

Country: Latvia
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1. Developing prevention at early stages, an overview of the Latvian system

1.1 Legal status of a minor in the legislation of the Republic of Latvia

Youth Justice System in Latvia consists of three level components: policy development documents in the field – concepts, guidelines, strategies (a); legislation – laws and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (b); institutional framework – agencies, institutions and organisations that implement the requirements of policy development documents and legislation (c). In a wider scope, Youth Justice System includes legal order of several fields with the aim to ensure favourable environment for children’s development. Thus, in a wider meaning this system, which belongs to the common field of the protection of the children’s rights, includes both Juvenile Justice System and delinquency prevention, as well as education, health and welfare components. In order to study this issue in a narrower sense, it is necessary to look at it through the specific objectives of each field and retain the rights of the child as a horizontal component. Analysing the system of justice from youth provision point of view, it has to be taken into consideration that in Latvia Juvenile Justice System is not separated from the system meant for adults (in the understanding of juvenile justice) and the preventive work with juveniles is not regulated in a common legal framework.

In Latvia, the legal status of a minor, a child and an adolescent, is stipulated by three legal acts. The Civil Law of Latvia¹ regulates that the minority of persons of both genders continues until they attain the age of eighteen. The law provides for² that in exceptional circumstances and for especially good cause, when the guardians and closest kin of the minor attest at the court that the behaviour of the minor is irreproachable, and he/she is able to independently protect and defend his/her rights and perform his/her duties, the minor may be declared as being of age of majority even before he/she has attained the age of eighteen, but not earlier than before he/she fully attain the age of sixteen. The majority before term can be granted by the Custody court (Orphan’s Court) but its decision is subject to being confirmed by the court of appropriate jurisdiction. If the minor marries in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Law, he/she is declared as being of age of majority before attaining the age of eighteen. The Civil Law of Latvia³ stipulates that until reaching 18 years of age a child is under the custody of his/her parents. It means that the parents have the rights and duties to care for the child and his/her property and to represent the child in his/her personal and property relations. It is regulated that

¹ The Civil Law, Article 219, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=225418> (last visited on 12.05.2014)

² Ibid, Article 220.

³ Ibid, Article 177.

care for the child means both his/her care and supervision, and the right to determine his/her place of residence. According to the Civil Law, care of the child means ensuring food, clothes, dwelling and health care, tending of the child, his/her education and upbringing – ensuring mental and physical development of the child, as far as possible taking into account his/her individuality, abilities and interests. The law imposes an obligation to the parents to perform also the supervision of the child, namely, care for the safety of the child and the prevention of endangerment from third persons.

The Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁴ regulates the framework of the child's rights and freedoms, as well as their protection. The law stipulates methods and principles according to which the child's behaviour is controlled⁵ and his/her liability is provided for. Simultaneously, the law specifies the rights, duties and liability of the parents, other persons, as well as state and local municipalities (governments) on the provision of the rights of the child. The Protection of the Rights of the Child Law stipulates the objectives of the protection of the rights of the child⁶ and the subjects of these rights, namely, the parents or adopters, foster family and guardians of the child (a); education, culture, health care and child care institutions (b); state and local municipality institutions (c); public organisations and other natural or legal persons whose activities are associated with the provision of support and assistance to children (e); employers (f). The aforementioned means that all the listed persons or institutions, as stipulated in this and other regulatory enactments, are endowed with the rights and duties to perform the protection of the rights of the child. For the purpose of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁷ a child is a person who has not attained 18 years of age, excepting such persons who have been declared to be of legal age in accordance with the law or have entered into marriage before attaining 18 years of age.

Within the framework of the Youth Law⁸ it has been stipulated that a young person is a person from 13 to 25 years of age. The aim of the Youth Law is to improve the life quality of young people by promoting their initiatives, the virtue of work and patriotism, participation in decision-making and social life, as well as by supporting work with youth in general. The Youth law stipulates the concept of youth policy, its principles and objectives, as well as the competence of state administrative institutions in the field of youth policy. Within the framework of the Youth Law, several objectives have been set for the primary prevention in the level of local municipalities: to establish the Youth Advisory Council which promotes the development and implementation of the municipal work with youth, as well as the youth participation in decision-making (a); and to establish youth centres in the local municipalities with the aim to promote youth initiatives in the particular municipalities, as well as the youth participation in the decision-making and social life (b). The law provides for that the objective

⁴ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (last visited on 12.05.2014).

⁵ Ibid, Chapter IX.

⁶ Ibid, Article 4.

⁷ Ibid, Article 3.

⁸ Youth Law, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Youth_Law.doc (last visited on 12.05.2014).

of the state and local municipalities is to enhance the young people's virtue of work and patriotism, non-formal education, voluntary work, physical activities and engagement in the cultural life as essential ways of useful utilisation of leisure time; to promote exhaustive development of young people by involving them in the activities of non-formal education, as well as sets the duty for the state and municipal institutions to support useful utilisation of the leisure time of young people by respective adjustment of the necessary environment.

- **Types and forms of the prevention of juvenile delinquency and violation of the children's rights.**

Particular activities that could be associated with *early prevention* are regulated in the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁹. The Law stipulates¹⁰ that the preventive work with children has to be carried out by local municipalities in collaboration with the parents of children, education institutions, the State police and the State Probation Service if the child is a probation client, public organisations and other institutions. Local municipality has the duty to perform preventive work with children until they attain 18 years of age in particular cases: if the child has committed an illegal act (offence)¹¹ and is not in detention during the pre-trial investigation period (a); is found guilty of the commission of the criminal offence but the sentence is not connected with deprivation of liberty (b); is released from criminal liability with the prosecutor's injunction on the punishment (c); is released from serving the sentence of deprivation of liberty (d); has committed illegal actions as set out in the Criminal Law but has not attained the age in which he/she can be held criminally liable (e); has committed illegal acts as set out in the legal provisions of the Administrative Violations Code¹² more than two times (f); if the child begs, is vagrant or performs other acts which may lead to illegal actions (g). In fact, the legal provisions allow local municipalities to apply prevention measures for every child who performs acts which may lead to illegal actions (the aforementioned point "g").

There is no doubt that one of the key components for the children's welfare is health care. Qualitative and timely determination of health risks and subsequent elimination of these risks is essential also in all types of prevention¹³. In Latvia, children healthcare is regulated in several regulatory enactments – the Law on the Rights of Patients¹⁴ stipulates that medical

⁹ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Chapter IX, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (last visited on 12.05.2014).

¹⁰ Ibid, Article 58.

¹¹ Author's note: in this case, such acts are considered illegal which are to be punished according to the legal provisions of the Criminal Law. The text of the Criminal Law (in Latvian) is available at: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=88966> (last visited on 12.05.2014)

¹² Administrative Violations Code, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Latvian_Administrative_Violations_Code.doc (last visited on 20.05.2014).

¹³ Author's note: in this case, primary, secondary and tertiary prevention is meant.

¹⁴ Law on the Rights of Patients, Articles 13 and 14, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=203008> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

treatment of a minor patient¹⁵ is permissible if his/her lawful representative is informed thereof and has given his/her consent. In the treatment process, the child has the right to be heard and to participate in the decision-making related to the medical treatment according to his/her age and maturity. Medical treatment of a minor patient is permissible only in the cases when his/her consent has been received, except if the patient is not able to pronounce his/her consent due to his/her health condition. In such cases the decision is taken by the doctor together with the relatives of the minor, the doctor's council or custody court. Every child has the right to receive information from the medical practitioner in a comprehensible manner taking into account his/her age and maturity. A special procedure¹⁶ is stipulated for the provision of preventive health care for children and youth in educational institutions. Every educational institution – preschool, primary school and other educational institutions – ensures regular presence of a nurse who is responsible for the control over the compliance with sanitary – hygienic rules, prevention of trauma risks at school, healthy eating control, as well as providing methodology support for teachers promoting healthy lifestyle and health activities. In order to assess early health risks in children, medical practitioners at school perform: preventive medicine inspections for children — hearing and vision screening, scoliosis screening, blood pressure and heart rate control; activities to prevent infectious diseases; once a year education institution organises preventive dental check-up; perform prevention of smoking, alcohol, drug, psychotropic and toxic substance abuse, as well as prevention of sexually transmitted diseases; consultations for parents on the issues of children's health improvement. Healthcare for children in Latvia is free of charge and the system is established as a model that provides regular care¹⁷ and that can be structured according to its intensity – a) the most intense medical care level is envisaged for children from their birth till 1 year of age. During the first month of the child's life, the parents have a duty to contact their family doctor (general practitioner) not less than once a week, whereas when the child is one month to one year old, the doctor has to be visited once a month; b) children aged 1 to 2 have to be taken to the family doctor once per half year. During these examinations, vision screening is performed and the child receives the necessary vaccinations, in case of need the neurological recommendations are available; c) parents of the children aged 2 to 6 receive family doctor's consultations once a year, the development of the child and readiness for schooling is examined; d) preventive screenings and consultations for children aged 7 to 18 are provided once a year. If the family doctor identifies a risk for the child's health during these examinations, the child gets sent to check-ups to relevant healthcare specialists (for instance, in cases of acute diseases, mental or neurological disorders).

¹⁵ Author's note: according to the Law on the Rights of Patients, Article 13, these provisions concern minors who have not attained 14 years of age.

¹⁶ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 279 of July 2, 2002 "Procedure on the Provision of Preventive Health Care and First Aid Availability in Education Institutions", <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=64202> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

¹⁷ Information on healthcare services for children, <http://ej.uz/fw7j> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

Although very often various *types of prevention* are applied simultaneously in practice, evaluating the organisation of preventive work with children in Latvia from systemic point of view¹⁸ it can be theoretically divided into three levels:

1. *First level of prevention* – early prevention is not identified and regulated in legislation¹⁹. In practice, it is performed through various forms of cooperation among the subjects of children's rights²⁰, i.e., the parents of children, education institutions, healthcare specialists, local municipality and other institutions. In this level of prevention, the work is carried out in the field of interest related education by regular health check-ups and through the cooperation of all types of educational institutions with parents.

2. *Second level of prevention* – prevention for children already with explicit behavioural disorders or risks. The child may be involved in educational programmes of social adjustment (correction) which are implemented in compliance with the General Education Law²¹ and the Education Law²². Educational programmes of social adjustment are acquired by persons with deviations in social behaviour and provided by educational institutions of social adjustment²³ or classes of social adjustment in comprehensive schools. *Social behaviour correction*²⁴ In Latvia is a set of activities which is aimed at the changing of personal characteristics and attitudes and includes mandatory educational activities of social adjustment: individual approach to each student; team work of the educational institution and cooperation with municipal agencies; the implementation of social behaviour correction, values education, and interest related education programmes. The result to be achieved in social behaviour correction: the student is motivated to do work, to learn, his/her system of values is changed and he/she has acquired understanding about a healthy lifestyle. *educational programmes of pedagogical adjustment* are applied for children with explicit learning or health-related disabilities²⁵ which can express themselves as inability to follow the process of learning together with other children or truancy. Such programmes are developed for children at the compulsory school age. Such classes may be opened in any school and usually they have 8 to 15 children in a class.

¹⁸ Author's note: More about this issue also in J.Zermatten, I.Kronberga "Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention" (2012), <http://www.providus.lv/public/27732.html> (last visited on 15.04.2014).

¹⁹ Author's note: According to the Dictionary of Social Work (L.Šļņeva, Riga, SDSPA Attīstība, 2000), *education programme for early social adjustment* is adapted to be applied methodologically and organisationally to the persons at compulsory education age with deviations in social behaviour who need to improve their knowledge according to the primary education programme and who need social behavioural correction.

²⁰ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Article 5, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (last visited on 12.04.2014).

²¹ General Education Law, Articles 59 and 60, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/General_Education_Law.doc (last visited on 20.05.2014).

²² Education Law, Article 43, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

²³ Author's note: there is one such institution in Latvia. The procedure of children's stay there is regulated by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 88 of February 1, 2011 "Regulations on the Internal Rules of Procedure for an Educational Institution for Social Correction", <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=225269> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

²⁴ Šļņeva L. Sociālā darba terminoloģijas vārdnīca (*A Dictionary of Social Work*). Riga:SDSPA Attīstība (*Higher school of management and social work "Attistiba"*), 2000. pp.23.

²⁵ Author's note: health problems of various types are meant here, for instance, hyperactivity, nervous system disorders, language disorders, addictions.

3. *Third level of prevention* – prevention for children who have already committed offences²⁶. In fact, this level of prevention is the most developed at the moment in Latvia. This group includes preventive measures for children who have committed offences but have not been sentenced yet; who have been imposed a sentence not related to isolation from the society; who have been released from criminal liability due to any reason; who have been imposed a sentence of deprivation of liberty; who have committed administrative violations; as well as children who have high risk of antisocial activities and who have entered the notice of the police but have not yet committed illegal acts. Preventive measures which are organised in the prisons of Latvia, including during pre-trial detention, belong to this group.

Looking from the point of view of prevention, Youth Justice System includes various types of actions to apply for persons who have not reached the age of majority. Each type of actions regarding children is stipulated by a regulatory enactment but it is implemented by an institution working in the particular field. All actions in the field of juvenile justice may be divided into²⁷:

- a) Preventive measures;
- b) Reactive measures;
 - a. Reactions to children’s behaviour, not related to criminal liability;
 - b. Criminal sanctions and their execution mechanisms.

1.2. Children and youth justice tools from the point of view of prevention (Scheme 1)

Type of action	Preventive measures	Reactive measures	
		Reactions, not related to criminal liability	Criminal sanctions and their execution mechanisms
References			
Regulatory enactment	Protection of the Rights of the Child Law.	Latvian Administrative Violations Code ²⁸ ; Law “On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Nature to Children” ²⁹ ;	The Criminal Law ³⁰ ; Criminal Procedure Law ³¹ ; The Sentence Execution Code of Latvia ³² ; State Probation Service Law ³³ . Prisons Administration Law ³⁴ .

²⁶ Author’s note: this includes cases provided for in the “Protection of the Rights of the Child Law”, Article 58, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (last visited on 20.05.2014).

²⁷ Author’s note: see Scheme 1 below.

²⁸ Latvian Administrative Violations Code, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=89648> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

Measures applied to the child or the type of	1. Regulates the separation of the child from family and extra-familial care of the child (placing in a child care	1. <u>Compulsory measure of a correctional nature</u> ⁴⁰ (CM) – a warning;	1. Deprivation of liberty ⁴² ; 2. Community service ⁴³ ;
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²⁹ Law On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Measures to Children, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=68489> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁰ Criminal Law, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=88966> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³¹ Criminal Procedure Law, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=107820> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³² Sentence Execution Code of Latvia, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=90218> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³³ State Probation Service Law, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=82551> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁴ Prisons Administration Law, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=68492> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁵ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Article 38, parts 1 and 2: "Social correction educational institutions are institutions, in which children with socially deviant behaviour are placed and in which, if necessary, compulsory measures of a medical nature are applied. A child shall be placed in a social correction educational institution if social correction of the behaviour of the child while located at his/her place of residence has not been successful or the child has committed a criminal offence before attaining 14 years of age. A child may be placed in these institutions pursuant to a court order in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the law "On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Nature to Children", <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁶ Ibid, Article 38, part 3: "A prophylactic institution is a unit of the State Police, where a child who has committed a violation of a law or a child with socially deviant behaviour is placed in the cases specified in the law. A child may be placed in a prophylactic institution for a short term in the cases and according to the procedures specified in the law. The police may place a child in a prophylactic institution in the cases referred to in this law, article 60, part two 60.panta not longer than for five days", <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁷ Ibid, Article 43.1, <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

³⁸ Ibid, Articles 51 and 52, <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

sanctions as provided for in the regulatory enactment	institution); 2. Stipulates the procedure of adoption; 3. Provides for the care of the child under guardianship; 4. Provides for the status of the educational institution of social adjustment ³⁵ and the placement of children in it; 5. Stipulates the status of the prophylactic institution of the State Police and the placement of children in it ³⁶ ; 6. Stipulates the status of a foster family and the placement of the child in it ³⁷ ; 7. Provides for the procedures of the protection of children from illegal activities by other persons ³⁸	2. CM – a duty to apologise to the victims; 3. CM – the placement of the child in the custody of parents, guardians or other persons, who are ready to hold liability for the child’s behaviour; 4. CM – a duty to eliminate by his/her work the consequences of the harm caused; 5. CM – a duty to reimburse the harm caused; 6. CM – behaviour restrictions for the child; 7. CM – community service; 8. CM – the placement	3. A fine ⁴⁴ .
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³⁹ Ibid, Articles 57 and 60. Article 58 of the Law stipulates the category of children with which the local municipality has a duty to perform preventive work and develop a programme for the correction of social behaviour, <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁴⁰ Article 4 of the law “On the Application of Compulsory Measures of Correctional Nature to Children” stipulates that compulsory measures of a correctional nature may be applied to children who have committed – a criminal offence and who a court has released from the imposed sentence; an offence provided for in the Criminal Law with regard to which a decision has been taken on the termination of the criminal case and sending of the materials to a court; an offence provided for in the Criminal Law with regard to which a procedurally authorised official has identified that it has been committed by a child who has not attained 14 years of age and with regard to which he/she has taken a decision regarding the refusal to initiate a criminal case and sending of the materials to an examination; offence with regard to which a decision has been taken on sending of the administrative violation case or materials to the administrative commission of the local municipality for the application of compulsory measures of a correctional nature.

⁴¹ Author’s note: in accordance with the Latvian Administrative Violations Code, minors shall be held administratively liable from 14 years of age for the commitment of such acts which are forbidden by the provisions of the Administrative Violations Code.

⁴² Author’s note: Deprivation of liberty for a person who has not yet attained 18 years of age may not exceed 10 years – for especially serious crimes; 5 years — for serious crimes related to violence or threat of violence or have caused serious consequences; 2 years — for other serious crimes. Deprivation of liberty may not be imposed to such persons for criminal violations or less serious crimes. In adding up punishment of deprivation of liberty for several criminal offences, the term of the punishment in total may not exceed twelve years and six months, but after several judgements — 15 years. A minor who has been imposed a sentence of deprivation of liberty has the right to be released from punishment before serving the term when he/she has served half of the initially imposed punishment. In case of conditional release from punishment before serving the term, supervision by the State Probation Service is applied to minors. A fine is applicable only to those minors who have their own income.

⁴³ Criminal punishment in the form of community service may be executed in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.119 of February 9, 2010, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=205060> (last visited on 22.05.2014) and the provisions of the Sentence Execution Code of Latvia, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=90218> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁴⁴ Author’s note: A fine applied to a minor may be 1 to 50 times the amount of the minimum monthly wage prescribed in the Republic of Latvia⁴⁴. If the minor has committed a criminal violation, after serving the punishment he/she shall be deemed to have not been convicted.

	(children who are victims of violence); 8. Stipulates juvenile delinquency prevention in local municipalities ³⁹ .	in an educational establishment for social correction. 9. <u>Administrative punishment</u> ⁴¹ – a warning; 10. Administrative fine; 11. The confiscation of the administrative violation object or the instrument of commitment.	
Institution responsible for the execution	Custody courts, social services of the local municipalities, social behaviour correction institution, the State Police.	Custody courts, social services of the local municipalities, social behaviour correction institution, the State and municipal police, court, Municipal administrative commissions, State Probation Service.	State Probation Service, Prison administration, the State Police.
Responsible sector	The execution of the legal provisions stipulated in the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law regarding child delinquency prevention issues is under the competence of local municipalities and the Ministry of Welfare. The legislation provides for the particular areas of competences for other ministries and institutions related to the protection of children's rights ⁴⁵ .	Ministries of the Interior and Justice, local municipalities of Latvia.	Ministries of the Interior and Justice.
Illustrative statistical data ⁴⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Average number of foster families in Latvia per year – 420⁴⁷; ◆ Average number of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In 2012, 9270 children⁴⁸ in Latvia were held administratively liable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Total number of prisoners in Latvia at the beginning of 2014 –

⁴⁵ Ibid, Articles 61 and 69 of the Law, <http://ej.uz/c1xj>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁴⁶ Provisory number of the population on December 31, 2013 was 2 million 5,2 thousand, estimated by using the information on registered migration. It is less by 18,6 thousand or 0,9% than at the beginning of 2013, more information on <http://www.csb.gov.lv/notikumi/pagajusaja-gada-piedzimusi-20-340-berni-39549.html> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁴⁷ Data from the website of the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights, <http://www.bti.gov.lv/>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁴⁸ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/924r> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

	<p>children placed/being in foster care per year – 680;</p> <p>◆ Number of children under extra-familial care in 2012 – from 1 800 to 2 000.</p>	<p>and got administrative penalties imposed against them, whereas in 2011 – 18091 children;</p> <p>◆ Number of State Police registered administrative violations committed by juveniles in 2013 – 5698⁴⁹;</p> <p>◆ In 2013, compulsory measures of a correctional nature (without proceedings) were applied to 182 children⁵⁰;</p> <p>◆ From January 1, 2009, till January 1, 2012, according to the data from the Population Register of OCMA⁵¹ the number of registered children in the state⁵² has decreased by 21330 children (-5,8%), whereas the number of registered minors has decreased even in 23804 (-23,95%)⁵³.</p>	<p>5108⁵⁴;</p> <p>◆ Number of minors in places of imprisonment in Latvia at the beginning of 2014 – 52⁵⁵;</p> <p>◆ In 2013, the total number of 563 minors were sentenced for various crimes, including 39 girls;</p> <p>◆ From all 563 juvenile convicts in 2013, 37 were raised under extra-familial care, 419 worked and learned, whereas 414 had never committed any previous crimes⁵⁶;</p> <p>◆ In 2013, 183 minors were imposed conditional imprisonment penalty and they were given under the supervision of probation⁵⁷;</p> <p>◆ In 2013, a real sentence of imprisonment was</p>
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⁴⁹ Vadlīnijas bērnu noziedzības novēršanai ir, bet pamats nedrošs (*There are Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency but the Base is Still Insecure*); Latvijas Vēstneša portāls par likumu un valsti (*Latvijas Vestnesis webpage on Law and State*), 28.11.2014, <http://www.lvportals.lv/print.php?id=259460>, (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁵⁰ According to the data from the Court Information System, https://tis.ta.gov.lv/tisreal?Form=TIS_STAT_O&SessionId=34A2E2A6BAC1EEB46A76286186CE7D3F (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁵¹ Author's note: OCMA – the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.

⁵² Author's note: more information on http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/lrd_arhivs.html, (last visited on 15.07.2012.)

⁵³ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/924r> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁵⁴ According to the information received from the Prison Administration.

⁵⁵ According to the information received from the Prison Administration.

⁵⁶ According to the data from the Court Information System, <http://court.jm.gov.lv/> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

			applied by the court of first instance to 97 minors ⁵⁸ .
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2. Juvenile Crime Prevention Strategies

2.1. Policy development documents adopted by the government of Latvia regarding the protection and prevention of the rights of children and youth.

At the moment, there are three key policy development documents in the field of the protection and prevention of children and youth's rights in Latvia⁵⁹:

1) Guidelines on the National family policy for 2011 – 2017⁶⁰ that stipulate the key principles for the establishment of the National family policy to follow developing policy documents in any field dealing with families and children. The guidelines provide analysis and planning of the issues that are directly related to all types of prevention – planning support to parents in the fulfilment of their parental duties; ensuring family-safe environment; providing types of support and assistance for children whose parents have left to work abroad; interventions to prevent domestic violence.

2) Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009 – 2018⁶¹ set out the objectives of the Youth policy, identify the course of actions to be performed, provide for the main tasks and priority target groups. The guidelines include the list of youth groups subjected to social exclusion risk which is very important in particular in the context of early prevention. The priority group includes youth: from needy and low-income families; who have not acquired basic education; from rural areas; orphans or youth without parental care; young and teenage parents, new families and particularly single-parent and large families; youth already noticed for their actions by the police and offenders, juvenile prisoners and the released from prison, as well as minors and youth who have suffered from violence.

3) The Guidelines for Prevention of Human Trafficking for 2014 – 2020⁶² emphasise that the majority of human trafficking victims are young women who are recruited, transported, sold and abused for sexual exploitation, forced labour and marriage of convenience by individual buyers, seuteneurs and human traffickers. Women come at situations of uncontrolled violence, their human rights are violated and they become victims or subjects ensuring enormous income for organised crime groups. Latvians mainly occur at exploitative

⁵⁹ Author's note: these policy development documents are approved by the government of Latvia. It means that during the time when the policy development document is in force all the adopted legal enactments have to comply with the principles and objectives stipulated in these documents.

⁶⁰ Guidelines on the National family policy for 2011 – 2017, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3583> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁶¹ Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009 – 2018, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=2994> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁶² The Guidelines for Prevention of Human Trafficking for 2014 – 2020, <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40287968> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

circumstances in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Belgium, and Sweden. Victims of human trafficking in most cases are young women, single mothers, unemployed people and members of large families and low-income families, children from foster homes and social care institutions, low educated people, and people with debt obligations. Therefore, the prevention of trafficking in human beings is of high importance. It is necessary that young people do not become victims of human trafficking. The aim of the prevention of trafficking in human beings is to concentrate all effort to prevent such crimes. In order to achieve this aim, it is planned to organise informative and educational activities targeted at the people from the highest risk groups.

4) Public Health Strategy for 2011 – 2017⁶³ detects the most significant problems in the field of public health, including healthcare for children. The strategy emphasises that the child's health and development during pregnancy and the first year of life mostly depend on the mother and father's health status, parents' knowledge of themselves and the child they are expecting, as well as their ability to take care of a child. Though, new parents' knowledge in these issues are poor, for instance, on the negative impact of substances on the health of the pregnant woman and the foetus, on the importance of a timely start of healthcare for the pregnant woman and on preventive measures to avoid child traumatism in early childhood. The lack of this knowledge leads to risks for the child in his/her early development. In order to reduce these risk factors, course of actions has been set to improve the health of children and their parents – orientating of healthcare specialists towards the work in inter-institutional environment; improvement of healthcare for pregnant women and infants – set as priority; reducing of child traumatism; reducing infectious diseases; improvement of accessibility to healthcare services for families with children.

5) The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019⁶⁴ (henceforward – the Guidelines) provide for the state policy regarding children and youth delinquency as well as prevention of victimisation for six years. This document analyses the situation with crimes committed by minors and with children who have suffered in crimes and accidents. It has to be mentioned that this policy development document is currently the most visible and used formal⁶⁵ framework for the planning of preventive measures for children in Latvia in general.

2.2. Characteristics and future challenges of juvenile delinquency and prevention of child protection against crimes.

⁶³ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 504 of October 5, 2011. "On the Public Health Strategy for 2011 – 2017", <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40219764> (last visited on 22.05.2014).

⁶⁴ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁶⁵ Author's note: approved by the order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 392 on August 21, 2013, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=4469> (last visited on 23.05.2014).

It is essential that the Guidelines⁶⁶ set out key objectives and principles of the policy both for juvenile delinquency and the protection of children against crimes. Thus, the next five years prevention policy will be developed with the aim not only to reduce the number of crimes and other violations of regulatory enactments committed by children but also to perform particular preventive measures to avert factors that favour delinquent behaviour, at the same time improving children's safety and ensuring environment favourable for children. These objectives are to be achieved by developing prevention in inter-institutional environment for the work with at-risk children and their parents. The objectives and principles in the Guidelines are closely related to the problems identified in studies in the field of the prevention of the protection of the children's rights. Analysing the dynamics of crimes, it is possible to conclude that the number of children-committed crimes registered in Latvia decreases. Nevertheless, this fact is directly connected with the decrease of the total number of children in the country⁶⁷. Among illegal actions committed by children in Latvia the majority are crimes committed in groups, whereas the number of serious crimes from all offences committed by minors is still very high⁶⁸. Alcohol abuse is mentioned⁶⁹ as one of the key factors why children and youth violate law, injure themselves, are subjected to suicidal risks and violence. Although the children's sickness rate for acute intoxication caused by narcotic, psychotropic substances, alcohol dependence and overuse had decreased in the last ten years, the last two years show increase in number of the children who receive medical treatment in hospitals due to the usage of addictive substances. Specialists admit⁷⁰ that recently hospitals have to deal with increasing number of children with mental behavioural disorders who have used psychoactive substances. It is emphasised⁷¹ that in 2012 the number of first-time registered children with acute intoxication caused by narcotic, psychotropic and toxic substances and the diagnosis of harmful use of substances increased rapidly (169) in comparison with 2011 (90 children). In 2012, 122 boys and 47 girls were entered in records with this diagnosis. In total, until 2010 there was a trend of decrease of this disease, but from 2011 the number of first-time registered children increased. In 2012, the number of children with acute intoxication caused by narcotic, psychotropic and toxic substance use and harmful use of substances was the highest in the last seven years. The Guidelines emphasise that in recent years there is a decrease in number of cases in Latvia when children who have committed crimes are imposed compulsory measures of a correctional nature instead of criminal punishment which would keep children away from the contact with adult justice mechanisms. In general, a persistent trend of decrease in the number of children suffered from crime is observed. If in 2008 there were 0,44% victimised children from all children registered in Latvia, then in 2011 there were only 0,18% from all the

⁶⁶ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁶⁷ Population Register, Statistics of OCMA, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia, <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/statistika/iedzivotaju-registrs/> (last visited on 23.05.2014).

⁶⁸ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.11.

⁷⁰ Report on the State of children in Latvia in 2012, http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/berns_gimene/bernu_tiesibas/akti/lmzino_060114.pdf (last visited on 23.05.2014).

⁷¹ Ibid.

children in Latvia⁷². At the same time, it has to be noted⁷³ that harm is caused to children with increasingly different criminal actions more often than before. More often children become victims of crimes against morality and sexual inviolability. More often such crimes are committed through various web sites or social networks in the internet. Using automatized data processing systems, more and more often materials are distributed where child sexual abuse is portrayed. The Guidelines emphasise that the protection of children against human trafficking becomes more complicated as the organisers of the crime are located outside Latvia and the prevention of those crimes depends directly on the cooperation among specialists from several countries. The number of children who have died or been injured in various traffic accidents in Latvia remains high. In 2011, 429 children were injured and 5 children died from traffic accidents; in 2012, 444 children were injured and 6 children died; in 2013, 484 children were injured and 7 children died from traffic-related accidents⁷⁴. Three major groups are children who have suffered in collisions of cars and bicycles, as passengers in vehicles and as pedestrians. The Guidelines list the key reasons for the high child traumatism rate in traffic – lack of reflectors for pedestrians and cyclists, non-conformity of the bicycle to the traffic regulations and rules on the road, wrong movement on the road or wrong crossing of a street. The Guidelines emphasise⁷⁵ that physically and emotionally violent environment at home and in the family is one of the main common reasons in Latvia why children become victims of various crimes. The scope of violence is very wide – from physical punishment⁷⁶ and lack of adequate care to sexual abuse. Children under the age of 5 get traumas or injuries as the result of violence, sometimes violence against a child causes the child's death. It can be concluded from the information given in the Guidelines that a large number of children (approximately 85%) suffer from domestic violence. Half of the children suffered from domestic violence have experienced combined violence, it means that they have been subjected to several types of violence⁷⁷. Thus, for instance, in 2011, 19909 individuals have suffered from crime in Latvia, out of them 653 were children, 312 from them were aged 1 to 14⁷⁸. On the basis of the information from the Guidelines, it can be concluded that there is an increase in number of

⁷² The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁷³ Ibid, p.16.

⁷⁴ Statistics of the Road Traffic Safety Directorate, The number of children suffered in traffic accidents from 1995 till 2013, inclusive, http://www.csdd.lv/tools/download.php?file=files/text/1397128745411_CS2014_19.xlsx (last visited on 23.05.2014).

⁷⁵ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, p. 21, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 20.05.2014).

⁷⁶ Attitude of citizens towards violence against children – the presentation of the results of the study, L.Prisko: "The majority, approximately half (51,5%) of the respondents hold the opinion that beating children as a form of punishment is sometimes usable, and more than a third (36,9%) of respondents think that physical punishment of a child should not be prohibited by law. Analysing the most common types of punishment used by parents in Latvia, it was identified that more often, slightly more than a fourth (27,5%) of respondents, raising parent's voice is used; almost one fifth (19,6%) uses criticism and approximately one sixth (15,4%) – prohibition to use some things. However, the rate of physical punishment is rather high. Thus, almost one fourth of the respondents admit that they have physically punished their child at least once in their lives". More on this study in Latvian: <http://ej.uz/kw82> (last visited on 23.05.2014).

⁷⁷ The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019, p. 26, <http://ej.uz/dr5b> (last visited on 23.05.2014).

⁷⁸ Report on juvenile delinquency, suffered children, situation in traffic and prevention over 12 months of 2012, <http://ej.uz/dbvu> (last visited on 23.05.2014).

cases when the Custody court removes parental rights only due to suspicions of violence against children. It can be related to the increasing number of cases of parental violence. There is a large number of families where parents cannot ensure proper care and development for the child, thus, for instance, in 2011, there were 2061 such families with 3661 children. Taking this into consideration, the demand for social rehabilitation activities for children in their place of residence or rehabilitation institutions is very high in Latvia – rehabilitation services are provided for more than 2 thousand children each year. Information from the Guidelines indicate that approximately 85% of the children who have received social rehabilitation services have suffered from their parents, the next highest percentage of children have suffered from relatives and the least have suffered from strangers. The Guidelines emphasise that one of the most vulnerable groups is young children. The problem is based on facts revealed in studies⁷⁹ that show that specialists who work with young children under 3 years of age do not have proper knowledge to identify cases of violence in due time, and the inter-institutional work is not developed to prevent violence (a); specialists have different opinions and understanding about violence. There are specialists who admit the fact of violence only in cases when rehabilitation services are already provided (b); specialists pay more attention to those families which are traditionally considered disadvantageous (for instance, parents use alcohol, are unemployed, do not take care of the child), but they are not able to recognise violence risks and occurring violence in cases when family makes a good impression in society (c); the society is very tolerant against violence, even manifestations of physical violence, and there is so called “culture of non-interference”(d).

The Guidelines identify the problems that: there is still a lack of information for a wider society on juvenile crime as a social phenomenon and its impact on the general development of the society (a); specialists do not have sufficient knowledge on prevention implementation methods (for instance, risk recognition and intervention) and the inter-institutional nature of prevention (b); **prevention of the rights of the child** lack systemic components, for instance – one and commonly used data base, skills of managing preventive cases⁸⁰ and involving children in social behaviour correction programmes (c); insufficient preventive work with children from risk groups, for instance, if the children are vagrant or have been imposed punishment without isolation from the society (d); the involvement of parents in preventive activities organised by educational institutions is poor or parents are not involved at all (e); there is a large number of children registered in the State Police who run away from homes and their parents due to the problems in their families or who avoid contacting their families (f); the number of fire-, water-, traffic-related and other types of injuries and deaths for children is still very high (g). Although the Guidelines have mentioned a list of serious problems in the field of the violation of the children’s rights, they do not offer solutions of a systemic nature, instead dividing both the resources and tasks in the field of prevention, which cannot lead to a wholesome solution of the mentioned problems in the near future.

⁷⁹ Mazu bērnu tiesību aizsardzības sistēmas izvērtējums (*The evaluation of the protection system of the rights of young children*), A.Putniņa, Z.Linde, http://www.centrsdardedze.lv/data/kampanas/Zinojums_NodibDardedze_Apr2012.pdf (last visited on 24.05.2014).

⁸⁰ Author’s note: prevention cases are meant here in accordance with the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Article 58.

There is no doubt that the main role in the development of any policy belongs to person's understanding, specialist's motivation and skills. Due to that, the main task of the prevention of the violation of children's rights at present in Latvia is to train specialists who work with and for children. On April 8, 2014, new provision in the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁸¹ came into force which provides for a wide training of all specialists who have any contact with the field of the protection of children's rights in their work. The new legal provision stipulates that special knowledge in the field of the protection of children's rights is necessary for the heads of extra familial care institutions; social workers; custody court specialists; leading specialists in educational institutions and other educators; prison specialists; heads of municipal administrative commissions, children's affairs sub-commissions and pedagogical medical commissions; officers of the municipal police and municipal social service workers who work with children and families; public prosecutors; social pedagogues and psychologists who work with children; judges; state inspectors of the children's rights protection; State Police officers and State Probation Service workers; lawyers and any other individuals who work in the fields related to children. These specialists may start their duties only after completing the training course on the system of the protection of children's rights and legal enactments in the field of the protection of children's rights; implementation of international legal enactments in the protection of children's rights; rights and duties of parents and children; on violence against children and its indicating features, as well as on inter-institutional cooperation for the provision of the protection of children's rights. Besides, specialists acquire skills on how to communicate with children and its basic principles⁸².

3. Promising practices in early juvenile crime prevention: Latvia

3.1. Towards the system of juvenile crime prevention: moving away from traditional approaches.

From 1991⁸³ till approximately 2002, there were very few discussions on prevention issues in Latvia, considering prevention more and in particular as means of averting criminal offences. For many years, there was a view that prevention can be implemented only by the police or a law enforcement agency, whereas the form of prevention implementation is informative campaigns (general prevention) and crime prevention for persons who have already violated the law and therefore have a special legal status⁸⁴ (special prevention). Thus, prevention within the system served as a repressive measure instead of aversive measure of such situations which could lead to the necessity of application of a repression of criminal legal nature. This approach referred both to people of legal age and minors. A wider discussion on prevention

⁸¹ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, Article 5.1, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=49096> (last visited on 24.05.2014).

⁸² Regulations on the Procedure How Special Knowledge in the Field of the Protection of Children's rights is Acquired, Their Content and Amount, Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.173 of April 1, 2014, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=265516> (last visited on 24.05.2014).

⁸³ Author's note: On May 4, 1991, the independence of the Republic of Latvia was restored.

⁸⁴ Author's note: it means that the person has a status of an administratively punished person, sentenced for a crime, or imposed a compulsory measure of a correctional nature (for children). Special prevention included also individual work methods which were related to the control over the behaviour limitations for the person.

issues was initiated at the time when an institution⁸⁵ for the enforcement of sentences without the person's isolation from the society and the supervision and support for people released from prison was being established in Latvia. In 2004, when Latvia joined the European Union, also the methods of Restorative Justice became topical. A year later – in 2005, the State Probation Service started reconciliation procedures with a mediator in criminal proceedings or mediation between the victim and the offender which promoted a different understanding of prevention within the system of rights protection⁸⁶.

In 2008, the work in the research⁸⁷ “Restorative Justice vs. Juvenile Delinquency: The Baltic States in European Dimension” started, within which juvenile justice systems of several countries including Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were analysed with the aim to identify whether and what kind of Restorative Justice components they have. Taking into account that Restorative Justice can justly be considered a resource for prevention methods, also the efficiency of justice in Latvia regarding minors from the point of view of prevention was analysed. The findings of the study show that Juvenile Justice System in Latvia mainly provides for reactive methods as an answer to the cases when children or young people have violated the law, while the preventive methods for the prevention of crimes and social inclusion are poorly developed. The fact that Juvenile Justice in Latvia is looked at only through criminal system narrows the conceptual understanding of Juvenile Justice in general. This can be observed also in the current system of prevention: for instance, municipal practitioners working with children and youth prevention issues have difficulties to acknowledge that preventive measures are possible and even advisable at the early stages of children development or during pre-schooling⁸⁸. The study emphasised that the development of rich content and strategically planned Juvenile Justice in Latvia is very slow, whereas the contemporary system “reflects the compromise between the two demands, namely, the objective necessity to react in a repressive manner to any criminal offence without relating it to the offenders age and the necessity to protect children to promote their development, including the cases when they commit offences. At the state level, it is not discussed on how to react towards juvenile crime and prevent the commitment of new criminal offences. The current concept bases on a statement that a punishment has to be a reaction to a crime and it can be less harsh than general provisions if the offender is of young age. Understanding Juvenile Justice in this way, it is developed as the cautious version of adult criminal justice which, however, does not save children from rough solutions, despite its relatively gentle approach”⁸⁹. One of the key

⁸⁵ Author's note: The State Probation Service of Latvia; State Probation Service Law, http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/State_Probation_Service_Law.doc (last visited on 25.05.2014).

⁸⁶ Author's note: More about the changes in the Latvian system of protection of rights: Restorative Justice in Latvia: Advancement, Perspectives and Challenges in Future (2013), http://www.providus.lv/upload_file/Publikacijas/Kriminalt/Restorative_Justice_Latvia_Report.pdf (last visited on 13.05.2014).

⁸⁷ Restorative Justice vs. Juvenile Delinquency: The Baltic States in European Dimension, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27807.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

⁸⁸ Author's note: on the basis of discussion materials (minutes) from 10.01.2014 on the study by L.Grāvere “The role of individual preventive work (social behaviour correction) in the protection of the rights of the child”. Participants of the discussion: I.Millere, M.Luste, L.Grāvere, S.Sīle, I.Kronberga; unpublished material.

⁸⁹ Restorative Justice vs. Juvenile Delinquency: The Baltic States in European Dimension, p. 116, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27807.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

reasons why adult criminal justice system is not valid for the prevention of children and youth crimes is the role of the child's parents and family both in the cases when the child has violated the law and when the child has suffered from criminal offences. Juvenile Justice system which has been developed after the pattern of adult system does not include the parental involvement which has a negative influence on resocialization (for offenders) or supportive process (for victims) already from the very beginning. In Juvenile Justice, parents have an essential role both in ensuring children's law-abiding behaviour, in prevention and also when the child is imposed a sanction of any type. Although the results of the study improved the understanding and knowledge of specialists in Latvia and other Baltic States on Restorative Justice, Juvenile Justice and particular issues of prevention, it did not result in direct and significant changes in legal enactments and practice.

In 2012 Latvia experienced ardent and contradictory specialist discussions about the expulsion of children with disturbing behaviour from school, and prevention issues occurred on national news headlines. As there is no developed children and youth crime prevention system based on common principles in Latvia, the possibilities of application of reactive methods against parents or children were widely discussed. Only by studying similar experience in other countries it was realised that "punishments will not be the means to make parents think about their responsibility for children. It is obvious that our system lacks the stage of individual prevention which would include cooperation with parents and support to them – only punishing exists. At the same time, we understand prevention only as a campaign, while individual prevention is neither defined, nor included in legal enactments. However, punishment cannot teach good parenting skills, it just makes people get punished. The result of punishment may even be opposite from the desired – parents who get punished do not understand their role as parents but may burst in anger and be violent to their children considering them to be guilty for parents' failures"⁹⁰. Nevertheless, this sudden actualisation of prevention did not materialise in the establishment of a comprehensive prevention system of children's antisocial behaviour, only some schools changed their internal code of conduct⁹¹ including norms on the possibility to agree among the school, parents and the child on the desired model of behaviour.

3.2. Practices to be developed and positive examples in the field of children and youth crime prevention

⁹⁰ Vecāku atbildība par bērnu audzināšanu un drošību (*Parental Responsibility For Children Upbringing and Safety*) (2012), I.Kronberga, Administratīvā un Kriminālā Justīcija (*Journal of Administrative and Criminal Justice*) Nr.3 (60), http://bsa.edu.lv/docs/akj_032012.pdf (last visited on 13.05.2014). Briefly on the publication: Parental responsibility on children's antisocial behaviour, exclusion from school, suspension of parental care, cooperation problems between parents and social services, lack of cooperation among the authorities and parents in case if a child is convicted of an offense, search for serious punishment for parents when children misbehave. All of these problems simultaneously are reflected in the Latvian media headlines and in the different types of specialist's negotiations as well. For many years parental responsibilities in Latvia are directed towards to penalties, but it should focus on the parental obligations and co-operation among parents, local authorities and schools - not to push the parents away from system, but to include them by providing support. Publication includes the analysis of law enforcement practices in Latvia and United Kingdom.

⁹¹ Author's note: for instance, possibility to conclude such an agreement was included in the Code of conduct No. 2 of Majori Secondary school in Jurmala on 28.08.2013, <http://ej.uz/1945> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

Acknowledging that practical experience is one of the best means to convince specialists and develop a new policy, the project⁹² “Building a Support System to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency” was initiated in 2011. The objectives of the project were to reduce risks of exclusion for children with deviations in social behaviour and to create a safe environment for a successful development of these children in rural regions of Latvia (a), to create and approve a sustainable support system for the prevention of juvenile offences suitable for the specific needs of various regions of Latvia involving municipal specialists, members of society and children themselves in this social process (b); to promote a philosophy of change in the work with children of social risk groups: to develop a supportive and restorative approach instead of punitive approach used by the specialists of children’s affairs working with children in all the interested institutions (c). Within the project, it was planned to work with children from risk groups thus being under increased threat of committing crime and causing harm to the community. In fact, they were children already noticed by the police for their actions, however, also the condition was taken into account that not only the police but also information from schools, social service, custody court and other institutions may indicate to the delinquency risks. It was planned to involve children from populated areas away from the big cities because there are less resources for those children and their families to spend for various social problems. The project was implemented involving children from needy or low-income families (a), families with addicted parents (b), truant and vagrant children. The target group included also children who have problems in acquiring education or whose parents had left the country for economic reasons to work abroad. Taking into account that the work of the state and local municipalities is not sufficiently coordinated, moreover, their officials usually complain on the lack of financial resources and do not see the existing possibilities to solve problems with available resources, the implementation of the project was ensured by involving active members of local communities who shared their experience and knowledge and helped children to discover new opportunities, motivated them for spending time in socially favourable activities thus keeping them away from roguery. The project involved a group of 9 seniors to contribute by communicating with youth within their community, thus ensuring the sustainability of these relationships. The needs of the children target groups involved in the project were identified by recognising their social behaviour risks – using risk and needs assessment tools specially designed for this intention and making a progress report for each child at the end of the project. The specific nature of the project objectives envisaged that all the potential participant groups of children have social behaviour risks but their reasons are different, for instance, lack of financial resources; objective or subjective obstacles in acquiring education; unemployment; fact of the commitment of a crime and inability to manage one’s personality; experience of dependence and violence; inability to solve problems in an appropriate manner. The needs of child to be involved in each project activity were identified individually by the project Inter-institutional work group elaborating an individual work plan for each child. At the same time,, the inter-institutional work group had a task to acknowledge resources available in their municipalities that could be used for the compilation of the catalogue of useful activities for children. At the beginning of the project it was planned that by

⁹² Building a Support System to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27598.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

involving children in socially useful activities, introducing them with the possibilities to organise their free time in an interesting manner, demonstrating real interest in their lives, delinquency risks would decrease significantly. Involved in project activities, children would acquire new knowledge and skills, broaden their horizon, and get motivation to act for their future to achieve important and useful goals. During the project, monitoring was carried out and a research was performed⁹³. In 18 months of the project more than 250 children were involved and Support systems for juvenile prevention were established in three local municipalities in Latvia. The Support systems included:

- a) Inter-institutional cooperation model. It means that every local municipality has developed a cooperation model among institutions that work with and for children. The implementation of this model enhanced the situations when specialists solve problems of particular children avoiding matters of form in issues where they can be left out.
- b) Regional work groups were one of the most significant components of the Inter-institutional cooperation model. Within its functions, various specialists from various institutions who work with children on daily basis met twice a month in each of the project implementation sites. The method worked for the interests of each child as the child and his/her parents did not have to go to innumerable institutions to solve their problems – specialists gathered around the child and made common effort to find the best solution.
- c) Accessibility to the procedure of selection of children and youth groups. Within the project, children were involved in useful activities, according to their risks and needs, identified beforehand. The project and its resources were planned for youth with low risk social behaviour problems, therefore the majority of project activities were based on group work, not individual work.
- d) Risk and needs assessment was one of the most significant tasks of the Regional work group: in order to determine whether the activities envisaged in the project could be useful for the child, his/her behavioural risks and needs to eliminate these risks were identified. As the result, it was realised that many children have significantly higher social behaviour risks than it was expected. Taking into account that there were no alternatives for work with those children at the project implementation sites or the possibilities to perform individual preventive work were limited, the children were involved in the project elaborating an individualised plan.
- e) Catalogue of useful activities for minors. There is no doubt that each local municipality has some kind of resources to use as a basis for the organisation of preventive work. However, at the initial stage of project planning it was realised that very often local municipalities have not batched all the possibilities of preventive work with children. Due to that, the Catalogue of Activities was created to offer appropriate activities to the child according to his/her risk and needs assessment, including individual prevention.

The study⁹⁴ revealed project results admitting that the Inter-institutional cooperation model is a method of children's right protection and delinquency prevention which is suitable to use at the

⁹³ Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention (2012), <http://ej.uz/r65i> (last visited on 15.04.2014).

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.53.

child's place of residence and is focused on the cooperation of specialists from various institutions for the improvement of the particular child's living environment. At the same time, inter-institutional cooperation allows involving the child's parents and family, as well as listening to the child's opinion. If the inter-institutional cooperation among the specialists from law enforcement agencies, local municipalities, specialists of children's affairs and other practitioners is organised setting topical priorities for a particular child and taking into account his/her needs, all specialists involved in the Inter-institutional work group can be theoretically divided into three categories: early prevention providers – preferably the closest people to the child – social service, parents and family, school, family doctor (GP), Children and youth centre, specialist of children's rights (a), general prevention providers – preferably the more distant – custody court, police (b), and institutions involved in special prevention – court, prosecutor's office, State Probation Service and prison (c). On the basis of the mentioned, it is possible to conclude – if level (a) specialists from the Inter-institutional working group perform their duties with the highest quality, there is no need to involve level (b) and (c) specialists. It proves that inter-institutional cooperation is a significant segment of early prevention work – the earlier the problem is identified and intervention is performed, the less capacity is needed from the involved institutions. At the same time, several problems were discovered during the implementation of the project: project activities (interventions) were planned only for children, allocating insufficiently active role for their parents (a); risk and needs analysis was performed only for the child, not the family in general (b). Due to that, a situation occurred when the cooperation with parents as informers on the child's needs often became formal and a row of problems which caused the child's antisocial behaviour risk was not identified at all. Therefore, when planning preventive group or individual activities and performing children assessment, a significant and active role has to be allocated to the children's parents and families. Besides, it has to be taken into account that the younger is the child, the greater has to be the role of his/her parents and family in any prevention activities. At the same time, it has to be emphasised that the second most important role after parents and family belongs to the attitude of the specialists at educational institutions (teachers, pedagogues, educators in general) towards the child's involvement in preventive programmes. Educators and the class teacher of the child in particular have to be very well informed about the prevention programme or intervention, and take active participation in it.

The evaluation of the project results⁹⁵ included the following main conclusions: Prevention is a set of purposefully performed activities in the child's daily life – including the planning of the free time, elimination of the obstacles to access sport and healthy lifestyle activities, as well as individual and group interventions. The establishment of prevention system is a long-term activity which has to be carried out by the government and specialists in the field who work with children and families on daily basis, together. Educational institutions play a very significant role, as well. It is necessary to introduce tools which would influence parental behaviour, for instance, supportive programmes for children together with their parents, and to control their implementation thus leaving the termination of parental rights as the last influential measure. The lack of a common legal enactment is obvious in Latvia which would provide for all the procedures with minors – both preventive, and reactive. The current

⁹⁵ Juvenile Delinquency Prevention: Conclusions, Paola Riva Gapany, <http://ej.uz/frga> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

situation when all the legal enactments that stipulate juvenile justice framework in Latvia are fragmented into three separate legal enactments: Latvian Administrative Violations Code⁹⁶, Criminal Law⁹⁷ and the law “On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Nature to Children⁹⁸”, whereas early prevention regulation is aloof – in the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁹⁹, does not serve the interests of qualitative and safe development of the child and the family. Children and parents occurring in the middle of such legally and institutionally complicated system most probably would feel helpless and fearful, but not strengthened. Prevention is a simultaneous task of the state and the local municipality, where the state is responsible for prevention planning, financial support, providing information to the society, but the local municipalities organise individual preventive work, at the same time having the preventive work of state and local municipalities coordinated in a professional manner.

Taking into account the significant role of early prevention measures and the fact that this form of prevention is not highly developed in Latvia, at the end of 2013 PROVIDUS initiated the project “Reducing youth at risk numbers: modelling early childhood intervention approaches¹⁰⁰”. The project has the objective to develop innovative methods for preventive work to create inclusive environment for children at pre-school and primary school age and their families. It is planned that the implementation of the project activities would: reduce social exclusion risks for children at pre-school and primary school age with early social behaviour disorders and create a safe environment for a successful development of those children in rural regions of Latvia (a); create and verify in practice a system for the recognition and elimination of children’s early behaviour risks, involving pre-school and primary school teachers, parents, local municipality specialists, members of local community, as well as children themselves (b); promote philosophy of changes in work with children at pre-school and primary school age with antisocial behaviour risks (c); create supportive and restorative instead of punitive approach in work with children performed by the specialists of children’s affairs and specialists from other institutions (d); strengthen the cooperation among the parents of the child and pre-school and primary school teachers in order to identify and prevent early behaviour risks for children at pre-school and primary school age; establish inter-institutional cooperation platform for preventive work and early interventions (e). In order to provide assistance and support to parents in children upbringing, the project envisages the following results in three local municipalities of Latvia involved in the project – Saldus, Kuldīga and Cēsis: *a multi-disciplinary cooperation model will be developed (1) among the specialists of pre-school, primary school, local municipality and NGOs, with the aim to elaborate and implement in practice methodology suitable for local needs for early recognition and*

⁹⁶ Latvian Administrative Violations Code, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=89648> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

⁹⁷ Criminal Law, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=88966> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

⁹⁸ Law On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Nature to Children, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=68489> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

⁹⁹ Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, <http://ej.uz/4rdo> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

¹⁰⁰ Reducing youth at risk numbers: modelling early childhood intervention approaches, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27876.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

prevention of children's social behaviour risks (2), thus enhancing the cooperation with children's parents or persons substituting for them. It is planned that the developed cooperation model and methodology will be created to be sustainable and usable in other regions of Latvia. The methodology for the early identification of children's social behaviour risks and cooperation with parents will be elaborated during the performance of practical work and analysis – in 2 year time 15 lessons will be held for children and their parents involved in the project from pre-schools and primary schools. In order to enhance cooperation among institutions and qualitative decision-making process to support families with children *inter-institutional work groups (IWG) are planned (SDG) (3)* with the core consisting of each region's NGOs members working in the field of children's rights protection, pre-school and primary school specialists, and state and local municipality specialists. Two of the regions involved in the project (Saldus and Cesis) have already a working IWG (or RWG – regional work group) for the work with at-risk youth and children from previous projects – therefore pre-school and primary school specialists will establish a subgroup of the existing inter-institutional group, but in Kuldiga it will be a totally new experience. One of the main tasks for IWG is to provide mutual support for colleagues in solving professional issues; therefore it is important that problems identified in regions are discussed also on the interregional level. The project envisages *Failure Reduction Strategy (FRS) tool or regular consultations with colleagues (4)*. The aim of regular consultations with colleagues or FRS – to ensure specialists with the possibility to solve professional problems in cooperation with colleagues from other regions and reduce failures at work, as well as acquire new skills and knowledge in the field of early prevention. In addition, other skills and knowledge developing activities for specialists are also planned in the project – the elaboration of study-based publications on early prevention issues and wider international forums for practitioners and specialists in the field. It is planned to identify best practices in the field of early prevention with the help of specialists from Norway, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Belgium. Right now¹⁰¹, the project has been started and more than 50 children from three preschools and three primary schools are involved in it, as well as their pedagogues and parents. During the whole project, children and their parents have a possibility to participate in activities that are appropriate for their needs, both individually and in groups. Children and their parents' needs are assessed using a special needs assessment tool. At the moment, monitoring activities are performed in the project and the first results show that children and their parents gladly participate in early prevention group activities and a significantly wider target group than planned will be reached. Project results will be summarised¹⁰² at its final stage and included in the monitoring report which will be available in English and Latvian.

4. Searching for best European practices: analysis of the experience from pilot projects

4.1. Aims, objectives and content framework of the project “Keeping Youth Away From Crime: Searching for Best European Practices”.

¹⁰¹ Author's note: the project implementation time is from January 7, 2013, to January 6, 2015, more information is available in Latvian: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27875.html> and in English: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27876.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

¹⁰² Author's note: Monitoring report on the practice to be developed in this project will be publicly available in September 2015.

Taking into consideration the findings and conclusions from the previous projects and the problems identified in the studies within the youth justice framework in Latvia, in 2012 Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS¹⁰³ in collaboration with professionals from Estonia, Lithuania, Scotland, the Netherlands and Belgium developed a project focused at a wider target group: not only children but also their parents (a), not prevention in its general understanding but the application of preventive measures for children at early risk stages including also children at risk in this group.

The project¹⁰⁴ “Keeping Youth Away From Crime: Searching for Best European Practices” started on January 7, 2013, and it is planned to finish on January 6, 2015. The overall objective of the project – to find, identify and apply the best European practices in work with children from risk groups thus improving the welfare and social inclusion, reducing risks from crime and rejection, and creating safer environment for a successful child development within Europe. The specific objectives are: to promote intense exchange of information and networking among the specialists of children’s affairs in Europe (a); to develop a common understanding among the specialists of children’s affairs on the implementation of the rights and values recognised in the charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (b); to find and implement practical, innovative, inclusive approaches in order to prevent children contiguity with crime, including the methods for the work with at-risk children in rural areas (c); to enhance the understanding of European law enforcement agencies, specialists, mass media, NGOs, social services, educational institutions and other specialists working with/for children on the benefits when using inclusive instead of punitive Juvenile Justice approaches in the work with children (d). Four types of activities are planned in general in the project: a study on the best practice of preventive work with children from risk groups and in at-risk situations (a); several international meetings of child prevention specialists, practitioners and theoreticians, in order to gain information on best practices in European countries (b); three pilot projects (c), designed for the implementation of the project researchers’ identified practices, methodologies and tools in practical work with children and their parents. The pilot projects have been started and are working in rural municipalities of Latvia where 120 individual programmes have been developed for at-risk children and their families. The programmes are created so that they include such methods as child and youth participation, early intervention approaches, community involvement in the integration of youth at risk. Each pilot project has an inter-institutional team consisting not only from specialists of children’s affairs, social workers but also educators and pedagogues, as well as specialists from law enforcement agencies. Within the inter-institutional team, an intense exchange of information is provided, risk and needs assessments for children and families are performed. Specialists from the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children’s Rights and PROVIDUS participate actively in the work of pilot projects ensuring consultations for regional specialists and monitoring of the pilot project activities. In the final stage of the project, the Monitoring report of the pilot projects will be

¹⁰³ Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS: <http://www.providus.lv/public/index.html> in Latvian, Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, http://www.providus.lv/public/index_en.html in English (last visited on 25.05.2014).

¹⁰⁴ Author’s note: more information on the project is available in Latvian: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27802.html> and in English: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27804.html> (last visited on 25.05.2014).

developed and made publicly available; community education activities (d) on youth justice issues, including the development of publications and presentations, as well as the creation of an educational movie and final conference, will be carried out.

4.2. The evaluation of children and youth crime prevention system.

In order to clarify how specialists from law enforcement agencies and of children's affairs, as well as other members of the society refer to various aspects of juvenile delinquency prevention, the assessment of the children and youth crime prevention system in Latvia was performed from April 14 – 28, 2014. The evaluation was performed using questionnaire method with 11 questions. 133 respondents took part in the questionnaire in total, out of them: 45 public prosecutors, 17 social workers from local municipalities, 5 teachers, 6 psychologists, 2 judges, 6 State Probation Service officers, 5 police officers from the state and municipal police, 6 lawyers, 1 entrepreneur and 37 representatives of other professions and occupations – doctors, clerks from state institutions and others.

Taking into consideration that Juvenile Justice is not defined as a system in Latvia and that there is no unambiguous understanding of the content and principles of Juvenile Justice among specialists of various levels, the respondents of the questionnaire were asked what Juvenile Justice is¹⁰⁵. 87% or 113 respondents indicated that in the combination of words “juvenile justice” the term “juvenile” denotes a young, inexperienced person who needs a special approach thus influencing his/her behaviour in society. This answer shows that the majority of specialists working in state, local municipality and law enforcement institutions understand that the necessity of differentiated systems in the prevention of juvenile crimes is determined by the special needs of children in the contact with justice and other institutions.

48% (62 persons) of the respondents indicated¹⁰⁶ that at their places of residence preventive work with youth from risk groups and youth in risk situations is performed in average quality, 30% (39 respondents) assessed this work as very poor, whereas 10% (13 respondents) described it as totally unsuccessful. Moreover, only 12% (16 respondents) expressed their view that the existing preventive work with children and youth risk groups in their regions is good, none of the respondents indicated that it was excellent. The fact that 88% of the respondents assessed the organisation of preventive work as average or poor complies with the information from previous studies and policy documents, as well as with the findings of the study performed in 2013 by the Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia¹⁰⁷ on the quality of preventive work in local municipalities.

¹⁰⁵ Author's note: What is juvenile justice? Please, mark one answer: The system of such norms the implementation of which results in nobody being found guilty and punished (a); In the combination of words “juvenile justice” the term “juvenile” means “innocent” (b); In the combination of words “juvenile justice” the term “juvenile” denotes a young, inexperienced person who needs a special approach thus influencing his/her behaviour in society (c).

¹⁰⁶ Author's note: To your mind, what is the level of quality of the organisation of preventive work with children from risk groups and children in risk situations in your region (local municipality)? Please, evaluate it with the score from one to five where one is the lowest – very poor and five – the highest score, excellent.

¹⁰⁷ Individuālā preventīvā darba (uzvedības sociālās korekcijas) nozīme bērnu tiesību aizsardzībā (*The role of individual preventive work (social behaviour correction) in the protection of the rights of the child*), Laila Grāvere, Head of the Children's rights department at the Ombudsman's Office, Rīga, 12.12.2013. <http://ej.uz/8voj> (last visited on 27.05.2014)

92% (119 specialists) of the respondents indicated that preventive work with at-risk children should be organised in the form of regular inter-institutional work where all the necessary specialists are involved, including representatives from law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, social workers and others. 8% (10 respondents) indicated that only law enforcement agencies should deal with prevention issues. Thus, it can be concluded that specialists of children's affairs and other specialists in Latvia have a consolidated opinion that the preventive work with children from risk groups has to be performed in an inter-institutional environment which means the cooperation of all subjects ensuring children's rights¹⁰⁸. It is well-known that a favourable and coordinated environment, as well as useful organisation of free time, is one of the factors to reduce significantly the emergence of antisocial behaviour risks.

Answering the question whether there are sufficient useful possibilities of spending free time for youth, 45% (58 respondents) indicated that they are of average quality; 8% (10 respondents) denoted that there are possibilities of spending free time for youth but they are difficult to access, 7% (9 respondents) held the view that at their places of residence young people have hardly any possibility of spending their free time usefully. 37% (48 respondents) in their answers to this question denoted that young people have possibilities to spend their free time usefully if they really want to participate, but only 4% (5 respondents) found these possibilities perfectly sufficient.

Taking into consideration that the community involvement plays a significant role in the organisation of preventive work of juvenile delinquency, the respondents of the questionnaire were asked¹⁰⁹ to express their opinion on the role of community in the preventive work with children from risk groups and in risk situations. 56% (73 respondents) held the view that this work has to be organised in the form of cooperation among public organisations and state and municipal institutions, as the result of which it possibilities of useful spending of free time would be ensured for children. 21% (27 respondents) answered that the participation of public leaders in inter-institutional cooperation groups would be necessary in the organisation of preventive work, whereas 15% (20 respondents) indicated that it would be sufficient if the members of community informed law enforcement agencies about the children's behaviour risks and risk situations. At the same time, the respondents of the questionnaire denoted that in general the representatives of community should:

- ◆ „react to situations, report them, namely, involve”;
- ◆ „the most important is that there is not indifference – from the society, leaders of organisations and simple passers-by...”;

¹⁰⁸ Author's note: in compliance with Article 5 and 5.1 of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law; the law is available in Latvian on: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=49096>, and in English: http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹⁰⁹ Author's note: To your mind, what is the role of the society (community) in the preventive work with children from risk groups and children in risk situations? Mark one answer: Informing law enforcement institutions about children's risks and risk situations (a); Cooperation of public organisations with state and municipal institutions to ensure possibilities for spending free time usefully (b); Participation of public leaders in the organisation of preventive work within inter-institutional work group of specialists (c); Other (please, specify) (d).

- ◆ „be in a nonstop and direct process of speaking with children with the aim to raise the young people’s desire to participate in useful activities for spending their time”;
- ◆ „be understanding, not strict followers of letter of the law, but very educated and experienced specialists without personal ambitions”;
- ◆ „work with children while they are not yet in the risk group. To my mind, the definition ‘at-risk children’ in this questionnaire is wrong. Work, preventive work is needed not to have such risk groups”.

Planning and spending children and youth’s time usefully is one of the methods how to prevent the emergence of antisocial behaviour risks, but the society of Latvia traditionally have been holding the view for a long time that this method can solve all prevention issues. According to the information analysed in this study, a favourable neighbourhood and accessibility to useful activities alone do not ensure avoidance from the potential influence of antisocial risks. Therefore, the respondents of the questionnaire were asked¹¹⁰ whether the existence of possibilities to spend free time usefully generally is a pre-condition that averts the child of participation in antisocial action. 78% (101 respondents) indicated that most probably possibilities to spend free time for useful purposes change the child’s experience and understanding of the possibilities in general. 16% (21 respondents) denoted that possibilities to spend free time usefully rather cannot save the child from antisocial behaviour risks as the participation or refusal to participate in antisocial actions depend more on the child’s lifestyle and his/her family than on the possibilities of spending free time. 5% (6 respondents) held the view that the possibilities to spend free time usefully are important because they allow keeping the child in the adults’ field of vision. Only 2% of the respondents considered that by ensuring useful activities for spending the child’s free time it is not possible to protect him/her from antisocial behaviour risks because social problems are so deep that children have not developed skills to involve in any activities, interest groups or free time activities. The answers can be explained from several aspects: the society has a dominating opinion that the reason of children’s antisocial behaviour is idleness or antisocial actions resulting in breach of the public order and peace (a). Such opinion can also testify that the society lacks information on the true reasons of children and youth’s antisocial behaviour (which are very often rooted in families and deeper than considered) and thus also of prevention methods which could be used to influence these reasons (b).

Taking that into consideration, the respondents of the questionnaire where asked to name¹¹¹ the most common reasons for juvenile delinquency committed by minors aged 11 to 18 – the

¹¹⁰ Author’s note: Is the existence of possibilities to spend free time usefully a pre-condition that the child would avoid participation in antisocial actions? Mark one answer: Yes, because the child is then in the adults’ field of vision, at least (a); No because social problems are so deep that the children have not developed skills to involve in any activities/interest groups/free time activities (b); Rather not because the participation in antisocial actions depends on the child’s lifestyle and family (c); Rather yes, because the possibilities to spend free time usefully change the child’s experience and understanding of such possibilities in general (d).

¹¹¹ Author’s note: What do you think, what are the reasons for adolescents and youth aged 11 to 18 criminal actions? Mark any two answers that describe the reasons, in your opinion: Wrong value system (a); Use of addictive substances (b); Poverty/unemployment of parents (c); Children unemployment/idleness in summers (d); Health problems (including mental and emotional) (e); Unavailability of qualitative system of education (f); Parents lack of parenting skills (g); Local municipality’s indifference to problems (h).

majority of the respondents or 31% indicated that the reason is a wrong value system; 24% indicated that parents lack parenting skills; 16% considered that the reason is the use of addictive substances; 9% of the respondents held the view that the reason for children and youth crime is parental poverty and unemployment; 8% considered that the reason is children's idleness and unemployment during summer when children do not have to go to school; local municipality's carelessness for children and youth issues was found as the reason by 6% of the respondents, whereas 3% indicated to the insufficient quality of the system of education and 2% pointed to health (including mental) problems. It is important to note that unlike the results of other questionnaires carried out in previous projects¹¹² the respondents of this questionnaire find parenting skills very significant. Taking into account that at the end of 2013 the society of Latvia faced the actualisation of problems related to children and youth's use of addictive substances, the respondents of the questionnaire have denoted this problem as one of the three key reasons for juvenile delinquency.

94% (122 participants) of the respondents indicated¹¹³ that it is essential to identify and assess risks in the child's behaviour in due time as it allows satisfying the child's needs and preventing antisocial behaviour risks, 4% of the respondents indicated that the recognition of risks and needs is meaningless because the majority of risks are not possible to prevent. Moreover, the respondents of the questionnaire indicated that:

- ◆ „social services should work with children's behavioural risks”;
- ◆ „the emergence of risks should not be even allowed, and it can be achieved by educating the parents in due time”;
- ◆ „risks should be assessed in the child's neighbourhood, first of all”.

The answers of the respondents of the questionnaire indicate to the necessity of a coordinated prevention system within which it would be possible to use risk and needs assessment mechanism to identify and prevent both antisocial behaviour risks and recognise the child's (young person's) needs for support, plan and implement appropriate interventions.

Keeping in mind the recommendations from previous studies¹¹⁴ and taking into account the conclusions drawn in the project¹¹⁵ “Keeping Youth Away From Crime: Searching for Best European Practices”, there is a ground to consider that specialists of law enforcement, rights protection and children's affairs have knowledge about prevention and work with children who are at risk of committing crimes, however information about early prevention issues and work with children in risk situations is less known. Therefore, the respondents of the questionnaire

¹¹² Building a Support System to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency (2012), <http://www.providus.lv/public/27403.html>, in English <http://www.providus.lv/public/27598.html> (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹¹³ Author's note: this is the answer to the question – How important is it to recognise and assess risks in the child's behaviour in due time? Mark one answer: It is important in order to identify the child's needs and prevent behavioural risks by satisfying these needs (a); Timeliness is meaningless because the majority of risks are not possible to eliminate (b); Other (please, specify) (c).

¹¹⁴ Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention, I.Kronberga, J.Zarmatten (2012), in Latvian: http://www.providus.lv/upload_file/Projekti/Kriminalitesibas/Berniem_draudziga_tiesiska_vidē_LV_1.pdf and in English: http://www.providus.lv/upload_file/Projekti/Kriminalitesibas/Child-friendly%20Justice%20in%20Latvia.pdf (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹¹⁵ Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices (2013 – 2015), in Latvian: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27802.html> and in English: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27804.html> (last visited on 27.05.2014).

were asked to identify¹¹⁶ who the children in risk situations are, to their mind. 33% of the respondents indicated that there is a ground to consider that a child is in risk situation if his/her parents use addictive substances; 30% indicated that the child is under a risk if he/she is not accepted in class or gets teased; 17% expressed the view that parents in the process of divorce mean a risk situation for the child; 8% indicated that the child is under a risk if he/she is raised by a single parent; 6% considered that situation is risky when the child has moved to another place of residence. The participants also emphasised that the child is in risk situation if:

- ◆ „the child is teased or not accepted in the class, or also showing off, willing to be better than others”;
- ◆ „those all are risk factors because everything depends on the child’s psyche and his/her perception of surroundings”;
- ◆ „the child is teased and not accepted in the class, at the same time there is no understanding in the relations between the child and his/her parents”;
- ◆ „the parents are busy at work and unable to find time for their child”;
- ◆ „the limits are not set already during pre-school and school period, there is no respect for adults but great permissiveness of children instead”;
- ◆ „parents do not raise their child at all”;
- ◆ „any of the mentioned situations may work as a risk situation for the child because any of them may make corresponding psycho-emotional deformations and influence the child’s development, thinking processes, decision-making skills and strategies”.

The fact that the third of respondents have indicated that parental substance abuse is a risk factor in the life of the child is probably determined objectively. The findings of the research carried out in 2011¹¹⁷ show that only 4-7% of the total number of Latvian population have abstained from alcohol in their lifetime. Any type of illegal drugs have been tried by 14,3% Latvians¹¹⁸. Recently, several occasions have gained full society’s attention in Latvia when mutual violence of students has occurred at school environment. 16% of economically active population of Latvia aged 18 to 55 have indicated¹¹⁹ that they or their family members have faced violence against children at school during the last year. 69% of all the Latvians aged 18 to 55 consider that violence against children at school is a widespread problem. Statistical data show¹²⁰ that also the third risk factor mentioned in the questionnaire – parents in divorce process – is objective as Latvia takes the third place in Europe by divorced marriage rate per thousand people. Taking into consideration that the question for the participants of the questionnaire did not include a detailed list of risk situations, naming only the most common, it

¹¹⁶ Author’s note: the respondents of the questionnaire had a question: It is well-known who children with behavioural risks are but who are children in risk situations, in your opinion? Risk situations are...? Mark any two answers that, in your opinion, describe the possibility of risk situations in the life of a child: The child is raised by a single parent (a); The child has moved recently to a new place of residence (b); Parents are in the divorce process (c); One of the child’s parents use addictive substances (d); The child is teased and/or not accepted in the class (e); Other (please, specify) (f).

¹¹⁷ Substance use and addictions among population – 2011; Analytic report, The National Health Service of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia; pp. 30 – 31, <http://ej.uz/8kzy> (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 122.

¹¹⁹ Vardarbība pret bērniem skolās ir būtiska problēma Latvijā (*Violence Against Children in Schools is a Substantial Problem in Latvia*), June 3, 2013, <http://ej.uz/1j75> (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹²⁰ «Eurostat»: Latvijā ir lielākais šķirto laulību īpatsvars ES («Eurostat»: *Latvia has the highest divorce rate in the EU*), March 26, 2013, BNS-TVNET, <http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/458536-eurostat-latvija-ir-lielakais-skirto-laulibu-ipatsvars-es> (last visited on 27.05.2014)

is possible that there are also other risk situations influencing and causing potential harm to children in particular circumstances.

In order to clarify the specialists' opinion on early prevention methods available for school environment to solve children's antisocial behaviour problems, the respondents of the questionnaire were given a standard problem situation description from daily life in a Latvian school and they were asked to mark¹²¹ one of the given solutions: socially exclusive (a), intimidating (b), focused on constructive cooperation (c), or other solution (d). The situation given in the questionnaire was the following: there is a boy at school, 12 years old, who is emotionally abusive, humiliates and intimidates other children and disturbs the learning process. 133 of the respondents considered that in this situation, school teachers have to prepare an agreement among the school, parents and the boy about the boy's desirable behaviour during the next academic term. Within this agreement, definite and clearly understandable responsibilities for the child have to be set, as well as the type of cooperation between the educational institution and the parents. Two respondents indicated that it would be enough if the head of the school and the boy's class teacher informed his parents about their son's unacceptable behaviour and warned them that the failure to change his behaviour would lead to the child's expulsion from school. None of the respondents considered the intimidating method when the child would be informed about the potential liability for his actions as a solution to this situation. Moreover, the respondents of the questionnaire added the following comments to their answers:

- ◆ „I choose Answer C because it is the only answer which includes mutual cooperation, not unilateral instruction. Besides, it is better to set specific short-term (2 months) goals than general long-term goals” (a lawyer);
- ◆ „There definitely has to be cooperation among all the parties. One of the best answers is C. However, also school has to be active and involve the necessary specialists to ensure the needed assistance (from specialists) both for the child and his parents” (a representative of an NGO);
- ◆ „In this case, the student is informed about the following reaction, in this situation it is the expulsion from school, and the student can change his behaviour in due time or get punished for his permissiveness” (a student who chose Answer A.);
- ◆ „The boy should be offered to learn individually (after the lessons or at home) to avoid close contact with other classmates who could join the boy in his mischiefs. At the moment when the boy returns in the class, another classmate “hierarchy” will be established and it will not be so easy to influence and offend other classmates, moreover, in private/individual lessons he will be more engaged in learning and maybe

¹²¹ Little Jānis (*John*), aged 12, has emotionally abused, humiliated and intimidated several his classmates already for the third time. The teacher feels helpless because the boy disturbs also her lessons. The teacher and the head of the school have invited the boy's parents to a conversation during which: The head of the school and the class teacher informed parents about their son's unacceptable behaviour and warned that if Jānis did not change his behaviour he would be expelled from school (a); The teachers tried to convince Jānis and his parents informing about the following liability if Jānis continued acting the same way (moralisation) (b); Teachers had prepared an agreement about the desired behaviour of Jānis for the next two months, as set out in the internal Code of conduct of the school. This agreement provides for the Jānis' responsibilities, parental support to teachers and Jānis, and the future cooperation among all the parties (c); Other (d).

will be able to follow other classmates' level of knowledge because usually those children who disturb others have difficulties in perception of information during lessons, therefore it is more difficult to concentrate and keep one's attention" (a student);

- ◆ „Suspend from school" (a police officer);
- ◆ „There has to be a conversation with parents about a better model of the boy's behaviour in general. How the school and parents can mutually influence the boy." (a public prosecutor);
- ◆ „Teachers TOGETHER with the boy and his parents come to an agreement about the desired behaviour, putting a stronger emphasis on the boy's own process of reasoning, how to achieve this result; in addition teachers, without the child's presence, not to reduce parental authority, reach a compromise in what, to parents and teachers' mind, is the parents' role and responsibility and directions in development of parental skills and future upbringing of Jānis, as well as mutual cooperation" (a head of educational institution);
- ◆ „The child himself has to prepare a list of resolutions about his behaviour at school, promising to fulfil them, setting also sanction mechanisms"(a specialist from an NGO);
- ◆ „The agreement has to be prepared together with the boy" (a psychologist);
- ◆ „The best solution is a mutual agreement, however the consequences of not following the rules have to be considered" (a social worker of a local municipality);
- ◆ „I agree with Answer C, however it is important to get to know the child's reasons for such behaviour, it may happen that the problem is already lingering"(a social worker of a local municipality);
- ◆ „It is important to involve the whole family in the process"(a psychologist);
- ◆ „I think that the most appropriate action is to inform both the parents and the child about the potential consequences – it would be only of informative nature, of course. The system itself and the attitude towards the happening have to be changed, what is good and what is bad has to be explained in an understandable manner. Moreover, expulsion or isolation from a particular group is not the best decision because everyone needs to try to join the community although it could be difficult and cause inconvenience to others (à la – it is good to be dumb because you do not recognise that you are and annoy others with it)" (a lawyer).

The fact that the majority of the respondents of the questionnaire chose the solution which is inclusive and constructive may be related to the current changes in the perception of the society about acceptable preventive measures. The respondents who prefer this solution (C) have explained their choice indicating that: the solution for violence and antisocial behaviour has to be accepted in the community, it cannot be only a unilateral decision/instruction (a); school has to be the active party in solving such issues (b); solutions for such problem situations have to be found in cooperation with parents (c); school teachers have to provide individual support to parents in solving similar problems (d); the child has to be taught how to independently manage his behaviour in society (e); situations of this kind have to be assessed in details, identifying the reasons of such child's behaviour (f); child's exclusion from a group (school, class) will not enhance his inclusion in the society in general (g). The respondents of the questionnaire who had explained their choice related to the socially exclusive approach mentioned that: the most efficient approach is setting firm limits for behaviour and control over

them (h); the child's exclusion from his usual environment can change his way of behaving (i); the child's exclusion from his usual environment can be applied as the last method of influence (k). Taking that into account and considering other information received from the questionnaire, it is possible to conclude that the answers received from the respondents cannot be related to their professional belonging – this tendency has to be considered positive as it does not prove any professional stigmatisation of a specialist group; on the basis of the content received from the answers, there is a ground to consider that the representatives of law enforcement, children's affairs and other institutions understand the reasons and methods for the preventive work with children and it can be considered a favourable soil for positive changes and the development of juvenile delinquency prevention.

4.3. The evaluation of pilot project practices in the project “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices”.

The pilot projects under the project¹²² “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices” had two types of tasks: using the resources available in the project, to acquire effective practices for the work with juvenile delinquency prevention implementation tools (a); to use the acquired knowledge and skills in the work with children from risk groups and in risk situations, developing 120 prevention programmes in total for children and their families in three local municipalities (b). The tasks had to be performed in the form of inter-institutional cooperation¹²³ with the professional assistance provided by the specialists from the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights¹²⁴. Meanwhile, specialists from the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights and PROVIDUS built a team for monitoring of the pilot projects. The pilot projects involved children and their parents in accordance with the information from the State Police and Social service information system about the children with behavioural risks and at-risk families. Risks and needs were assessed for children to be involved in each pilot project and their families, and a Catalogue of activities was created to meet the particular needs. On the basis of the resources available from the Catalogue of activities, the members of the Inter-institutional work group prepared an individual programme for each child and his/her family envisaged for reducing the identified risks particularly in their case. The monitoring¹²⁵ of the pilot projects was carried out using the following methods: regular meetings of the monitoring team with regional Inter-institutional work groups at the pilot project sites in regions (a); regular summaries of the monitoring team work results between the visits to pilot project sites in regions (b); the organisation of in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the coordinators of the pilot projects (c); the evaluation of the impact of the

¹²² Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices (2013 – 2015), in Latvian: <http://www.providus.lv/public/27802.html> and in English, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27804.html> (last visited on 27.05.2014).

¹²³ Author's note: each local municipality involved in the project established an Inter-institutional cooperation work group.

¹²⁴The State Inspectorate For Protection Of Children's Rights: <http://www.bti.gov.lv/lat> , in English, http://www.bti.gov.lv/eng/vbta_inspekcija/ (last visited on 28.05.2014).

¹²⁵ Author's note: detailed results of the pilot project monitoring will be included in the pilot project research (monitoring report). This report will include the evaluation of preventive work in regions involved in the project with the aim to distribute the good practice also in other local municipalities in Latvia and among other specialists.

pilot projects on children and families in regions (d); the evaluation of friendliness of services provided at the pilot project sites to children and families (d).

4.3.1. Evaluation of the specialists of children's affairs and other specialists from regions of Latvia about the process of the pilot projects and achieved results.

In order to find out the opinions of specialists involved in the pilot projects about the progress of the project and the pilot projects in the three regions of Latvia, a qualitative research – questionnaire was organised for the specialists working in the regional pilot projects. The questionnaire included questions on the usefulness of the project in relation to the achieved objectives (a); on the prevention tools and methods used in the project (b); on pilot project target groups and influence made on them (c); on the problems during the implementation of the pilot projects and ways of solving them (d).

Specialists from the pilot projects who participated in the questionnaire admitted¹²⁶ that despite the fact that the situation in each of the family involved in the project was very different, all the specialists who were involved in the inter-institutional work groups in the regions gained new knowledge about the work with children with behavioural risks and children in risk situations. Specialists expressed their conviction that inter-institutional cooperation model has served as the best tool for the provision of qualitative support to children in risk situations, which has provided the possibility to take decisions quickly and without excessive formal obstacles in the interests of children and families. It is emphasised that a very important role in the preparation and provision of qualitative support to children and families was played by the possibility to follow the progress of the families involved in the projects on a long-term basis. Also the possibility to acquire not only practical experience but also theoretical knowledge in the project was found significant. It has to be taken into account that one of the main roles in each pilot project belonged to the local social services and their specialists who face the need to find complicated practical solutions in their daily work. Despite that, the possibilities provided to specialists by the project to get acquainted with the experience of other regions of Latvia and foreign countries in the field of children's right protection, social work and prevention were considered important.

It is certain that the aim of the pilot projects in the local municipalities of Latvia was also to achieve visible and sustainable improvements in the preventive work with delinquent children and children in risk situations. The specialists involved in the pilot projects confirmed¹²⁷ that, as the result of the project, *“social exclusion risks have been reduced not only for the children involved in the project but for a larger part of the society because the inter-institutional work group is more and more interested to use preventive measures not to allow children to come to the situation of committing a crime. Specialists report specific cases with children much earlier; they are not afraid to cooperate and ask for help to their colleagues because they*

¹²⁶ Author's note: Specialists involved in the pilot projects were asked if their knowledge about the work with children from risk groups and children in risk situations has improved during the implementation of the project.

¹²⁷ Materials from in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the leading specialists at the pilot project sites in the project “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices” (JUST/2011/FRAC/AG2671). Interviews were taken from May 19 – 26, 2014. Unpublished material.

understand that institutions can trust each other and really find solutions for each particular situation. It has to be admitted as a very important factor that during the project it was possible to offer children various kinds of supportive activities. Therefore also the specialists felt more confident in their ability to help because there were resources and activities to offer to solve the situation on each particular child and his/her family. There are changes in all the fields because the specialists have much more experience, knowledge and conviction that families with children need to be helped not punished". At the same time, specialists revealed a row of risk factors: it was realised that the majority of children who got involved in the pilot project programmes had problems with regular attendance of school and low academic achievements, as well as very high social exclusion risks: "Studying the information about children and youth from social risk group we found out that these are the biggest truants. Information was spread to the department of education of the local municipality, social service, police, parents, support personnel. This cooperation helped to stimulate children to attend school as they received support both from various institutions and their families¹²⁸". It is admitted that the participation of parents in the pilot project activities has made preventive work with children more intense because the parents have not only allowed their children to participate in the project activities and supported them but also acquired communication skills intensively to use in the relations with their children: "This project showed that both children and parents long for various activities as some of them discovered hidden talents in them and many raised their self-confidence. This project has improved a family's well-being and social inclusion¹²⁹".

One of the project objectives was to create a unified understanding among the representatives of various institutions about the work with children from risk groups and children in risk situations¹³⁰. The specialists in pilot projects expressed the view that the implementation of efficient preventive measures is directly related to two factors: the level of knowledge for the specialists who work with children (a) and the ability to communicate with each other in the interests of the child (b): "A common understanding about the work with children from social risk groups has been established among the social service, custody court, police, department of education, youth council, youth centres, schools. We realised that some school teachers have a worse understanding about the work with children from social risk groups and children in risk situations, as they think that if the student does not learn he/she does not need extra curriculum activities. They have also insufficient comprehension about the fact that the priority has to be given to the solution of the conflict between the student and the teacher and then the improvement of academic achievements will follow. Very often the student lacks support from adults. Rural schools do not have social pedagogues who would help solving conflicts in a professional manner in the school environment¹³¹". The answers in the questionnaire

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Author's note: Due to that, the question was asked to the specialists in their qualitative interviews – during the implementation of the project, has there been established a common understanding among the representatives of various institutions in your local municipality about the work with children from risk groups and children in risk situations?

¹³¹ Materials from in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the leading specialists at the pilot project sites in the project "Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices" (JUST/2011/FRAC/AG2671). Interviews were taken from May 19 – 26, 2014. Unpublished material.

emphasise that a common standard of professional work of the specialists is improved by trainings which are organised together for the representatives of different institutions.

During the project, it was important to implement innovative methods or other inclusive mechanisms in the pilot projects to prevent children from the contact with crime, including such methods which would be available to use specifically in the work with children from risk groups particularly in rural regions. Specialists admit that the implementation of preventive measures is effective if it is related to two factors: specialists' knowledge for the work with children (a) and their ability to find mutual agreements in the interests of the child (b), as then the work is not focused only on the children but also parents and family involve more actively trying to improve the situation in the child's natural living environment: *"If only we get information about violence at school, we look for solutions to prevent such situations in all the schools in the local municipality without waiting for the emergence of consequences. In such cases lessons or discussions are organised for all the students in the school, specialists of the protection of children's rights are invited or other types of solutions are searched for to work preventively. We have tried an innovative method – support groups for youth at school. The emphasis was put not on the exclusion of the young person who has done something unacceptable from school environment and sending him somewhere to the group where "everybody is of the same kind" but on the work with children and youth in the school environment¹³²".* It has to be admitted that the methods used during the project: children and youth involvement in the school and local municipality environment, listening to their opinion and taking notice of it, support in learning process, more active involvement of parents in the child's daily life, support groups at schools and other activities have been focused on reducing social exclusion risks and developing inclusive methods.

It is important to realise that the emergence of such fundamental changes in rural municipalities in Latvia is a big step in the field of prevention and the development of inclusive environment, favourable for children. Such changes strengthen all the involved parties and the society in general, because one group of people (various practitioners, who work with children in an inter-institutional environment) see the positive results of their work and gain motivation for work using new methods, whereas the other group (children, their parents and families) start confiding in specialists seeing that the support provided for them is true and not formal. Such features prove that the pilot projects have encouraged people to change their values by understanding that punitive and confronting methods cannot be applied for the implementation of preventive measures for children and youth: *"Most often educational institutions report on these children and young people. There are cases when the student's parents inform the department of education, members of (local) council, heads of youth centres who forward the information to the social worker who is responsible for the work with children and families. During the project, the cooperation has reached such level that also the workers of youth centres inform the social service if they notice children with behavioural risks."* The interviewed specialists admitted that prevention activities are more efficient if the child may make his/her own choices and take decisions on the type of participation in prevention programmes: *"We have to make youth trust in us, trust in themselves, their own abilities, we*

¹³² Ibid.

have to help them find their hobbies, something they really like, not something that is “in fashion”, not something that their moms and dads want”¹³³. Admitting that inter-institutional cooperation has been the most effective solution for prevention planning and implementation in the pilot projects, it has to be noted at the same time that difficulties were also recognised in particular in the field of early prevention, including for families with young children: *“It has to be noted that hardly ever we receive information (to the social service or inter-institutional work group) from family doctors or the hospital, although, to my mind, family doctors and the hospital are one of the first who could see that families have problems and support and assistance is needed”¹³⁴*, tells one of the members of the Inter-institutional work group in the pilot projects.

The fact that children and families for the participation in the pilot projects were chosen to help them not to impose punishments or apply other reactive methods was related to the necessity to implement such mechanisms which could individually identify risks and needs instead of guilt and sanction to be applied for it. To make it possible, the Inter-institutional work group had to use methods to identify risks and needs and summarise potential intervention methods (a), available services (b) and possibilities of spending free time for children and families available in local municipalities (c). These three components together had to create a Catalogue of activities corresponding to children’s needs. The pilot projects involved only those children and parents to whom it was possible to provide the necessary support within the pilot projects: *“The project involved the children whose risk situations were reported to the Inter-institutional work group by the specialists from various institutions when they were informed about the project and its possibilities. The Inter-institutional work group decided for which children the project would be the most useful”¹³⁵*. Another member of the Inter-institutional work group mentioned that: *“The selection of children for the project was carried out in cooperation with the social service who suggested children who needed activities performed within the project; those children were involved in social prevention and correction programmes. Then, children were chosen for the project in cooperation with the neighbourhood educational institutions and youth centres who had observed risk situations for children. The risk assessment tool available in the project helped to recognise risk situations more in details”¹³⁶*. It has to be admitted that a special risk and needs tool was developed for the needs of the pilot projects that could identify the project target group for the participation in prevention activities in the most efficient way.

After identifying the children and youth’s risks and needs individual programmes were prepared for them including activities from the Catalogue of activities. The interviewed specialists from the pilot projects admitted that the most significant activities were those which were planned specially for the parents of children and young people (a), various methods for ensuring discipline and providing support (b), as well as activities of an inclusive nature which did not separate children with behavioural risks from motivated children and youth (c):

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

“Keeping children to discipline is related to the content of lessons, if children are interested in it, there are no problems with discipline. After common group activities (for instance, camps, excursions) also problems with children’s behaviour were discussed (in a circle). It is one of the methods how to accustom children to discipline which makes children watch their actions from aside, understand how others feel and what are his/her own feelings, and change his/her future behaviour. Both children and teachers participate in this conversation where in an unconstrained atmosphere they tell about the problems and solutions are found together¹³⁷”. The most used individual methods in the pilot projects were psychotherapist, psychologist and social pedagogue consultations and individual classes with art therapist.

One of the most important issues in the pilot project monitoring was whether the activities included in the Catalogue of activities were sufficient to reduce the identified behavioural risks in children and to help them deal with risk situations. Simultaneously, there was a need to evaluate whether the time frame set for the implementation of project activities was reasonable to deal with the children’s risks sufficiently and change the children’s behaviour. The specialists from the Inter-institutional work groups indicated that *“..in order to change a child’s behaviour eight months to 3 years are needed. It is very difficult to keep children’s motivation and interest in participation in the programmes. There are no tools also to directly assess the significance of activities provided for children and parents to improve the situation with particular risks in a long term. Activities are more related to the particular situation at the moment of their implementation, whereas the children and their parents need relationships to be established with them, they need a safe environment to be ensured where they would feel accepted and loved. There are children who have received assistance and their risks have reduced, the quality of life has increased, however the best changes can be observed in those families where also the adult members of the family have attended various specialists, not only children¹³⁸”.* The specialists from the pilot projects indicated also that the implementation of preventive measures for children have to be sustainable and that the family, and parents in particular, plays a very significant role in reducing the child’s behavioural risks: *“There were more problems with reducing the identified behavioural risks for those children and youth whose families are not able or willing to help. In order to change children’s behaviour, different time frames have to be considered because the problems differ and family support plays a great role. It is also important how the family receives this complex assistance and whether it is accepted from the family. The behaviour of the majority of the children involved in the project has changed; nevertheless, it will remain only on condition that the cooperation with the child, young person and his/her family in general will be carried out on regular basis also in future¹³⁹”.*

The interviewed members of the Inter-institutional groups have indicated that in those regions where the pilot projects were carried out prevention activities develop rather quickly from the methodology point of view. At the same time, they emphasise that: there is a tendency that the police turns to the municipal Inter-institutional group more seldom to have preventive

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

programmes designed for the children who have entered their field of view¹⁴⁰ (a); the quality of preventive work in a local municipality depends directly on the concerns of the administration of the local government on the necessity of such quality (b); more often the actions that are punishable according to the provisions of the Criminal Law are committed by younger and younger children (for instance, theft) who have not yet reached the age when they can be held to criminal liability. Due to that, preventive measures are very necessary for children from all age groups including preadolescence (c); children's antisocial behaviour very often manifest itself when families have crisis situations and they all cannot be predicted. To support children and families in such situations, long period of time is necessary and it cannot be done during one project (d); although the Inter-institutional cooperation group is established in the local municipality and the work is planned purposefully with at-risk children, there are situations when it is not, in fact, possible to help the child and his/her family because the local municipality does not have appropriate resources To improve support in crisis situations, family assistant service is being developed (e).

The main task for the specialists involved in the pilot projects was to reach the target group – children with behavioural risks and children in risk situations and their parents. Therefore, the evaluation of the Inter-institutional work group specialists on whether and how the project activities corresponded to the needs of the target groups was very important. Specialists indicated that: preventive activities and programmes carried out during the project reached the target group and it is proved by the solved risk situations for children and families, as well as the reduced antisocial behaviour risks in children (a); it would be useful to stipulate the Inter-institutional cooperation model for preventive work in local municipalities in the law with the aim to have its decisions legally binding for the target group (b); the implementation of preventive measures need more time and mutual trust and understanding atmosphere among the target groups and professionals from the inter-institutional group, therefore it is important to create an Inter-institutional cooperation group as an independent unit (c). Reaching the target group, specialists from the pilot projects most often faced the following children's risks and risk situations, parental and family risks:

Scheme 2.

Identified risks and risk situations for children	Identified risks for parents, family
Conflicting relations both at home and in the school environment	Lack of parenting skills and knowledge
Various types of domestic violence	Conflicting relations in the family
School truancy	Alcohol dependency
Permanent under-achievement	Unemployment
Vagrancy, excessive leaderism	Mental health problems
Violence against peers or violence from peers	Poverty

¹⁴⁰ Author's note: in this case, programmes are meant which are designed in accordance with Article 58 of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, more information in the text of this legal enactment and other enactments related to it: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=49096> (in Latvian), http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Protection_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child.doc (in English), (last visited on 28.05.2014).

Parents in the divorce process, as the result of which parents “fight with each other”, involving children.	Children are raised by one of the parents or grandparents because parents have left to work abroad.
Violent emotional attitude towards the child in the family	Domestic violence
Being disregarded	Antisocial behaviour
Insufficient supervision	Inappropriate domicile
Feeling of not being needed to anyone and not belonging anywhere	“Parents do not have place in the house of the child” or the child has no value in the family because parents are occupied with their problems.
Too many duties, too much responsibility for the child (from parents, teachers) unsuitable for the child’s age	Excessive leaderism or immoderate, unjustified demands against others
Learning difficulties	Apathetic relations in the family
Addictive substance abuse	Participation in gangs/groupings or “wrong” friends

As it can be seen from the information in Scheme 2, many problems identified for the target group have developed as the result of permanent disregard of risks, referring both to children and parents, families in general. At the same time, it has to be noted that Latvian rural regions face the risk of problems caused by economic reasons, such as: parents leave their children going to work abroad, unemployment, domicile or environment inappropriate for a family. Moreover, there is also another tendency caused by economic reasons – taking into account the material instability in families, parents very often have too high expectations from their children who cannot fulfil them and become depressive, start fearing from parental reactions which leads to domestic violence and violence outside it, as well as school truancy and vagrancy. This situation shows that families with children¹⁴¹ usually have problems of a systemic nature which can be solved only by a systemic and comprehensive preventive measure. Moreover, the specialists from the pilot projects indicated that *“it was necessary to work a lot with parental motivation to make them understand why their child needs such activities and why they are so important. Part of parents who even recognised the problems, see them only in children – let the children participate in the activities but leave us (parents) alone. Parents joined pilot project activities unwillingly, however if they joined the progress was the biggest in those families. One of the mums, who attended the support group and had one child in extra-familial care but the youngest children at home, said about the skills she acquired that she learns such things in the classes that should be “acquired with breast milk”, but the reality is as it is. She added that if she had had such knowledge earlier she would have solved many problems. It has to be admitted that the specialists could observe the improvement of communication in the family, change in attitude towards children and a healthier understanding of their needs corresponding to the children’s age groups¹⁴²”*. Motivating the parents, another very important aspect was parents did not have to pay for their participation in

¹⁴¹ Author’s note: families which have risks and risk situations mentioned in Scheme 2 are meant here.

¹⁴² Materials from in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the leading specialists at the pilot project sites in the project “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices” (JUST/2011/FRAC/AG2671). Interviews were taken from May 19 – 26, 2014. Unpublished material.

the pilot project activities together with the children. The majority of the specialists from the Inter-institutional work groups mentioned that the biggest number of participants was reached in those activities where transportation and snacks were provided, whereas children liked cooking classes the most. One of the greatest challenges for the pilot project specialists, in their opinion, was exactly the involvement of parents: *“The biggest challenge – work with parents and possibility to offer support and various trainings and support groups to parents. It was challenging to find an individual approach to each parent to motivate them and try to involve in the improvement of their child’s life quality because no one likes being directly or indirectly called an insufficiently good parent. There was a great resistance¹⁴³”*. At the same time, the specialists of the Inter-institutional work groups from the pilot projects indicated that during the implementation of the project they have acquired social inclusive methods in work with children with behavioural risks; it is important for children to participate in the decision making process at their place of residence (local municipality). Thus, in Madona pilot project, 7 children participated actively in the Youth Spring Forum where they worked actively in local municipality work groups, asked questions and submitted proposals for municipal clerks; a closer connection among the children’s parents, teachers, specialists from law enforcement agencies, Youth centre and social service specialists have been established.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

4.3.2. General evaluation of children, youth and families by pilot project sites.

Scheme 3.

Pilot project site Criterion	Madona			Saldus	Cēsis	Total
	Madona	Ļaudona	Bērzaune			
Number of children involved in the project	38	15	16	57	47	173
Children age group	7 - 16	13 - 22	11 - 16	9 - 16	8 - 17	7 - 22
Identified risks for children and families in particular pilot projects	Risks related to life in the family, including violence, poverty, inappropriate domicile; to bad relations and low achievements at school, bad-influencing friends out of school, in the neighbourhood; also to low spirits, disbelief in oneself, feeling of needlessness, irrelevance, sudden lack of self-control, fits of rage, aggression.	The child is raised in a foster family or under guardianship; unfavourable family conditions for the development of the child; the child is raised in a single-parent family; poor family; the child is an orphan; the child has learning disabilities.	The child is raised by a single parent, poor or low-income families, the child has problems in academic process – truancy or low achievements, the child lacks communication skills both with peers and adults.	Aggression, inability to establish mutual relations, weak connection with parents, typical desire to be a leader achieving it with deviant behaviour.	Divorced family, lack of parenting skills, behavioural and academic problems, parental alcohol misuse, low academic achievements, aggression towards family members, financial problems, children drinking alcohol, emotional and physical domestic violence, weak mother/child relationship, behavioural problems in the family	
Changes for children during the project:	Children and youth have	Three main things in total:	Children have improved their academic	Children involved in the project were	In general, positive changes can be	

<p>improvement/ regress (according to the pilot project specialists' point of view)</p>	<p>changed their attitude towards their life events. Almost all project participants started attending the youth centre. Now, the project participants: communicate more freely, are polite in their relations with peers and adults, have found their place on the youth centre (come to project classes, part of the participants have joined activities in the Youth centre activities – ceramics, playing guitar, technical modelling, floral design, drama lessons, hairdressing, art, activities for animal</p>	<p>children and youth acquired such skills useful for their daily lives which are very important for their future (self-control, dressing accordingly depending on the situation, communication with other people); parents established a closer contact and understanding with their children; children and youth together with their parents learned to communicate not only with each other but also with other people: specialists of children's affairs and from the local municipality.</p>	<p>performance (classes with the speech therapist were very useful), they are more open and braver (support from the psychologist and teachers/lecturers), children have learned how to cook a meal for themselves, they are more creative and do not fear rejection. Participating in sports activities, they have learned healthy competition skills and not to derogate their own and other's achievements.</p>	<p>accustomed to particular order of things in their lives (positive discipline) and taking responsibility for their own decisions. It was a great benefit to teach parents do various things together with their children, which improved their mutual understanding and recognition. It was observed that children are in desperate need of appreciation (positive) from adults for what they have done. Anxiety and stress has been reduced in children, they are calmer, can take their own decisions, they are more helpful, mutual support group has been established.</p>	<p>observed in children both in their relations in the family and behaviour. Children learn not only skills but also attitude towards each other. Much better unity can be observed than it was at the beginning of the project, as well as better skills to support and protect each other.</p>
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	<p>lovers). They join not only classes, but also bigger events. Two youngsters joined the work of Madona region Youth council. Adolescents were supported in choosing their future professions. Negative aspect – not all children acquired positive changes in their achievements at school.</p>					
<p>Special examples (according to the point of view of the pilot project specialists and children)</p>	<p>One girl was involved in the project due to theft cases and aggressive behaviour. During the project camp for adolescents it was found out that the girl not only likes riding BMX but is also very talented. After the camp, it was a joy to hear in the</p>	<p>There were two children for who it was not possible to eliminate deficiencies in their education process</p>	<p>We are glad that the young people who even did not even know how to greet people at the beginning of the pilot project now feel welcome arriving at the youth centre, they have made new friends, appreciate and enjoy possibilities provided for their development and improvement.</p>	<p>One very special example was gained when children got to know what parents think about them and vice versa with the help of drawings. As the result of this, both parties experienced a lot of positive emotions: children listened more to what their parents say, whereas parents stopped being so harsh against their</p>	<p>A 15-year-old girl with behavioural and academic problems was involved in the project. There were behavioural problems in the family, aggression against family members, weak mother/child relationship, the girl could not control her anger and, according to her mother, used alcohol. She had only a</p>	

	<p>conversation with her family that the girl and her parents have found a compromise between sports and music: now she continues attending the music school, and her parents act supportively towards her BMX trainings. Since September 2013, the girl has participated in BMX competitions and won prizes. She has too little free time to attend the youth centre, but BMX trainings have provided her with the necessary adrenaline and the child's energy is used purposefully. Relations in the family are</p>			<p>children. Elder children involve in the groups became mentors for the younger, acted like assistants for the class/group leaders. By ensuring preventive work for the child and his/her family together it is possible to achieve greater progress than applying measures separately.</p>	<p>few friends or such acquaintances who have negative impact on the child. Within the project, the girl joined various socially inclusive and personality developing activities, attended the psychotherapist. Also the girl's mother attended classes by the psychologist to get closer to her daughter, find a common language and improve mutual relations. The girl's parents are divorced; there are suspicions about sexual violence in the family. As the result of project activities and specialists' assistance the girl has received support. At the beginning of the project activities, the girl did not talk about what had happened, her behaviour was destructive. Now, the girl has started</p>	
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	better; there are no more reproaches for her behaviour.				talking more and is more open for the cooperation with the specialists.	

It can be concluded that in total 173 children participated in all three pilot projects. Attention has to be turned towards the fact that one pilot project – Madona region – was divided into three pilot subprojects taking place in the centre of Madona, Bērzaune and Ļaudona. It is related to the fact that Madona region has a significantly larger rural territory, and it would not have been possible to provide the pilot project activities for the children from rural parishes of Madona region, were they organised differently. Taking into account that there is a lack of a unified and systemic framework for preventive measures, no age frame for children to be involved in the pilot projects was set. It means that already at the moment of pilot project planning every local municipality acknowledged the age groups of children who could be involved in the project and planned the potential Catalogue of activities corresponding to that consideration. The identified risks in children can be relatively divided into: emotional education and communication disorders (a) and reasons of a socio-economic nature (b). The project could influence the most children and youth's emotional management skills and improve their social communication skills; in fact, there were very few possibilities to manage risks of a socio-economic nature¹⁴⁴, the reasons of which have been long-term and arisen in the remote past of the family, for instance, low level of education for parents leading to their inability to find a well-paid job. The results of the pilot projects are related to this condition: children, youth and parents have managed to stabilise their mutual relations, acquire new communication skills, make and broaden the circle of trust, acquire new useful skills for daily lives. At the same time it was not possible for the pilot project to solve such factors as inappropriate environment or domicile for the family or parental unemployment. However, despite this factor, there is a ground to consider that the recognition of the problems and the identification of risk factors together with the family have to be considered already as a step closer to the necessary solutions in future.

4.3.3. The assessment of the friendliness of the services at the pilot project sites for children and families.

Within the project, the quality of services provided for children was assessed in all the pilot projects – in Saldus, Cēsīs and Madona. The evaluators used the quality assessment tool for services for teenagers and young adults – *Youth-Quat*¹⁴⁵. It is designed by specialists from the organisation “International Child Development Initiatives” (ICDI) in the Netherlands, specially adapting the assessment criteria in order to assess services provided both for boys and girls within one assessment procedure.

Specialists expressed their opinion about six key criteria groups – dimensions assessing (1) Friendliness towards Youth; (2) Connectedness; (3) Safety, Health and Protection; (4) Staffing and HR; (5) Sustainability and (6) Agency. Each dimension includes 9 features: if the particular statement corresponds to the situation at the pilot project implementation site and works in practice it receives positive score; whereas, if there is no such feature the score is

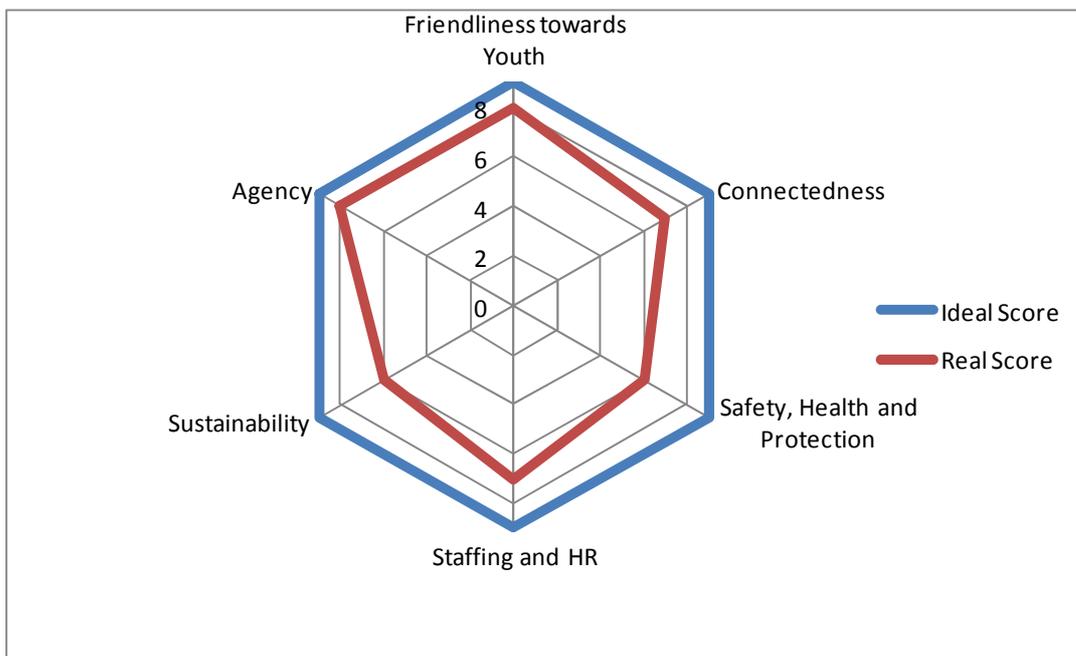
¹⁴⁴ Materials from in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the leading specialists at the pilot project sites in the project “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices” (JUST/2011/FRAC/AG2671). Interviews were taken from May 19 – 26, 2014. Unpublished material.

¹⁴⁵ ICDI has developed and will continue to develop innovative tools that can support researchers, practitioners and policymakers in their work with and for children: <http://tools.icdi.nl/> (last visited on 30.05.2014).

negative. On the basis of this principle, the maximum score in each dimension is nine – if all statements correspond to the practical work with children, it can be concluded that the provided services are high quality services and correspond to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁴⁶, Konvencijai par personu ar invaliditāti tiesībām¹⁴⁷ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women¹⁴⁸.

As the use of this tool among the practitioners in Latvia is a novelty, all the specialists involved in the assessment were asked to look at the criteria more broadly, because children as service receivers were not divided into groups according to their age, places for providing services were also not separated, thus obtaining as general overview about the quality, accessibility and content of all the services as possible. It means that the assessment includes all the services which are available at the pilot project sites for children under the age of 18, taking into account all the places of service provision, including Children and youth centres, educational institutions and other. After summarising the opinions of all the specialists involved in the assessment, the following results were obtained.

Scheme 4.



As it can be seen in Scheme 4, in total the quality of the services available in the pilot projects has been assessed with a high score, far enough above the mean scores. Thus, the conclusions can be drawn about the fields where services provided for children correspond to the best practice, at the same time noting several aspects which would need extra attention.

The results of the specialists' opinions show that, in comparison to other dimensions, more attention should be turned towards safety, health and protection issues (6 points out of 9). This

¹⁴⁶ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=85620> (last visited on 30.05.2014).

¹⁴⁷ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=205328> (last visited on 30.05.2014).

¹⁴⁸ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, <http://www.humanrights.lv/doc/vispaar/sievdisk.htm> (last visited on 30.05.2014).

dimension assesses the specialists' possibilities and resources to protect children from all kinds of damages, at the same time broadening the understanding of safety and protection towards its positive aspects such as the child's possibilities to stay alone or think in solitude. On the basis of the information received from the specialists, it is almost self-evident that premises meant for children do not have, for instance, dangerous objects in them. The questionnaire allows concluding that it is necessary to reconsider whether the premises for children activities are safe against strangers – how to limit access to particular premises for unauthorised persons and thus reduce the possibility that children are subjected to the risk of harm caused to them. The specialists admitted that children do not need to ask for permission to the project staff before leaving premises¹⁴⁹ and children are not always accompanied by the project staff. It is possible that informing the project staff member about leaving and in particular cases also receiving of permission to leave premises may be an easy method to contribute to a higher level of safety and protection in these institutions. It has to be noted that the most critical assessment was received by regular health inspections for children: it is not a regular practice in any of the regions and that has a considerable influence on the total score of the Safety, Health and Protection dimension, therefore it can be concluded that this particular issue needs more detailed assessment of the existing practice and changes in performance.

Another dimension which has received the same lowest amount of points (6 out of 9) is the Sustainability dimension where the specialists assessed not only financial concerns but also children's interest on the provided services (classes, events, activities), staff motivation and skills to address and cooperate with other interested people, as well as the efficiency of the provided services. The majority of the specialists assess positively the long-term financial support provided by the local municipalities and other finance providers, as well as the resources invested by the community. More critical assessment is given to the free time and work invested by the children's family members – on the scale of all the regions involved in the project, it would be useful to implement such activities which would enhance the participation of family members in particular and their understanding of the significance of the provided services in children's daily lives, as well as inform about the possibilities to support already existing activities thus ensuring their contribution to the sustainability of the project activities and their results.

Equally high score has been given to the dimensions of Connectedness and Staffing and HR (7 points out of 9). Connectedness dimension was assessed by the way how the provided services comply within other essential social structures, accessibility to funding, receiving of feedback, and also the identification and use of new opportunities, positively indicating to the interest of the local authorities and particularly to the connectedness of the provides services to other social structures. Thus, for instance, children can access publicly available information – books from libraries, internet, TV – in all the regions involved in the project. Within this particular dimension, it was asked to assess whether “people from outside” attend places where services are provided for children on regular basis. In the specialists' opinion, it does not happen often. “Unauthorised persons” should be separated from the “people from outside”, where the former have to have limited access to the premises to ensure children's safety,

¹⁴⁹ Author's note: various types of premises are meant here where classes and activities for children take place. They can be premises of an educational institution, Youth centre, interest-related education groups or other.

whereas the latter can provide formal and informal quality control and assessment of the provided services, as well as experience exchange which in general can be considered as a positive manifestation of interaction and connectedness.

Analysing the results of the Staffing and HR dimension, a positive mark should be given to the specialists' conviction that the managers and staff or service providing places have the necessary skills and understanding for ensuring the services, including the implementation of the key principles of the protection of children's rights. Also regular development of leaders and staff's skills and knowledge is highly appreciated. The only aspect to turn additional attention to is the monitoring of the activities and provided services – the assessment of the activities to be performed together with children, which would be carried out by a third party, is not a regular practice in any of the regions (pilot projects); nevertheless, the assessment of the offered services and evidence-based recognition of efficiency is an important precondition, for instance, for a potential receipt of funding and improvement of the services, therefore it is worth paying more attention to this aspect.

Dimensions receiving the highest score in the specialists' assessment are Friendliness towards Youth and Agency (8 points out of 9). Assessing the friendliness of the services, the specialists indicate that children feel comfortable and free in the premises where the services are provided; the materials and equipment in most cases correspond to the children's needs and potential, and the cooperation among the children and the staff members is constructive and meaningful. At the same time, it can be observed in all the regions involved in the project that the access to the project premises can be difficult for children with special needs – it has to be admitted that it is a significant obstacle for achieving the highest score and a long-term and systemic solution should be searched for to solve this issue.

Assessing the Agency dimension, a remarkable amount of positive assessments has been received which all-in-all testifies that the specialists' attention is turned towards the efforts to make children believe in their possibilities and abilities of self-control, influence over their own actions and environment around them. Thus, for instance, children have a possibility to express their thoughts and feelings, specialists provide their advice and support, children are encouraged to take initiatives and new responsibilities are assigned to them according to their growing capacity and skills. In order to develop the Agency dimension to a higher level, all the regions should consider the necessity and resources of establishing a consultative council involving also the children's parents to enhance both the developmental possibilities for children and improve cooperation among the parents and the specialists. The improvement of this aspect might be related also to the ensuring of sustainability where one of the features to improve is more qualitative involvement of family members.

Looking at the assessment of the quality of the services provided for children, the results allow concluding that in general the services available in Cēsis, Saldus and Madona regions (pilot projects) are qualitative and focused on the observance of both the rights of the child and his/her interests. At the same time, a fact has to be mentioned that neither of the dimensions received the maximum score which means that each dimension has possibilities for improvement and the value added from the use of this particular assessment tool – YOUTH-QUAT – is the identification of these deficiencies. As it was mentioned before, improvement and more significant changes are needed in the field of children's safety and health, as well as

sustainability and connectedness. It would be useful to perform a repeated (or even better – regular) assessment of the dimensions after the implementation of the identified changes to record the dynamics and directions of the service development, thus supporting specialists in their daily work with children and families.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusions on the organisation of children and youth crime prevention work in Latvia:

- ◆ According to the legislation of Latvia, a child is a person who has not attained 18 years of age, excepting such persons who have been declared to be of legal age in accordance with the law or have entered into marriage before attaining 18 years of age, whereas a young person is a person from 13 to 25 years of age;
- ◆ In Latvia, there is no system of justice for children and youth separately from the system for adults and the preventive work with minors is not regulated in one unified legal enactment;
- ◆ The planning and implementation of preventive work in Latvia is under the responsibility of local municipalities, the current legal framework does not limit local municipalities and they can perform preventive work with children of any age who act in a way that could lead to illegal actions. At the same time, there is a lack of methodological instructions regarding the forms of preventive work with children from particular age groups and due to that and other reasons preventive work with children is insufficient at least in a half of local municipalities in Latvia;
- ◆ The organisation of the preventive work with children in Latvia can be theoretically divided into three groups from the systemic point of view: the first level of prevention – early prevention is not directly defined and regulated in legal enactments; the second level of prevention – preventive measures for children with explicit behavioural or academic risks. The child may be involved in social behaviour correction programmes, whereas children with typical academic or health disorders are involved in educational programmes for pedagogical correction. The third level of prevention is envisaged for children who have already committed criminal offences.
- ◆ Currently¹⁵⁰, there are five policy development documents regulating the field of the protection of the rights of youth and prevention in Latvia: Guidelines on the National family policy for 2011 – 2017; Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009 – 2018; The Guidelines for Prevention of Human Trafficking for 2014 – 2020; Public Health Strategy for 2011 – 2017; The guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and protection of children against crimes 2013 – 2019;
- ◆ The number of crimes committed by children tend to decrease in recent years in Latvia, however, this fact is rather related to the decrease in the total number of children in Latvia;
- ◆ Most often minors in Latvia commit such crimes which are performed in groups, whereas the rate of serious crimes out of all crimes committed by minors remain high;
- ◆ Alcohol abuse is one of the key factors why children and youth violate the law, get injured, are subjected to suicide risks and violence;

¹⁵⁰ Author's note: The study was conducted in February – May, 2014.

- ◆ The last two years show the increase in the number of such children who are hospitalised due to addictive substance abuse, more and more often medical institutions have to treat children with mental behavioural disorders caused by the use of psychoactive substances;
- ◆ In recent years, there is a decrease in the number of cases when children in Latvia who have committed crimes get imposed compulsory measures of a correctional nature, that could protect children from the contact with adult justice mechanisms, instead of criminal punishment;
- ◆ The main task of the prevention of the violation of children's rights in Latvia is training of the specialists who work with and for children. On April 8, 2014, the provision of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law came into effect stipulating wide and comprehensive training of the specialists who have any contact with the field of the protection of the children's rights in their work;
- ◆ Since 1991, there have been a few discussions on prevention issues in Latvia, and prevention has been considered more as a tool for averting crimes in particular, not the violence of rights in general. Therefore, for many years the police or any of the law enforcement agencies has been the institution to implement preventive measures, whereas the most often applied forms of prevention were informative campaigns (general prevention) or individual crime prevention in the form of supervision for persons who have already violated the law and have therefore obtained a special legal status (special prevention);
- ◆ The current concept of children and youth justice (opinion about prevention) is based on the statement that punishment has to be a reaction to a crime but if the offender is of a young age punishment may be less harsh in comparison to general norms;
- ◆ New approaches for prevention work are implemented with the help of special projects in some local municipalities. Thus, the project "Building a Support System to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency" aprobatd an Inter-institutional cooperation model in several local municipalities which improved the efficiency of work not only with children but also with their parents;
- ◆ Prevention in Latvia should be a set of purposefully implemented activities in a child's daily life – including planning his/her free time, elimination of obstacles for the access to sport and healthy lifestyle activities, as well as purposeful and child-oriented individual and group interventions should be available;
- ◆ The establishment of prevention system is a long term event to be performed jointly by the government and the specialists in the particular fields working with children and families; the role of educational institutions is essential and underestimated so far;
- ◆ It is necessary to introduce tools in preventive work which would influence parental behaviour, for instance, programmes of a supportive nature for children participating together with their parents, control over such programmes, thus leaving the termination of parental rights as the last means of influence;
- ◆ The lack of a common legal enactment is obvious in Latvia to stipulate all activities with children – both preventive and reactive. At this situation, when all the legal provisions setting out the legal framework for juvenile justice in Latvia are fragmented into three separate laws: Latvian Administrative Violations Code, Criminal Law and Law On Application of Compulsory Measures of a Correctional Measures to Children,

whereas slight indications on early prevention provisions are found separately – in the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, does not serve in the interests of a qualitative and safe development of the children and their families;

- ◆ The majority of specialists who work in the state, municipal and law enforcement institutions understand that the necessity of a separate system for prevention of juvenile delinquency is defined by children's special needs in the contact with justice and other institutions;
- ◆ At least half of the law enforcement specialists consider that preventive work youth from risk groups and youth in risks situations at their places of residence is poorly performed, whereas every third respondent considered it to be bad;
- ◆ Favourable neighbourhood and availability/accessibility of useful activities alone do not guarantee that children will avoid antisocial behaviour risks: the society lacks information on the true reasons of antisocial behaviour in children and youth and therefore on preventive measures to reduce such reasons;
- ◆ Latvia needs a coordinated early prevention system within which it would be possible to use risk and needs assessment mechanisms and both recognise and prevent antisocial behaviour risks and identify the child's (young person's) needs for assistance, plan and apply appropriate interventions;
- ◆ Specialists from law enforcement agencies and of children's affairs in Latvia have knowledge about prevention and work with children with delinquency risks; however, there is significantly less information on early prevention issues and work with children in risk situations.

5.2. Conclusions on the three pilot projects in Latvia in the project “Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices¹⁵¹”:

- ◆ Specialists who were involved in the Inter-institutional cooperation work groups in the regions acquired new knowledge about preventive work with children who have behavioural risks and with children in risk situations;
- ◆ The possibility to follow the progress of the families involved in the project on a longer period of time and assess the influence of preventive measures on the identified risks has been very significant for the preparation and provision of qualitative support of the children and their families;
- ◆ The specialists who were involved in the project admitted the significance of the possibility to acquire not only practical experience but also theoretical knowledge;
- ◆ It was recognised that the majority of children who were involved in the pilot project programmes had truancy problems and low academic achievements, as well as very high social exclusion risks;
- ◆ The involvement of parents in the pilot project activities have intensified preventive work with children because their parents have not only allowed them to participate in the activities and supported them but also taken part actively themselves;

¹⁵¹ Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices, <http://www.providus.lv/public/27804.html> (last visited on 30.05.2014).

- ◆ The implementation of effective preventive measures is directly related to two factors: level of knowledge and ability of timely mutual communication in the interests of the child of the specialists who work with children;
- ◆ The implementation of fundamentally new, inter-institutional work methods in the rural municipalities of Latvia is a big step in the field of prevention and for the creation of children-friendly inclusive environment. the practice gained during the pilot projects has encouraged people to change their values understanding that punitive and confronting methods cannot be applied in prevention work with children and youth;
- ◆ Preventive measures are more efficient if the child is allowed to make choices and take decisions about the type of participation in prevention programmes;
- ◆ The most often used individual prevention methods during the pilot projects were consultations of psychotherapist, psychologist, social pedagogue and classes with art therapist;
- ◆ The implementation of preventive activities for children have to be sustainable and family, particularly the child's parents, plays a very important role in reducing the child's behavioural risks;
- ◆ The police less and less often turns to the local municipalities to ask them prepare preventive programmes for the children who have entered their field of vision;
- ◆ More often actions which are punishable according to the provisions of the Criminal Law are committed by younger children (for instance, thefts) who have not yet attained the age of criminal liability. Die to that preventive measures are necessary for children from all age groups, in particular in primary school – preadolescence;
- ◆ Preventive measures and programmes implemented during the project have reached the target group which is proved by the solved risk situations for children and families and the decrease of antisocial behaviour risks in children, therefore it would be useful if the Inter-institutional cooperation model for the performance of preventive work was stipulated by a law with the aim to make the decisions by the Inter-institutional work group legally binding;
- ◆ Many problems identified for the target group have resulted from a long-term disregard of risks, both for children and their parents and families in general. In rural municipalities of Latvia, financial problems still cause significant risks such as neglecting children when leaving to work abroad, unemployment, inappropriate familial domicile or environment;
- ◆ Families with children¹⁵² mostly have problems of a systemic nature which can be solved only with a systemic and comprehensive preventive solution;
- ◆ It is important for children to participate in the decision making process at their place of residence (local municipality). the specialists from the Inter-institutional work group have emphasised this method of participation as one of the most efficient forms of inclusive prevention;
- ◆ The project has influenced children and youth's emotional management skills and improved social communication skills the most, it has been hardly possible to manage risks related to socioeconomic factors;

¹⁵² Author's note: those families are meant here which have risks and risk situations mentioned in Scheme 2.

- ◆ The evaluation by the pilot projects specialists show that, in comparison to other problems, more attention should be turned towards the issues of children's safety and health protection;
- ◆ There is a need to consider whether the premises meant for children in local municipalities (preschools, schools, children and youth centres) are safe enough against strangers. It is necessary to limit access for unauthorised people to these premises and reduce the possibility that children face potential damage risks;
- ◆ The most critical score in the assessment was given to the children's health check: none of the regions have health checks as a regular practice, and that considerably influences the overall assessment of safety, health and security situation. It is possible to conclude that this issue in particular needs detailed assessment and action change;
- ◆ Managers and staff at the places where social and educational services are provided have all the necessary general skills and understanding including about the implementation of the most significant principles of the protection of children's rights; also regular improvement of skills and knowledge for these managers and staff is highly appreciated;
- ◆ Extra attention should be turned to the monitoring of expediency of services and activities provided for children and families in local municipalities, thus, for instance, none of the regions (pilot projects) have a practice of assessing the activities provided for children, which would be performed by an independent third party. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that the assessment and evidence-based recognition of efficiency of the provided services is a significant precondition, for instance, for a potential possibility of funding and improvement of the services;
- ◆ Assessing the work organisation (Agency dimension), many positive evaluations have been acquired which show that in general specialists' attention is turned towards strengthening the children's confidence in their possibilities and skills to control and influence their behaviour and the environment around them.

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