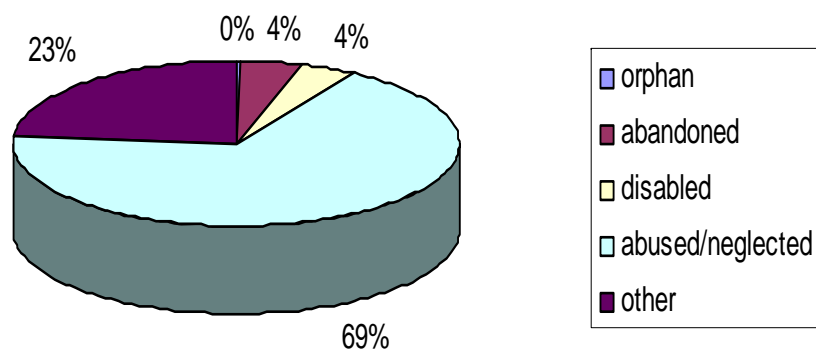
Country 2003	Proportion per 10,000	No u3 in institutions	Country 2003	Proportion per 10,000	No u3 in institutions
Czech Rep.	60	1 630	Poland	9	*1 344
Belgium	56	*2 164	Croatia	8	144
Latvia	55	395	Albania	8	*133
Bulgaria	50	1 238	Sweden	8	(*213)
Lithuania	46	458	Denmark	7	133
Hungary	44	773	Germany	7	1 495
Romania	33	2 915	Ireland	6	*95
Slovak Rep.	31	502	Cyprus	4	*15
Finland	28	(*466)	Austria	3	*37
Malta	27	44	Greece	3	114
Estonia	26	100	Turkey	2	850
Spain	23	*2 471	Italy	2	*310
Netherlands	16	1 284	Norway	<1	(17)
Portugal	16	714	UK	<1	(*65)
France	13	*2 980	Slovenia	0	0
Luxembourg	12	*20	Iceland	0	0

# Proportion of all children under 3 years who are in institutional care, 2003 (blue lines are estimates).

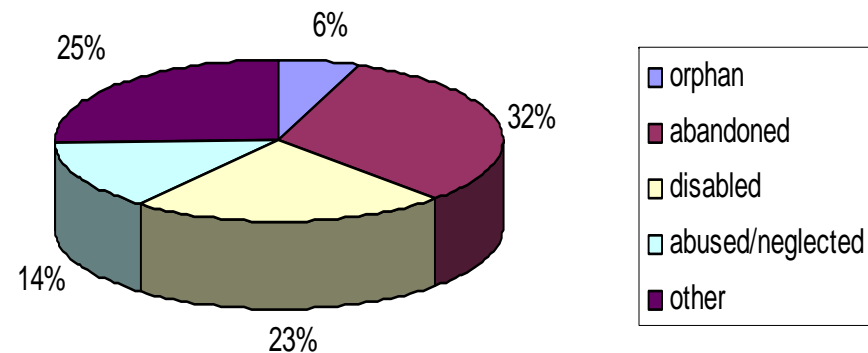


# Reasons for institutionalisation in 2003

Reasons For Institutionalisation Of Children Under The Age Of Three - EU Member States



Reasons For Institutionalisation Of Children Under The Age Of Three - other surveyed Countries\*



# A breeding programme for anti-social behaviour



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**A third of children in residential care have some form of disability**

# Protection/Out of Home Placements

## Care in Community

- **Family Support with Day care/therapeutic interventions**
- **Care by Non-offending parent (in the absence of the offender)**
- **Kinship Care (grandparent/other relative)**
- **Foster / therapeutic foster home**
- **National Adoption**
  - *Only 4% are true orphans!*

## Institutional Care

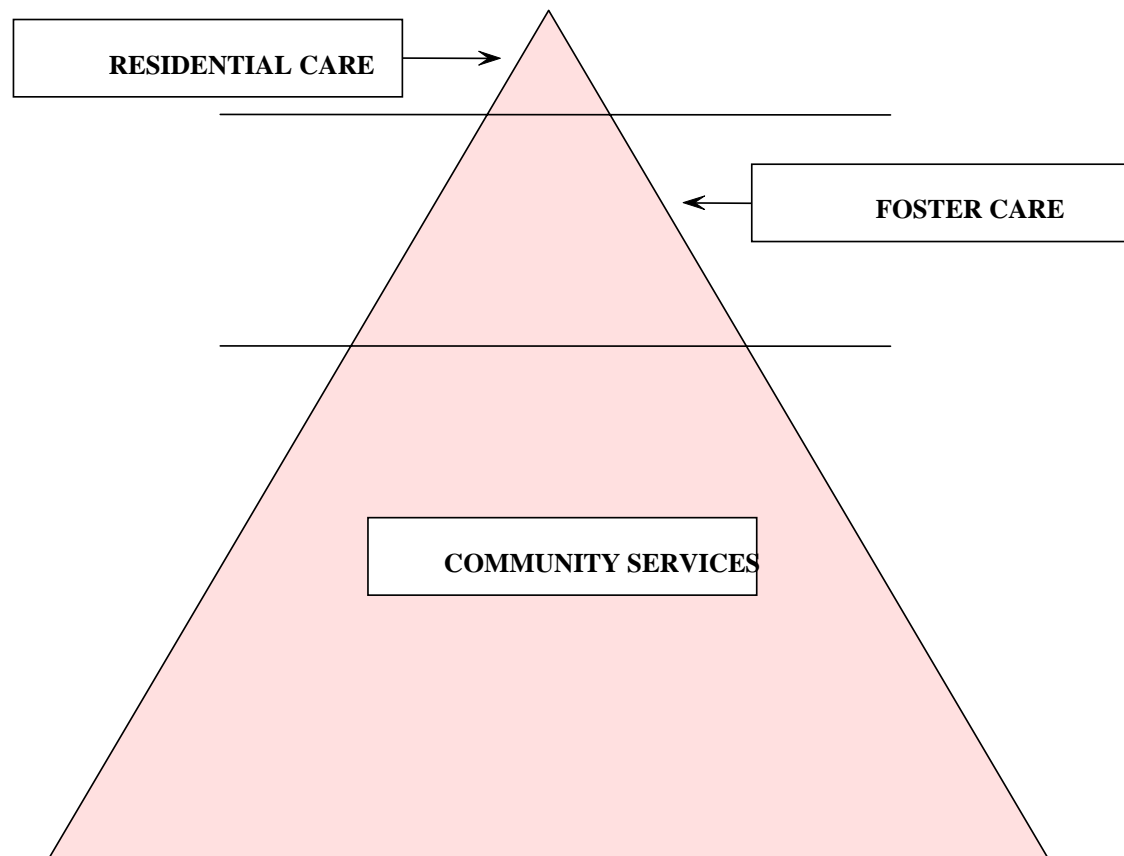
### ☞ Institution ??

*No child under 5 should be in institutional care*

### ☞ International Adoption

*Last resort  
Only in the best interests of the child*

# Transforming of children's services



Pyramid of services to children and families: There are pitfalls in attempting to reduce residential care

# Alternative care for young children

- Institutional care cost on average 3X more than foster care but 1 in 3 countries in Europe place more young children in institutions than in foster or kinship care.
- To reduce costs, some countries in economic transition have promoted international adoption as an alternative to the long term institutional care of their children (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania ), usually in the absence of established services for family support and rehabilitation, foster care and national adoption.
- By contrast, countries that have well developed family support and rehabilitation services, foster care and national adoption have hardly any young children in institutional care (UK, Norway, Iceland and Slovenia).

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## Prevention of Harm to Abandoned and Maltreated Children

- Mother and baby units offer support and shelter to mothers high risk of abandoning their children.
- Alternative family based care for abandoned young children and babies (foster care).
- Surrogate family apartments for abandoned children (consider national adoption).
- Integration of children with and without disabilities.

# Mothers need shelter as well as children



# Mother-Baby Units to replace Baby Homes

## No child under five in residential care



# What does an individual child need as an alternative to institutionalised care?

- **Local services:** what health and social facilities are available to ensure a young child's needs are being met free of charge (home visits by professionals?)
- **Assessment of each family** in relation to their child needs, parent's capacity to meet the needs, social and economic factors inhibiting the parent's capacity
- **Support for families**, financial, practical and emotional
- **Rehabilitation of families** assessed as being high risk of harming the child physically, sexually or emotionally through abuse or neglect
- **Foster Care** of a high standard to care for the child and act as a role model to parents being rehabilitated
- **Adoption** only after rehabilitation of parents and extended family interventions have failed
- **Free Legal Representation** for parents and child involved in public care proceedings

# European survey on young children in institutional care resulted in national surveys



Mapping the number and characteristics of children under three in institutions across Europe at risk of harm



EUROPEAN COMMISSION DAPHNE PROGRAMME  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

In collaboration with

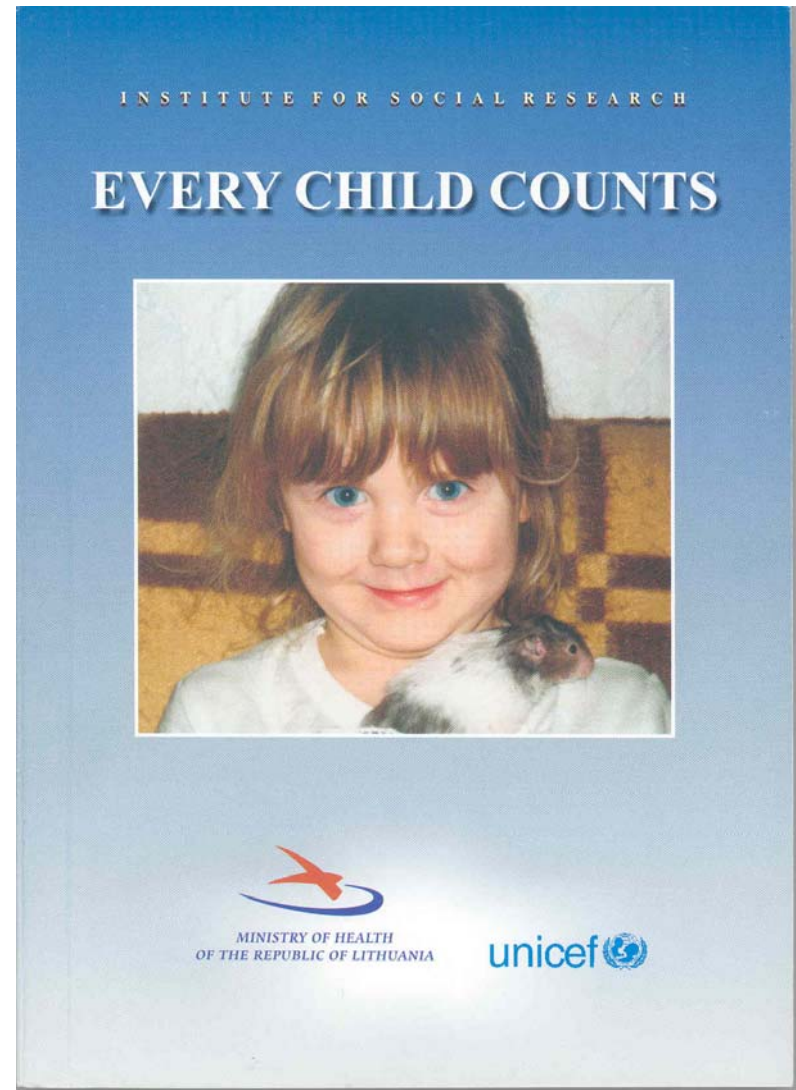
WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE &  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM, UK



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BIRMINGHAM



EUROPE



# Legal framework for international adoption

## *UNCRC - United Nations Convention on Rights of Child (1989)*

- Best interests of the child (Article 3)
- International adoption only as a last resort (Article 21b)
- Respect privacy of child (Article 16)
- State's responsibility to support parents in difficulty (Article 18)

## *Hague Convention (1993)*

- No improper financial gain from intercountry adoption (Article 32) ('Reasonable' professional fees?)
- Child must be adoptable (Article 4)  
**(BUT only 4% of children in institutions are 'true' orphans, Browne et al. 2005)**

NORTHWESTERN AIRLINES  
FLIGHT MAGAZINE - JANUARY 2001  
present to

Contact  
**Van Dyke Adoption  
Foundation**

for a free information  
package on Romanian  
Adoption.

Call us  
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(877)

979-1289

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JANUARY 2001

fightin



**A**fter winning  
Division I  
University of North  
Sioux hockey team  
college hockey team in  
White House.

Last month, men  
onship team had th  
President Clinton in  
There he gave them

# Internet Adoption Findings

- Inappropriate agency name – 12% of sample
- **Application fee** - Mean: \$260 (Range: free to \$1,000)
- **Agency fee** - Mean: \$4,228 (Range: free to \$9,400)
- **Total fees** - Mean: \$20,338 (Range: \$7,500 to \$35,000)
- Not enough information available - 47%
- Fantasy terminology – 18%
- General photographs of children - 84%
- Photolisting of children – 30%
- Parents able to select child - 37%
- Able to apply on-line - 34%

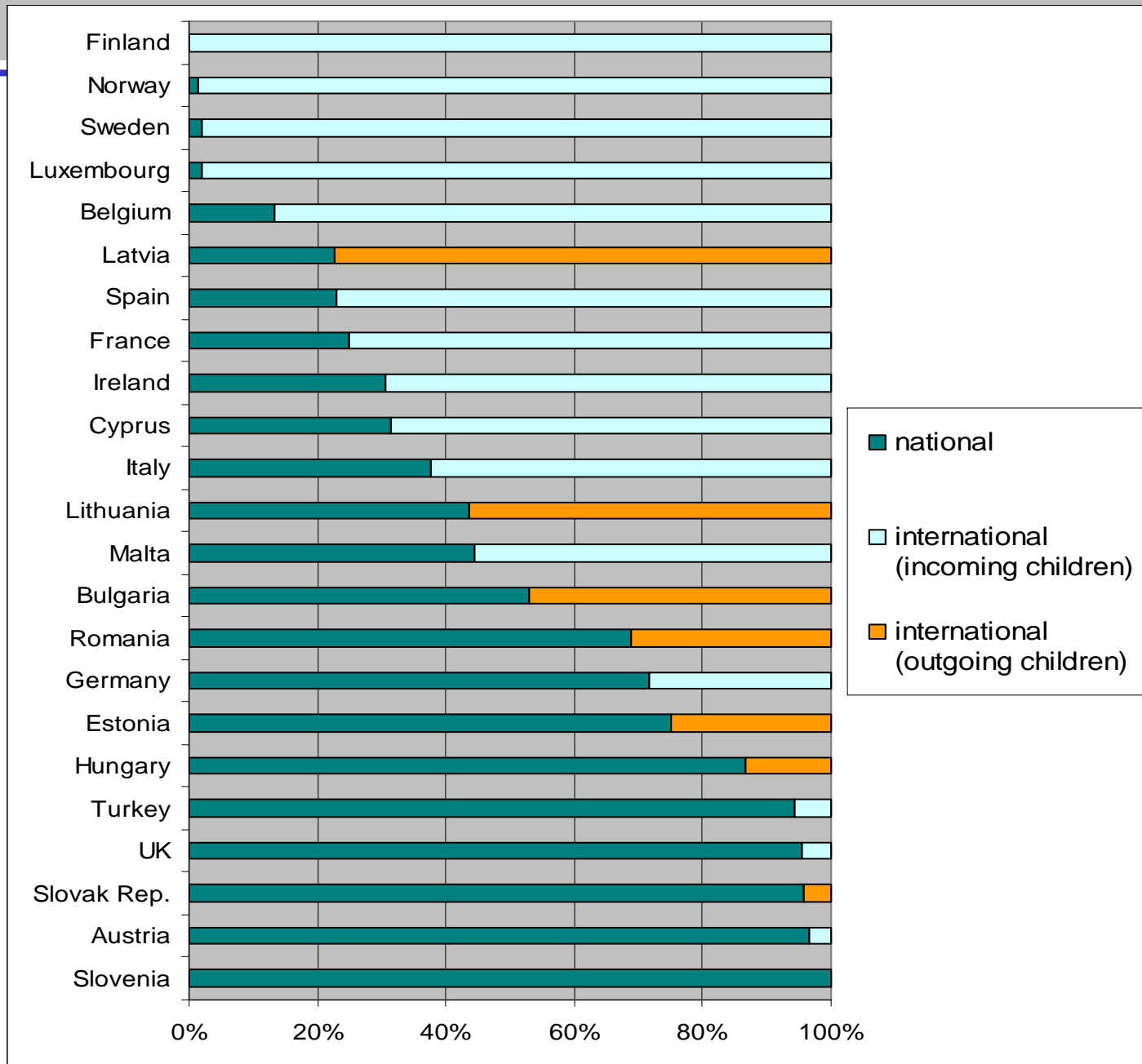
# Disregard for international law

- 38% of agencies are in **breach** of the principles of the UNCRC and Hague Convention by containing one of the following (12% of agencies had all three):
  - **Photolistings of children**
  - **Fantasy terminology**
  - **Allowing parents to select a child**

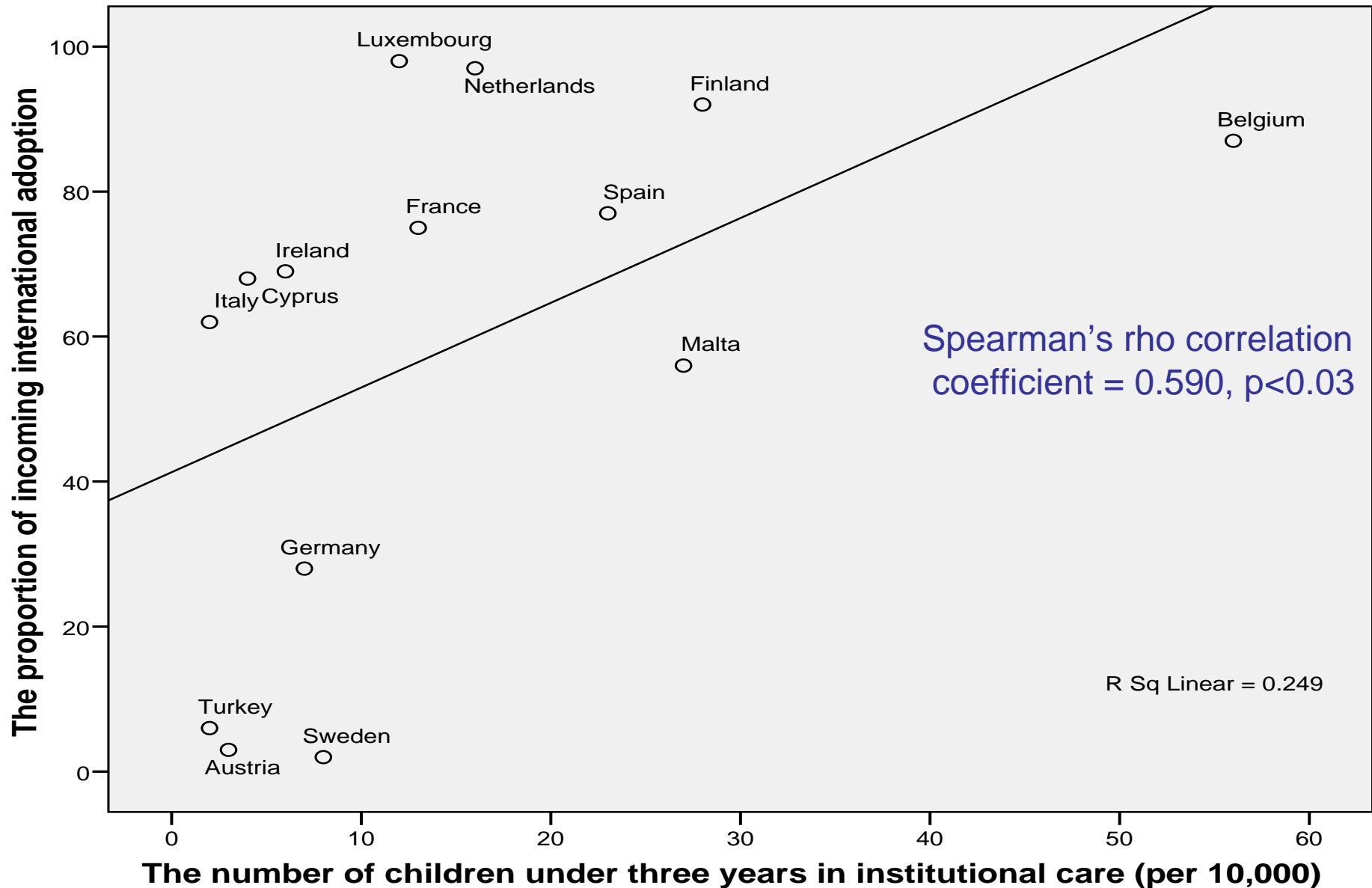
# Problems identified with International Adoptions

- Little consideration for long-term needs of child
- Breach of privacy – medical/social information and photographs
- Puts needs of parents before the child
- Fantasy terminology and pictures may attract paedophile interest
- Potential National adoptive parents cannot economically compete.

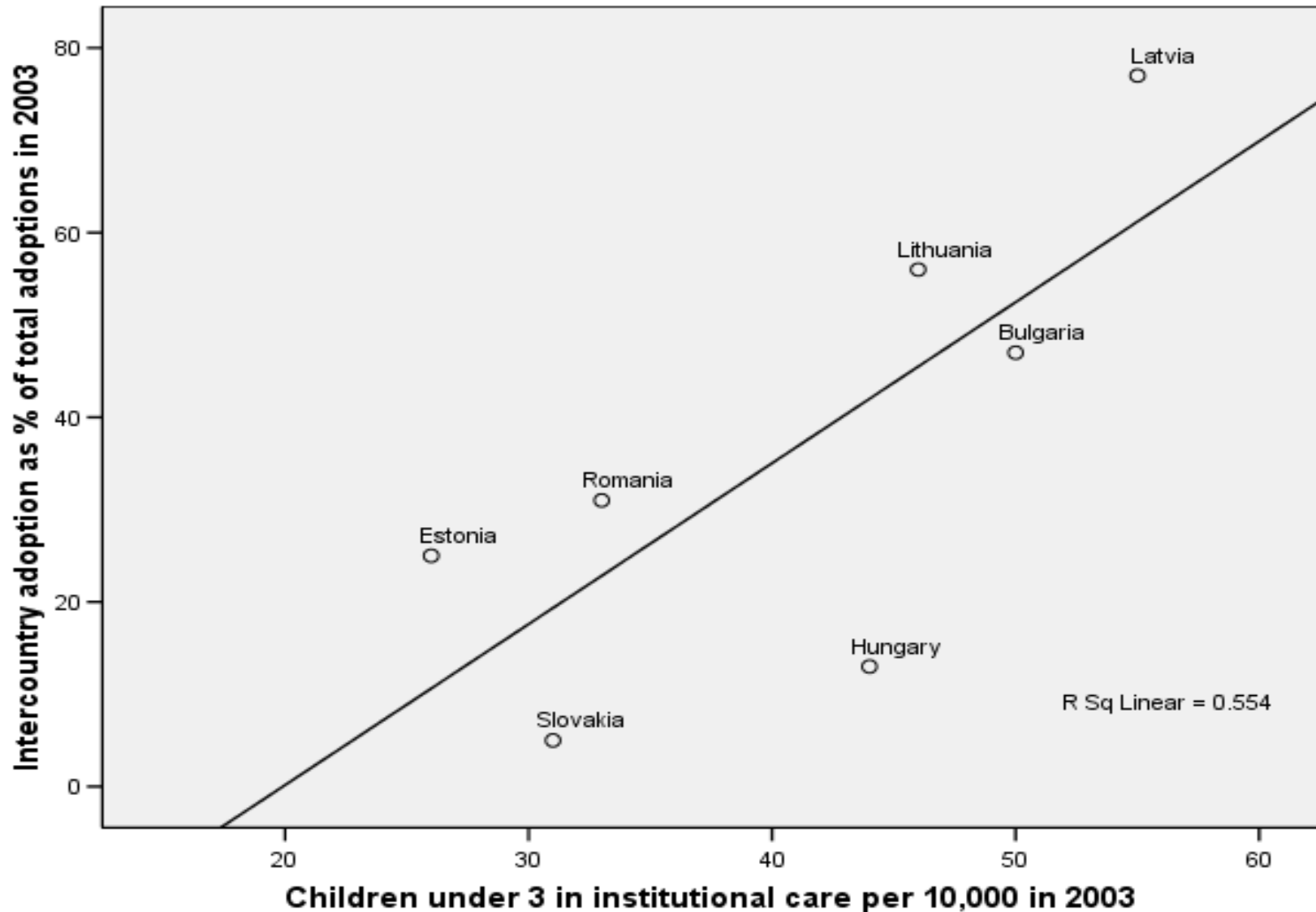
# Ratio of national to international adoptions 2003



International adoption correlates with increased the institutional care of young children in **Receiving countries** (Chou & Browne 2008)



International adoption correlates with increased the institutional care of young children in **Sending countries** (Chou & Browne 2008)



Spearman's rho correlation coefficient = 0.786,  $p < 0.03$

# Policy Implications

- **Stricter controls on agencies**
  - Ensure parents are well informed on the adoption process and most children have living parents
  - Not to display personal information about adoptable children
  - Use of more appropriate language
- **Implementing children's rights**
  - Prevention of abandonment
  - Support for birth mothers
  - Promote domestic adoption/foster care
  - Reinforcing good practices e.g. assessing and matching the needs of child to the family.
- Intercountry adoptions should only be implemented as a **last** resort after all other options have been explored e.g. rehab of biological family, kinship/guardian care, foster care, national adoption.

The problem of teenage parenting in the UK – no one has recommended international adoption as a solution



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