



Project „Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for Best European Practices”
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Inter-institutional instrument for working with and for children

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1. Why pilot projects were needed?

Even though the international law has determined the principles on which children and juvenile delinquency prevention should be based on, often in practice and in national legal provisions there are fundamental systemic differences.

For example, The Riyadh Guidelines states¹, that comprehensive prevention plans should be instituted at every level of Government, including close interdisciplinary co-operation between national, State, provincial and local governments, with the involvement of the private sector, representative citizens of the community to be served, and labour, child-care, health education, social, law enforcement and judicial agencies in taking concerted action to prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime. European Committee on Crime Problems emphasizes², that „...a sound prevention policy should be based on a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and pluri-institutional approach.” At the same time it has been found³ that different countries lack common and practice-based national-level framework for children and youth delinquency prevention, including common (national wide) inter-institutional cooperation model.

2. The importance of the pilot projects, tasks and role in the project⁴

Using inter-institutional cooperation model enables to get a variety of additional resources, which are useful for carrying out children's and young people's social inclusion in all at risk cases, including anti-social behaviour prevention, early intervention, prevention of delinquency as well as to mitigate harmful effects of crime to the young person or child. Well-developed inter-institutional cooperation model for prevention of youth delinquency can improve effectiveness in two areas:

- a) ensure multidisciplinary, to enrich the range of prevention methods;
- b) ensure inter-institutional environment, to provide an opportunity for all parties involved (professionals, parents etc.) to take coordinated actions in the interests of the child.

¹ United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines), Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 45/112 of 14 December 1990. Para, III (g). Accessible: <http://ej.uz/fsyp> (accessed 23.04.2014).

² Preliminary Report on Responses of Justice to Urban Violence Involving Juveniles. Strasbourg, 24 March, 2014, prepared by Mrs Josiane Bigo. Accessible: <http://ej.uz/my6r> (accessed 23.04.2014).

³ For example, see a summary on Italy, Austria, Latvia: “Keeping youth away from crime: searching for best European practices. Summary”. I.Kronberga, S.Sīle. Accessible: http://providus.lv/article_files/2886/original/keeping_eng.pdf?1427889591 (accessed 23.04.2014).

⁴ Launching the pilot projects, the objectives were: 1. Providing the partners with an opportunity to examine the good methods and tools within the duration of the project without waiting the ending date of the project so that all the conclusions can be included in the research; 2. Implementation of practical, innovative, inclusive approaches in order to prevent children contiguity with crime, including the methods for the work with at-risk children and children in risk situations in rural areas; 3. Implementation of Pro-Social Modelling values and methods in order to transform the anti-social behaviour of youth and their relatives through modelling positive relationship skills.

The aim of the pilot projects was the approbation of the inter-institutional cooperation framework to implement effective prevention methods, while providing real support to children (and families) experiencing behavioral problems. During the project not only the inter-institutional cooperation model has been designed - within the duration of all activities, socially inclusive support for 127 children and their families has been provided.

Experience gained from pilot projects:

- a) is useful to any European Union country, which wants to strengthen or establish an inter-institutional cooperation framework for dealing with youth crime prevention issues - whether on national or local level;
- b) it showed, that implementation of the inter-institutional cooperation model is simple and does not require significant financial investments.

3. Inter-institutional cooperation model to keep a youth away from crime⁵

Within the project "Keeping Youth Away from Crime: Searching for the Best European Practices" three pilot projects in different rural areas of Latvia were implemented. Before the beginning of the project, three local municipalities in Latvia were addressed - each municipality was interested in cooperation and had some experience with implementation of new tools and methods for working with children. Cēsis, Madona and Saldus local governments agreed to get engaged in the project. In this process, motivation of professionals who do their daily work with children and families at risk played a very important role.

- **Problem definition and target groups**

Previous projects⁶ and international cooperation experience showed that the use of inter-institutional cooperation model provides quicker and more efficient way to identify and support children, young people and families who are at risk of social exclusion (also at the risk of delinquency). The target group of the project was aimed at children and young people who are in situations of risk and who express early behavioral risks, including the families of the children. Thus, the target group of the pilot project came to children and young people with low or medium risk of antisocial behavior and their families who live in less developed rural areas.

- **Inter-institutional working group and its composition**

In each of three pilot places inter-institutional working group was set up and it was composed of local law enforcement professionals and other institutions: the police, social services professionals, representatives from education authorities, doctors, psychologists, probation officers etc. Two types of professionals were involved in the group: those who reported on the children and families at risk (police, probation..), and those who provided support to the target group (psychologists, doctors, school..). However, this distinction is relative as it varied in accordance with the requirements of each individual case, therefore professionals of the work group sometimes changed their roles. Inter-institutional working group's task was to identify

⁵ National report within the project JUST/2011/FRAC/AG/2671 "Keeping Youth Away from Crime: searching for best European practices", I.Kronberga. Pages, 24-48. Accessible: <http://ej.uz/4ero> (accessed 23.04.2014).

⁶ Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention, I.Kronberga, J.Zarmatten. Accessible: <http://ej.uz/4ero> (accessed 23.04.2014).

children, young people and families who need support in their own municipality (a), to assess their needs and risks (b), to draw up an individual program for assistance (c) to manage the program (d) and to evaluate it (e).

- **Involvement of children and their families**

Children, youth and their families' involvement in the pilot project was on a voluntary basis – it was due to the consideration that it is not possible to provide assistance if people do not want to accept it. Individual programs have been drawn up by joint agreement among the inter-institutional group, the children, young people and their parents.

- **Risk and need assessment**

Risk and needs assessment was carried out using a specially designed questionnaire, where one questionnaire was intended for the child and family risk assessment, and the other - for parent assessment. The aim of inter-institutional working group was to contrast each of the identified risks with needs of the child, young person or family, and to address the identified needs with specific measures in individual support plan.

- **The catalogue of activities**

One of the inter-institutional working group's tasks was the development of the catalogue. Catalogue served as a unique tool for the identification of resources that can be used when carrying out prevention work. In the catalogue specialists included all the services and capabilities which were available in their municipality (a), and which were provided by the project (b). Different types of services were included: psychologist, health measures, various types of measures in schools, parenting support, participation in educational and leisure activities, restorative justice measures, etc.

- **Results and evaluation⁷**

All three pilot projects were **evaluated** by the monitoring. The monitoring 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);
- organisation of in-depth (qualitative) interviews with the coordinators of the pilot projects (c);
- evaluation of the impact of the pilot projects on children and families in regions (d);
- evaluation of friendliness of services provided at the pilot project sites to children and families (d).

Inter-institutional cooperation model is the story of how and how effectively different professionals can work for the benefit of children and families with child friendly methods. The practice gained through the pilot projects has encouraged people to change their values,

⁷ About evaluation of the results of pilot projects it is possible to learn more here: National report within the project JUST/2011/FRAC/AG/2671 "Keeping Youth Away from Crime: searching for best European practices", I.Kronberga. Pages, 24-48. Accessible: <http://ej.uz/4ero> (accessed 23.04.2014).

understanding that punitive and confronting methods cannot be applied in prevention work with children and youth.

Instead of approving separate approaches for working with children, a **system** for working with children has been approved as the result of implementation of the pilot projects. This system shows how it is possible to assemble a variety of methods and make them work in the interests of children, families and young people at local governments' (the place where the children live) level. Similar approach of organizing a system for youth crime prevention can be implemented in any countryside or less developed rural area. The implementation of fundamentally new, inter-institutional work methods in the rural municipalities of Latvia is a big step in the field of crime prevention and for the creation of children-friendly inclusive environment not only in Latvia or Baltic states but around the Europe.