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Regional Patterns of the Child's Welfare under the Social Policy Reform in Russia

This paper is a part of the research project “A Child’s Right to a Family: Deinstitutionalization of Child Welfare in Putin’s Russia” (Meri Kulmala – project leader). It embraces very preliminary results of the empirical analysis aimed at describing regional patterns of the reform implementation of residential care for children left without parents in Russian regions (deinstitutionalization). The research seeks to sketch main patterns of the reform outcome (the deinstitutionalization and the emergence of fostering child care) by revealing models of cooperation between public organizations and NGOs that produced by social and economic regional environment. The analysis revealed There are three main types of NGOs become a part of the official system of services provision: (1) professional organisations that assist foster families and children left without parents; (2) SOS villages, organisations that arrange family care for children; (3) shelters and organisations affiliated with Russian Orthodox church helping children left without parents. The study also enabled to demonstrate how in response to social policy reforms, regional authorities tend to create associations of foster parents “from above”. The case study of several regional cases of these attempts demonstrate key power tools through which these initiatives are supported and implemented. Generally speaking, the analysis demonstrate main outcomes of the residential care reform in Russian regions and main regional patterns in response to federal driven policy.