

Census for children – Data on children in alternative care

Data limitation

- Secondary data with different methodological approaches
- No software used by all instances in the system for alternative care
- Disaggregation not available for some data, disaggregation related to disability nonexistent
- Changing mandates around data collection



Availability of data for children in alternative care

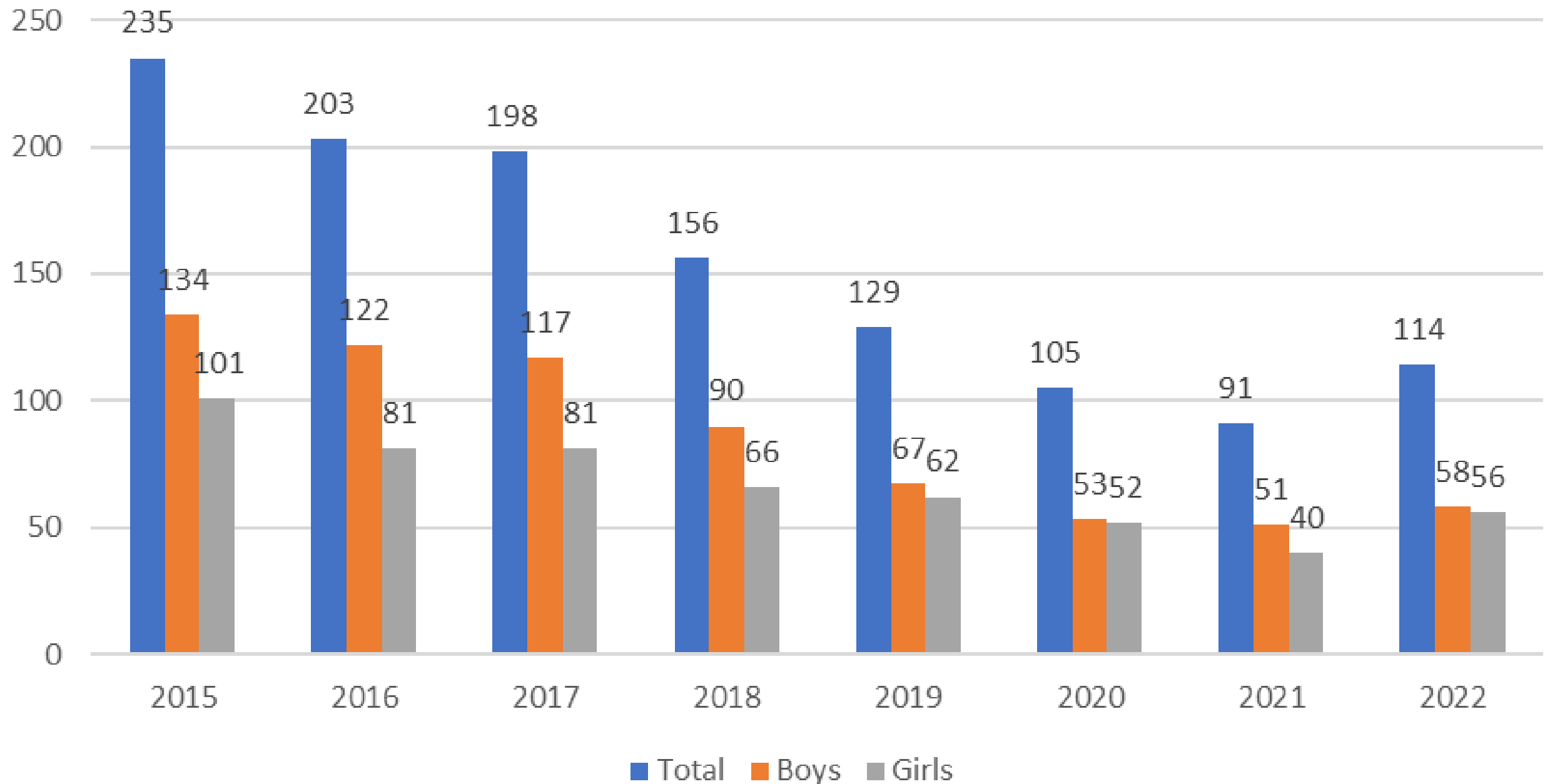
01. Continuous trend of decreasing number of children who entered formal residential care during the year, from 119 in 2015 to only 4 in 2022

02. Children with disabilities in formal residential care also varied significantly over the period 2015-2022, from more than 50 in 2015 and 2016, to 28 in 2022.

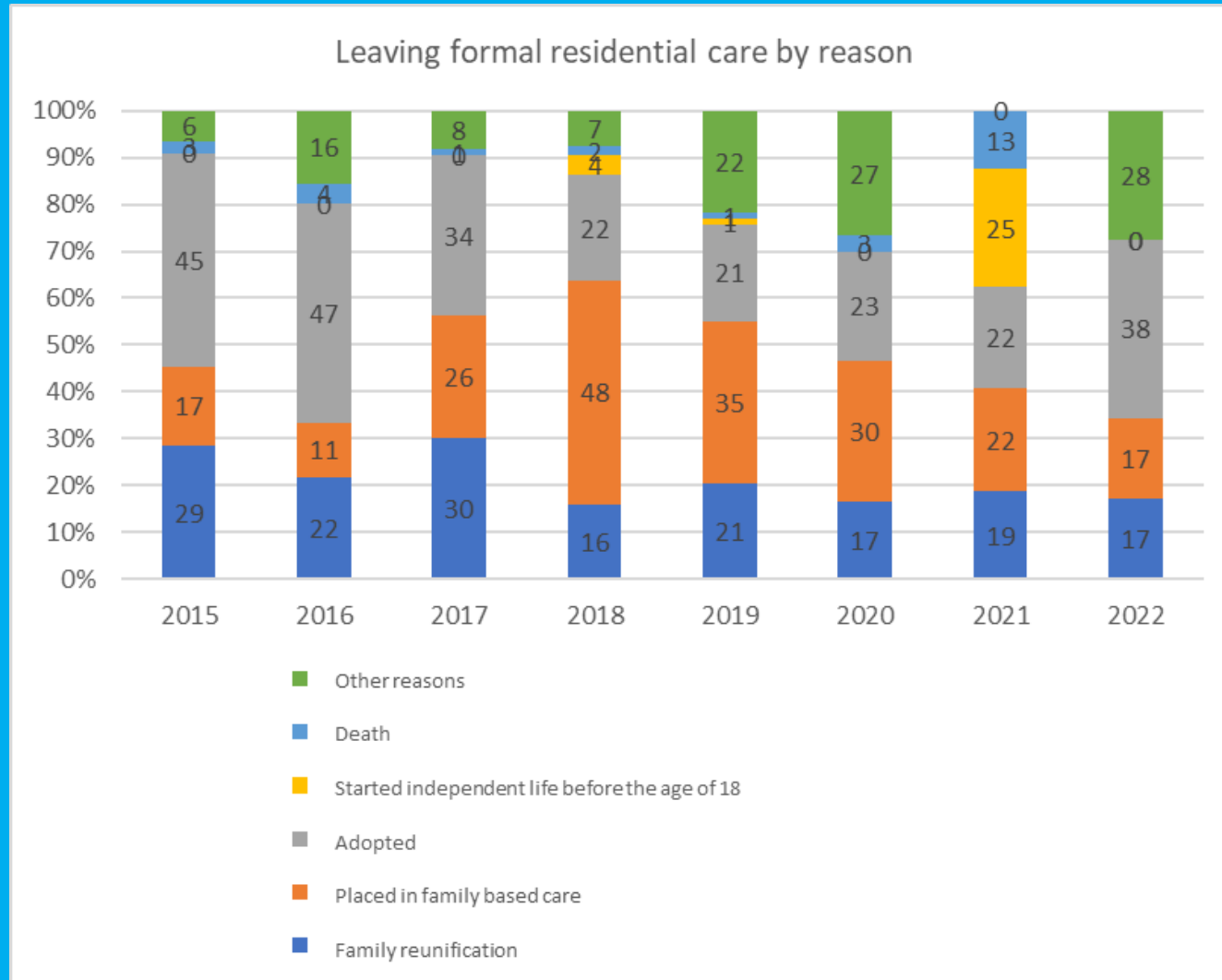
03. The number of children who left formal residential care has also decreased in line with the decreasing number of children who entered.



Children in alternative care, 2015-2022



The portion of “other reasons” needs to be examined, as it amounts to almost one quarter, with every fourth child leaving for “other reasons”.



Availability of data for children in alternative care

- 01.** Number of children in family-based formal care – 436 (2020) to 369 children (2022).
- 02.** Number of children with disabilities placed in family-based formal care – 34 in 2015 to 78 in 2022
- 03.** Number of children with disabilities placed in foster families – 91 in 2021, 75 in 2022 vs 39 in 2019
- 04.** Number of children that left formal foster care in 2022 - 49 children, of which 11 children with disabilities
- 05.** Reasons why children left care in 2022
 - 55% of them left it due to family reunification
 - 20% were placed under formal residential care
 - 12% were adopted
 - 10% started living independently



Number of children aged 0-17 placed in foster care, by gender and disability, at the end of the year, by year

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of children aged 0-17 in foster families, at the end of the year	238	247	274	302	317	332	346	256
Of which no. of children with disabilities	34	35	39	38	39	41	91	75
By gender								
Boys	108	121	139	156	174	173	166	129
Girls	130	126	135	146	143	159	180	127

What is the story behind the data for children in alternative care telling us?

Maja has lost her parents when she was 7 years old. She was the oldest of four siblings, having two younger brothers and one sister. After she lost her parents, she was placed in one foster family where she was maltreated. She was then transferred to another foster family, now separated from two of her siblings, which remained in the previous family. In this family, she did not receive the family support she hoped for. She was then relocated to a small group home and separated from her last sibling which was placed in another group home. Despite her strong will to be together with her siblings, she was not even allowed to contact with two of her siblings which remained in the first foster home. She reacted to the social work services, but to no avail.

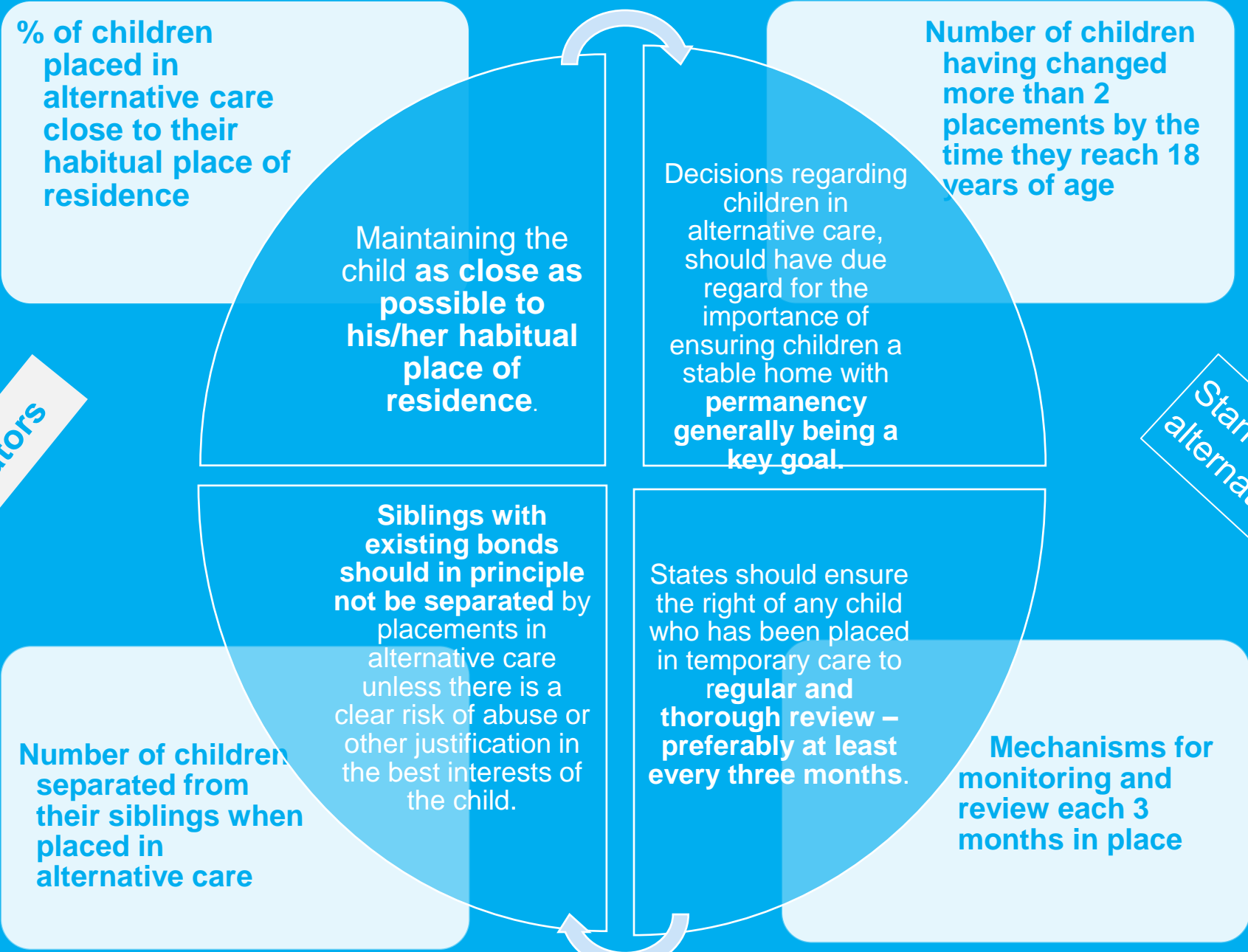
*The name has been changed for privacy and to protect the identity.

Latest CRC recommendations for North Macedonia

- Establish a comprehensive and reliable data collection mechanism, with indicators on all rights guaranteed by the Convention and its Optional Protocols
- Ensure that data can be disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin, nationality and socio-economic background to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children, and in particular younger children, children in alternative care
- Introduce a gatekeeping system regarding alternative care, with the aim to reduce the number of children in out-of-home placement, prevent unsuitable entries into the care system, ensure the suitability of placement and return to family or community

We need to reevaluate how institutions collect data, how they read the data, and ensure that data tells us a story of what decisions have been made and should be made in the best interest of the child.





% of children placed in alternative care close to their habitual place of residence

Number of children having changed more than 2 placements by the time they reach 18 years of age

Maintaining the child as close as possible to his/her habitual place of residence.

Decisions regarding children in alternative care, should have due regard for the importance of ensuring children a stable home with permanency generally being a key goal.

Siblings with existing bonds should in principle not be separated by placements in alternative care unless there is a clear risk of abuse or other justification in the best interests of the child.

States should ensure the right of any child who has been placed in temporary care to regular and thorough review – preferably at least every three months.

Number of children separated from their siblings when placed in alternative care

Mechanisms for monitoring and review each 3 months in place

Potential indicators

Standards for alternative care

Way forward

- Support to **collect data on a regular basis** by implementing the case management
- Foster a process of intersectoral collaboration to gradually introduce a **mechanism for data exchange** between the National Commission for ICF, the Centers for Social work, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Electronic Health Information system
- Support data providers to adequately report on the reasons children are leaving alternative care to be able to **analyze the data trends** and propose suitable measures and policies
- Develop **new indicators** to determine and analyze the decisions being taken for every child and whether they are in line with his/her best interest

Thank you