

KEEPING YOUTH AWAY FROM CRIME: SEARCHING FOR BEST EUROPEAN PRACTICES

A COMPARATIVE STUDY



Presentation is prepared in project «Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices». Project is implemented with financial support from the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union.

OVERVIEW

- **Project lead by IJJO**
- **Participating countries:**
 - England & Wales
 - Scotland
 - Italy
 - Belgium
 - Austria
 - Lithuania
 - Latvia
 - Sweden
 - Netherlands



AIMS & METHODOLOGY

- To identify and learn from best practices in early intervention across Europe
- Detailed country-by-country analysis prepared by national experts
- Comparative report to look at different approaches and draw out key similarities & differences
- Particular focus on drawing out practical examples of strategies which are most effective
- Also collecting interviews with practitioners



EARLY PREVENTION

- “**Early prevention**” refers to a series of actions which aim at creating an environment that deters children from persistent disruptive behavior and early-onset delinquency
- UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990) (Riyadh Guidelines) recognize early prevention has as a crucial and “essential part of crime prevention in society”
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/juvenile.htm>
- There are strong moral, criminological and financial reasons to pursue strategies that limit young people’s contact with the criminal justice at the earliest possible stage. A plethora of international studies have shown that the greater a young person’s contact with the courts, the greater his or her risk of re-offending



AREAS OF FOCUS

A. Youth Justice System

1. Broad Principles of the Youth Justice System
2. Mains bodies/institutions dealing with Juvenile crime prevention
3. The right of children and young people in conflict with the law.
4. Diversion measures

B. Care System (from the scope of juvenile crime prevention)

1. Overview of the child protection system
2. Monitoring mechanisms
3. Criteria for placement or supervision
4. Recreational Activities

C. Education system (from the scope of juvenile crime prevention)

1. What is available to children at risk?
2. Special schools
3. Excluded children

D. Health system (from the scope of juvenile crime prevention)

1. Early screening of mental health and intellectual disabilities
2. Prevention of drugs consumption and support for addicted children
3. General health mechanisms and support for vulnerable families and children



KEY FINDINGS

1. In recent years particularly, there has been a shift towards early prevention as an effective measure of juvenile crime prevention across Europe
2. Countries are generally embracing more innovative practices & looking at ways to divert young people away from the criminal justice system as soon as possible
3. There are a variety of strategies being used; the most effective of which appear to be involve grass-roots organisations & local practitioners



KEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

4. Broadly speaking, there are improvements to be made in the linkages between health, education, and care systems and the criminal justice system at large
5. There could be more and better evaluation of projects & strategies aimed at early intervention
6. It would be useful to encourage greater collaboration between European countries to share best practices



THE ITALIAN REPORT

Methodology

- Desk research and country analysis
- Semi – structured interviews
- Focus on drawing examples of promising practices

Report's structure

- Italian context
- Overviews of the systems involved in the prevention of juvenile delinquency
- Early prevention in the country and promising practices
- Recommendations



THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

- A. ***Geographical context***: Regions and local entities with different forms of legislative, administrative and financial autonomy, and strong historical differences among macro-areas
- B. ***Recent socio – economic situation*** in Italy: economic crisis, with concentration of inequalities and disadvantage in some areas
- C. ***Youth crime data and trends***: decrease and persistent differences among the macro-areas
- D. ***Historical context*** (from the scope of juvenile crime prevention): recent awareness on child rights and on the importance of juvenile delinquency's early prevention



JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The decree D.P.R. 448/1988, Regulations on the criminal proceeding involving children: for the first time, the child offender is into a key position in all the phases of his/her own proceeding

A. Principles of the juvenile justice system

1. Minimum harmfulness of the proceeding: to use diversion and alternative measures as much as possible
2. Residual use of detention: detention as *extrema ratio*
3. Penal responsibility
4. Suitability principle
5. De-stigmatization: privacy protection and anonymity of the child

B. Diversion measures

1. Judicial pardon
 2. Sentence of no case to answer because of irrelevance of the circumstances
 3. Suspension of the proceeding to put the child on trial
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CARE AND PROTECTION SYSTEM (1)

The child protection system in Italy started to be put in place around the '70s-'80s.

Crucial functions of child protection and care are devolved to the Regions and local entities through the creation of public and private structures, which depend on the regions or the municipalities (Comuni) and are strongly interconnected

The **three main entities** that in Italy compose the child protection system, are the Welfare (social services, health care, schools/education, educational communities, foster care institutions, ...), Family and Justice, which should work strongly interconnected.



CARE AND PROTECTION SYSTEM (2)

Early warning of children at risk

- Private individual
- School
- Law enforcement agencies
- Social services
- Health care services

Identification of the appropriate intervention

- Juvenile Court (civil and administrative competence)

Local socio-assistencial support

- Social services
- Asl (social-health support)
- Private communities
- Communities with specific agreement with the local municipality
- School
- Family counseling
- Day care centres
- Youth centres
- Various local initiatives



EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education for children with special needs: Particularly vulnerable categories of children are protected within the school with specific instruments.

School dropouts: in Italy the number of the so-called “early school leavers” is still high and higher than the European average.

The phenomenon is concentrated in Southern Italy, where particular conditions of disadvantage are also more concentrated, together with lack of resources for schools and services for children.

The Ministry of Education set up a ***national official registry for students***, to monitor scholastic dispersion. Nevertheless, supportive programs and a national strategy against scholastic failing and school dropout are needed

HEALTH SYSTEM

Early screening of mental health and intellectual disabilities: the Ministry of Health Care in Italy provides schools with a medical unit, as well as a medical unit is present in all juvenile facilities in Italy, in both cases including psychological and psychiatric assistance.

Prevention of drugs consumption and support for children: SERT (Public services on drug addictions) introduced with law 162/90: functions on early prevention, treatment of drug consumption, rehabilitation and social/work reintegration.

They work in strong collaboration with therapeutic communities, local municipalities and volunteers, with an interdisciplinary team of professionals, specialized on drug consumption issues



KEY FINDINGS ON EARLY PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ITALY (1)

1. *Prevention of juvenile delinquency is a priority* in the Italian political agenda, even though only recently the importance of early prevention has been recognize, aiming at reducing the opportunities of committing crime but also at creating a positive social environment, supporting social groups at risk, creating a network of actors who deal with child protection in the same area
2. Juvenile delinquency's prevention in Italy is the result of *joint actions* of all the actors and bodies involved in the care and protection system



KEY FINDINGS ON EARLY PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ITALY (2)

3. The Italian panorama is rich of a *great variety of instruments and projects* aimed at preventing children and youths from committing delinquent acts

4. The vast majority of programmes and projects implemented in Italy falls into one of these *three main broad categories of strategies*:
 - Outreach, street education
 - Social and family mediation
 - Interventions to prevent school dropouts



KEY FINDINGS ON EARLY PREVENTION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN ITALY (3)

5. One of the main findings and one of the main constraints: *early prevention of juvenile delinquency is very localized and sector-based*, and does not refer to a centralized and national programming. Different Ministries and entities are involved but there is not a clear and unitary actor with the specific authority for coordinating policies and actions on delinquency prevention
6. Early prevention of juvenile delinquency in Italy, as the children's care and protection, is *held by the local entities and realities*, with very heterogenous investments of funds and resources

PROMISING PRACTICES (1)

Invisible City Foundation – Life School ‘Falcone-Borsellino’

- **Where:** Catania (Sicily), at risk neighbourhood in an area historically characterized by a strong presence of mafia.
- **Why:** to divert the children and juveniles' path into school drop out and illicit activities on behalf of organized crime, towards legal alternatives and individual empowerment
- **How:** through a high educative and cultural offer, boosting children self-esteem, committing towards the others, through peer-tutoring and conducting; creating a group to engage children with group identity feelings and to increase their sense of legality; teaching children how to build positive relationships with the others, with respect, through music classes and through collective classes on legality
- **For whom:** children from around 4 to 14 years old from at risk neighbourhoods



PROMISING PRACTICES (2)

«CivicoZero» Project – Save the Children Italia

- **Where:** Rome, in particular the centre of the city. The phenomenon analysed and targeted is a significant presence on the territory of migrant children
 - **Why:** to achieve juvenile delinquency's prevention through child protection, through an overall presence on the territory, from the streets to the juvenile justice system services and the day-care centre
 - **How:** the project intervenes on different dimensions, to integrate the interventions of the institutional and private agencies already existing on the territory, which deals with child protection: in the street (children and youths involved in prostitution, criminal activities and begging, with a Mobile Unit, daytime and night-time), in the penal/criminal area; in the spontaneous Roma Settlements, with a daytime Mobile Unit; in the Day care centre 'CivicoZero' for children and youths, under aged and young adults
 - **For whom:** children of every nationality, with a specific focus on unaccompanied minors who live in the streets, in disadvantaged situations, within the justice system, at risk of trafficking and of committing crime
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RECOMMENDATIONS (1)

A. *Legislation*

1. Modern models of diversion measures, responding to the «new» categories of children involved in the juvenile justice system
2. Specific juvenile penitentiary regulation/law

B. *Policies*

1. National integrated action plan on early prevention
2. National programming to support and protect vulnerable categories of children, with homogenous investments of resources
3. Stronger investments in the education system
4. Stronger investments in the social services, family support and local support system (disproportion between needs and resources)



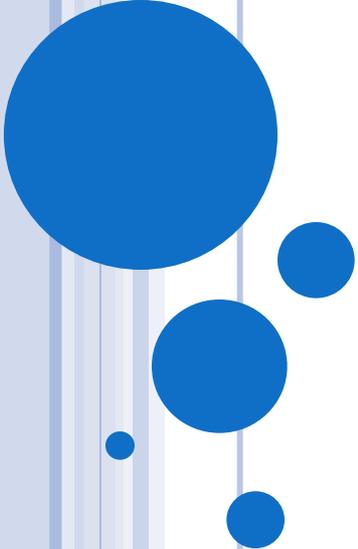
RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

c. Monitoring

1. National overview instruments and national monitoring system which ascertain the actual effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the plenty of projects

d. Implementation

1. Integrated set of actors, actions and multi disciplinary activities
 2. Focus and intervention on the «new» categories of vulnerable children, including victims of violence
 3. Importance of campaigning and raising awareness on child rights and early prevention, also through the use of the new media and social networks
 4. Network between agencies, institutions and all the actors involved in the children's care and protection
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THANK YOU!!

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