



PROVIDUS
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Supporting children

Early prevention methods
for anti-social behaviour
working with pre-school
and primary school children
and their parents

Ilona Kronberga and Sanita Sīle

2015

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Introduction

The research “Early prevention methods for anti-social behaviour working with pre-school and primary school children and their parents”¹ was carried out under the NGO project programme funding with financial assistance from the European Economic area financial mechanism and the State of Latvia financing.²

The research reflects the project results with the *aim* to develop innovative working methods for reducing risk situations that provoke antisocial behaviour in children. The target group included 48 children at social exclusion risk and their families. In fact, more than 200 people were involved in the project activities including in the project indirect target group also such categories as: other relatives of the project families – sisters, brothers, grandparents; municipal social work practitioners, educators, heads of educational institutions; NGOs involved in the project, and other interested members of the community. The project was carried out involving specialists from several EU countries: pilot projects took place in Latvia – Kuldīga, Saldus and Cēsis, whereas the foreign experience was gained in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia, Norway and Belgium.³

To achieve project objectives, the following tasks were carried out:

- inclusive preventive work was organised with preschool and primary school children and their parents in three municipalities in Latvia;
- Inter-institutional cooperation groups were established in three municipalities in Latvia in order to ensure efficient decision making in the best interest of a child and an intense information exchange among the institutions and organizations involved in the prevention process. The task of the work groups was to plan and carry out social inclusive activities for children and their families, to discuss regularly topical issues in the educational institutions involved in the project elaborating appropriate solutions for them and ensuring the coordination of preventive work in a multidisciplinary environment;
- events were organised on regular basis to increase professionalism for the specialists involved in the project;⁴
- the most successful foreign practice experiences were identified and discussed with the pilot project specialists.⁵

As the result of the project, change philosophy was facilitated for work with children and their families:

- children-friendly and inclusive community was formed;
- multidisciplinary cooperation model was developed for the performance of preventive activities according to the specific needs for practice to be developed in Latvian municipalities;
- methodology was developed for early identification of children's social behaviour risks;

¹ More information on the progress of the project “[Reducing children's antisocial behaviour: early prevention models](#)”.

² Financial assistance for the project was received from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway under the NGO project programme. More information [here](#). (Internet resources here and further reviewed in September 2015)

³ See materials from two conferences organised in the project: 2013 Conference information [here](#); 2015 Conference information [here](#).

⁴ In order to improve the professionalism of the specialists involved in the project, 6 colleague consultations were organised on various topical issues in the field of prevention and children's rights protection, as well as FET (failure elimination tool) was developed, more information available [here](#).

⁵ Authors' note: One of the most appreciated foreign examples was identified in Estonia, more information [here](#).

- failure elimination tool was developed to improve the work quality.

Within this research, data acquired in pilot project monitoring and statistical data on preventive work in Latvia in general were analysed. The aim of this research is to provide the reader with evidence-based and concentrated information on effective and practice-evaluated inclusive early prevention methods for work with pre-school and primary school children and their parents (families) to reduce risks provoked by antisocial behaviour in children at pre-school and primary school age. The research includes information on antisocial behaviour risk identification methods, inter-institutional cooperation ways (possibilities) in the field of prevention of violation of children's rights, early prevention work and additional resource identification methods. The research is supplemented with the summary containing prevention work practices to be developed in Bulgaria.

Conclusions and project overall results included in the research have been discussed in the international conference “Social inclusion as a preventive method for children's antisocial behaviour” held on September 29, 2015 in Riga.⁶

The essence of the project “Reducing children's antisocial behaviour: early prevention models”

Why is it necessary to prevent children from any kind of contact with delinquency?

Most of the youth demonstrating behavioural problems in their teen years, including breaking law or becoming victims of crimes, have been left out of the necessary adult attention already much earlier in their lives. The reasons why a child behaves in a way that is not acceptable for other members of a community or easily becomes a victim of their peers or adults' harmful actions, arise in early stages of a child's development.

The fact of a child's antisocial behaviour or delinquency often is the consequence for a lasting adult disregard of any need of a child already in early childhood.⁷ Due to that, it is very significant that parents, preschool and school educators have the skills:

- to recognise risks in a child's behaviour and risk situations a child has become in;
- to use mutual cooperation methods to act in the best interest of a child.

The family of a child, parents, family doctor (GP), social service practitioners and educators are exactly the specialists whose professionalism determine what happens with the child daily, besides – since the very birth of the child. Although the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁸ stipulates that the protection of the rights of the child shall be implemented in collaboration with the family, State and local government institutions, public organisations and other natural persons and legal persons, in fact this legal norm does not work in practice in Latvia because:

- it does not have a clearly formulated mechanism of implementation;⁹

⁶ More about the conference [here](#).

⁷ “[Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention](#)”. PROVIDUS, 2012.

⁸ [Protection of the Rights of the Child Law \(1998\), Section 6, Part 3.](#)

⁹ “[Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention](#)”. PROVIDUS, 2012.

- therefore there is no coordination among institutions, no institution is set to be in charge of prevention work;
- prevention activities does not have clearly defined source of financing which relatively is currently divided among the budgets of several institutions in practice.

Children-friendly justice: concept and connection to prevention

A child's contact to the formal justice system¹⁰ or institutions as a whole has to be considered a very sensitive process, especially if the child is involved in a criminal proceedings as a witness, victim, suspect, the accused or the person on trial. A child is not “a small adult” but a human who is very vulnerable due to the age, maturity and developmental peculiarities, therefore any formal processes which are not understandable, friendly for the child or are not carried out in the best interest of the child have to be considered as potentially risky and even dangerous for the future life of the child. This can be related in particular to the decisions made in a criminal proceedings, the implementation of which (imprisonment, arrest, residing in closed or partially closed institutions) may have unfavourable influence on the child's life quality: even short-term exclusion from educational process, consequence of unfavourable emotional or physical influence, separability from the family and usual environment, loss of social links. Qualitative, professional and timely-performed preventive work protects the child from the mentioned risk situations and contact with formal procedures, as well as creates preconditions for a successful development and social inclusion of the child. It provides the society with a person who is able to make a contribution instead of returning from imprisonment and meeting the consequences of his “criminal career” – living from allowances and inability to find job due to the lack of education. Equally, the child becoming a crime victim, the status of a victim may have a negative influence on the further development of the child and the child's future life quality, and the experience related to that has to be considered a risk factor.

Damage from crime to the socio-economic development of the state and the role of prevention to avert it

At the moment, when mortality rate in Latvia exceeds birth rate, along with the quantitative measures¹¹ (number of children) also the qualitative needs of the society regeneration in Latvia are of equal significance. These needs are mainly related to children and the creation of a family-friendly, favourable and inclusive environment. Children are components of a family and a society in general, success of their development today determines the quality of our tomorrow's society. Therefore it is important to recognise and prevent the development of children's antisocial behaviour that can lead to the conflict with law and its harmful consequences in the future. It is important also to recognise and prevent risk situations in the child's life in time so that they do not result in the child becoming a victim of the other persons' antisocial or unlawful action, including suffering from emotional or physical violence.

¹⁰ Author's note: *Formal child justice* is a child's contact with any kind of formalities and institutions including processes that are related to the changes of the child's legal status (for instance, a victim, a witness, a suspect, member of a civil proceedings in legacy cases etc.). Often children get into contact with the implementation of a legal norm stipulated by a law through mutual combination of the aforementioned roles. Therefore any formal (stipulated by law) procedures where a child is involved should be children-friendly and carried out in the best interest of the children despite the status of the child in the proceedings. More about this term see in “[Justice for children](#)”.

¹¹ [At the beginning of 2015, there were for 15,4 thousand less inhabitants in Latvia.](#)

The significance of crime and its potential harmful consequences, and the effectiveness of prevention system has to be related more than just to how we implement and execute the norms of international legal acts and other international obligations, or what is the emotional condition of the people living in our country. The harmful effects of crime have heavy consequences not only on social but also economic life. Thus, for instance, in the review of the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom on crime costs in England and Wales¹² it was stated that during one year (1999-2000) crime in the United Kingdom has caused losses and additional expenditures in the amount of 60 billion pounds. Moreover, it is noted that the earlier a person gets in touch with crime, the bigger is the damage to him or done by him to others during his criminal career.¹³ Progressively to the damage done to himself or others, also the state expenditures grow to prevent such damage; besides, the earlier the “criminal career” has started, the higher are the expenses for the state to cover.

The greatest benefit from early prevention¹⁴ and inclusive interventions, as mentioned in the research carried out in the USA,¹⁵ is a qualitative new generation that is not connected to any social or economic risks (for instance, missed or low quality education, emotional or physical harm, teenage pregnancy, addictive substances etc.). The research indicate that so called late prevention¹⁶ programmes which are already carried out as planned systemic, long-term deep interventions because there are particular behavioural risks or crimes cost 40% more that timely performed early prevention activities. Crime is a social phenomenon that harms the development of a society and economics in all fields, and every country in general. Expenses for many delinquent acts and crimes cannot all in all be calculated comprehensively because alongside the material or emotional harm done to the victim and the expenses for law enforcement agencies, also the harm to the society as the whole should be added.¹⁷ According to these considerations, the key objective of this project was formulated – to develop social inclusion early prevention methods for work in particular with young children in rural municipalities in Latvia giving a new inter-institutional professional experience for educators, social workers and specialists from law enforcement agencies to take timely actions in the best interest of a child.

Some aspects taken into consideration while carrying out the project

Human resources

For the performance of the project, specialists¹⁸ with several years of experience in carrying out similar projects¹⁹ were involved. The results of those projects testify that teenager and youth behaviour problems are consequences that have arisen in the earlier stages of the children's development, as well as the fact that the cooperation among parents, educators, specialists from state and municipal institutions and non-

¹² Sam Brand, Richard Price. [Home Office Research Study 217: The economic and social costs of crime](#) (2000). Page 7.

¹³ Office Of the State Comptroller. Thomas P. DiNapoli, [State Comptroller. Cost-Effective Investments in Children at Risk](#) (February 2011).

¹⁴ [Early prevention or early intervention is a timely and planned systematic intervention which is carried out as early as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become for difficult to reverse.](#)

¹⁵ Office Of the State Comptroller. Thomas P. DiNapoli, [State Comptroller. Cost-Effective Investments in Children at Risk](#) (February 2011).

¹⁶ Authors' note: In this meaning, the term late prevention has to be taken as the activities of secondary (target group: offender and victim in the criminal proceedings and during the enforcement of the penalty) and tertiary (target group: offenders after the end of the enforcement of the criminal penalty and crime victims receiving long-term assistance) prevention.

¹⁷ [Economic and Social Effects of Crime - Growing Interest In The Costs Of Crime, Determining Costs, The High Cost Of Crime, Community Efforts To Avoid Crime Costs.](#)

¹⁸ Authors' note: Preschool educational institutions and schools, and specialists involved in the project are mentioned in the project booklet [“How to create an environment favourable for the child's development?”](#).

¹⁹ See the results for the project [“Keeping Youth Away from Crime. Searching for Best European Practices”](#) (2013-2015).

governmental organisations is the most efficient form of early prevention for children's antisocial behaviour.

Project compliance with the children's rights protection policy priorities in the European Union and Latvia

Linking with the international legal acts and legal documents by the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as the policy document priorities of the Republic of Latvia was one of the preconditions for a successful project realisation. Project philosophy is based on the objective to create such legal environment that would be favourable for children with basic principles as formulated in the guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe "On Child-friendly Justice".²⁰ These guidelines stipulate a row of significant standards for the provision of a children-friendly legal environment and the development of child justice.²¹ The aim of these guidelines is to improve the system of justice and adapt it to the specific children's needs. The guidelines contain basic provisions for European countries to apply in all cases when, despite the reason, a child is involved or gets into contact with criminal, civil or administrative justice.²² It has to be admitted that due to the changes in social priorities both in Europe and worldwide, the protection of the rights of a child defines the factors that endanger a favourable legal environment for children including more than just the situations when a child meets the system of justice because of having broken the law, become a victim or a witness of a crime.

- It is considered that a child is in a risk situation²³ also in the following cases²⁴: refugee and asylum seeker children;
- children forced to leave their homes and go to seek for an asylum in another part of their country²⁵ or another country of the same region due to nature disasters;
- children without a constant place of residence;
- children who are involved in employment inappropriate to their age, skills and maturity;
- children who have armed conflicts going on in their places of living;
- children who are involved or associated with any of the belligerent's human resources or are under special training for activities of military nature (child soldiers).

Although these risk situations are not in fact referable to children in Latvia,²⁶ there is definitely a need for specialists to be aware of and take into consideration.²⁷

²⁰ [Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child friendly justice](#) (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 November 2010 at the 1098th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

²¹ [Minimum Standards for Child protection in humanitarian action](#). Standard 14 - Justice for children (2012). Pages 128 – 131.

²² Authors' note: The term "justice" or justice in the systemic meaning (the system of justice) means three components of the field aimed at reaching common goals: a) legal framework (legal acts that stipulate legal relations); b) institutional system, and c) resources for the field (including the quality and quantity of human resources).

²³ Authors'note: Risk situation – a situation in which a child has appeared due to the coincidence of conditions or as the result of adult decisions which do not depend on the child's choice. This is a situation which is not created by the child and from which the child cannot get out without adult help (for instance, nature disasters, war, home accidents, parental divorce, bad relations among adult family members).

²⁴ [Interagency review of justice for children in a humanitarian context \(CPMS 14\)](#).

²⁵ ["Internally Displaced Persons"](#).

²⁶ Authors' note: They are referable to in rare cases, for instance, refugee children or children without a particular place of residence. However, the number of children in these categories is very low. Thus, for instance, children are without permanent place of residence only for a short period of time, whereas the number of refugee or asylum seeker children in Latvia is not big yet.

²⁷ About the situation in Latvia in 2014 see the informative report ["Overview of the situation of children in Latvia 2014"](#).

The activities carried out in the project are based on the principles and recommendations that are included in the following:

Council of Europe documents:	Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18; ²⁸
	Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families; ²⁹
	Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of the early psychosocial intervention in the prevention of criminality; ³⁰
	Child-friendly juvenile justice: from rhetoric to reality, Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2010 (2014) ³¹ and other. ³²
United Nations international documents:	Convention on the Rights of the Child (in force since 2 September 1990); ³³
	Declaration of the Rights of the Child (in force since March 1992); ³⁴
	UN Approach to Justice for Children (Guidance note of the UN Secretary General, September 2008); ³⁵
	Basic principles of restorative justice in criminal matters (2012); ³⁶
	Guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines, 14 December 1990); ³⁷
	Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules, 29 November 1985) ³⁸ and other.

The activities carried out in the project are also based on the development planning documents of Latvia:

- Guidelines "Latvia Suitable for Children 2004-2015"³⁹ (in particular Sections A, C and D) demonstrate a number of problems that hinder children's psychoemotional development in Latvia,

²⁸ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2012\)2](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

²⁹ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2011\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families.

³⁰ [Recommendation Rec \(2000\)20](#) on the role of the early psychosocial intervention in the prevention of criminality.

³¹ [Child-friendly juvenile justice: from rhetoric to reality.](#)

³² More about the documents by the Council of Europe and European Union see at the [website of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#), and the [website of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice](#).

³³ [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, but entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49.

³⁴ [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#), adopted on 20 November 1959, came into force in March 1992.

³⁵ [Guidance note of the Secretary-general: UN Approach to Justice for Children](#).

³⁶ [ECOSOC Resolution 2002/12](#): Basic principles on the use of restorative justice programmes in criminal matters.

³⁷ [United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency](#) (The Riyadh Guidelines), A/RES/45/112, 68th plenary meeting, 14 December 1990.

³⁸ [United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice](#) ("The Beijing Rules"), A/RES/40/33, 29 November 1985.

³⁹ Authors' note: Guidelines "[Latvia Suitable for Children](#)" stipulate that the Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the preparation and the Minister of Welfare is in charge of submitting the annual overview on the situation of children in Latvia to

such as poverty, remoteness, unequal possibilities to receive education, crime risks. To solve these and other problems stated in the guidelines, multisectoral cooperation principles⁴⁰ have been set in this project among the specialists of municipal and state institutions and non-governmental organisations;

- Guidelines for State Family Policy 2011-2017⁴¹ indicate that parenting is a difficult task therefore parents need support in the performance of their responsibilities; it is emphasised that during the first years of life a child needs particularly great amount of parental attention and care which is a precondition for a favourable child's development later on. At the age of 4 to 7 years, further acquisition of human relations goes on when the child learns behavioural norms from parental examples. In preschool and primary school period the child adapts in an out-of-family environment – preschool educational establishment, school, extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, the mother or the father has to return back in the labour market after child care leave and balance the professional career with parenting responsibilities. Often, parents do not have enough skills to perform this complicated task therefore it is important to support children's parents and at the same time strengthen the cooperation with school educators and positive relationships with the child.⁴²

Project tasks and results

In order to provide assistance to parents, educators and other specialists to create practice applying legal norms in the best interest of a child, three project municipalities in Latvia – Saldus, Kuldīga and Cēsis – developed a multidisciplinary cooperation model among the specialists of preschool and primary school, municipality and local non-governmental organisations with the aim to introduce in practice methodology for early identification and prevention of children's social behaviour risks corresponding the local needs. It was stated that the developed cooperation model and methodology had to include documents and project results that were based on the practice to be developed⁴³, valid (evidence-based) and therefore ready to be implemented in other municipalities in Latvia.

The methodology for early identification of children's social behaviour risks and cooperation with parents was developed during the performance and analysis of practical work – within 2 years more than 15 sets of workshops were led in preschool educational institutions and primary schools⁴⁴ for the children involved in the project and their parents. To facilitate the cooperation among the institutions and qualitative decision making to support families with children, inter-institutional work groups (IWG) were established. It was planned that the core of these work groups in each municipality will include two project specialists, preschool and primary school educators, and specialists from state and municipal institutions. One of the

the Cabinet of Ministers under particular procedure each year until 10 November (in the period from 2014 to 2016), including information on the implementation of the guidelines “Latvia Suitable for Children” in the previous year in the guidelines.

⁴⁰ Authors' note: Multisectoral cooperation is interinstitutional cooperation, namely, cooperation among various institutions that are involved in the protection of the rights of the child under Section 6, part 3 of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law.

⁴¹ [Guidelines for State Family Policy 2011-2017](#).

⁴² Authors' note: Get acquainted with the triangular cooperation model “child – parents – school/preschool – child” in the publication “[How to create an environment favourable for the child's development?](#)” by I. Kronberga and S. Sīle.

⁴³ Author's note: The term practice to be developed is a fixed (in writing or digitally) form of experience, method or a set of methods, or the practice of the application of legal acts corresponding to achieving particular objectives in the field or subfield (principles of international and national rights, aims of legal acts) and delivers positive result to the society and individuals.

⁴⁴ Authors' note: In general, 3 preschool educational institutions and 3 primary schools were involved in the project, which makes a total of 6 educational institutions.

main tasks of IWG was giving mutual colleague support in solving professional issues therefore it was important that the problems identified in municipalities were discussed also in the inter-municipal environment.

In order to give support to specialists of various fields during the fulfilment of the tasks, the Failure Elimination Tool (FET) was used. In fact, FET is a set of targeted planned colleague consultations. The aim of FET – to give specialists a possibility to solve professional problems in cooperation with the colleagues from other municipalities involved in the project and to eliminate failures in the professional actions, prevent repetition of mistakes and give mutual professional support.

Publicity activities planned and carried out during the project:

- project initiation conference.⁴⁵ The aim of the conference was to give the specialists involved in the project the possibility to receive more information on early interventions and prevention work with preschool and primary school aged children and their parents, and behavioural risk management. Experts from Norway, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Belgium took place in the conference introducing its participants with innovative methods in social work in their countries.
- Publications⁴⁶ on the protection of the rights of the child and early prevention.
- Final conference⁴⁷ where the project results and potential result sustainability were discussed. The best foreign practice examples (Lithuania, Norway, Estonia, Belgium, Bulgaria) were summarised in the final event and project monitoring conclusions were made publicly available.⁴⁸

Project target group

The direct target group of the project was both gender children at preschool educational institutions and primary schools and their families in three municipalities in Latvia: Kuldīga, Cēsis and Saldus. In the consultations with social workers and educators in Latvian municipalities, it was recognised that the most expressed behavioural problems are for preschool children at 4 and 5 years of age, and primary school children at Years 2 and 3. This is a period when children have adapted either in the preschool educational institution or primary school and therefore the individual features of the child's character, needs and attitudes towards events become visible, the development of communication with peers and self-realisation start forming⁴⁹. For instance, children at the age of 4 and 5 years start feeling proud about a job well done, the ability to solve problems and the necessity to identify with adults develop. Therefore it is important for the children to create contacts of different levels with parents and preschool educators to satisfy these needs. In the preschool period, children's adaptation process in the school environment continues: in year 1 it is more related to the acquisition and familiarisation with the new environment, whereas in year 2 and 3 children reach the phase of individuation where the child strives to show his individuality, personality, and skills. If this phase is successful, the child has integrated well in the group.

⁴⁵ "[Social inclusion as a preventive method of children's antisocial behaviour](#)", held on 27-28 November 2013.

⁴⁶ See, for instance: I.Kronberga "[European Union rights in the system of the protectin of the rights of the child in Latvia: Prevention of the Violation of Children's rights vs prevention of child delinquency](#)".

⁴⁷ "[Social inclusion as a preventive method of children's antisocial behaviour](#)", held on 29 September 2015.

⁴⁸ Presentation "[Reducing the number of children at risk: modelling of early intervention approaches](#)" by I. Kronberga.

⁴⁹ "[Help for Parents](#)".

Therefore it is very important that parents, educators and children can reach mutual understanding giving a safe environment for the child's development based on the rules that are understandable for the child.⁵⁰

In order to have the project idea practically implementable, it was planned to choose one preschool group with children aged 4 at the beginning of the project and their parents, and one year 2 class in each of the three municipalities. After the discussions with the management of educational institutions and teachers and taking into consideration their recommendations, 8 children and 8 their parents were selected in each educational institution (group and class) who were involved in the further progress of the project for 2 school years with a set of 22 workshops (2 school years x 11 workshops) to promote the mutual communication among parents, children and educators in the interest of safe development of the child. Performing the planned work with inclusive methods during the project, it was concluded that it is useful to include also other children and parents in the workshops if they wish to. Thus, the project specialists in collaboration with teachers evaluated and included a wider range of children and parents in the groups making, in fact, the project working methods even more inclusive. However, the proposal to participate in project activities was first made by the specialists to those families where at least one risk for mutual communication or child's behaviour exists.

In the previously implemented projects⁵¹ the conclusions have been drawn that “parenting skills do not appear at the birth of the child – these are particular skills for the parents to acquire. Therefore the acquisition of these skills have to be organised in a timely manner, before the risk situations in the family appear or the child demonstrates behavioural risks”. It is also indicated that “such instruments have to be implemented that influence parental attitude until the moment when they understand and accept the model of behaviour which is suitable for their children and parents themselves. Appropriate programmes have to be created for children and their parents together”. Selecting risks in the relationships between children and their parents, the identification of the following features were considered as risks:⁵²

- in family evaluation – split family, parental divorce, parental disregard, lack of emotionally warm relations between parents and children etc.;
- in children evaluation – flashes of anger, seclusion, tearfulness, lying, violent behaviour towards others (hitting, biting, scratching) and other.

Research Methodology

In order to reach the aim of the project, to fulfil its objectives, and in particular to strengthen and disseminate the project results, the recording and fortification of the achieved results i.e. monitoring process was performed all through the project. Monitoring process was carried out in accordance with the pre-set research methodology.⁵³

For a successful provision of project monitoring the following activities were performed:

⁵⁰ [“Age characteristics of children”](#).

⁵¹ [“Building a Support System to Prevent Juvenile delinquency”](#) and about the project [“Restorative Justice vs. Juvenile Delinquency: the Baltic States in the European Dimension”](#).

⁵² [Protecting children’s rights in criminal justice systems: A training manual and reference point for professionals and policymakers \(2013\)](#). Pages 20-21.

⁵³ Authors’ note: the planned research methods and methodology were gathered already by project planning and included in the project application submitted to the sponsor.

- 3 introductory seminars organised in Saldus, Cēsis and Kuldīga municipalities. The success of the planned objectives depends a great deal from how precise the specialists understand the tasks given to them and whether the project idea gets support among municipality specialists and the target group. Due to these reasons, special work of clarification was planned and performed at each of the sites for activity implementation. As the result, support and understanding from wider community were gained;
- Colleague consultations organised and Failure Elimination Tool (FET) developed. Colleague consultations were planned as the activities where project specialists from all municipalities could come together on regular basis. During these meetings, specialists from various municipalities exchanged information on more successful working methods and gained new knowledge on topicalities in the field of prevention. Altogether, 6 such meetings were organised where project specialists met practitioners from the State Inspectorate For Protection Of Children's Rights, State Probation Service, Ministry of Justice, as well as leading specialists of pedagogical and social work.⁵⁴ During the peer consultations with colleagues, also the problems of various natures are being solved, that appear while carrying out particular activities. Mainly, they are solved through mutual exchange of knowledge and sharing of information. All the solutions and problems that are discussed among the specialists get included in a special document, the Failure Elimination Tool. Such approach allows the project participants and other specialists not wait for the final monitoring report of the project but instead find immediate answers to the most widespread problems in the prevention work as well as participate in the creation of the good practice themselves;
- Methodological recommendations for the organisation of the project activities developed in collaboration with the members of the local communities and representatives of the responsible authorities. The organisation of the project work needs to be based on unified principles and organisational methods. Therefore, during the introductory seminars, methodological recommendations were introduced to the project specialists in municipalities in the form of discussions. Work organisation that is based on a unified system of methods make the performance of monitoring easier and increases the quality of the research work and the sustainability of the results. At the same time, it is essential that the project implementation team involve in the development of the organisational methodology for the project, in order to have the objectives based on the current positive practice instead of being imposed on by “the higher levels”;
- Assessment of the performed activities submitted with the evaluation of their success and failures. All through the project, the activities performed in the project were assessed and the results were recorded using such methods as interview, questionnaires, and focus group discussions (for instance, in the case of FET);
- Information gathered on the progress of the project, comparing project results in three municipalities. Project results were recorded both in all three municipalities together (questionnaire for municipal specialists and practitioners in IWG – Interinstitutional Work Group) and in each municipality separately (questionnaire for children’s parents and family members);
- Methodology and recommendations on multidisciplinary cooperation model corresponding to the local needs developed among the specialists of preschool and primary school, municipal self-government and local non-governmental organisations for the early recognition and prevention of social behavioural risks and implementation of innovative social services:
 - The development of the methodology was based on the specialist resources available in the municipalities. Work groups from each municipality acknowledged human and other

⁵⁴ [“Colleague Consultations”](#)

resources in the municipality and involved them to carry out the prevention activities. In order to develop an evidence-based summary of methods for the performance of early prevention work, a cycle of 22 lessons for children and their parents was planned and implemented in pre-school educational institutions and schools in 3 municipalities. Analysing these lessons 15 of them were identified to serve as the basis to develop the methodology for the organisation of early prevention work in primary school and pre-school. Thus, a cycle of 15 lessons was created and tested in practice to improve the cooperation among children, parents, and educational institutions for the performance of the primary (early) prevention activities with a target group.

- Recommendations on the interinstitutional cooperation model were developed according to the IWG experience during the project, FET included solutions and the composite evaluation of primary prevention activities.
- Multidisciplinary cooperation model was used in the form of IWG where specialists from educational institutions, municipal social services and local NGOs were gathered together. The aim of the IWG was to analyse the performed lessons and elaborate recommendations to improve them, an use this experience as the basis for the development of the methodology for preventive work in pre-school and primary school educational institutions;
- The knowledge and practice summaries from the project were tested and approved in two project conferences.⁵⁵ The practice to be developed in Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Norway, Estonia and Belgium was analysed in the form of discussions.

The results of the monitoring process were strengthened and fixed in the research or the final monitoring report. The aim of the monitoring report was to introduce the practice recognised as potential for development and conclusions drawn from the project to specialists in Latvia and abroad.

Project monitoring report includes the following project results:

- Analysis of the practices established in the municipalities for the work with target groups (questionnaire for the interinstitutional work group);
- Analysis of the recorded results from work with parents and children (questionnaire for project specialists in municipalities);
- Summary of the methods developed by the NGOs and municipal specialists of educational work (three methods for primary (early) prevention work with pre-school and primary school children, their parents and families);
- Analysis of the discussions and specialist opinions from FET meetings (Failure Elimination Tool);
- Bulgarian experience for work with children in the field of primary prevention is added to the monitoring report.

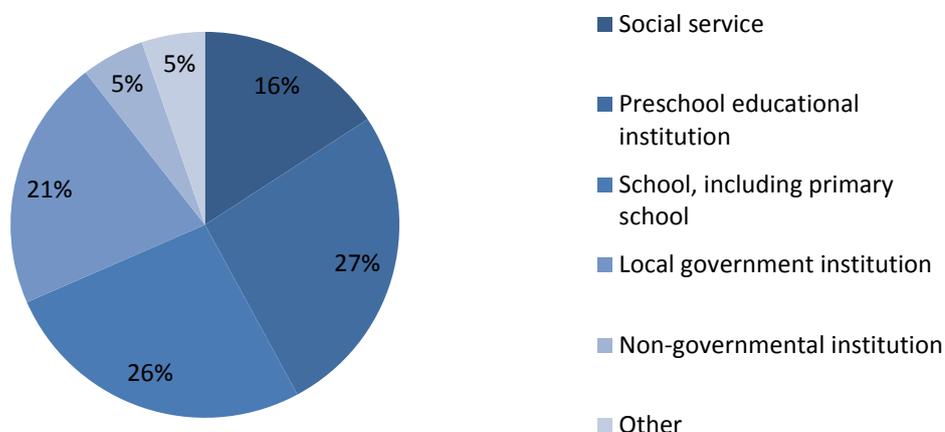
⁵⁵ [“Social inclusion: preventive measures of children’s anti-social behaviour”](#), held on November 27-28, 2013, Materials from the 2nd conference [“Social inclusion as the preventive method of children’s anti-social behaviour”](#), held on September 29, 2015.

Results of project participant questionnaires

In order to have project participants' opinion on the activities carried on during the project and their results – sustainability, usefulness, suitability for target groups – three questionnaires for project participants were used. In compliance with the methodology, project participants were divided into three groups according to their roles in the project activities. Thus, the following specialists participated in the questionnaires: specialists from municipal (Saldus, Kuldīga, Cēsis) Inter-institutional work groups; educators, specialists of educational, social work and other practitioners from the involved municipalities; and parents and family members of the children who were engaged in the project activities.

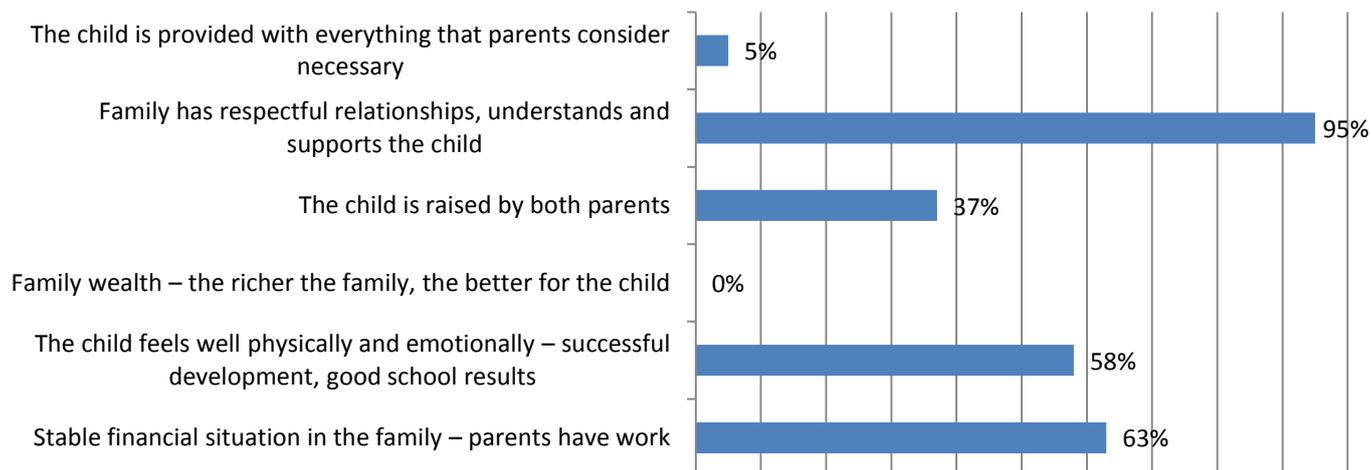
Inter-institutional work group specialists' opinion on preventive work

What is your current/permanent workplace?



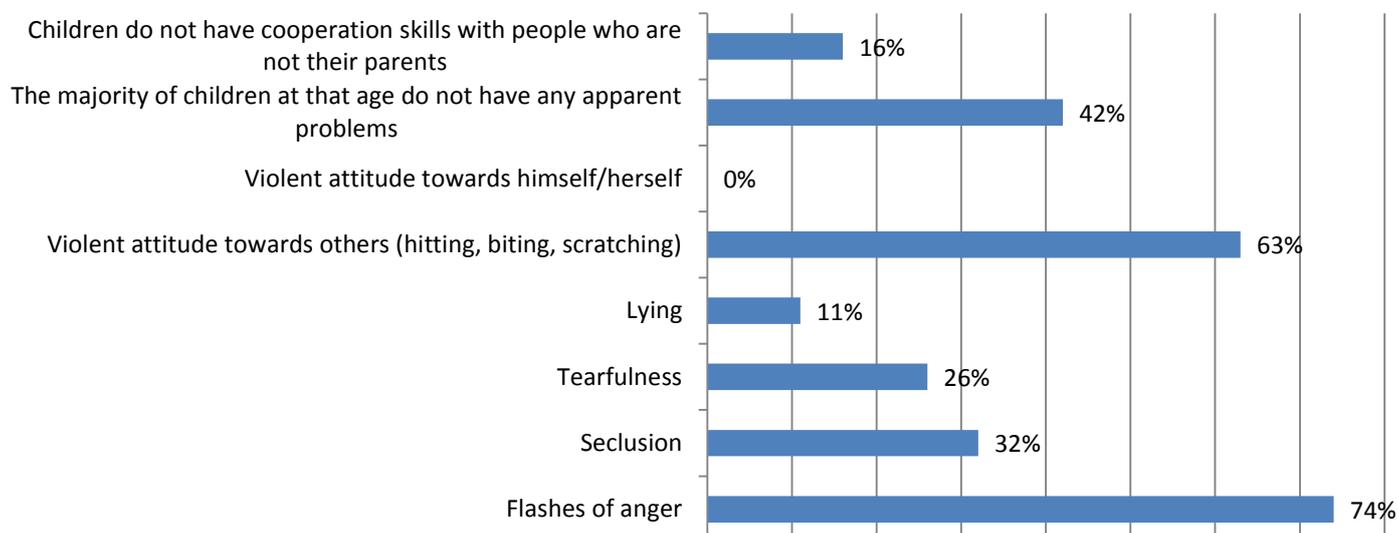
An Inter-institutional work group (IWG) was formed in each municipality where project activities took place. It consisted of the representatives of social service, educational institutions (pre-schools and primary schools), non-governmental organisations and municipal institutions. Mostly educational institutions and municipal institutions – social service (16%) – were represented in IWG. In this case, the specific character of the project has to be taken into account – the majority of the activities were connected to primary schools and pre-school educational institutions. The specialists joined IWG voluntarily and, as it can be concluded from the questionnaire, admitted that active cooperation with colleagues in solving acute family and child related situations on daily basis provided a possibility to act more professionally, more efficient and in the best interest of the child.

What testifies the most about the child’s wellbeing in the family?



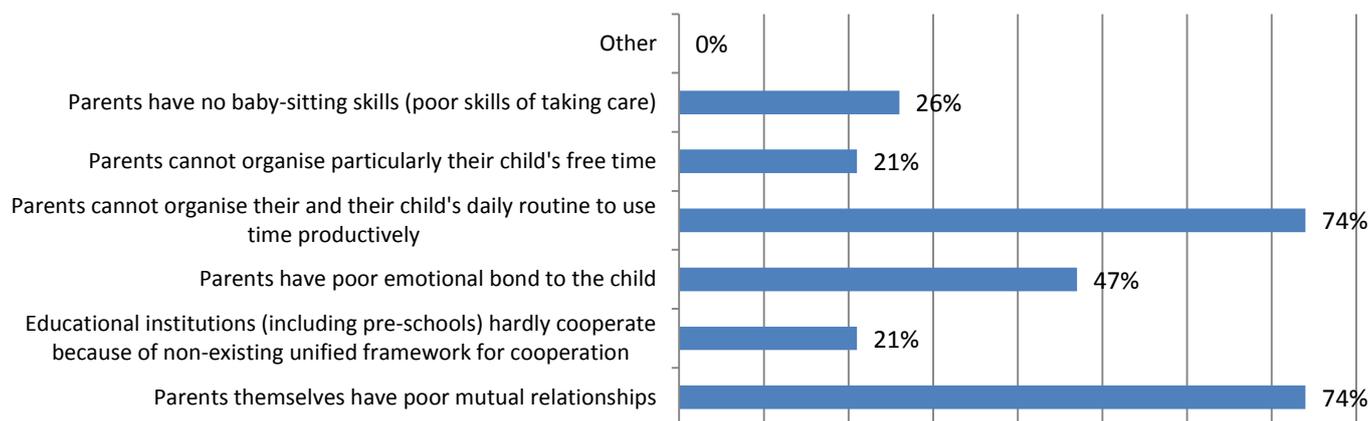
Taking into consideration that the IWG specialists’ task was to find and appraise methods for work with children and their families who are under the risk of social exclusion due to various reasons, the aim of monitoring was to clarify what indicates about a family’s wellbeing and what, in the opposite, show that the child needs special attention from educators and social workers. It was pointed out that the wellbeing in the family is characterised by respectful relationships and the family understands and supports the child (95%); also the indicators of stable financial situation and parental employment (63%) as well as the physical and emotional development of the child and success at school (58%) were mentioned with the same level of importance.

Which behavioural risks are the most common in pre-school and primary school children?



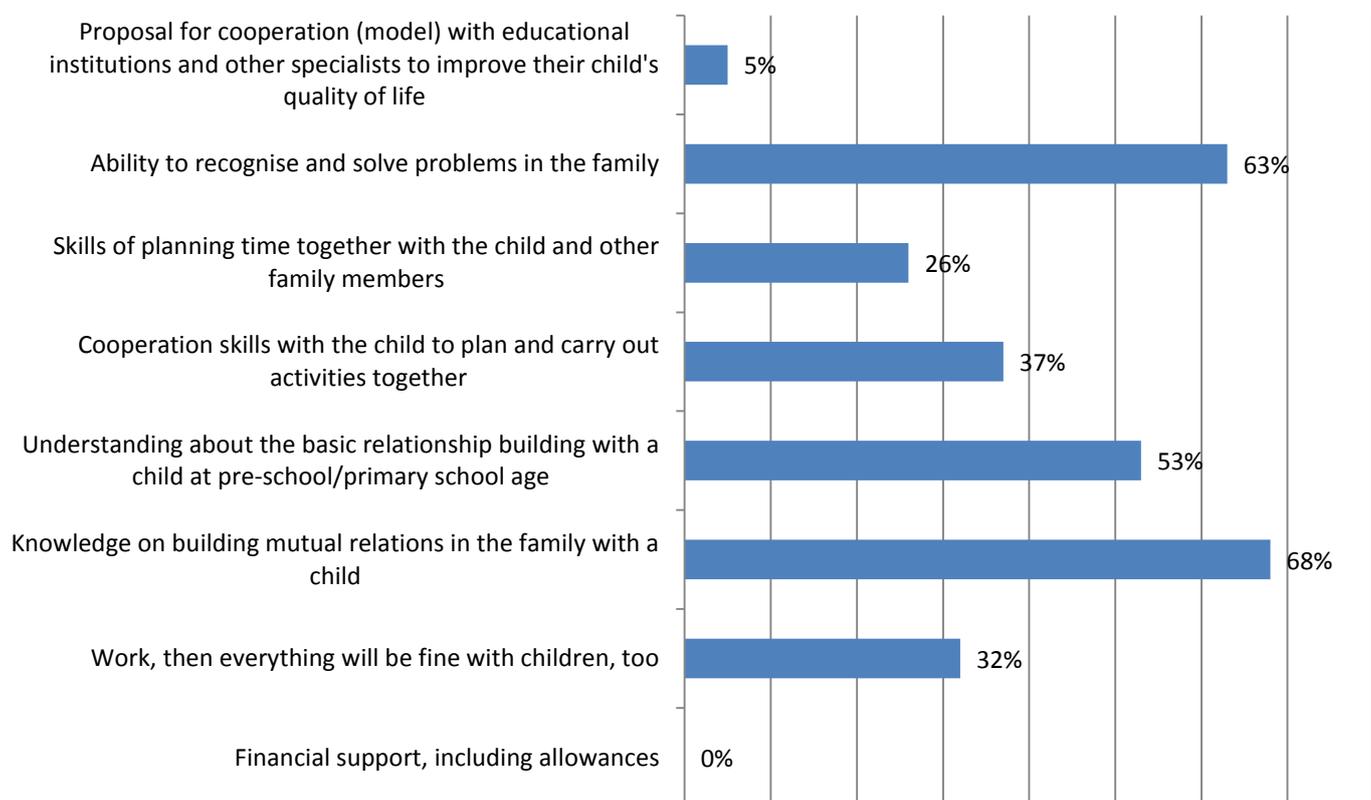
Specialists indicated that pre-school and primary school children mostly have a number of behavioural risks typical to this particular age group, including flashes of anger (74%), violence towards other children: biting, hitting, scratching (63%), whereas 42% respondents answered that children of this age practically do not have any significant behavioural problems.

In your opinion, what difficulties do parents face in children upbringing?



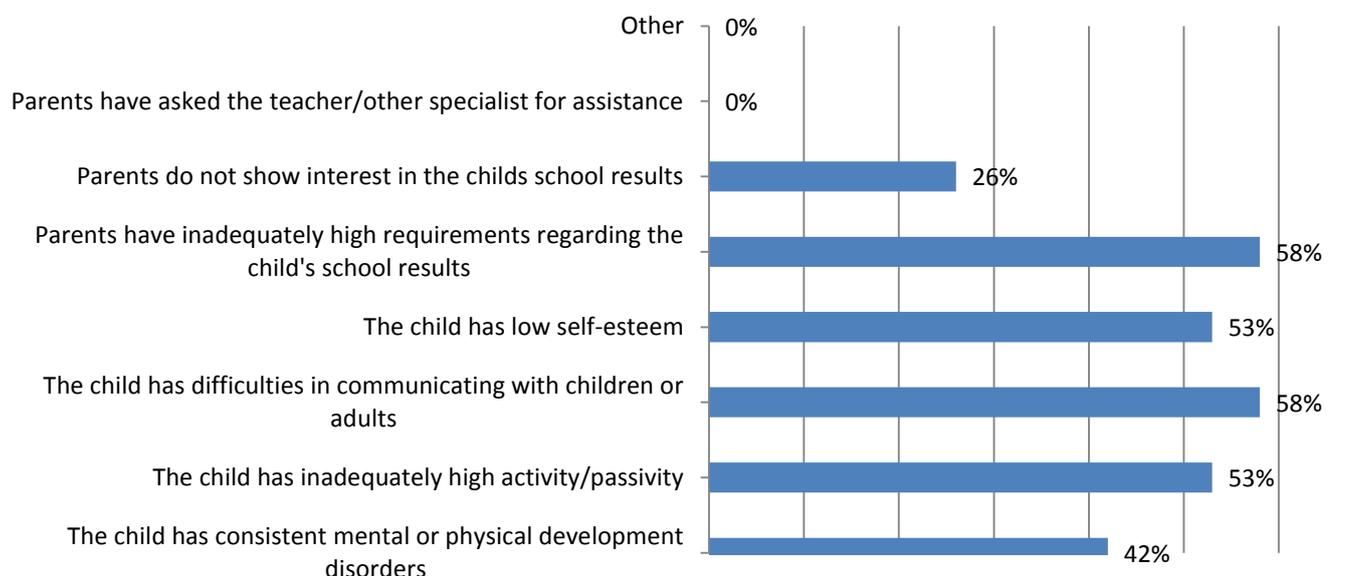
Specialists indicated that the parents have the biggest difficulties in children upbringing if they themselves have poor mutual relationships (74%) and if they are not capable of organising their and their children’s daily routine to spend their free time productively (74%).

What support do parents need most?



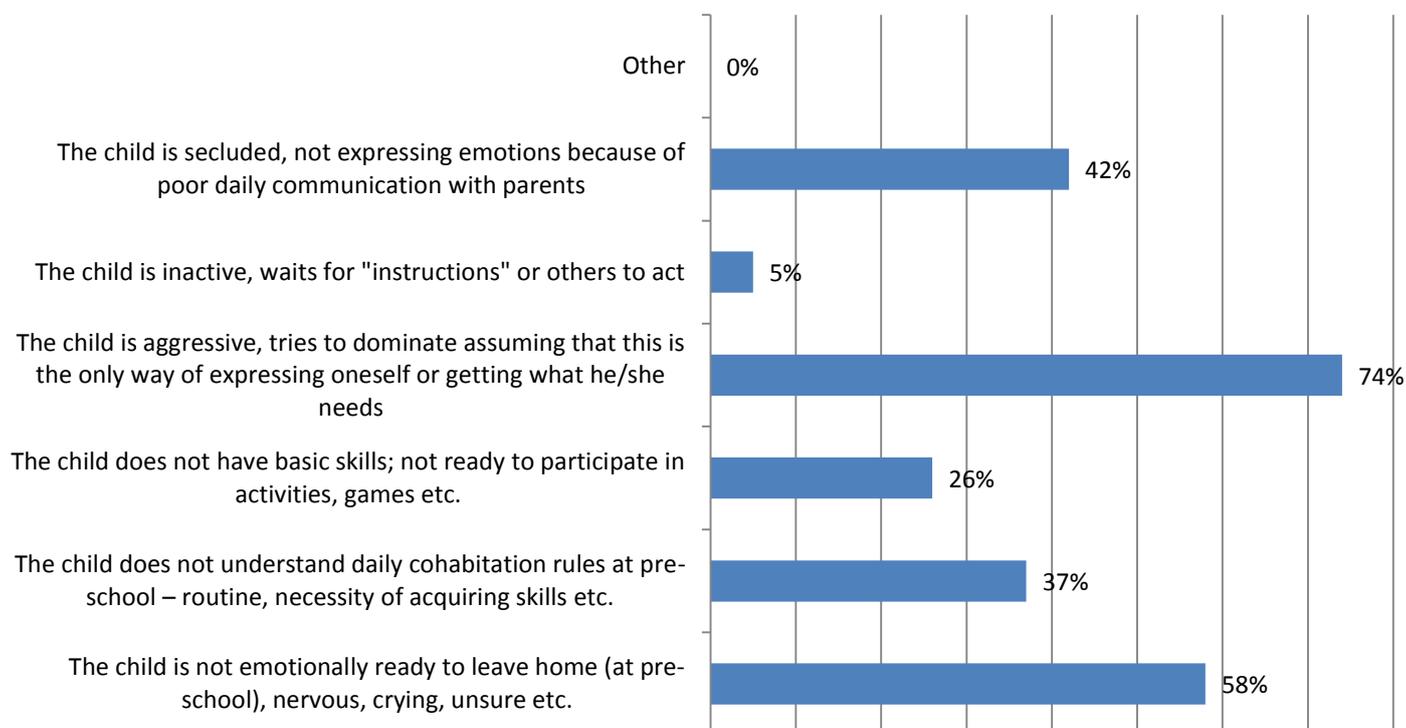
When raising children, mostly parents need knowledge on building mutual relations in the family with a child (68%) and the ability to recognise and practically solve problems in the family (63%).

What indicates that a child may have behavioural problems in the future?

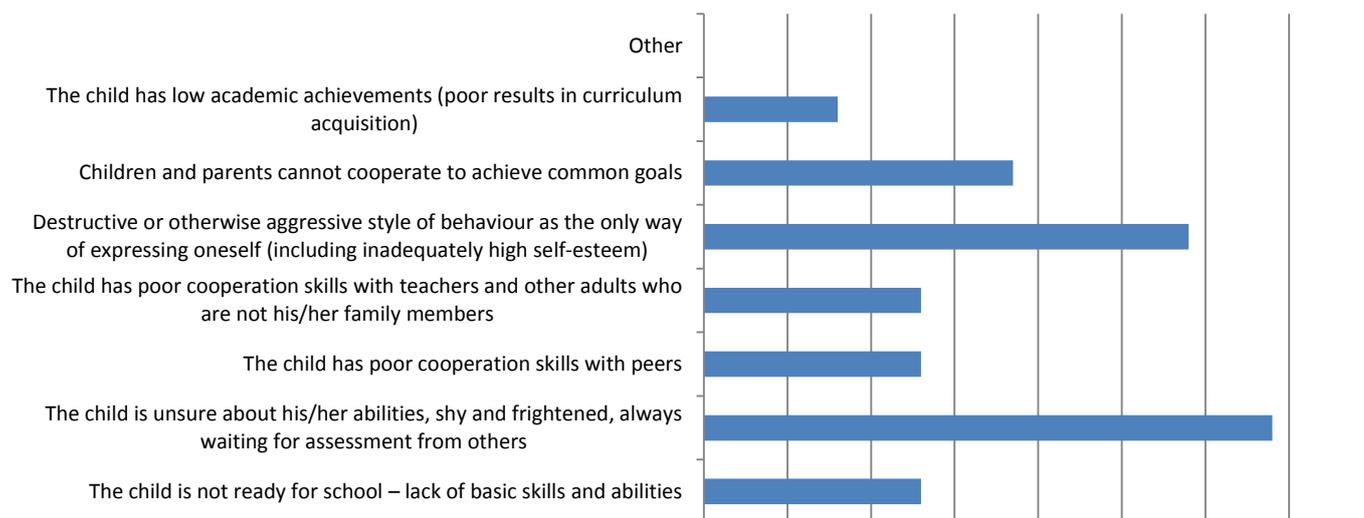


Planning and performing preventive work, it is important to be able to identify the signs that show that the child may have any behavioural problems in the future. Only by recognising these signs, it is possible to give support in order to prevent risks both in the child's behaviour and in the family in a timely manner. Specialists indicated that the most occurring signs showing possible risks in the future are the following: the child's parents have inadequately high requirements regarding the child's performance and achievement at school (58%) and the child has difficulties with communication with adults or other children (58%). At the same time, specialists pointed out that a reaction should follow in situations when inadequately high child's activity or passivity can be observed (53%) and the child has very low self-esteem (53%).

In your opinion, what problems in behaviour do children have at the age of 3 to 6?



In your opinion, what problems in behaviour do children have at the age of 7 to 10?



IWG specialists marked that at the age of 3 to 6, children mostly have two types of problems in their behaviour:

- aggressive behaviour and trying to dominate thinking that it is the only model to express oneself and receive what he/she wants (74%);
- the child is not emotionally ready to stay somewhere else but in the family, often cries, is not sure about himself/herself (58%).

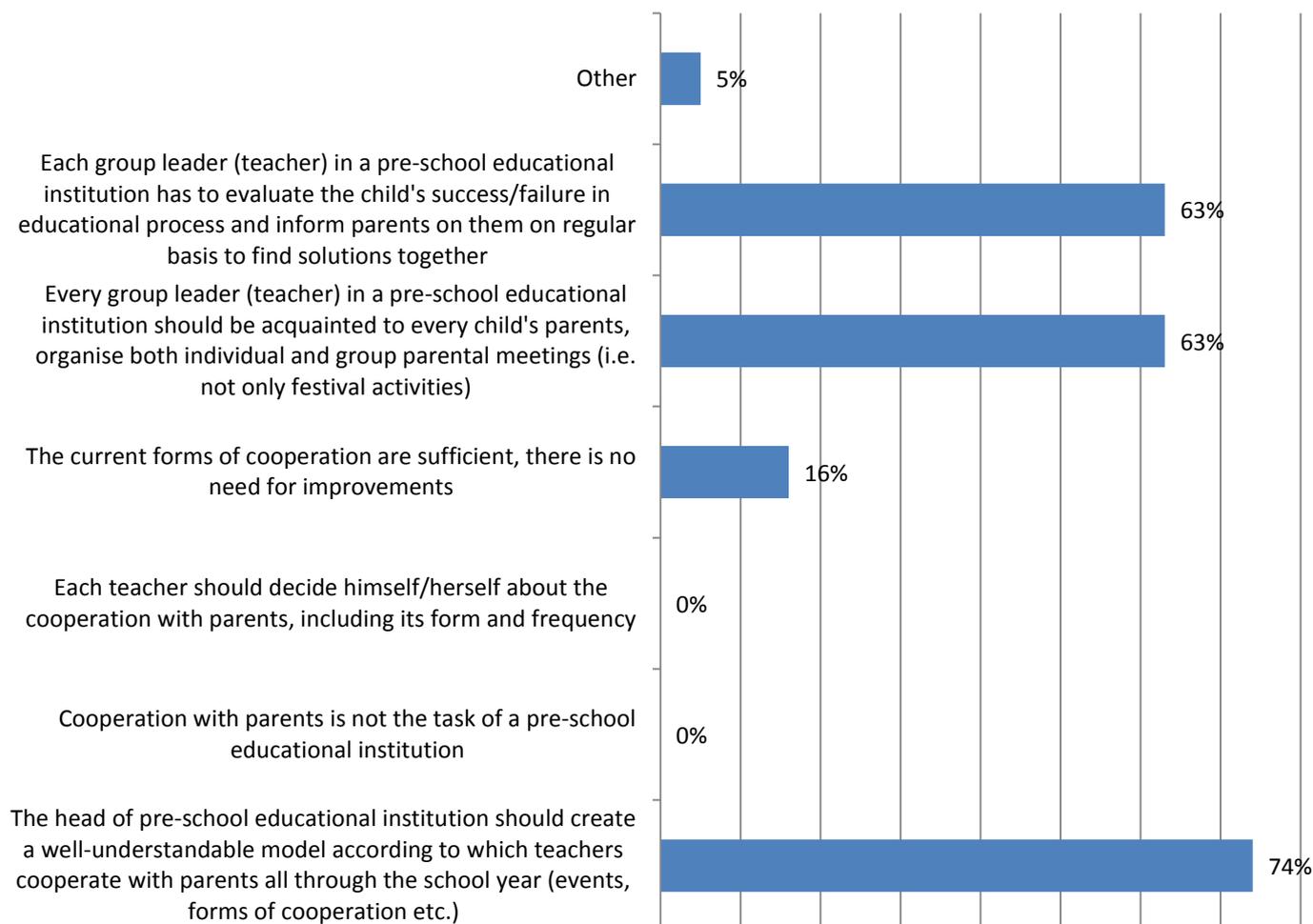
Answering to this question with regard to children aged 7 to 10, specialists indicated that:

- the child is unsure about his/her abilities and therefore is shy and frightened, non-stop waiting for assessment from aside (68%);
- the child has destructive or in any other manner aggressive style of behaviour as the only way of self-actualisation including inadequately high self-esteem (58%).

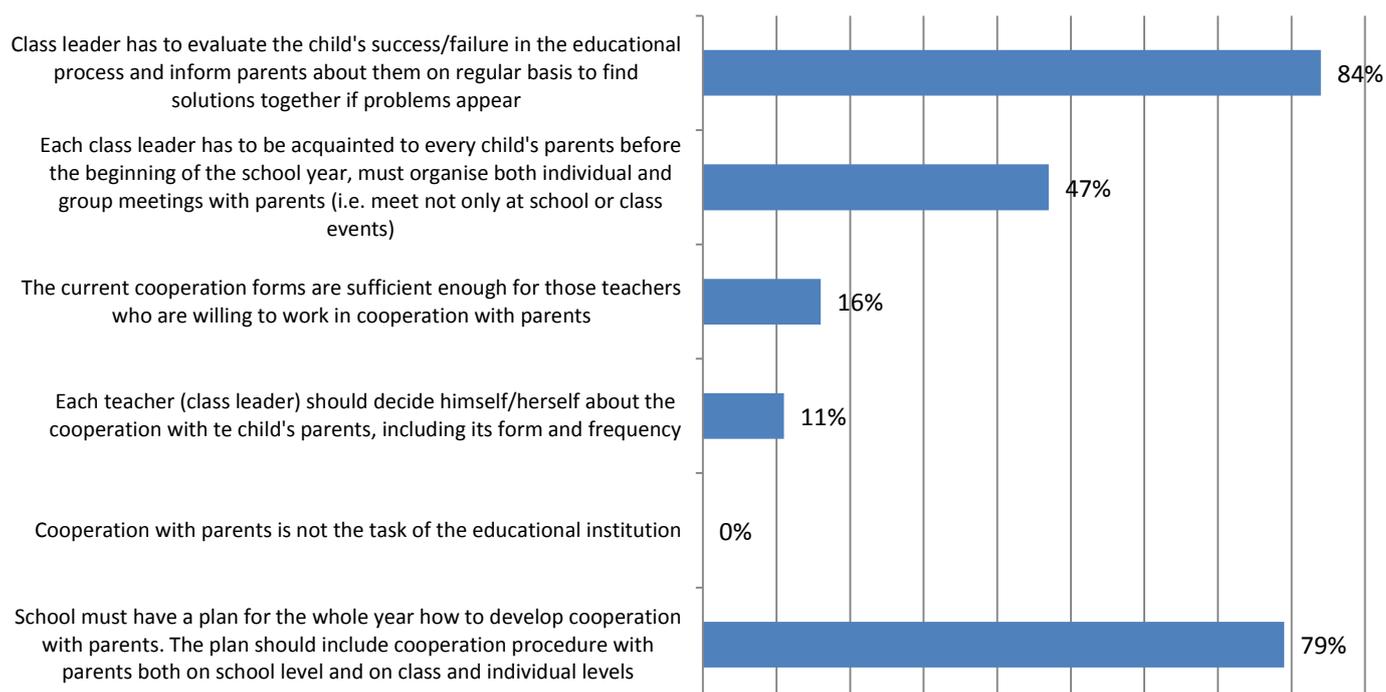
It testifies that the preparation of the child for life in social environment is very significant also on the emotional level (pre-school experience) not only on the level of basic social skills (for instance, ability to feed or dress oneself without help), as well as the knowledge of understanding various behavioural models, their consequences, respecting oneself and others. It is not enough that the child is only told about the necessary behaviour – it is equally significant to understand these behavioural models in the level of particular actions (algorithms). At the same time, it is important that the child understands on such practical skills how the school works, how it differs from pre-school educational institution, what exactly differs, what is expected from the child. If the child is aware of himself/herself, his/her actions, feels sure about his/her skills and adults' expectations, the child's behaviour will be predictable both for the parents and for the teachers. In such situation, it will be much easier to anticipate risks in the child's behaviour, family situations and give preventive support before problems grow.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ I.Kronberga "[School rules: the child does not have to memorize them but understand](#)" (2015).

What should be prioritized developing the cooperation between pre-school educational institutions and parents in the interest of the child?



What should be prioritized developing the cooperation between primary school and parents in the interest of the child?



It is very important that a close cooperation between the child's parents and educational institution begin already at pre-school stage becoming a common routine. Actions may not be considered as carried out in the best interest of the child if educators and parents start cooperating only when the child is already expressing particular behavioural risks or behaves in a manner that is not acceptable for others⁵⁷. IWG specialists in the three municipalities in Latvia indicated what should the priorities be when developing the cooperation between the child's parents and educational institutions:

- in pre-school educational institution – the head of the pre-school should create a well-understandable model according to which teachers cooperate with parents all through the school year, including common events, activities and cooperation forms (74%);
- at primary school – class leader has to evaluate the child's success/failures in the process of acquiring education on regular basis and inform the child's parents about them in timely and regular manner in order to find solutions together in cases of problems (84%). The school also has to provide accepted plan for the school year about how the cooperation with parents is organised. Such plan should include the procedure of cooperation with the child's parents both in school, class and individual level (79%).

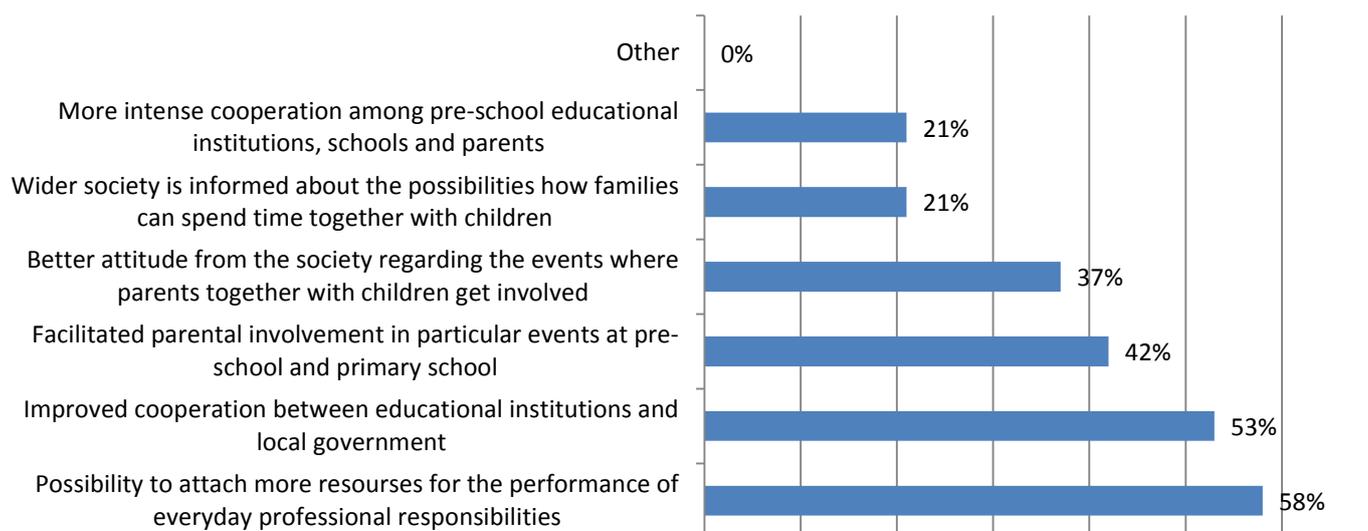
Thus, the specialists point out that the cooperation with parents need to be planned, systemic and regular but not fragmented; it has to be predictable and supportive both from the side of the educational institution and the child's parents.

IWG specialists from the municipalities indicated that in the organisation and leading of emotional communication workshops for parents and children at pre-school educational institutions it is important that the parents join the workshops together with their children, whereas the workshops could be organised in parts where, for instance, parents and children could have separate tasks in one part of the workshop and work together in the other part of the workshop (74%) (a); in order to provide professional support in the communication between parents and children thus having true preventive effect, teachers have to make careful analysis about what communication problems exist between parents and children and only then plan the topic of the workshop and choose the method (68%).

63% of the respondents indicated that while performing their professional duties in educational institutions they have had reasonable suspicion that parents solve their conflicts with children in a violent manner; 58% mentioned that there have been situations when teachers knew that children are flogged; 47% of the respondents indicated that there have been cases in their practices that parents have turned to them (at the educational or municipal institution) to find solution for conflicts in which their children and other children are engaged.

⁵⁷ M.Luksa "[Early prevention – not to let small risk grow into juvenile delinquency](#)" (2014).

What are the benefits from inter-institutional cooperation organising work at pre-school educational institutions and primary schools?



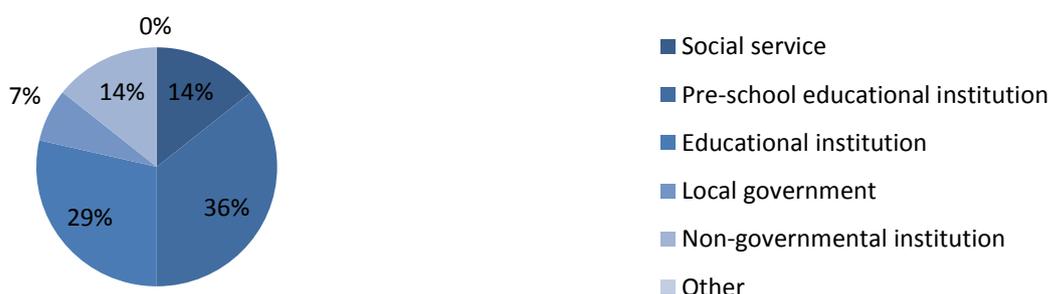
Preventive work has multidisciplinary and inter-institutional pattern, it means that in order to perform this work in an effective and qualitative manner and have its planned results, an environment, a framework should be created where specialists from various fields and various institutions could cooperate together. Specialists who participated in the questionnaire admitted that while they were working in the inter-institutional environment during the implementation of the project they had a possibility to attach more resources for the performance of their everyday duties (58%), cooperation between educational institutions and local government increased (53%), and parental involvement in particular events at pre-school educational institutions and primary school improved (42%).

74% of the respondents indicated that IWG is a good solution as it gives the specialists possibilities to discuss problems in a wider circle and find solutions together; whereas 47% emphasised that IWG is a new form of cooperation in the field of education which should be improved further, including the establishment of its legal framework.

The respondents from various municipalities in Latvia admitted that inter-institutional work groups should involve specialists from educational and municipal institutions (74%) and municipal social work specialists (63%).

Questionnaire for municipal leading educators, teachers and social specialists on the possibilities and benefits of preventive work

What is your current/permanent workplace?



In additions to Inter-institutional work group, a range of specialists, such as heads and deputy heads of educational institutions, various specialists from social service, educators, psychologists, other specialists from the local government and non-governmental institutions and other, were involved in the project not joining the work group directly but supporting work group efforts and particular project activities with their professional experience and knowledge. In general, each municipality was represented by one non-governmental institution, one pre-school educational institution and one school (primary school), namely: in Cēsis the partners of the association "Mazās pēdas" were Cēsis City Pastariņš Elementary School and Cēsis City Pre-school Educational Institution No 3; in Kuldīga the partners of the foundation "Mamma mammai fonds" during the project were 2 pre-school educational institutions, "Bitīte-attīstības centrs" and "Cīrulītis", as well as Kuldīga Alternative Primary School; in Saldus foundation Centre for children's development "Saulīte" cooperated with Saldus Elementary school and special pre-school educational institution "Cerībiņa". Specialists from these organisations and institutions were included both in IWG and project implementation activities supporting them with their professional competence.

Specialists admitted that the workshops carried out with the children and their parents in cooperation with municipal and educational institutions were of high importance because:

"Relationships among children, parents and school staff improved;

Parents had a possibility to receive extensive information from various specialists, and children were provided with substantial and informative free time activities;

Mutual cooperation among parents, children and teachers was enhanced; participants gained skills to ask for help in case of need and to study and understand their children and themselves;

Children and parents had a chance to meet in a neutral environment and spend free time productively which helped strengthening their mutual relations;

Parents had a chance not only to get to know but also try in practice several methods how to cooperate with children in order to prevent flashes of anger and disobedience, rage and whims;

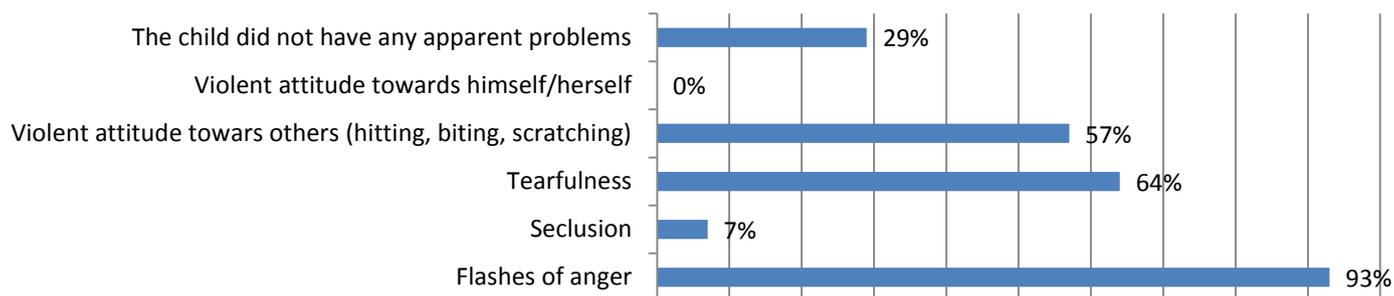
The project showed the parents how important it is to notice and work together with their children. It helped to understand that the time spent with the child is pleasant and useful both for the child and parents themselves. Parents from disadvantageous families could observe how other families treat their children and learn in an indirect manner;

In every workshop, both parents and children got theoretical and practical experience for various creative and interactive activities, they took an active part in discussions on the use of the received information in practice. Knowledge and skills from the workshops improved the development of the personality of every parent and child which is a precondition for a favourable social environment to raise a child in the family;

Common activities and acquisition of knowledge and skills, sharing experience and possibility to receive individual consultations and assistance were the most useful;

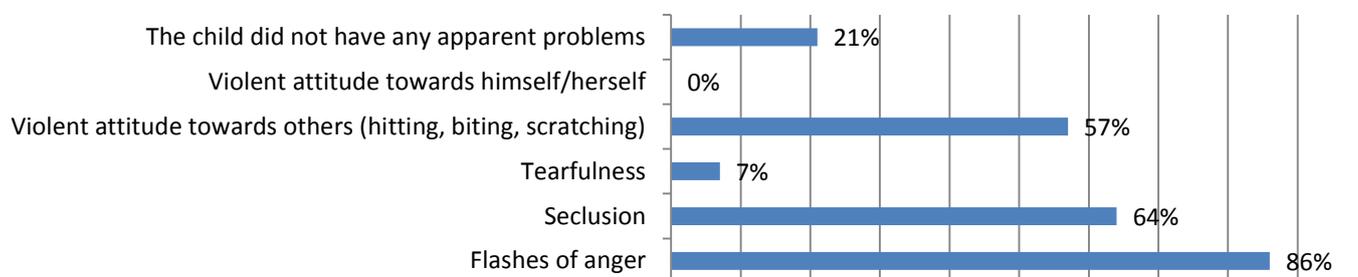
All this experience was a good basis for making bonds with the family, later it can serve as a significant argument to refrain from criminal actions".

In your opinion, what behavioural risks did the children (families) have at the pre-school educational institution?



Specialists indicated from their practical experience that children at pre-school age most often have flashes of anger (93%), tearfulness (64%) and violent attitude towards others – hitting, biting, scratching (57%), whereas only 29% of the respondents answered that children did not have any apparent problems.

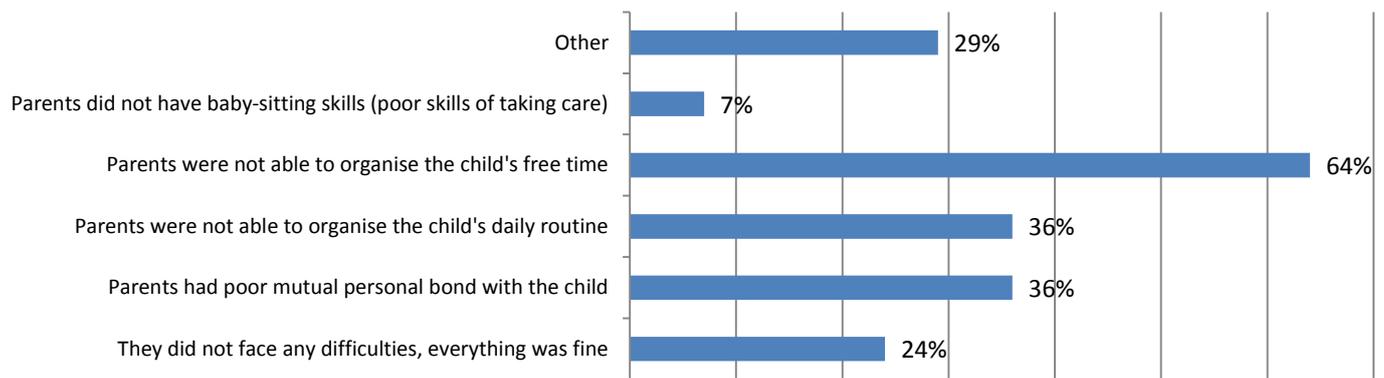
In your opinion, what behavioural risks did the children (families) have at primary school?



Evaluating their experience in work with children at primary school age, the specialists who participated in the questionnaire admitted that the most frequent behavioural risks were flashes of anger (86%), seclusion (64%) and violent attitude towards others (57%).

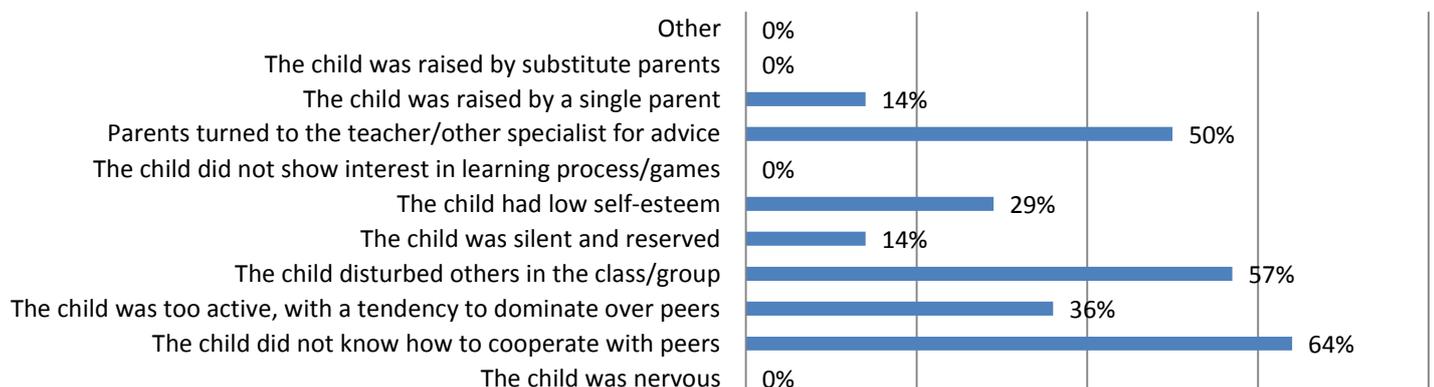
Comparing both specialist evaluations on pre-school and primary school aged children, a conclusion can be drawn that the child's utmost behaviour (flashes of anger/tearfulness) changes after the pre-school period and seclusion becomes dominant. From the point of view of prevention it has to be considered a risk factor which can lead to higher level aggression towards others or the child himself/herself if not paid adequate attention to. Therefore, a special attention has to be paid to the children's behavioural problems at pre-school age because then it is still possible to prevent potential problems in the future using less resources (human, time, financial).

In your opinion, what difficulties did parents face in children upbringing?



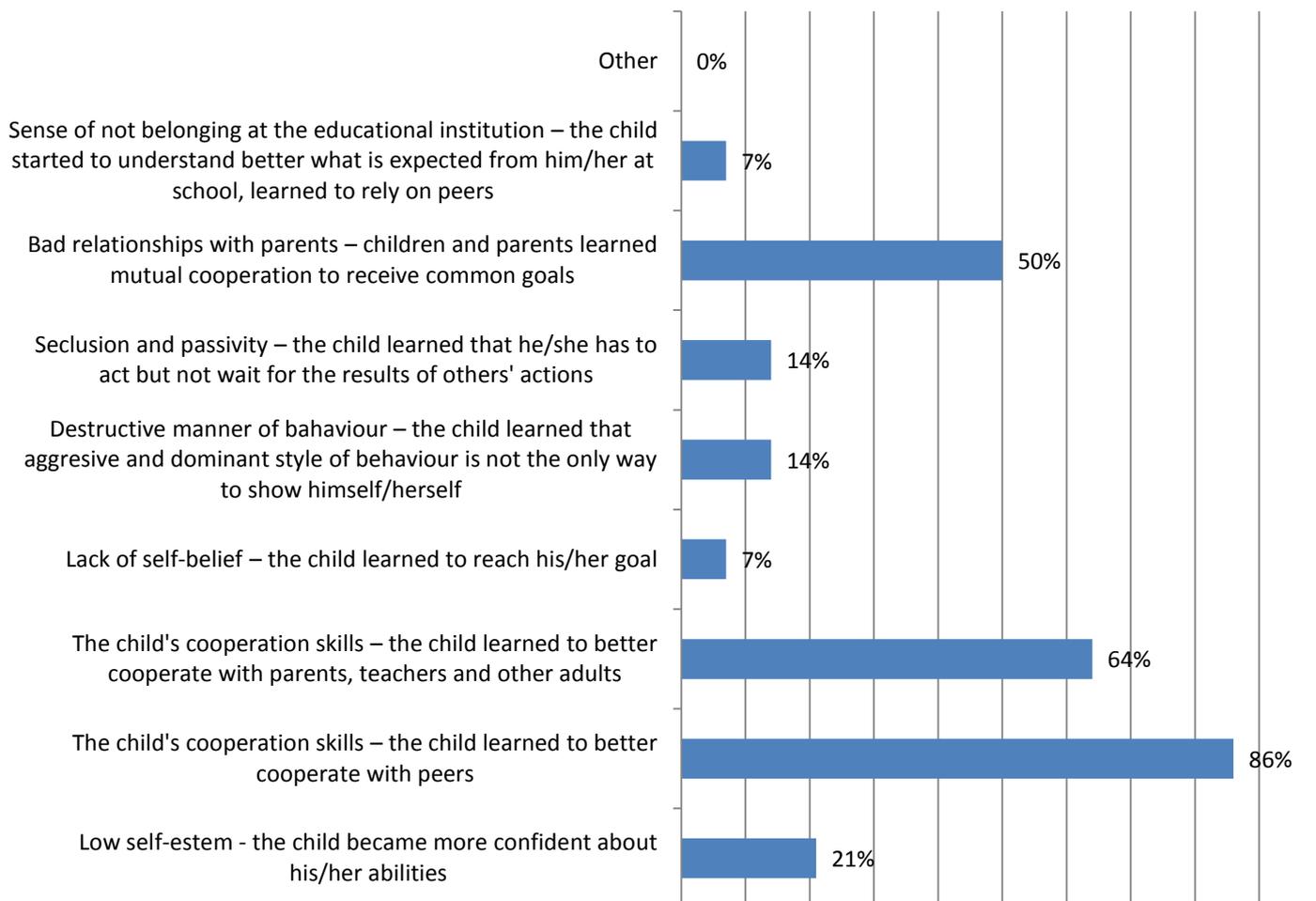
64% of the municipal specialists mentioned in the questionnaire that the biggest problem for the parents faced in children upbringing process is the lack of skills to organise free time. It means that these skills are particularly necessary for parents. Providing them, even if it means allocating the teacher's time for the development of parents' skills, the teachers themselves solve their future problems with particular child's behaviour; this is a possibility to prevent potential antisocial behavioural risk before it emerges. As the information from the educators showed in the project, not always the organisation of free time activities are directly related to financial investment and particularly expensive extra-curriculum activities for children. Many problems can be solved through time management and exploration of additional resources which stay unnoticed in everyday routine. For instance, common evening rituals in the family (it does not matter if the family consists only of a child and a father or mother, or a grandparent). The most important thing is that the child may trust and rely on previously planned regular and understandable actions (at least some of them constant, not changing), the child starts feeling safe in what happens, understands that daily routine is predictable and can be planned – it means that the child feels that he/she is able to manage it. Thus, the child is prevented from unpredictable behaviour (for instance, "friends" invitation to go somewhere without informing parents, truancy and leaving home/school without anyone knowing etc.) and its harmful consequences. However, if the parents fail to plan time, the child is unable to learn it; or if teachers do not follow their promises, the child will never do. In this case, situations may lead to mutual disappointment and unpredictable child's behaviour in the future.

How / on what basis did you identify that children had behavioural risks? What indicated on them?



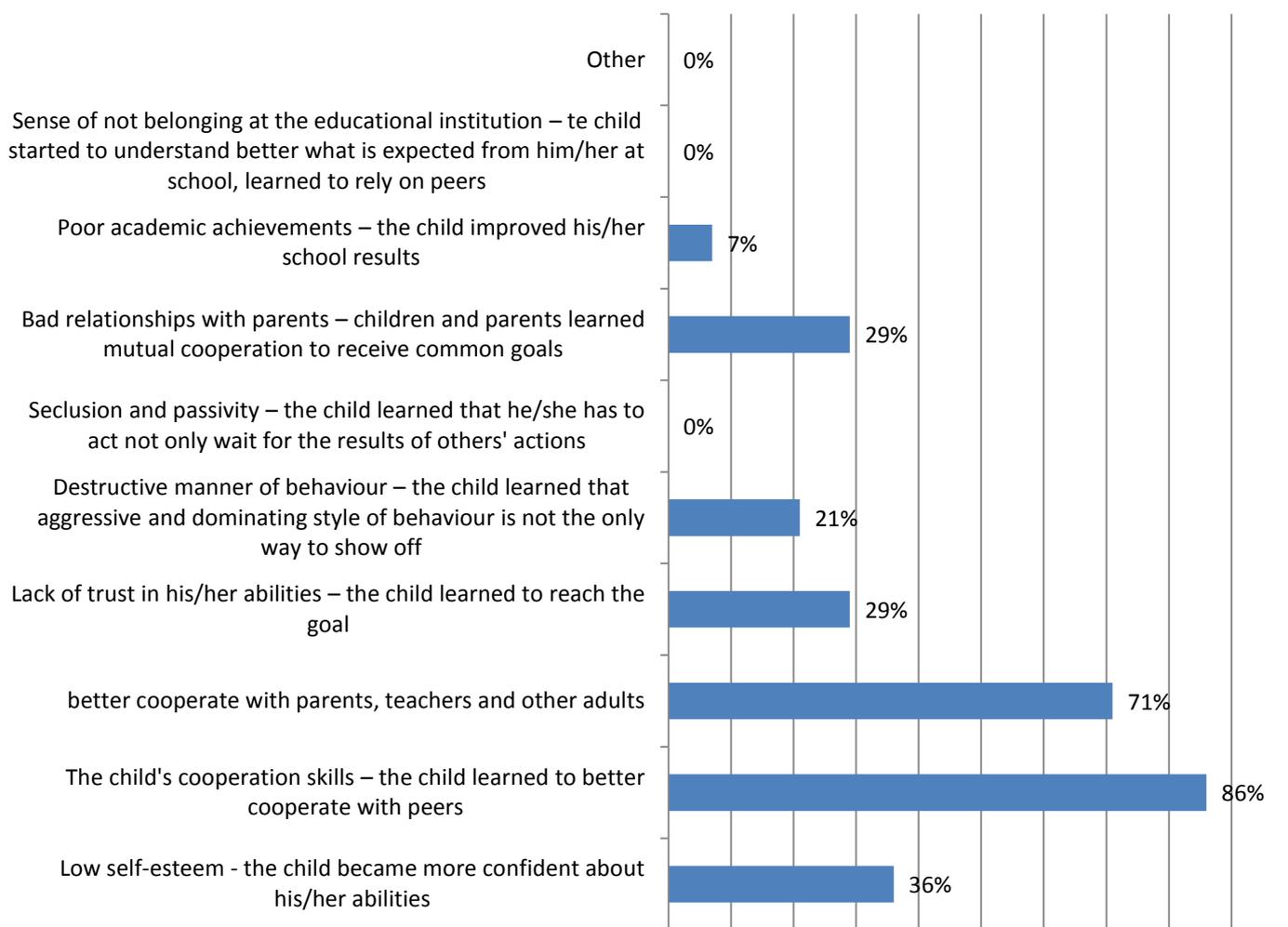
Specialists admitted that behavioural risks in children were indicated to by the child’s inability to cooperate with class/group mates (64%), the child was disturbing other children in the educational institution (57%) or parents asked for advice in the educational institution (50%).

What behavioural problems for children at pre-school educational institution were addressed (solved) as the result of project activities?



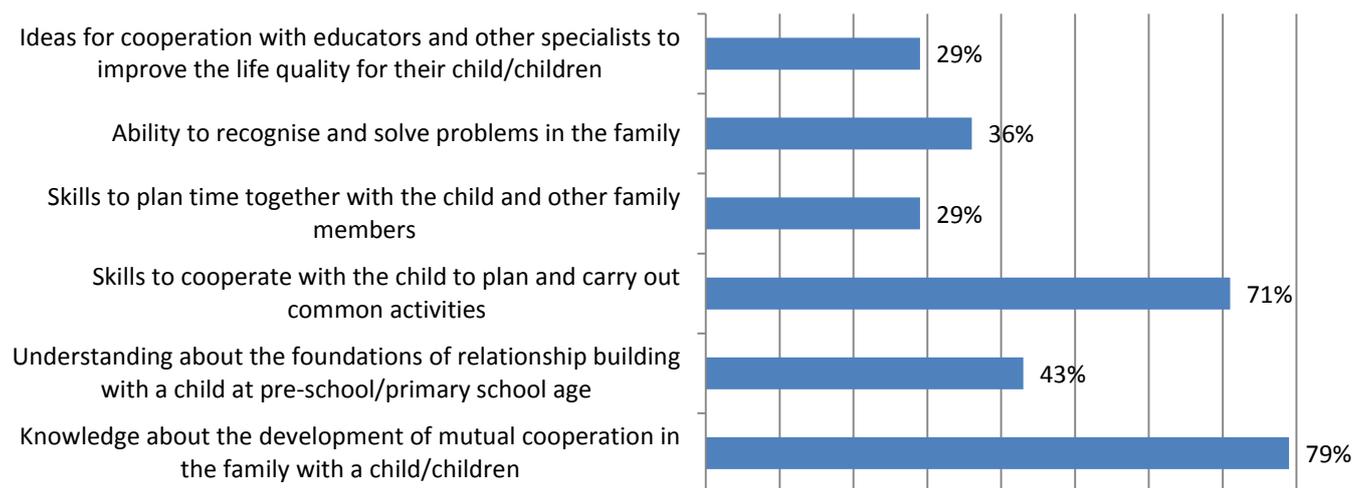
As the result of project activities the problems appearing in the pre-school educational institution were addressed by increasing the child’s skills of communicating with peers (86%), parents and other adults (64%), and improving the bad relationships with parents teaching the children and parents how to cooperate for reaching common goals (50%).

What behavioural problems for children at primary school were addressed (solved) as the result of project activities?



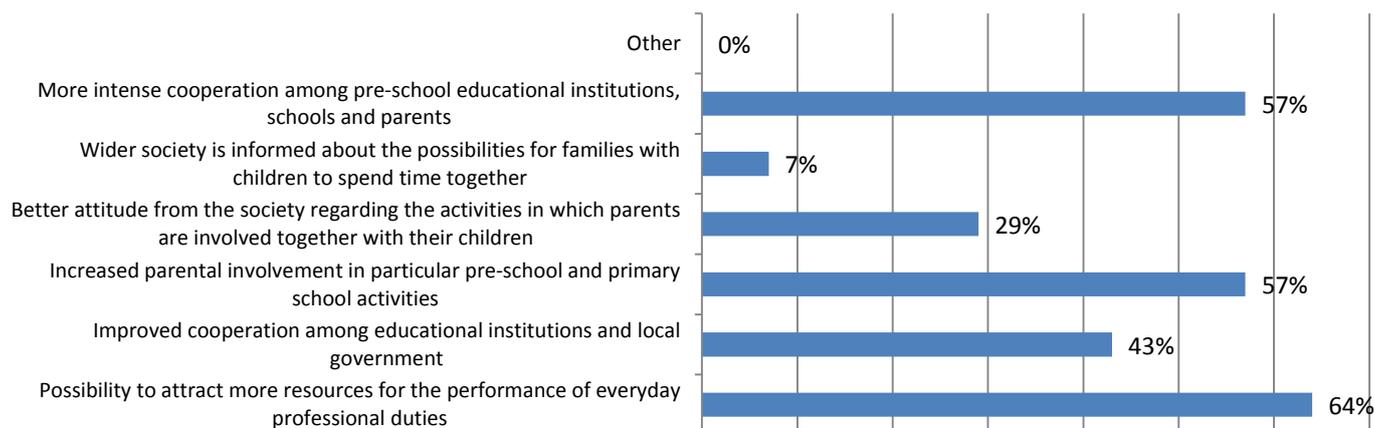
Whereas regarding primary school, the specialists admitted that the behavioural problems for children at primary school age were addressed and solved through the improvement of cooperation with peers (86%) and adults (71%). 36% of the respondents indicated that interference was necessary to increase the child's self-esteem. After the analysis of the current situation it is possible to come up with a hypothesis that the children with low self-esteem most often have problems of various natures in communication with other people – both peers and adults. Low self-esteem may express itself as seclusion or hyperactive behaviour; in both cases a conflict is possible either with teachers or peers. In both situations conflicts make harm to the child therefore it is important to identify them on timely manner and prevent professionally.

What support did the project activities that you organise provide to parents?



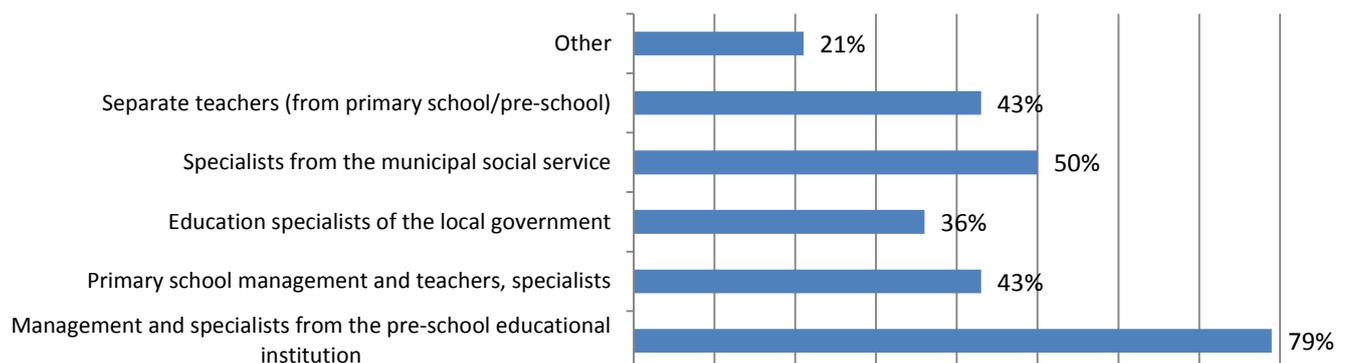
The workshops provided for the parents gave them knowledge on the development of mutual relationships in the family with a child (79%), skills to cooperate with the child for carrying out common activities (71%), and understanding about the foundations of relationship building with children at pre-school/primary school age (43%).

What are the benefits from inter-institutional cooperation organising the work at pre-school educational institutions and primary school?



Leading specialists of the municipalities indicated that the inter-institutional cooperation model among educational, municipal and local non-governmental institutions has provided a possibility to attach more resources than usually for the performance of everyday duties (64%), accelerated parental involvement in activities organised by educational institutions (57%) and made the cooperation among pre-school educational institution, primary school and parents more intense (57%).

Which institutions/specialists were the most willing to participate in the inter-institutional cooperation?



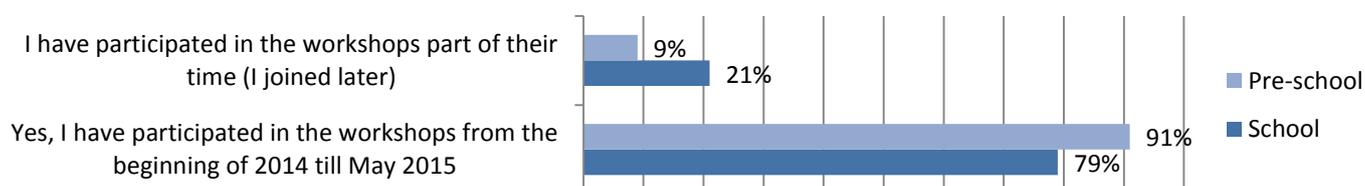
The most active participants in the inter-institutional cooperation, according to the specialists' opinion, were specialists and management of pre-school educational institutions (79%), local government social service specialists (50%) and primary school management, specialists and teachers (43%), as well as separate teachers from educational institutions (43%). Moreover, the specialists participating in the questionnaire admitted that the Inter-institutional work group should include: pre-school and school specialists, social pedagogues, municipal practitioners in the field of education, management of educational institutions and representatives of custody court, municipal specialists responsible for resource attraction, child psychiatrist, neurologist or family doctor (GP).

Questionnaire for children's parents involved in the project and their families

In order to gather information on how useful the project workshops for children and parents were together with other activities, the questionnaire was made where more than 200 parents and family members involved in the project participated.

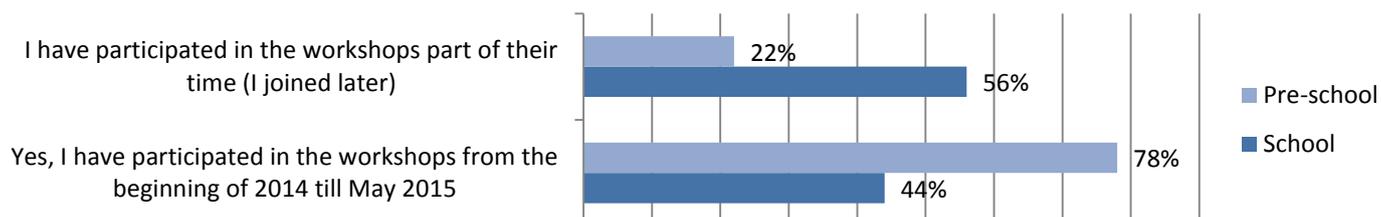
Did you have a possibility to participate in the workshops during all their process?

(Cēsis)



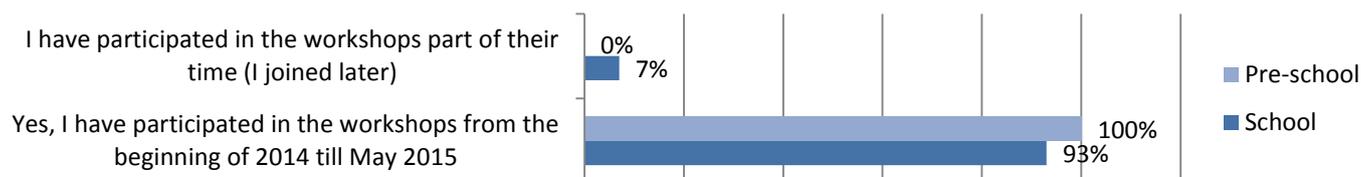
Did you have a possibility to participate in the workshops during all their process?

(Kuldīga)



Did you have a possibility to participate in the workshops during all their process?

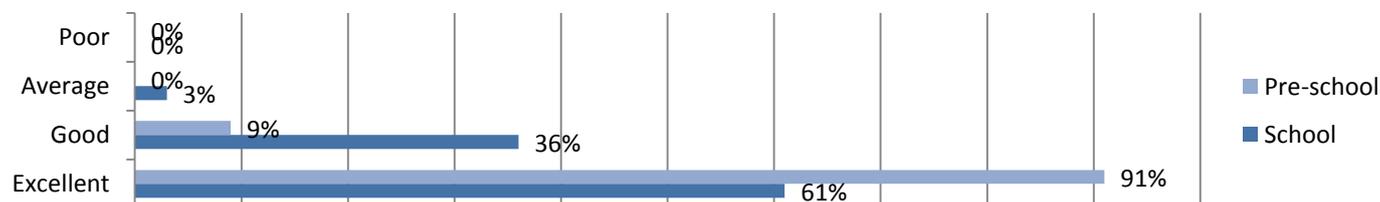
(Saldus)



Parents (family members) of those children who were involved in the project admitted that they have had a possibility to participate in activities organised at educational institutions for parents together with children – in Cēsis (pre-school 91%; school 79%); in Kuldīga (pre-school 78%; school 44%); in Saldus (pre-school 10%; school 93%). It has to be admitted that the biggest parental responsiveness and wish to involve in the activities organised at educational institutions for parents together with children can be observed in particular at pre-school educational institutions. It testifies that the most effective way to reach children's parents in fact is not during the child's school time but pre-school period instead. Pre-school period is the most effective time to identify potential behavioural risks, provide knowledge to parents on successful cooperation with the child, relationship building. From 3 to 6 years of the child's age behavioural problems can be solved with rather simple methods⁵⁸. At the same time, it has to be admitted that during this period also the parents are more open to cooperation – parents of children at pre-school age involved more actively in all 3 municipalities.

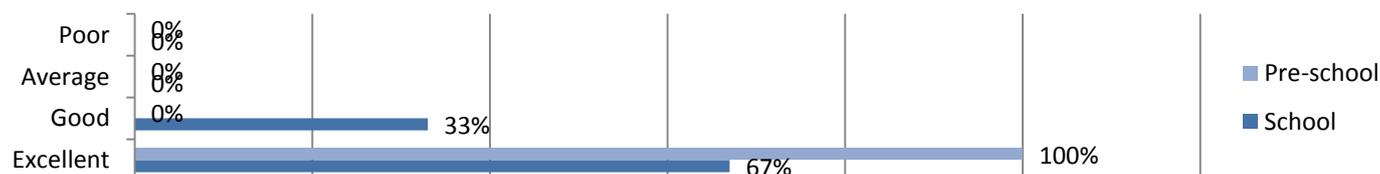
What is your overall evaluation about the workshops you have attended?

(Cēsis)



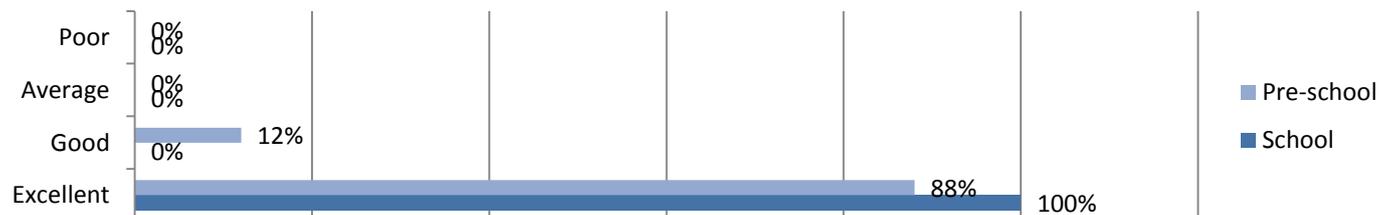
What is your overall evaluation about the workshops you have attended?

(Kuldīga)



What is your overall evaluation about the workshops you have attended?

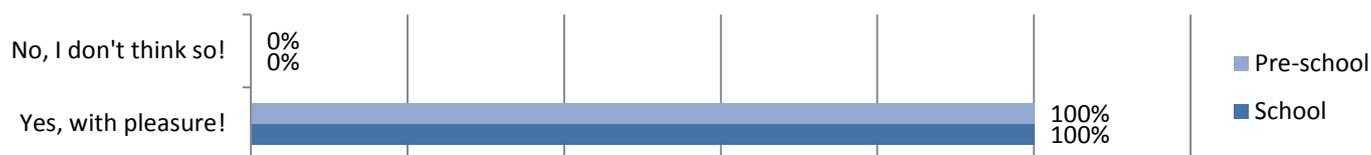
(Saldus)



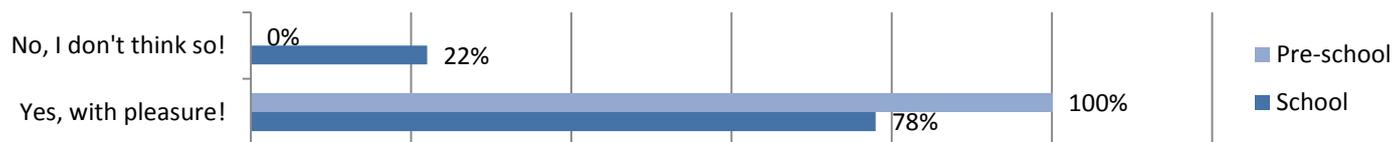
⁵⁸ [The description of the carried out workshops.](#)

Evaluating the suitability of the workshops to their need, parents of children at pre-school and primary school age indicated the following: in Cēsis (excellent – pre-school children parents 91%; primary school children parents 61%), in Kuldīga (excellent - pre-school children parents 100%; primary school children parents 67%), Saldus (excellent, pre-school children parents 88%; primary school children parents 100%). Thus, it can be concluded that the workshops carried out during the project were useful and necessary for parents. Certainly, the quality of such workshops⁵⁹ depends also on the attitude, knowledge, skills and motivation of the specialists who lead these workshops. However, taking into consideration that the problems of complex nature were addressed during these workshops, a big role in the successful planning of these workshops belongs to multidisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation.

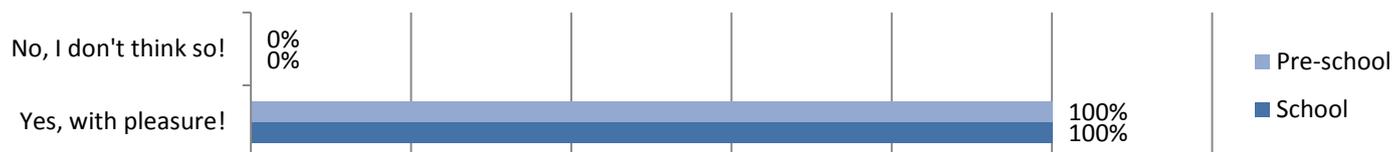
If you had a possibility to continue participation in workshops next school semesters - would you like that? (Cēsis)



If you had a possibility to continue participation in workshops next school semesters - would you like that? (Kuldīga)



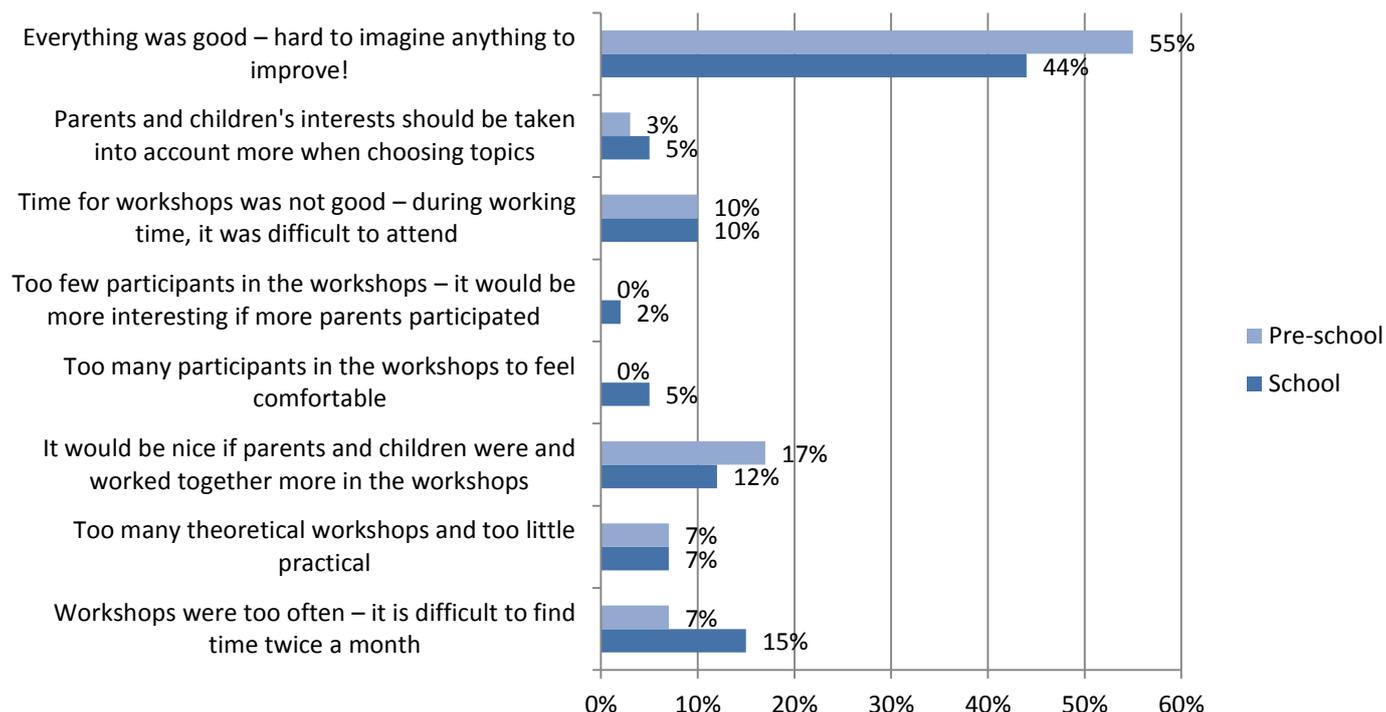
If you had a possibility to continue participation in workshops next school semesters - would you like that?



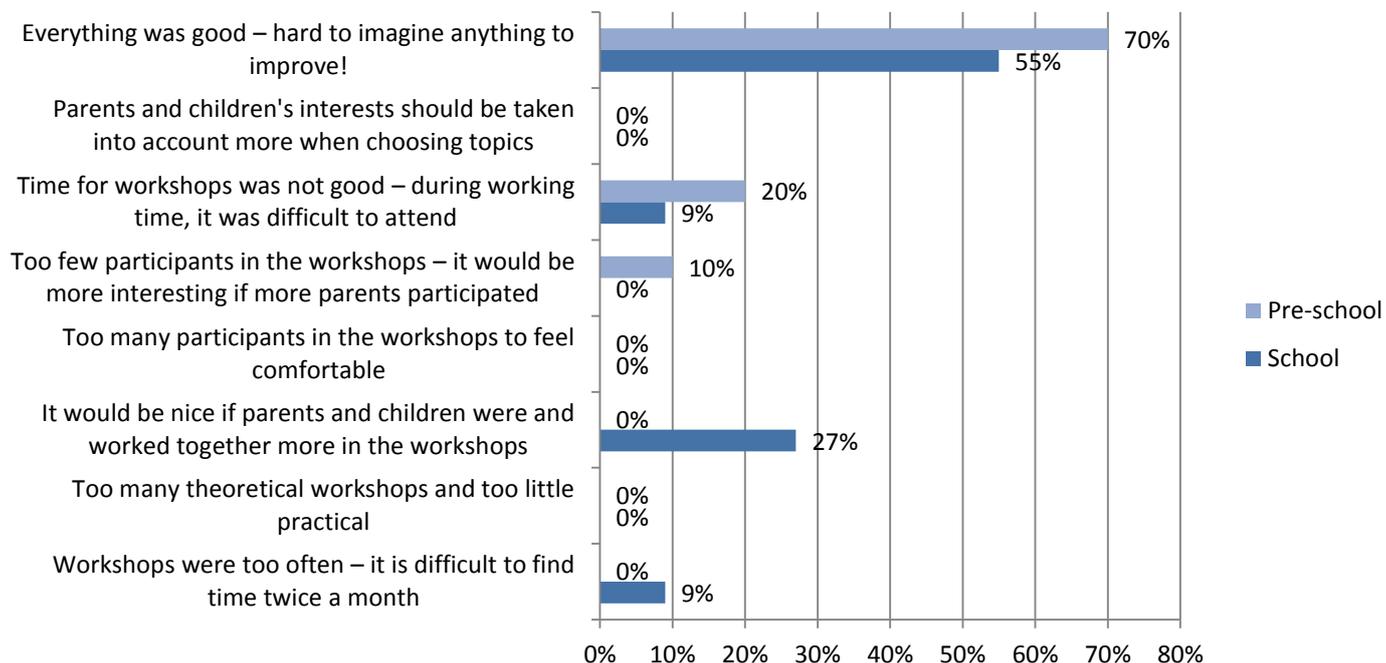
Being asked whether they would participate in similar workshops if there was a possibility to continue lecture cycle for children and their parents, the parents who participated in the questionnaire answered that they would be glad to participate in such workshops were they only organised – in Cēsis: pre-school – 100% of parents, primary school – 100% of parents; in Kuldīga: pre-school – 100% of parents, primary school – 78% of parents, whereas 22% doubt about their participation; in Saldus: pre-school – 100% of parents, primary school – 100% of parents.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

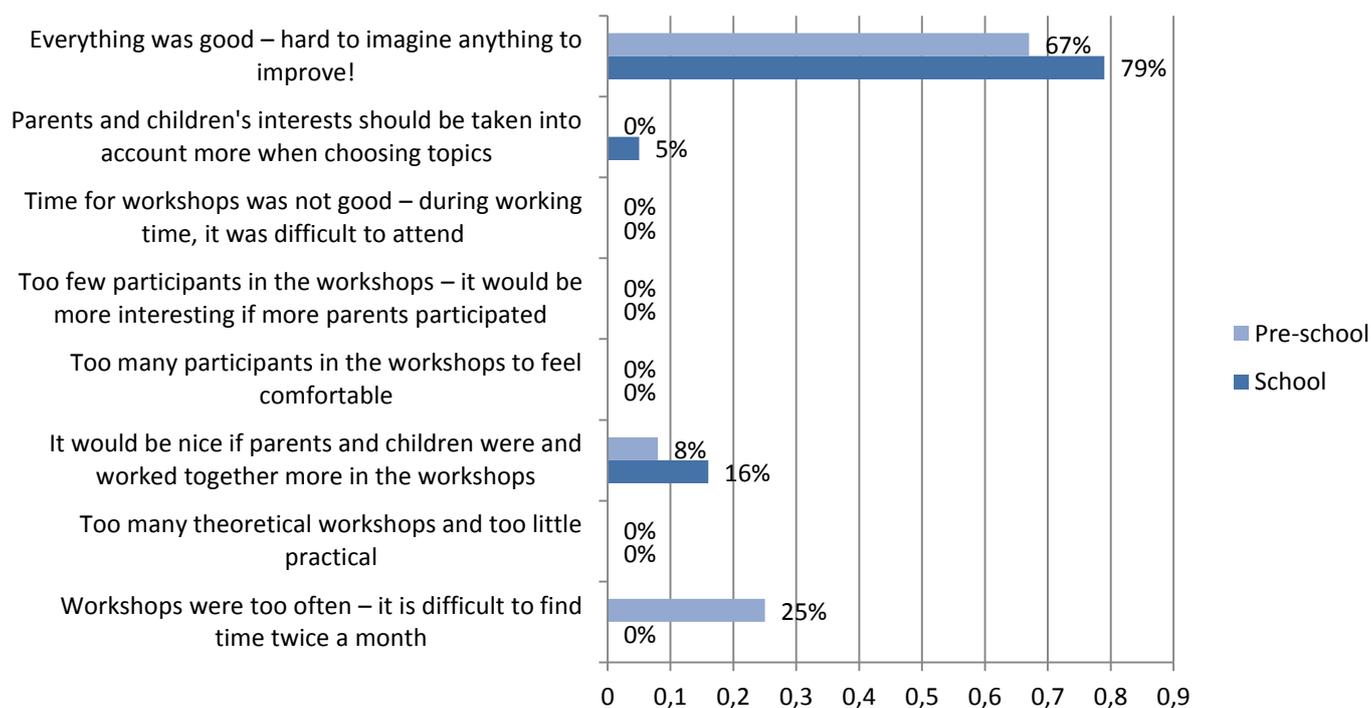
How should the workshops be improved to be more successful and interesting? (Cēsis)



How should the workshops be improved to be more successful and interesting? (Kuldīga)

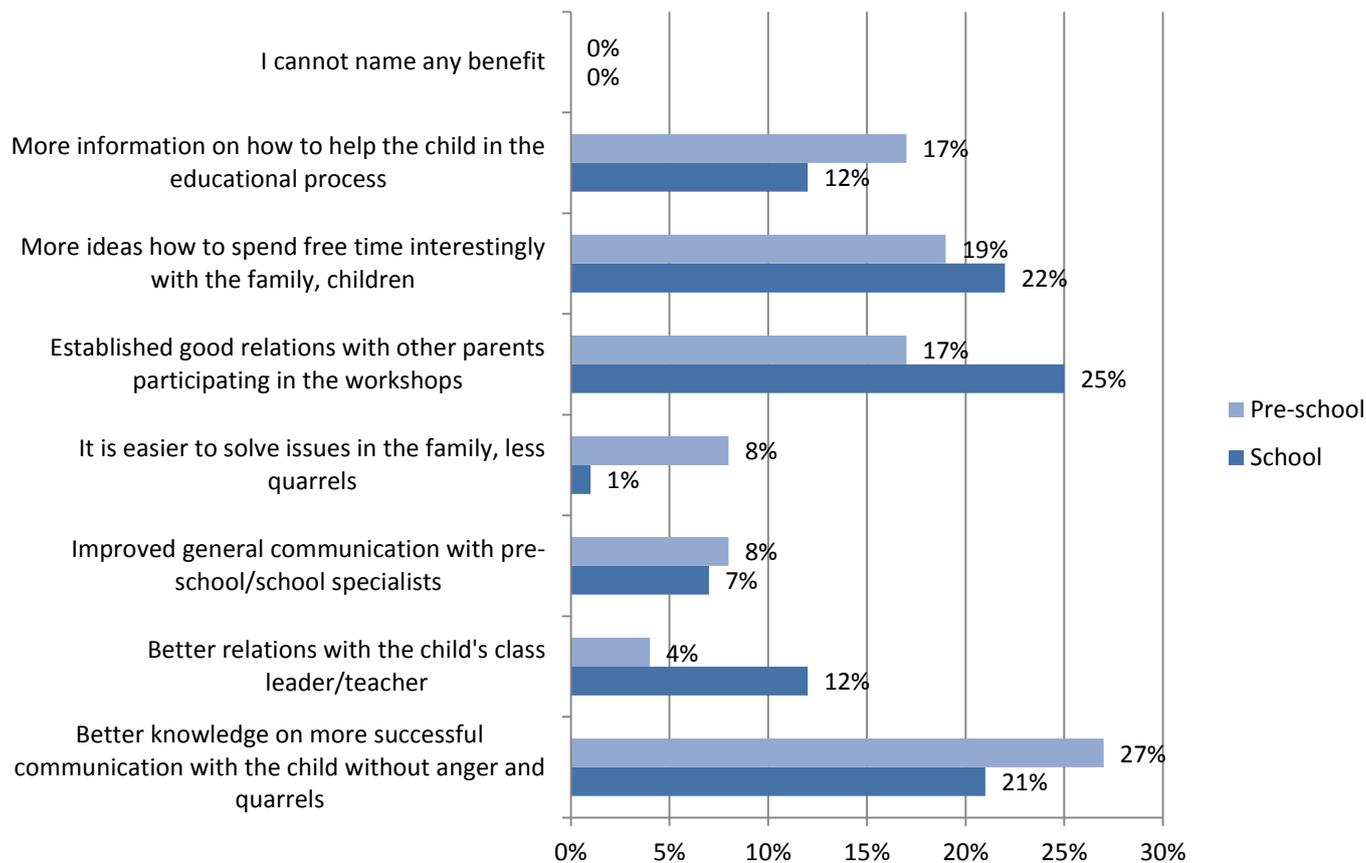


How should the workshops be improved to be more successful and interesting? (Saldus)

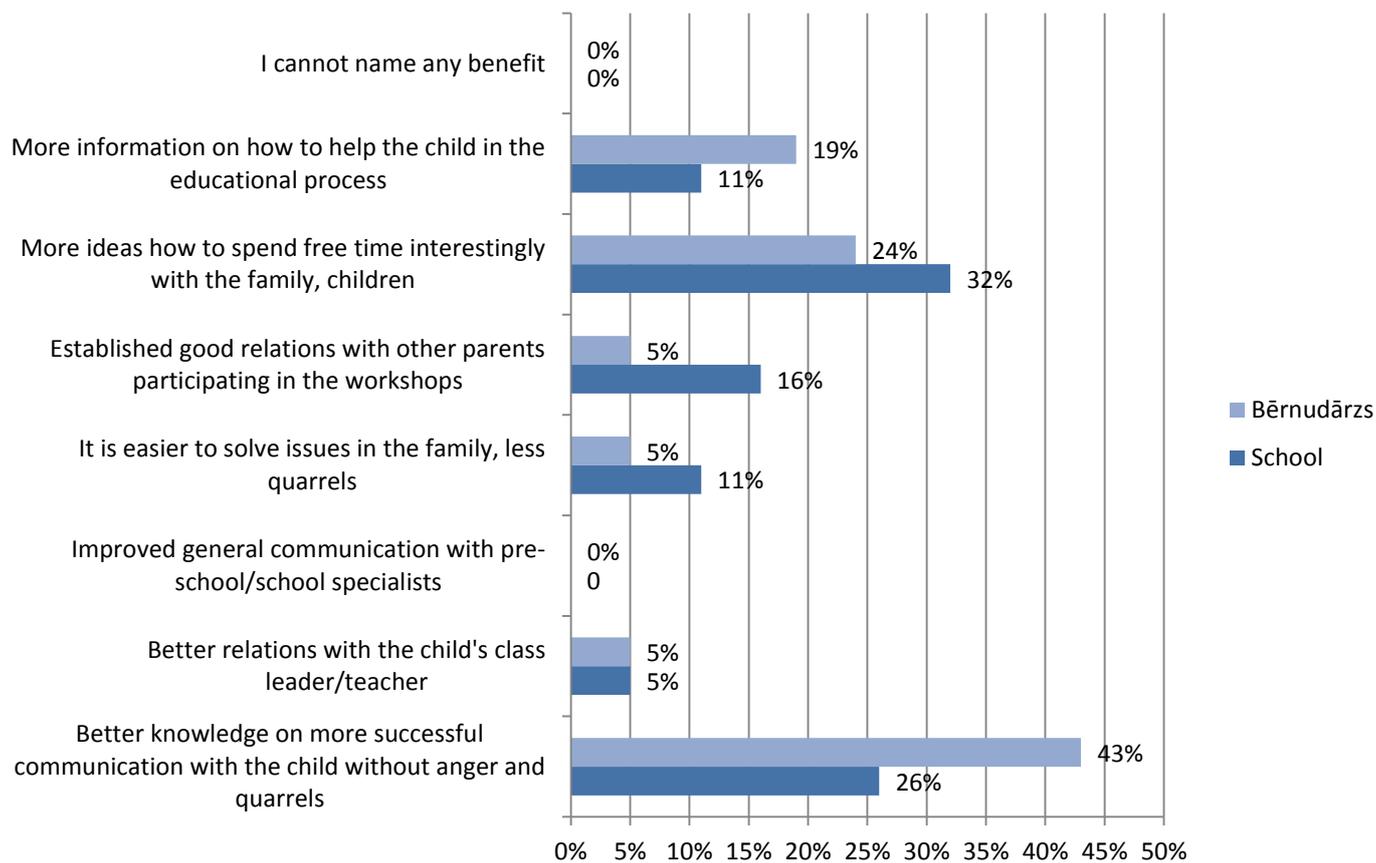


Parents indicated that particular competences should be improved in the workshop cycles. In Cēsis more than a half (55%) of pre-school and 43% of primary school children parents mentioned that the performed workshop cycles do not need any improvements, whereas 17% of pre-school and 12% of primary school children parents indicated that children and parents have to be together more during the workshops. 15% of the primary school children parents indicated that workshops were organised too often and it had been difficult to find time for them twice a month. 10% of the parents indicated that it was difficult to attend the workshops because they started during their working time; in Kuldīga 70% of pre-school and 55% of primary school children parents admitted that they were satisfied with the organisation of the workshops. 20% of pre-school and 9% of primary school children parents indicated that it was difficult to attend the workshops because they started during their working time, whereas 27% of primary school parents held a view that more workshops needed to be organised for children together with parents in particular. In Saldus more primary school children parents were satisfied with the workshops (79%); workshops at the pre-school educational institution satisfied 67% of the respondents. Parents involved in Saldus pilot project indicated that the workshops were organised too often and it was difficult to find time for them (25% of pre-school parents), whereas 5% of primary school children parents indicated that children and parent interests should have been taken into account more when choosing workshop topics.

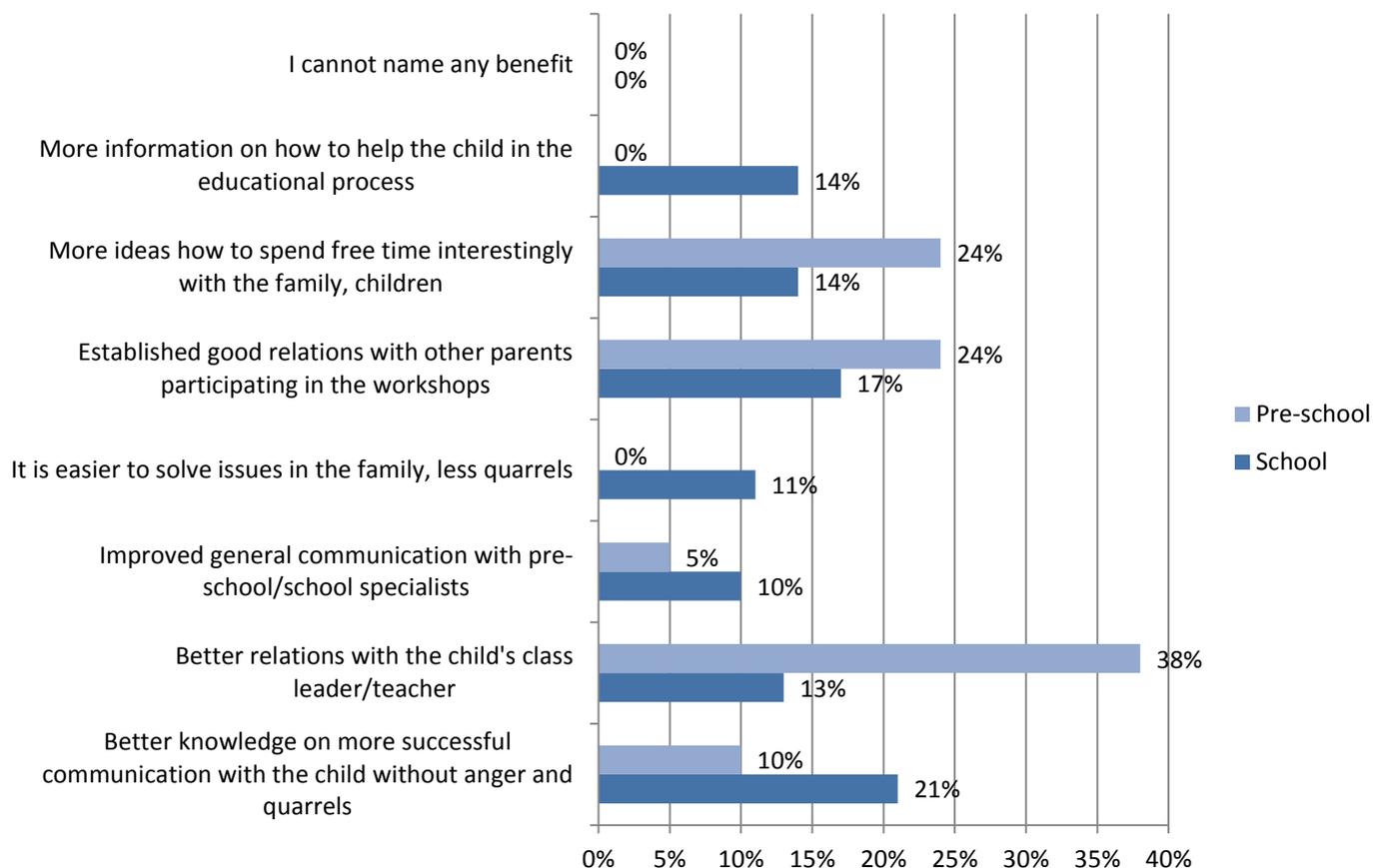
**In your opinion, what are the main benefits for your family from the participation in the workshops?
(Cēsis)**



**In your opinion, what are the main benefits for your family from the participation in the workshops?
(Kuldīga)**



**In your opinion, what are the main benefits for your family from the participation in the workshops?
(Saldus)**



Parents expressed their opinion also about the main benefits from their participation in the workshops emphasising that the main benefits were: in Cēsis – better knowledge on communicating with the child without anger (pre-school 27%, primary school 21%), established good relations with other parents participating in the workshops (pre-school 17%, primary school 25%); in Kuldīga – better knowledge on communicating with the child without anger (pre-school 43%, primary school 26%), more ideas how to spend time interestingly with family and children (pre-school 24%, school 32%); in Saldus parents indicated that better relations have been established with the child’s class leader or teacher (pre-school 38%, school 13%), established good relations with other parents participating in the workshops (pre-school 24%, school 17%), and information gained on interesting ways how to spend time together with children and family (pre-school 24%, school 14%). Thus, it can be concluded that in general the content of the workshops has been directed towards the stabilisation of relationships among the members of the family with a child and the development of the knowledge and skills about mutual cooperation in the family. Both factors are particularly significant to ensure safe emotional environment for the child’s development, development of positive child’s self-esteem and trust in his/her power and mutual trust. These factors strengthen the child’s positive bind to his/her parents and family and it will work as a security factor in the future from any potential harmful influence. Close, trustful and positive relations between parents and children serve not only as a basis for the development of the child’s personality but also as a peculiar “antiviral system” safeguarding the child all through his/her life.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ I.Kronberga, S.Sīle [“How to create an environment favourable for the child’s development”](#) (2015).

Conclusions and summary

The reasons why a child behaves in a way that is not acceptable for other community members, or gets victimised easily through harmful actions by his/her peers or adults, develop in early stages of the child's development. It is essential that the parents, pre-school educators and school teachers have skills of recognising risks in the child's behaviour and risk situations the child faces, as well as skills of using mutual cooperation methods to act in the best interest of the child.

Although the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law⁶¹ stipulates that the protection of the rights of the child shall be implemented in collaboration with the family, State and local government institutions, public organisations and other natural persons and legal persons, the legal norm does not work in fact because it lacks a clear mechanism of implementation⁶², therefore institutions do not have mutual coordination, there is no institution in charge of preventive work, and prevention measures do not have clearly set source of financing which at this moment is relatively divided among the budgets of many institutions.

The lack of prevention activities and timely professional reaction (intervention) from adults result in the child facing formal justice system⁶³ or institutions sooner or later. The contact with this process is always to be considered very sensitive especially if the child is involved in criminal proceedings as a witness, victim, suspect, the accused or the person on trial. A child is not "a small adult" but a human who is very vulnerable due to the age, maturity and developmental peculiarities, therefore any formal processes which are not understandable and friendly for the child or are not carried out in the best interest of the child have to be considered as potentially risky and even dangerous for the child's future life.

Crime has not only heavy social consequences but also economic ones. For instance, in the review of the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom on crime costs in England and Wales⁶⁴ it was stated that in one year time crime has caused 60 billion loss for the country plus additional expenditures. Crime is a social phenomenon that harms the development of a society and economics in all fields and the country as a whole.

The biggest role in the social integration and protection of the child belongs to the parents and other family members. It has to be taken into consideration that parenting skills do not come together with the child's birth – parenting means particular skills that parents have to acquire. The acquisition of these skills has to be organised on timely manner before risk situations appear in the family or before the children show behavioural risks. Therefore, such instruments need to be implemented that influence parental attitude in a way that lets them understand and accept the behaviour that is useful for themselves and their children. Programmes of particular nature have to be developed for children together with their parents.

⁶¹ [Protection of the Rights of the Child Law](#) (1998), Section 6, Part 3.

⁶² "[Child-friendly Justice in Latvia: Focusing on Crime Prevention](#)" (2012).

⁶³ Authors' note: Formal child justice is a child's contact with any kind of formalities and institutions including processes that are related to the changes of the child's legal status (for instance, a victim, a witness, a suspect, member of a civil proceedings in legacy cases etc.). Often children get into contact with the implementation of a legal norm stipulated by a law through mutual combination of the aforementioned roles. Therefore any formal (stipulated by law) procedures where a child is involved should be children-friendly and carried out in the best interest of the children despite the status of the child in the proceedings. More about this term - "[Justice for children](#)".

⁶⁴ Sam Brand, Richard Price. [Home Office Research Study 217: The economic and social costs of crime \(2000\)](#). Page 7.

The wellbeing of a family is characterised by respectful relations in the family with a child, the child is understood and supported and the family has a stable financial situation: parents have jobs and children have successful physical and emotional development and achievements at school. The biggest difficulties in parenting appear if the parents themselves have poor mutual relationship and if the parents do not have skills of organising their and their children's daily routine to spend free time productively.

There are several indicators in the child's behaviour that may point to the necessity of ringing the bell and react – if the child's parents have inadequately high demands regarding the child's results at school, if the child has difficulties in communicating with adults or other children, if the child is inadequately active or passive, and if the child has very low self-esteem. At the age from 3 to 6, two types of problems can be observed in children's behaviour:

- the child is aggressive and tries to dominate thinking that this is the only behavioural model to show off and reach any wish;
- the child is not emotionally ready to stay somewhere but within the family, often cries, is not confident in himself/herself.

Whereas children aged 7 to 10, according to specialists' answers:

- are not sure about their skills, therefore feel scared, wait for evaluation from others all the time;
- their style of behaviour is destructive or otherwise aggressive as the only way of self-realisation, including inadequately high self-esteem.

In order to avert risk situations, it is important that, in the level of practical skills, the child understands how the educational institution works, what the rules are, for instance, how the school differs from pre-school educational institution, what the differences are, what is expected from the child. If the child realises himself/herself, his/her actions, feels safe about his/her abilities and adults' expectations, the child's behaviour will be predictable both for the parents and the teachers. Hence it will be much easier to predict risks in the child's behaviour, family situation, and provide support before problems accelerate. It is important that a close cooperation between parents and educational institution starts already at pre-school stage becoming a common daily practice. Actions cannot be considered as performed in the best interest of the child if the teachers and the parents start cooperating only when the child already shows particular behavioural risks or behaves in a way that is not acceptable for the community. Particular attention has to be turned towards children's behavioural problems at pre-school age as it is possible to prevent future potential problems with fewer resources (human, time, financial).

Preventive work has multidisciplinary and inter-institutional character, it means that for the delivery of efficient and qualitative actions that give planned results, an environment, framework has to be created that allows cooperation among specialists from various fields and specialists who carry out their daily professional responsibilities in different institutions.

Inter-institutional cooperation model among educational institutions, local government and non-governmental organisations give a possibility to attract more resources that usually to perform daily professional responsibilities, enhance parental involvement in the events organised by educational institutions, and makes it possible to have more intense cooperation among pre-school educational institution, primary school and the child's parents in the best interest of the child.