

Co-funded by  
the European Union



# **Comparative study on best practices identified inside the project**

## **"Alternative for Social Support Inspiring Transformation" ASSIST - 785710**

1



This material was co-funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The content of this material represents only the views of the author and is his sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.



## CHAPTER I - Introduction

### 1.1 General framework

Until 1990, the child protection policy in Romania was extremely centralized, fragmented between different ministries, favoring the institutionalization of children and the lack of responsibility of the family and community, a system specific to the communist ideology.

Following the ratification of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Romania has committed itself to promoting the rights of the child in accordance with the principles and rules set out in the Convention. Thus, in the period 1990-1996, a number of normative acts were developed which aim to improve the child protection framework, but without its overall reconsideration, which led to the fragmentation of the situation and excessive stagnation through the establishment of new administrative structures field.

In June 1997, the Government of Romania adopted the Emergency Ordinance no. 26/1997 on the protection of the child in difficulty, establishing the basis for a new system of protection based on the principle of decentralization of power and decision-making responsibilities.

Between 1998-2004, the child protection system in Romania went through several stages, undergoing a continuous reform process, being adjusted, modified, rehabilitated and improved.

In 2005, this process culminated in the redefinition of the entire social assistance system by setting up the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) at the





level of the counties and districts of Bucharest, including all the support services addressed to all social categories in need under the auspices of a single institutions.

In Romania, child protection policies and national legislation recognize the rights of the child to develop in a family environment, favoring the support of biological families and children in difficulty, giving priority to substitution care for residential care and supporting the contribution of the nongovernmental sector to the achievement of social policy objectives.

In order to implement the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at national level, the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights 2014-2020 was developed in Romania. This is the framework document that aims to coordinate the efforts of the responsible institutions and those responsible for the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Strategy proposes creating an effective framework for implementing the main priorities in children's policies to "allow the conditions for the development and training of children from birth until the age of 18".

The target groups of the strategy include children separated from parents (for example, children placed in care of a person or family, maternity or residential service) and young beneficiaries of a protection measure.

The strategy has identified a number of key areas of interest and direction for action:

- increase the capacity of children / young people to make decisions about the school and professional orientation and the development of a career corresponding to the qualities and preferences expressed by them;
- diversification and adaptation of free time programs for children;
- directing education, especially early, to maximize the personality, talents and





physical and mental abilities of the child;

- defining the occupational field, specific qualifications and occupations, as well as occupational standards in the field of child protection and promotion;
- promotion of the system of assessment and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts;
- the existence of a national system of initial and continuous training of professionals interacting with the child;
- develop children's independent life skills to prepare them to leave the special protection system.

The national strategy refers to the importance of non-governmental organizations, which can play a key role in promoting innovation and good practice.

The failures of the social and professional integration of young people who have left the placement centers over the years have become a concern for decision-makers in the system, so it has been necessary to develop a legal framework to regulate the development and diversification of services that lead to the preparation young people for an independent life. For this purpose, according to the legal provisions, operational procedures (OPs) have been developed at the level of each department within the Department for Social Assistance and Child Protection (residential services and alternative services of family type - foster carers), such as:

- PO on the admission and evaluation of children in the protection system;
- PO to maintain contact with the family and other important people in the child's





life;

- PO on the active participation of the institutionalized children / young people in the everyday life of the social service;
- OP for education, recreation and social activities;
- PO on the prevention, identification, reporting, evaluation and resolution of suspicions or accusations of child abuse;
- PO regarding the relationship with the children's staff.

The main reason for this project is to support the whole child protection system and to reduce the failures of the social and professional integration of the young people leaving the placement centers; our project also aims at improving existing operational procedures by identifying good practice models in EU countries, transposing them at national level and creating new operational procedures to facilitate socio-professional integration of children and young people leaving the protection system.

## 1.2 Brief description of the project

The project "Alternative for Social Support Inspiring Transformation" is carried out under the financing contract no. 785710 with the European Union, represented by the European Commission, funded by the the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).





## Project objectives

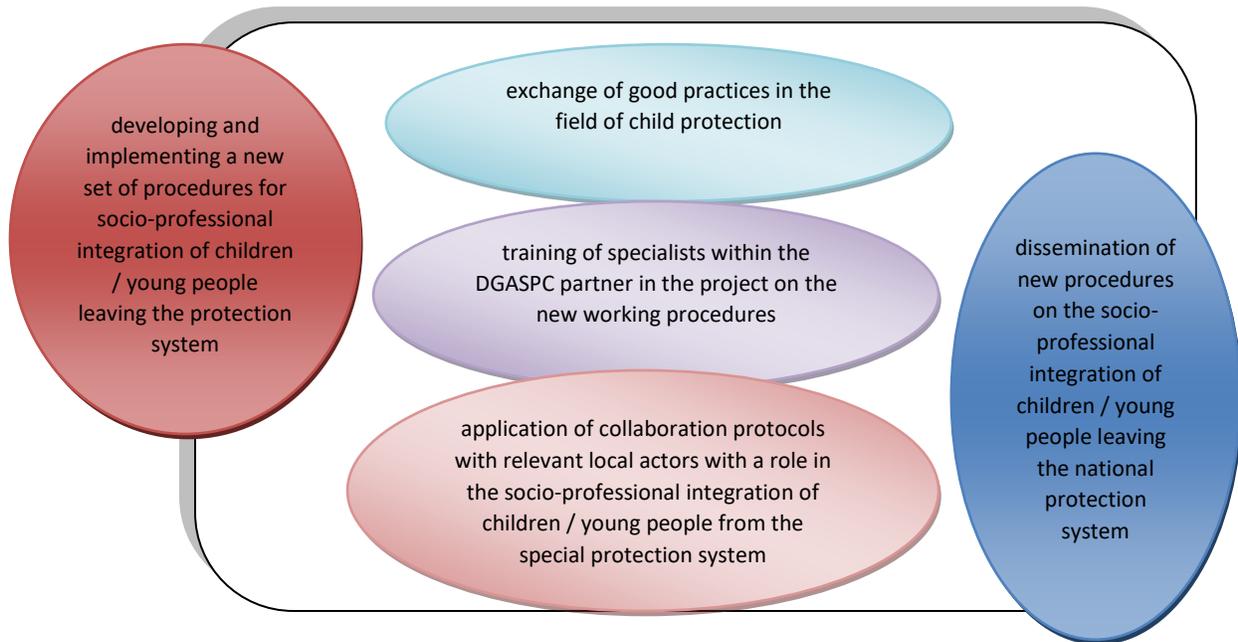
The overall objective of the project is to support the whole child protection system and to reduce the failures of the social and professional integration of the young people who have left the placement centers. Specifically, the project's specific objectives include:

1. Improving the skills of professionals from 3 Directorates-General for Social Assistance and Child Protection (GDSACP) on the socio-professional integration of children and young people leaving the protection system.
2. Informing the GDSACP professionals and the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (NAPCRA) in Romania on the working methods developed within the project.
3. Increasing awareness of the importance of socioprofessional integration of children and young people into the protection system.
4. Developing the independent life skills of children and young people from the GDSACP protection system Arges, Dâmbovița and Vâlcea.





## Components and project specificity



## Project activities

### ❖ A1. Project management

### ❖ A2. Exchanges of good practice in the field of child protection



- ❖ A2.1. Identification of institutions / organizations in EU countries with expertise and results on the socio-professional integration of children / young people to leave the special protection system
- ❖ A2.2. Organization and sharing of good practices
- ❖ A2.3. Elaboration Comparative study on best practices identified

**❖ A3. Elaboration and implementation of new work procedures for the socio-professional integration of children / young people to leave the special protection system**

- ❖ A3.1. Developing, on the basis of the Comparative Study, the Handbook on Procedures for the Socio-Professional Integration of Children / Young People to Leave Special Protection System
- ❖ A3.2. Organizing and conducting training sessions of GDSACP specialists on new working procedures
- ❖ A3.3. Conclusion and implementation of collaborative protocols with relevant local actors with a role in the socio-professional integration of children / young people from the special protection system
- ❖ A3.4. Implement new working procedures

**❖ A4. Organizing and conducting information and dissemination events**

- ❖ A4.1. Development of visual identity project and information materials
- ❖ A4.2. Organizing and running the project launch conference

o





- ❖ A4.3. Organize and run national seminars to disseminate new working procedures
- ❖ A4.4. Organize and run conference closing project

The expected results of the project include:

- 24 training sessions
- 632 professionals trained in socio-professional integration of children /young people to leave the protection system
- 8 national dissemination seminars
- 160 informed professionals on new working methods on socio-professional integration of children /young people that will leave the protection system
- 100 professionals aware of the importance of socio-professional integration of children /young people in the protection system
- 661 children /young people prepared to leave the protection system
- 2 conferences

The type and number of deliverables to be produced are:

- 12 best practices identified
- 1 Procedure Manual
- 1 elaborated support course
- 1 Procedure Manual disseminated at national level through the 8 national seminars organized
- 3 county protocols





Need to develop this Comparative Study within the project, is to achieve a faithful framing of the child protection system in Romania, in the framework of European policies on child protection and to provide examples of good practices registered in other EU countries that can be applied and transferred to the Romanian system.

The comparative study will be the basis of the Manual of Procedures for the socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the special protection system to be developed within the project.

Through this Comparative Study, we aim to provide an analysis of child protection systems in four European Union member states, namely Estonia, Belgium, Croatia and Bulgaria, and to provide 12 models of good practices in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system.

The study is divided into 7 chapters, as follows: CHAPTER I makes an introduction to the general framework on the protection system in Romania and the necessity of carrying out this study within the project, CHAPTER II, in which the purpose of the present study is presented, CHAPTER III, the presentation of the peculiarities the child protection system in Romania (policies, legislation), CHAPTER IV, presentation of the child protection system in 4 countries of the European Union: Estonia, Belgium, Croatia and Bulgaria, CHAPTER V, description of best practice models identified at European level, CHAPTER VI, identification of the similarities and differences between the child protection systems analyzed, conclusions.





## CHAPTER II - Purpose of the study

This document presents the Comparative Study on best practices identified in the project „Alternative for Social Support Inspiring Transformation" ASSIST - 785710.

The proposed study will take into account the needs and requirements of the project as regards the implementation of the activity A2. Exchanges of good practice in the field of child protection.

The exchange of best practices in the "Alternative for Social Support Inspiring Transformation" project involves firstly identifying and selecting best practices in the field of child protection in EU countries, which can be applied in other contexts and other countries such as Romania, and on the other hand the exchange of experience through which project experts will have the opportunity to understand 12 good practice models implemented in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system, which at the end have been analyzed and integrated into this comparative study.

The exchange of good practice has as objective the handing over at the level of the county partnerships to be signed in the three counties implementing the project, namely Argeş, Dâmbovița and Vâlcea of good practice in other EU Member States in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system, by organizing exchanges of best practices, documenting visits, elaborating and disseminating a manual of procedures.





There will be 3 protocols (one in each county) with public institutions, NGOs, mayors, employers. The socio-professional integration of post-institutionalized youth can only be achieved through sustained effort and ongoing collaboration between all the organizations involved. Teamwork requires collaboration and action to lead to: 1) creating the best working tools and restoring them whenever necessary; 2) setting action priorities for each case; 3) developing action strategies that respond adequately to individual needs, to the psycho-behavioral profile and specific situation of each young person; 4) dynamic and flexible adaptation of the objectives and modalities of action, prevention and correction of possible errors over time; 5) Creating a social support network for each assisted young person.

The expected outcome of exchanges of best practices aims at transferring experiences, capacities and best practices within nongovernmental institutions / organizations from different socio-cultural contexts.

The aim of this study is to collect and compare best practice models from other European countries in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system and to achieve a faithful framing of the child protection system in Romania in the framework of European policies on child protection.

Countries in which good practice has been exchanged have been identified in the activity "A2.1- Identification of institutions / organizations in EU countries with expertise and results on the socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the special protection system".

In order to identify them, contact and information requests were sent to the central institutions / organizations in EU countries, with tasks in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system, through which information was requested with on organizations providing socio-professional integration services for children / young people leaving the protection system.





The information obtained and the identified good practice models were centralized, analyzed and applied to the following criteria:

- Innovation (what distinguishes the intervention and what makes it of interest to any of the 4 EU countries and at an EU level);
- Efficacy (what was the impact of the intervention, i.e. the occurrence of expected changes and the existence of a causal link between that action and changes occurred); Transferability (how can the intervention be applied in other contexts and in other EU countries, which are necessary elements for successful replication);
- Sustainability (the selected interventions need to prove how they continued to produce effect on the target groups/communities);
- Relevance of results and beneficial changes generated on a specific target group / community;
- Respect of ethical norms /standards;
- Cost-effectiveness (use of resources -financial, human resources, time resources, etc- in relation to the impact achieved).
- Innovation (what distinguishes the intervention and what makes it of interest to any of the 4 EU countries and at an EU level);

Following the completion of the identification and selection process, the four identified countries where the best practices were exchanged were: Estonia, Belgium, Croatia and Bulgaria.

During the course of each exchange of good practices, the following aspects were considered:

- the identified challenge





- objectives
- action taken
- innovative elements
- added value
- results and benefits for both children / young people leaving the alternative care system as well as the community
- partnerships developed to support the socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the alternative care system
- the funding obtained for carrying out specific programs for these children / youngsters, etc
- relevant photos / materials

Thus, the best practice models contained in this study will form the basis for the development of the new Procedures Manual for socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system within A3. "Development and implementation of new working procedures for the socio-professional integration of children / young people to leave the special protection system".

The information and experience acquired during these exchanges of good practices will substantiate and develop the new procedural framework for socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system to be implemented in the three counties of the project, namely Argeş, Dâmbovița and Valcea.





The new developed procedures will be used by the professionals of the three DGASPC partners in their current work with children / young people to leave the special protection system, and will be disseminated by presenting them in the 8 national seminars will run according to A4 activity. "Organizing and conducting information and dissemination events".

The implementation of the new work procedures will be carried out at the level of each DGASPC and will bring about a series of changes to improve the socio-professional integration and socio-professional integration of children and young people who are in the special protection system.

A comparative analysis of the methods of support for socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the special protection system identified in the visited countries and in Romania is especially useful for specialists working in the field of child protection, elaboration and implementation of policies on the child protection, but also those who might be interested in adapting / transferring some of the identified models.

### **CHAPTER III - Presentation of the specifics of the child protection system in Romania**

The child needs a stable family environment and the services offered to him and his family must be designed to be available at any time in his or her life, aiming at supporting up to the moment of maturity, while covering the different specific needs that may occur at a given time. Thus, the state has to intervene through the services offered, which must evolve and be in line with the identified needs.

Until 1990, the child protection policy in Romania favored the institutionalization of children and the irresponsibility of the family and the community.





Following the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, Romania has been obliged to promote the rights of the child in accordance with the rules set out in the Convention.

In June 1997 the Ordinance no. 26/1997, on the protection of the child in difficulty, by setting up a new system of protection, by establishing, under the jurisdiction of the county councils, the bodies responsible for establishing, implementing and monitoring the measures for the protection of the child in difficulty, named the Commissions for protection the child, designed as specialized bodies of the local public administration and the specialized public services for the protection of the child, whose mission is to ensure the protection of the children in difficulty, to assist in the realization and exercise of their rights and to provide support to the family for the prevention of situations in danger security and child development.

Through the National Strategy for the Development of the Child Protection System adopted by the Romanian Government in July 2000, the National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights proposed to continue the process of creating a new child protection system that would favor the protection of the child with his / in a context as close as possible to the family pattern. Among the objectives of the strategy we mention: the restructuring of existing residential services and institutions and the reorientation of the use of existing resources for the diversification of alternative services to residential care; improving / harmonizing the legislative framework necessary for the organization and functioning of the child rights protection system; the creation and development of a national system for monitoring and assessing the situation of a child in need or in a precarious situation, the work of childcare services and institutions, the available financial resources and the ability to predict the possible budgetary crises of the child protection; strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights; supporting the development of the institutional capacity of the local public administration





authorities; the development of human resources intervening in the child rights protection system by defining and promoting its professional status; promoting the participation of civil society in the development of the national child rights protection system.

During the year 2000, the public-private partnership for child protection, through services developed at the level of local communities that allowed for early intervention in the family at risk and support for the family in difficulty through counseling, material and financial assistance, of day-mother-child centers, managed to prevent institutionalization or abandonment for a total of 15,734 children, during which time their families were monitored and supported to overcome the crisis situation.

Between 1998-2004, the child protection system in Romania went through several stages, undergoing a continuous process of reform, being modified and improved. During this time, child protection centers were taken over by the Directorate. Over the years some of the centers have been upgraded, others have been closed and institutional care has been replaced by alternative protection. A network of foster carers has been developed and new services have been created: day centers, recovery and counseling centers, children with disabilities centers, family-type houses and apartments.

The closure of old-style institutions has been a major challenge for the child protection system. It has been found that the new mission to childcare institutions can no longer be met in former locations, regardless of the efforts made (capital repairs, restructuring, modulation, etc.). For this reason, it was decided to move children to appropriate locations to meet their individual needs. At the end of 2002, a number of 93 old national institutions were closed (27 former boarding schools, 5 former hospital homes, 4 institutions transferred from the Ministry of Health and 57 placement centers). Also, the number of functional placement centers increased from 758 in 2001 to 1375 in 2005. Among the solutions adopted to resolve these situations, we mention:

17





reintegration of the child in the natural family, protection of children through family-type alternatives (professional maternal assistant, relatives, other families / persons), child protection in family-type cottages or apartments. At the same time, depending on the needs of the child and the family, they also benefited from certain support services (counseling, day care, recovery services for the disabled child, etc.).

Between 2001 and 2005, the maternal care network grew significantly, with an increase in professional foster care from 3.228 to 14.111. At the end of 2005, 593 alternative services were developed in the structure of the General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection: 58 maternity centers, 118 day care centers, 50 support and support services for young people coming from placement centers, 70 counseling and support centers for parents, 46 Pre-Conception Abandonment Prevention Services, and Monitoring, Assistance and Support Services for Pregnant Women Abandoned, 48 Centers for Preparedness and Support for Reintegration and Integration of the Child, 92 Centers day care and recovery of the child with disabilities, 16 services of guidance, supervision and support of the social reintegration of the delinquent child, 10 centers for assistance and support for the psychological rehabilitation of the child with psychosocial problems, 23 services for supporting the child in exercising his or her rights, including the right 18 services for street children, 18 counseling centers and support for the ill-treated, abused, neglected child, including a victim of domestic violence and 26 other services.

The tendency of policies in the field of protection and promotion of children's rights is now focused on decentralization and the empowerment of the local community. In this respect, the local community is considered to be able to identify and prevent risk situations as well as to identify primary resources and primary interventions. Law no. 272/2004 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child, clearly amended, clearly defines the obligation of the local public administration authorities to guarantee and promote compliance for children's rights in the





administrative-territorial units, ensuring the separation of the child from its parents and the special protection of the child or definitively parenting.

The socio-professional integration of young people leaving the child protection system is another area that is being addressed. During this period both the creation of appropriate services within the Child Protection Departments focused on the preparation for life of adolescents and young people, as well as the creation of a legislative and institutional framework that would provide the necessary support for the young people to find a job and of a home. However, problems have not been resolved.

In order to prepare adolescents and young people for life, specific services have begun to be developed within the Child Protection Departments. The vast majority of these are flats or family-type homes where young people manage themselves with a minimum level of supervision by adults (hired staff).

In 2001, the first action plan for the social reintegration of street children was drawn up, and it was also a time to realize that this area requires significant financial, material and human time and resources. The implementation of the measures proposed during the period 2001-2002 resulted in a significant reduction of the phenomenon. Thus, at the end of 2002, the number of children and young adults living in the street fell from 2,500 to 1,500 nationally.

Also, under art. 105 of the Law no. 272/2004 and the provisions of H.G. no. 1434/2004 and there shall be at the level of each county the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection. It is a public institution with legal personality that functions under the jurisdiction of the County Council by merging the Public Social Assistance Service and the Specialized Public Service for Child Protection at the county level and appropriately takes over the attributions and functions of the two institutions as well as the entire staff their personnel, who consider themselves transferred under the law.





The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection carries out, at county level, social assistance measures in the field of child, family, lone, elderly, disabled, as well as any other persons in need. In order to carry out the tasks provided by the law, the Directorate-General fulfills mainly the following functions: strategy, under which it ensures the elaboration of the social assistance strategy, the social assistance plan for preventing and combating social marginalization, and the anti-poverty programs; to coordinate the activities of social assistance and child protection at the county level; management of the funds it has at its disposal; to collaborate with the deconcentrated public services of ministries and institutions that have responsibilities in the field of social assistance, local public social assistance services, as well as representatives of civil society working in the field; through the provision of the human, material and financial means necessary for the implementation of the strategies regarding the fight against social exclusion, prevention and combating of social marginalization, as well as for solving the individual and collective social emergencies at the level of the county, respectively of Bucharest; representing the county council, respectively the local council of the Bucharest sector, internally and externally, in the field of social assistance and child protection.

By Law 275/2004, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption is replaced by the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights as a specialized body of the central public administration with legal personality, subordinated to the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family. The attributions in the field of child protection through adoption will be taken over by the Romanian Office for Adoption.

During 2005, the National Strategy on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child for the period 2006-2013 and the Operational Plan for the period 2006-2008 were also elaborated in consultation with all responsible actors. The strategy will ensure the mobilization of the necessary resources, the empowerment of the relevant actors and the provision of an effective partnership





for the protection and observance of the child's rights as well as the improvement of the condition of the child and its valorization in the Romanian society.

The strategy envisages the approximately 4.5 million children of Romania and refers to the implementation of their rights as defined in the UN Convention and other international documents ratified by Romania in all areas of interest to children: social, family, education, health, etc. At the same time, children from Romanian citizens living abroad as well as children without citizenship located on Romanian territory, refugee children and children from foreign citizens living on Romanian territory in emergency situations are also targeted. At the same time, the Strategy aims to cover a field for which Romania committed itself 15 years ago but it has not yet been fully realized the monitoring of the respect of children's rights and concrete legislative and administrative measures in order to promote and respect them both by the family, individuals, as well as institutions and authorities.

The tendency of policies to protect and promote children's rights is now focused on decentralization and the empowerment of the local community. To this end, the local community is considered to be able to identify and prevent risk situations as well as identify primary resources and primary interventions.

Law 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights clearly defines the obligation of the local public administration authorities to guarantee and promote respect for the rights of children in the administrative-territorial units, ensuring the separation of the child from its parents and the special protection of the child temporarily deprived; definitively caring for his parents. Under the law, "Local government authorities have an obligation to involve the local community in identifying the needs of the community and addressing social problems affecting children at the local level. To this end, community consultative structures can be created including, but not limited to, local businessmen, priests, teachers, doctors, local counselors and policemen. The role





of these structures is both to solve concrete cases and to respond to the global needs of that community. "

Regarding social services, specialists believe that they did not develop unitarily, in the post-1989 period, for all sectors of social assistance. The most important thing, however, was in the field of child protection, a sector in which both major governmental support and special interest from specialists benefited.

In the context of the development and implementation of the Social Assistance Framework Framework, the governance program 2004-2008 calls for a redefinition of the role of the state in the institutional reconstruction of the social assistance system and the partial transfer of responsibility for the provision of services to the nongovernmental sector. Thus, it was proposed to concede to non-governmental organizations a percentage of the current public services for child and family protection. The transfer of services will facilitate, according to ANPDC, "the construction of a system of services at national level, which will reach the client's door. The main partners involved in this purpose are local authorities and non-governmental organizations".

Legal standards have also been developed for quality standards for social services in the field of child protection, such as: Minimum mandatory standards for residential child protection, Minimum standards for the maternal center, Minimum standards for child care centers Counseling and Support for Parents and Children, Minimum Mandatory Standards to Provide Child Protection to Professional Maternity Assistants, Minimum Mandatory Standards for the Center for Preparedness and Support for Reintegration and Integration of the Child, Minimum Standards for Internal Adoption, Minimum Mandatory Standards for Centers Day, Minimum standards for Day Care Centers for Children with Disabilities.

In order to ensure social policies in the field of child and family protection, the law allows local public administration authorities to set up and organize public social assistance services.





Based on past experience and taking into account the practices of developed countries, Romania has adopted and started to apply legislation from 2005 which makes the transition from a system focused on the protection of the child in difficulty to a system aimed at promoting and respecting the rights of all children.

Important progress has been made in Romania in the policies of child abduction protection, the increase in state support and funds allocated for this purpose, but we can not say that the problem of children in difficulty has been solved so far.

## **CHAPTER IV - Presentation of the child protection system in 4 countries of the European Union: Estonia, Belgium, Croatia, Bulgaria**

### **1. Child protection system in Estonia.**

The Child Protection Act came into force on 01.01.2016

The aim of this Act is to recognize the value of every child in society, to ensure clear principles to protect children's rights and to ensure children's well-being.

The law focuses on:

- prevention and early intervention;
- multisectoral approach and integration of services;
- cooperation between the State and local municipalities.

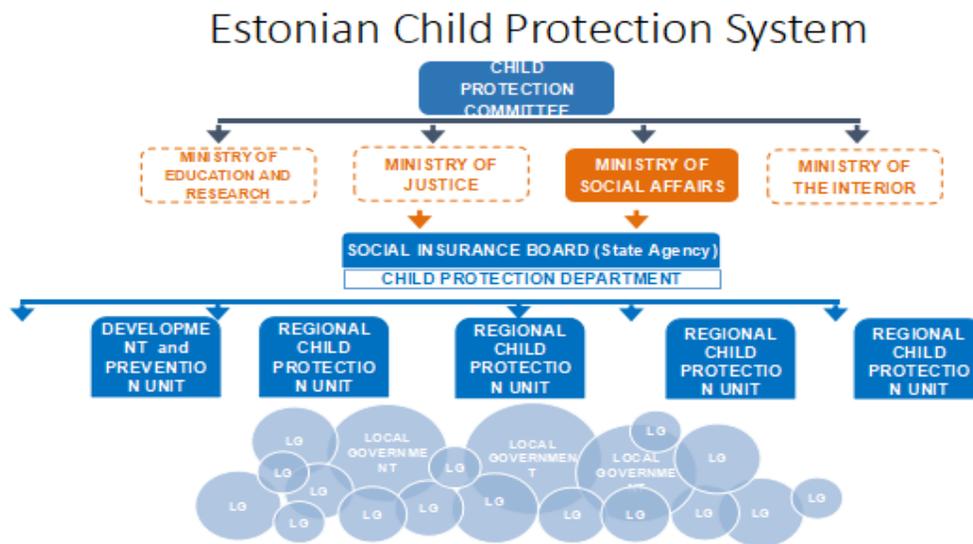
The main investments made by the Estonian State to implement the Act are:

- building up the national child protection unit as a part of Social Insurance Board;





- building up the in-service training system for child protection workers;
- building up the supervision system for child protection workers;
- piloting several programs and services for children and their families



### Estonian Social Insurance Board (State Agency) and Department for Child Protection

The **Estonian Social Insurance Board** is governmental institution acting under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

It`s objectives are administration and implementing of the social security and welfare legislation.





**Child Protection department** was established in order to:

- Implement the government's policies and strategies;
- Act as a central organisation between the State and the local governments;
- Coordinate and strengthen cross-sectoral prevention and cooperation in child protection;
- Enhance the quality of intervention and ensure the wellbeing of children.

The Department for Child Protection has four regional teams and a Development and Prevention Unit in Tallinn, as follows:

- Eastern Region - 2 counties, 16 local governments;
- West Region - 4 counties, 14 local governments;
- North Region - 3 counties, 23 local administrations;
- South Region - 6 counties, 26 local governments;

Each regional team consists of:

- Team leader;
- Alternative care specialists;
- Case workers;
- Project coordinators.

As statistics, in Estonia there are 1 325 635 people (of which 249 780 children)





### Tasks of Child Protection Department 1:

Develop guidelines for local administrations, having as their main project to date - the "Child Welfare Assessment Guide".

### Tasks of Child Protection Department 2:

- Offering counselling and assistance to local governments with:
  - resolving child protection cases: national and international;
  - preparing of a development plan supporting the well-being of children;
  - organising the professional supervision of child protection workers and their professional network;

providing 24/7 counselling service for State and local government specialists (inc. cases where a child is in immediate danger – child/parent separation decisions).

### Tasks of Child Protection Department 3

- Child Helpline 116 111;





- Missing Children Helpline 116 000;
- Coordination of cross-sectoral prevention, cooperation and outreach (awareness raising, newsletters, campaigns, seminars);
- Managing adoption cases: international and national ;

In addition to preparing the adoption, our specialists also help adopted people find information about their origin (biological parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters etc.).

#### **Tasks of Child Protection Department 4**

- Development and provision of services for children and families;
- ESF Project „*Improving the quality of alternative care*”;
- Support services for children (age 0-17) with significant and severe disability who require great need of care (personal assistant, caretaking, transport to service).
- Children's House (Barnehus) - child-friendly interdisciplinary service for children suspected or confirmed to have been sexually abused.

In the beginning of the 2000`s the main focus was in developing institutional substitute home service (alternative care):

- national institution of substitute homes were reorganized and given over to local municipalities;
- transition from large institutions to family-friendly living conditions (34 family homes to 350 children were built using the resources of EU and Switzerland);





In 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs elaborated a strategic document - the Green Paper of Alternative Care - to provide a systematic approach for the development of alternative care system in Estonia that would ensure the welfare and rights of children placed in alternative care.

## Alternative care system in Estonia

### Alternative forms of child care:

- adoption (decided by the court)
- guardianship (including relatives, decided by the court)
- alternative care service (provided in 3 ways, upon decision by the local authorities):
  - adoptive family;
  - family house (1-3 family parents);
  - substitute house (shift workers).

Alternative care services are provided to children up to the age of 18 or, in the case of further studies, until the end of the academic year in which the person reaches the age of 19.

### In Estonia, alternative care is mainly regulated by:

- Family Law Act;
- Social Welfare Act;
- Child Protection Act.

## Continuous care after leaving the alternative care system





The continuous care service is a social service organized by a local authority, whose objective is to support a person's ability to leave alternative assistance and guardianship to cope independently and continue their studies.

The care service is provided according to a case plan, on the basis of which the local authority ensures:

- financial resources for individual costs (minimum 240 euros per month);
- housing;
- services and benefits to meet basic needs (eg support person).

## 2. Child protection system in Belgium.

**The Flemish Youth Welfare Agency** - operates under the responsibility of the Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family and consists of six structures: the services of the general manager, the intersectoral gateway, community institutions and supply policy, support strategy and services, centers of social assistance and services, juvenile court.

The role of the Youth Welfare Agency is to:

- carry out training activities on youth care policies;
- provide substantial support to centers for youth support, social services for youth legal assistance and cross-sectoral gateways;





- programming and recognition of private facilities in youth assistance;
- managing the Fund for the Young People Welfare;
- subsidize private facilities, families and innovative initiatives;
- organize youth special assistance information line (JO line).

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2014, the Flemish Government approved the Order implementing the **Decree on Integrated Assistance to Young People**. Through the **Decree on Integrated Assistance to Young People**, Flanders ensures extensive cooperation between all sectors involved in providing assistance to young people, both family and alternative careers. The sectors involved in full youth assistance in Flanders are:

- General Social Assistance Center;
- Youth Welfare Agency;
- Mental health centers;
- Counseling Centers for students;
- Child and family;
- Flemish Agency for People with Disabilities.

This decree seeks to provide children / young people support that they can all apply for at any time, in a situation of need, without discontinuity in services provided to them.

By implementing the Decree on Integrated Assistance to Young People - the entire help offer for youth that was not directly accessible, became accessible through a single procedure: the cross-





sectoral portal. Until the date of application of the decree, each sector had access procedures and different admission requirements.

In order to allow uniform access to assistance, all forms of assistance in Flanders have been similarly identified, requiring a series of changes in the services provided to young people, namely by the cessation of the work of certain committees such as: Special Youth Care Committees, mediation committees, etc. either by continuing the activities of certain services (Child's Court) and by setting up new services such as Youth Care Centers and others.

In Flanders, forms of support granted to young people cover a wide range of services: family-type homes, foster parents, centers for children with disabilities, etc. The number of places in these forms of youth assistance is limited. To allow access to these services, which are not directly accessible, an "Intersectoral Gateway" was created - the cross-sectoral portal.

The cross-sectoral portal is part of the Department of Continuity and Access to the Flemish Youth Welfare Agency and allows a uniform and transparent operation, by providing the opportunity to combine services offered by other sectors such as: Mental Health Centers, Counseling Centers for Students, Children and Family, the Flemish Agency for People with Disabilities, etc.

Because all applications are contained in a single portal, the most radical help is reserved for those who are in a state of extreme urgency. The cross-sectoral portal always has a clear vision of the supply and demand for youth help, and in some cases allows the adjustment of the social services offered.





This portal provides access to forms of assistance directly accessible to young people. Through the Intersectoral Portal, we analyze what form of help corresponds to the difficulty faced by the young person and who can provide it in an efficient way.

### **How the cross-sectoral portal functions:**

All experts involved in the care of young people - either from a student orientation center (CLB), or from the Youth Counseling Center (JAC) or the Mental Health Care Center (CGG) - can apply on the intersectoral portal. This happens after consultation with the young person and the parents. Together, they fill in the registration document describing the young person's situation. Once the registration document has been completed and filed, two teams are involved in solving the case:

- The **situation assessment** team examines the aid request and the situation of the young person and determines what form of assistance is most appropriate. To this end, *he shall draw up a report* within 30 working days.
- The **Youth Support Management** Team *prepares the Youth Aid proposal* within 15 business days.

Following the proposal, the young person shall receive a *Support Decision specifying which services will be offered, who will provide them, and for how long.*

Another structure with responsibilities in protecting and promoting the rights of young people within Flemish Youth Welfare Agency, which supports those who are at risk is: ***Ondersteuningscentrum Jeugdzorg*** (Youth Care Assistance Center). If the risk situation in which the young person is confirmed following an investigation conducted by experts from Youth Care Assistance Center, they decide whether to begin or to continue social assistance granted by the government.





Therefore, the attributions of Youth Care Assistance Center are:

- Providing consultancy to service providers;
- Investigating whether the Government needs to intervene through social services;
- Starting assistance services and monitoring the services provided;
- Referring to Minors' Justice Service if legal assistance is required.

**Minors' Justice Service** - Judicial assistance imposed by the court for minors, in the following situations:

- a minor who violated the law (offense);
- a minor who is in a problematic education situation and voluntarily help is not possible. The minor may therefore face forced assistance if he has not committed criminal offenses;
- there is an acute crisis situation requiring immediate action. In the first instance, the Minors' Court of Law shall take urgent action. Only then it shall examine whether voluntary (emergency) assistance is possible;
- the parent (s) do not do what they expected to do, in quality of parents.

A Consultant of the Minors' Justice Service will investigate the situation of the person concerned. Based on this investigation, the Judge of the Minors' Court of Law decides what will happen to him, by formulating appropriate assistance proposals. The Consultant aims to implement the court decision.

The judge of the Minors' Court of Law may decide to place the young person who has committed a criminal offense or is in a very disturbing situation, in a public youth institution. These are the community institutions De Kempen - with the De Hutten and De Markt campuses, community





institution De Zande community - with Beernem, Riselede and Wingene campuses - and community institution De Grubbe in Everberg or the Flemish Detention Center De Wijngaard in Tongeren.

In order to provide services specific to young people at risk, but also to their socio-professional integration, private organizations are also involved. In order to access the services provided by these private organizations, young people can present themselves at the headquarters of organizations on their own initiative, access the services through the cross-sectoral portal, or the Minors' Court of Law can decide social assistance for young people within these organizations.

The Flemish Youth Welfare Agency is responsible for recognizing, managing and subsidizing these private organizations.

At the same time, the Agency subsidizes specific projects and initiatives that address either a specific target group or a situation with special problems or that are innovative in a different way. Among the projects subsidized by the Agency that have achieved good results and which are still being implemented are also *Time-out projecten onderwijs welzijn* whose objectives are: preventing school dropout, reducing behavioral problems and neutralizing the problematic situation, forming a buffer to prevent students from entering into more severe forms of assistance, and strengthening the school team in preventing and dealing with such problems. The Columbus project focuses on communication and connection and has positive reorientation so that the young man and the family find the power to address the obstacles and difficulties that are inherent to life itself.





In order to improve the services offered to young people that are going to leave the protection system and to start an independent life, the Flemish Youth Welfare Agency, in partnership with the Carintia Regional Government, the AP University College, Cachet, Diakonie, Feantsa and ENSA, implements the project "*A Way Home: From youth care to interdependent living: tools, strategies and community building*" by which it seeks to define and apply a policy of assistance and support to these young people, a policy supported by qualified instructors and professionals in preparing young people to become independent and functional members of society. At the same time, the project aims to apply the Canadian model "*A Way Home*", which should be seen as a structural approach aimed at combating the exclusion and marginalization of young people (homeless) by building a common understanding of the challenges faced by young people leaving the system care to get better answers from social institutions and services (housing, employment, access to social security, budget optimization guidelines, public social services).

### 3. Child protection system in Croatia

In Croatia, unlike the other states of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, the Social Assistance Faculty was established in 1952, trained specialists in this field and provided services in the social field. At present, the priority at national level is the closure of residential centers and the development of community services.

All interventions of social services aim at eliminating all risks before addressing the court for separation of the child from the family. The intervention is carried out in teams of specialists,

35





including psychologists and medical staff. When state institutions can not provide all services, non-governmental organizations (accredited organizations, funded from national and international programs) are subcontracted. The beneficiaries of special protection services are 80% in public services and 20% in private ones. At the national level there are 1018 beneficiaries in the child protection system, and the average monthly cost for a beneficiary is 2000 euro.

In the state system, young people have special protection up to 26 years of age, and if they do not continue their studies, they may stay for up to 1 year while trying to find a job. In the maternity care system, there are problems related to the fact that the foster parents are elderly, have a low level of education or live in rural areas where access to services is not easy.

At present, nursing assistants are specialized: for "normal" children and for children with disabilities: children with physical disabilities, children with mental health problems, children with behavioral disorders, but there is no intention to differentiate between them and foster carers prepared for children in different situations.

Each city has at least one social assistance center (for social records: children, young people, families in difficulty, the elderly). For example, 12 such centers (Welfare Center) are in Zagreb. The municipality is usually focused on prevention, it does not work directly with the beneficiaries, but through NGOs, encouraging the development of the private system (there are 13,000 NGOs in Zagreb, not all in the social field and not all assets). At the country level there are 132 child protection centers.





Education, continuation of studies is important (For example, calculations made in Finland have shown a cost of € 1000000 during the lifetime of a person who drops out of school). In Croatia there is the possibility, for those who do not go to school, to learn at home and take their exams or attend classes at the evening.

### **3. Child protection system in Bulgaria.**

The State Agency for Child Protection /SACP/ was established under the Child Protection Act with Decree No.226/10.10.2000 of the Council of Ministers and started functioning on 01.01.2001.

The Agency is managed by a Chairperson who is supported by an administration.

The Chairperson of the Agency is a specialized body of the Council of Ministers who runs, coordinates and monitors the child protection policies in Bulgaria. The main objective of SACP is to guarantee the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of the child and the national legislation in this area by supporting the Chairperson in the implementation of his responsibilities.

The Chairperson has the following responsibilities: to develop the state child protection policy together with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and Science, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Finance, the Secretary of the Central Commission for Combating Juvenile Delinquency and the National Association of the Municipalities in Bulgaria; to develop and monitor the implementation of national and regional child protection programmes; to monitor and analyze the implementation of the state child protection policy; to





provide methodological guidance to the child protection departments within the Agency for Social Assistance and to the social service providers; to coordinate the governmental bodies - part of the national coordination mechanisms, including anti-violence mechanism and many others.

Since 2009 according to the Child Protection Act (art.17a, p. 17) a National Hotline for Children 116 111 has been established under the auspices of SACP. It started functioning in its full capacity since 2010. It has national coverage, it's free, 24/7 functioning. It provides consultation, information and support concerning all kinds of child-focused questions and problems. The staff of the Hotline consists of carefully selected and trained professionals (child and clinical psychologists, social pedagogues, social workers).

SACP is organized in three directorates, namely the Directorate General for Children's Rights Control, the Policies and Programmes for children, Strategic Development and Coordination Directorate and the Directorate dealing with financial, legal and administrative issues. The Directorate General operates by its regional offices in the towns of Bourgas, Russe, Plovdiv, Vratza and Varna. The staff of SACP is about 66 people having expertise in different fields related to the child rights protection.

The specialized child protection bodies are the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection and the "Social Assistance" Directorates at the Agency for Social Assistance. "Social Assistance" Directorate is a body of child protection at the local level within which operates the "Child Protection" Department (CPD). CPD social workers take protective measures with regard to children at risk.

The basic principle the special laws and regulations is the commitment of the State to protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of the child in all spheres of social life by providing and





implementing measures to protect the rights of the child.

Child protection is a system of legislative, administrative and other measures to guarantee the rights of every child. Ensuring the right of children to live with their parents is one of the priorities of the system for child protection. The efforts are aimed at improving parenting skills and changing attitudes towards children. The competent authorities for child protection are striving to ensure in their work the respect of children's rights, protection of the best interest of the child and support of children and families.

Bulgarian legislation in the field of child protection and its underpinning principles of preventing child abandonment and placing children in institutions only in extreme cases correspond to the international standards in the field of children's rights. An integral part of the implementation of this principle is the support of parents when they have difficulties to care for their children. Authorities for child protection at the local level are making a concerted effort to prevent abandonment and to reintegrate children, providing in addition to socio-psychological support also financial assistance which is part of the work on prevention, reintegration and placement with relatives or in a foster family. Extremely important is the individual approach in addressing cases, which is linked to the specific needs of the child. Essential for guaranteeing the rights and interests of children is the fact that placement outside the home, including in a specialized institution, shall be done by the court.

## **CHAPTER V - Description of good practice models identified at European level**





## 5.1 Description of good practice models identified in Estonia

### Model 1 - Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers

**The Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers (EATL)** is a union of workers in the social protection system that formed a non-profit organization at a national level, operating in the public interest and guided in its activities by the laws of the Republic of Estonia, whose objective is to help in educating children without families and integrating young people into society by giving them equal opportunities to have a meaningful life.

The official abbreviation of the Union is EATL. The English name of the Union is the Estonian Association of Care Workers. The Union has its head office in Tallinn, the Republic of Estonia. This non-governmental organization was established in 2009, it is a charitable organization and acts in the public interest, aiming at improving the quality of social services for institutionalized children and preparing them for an independent life so that they can face the challenges of everyday life after they leave the social protection system.

The Association supports and encourages the development of children left without parental care throughout Estonia and have the following issues:

- they are abandoned by their family;
- they are traumatised;
- they do not have the necessary skills to lead an independent life;
- they do not know how to contact different institutions;





- they have low self-esteem, they do not believe in themselves;
- they are afraid of trying to change their lives;
- they are afraid of failure; etc.

Their purpose is to bring together educators / employees from social institutions with people who want to improve the well-being of children who grow up in the social protection system and to make sure that these children are prepared for an independent life.

The Association (EATL) offers the neglected Estonian children and young people a chance to return to security and emotional stability teaching them how to be rational, to believe in their abilities and life. This process is very cumbersome and often the results are not immediately visible. Therefore, it is necessary for those who work with children and young people to be well-trained from a professional point of view, to be strongly motivated and to acknowledge their efforts in order to avoid possible failures / abandons.

#### **Events and activities organized by the Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers:**

- Organizes and supports trainings, seminars for teenagers over 15 years old with the following topics:
  - personal data protection;
  - sexual education;
  - legislation;
  - first aid knowledge;
  - how to manage their relationships;
  - drawing up a CV and going for a job interview;





- planning personal budget

The purpose of the training is to show young people that failure can be seen as a learning experience which, in fact, it is often difficult, and that difficult experiences and life situations are the ones that teach us the most.

- ❖ It teaches young people how to be motivated and inspired, to maintain a positive attitude over life and it also teaches them how not feel like they are victims.
- ❖ It encourages young people to return, after leaving the alternative care system, as volunteers to support the children who are still in the system.
- ❖ Organizes trainings and seminars for staff employed in various institutions who provide social services to improve their cooperation, working conditions and skills, which in turn create better premises for supporting young people who grew up in social institutions and improving the methods used in educating children /young people on how to deal with the future.
- ❖ Organizes as an anniversary of the establishment of this Association, an annual national competition called „The Golden Potato”, following the Bulgarian model of the „Golden Mother” competition.

This year, for the fifth consecutive time, the „The Golden Potato” Gala will be held at the Tallinn Film Museum on 06.11.2018. This gala is a tribute to the best care workers in the field of alternative care taking, but also to young people who have benefited from social services and the training of this Association and who later became actively involved in the education / training of children from the social protection system, in the activities coordinated by the Association.

42





The explanation for choosing this title for the gala - „The Golden Potato”, is the following: the potato is fundamental in the nutrition of Estonians. However, it is not very appreciated; it is not seen as a prestigious food product. Similarly, the employees in the substitute homes (or orphanages) are very important for children, their profession is very demanding and complicated, but it is not highly appreciated and recognized in society.

- ❖ They organize various leisure activities / actions, such as sports competitions, camps, anniversaries for children and young people, free-time activities with the participation of successful people;
- ❖ They publish various informative materials;
- ❖ They organize economic activities, lotteries, etc., fundraising actions to achieve their goals;
- ❖ They cooperate with public authorities, other non-profit organizations and other legal entities and individuals interested in the activities of the Association;
- ❖ They organize international collaboration with similar organizations from other countries and organize mutual meeting.

Meelis Kukk is the Executive Director and one of the founding members of the Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers. He works with his sister Marina Sepp. Both of them needed alternative care for four years while still minors, and therefore as former beneficiaries of the social protection system, have returned to coordinate/ work as volunteers for the activities of the Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers.

### Benefits and impact for the target group

43





Teenagers/young people who participate in the programs run by the Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers, as professionals, have the advantage of using applied and tested methods, they focus and insist on teaching them the practical things they need in the life they are going to face after leaving the social protection system.

The Association (EATL) supports the participation of all people over the age of 15 years old who are part of the social protection system, inviting everyone and conducting information and awareness raising campaigns for the target group regarding the participation in trainings and seminars in order to prepare for an independent life, but their participation is the result of a unilateral act of will coming from every teenager/young person.

The other target group category - workers employed in the special protection system - enjoys substantial support in their education through periodic trainings and seminars which bring to attention new methods and working tools that they can apply in educating and supporting children who are part of the social protection system, pursuing the same goal of reaching the superior interest of children who become adults leading an independent and fair life.

Children need and deserve recognition of the fact that the people next to them are acknowledged and they do their work with pride.

### Sustainability of good practice example

**The Estonian Association of Care Placement Workers' Sustainability comes from:**

- entry and membership fees;
- donations and allocation from legal and physical persons supporting the activities of





members and the Union;

- organising paid events, lotteries, sales of publications and other income from business activities;
- revenues from the use of assets owned by the Union;
- other collections foreseen by the national legislation.

### Transferability of good practice example

There are non-governmental organisations in Romania that do similar activities, but unfortunately there are very few and do not benefit from the same flexibility in collecting and using funds.

The activities of regular and continuous training of children and employees who work permanently with children is also necessary and beneficial within the social protection system in Romania, but there are rare and insufficient opportunities when these can be done with extra-budgetary funds, and the state budget is limited.

As a rule, in Romania, training with children /teenagers in the social protection system in order to prepare them for an independent life is done by the employees who have other tasks and where daily routines and difficulties often encountered in the behaviour of children, make the targeted results unnoticeable. Therefore, it would be preferable to have specialized entities to organize such training with both the children /young people in the special protection system and the employees.

45





On the other hand, stimulation and motivation strategies for the volunteering activities in this field and also other fields must be enacted.

### Model 2 - SEB Charity Fund

SEB (Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB) is the main sponsor of MTÜ SEB Heategevusfond (SEB Charity Fund). On December 14 2006, the CEO of SEB Eesti Ühispank, Mart Altvee, and Triin Lumi, CEO of SEB Charity Fund, signed a co-operation memorandum in the Children's Shelter in the Tallinn Children's Home, under which SEB (known as SEB Ühispank) supports the Charity fund with 1.3 million € (EEK 20 million) over the next 15 years.

SEB Charity Fund collaborates with the Tallink Group, which is a Estonian capital company, being one of the largest passengers ship companies in the Baltic Sea, serving over eight million passengers a year.

The Tallink Group pays special attention to children and young people, nature conservation and sport as a source of health and solidarity.

Since 2007, the Tallink Group and the SEB Charity Fund have begun to bring more color and excitement to the lives of children in need of special care and to give them the joy of learning something new by sponsoring them to travel to Helsinki, to have fun at parties in water parks and cooking events in different hotels.

Another collaboration of the SEB Charity Fund is with the **Sina ja Mina Family Centre** in order to carry out training programs for shelter workers at Estonian national level.





**Sina ja Mina Family Centre** is a non-profit association founded in 2004, whose goal is to make people appreciate the importance of healthy family relationships and promote efficient education practices.

The Family Centre offers training to parents in the Gordon Family School, family counselling as individual counselling, help people to maintain good family relationships and prevent risky behaviour by children. The Family Centre also supports teachers who help children in their everyday lives and who appreciate listening, self-establishment and conflict solution skills.

### **Events and activities organized by S.E.B.**



In December, the SEB Charity Fund takes action so that Santa's bag is filled with gifts for children neglected by parents who were supposed to spend Christmas Eve on the child shelter. Everyone can access „The Christmas Tree” site (<http://www.heategevusfond.ee/joulupuu/>) which lists the names of 150 children from eight child shelters and homes nationwide and their requests to Santa Claus. Gifts are collected and delivered to children in time for Christmas.



On October 21, 2018, SEB Heategevusfond organised a career day for young people who do not have a family to support them. The topics of the career day were financial intelligence, the threats





and opportunities of the digital world and the basic rules of the labour market. Other key topics were human relationships and teamwork.

The career day was opened by Ena Soodla, coach of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme, who spoke about the importance of the relationship, the difference between relationship and loneliness, and how we relate to family, loved ones, present and past.

Young people discussed the issue of values and shared their personal experiences of trust, respect and honesty. It was concluded that everyone has to be aware that running away from conflicts is not a solution.

Also on this occasion was organized a financial intelligence workshop and talked to young people about saving money, investing them, and how their personal budgets can be maintained and balanced on a daily basis.

The workshop focused on providing practical tips that would make young people interested in managing their money wisely.

The financial intelligence workshop taught young people how to shop online, how much the salary (income) is, whether it is wiser to collect or borrow and how to grow your money over time.

Another topic discussed was related to the importance of lifelong learning process. The young participants were trained to be able to write their own motivational letter and their own CVs. Also, a video of a job interview was viewed. Young people have been explained that employers regard experience as something very important and that one way to add experience to each one's CV is by doing volunteer work.





May join the SEB scholarship program any child between the ages of 7 and 25, who does not live in his own family and is interested in movement and sports, crafts, music or other hobbies.

In 2018, SEB Heategevusfond is granting EUR 50,000 worth of study scholarships.

The scholarships are intended to finance the following types of needs:

- a group of children with the same hobby, provides training fees up to 35 EURO per month (up to a maximum of 10 months per year);
- purchasing supplies, equipment, an instrument or technical tool for EUR 30 to 150 (single support);
- covering a fee of up to EUR 150 (one-off support) for attending a camp or participating in a competition.

In order to apply for a scholarship, the applicant must complete the following documents himself:

- the application form containing personal data;
- applicant's letter of intent, in which he / she justifies his / her wish to receive a SEB scholarship. This letter should include a list of achievements, a description of the young or future plan for his hobby, containing up to 3000 characters;
- letter of recommendation from an educator, teacher, supervisor, child protection official or the like. This must include a characterization of the applicant in a maximum of 3000 characters;
- a document certifying the applicant's place of residence (from the institution or the municipality).





All SEB scholarship applicants can benefit from personal counseling, where they receive additional information, explaining how to grant scholarships and what obligations imply the quality of scholarship.

In the fall of 2018, the group of scholars consisted of 80 young people, of whom 14 were under guardianship or in a care family, 10 were young parents, and the rest were from substitute homes.

### **The race of the century**

At the initiative of the nonprofit association SEB Heategevusfond in 2018, the Tallinn Marathon became the sports event with the biggest number of participants in Estonia's 100-year-history. Children from safe houses and substitute homes along with family parents were included.

For some children it was their first time participating in such a highly attended event. The challenge was that they had to stay together as a group, and the only way in such a crowd was to hold each other's hands. It took a lot of effort to convince some runners that it is necessary to run with the hand.

The next hurdle was that everybody had to move at the same pace and quite quickly! If some child started to lose pace, others invented different ways to motivate their companion. A very effective incentive was the knowledge that everyone who finishes the race gets a medal.

### **Football day**

On the last Wednesday of August, under the leadership of the non-profit association SEB Heategevusfond, some children from foster homes and safe houses have come to play football





with the great national players. When they first arrived at the stadium, the children got to meet the players of FC Flora, ask for an autograph and take a picture with them. Each child got a ball, and could ask for autographs to be signed on it. Those who were more courageous introduced themselves to the players and promised to support them during the game. The children were very happy – it was cool to see the football players with their own eyes.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

SEB Heategevusfond, through all its actions, supports children and young people who grow up without the protection of their parents, opening up new horizons, making them look more optimistic in the future.

SEB Heategevusfond's activities help young people develop their communication and relationship skills, and by financial support, young people become more relaxed and confident in their own strengths.

Training programs for workers employed in the special protection system - provide substantial support to their training through regular training and seminars to help them improve continuously: the quality of teamwork services; communication between the employee and the beneficiary and the working methods.

### **Sustainability of the SEB Charity Fund Estonia**

The main financial sources of SEB are:

51





- financing is from an investment fund and from an insurance and reinsurance fund;
- another source of financing is represented by private donors and bank clients. The *SEB Charity Fund* has the largest number of ordinary private donors among its members, making it possible for all bank customers to make donations to the Fund free of charge.
- Twice a year there are fundraising campaigns where all people are invited to donate in support of their parents without parental care.

### Transferability of good practice example

In Romania, a system of attracting and motivating non-governmental organizations to conclude partnerships with institutions in the public social protection system for the purpose of raising funds and developing activities similar to the **SEB Charity Fund**.

### Model 3 - Tallinn Children's home

Home of Tallinn is a city-accredited body with social and administrative resources, providing security and social assistance by providing care services for children and young people, fully supporting their preparation to cope with independent life based on their development potential.

The centre responds to the child's basic needs in a family-like manner, a safe and favourable living environment where they can develop their education and skills necessary to face with maturity the situation that arise in everyday life.

52





The Centre provides quality social assistance services and takes into account the individuality and special needs of each individual beneficiary, providing flexible solutions, a healthy lifestyle and supporting further studies.

The core values guiding the centre's specialists are honesty, dignity, openness and credibility, keeping promises and following agreements, taking responsibility and understanding mistakes. In applying the work methods, emphasis is placed on: non-discrimination, listening to the beneficiary, taking into account his interests and treating him with respect.

The rights of the beneficiaries are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and other relevant legislation, the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fundamental right of each beneficiary to self-determination is respected.

The target group for which the centre offers social services includes children:

- ❖ whose parent is dead or missing;
- ❖ whose parent has limited legal capacity;
- ❖ custody of the parent of a child has been suspended or restricted;
- ❖ who are separated from the parent;
- ❖ whose parent has been convicted and sentenced to deprivation of liberty;
- ❖ an unaccompanied foreign minor





Starting with 2005, the decision was taken to restructure large capacity centres by building small capacity buildings. In 2015 it was inaugurated the last house of that type.

In January 2018, there were 170 children in the residential system and were distributed as follows:

- ❖ 2 family houses, where two substitute families reside;
- ❖ 2 family houses integrated into the local community;
- ❖ a village with 10 houses where 60 children lived;
- ❖ a home for severely disabled children with permanent care;
- ❖ 4 apartments with 6-8 children each;
- ❖ a residential centre for children;
- ❖ a shelter for mother and child.

The Children's Care Centre in Tallinn began its work in 1993, being the oldest care home in Tallinn. The main purpose of the Tallinn Child Support Centre is to provide shelter for people and small children, social rehabilitation services for young people with behavioural disorders, counselling for parents and young people with addiction problems. Currently, the Tallinn Children's Care Centre has 4 centres:

**The Lilleküla Centre** is the oldest centre in Tallinn, founded in 1993, has a capacity of 14 places for children who need help and protection to overcome the problems they face. The main reasons why children become beneficiaries of this centre are: vagabondage, domestic violence, parental alcoholism, drug addiction, loss/lack of a home, poverty and parental neglect. The child is most





often brought by police or special child protection services, and older children come for themselves to ask for help. The centre can provide services for children aged between 3 and 17 years old, but most of the beneficiaries are aged between 7 and 17 years old.

The centre provides services for a period ranging from one day to one year. Pre-school children spend their time assisted by social teachers, being involved in games and educational activities specific to their age. Students are assisted in studying and creating a favourable environment for learning habits, attending the former school or being transferred to another school.

Under the careful coordination of the head of the centre, beneficiaries work with psychologists, social workers, social teachers and nurses. The psychologist works with both the child and the biological family so that the conditions underlying the establishment of the social protection measure can be removed, facilitating reintegration. The nurse assesses the health of each child, tries to identify health problems and directs the child towards additional medical investigations if necessary.

Approximately 80% of children, after the interventions of the centre's specialist team, eliminate the causes that have prevented them from growing up in a family, they are reintegrated. If necessary, these children will remain under the supervision of a child care worker.

**Nõmme tee centre** is a centre founded in 2000 for the recovery of children with various addictions and /or behavioural disorders who were in difficulty. The centre has a capacity of 12 places for girls and 12 for boys aged between 10 and 17 years old. Working with children with addiction problems is successful only on long periods of time and therefore the children stay at





the Nõmme Theatre Centre for periods of 6-9 months. If it does not work effectively the child can be redirected to another centre.

The centre's specialists, in their recovery programs, work with: the Tallinn Children's Hospital, the Psychiatric Clinic, child protection workers in urban areas, members of the minors committee and school representatives (usually a teacher or a social worker)

The centre receives up to 100 children annually.

Prior to being admitted to this Centre, the children undergo a two to three-week assessment in the Department of Psychiatry of the Children's Hospital in Tallinn, where medical tests are carried out and the goals for solving child problems are established, and then the work with the child will continue in the Nõmme theatre centre.

The aim of the Nõmme theatre Centre is to provide children with addictive or behavioural disorders a safe environment to help them overcome the identified problem and rehabilitate themselves from a social point of view. The centre also offers learning opportunities and various child development options for day-to-day care.

The **social program** includes several stages and a series of activities such as:

### **Teamwork**

A group discussion coordinated by social teachers and psychologists, addressing issues and current topics in the lives of young people in the centre.

### **Periodical study**

Participation is carried out in collaboration with Ristiku School and Karjamaa School. Teachers from both schools come to the Nõmme theatre centre, where younger children attend school.

### **Practical hygiene rules**

Every morning, children clean up their room and joint areas, and a general thorough cleaning is performed on Saturday.





### **Individual and family psychological counselling**

Individual psychological counselling is done according to the program and once a week there is a counselling session involving the child and members of the biological family in order to solve the tension between them for the harmonisation of the inter-familial relations.

### **Healthcare**

Each child benefits from an initial medical assessment to determine the general health status.

### **Motivation and daily assessment**

Every day the child is assessed by giving him points for conduct, hygiene, educational activities, compliance with rules, etc.). If the child has collected the required number of points, he /she has the opportunity to attend weekend events (eg. theatre, exhibitions, sports events, trips) or visit his/her biological family.

There are plenty of opportunities for leisure: sport centres, basketball, football, DJ workshop, bakery shop, music workshop (bands).

If the children do not follow the rules and do not make progress following the specialized intervention, continuing to show a deviant behaviour, they are directed to other centres of treatment and rehabilitation. If they commit criminal offenses and do not answer before the law, it can be decided to admit him or her in a re-education centre.

**The Männi Centre** started its activity on 01.01.2016 offering social services for 14 children aged 3 to 18 years old.

The centre offers 24-hour service, temporarily until needed from the following specialists: psychologists, social workers, social teachers and nurses.

Children are offered a safe environment and warm food, have the opportunity to attend the former school or can be moved to a nearby school, are helped to acquire the necessary social skills and





hygiene habits. The child will remain in service until a solution is found for the future organization of the child.

### **Mother and child security service**

A shelter for future mothers, mothers and children who suffer from violence or who for any other reason are homeless, are in danger and need protection, understanding, support and counselling. The shelter has a capacity of 24 places, providing protection and support services 24 hours a day. The social worker is concerned with the safety of the mother and the child, trying to find optimal solutions to solve their situation; guides the mother in order to acquire the basic principles regarding the child's care.

Mothers constantly care for children, are involved in household activities, and together with the social worker identify solutions to safely leave the centre.

When mothers leave the shelter, appropriate information is communicated to the home social department for monitoring purposes.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

Children are provided with all the conditions they need to grow in a safe environment and to overcome the identified problems being supported in the process of healing and social rehabilitation, benefiting from learning opportunities and different development options.

Through alternative activities, rigorous and responsible work of all specialists involved in solving the case, both with the child and with the biological family, the return of the child to the family is facilitated after the elimination of the underlying causes of institutionalization - approximately 80% of the beneficiaries are reintegrated every year.





Another benefit is that there are juvenile treatment and rehabilitation centres as well as the rehabilitation centre for children who commit criminal offenses and that may not be held criminally liable.

### **Sustainability Substitutes Home of Tallinn**

Home of Tallinn is financed by the public budget, the Municipal Council approving the city budget and implicitly the centre's proposal.

The Centre may receive allocations and donations from foundations, companies, non-profit-making associations and individuals that are taken into account in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Estonia and Tallinn.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

A good example of the social protection system in Romania would be the Juvenile Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre and the Re-education Centre for children who commit criminal offenses and who may not be held criminally liable.

The social protection system in Romania needs such services to complete the wide range of social services it offers.

### **Model 4 - SOS Children Villages, Keila youth home**





The SOS Association is a non-profit organization which is based on donations from natural persons and companies. SOS Children's Village is an alternative to the family that has to provide care for children for whom separation from the biological family has been necessary.

Within the SOS Children's Village, children can live in the same family together with their biological siblings while maintaining contact with their biological parents until the family's situation improves enough so that they can return home. Children who no longer have a living parent need long-term alternative care to support them in their development as independent adults.

The SOS vision states that a child must belong to a family and must grow up with love, respect and security.

The mission of SOS is to prepare families having children in difficult situation and to help these children organize their future. In addition to the work of the SOS parents and social workers, the contributions of educators and volunteers help introduce children into various activities to help them find hobbies and interests in addition to the daily routine of formal education.

SOS supports the following types of alternative care for children:

- ❖ Family care;
- ❖ Foster care;
- ❖ Family type houses for small groups;
- ❖ Shelters for emergency situations;
- ❖ Crisis shelters for mothers and children;
- ❖ Transit homes.





The recent rise in the price of food and other commodities has affected many families in Estonia. There are great inequalities in child welfare, and poverty has had a major impact on the lives of children.

Children who grow up in poverty, in one-parent families or families with subsistence or health problems (especially those associated with HIV / AIDS) present the highest risk of losing parental care. These families are often socially isolated and it is difficult to make connections and form relationships, which would help them to improve their lives.

For this reason, SOS children's villages extend their programs in cooperation with local authorities.

Although the Estonian state has taken measures to help children who have lost parental care, SOS work in the region remains crucial. In 2004, the Estonian government took a series of initial measures to change how children who lost their parental support were cared for. The policy was to dismantle large care institutions and focus on raising children into a family-type system. This is also how SOS children's villages deal with children.

SOS works very closely with local government agencies, ensuring that young people and children have access to quality care and any other help they need, be it psychological or educational.

SOS provides childcare and ensures conditions to feel loved and protected.

## **Family care**

Up to 30 children whose families can no longer take care of them can find a loving home in one of the SOS families in Estonia. There are five family houses in Juuru, which are fully integrated into the neighbourhood. Children in SOS families attend nearby schools with other children in the locality, which helps them become part of the community.





A personalized development plan for the child is developed together with the child or young person, it is reviewed periodically and modified according to the changing needs of the child or young person.

### **Support for young adults**

When children become teenagers, they can benefit from SOS programs for young people, either in Tallinn or Keila. Both cities offer young people a wider range of educational and social activities than Juuru. SOS continues to support young people until they can live independently. It helps them continue their studies and attend further studies, such as vocational training courses or to take part in university courses.

Children's Village Keila SOS was opened in late 1994, just before Christmas. The official inauguration ceremony took place on June 16, 1995.

The village comprises 12 family homes situated right in the middle of the community. Each home has up to 6 children and SOS mother lives with them 24 hours - 7 days a week. On holidays there is an SOS employee who replaces the SOS mother.

SOS follows a strong principle according to which children are raised by the same person whom they have met since they first came to the children's village. The SOS mother takes part in all household activities, helps the children do their homework, cares for them when they are sick, supports them and she is next to them when they are upset, worried, but she is also happy for them when they succeed. All these aspects allow children to feel safe and grow in a safe environment.





Currently, there are 52 children living in Keila's village. There are other employees in Keila SOS Children's Village: educators, psychologist, village director, social worker and village manager. They all support the development of children. Children can also benefit from advice and help from a speech therapist who regularly visits the village.

In recent years SOS mothers have benefited from the help of volunteers who assist and help children with their homework and in planning and participating in recreational activities.

SOS emphasizes on discovering the child's interest when it comes to hobbies and afterschool activities. The strengths and interests of a child are discovered together with the SOS mother, teacher and psychologist. Depending on this, the child can be sent to an appropriate extracurricular course. Most children are involved in sports activities. Boys prefer football, basketball. Swimming and dance are the girls' favourite activities.

In **SOS Keila village**, children have the opportunity to enjoy art classes and take music lessons to study a musical instrument. The village manager has the opportunity to offer to the most active and hardworking children the opportunity to do other important tasks, such as arranging, varnishing or painting a writing table, repairing a chair, cleaning snow or mowing the lawn in the yard. Children enjoy participating in the spring and autumn cleaning activities together with the SOS village staff, knowing that after a day of work, a joint event will take place, such as a campfire, special food, and games.

For summer holiday periods, each child is assigned an activity such as: watering flowers; collecting rubbish and branches/leaves from the yard; sweeping the alleys; lawn mowing and other outdoor activities. Older children are helped to find suitable jobs temporarily either in the





youth camp in Keila or surrounding companies. There are cases when young people, after leaving the SOS village home, have quickly found a job because in the previous holidays they have temporarily worked for that company.

SOS employees work with young people who have lost their parents or who are at risk of losing them and encourages them to provide valuable information about their own needs and experiences. Young people can make an essential contribution to finding solutions to the challenges they face and can help improve the quality of childcare. SOS is also working to give young people the opportunity to express their views directly to decision-makers and stakeholders, to engage in global debates and to speak at international events.

The **Keila House** I have visited has a capacity of 14 places for teenagers over the age of 14, but the teenagers over 16 years old prevail. They can benefit from SOS services in this house until the completion of their basic studies.

The primary condition to continue living in the house is to attend school. If they are expelled after school, they are forced to leave the house in three months. Usually at age of 18, these young people leave the social protection system, but now the oldest is 24 and he is a student. Teenagers over the age of 16 and young people are encouraged to find a job and attend school at the same time. The money they earn is capitalized in a bank account and the young person has access to it after he after leaves the social protection system.

Social parents and adolescents drew up a set of house rules that are displayed and followed. Young people in the house are self-sufficient, they do the cleaning, cook food and do other





household chores. In the kitchen there are timetables containing the schedule for the cleaning, dishwashing and cooking activities.

Every young man concludes a residence contract with the municipality, where they undertake to respect the conditions and rules imposed.

When entering the house, young people are encouraged to choose a reference person among their employees, who will be a sort of personal guide. This relationship is based on trust and mutual respect, young people being encouraged to ask for support at any time, even outside the work schedule. In most cases, after leaving the social protection system, young people still maintain the relationship with the reference person.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

The care system provided in the SOS homes resembles to the care that children/ young people receive in an ordinary family where all the members have rights and responsibilities, have age-appropriate rules and sanctions, where they learn what respect is and what are the basic rules in a society.

Young people are taught and motivated to make a living, therefore most of those who leave the SOS home quickly find a job and know how to manage their own budget.

On admission to the house, young people are encouraged to choose a reference person among their employees, who will be a sort of personal counselor. This relationship is based on trust and





mutual respect, young people being encouraged to ask for support at any time, even in out-of-work hours. Most of the time after leaving the social protection system, young people still maintain the relationship with the reference person.

### Transferability of good practice example

A strong point of the SOS children's care strategy is the strong principle that children are raised by the same person whom they have met since they first came to the children's village.

In Romania, it would be preferable to have the possibility of continuity regarding to the reference person/ care provider chosen by the child, from the moment they enter the social protection system and until the end of the social protection measure.

## 5.2 Description of good practice models identified in Belgium

### Model 5 - Oranjehuis – Aura (Orangehouse)

**Oranjehuis** is an organization that provides social services to children, young people and their families who face various problems in their home, school, workplace, or circle of friends. The association has been active in the West and East Flanders since 1971, but has expanded its service offering abroad over the years, providing services to nearly 450 young people and their families per year, with the help of 85 employees and about 35 volunteers.





The goal of the organization is to build confidence in the younger self, trust in school and society, thus increasing the chances of socio-professional integration.

**Oranjehuis wishes** to activate the positive forces of young people and their environment through an individualized program that is being developed with them, a program that aims to fight against marginalization and social exclusion and at the same time to stimulate their active participation in society.

In order to benefit from the services provided by the Oranjehuis Association, it is enough to address them directly, but there are cases where young people benefit from these services as a result of a court decision.

For each beneficiary, a personalized program is assured to overcome the crisis situation, a program that emphasizes 4 levels of the human relationship, namely *young person's connection with his / her own personality, connection with family, connection with society*, paying special attention to schooling, labor and social assistance, and connection *with nature and the spiritual world*.

The Oranjehuis Association is recognized as a multifunctional center that acts in order to overcome relational problems when they tend to lead to social exclusion.

The reasons for which children use these services or for which the provision of services has been established by court decision are: school dropout, psychiatric problems, absenteeism, juvenile delinquency, lack of professional skills, etc.

The center is aimed at young people aged between 12 and 18 and their families. Young people entering the program offered by the association, shall conclude an agreement on their presence, objectives and responsibilities.





The methods used are based on counseling and consultation of all involved, according to a case-sensitive procedure. The Center offers individual counseling services in which self-knowledge, socialization, involvement in various activities and projects takes place. The center's experts analyze the issues that young people face, listen to them, initiate dialogues about expectations, goals and responsibilities. Activities are also based on discovering young people's abilities, understanding their aspirations and passions and, more importantly, the importance of the circle of friends. Depending on needs identified, school, family and legal counseling is provided.

The center also offers temporary pedagogical support to families experiencing difficulties in raising children. In order to do so, Oranjehuis counselors analyze each situation and provide support to families until it is found that parents can solve the situations faced by children and young people are able to cope with conflicts in a positive way.

In the situation that keeping a young man in his environment would be contrary to its interest, the possibility of a temporary residence is offered in Oranjehuis through a residential center with a capacity of 18 places, whose beneficiaries are young people aged 12-18 (20)

At the same time, young people under the age of 21 years who work or are seeking a job can live in the studio / one-room apartment within the organization, where they are helped by the personnel to develop their skills for an independent life (budget management, cooking, home maintenance, washing laundry, etc.).

In order to benefit of services provided by the residential component of the center, young people are required to attend school, and if they have completed the courses, to prove that they are





seeking a job or that they are employed. Young people living in Oranjehuis learn to communicate and empathize with others and participate in post-school activities, and during holidays they go on camps.

Young people aged 17-18 (21) years, who have acquired the skills to live independently are helped by a counselor to rent a studio or a one-room apartment in the city. They live completely independently but are monitored for some time by the counselor. If they face problems, they can request help at any time, even after the end of the monitoring period.

Another project supported by Oranjehuis is the **PART-TIME AURA TRAINING CENTER** which organizes training and personal development courses for young people aged 15 to 18 years, but starting with 2019, the age category will change and will be between 12-25 years.

It addresses young people who have difficulty in obtaining a formal education diploma. young people are either enrolled by a low frequency education center or by the youth care centers or child protection services. The objective is that these young people are able to continue their studies, obtain a diploma and develop their professional skills.

Each young person is assisted by a counselor, together with whom he draws up a personal development plan, tailored to the youngster's desires, aspirations, skills and needs.

The program that the young person will observe within the center can take place over a period of 2 months to 2 years and involves 2 days of compulsory curriculum activities and 3 days of practical work in order to obtain a professional qualification. If the beneficiary expresses desire to opt for a certain professional field (such as barber shop, manicure-pedicure, etc.), the counselor contacts the firms / professionals to form in the field chosen by him / her.





Within the center, the young person can access a wide range of personalized group and individual courses in an attractive and motivating approach. It can follow courses such as: general development, obtaining a driving license, carpentry, construction, patisserie / bakery, etc. At the same time, he / she can participate in courses where to develop creativity, anger control, and literacy if the situation requires so. In addition to these courses, the young person also benefits from recreational activities (horse riding, dancing, sporting activities).

During attendance to center activities, the counselor keeps in touch with both the family and the educational units, and there is a very good collaboration with all institutions involved in the young person's training for an independent life.

**Columbus project.** In mid-2009, a proposal to expand Oranjehuis's activities was formulated in response to the growing influx of young people's requests for assistance. After a successful pilot project involving ten families included in a positive reorientation program, the Columbus project was launched in collaboration with the **Kortrijk Child Care Center**.

By borrowing his name from explorer Columbus, the Columbus experiment aims at finding new horizons, along with young people and their families. In autumn 2010, Roeselare Care and Assistance Center was associated with the project, and in September 2011, collaboration began with the Gent Care and Assistance Center. Due to the cooperation and orientation of these three different organizations, Columbus has managed to support many families in recent years, with 738 families supported only during 2010-2013

The Columbus project focuses on communication and connectivity and aims at positive reorientation. The positive reorientation method starts from the whole context of a young person





(school, family, work). Everyone is heard, in an efficient way. In the family circle, following individual assessments, the issue is explained from the point of view of all parties involved. Everyone has the right to be heard, to speak and to judge from their own position about what must happen in the future. The responsibility and commitment of all are tested. This results in a common plan of approach and involvement. The aim of Columbus is for the family to find the power to address obstacles and difficulties inherent to life itself.

A tool applied to all the structures of the Oranjehuis Association is the Trust Circle in which both beneficiaries and staff participate. Trust Circle is performed at least 2 times a day or whenever it is deemed necessary. The participants get seated in a circle and say what they feel, creating an atmosphere of trust and intimacy that makes them drop their inhibitions and trust in each other.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

The services provided by the Oranjehuis Association through its projects have an impact both on young people who reached an impasse and on their families. The individualized program, based on the exploitation of its own potential, offers direct beneficiaries the opportunity to overcome themselves and increase self-esteem. Also, the activities in which they are involved lead to the formation and development of skills that motivate them and give them new perspectives. Interaction with other Beneficiaries within the Multifunctional Center and personal counseling contributes to the awareness of the situation and the risks to which they or their loved ones are exposed. The common activities organized on holiday camps contribute to the development of

71





social skills, the formation of a sense of belonging to a group, and the growth of empathy and solidarity.

Most often, the problems of young people are the consequences of lack of family communication. That is why the Oranjehuis Association initiated the Columbus project, where the whole family is counseled and helped to identify the causes of the social impasse they face. Awareness of mistakes leads to accountability, and the method has a major impact on young people's approaches and especially their emotional involvement in overcoming problems. They become aware of the role they have in their family, their ability to contribute to family stability and become responsible and involved.

In case of school dropout, returning to system may be an obstacle, both in terms of formalities and determination of the young person. The AURA Part-time Training Center, run by the Oranjehuis Association, provides those who are no longer motivated by the school system they are attending, new learning paths through training and personal development. They accumulate theoretical and practical knowledge, learn to use their skills and are encouraged to develop professionally in the direction of their own aspirations. These young people get a qualification in the field they want to work and are counseled in finding a job, which is a significant educational impact and an investment in their own future.

Reliable investment in young people who are offered the opportunity to live in individual dwellings in the city motivates them in the process of building an independent life. Once they have secured their living space, they can concentrate on finding the right job, in order to ensure a stable income. The counseling and guidance offered by the Association's experts, both in terms of





budget management and in the skills needed for civilized life, makes it easier for young people to transit to a normal, independent life.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The activities of Oranjehuis Association projects are designed for different age groups and different issues that young people face. The practices approached are based on studies, and results validate them. Individual methods that each case is dealt with, allow experts to adapt their practices to the needs of each young person and implicitly to develop the services they offer. From one generation to the next one, young people face problems that are added to directions dictated by the social, economic or cultural context they are going through. The "problem, context, method" circle has a strong regeneration potential according to each component. One determines the other.

The correct correlation between these three aspects that make up the method approached by the Association, ensures its application in the long term, in different situations. Thus, adapting the method from one generation to another, from one geographic space to another, or from one culture to another, becomes natural and is based on an initial formula that remains unchanged. It has an unlimited applicability and utility because it allows to obtain results regardless of the situations or scale it is applied to.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

Oranjehuis practices have a strong potential for transferability. This is ensured, on one hand, by the success it enjoys in Belgium and, on the other hand, by its huge ability to adapt the methods





used. Throughout the world, young people are confronted with similar problems, but taking over the Association's practices must take into account the specificities of each country. The counseling route and timetable will be tailored to the context and characteristics of the system where the Oranjehuis method is to be implemented. In other words, the process will be applied in the same way, but the difference will be to identify and include specific cultural accents within the method.

An analysis can determine the coordinates and degree of processes adaptation, in view of the transferability of methods approached. It is also possible to identify other groups of young people with other needs or in other situations of difficulty, to which these services may be transferred. For example, children and young people in Foster Centers, where the transfer of methods can be done successfully, given the infrastructure already created. Taking over examples of good practice in this case, can be done by reproducing the processes developed in the Multifunction Center, but using them at another scale. Also, for these young people, an additional practical knowledge, following the AURA example, in partnership with VET schools, would be of help, in order to develop skills that can be used in developing a career.

For young people in foster parents' care, where communication or adaptation problems occur, the Columbus Project method can be easily transferred by assigning a counselor to involve the family in an open debate.

Taking into account globalization and cultural development, good practices in social assistance have become much easier to transfer because they allow the adaptation and development of new and innovative approaches on the same format.

### **Model 6 - Jeugddorp Kaizen**

74





**Jeugdorp** is an organization that provides shelter and guidance to children and young people in a problematic situation through the following services:

- **Studio 16** is a „training service when living in a room”, the beneficiaries of this house are young women aged between 16 and 20 years old. Within this house, the beneficiaries are assisted in developing skills for an independent life.
- **Holleblok** is a mixed residential group for ten children aged between 3 and 14 years, being admitted for a limited period of time until their families overcome the crisis situation that has led to the court decision placing the child in such a service.
- **De Passant** is a mixed residential group for ten children aged 3 to 18 years old, and within this house the placement measure is ordered by the minors’ Court of Law. The child / young person can return to the natural family when it is considered that the family can provide a stable and safe environment.
- **De Stroming** is a residential component for 15 girls aged between 12 and 18 years old. Young people along with their families are provided with counseling and guidance to overcome the difficulty that has led to the establishment of the placement measure in such a service. If the young woman cannot return to the natural family, alternative solutions will be sought, in order to prepare her for an independent life.
- **Gezinsbenaderende werking** - is a house where a foster family lives (mother, father with their children) which has in placement, by court decision, 8 children older than 9 years. This is the only foster family in the Flemish area.





**Kaizen** is a component of Jeugdorp organization with headquarter in Bonheiden, near Mechelen, which provides the transition from the system of protecting young people to adult life. At the time of the visit, it was the only organization offering housing solutions for young people aged 17-25 years, who have no place to live and are at risk of becoming homeless. It is a newly created department (1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014) that provides residential help, as well as counseling, guidance and support services for young adults.

This component of the organization came into being due to the requests received from young people claiming that "There is not enough support in the social assistance system" and the lack of communication between the care system for the young and the adult care system.

The organization's actions consist of:

- To provide them a home without preconditions, only in view of motivating them to change their lives (being visited only once a week by a counselor);
- Supporting them to achieve their goals, actions that are focused on solution and not on problem;
- To provide the necessary tools to succeed - "Trust as a key."
- Kaizen's vision is that "Anyone has the ability to solve its own problems with the right support."

For this category of young people are available:

- a house with 8 studios located in the town of Bonheiden. Here, young people are on their own, but each has a counselor appointed, who monitors weekly the progress made by the young person and supports him /her when he / she is in trouble.
- 12 apartments for young people in Mechelen city, in blocks to be demolished. This

76





solution was chosen due to a lack of funding for this category of people. These apartments are rented for a period of 1 year. Usually in apartments there are young people who do not have a qualification, but they receive financial aid from the Government. One of the conditions imposed by the foundation for the young person to be able to live in such an apartment is that he has already benefited from an accommodation service offered through the other Kaizen houses.

- A small KaJac house where 4 young people live together with a supervisor, who also benefited from the services provided by the organization. This supervisor helps young people to develop their skills for independent living, advises them on day-to-day issues, but the expert aid for the tenants is provided by the counselor.

KaJac House is a collaboration between Kaizen and the Adult People Agency, which began on 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, in a house owned by Jeugdorp, located in the Vagevuurlaan area of Bonheiden.

The methods, the working tools approached in providing services for young Kaizen beneficiaries are:

- The warm welcome;
- The Outcomes Starr (Star Results);
- Making a projection of future, DREAM;
- Providing necessary tools to succeed - Participation
- Group Dynamics - Interns / Trainees - (seeking leisure activities);
- Focusing on solutions.





Although used for only 6 months, one of the working tools, which from the point of view of the organization's experts contributed to increasing quality of services offered to young people and to better results regarding their integration into the socio-professional environment, is "Outcomes Star", a tool that supports and measures changes.

Currently there are 25 versions of this tool, with applicability in several sectors: adult care, armed forces, autism and ADHD, community, criminal justice, domestic violence, education, employment, families and children, health, homelessness and other needs, mental health, substance abuse and youth, versions developed in collaboration with suppliers of these types of services.

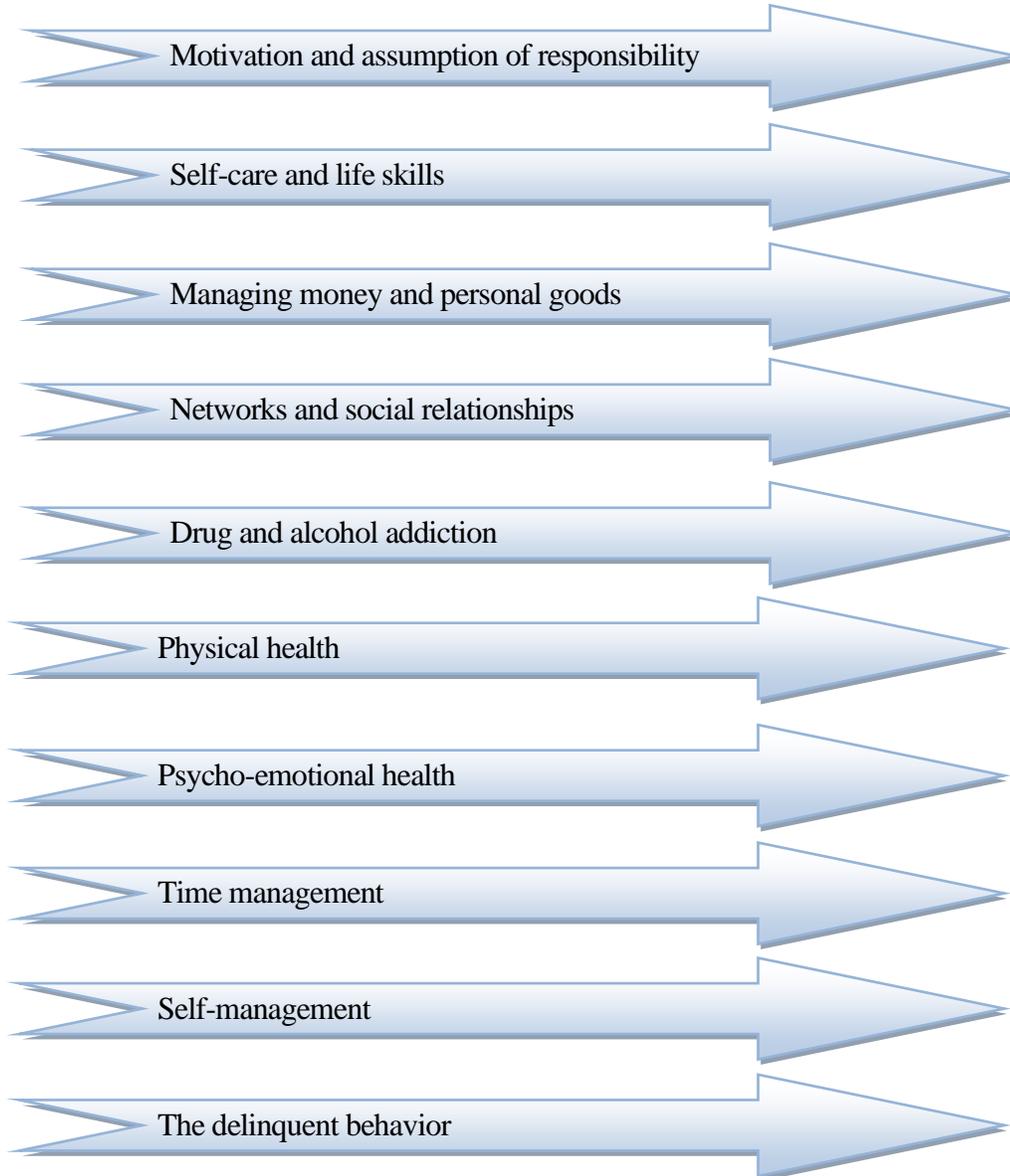
The **Outcomes Star** is widely used by both large and small volunteer organizations as well as local authorities in the UK, Australia and started to be used in many countries including USA, Canada, New Zealand, Belgium etc. It works because it is a unique result measurement tool designed to be used in collaboration with service users, in an objective and fully integrated way. In order to use any version of Outcomes Star, organizations must have Star training programs and licenses for staff who use this tool.

Members of the organization use the **Starlessness Star** for young people who use the organization services (homeless, but also with other needs), a variant that identifies and focuses on what needs to be changed in their lives (it can mean searching, finding and keeping a home, establishing and improving relationships, developing new skills to help dealing with everyday problems.) Making such changes is not easy, but understanding how the changes work, can help the person in need.





*Starlessness Star* covers ten key areas of life:





For each of these ten areas, there is a scale. Each scale follows the same pattern - The Journey of Change - in five stages:

**Stage 1 - Block (1- 2)** - the stage in which the individual feels blocked. At level 1, the individual is far from reaching the maximum potential, a situation that can negatively affect both him and those around him. At this stage the individual does not feel able to talk about own problems. When positioning at Level 2, the individual becomes aware that he is overtaken by problems. This is the moment when the possibility of change is foreseen, but he still does not accept help.

**Stage 2 - Acceptance of aid (3-4)** - the stage in which the individual realizes that he wants a change. Although he is frightened by what change means, he realizes that he can no longer continue in the given situation and begins to accept help only for pressing problems and not constantly. At level 4 the individual accepts help in a constant manner, but does not have an initiative and does not rely on the counselor's help.

**Stage 3 - Awareness of the existence of your own potential (5-6)** - the stage in which the individual begins to believe in himself and in being able to make changes in his own life. At level 5, the young person designs his future plan and realizes that changes are only made through his involvement. At level 6 the individual already has the initiative and is trying new ways to solve the situations. It is a stage where the individual needs a lot of support from the counselor.

**Stage 4 - Learning (7-8)** - At level 7, the individual is aware of what he does and what does not help him, in reaching the goals he has proposed. He is more confident in his own forces and more consistently doing things that bring him closer to the changes he wants to bring to his life. At level 8, the individual has achieved his goals, but needs more regular support from the counselor.

**Stage 5 - Self-confidence (9-10)** - At level 9, the individual develops self-confidence by acting for most of the time independently and without asking for help or advice from the counselor; requests help only

80





in crisis situations, in order not to lose what he has achieved. At level 10 the individual can handle himself without any help from outside, regardless of the situations he faces.

In order to fill in the Starlessness Star, each of the ten scales is analyzed, one by one, together with the organization's representative. Together, the level in which the young person is located, in each area, is identified by marking the number on the star chart and connecting the points to create a picture of areas that are working well and those that cause difficulties.

The image obtained will help the young person and the counselor to agree on the areas in which they have to work and can start to think about the measures to be taken and the help the young person needs to implement the measures.

The individual person together with the counselor will return to the Star at regular intervals, to identify the point where the young person is at, by mutual agreement and to draw a new form on the Star. Over time, this process helps building the images of the individual's personal journey. He will see where he started and how things changed for him. This process can help him see things in a new light and place the ups and downs of a week, in an overview.

Also, by applying this tool, the association has a clear picture of whether the service provided to the young person offers adequate support, which are the points where the beneficiaries of the services are making the most of the changes and which are the points where they should be given more help or if the situation needs to be addressed in another way.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

81





The most important benefit of the Kaizen program is that it offers those in a situation they can no longer control, a chance to become active and responsible citizens of the community. They are helped to overcome the moment by both material support (housing provision) and psychological assistance.

Each individual benefit of support from a counselor who assists him on a weekly basis, that motivates him and ensures safety to the young person. At the end of the program, the young man gains self-confidence and is prepared to face any situation. He is able to integrate into society, find a job and take responsibility.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The sustainability of the initiated methods is based on Kaizen's practical approaches to the needs of young people in transition from the protection system to adult life. Houses made available over a period of one year are then redistributed to other young people in similar situations. On the other hand, a number of young people in the Kaizen transition process become counselors for the next beneficiaries. This involves the accumulation of feedback directly from the beneficiaries and, implicitly, new suggestions for approaching the situations they have experienced. They have already experimented with a number of problems that newcomers may face in the system, they know "from within" the needs, fears, frustrations or feelings of young people who go through what they have gone through. Exploiting their own experiences, as examples to be followed or avoided, adds value to the method used and long-term perpetuation of this practice.

### **Transferability of good practice example**





Outcomes Star already apply to multi-country organizations, demonstrating their replication capability. Given its versatility, the method can work on a large area of problems faced by young people. The assisted journey follows the path that an individual lacking any perspective goes through, until the stage where he is fit to face any situation. None of the five stages is conditioned by the problem itself, but act on the effects it has on the individual. Therefore, the structure of the method can be adapted and easily transferred to other target groups. In partnership with school psychologists, it can take the form of a program for troubled teenagers, even if they are not part of a formal protection system.

The 25 versions existing so far, applied in various fields - adult care, armed forces, detention centers, autism and ADHD, community, domestic violence, education, employment, families and children, health, homelessness, health mental abuse, substance abuse - can be adapted and taken over by any organization that has experts and has the ability to support logistically this process.

### **Model 7 - Flemish Agency for Youth Welfare - RISING YOU**

**RISING YOU** is collaboration between various partners who support talented young people on their journey to ambitious jobs. The founders of this project are: Benjamin Gérard (social entrepreneur, founder of NATURE Association), Frank Coenen (entrepreneur and founder of InControl) and Nature Association, a recognized youth association since 1996, working to provide young people with the opportunity develop in a harmonious way.





The motto of the collaboration is **We climb. We rise. We shine.**

The Nature Association has a climbing club in Brussels, which is aimed at children and young adults aged between 12 and 30 years old. This club was set up especially for a particular target group, namely for socially vulnerable young people, but anyone can participate in the activities of this club for free.

All young people (be they in the system of protection, or from families, or refugees) from the age of 12 years old may participate in climbing activities that take place weekly, indoors or outdoors. Through the activities carried out at the club, the aim is to develop self-esteem, belief in one's own forces and improve relationship with others; in addition, within the club, the aim is to develop also employment skills, i.e. those attitudes and behaviors that will give them more opportunities on the market labor.

Club members who want to turn their hobby into work and who have acquired necessary attitudes can join a training course for different jobs, which is organized at height.

During the period February 2012 - June 2018, based on requests from companies looking for workforce, 4 free training programs for utility climbers in various fields were developed, programs developed mainly based on the employer's needs.

In order to participate in these training courses, candidates are subject to an evaluation and are selected by companies based on the profile they require. Following the selection, young people participate in the training program.

The training takes between 3 and 5 months, depending on the profile, and includes various modules: industrial painting, mounting of high voltage lines and poles, mounting and dismantling scaffolding, etc. At the same time, besides developing professional skills, participants are helped to get all the necessary skills to practice. Following the completion of the training course and

84





obtaining all the certificates, they begin their practical training in companies looking for workforce. Internship takes 10 days and is an opportunity to prove to the company how well they are motivated, punctual and competent, so that at the end of the internship that may be employed. Throughout this period, on the basis of needs identified, young people can also benefit from assistance and support in obtaining housing, obtaining a driving license, developing positive social relationships, etc.

So far, out of the 48 students, 46 have been hired and they kept their job, and 2 of them have been trained for 10 days.

All the steps taken by Rising You are to help the individual to self-discover, to develop, to overcome his situation.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

Participants in the **RISING YOU** program benefit from the learning of both sporting and professional skills and specialize in a niche job. In addition to physical qualities - strength development, increased resistance, improved coordination and harmony in movement, increased concentration capability, body modeling - climbing exercises train mind and eliminate stress.

Climbing training develops competitive spirit of young participants and motivates them to become winners. This workout requires the use of all physical and mental resources, requires a great deal of concentration and coordination. Not a few times, climbing is considered an extreme sport, preferred by young people. Practicing climbing can not only be considered a challenge for them, which can motivate them additionally, but it can also provide them with the necessary skills to find a job in the field of utility climbing.





Involvement in this program helps young people to become aware of their weaknesses and to overcome their fears. Climbing also develops young people's strategic and effective thinking and trains them for work under pressure. By participating in this program, young people are encouraged to discover their limits and to overcome them, which has a major impact on their training.

Besides these benefits, the organization also takes care of obtaining the attestations required to young people to practice the profession. Moreover, young people also benefit from a job, obtaining a driving license, housing and counseling until they are able to fully integrate into social life and become independent.

### Sustainability of good practice example

The fact that the program is run on the basis of demands made by labor force companies, based on the needs of the employer, guarantees a job to young people. This procedure demonstrates its success by the fact that out of the 48 young people trained, 46 have been hired and kept their jobs. With the development of cities, demand for jobs is becoming more diverse. Climbing courses in general, and utility climbing in particular, are costly and less accessible to people experiencing problems. That's why the **RISING YOU** program, offered for free to those who are in a vulnerable situation, is appropriate, especially as young people have the chance to change their lives. Its sustainability is ensured by cooperating with companies that also benefit from the services of the program.

### Transferability of good practice example





The **RISING YOU** program has two important components: competitive education and offering a job opportunity. Both components can be replicated in any community where there is a need to practice this sport for professional purposes. On the other hand, in terms of education, the program offers young people an alternative to learning and acquiring a competitive spirit. This program can be replicated both by schools or social assistance centers, as well as by non-governmental organizations that support and target young people in vulnerable situations.

### 5.3 Description of best practice models identified in Croatia

#### Model 8 - SOS Children's Villages Croatia

Association SOS Children's Villages in Croatia, a non-profit and non-governmental organization working in Croatia since 1992. It is a member of the international organization SOS Kinderdorf International, founded in 1949 in Austria, which operates in 152 countries around the world. The work of society is mainly guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care for Children. Performing the necessary tasks within the SOS Children's Villages Association in Croatia is carried out by the National Office, which coordinates all SOS facilities in the country. Collaborators at the National Office are professionals who devote their best efforts to helping children build a better life.

**SOS Vision Children's Village Croatia:** Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

**Mission SOS Children's Village Croatia**





We build families for children in difficulty, help them shape their future and share ourselves in the development of local communities.

The family is the cornerstone of society. Every child in the family is protected and free to enjoy the feeling of belonging to his family.

Children's villages SOS focuses on the problem of children at risk.

SOS Children's Village is a modern child care and care program that evolves according to the changing situation of children in the local context. Here children learn values, share responsibilities and establish lifelong relationships. With love and acceptance, emotional wounds are healed and self-confidence is strengthened. Children learn to trust and trust themselves and others. Once their self-consciousness is sufficiently developed, each child can recognize and realize its potential. The voice of each child is heard. Children participate in making decisions that affect their lives. They deal with their development with appropriate guidance. Children grow up in the environment that respects them and preserves their dignity as loved members of their families and community. Children are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

SOS Children's Villages is responsible for the direct care of vulnerable children in various forms of alternative care, strengthens families to prevent child abandonment and neglect, supports the rights of all children without parental care or the risk of losing their rights, and the rights of their families.

SOS Children's Villages Croatia is registered as a non-governmental organization - a provider of social services. As providers of social services, SOS villages for children have a contract with the Ministry of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, which partially finances the association's costs.





Target group:

- Children and young people without parents or parental care
- Children whose parents neglect or abusive parental duties
- Young adults
- Families who need professional help and other support because of interrupted relationships or other negative circumstances

Family-friendly programs work with nearly 100 families and 250 children and young people.

SOS Children's homes have the status of children's homes and accommodation and care facilities for children and young people without parental care.

At present, SOS Children's Villages takes care of a total of 230 children and young people.

Social services provided:

- Temporary and long-term accommodation (services outside the family);
- Childcare, health, specialized assistance, individual counseling, psychological assistance, guidance, education, free promotional activities and children's potential development;
- Counseling and helping the person overcome the difficulties;
- Family counseling and support (includes all forms of professional assistance in overcoming family problems and parenting difficulties in childcare and education and family-based training in everyday life) - in beneficiary's homes;
- Develop partnerships and participate in the life and development of local communities;
- Working with the biological families of beneficiary children to correct their disadvantages to the child and to monitor parent-child contact.

89





In two SOS children's villages there are 31 SOS families. Each SOS family offers accommodation for 5 children aged 0 to 12 (or older for siblings).

The children stay by the end of the elementary school and then, according to their psycho-physical maturity, they go to youth programs.

Each SOS family is run by the SOS mother who handles a maximum of 5 children, no older than 14 years. In individual cases, SOS families may have 6 children. For example, when there are more children in the same family, or when smaller children are placed in the family with older children.

Mother SOS has secondary education and some additional courses such as the "SOS Mother's School" and training to work with abused and neglected children. Every SOS mother lives in a SOS family with children.

Depending on the number of children in the SOS family and the complexity of their needs, each SOS family receives assistance from a SOS aunt who works either full-time or part-time. Currently, SOS Children's Village of Ladimirevci provides care for 78 children in 16 families, and SOS Children's Village in Lekenik hosts 74 children from 15 families. The professional support for SOS Moms in each child's place is provided by the child development team, consisting of two psychologists, two social assistants and a pedagogue.

### **There are 4 Youth facilities in Croatia: in Velika Gorica, Zagreb and Osijek**

In each facility there are 12-14 young people. For young people aged 15 and over who have completed primary school, they are housed in or out of the SOS system at the request of the Social Welfare Center. The stay lasts for an average of 4 years - until the end of the secondary education, after which the young person continues to study or is employed.





The following programs are offered to young people:

- Student Program - Financial Assistance, counseling and help;
- SIL program - financial assistance, counseling and assistance, use of Zagreb-owned parishes (maximum 3 years).

By the end of the three-year SIL program, young people remain in the so-called "next" period where counseling is provided whenever necessary, or if they need financial help.

There are a number of employees, namely: 5 educators with university studies - social workers, social pedagogues, psychologists. They work in three shifts.

Program for the prevention of separation of children of biological families "House of Love for Every Child" with the following basic content:

Two SOS mobile teams provide social counseling and assistance services, psychosocial help and family support in their home.

- Counseling Center for counseling and support services and education.
- Logopedics - the project "Better Reading, Better Writing and Better Speaking" for SOS CV and Local Community

The services are offered at the request of the Social Welfare Center, at the suggestion of schools, medical institutions or other institutions at the request of the user or family.

In family consolidation programs, work is done in accordance with family management principles, initial assessment, full family assessment, family planning change, performance evaluation. SOS Children's Villages organizes the School for Parents, support groups, education with thematic education children, volunteer aids.





SOS Children's Villages initiates and proposes an early termination of the young people who leave the 2 phase protection system:

***The first phase - starts two years before***

- ❖ Strengthen the sense of responsibility for young people, acquiring social and communication skills
- ❖ Strengthening specific and practical life skills, giving young people the skills they need to be competitive on the labor market
- ❖ Encouraging stable employment as well as temporary and summer jobs for young people, motivating young people to save money

***The second phase begins one year before***

- ❖ Psychological availability of young people to accept departure and avoid a sense of loneliness and fear of the future
- ❖ Elaboration of the individual transition plan for the post-assistance assistance program (pathway) based on IDP, but with detailed concrete measures, timing, responsibilities and budget

**Benefits and impact for the target group**

The SOS Children's Villages Association has implemented various projects, such as:

**"Adopting an SOS Family".**

Family sponsorship of companies is a form of long-term partnership that provides ongoing support from corporate partners that contribute to covering the costs of an individual SOS family.





Through this form of assistance, accommodation and care are provided for children who have found their new home in SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci and SOS Children's Village Lekenik.

Sponsoring a SOS family involves more than financial support. Corporate partners have the opportunity to get involved in SOS family life. They meet with their children and their SOS mother in person, follow their development, know their specific needs, and help solve some of the problems that they encounter.

Corporate partners work together with SOS colleagues for children in Croatia to demonstrate to them that they are not alone on the road to maturity.

The SOS family becomes part of the "family of the company". It gives companies the ability to track and support the development of children and their involvement in their own events.

In addition, it offers the promotion of partnership, depending on the sponsor's wish, can place a board on the sponsored SOS house, with the logo of the sponsor's company.

Each SOS family is run by the SOS mother who handles a maximum of 5 children, no older than 14 years. In individual cases, SOS families may have 6 children. For example, when there are more children in the same family, or when smaller children are placed in the family with older children. Depending on the number of children in the SOS family and the complexity of their needs, each SOS family receives assistance from a SOS aunt who works either full-time or part-time.

Currently, SOS children's village in Vladimirovici provides care for 78 children in 16 families, and SOS children's home in Lekenik hosts 74 children from 15 families.





### **"Understanding - the first step towards happiness"**

Every child has the right to education. Children from SOS Children's Village regularly attend primary schools in Lekenik and Ladimirevci. Secondary school children attend secondary school in Osijek, Velika Gorica and Zagreb while living in SOS Youth Facility. They still remain members of their SOS families, visiting them on weekends and holidays. Children in SOS care often come from families with difficult situations, they are neglected and privately educated.

Getting a good education and gaining the right professional qualifications is the best way to get self-confidence, and they use every opportunity to convey this.

*Target group*, 152 children from the SOS villages of the Ladimirevci and Lekenik children who need additional help from special education teachers and speech therapists as well as additional psychological help.

### **"Together in School "**

It is similar to the project "Understanding - the first step towards happiness"

In addition, this project is addressed to students studying at colleges in Croatia for students working on doctoral theses. They all continue to be members of their SOS families, visiting them on weekends and holidays, as in the previous project.

School books, supplies, and a growing number of necessary and costly school supplies are increasingly affecting the family budget, so they want to make sure that these children and young people have everything they need for to achieve the best possible results that they are capable of.

*Target group*, 160 children and young people from SOS villages of the Ladimirevci and Lekenik children participating in primary, secondary, university and post-graduate education.





### **"Good Handyman "**

The project provides funds for regular maintenance of investments in all areas where children and young people live, provides funds for auxiliary facilities in Lekenik and Ladimirevci children's villages, used by development staff and administrative staff.

In addition to the SOS families, villages serve as a home to a number of expert collaborators, depending on the location, namely: directors, pedagogical assistants.

Allowing children and young people to learn valuable skills that will help them when they start living alone: how to make small repairs around the house, changing a bicycle tire or planting a favorite plant, or a tree that will give it a day, shade or even bear fruit.

### **"Health is precious "**

Although the health insurance system offers many services and medicines

Children who come ill or get sick during their stay in SOS villages must be provided with additional funds to meet many other needs.

After being admitted to SOS villages, many children are undernourished, so they need to make sure they get vitamins and other dietary supplements to help them recover and reach normal physical development. Due to poor hygiene, admitted children can also carry parasites, lice, so all children must be treated.

In winter, recipients have frequent colds, they get sick of the flu, there is no alternative but to buy proper medication from house staff. Immunity stimulation supplements are a significant expense for this category, especially for children who have a very low immune system because of their childhood neglect.

More and more infants aged just a few months are admitted. It manages to cover most of their needs from donations in kind, but often requires extra food, creams and diapers in short time.





The law provides that all collaborators working directly with children and young people should be subject to regular health checks at the National Croatian Public Health Institute - most of them must undergo these checks twice a year.

This project allows for adequate medical and hygienic conditions for children and young people in village care.

As these children entrusted to the care of the villages come from bad living conditions, there must be many measures to make them as healthy as possible.

*Target group*, 230 children and young people from SOS village villages Ladimirevci and Lekenik.

### Sustainability of good practice example

#### **Long term partnerships.**

Key partners help support the core work of SOS Children's Villages in Croatia. Depending on their wishes and abilities, key partners provide funds for the annual maintenance costs of one or more SOS families, as well as funds for special education and speech therapy costs; funds for books and school supplies; funds for the transport of children; for investment maintenance and medical expenses. The key partners sign cooperation agreements for a one-year period.

Financial guidelines of the project (one area professional in each village) - "*Understanding - the first step towards happiness*"

- 180,000 HRK per year (15,000 HRK per month) for speech therapy;
- 150,000 HRK per year (12,500 HRK per month) for special education teachers;





- 120,000 HRK per year (10,000 HRK per month) for psychologists.

#### Financial Guidelines of the Project - "Together in School"

- 40,000 HRK per year for school books and materials for 69 high school students;
- 60,000 HRK per year for school books for 111 Primary School pupils in SOS Children's Villages in Ladimirevci and Lekenik

#### Financial Guidelines of the Project - "Good Handyman"

- 25,000 HRK per year for regular maintenance costs for investment in all four youth institutions - in Osijek, Velika Gorica and Zagreb;
- 40,000 HRKs per year for small repairs at facilities in the two villages for children - in Lekenik and Ladimirevci;
- 50,000 HRK per year for the cost of repairing appliances in both children's villages and in all four Youth Facility facilities - in Osijek, Velika Gorica and Zagreb;
- 100,000 HRK annually for the average maintenance costs of all the buildings and facilities in the two villages - in Lekenik and Ladimirevci.

#### Financial guidelines of the project - "Health is precious"

- 35,000 HRK annually for health and hygiene needs in a single child village, including one SOS Youth Facility (70,000 HrK annually for costs in both children's villages and all four SOS Youth Facility);
- 55,000 HRK annually for sanitary inspections at the Croatian National Croatian Public Health Institute, which are compulsory for workers in the two villages of rural children and all four facilities for young people.





At the same time, all the case-related marketing projects have been unified under the title "Days of Good Friends". Partners allow part of the proceeds from the sale of a product or group of products to go to a good cause. It can be a kuna from every sold coffee, or 50 bucks from a product's sales. Once the allocated time has expired, the company makes a calculation and donates the sum of the number of items sold in SOS Children's Villages Croatia.

Each year, SOS Children's Villages Croatia makes a list of necessary investments. This includes, among other things, the maintenance of existing facilities - 31 family homes where children live with their SOS mothers, 4 youth facilities with 15 high school students, SOS Social Center and other facilities.

With such a large number of facilities, it is to be understood that only a few need renovation every year. Corporate partners help in this task.

To maintain maintenance work to the standards required for childcare facilities, a system has been designed in which corporate partners cover the cost of work done by professional contractors, which are helped by volunteers - the employees of the partner company.

Partners can choose between house painting, window replacement, playground repairs, landscaping, and similar activities. They always work in collaboration with professionals.

Professional entrepreneurs take care of the workplace, but involvement of volunteers is extremely important: they help prepare and clean up the job and make it simpler. In addition to volunteer work, they get to know SOS Children's Village and spend time with SOS children and mothers.





Humanitarian Phone SOS Children's Villages Croatia: Interactive Company Telecom has donated a humanitarian number. With an appeal, HRK 3.20 is donated for children and young people from SOS villages in Lekenik and Ladimirevci.

### Transferability of good practice example

Sponsoring as a form of long-term partnership that provides ongoing support from corporate partners. These partners will contribute to covering such expenses.

### Model 9 - Parents' Association "Step by Step"

**Parents' Association "Step by Step"** is a civil society organization that supports the development of democratic relationships in society by protecting, respecting and promoting the rights and interests of children and families, and enhancing parental voice in policy and decision making on children and families.

The main activity of the Association is to promote the rights of children and their families to a decent life; cooperation with pre-school, school and other child and family care institutions; the joint appearance of members in front of state bodies and institutions and local communities; organizing seminars and public conferences; publication; cooperating with national and foreign organizations and promoting donations and sponsorships.

**Parents' Association "Step by Step"** was founded in 1996 with the aim of applying the international Step by Step Project. The Association introduced the Step by Step Program into the Croatian kindergartens and schools in order to teach thousands of teachers and tutors about methods of





educating children. It started two magazines (“Child, kindergarten and family” and “Child, school and family”) and established a special library for teachers and tutors where the translated curricula for the children in childcare, kindergarten and the first four grades of elementary school can be found.

In 2003 the Association established a public educational centre called “Step by Step”, a non-profit institution for tutor training in relation to the Step by Step Program, thus allowing Association to focus on the projects and programs designed for parents and children.

PA Step by step’s projects principally address the issue of child abuse prevention, the importance of parents’ active participation in decision making regarding education and other policies concerning children and families and support to teenage mothers and parents.

“**Mom is Mom**” is a project designed for pregnant teenagers, teenage mothers and their families. It is implemented with the aim of preventing risky youth behaviour and providing psychosocial help and support for pregnant teenagers, underage parents and their families. The program's activities include the MOM IS MOM counseling program, the web portal for girls and parents of minor pregnant women in order to prepare them for independent living and active participation in the community. The Project is funded by the Ministry of social policy and youth, the City of Zagreb, The National foundation for civil society development.

Among the objectives of the association are:

- Continue to implement and expand the Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAP) in pre-school, primary schools and special education centers;
- Promoting equality and the active role of parents in all areas of child welfare.





- Parenting for the role of lawyers for children and active partnership in educational institutions.
- Promoting responsible sexual behavior of young people and providing support and assistance to teenage pregnant women and adolescent mothers and their families
- Developing and expanding social services for teenage parents, networking and promoting cross-sectoral cooperation.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

The counseling center, in the project, started in 2005 - "Mom is mother", for pregnant adolescents, adolescent parents and their families;

Web portal [www.maloljetni-roditelji.net](http://www.maloljetni-roditelji.net) for young pregnant girls, parents and young people in danger, as part of the "Step for young mothers" project;

Counseling Center - Developing new social services for teenage parents. It aims to reduce the vulnerability of pregnant women and juvenile parents and empower them to actively and responsibly take parental roles;

PAC (Child Abduction Prevention Program), the largest and most sustainable program for the prevention of child violence in Croatia;





Project PARENTS INVESTMENTS. To contribute to the recapture of discrimination and the greater integration of former detainees and their families by strengthening personal, parental and partners' resources.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

Zagreb Children's House Partnership - Department for Moms, Zagreb Social Protection Center and Zagreb Public Academy.

With the financial support of the Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy (MDFYSP), Ministry of Justice, Criminal and Probation Directorate, Penitentiary Administration.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

It is important attention to detainees, and the fact that it is the only association dealing with such a category of people. Persons who commit a delinquency and have good behavior may enter a half-open scheme, that is, they may be allowed 3 days to participate in psychological counseling. This is possible in the last year of detention, or in the last period of detention.

### **Model 10 - PRAGMA Association**

Pragma Association specializes in working with young people who are at risk or who have already left the education system (usually defined in the ESL group - Early abandonment of education - young people aged 18-24 who study lower secondary education and no longer in the

102





education system) and young people who are not in the education and training system and are not employed (NEET, 18-24). Pragma has further expanded the group of beneficiaries and the beneficiary's age is between 15-29 years. These include young people in the social welfare system (if they come through a social welfare center), the judiciary (special measures), the health system (the recommendation of a general practitioner, nurses, etc.) and, of course, the educational system (professional services) or to the challenge of parents. PRAGMA had only a few young people who were from social care centers, that is, living in these centers. Of the two groups, as the main cause, there is a low socio-economic status of the family that generates or increases the difficulties with the child.

The Pragma Association emphasizes the early abandonment of the NEET school and NEET group with examples of collaboration between them and their partners (Croatian employment service, social assistance center, schools, associations). They can invite partners and associates to show how they work, with recommendations, and see if there is a possibility for users to be an active part of the study group.

The Pragma Association aims to improve living conditions; to develop prevention and intervention programs for children, young people and families; to develop innovative social programs. Beneficiaries of the association's services are school-leaving children, usually aged between 14 and 18, delinquents, children with emotional problems.

For parents, it provides counseling, conferences and workshops, consultations, educational programs for fathers. Collaborators are school-based experts for early identification of young people at risk, assessment, therapies, communication activities, counseling.

Media partners promote a positive image of children and young people, promote the values of education and also promote the social assistance system. One of Pragma's projects aims to





encourage journalists to write articles about children; the project has been running for 6 years, and journalists are noted for children and subsequently awarded.

The media partnership is also important in the advocacy campaigns the association carries out through the organization of conferences, radio - TV broadcasts, publication of press releases and press releases. Other associations, such as the Croatian Association of Entrepreneurs, the Health Association, make it possible to carry out the Pragma Association's projects. Also, partnership with public institutions is important. For example, the court decides that the young person follows a counseling program, he goes to the Social Welfare Center, and from there he is sent to different counseling associations.

Among the projects carried out, we mention: the counseling center for children, young people and parents; mentoring programs; workshops aimed at developing / developing social skills, prosocial behavior, emotional culture; workshops for young people without a job to teach them how to write a CV, how to interview, SWOT analysis; conferences on addictions, media culture and emotional culture, entrepreneurship; the development of innovative educational materials (tests, school calendars).

From the autumn of 2018, she runs the **"One week at school / a week at work"** program, and young people are trained in various areas, such as cook, hairdresser, nurse.

The Youth Continuing Program, developed in partnership with the Faculty of Law of the Zagreb University, the Zagreb and Somobor Social Care Centers and the Association of Social Pedagogues and financially supported by Zagreb City Hall, aimed at research in this area. The considerations that justified this project are related to the implications of not completing studies: lack of employment, poorly paid jobs, jobs that involve physical work; poverty and social





exclusion; housing issues; the risk of adopting anti-social behaviors and the emergence of family problems, and personal lack of self-confidence, self-esteem.

The **research results** highlighted family issues:

- parents divorced or working too much, or parents without employment, who tolerate absences from school or who do not cooperate with school;
- parents are not involved, lacking interest in children, lacking authority and control;
- weak communication skills;
- not sufficiently aware of the importance of education.

For example: there are many children from disorganized families; parents work most of the time and have no time or energy to handle the baby; parents themselves have a low level of education or do not work; parents believe they have no obligation to deal with the education and guidance of children, that they grow up alone; does not cooperate with school, does not participate in meetings with parents; I apologize for the children when they refuse to go to school; parents say that education is not so important and therefore does not motivate the child or prefers to find a job instead of going to school; they have no control over the children.

*Among the young people, it was highlighted:*

- verbal violence, lack of working habits, avoidance of class;
- lack of motivation for a school specific to the type of school (vocation);
- difficulties in writing / reading / learning;
- low intelligence;





- low motivation for professional and social achievement, shyness, depression, lack of self-esteem, lack of trust.

The behavioral, intellectual and emotional characteristics of the participants in the study are:

- School absenteeism;
- Drug abuse, violence, learning problems;
- Attention deficit, lack of motivation.

Problems inside the system:

- Education system: Teachers are not sufficiently empathetic; financial support is insufficient; experts feel mostly helpless (lack of individual approach)
- Social assistance system: insufficient time for individual work, by case; lack of specialists; not intervene early;
- Labor market: young people are at risk of not finding a job; the costs of adult education.

### **Support models:**

- a) *The pedagogical measure of extended professional practice* in primary and secondary school is a form of educational practice that is conducted to determine the reasons for unacceptable behaviors, complex forms of behavioral disturbances and / or increased risk of student behavior and to take action for their rehabilitation and the return of balance to socially accepted behaviors.

### **Implementation modalities:**

- Prevention, teacher education, support for teachers;
- Closer cooperation with social workers within the school;





- Working teams, exchange of experience.

To exemplify: The pedagogical measure of the extended professional procedure is applicable before expelling students. It is important to involve parents and teachers alike in doing this. Try to motivate students to find interesting things in school. They are talking to parents and are guided to acquire parenting skills. More preventive action is needed. Social workers should also be involved in spending more time in schools, discussing with students. Teachers need further training. Better cooperation and the expansion of the network of specialists is needed.

- b) Counseling, learning support, leisure activities, workshops, teaching assistance

### **Implementation modalities:**

- Prevention, education for teachers and parents;
- Better cooperation (NGOs, schools, social workers)
- Working teams, exchanges of experience
- Local aboraders
- Deepening research - what are the needs of students?
- case studies;
- proposals for social policing;
- public events and conferences;
- case prevention and second chance, workshops, individual counseling;
- cooperation with public and private institutions
- Best method: "Be close to the child"





### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

Depending on the type of project, either early to improve behavioral behavior of young people and motivate them to continue their studies, or they are included in rehabilitation programs, acquiring new knowledge and skills..

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The Pragma Association aims to continue the problem-solving research, along with the school, the local community, the social assistance center, the police, the health institutions, other non-governmental organizations; maintaining cooperation, exchanging information at the level of specialists, but also at the institutional / public level and exchanging data on good practice and working methods; promoting a positive image of education and its role in social integration and reducing social inequalities.

The financing of the association's programs is ensured by contracts concluded with ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Family), with local institutions (Zagreb City Hall), but also from accessing European funds or from donations (of donations is small the funding percentage).





### **Transferability of good practice example**

It is worth noting the importance of partnership between public and private institutions, but also the multisectoral approach of cases. Social assistance in schools is also a branch of social assistance, but which, unfortunately, only addresses pupils in special education. In schools of mass education, the social worker at the local social assistance service or DGASPC. However, at least in the case of children in the special care system attending the special education, intervention can be rethought in the sense of closer collaboration between the case manager / social worker responsible for the case and the social worker at the educational institution, so that the objectives have continuity.

It is also useful to strengthen partnerships with the media so that child services are promoted, but also actions aimed at raising awareness of the community, focusing on the positive aspects of each beneficiary, this being useful in increasing the chances of social integration and integration into the labor market, because unfortunately in the local and national media are presented the "failures" of the social protection system and less the talented, serious and talented children and young people.

### **Model 11 - Children First Association**

Initially, there was an action group that came to support the people in need of help from the Croatian war and the Children First Association was set up in 1994. Between 1991 and 1997 they carried out humanitarian activities and psychosocial support programs for refugees and for families and displaced children. Since 1997, the Children First Association has been developing programs and services for children.

109





The beneficiaries of the services provided by the association are children deprived of adequate parental protection (victims of domestic violence, neglected or abused, children with psychosocial and emotional adaptation problems), young people with behavioral problems, children and young people in the foster care system, parents or caregivers of children in difficulty - conflicts created by divorce, domestic violence, mental or non-parental skills, nursing assistants, parents of children who are in the social protection system. They are offered counseling, psychosocial support, crisis intervention, informal education. In the past year, the association had 415 benefits, mainly among parents / carers, according to a court decision (256), but also among children who did not have adequate family care (107).

As a rule, cases are distributed by the Municipal Social Assistance Center, but the beneficiaries can also address the association directly. There is a collaboration protocol with the Zagreb Social Welfare Center, which includes the principles of collaboration and social services provided, the rights and obligations of partners, the procedures used in the provision of social services, the mechanisms of collaboration, the limits of competence, the obligation to periodically review the protocol, according to legislative changes and working practices. As a way of working, for placement centers, they have a mobile team that moves to the place where the beneficiary is located. As a rule, services run during the school year.

The counseling contract is signed by both the parent and the child and is part of the motivation. The contract provides for confidentiality conditions and situations where the confidentiality principle is not applicable, the means of information, the objectives set, the estimated duration, the rights and obligations of the beneficiary, the rights and obligations of the counselor, the referral procedure.





Work methodology is based on a child-centered approach, an integrated approach to delivering / delivering social services and on the availability / accessibility of services in the local community.

Working methods depend on the age category of the beneficiaries, but also on the issues raised. For example, children use dialogue techniques, games, musical activities; with adolescents doing activities that make them happy (for example, the BELA book play) or do role-playing games; adults are using role-playing games. Group activities are performed in groups of up to 15 people (in the group, they are both parents, if they are divorced). For adults, there are 12 counseling sessions, and for children, meetings are held twice a month, during the school year (September to June), but I can come back if needed.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

The association's programs are based on the needs of the children, actively involving parents and experts in the education and social assistance system and other non-governmental organizations at the same time.

The programs contribute to the development of the integrated approach, the promotion of good practices, mutual learning and the development of innovative practices.

The projects aim at preventing all forms of violence against children and young people, reducing cases of violence against children and violence among children / young people, support for foster families focusing on the acquisition and improvement of non-violent education methods, support for beneficiaries with behavioral problems to accommodate in residential institutions, as well as for the preparation for the independent life of leaving the special protection system; the

111





multisectoral approach by creating / developing a network between the social assistance system, the education system and the whole community.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The association's projects aimed at preventing unacceptable behavior among children were recommended by the Ministry of Education to be implemented in schools and incorporated into pre-school curricula. Funding of the Association's activities is ensured by 1/3 of the Ministry's budget, 1/3 of local authority budgets and 1/3 of projects and sponsorships.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

It is important to pay attention to the service contract / counseling contract as an aspect of accountability and motivation of the beneficiary. In the protection system in our country, the service contract ends in accordance with the legislation and standards in force, but the interventions within it are not personalized, but in the individual protection plan (invoked in the contract). This aspect can be taken into account in order to simplify the service planning process, which at this time involves: planning of the team meeting, minutes of the meeting, elaboration of the individualized protection plan, service contract, elaboration of the specific intervention plans, implementation of the specific intervention plans.

It is also important to note that the working methodology with the beneficiaries is found in the collaboration protocol with the financing public institution and we consider it important to strengthen the public - private partnership. Providing services in non-residential structures brings the protection system closer to the intended purpose of providing family-type care (if we do not

112





have any therapists or medical staff in the family, and we should address healthcare specialists or private clinics, for example, then it is useful for the beneficiary of the special protection service to carry out the therapies, when it is needed, in an environment outside the placement center: (the psychologist's cabinet, the physical therapy therapist in the recovery hospital, or to do ergo therapy in an NGO etc.).

#### 5.4 Description of good practice models identified in Bulgaria

##### **Model 12 - State Agency for Child Protection Bulgaria Foundation "CONCORDIA" Bulgaria**

The State Agency for Child Protection / ASPC / was established on the basis of the Child Protection Act by Decree No.226 / 10.10.2000 of the Council of Ministers and started functioning on 01.01.2001. The agency is headed by a chairman who is supported by an administration. The President of the Agency is a specialized body of the Council of Ministers that coordinates and monitors child protection policies in Bulgaria. The main objective of the ASPC is to ensure the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and national legislation in this area by assisting the President in the exercise of his responsibilities.

The "**CONCORDIA Bulgaria**" Foundation is an independent humanitarian organization that operates internationally, with the basic mission of supporting children, young people and families





in difficulty in a direct, rapid and sustainable way. The Foundation offers opportunities for a happy childhood, school education and training, it helps young people to acquire the skills they need to lead an independent life.

The Concordia Bulgaria Foundation is part of a network of public organizations called "Concordia Social Projects" operating in Bulgaria, Romania (1991), Republic of Moldova (2004) and Austria (2016).

The first project of the Concordia Foundation in Bulgaria was carried out in 2008 at the Social and Youth Centre "Sf. Constantin "being a complex of social services in support of children and young people in risk groups.

At present, Concordia Bulgaria manages several different types of social services:

- day centres (two of which are delegated by the state through a contract with the Metropolitan Municipality);
- counselling centres
- residential type centres
- two social enterprises in marginalised communities.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Foundation collaborates with a large number of competent professionals in the field of childcare and motivated volunteers in order to contribute to the development of social services and to provide a future for children and young people that are at risk.

**The principles** underlying the work of the Concordia Foundation are as follows:





Specialists are constantly concerned about creating favourable conditions for the development, protection and establishing solid connections, as well as promoting responsibility among children and young people.

### **Working with families**

The activities of the foundation focus on working with families to avoid the traumatic separation between children and their parents, considering that it is important for parents to get involved in their children's daily routine. Working with the family has an important role for an optimal development of the children and creates a solid basis for their future. Bu if this is not possible, alternative solutions are found for the children's education.

### **Trust**

Children and young people need man and women with whom they can build a relationship based on trust; they need to have role models for a responsible life as future adults. If in their original families this is not always possible, the *Concordia Foundation* has professionals who have the capacity to strengthen their skills, to boost their self-esteem in order to lay the foundations for an independent life.





### **Systematic approach**

When working with young people and children it is essential to acknowledge important aspects in the context of the relationships they develop, such as: Where do they come from? What have they experienced? Who were they?

This approach raises a better awareness of the problems an individual faces and it represents the main aspect when it comes to care and support.

### **Participation of the child / young person.**

The Concordia Foundation strives to build the skills to express their own opinions and make decisions for each child and young person, depending on the age and individual level of development.

### **Advocacy**

The Concordia Foundation supports the rights and interests of children / young people and families who need social services and tries to support them in all situations. As a key factor in building a more rightful and more appropriate child protection system, it is proposed the establishment of a child and family court in Bulgaria.

The social center of the "Concordia Bulgaria" Foundation offers three types of services:





- Temporary residence center for adults;
- The Transition Center for Youth;
- Children's Day Center;

**The Temporary Residential Adult Centre** has a capacity for 30 people and they can receive services for a period of maximum 3 months. The target group of this service consists of young people from the social protection system aged between 24 and 29 who have failed to become independent and have not found a job. Here, the young people are helped to discover their vocations, are encouraged to develop their skills for an independent life, they are assisted in seeking employment through counselling on how to draw up a CV and how to behave in an interview with the employer.

**Youth Transition Centre** has a total capacity for 12 people, 10 for children between 15 and 18 years old and 2 for young people aged between 18 and 24 years old. The target group of this service consists of children assigned by the Child Protection Department of the municipality and they come from either from their families of origin or from centres undergoing restructuring. The main purpose of this centre is to help the children to finish high school; to acquire independent living skills and to find a job. The centre is an open type centre, the children are accompanied to school and they are not strictly monitored.

In order to enjoy the services offered by the centre the beneficiaries must study and work at the same time. During their stay, they are not required to contribute to expenses. Their is deposited in a personal bank account to which the beneficiaries have access only after they leave the centre. In the centre there are workshops for various leisure activities such as pottery, football clubs, music,

117





decorative candles, and more. Beneficiaries are permanently supervised by at least one person, each child having a designated case manager. Every three months, he draws up a Personalised Plan. At present, a new internal child protection regulation is implemented, regulation which refers to the relationship between the employees of the centre and the beneficiaries, the type of behaviour beneficiaries are allowed to (they must show respect, they must not destroy things, they have to be civilized).

Major beneficiaries must conclude a contract stating that the Centre has the right to monitor them closely. This contract is flexible, new monitoring directions can be added, such as: school monitoring, health monitoring. The contract also includes rights and obligations for the parties (they clean the room and common spaces, wash clothes, sometimes prepare food for themselves, etc.).

In case the beneficiaries do not follow the terms of the contract, gradually the following measures are taken:

- counselling takes place so that the young person becomes aware of the mistake and the way of rehabilitation;
- verbal warning when counselling has not had the expected results;
- some restrictions apply, for example: they cannot go to theatre, movie, they cannot visit their biological family and others.
- if all of these do not work, a clinical assessment is required - a psychologist who can change social protection measure by moving the beneficiary to a family-type home being closely monitored.





Discussions with the employees revealed that the biggest challenge is to succeed as much as possible in motivating beneficiaries to engage in activities. They work with them so that they can offer them guidance in their adult life. They applied a system of rewards and penalties based on points accumulated to perform certain tasks / activities, and when a rule is broken points are In addition to this score, children who attend school, who follow the program and have a civilized behaviour, receive pocket money at the end of the week. If the beneficiaries have observed the regulation for a period of three weeks, they may choose to participate in an external activity such as theatre, film, park walks, or a visit to the biological family if the family situation has improved.

### **Day care center for street children**

The Concordia Foundation provides day-to-day social services for 25 children based on a contract with the Bulgarian public system.

The target group consists of children:

- between the ages of 4 and 18, who are neglected, ill-treated or abused
- who have dropped out of school and / or are exploited through work
- children and teenagers living on the streets
- who come from families belonging to the Roma ethnic group, having existential needs and who are strongly affected by social exclusion
- who live in poor hygiene conditions, without running water,
- faced with social discrimination.

The foundation offer services to help them meet their basic needs such as hot meals, clothing, basic medical assistance and support children and their parents in learning.





### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

The Concordia Foundation's care system, in addition to meeting basic needs, is based on motivating beneficiaries by collecting points as a reward for proper behaviour and compliance with internal regulations. Beneficiaries are taught and motivated to face the difficulties that can come across in their life and acquire the skills necessary for an independent life. Another benefit is the existence of workshops for vocational activities where children / young people can be creative and can spend their free time in a useful way.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The Adult Temporary Residence Centre and the Youth Transition Centre are funded by private contributions from Austria, and the Children's Day Centre is funded by the Bulgarian state through a public-private partnership.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

We consider that it would be beneficial for the social protection system in Romania to implement a motivational system of rewarding beneficiaries for proper behavior and compliance with internal regulations.





### Model 13 - SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria

**SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria** is part of the large international family of SOS Children's Villages International.

Established in 1990, SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria is the first child rights organization in the country. Offering direct services to children deprived of parental care, it was also the first civil society association in Bulgaria to develop models of family care as an alternative to institutional care for children. The association provides family care, supports foster parents, provides family services, supports young people through programs to gain independence, and promotes children's rights.



#### Strengthening the family

This program supports children who risk losing care of their biological parents, through a series of family services aimed at preventing the separation of children from their biological families. It provides social and psychological support to families, allowing them to better deal with their children. The program is implemented at the SOS social welfare centers in Gabrovo, Pernik, Sofia, Tryavna și Veliko Tarnovo. Approximately 250 families receive services that result in increased parental capacity and family reunification.





## Advocacy Campaigns for Children's Rights

SOS Children's Villages advocates for children's rights and supports their families in their efforts to improve the quality of their children's lives. It seeks to raise awareness among children and young people and to ensure the active participation of children in the life of society. The association is among the strongest defenders of child rights and child welfare in Bulgaria and strives to create an improved legislative and policy framework. In the traditional SOS model, a "mother" and a "aunt" cared for 12 children, in every house. In this model were searched for unmarried, widowed, single, without children and without the possibility of having children, and children were unable to reintegrate. In Bulgaria this model could not be applied because of the legislation. SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria recruits maternity assistants in 4 regions of the country: Gabrovo, Pernik, Sofia și Veliko Tarnovo, prepare them, support them in the accreditation process, and monitor them.

Children in SOS adoptive families are fully integrated into local communities. They also supported qualified teams of educators, psychologists, psychotherapists, speech therapists and social assistants registered by SOS children's villages.

In Bulgaria, if the maternal assistant twice refuses the children for whom the placement measure is required, is removed from the "program".





## **Family-type homes**

Houses of the family type accommodate 5 to 8 children and young people, cared by a team of professionals, and are located in Veliko Tarnovo și la Gabrovo. At present, SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria aims to move children to Sofia in order to facilitate their access to various community services.

## **Youth facilities**

These provide care for boys and girls over 14 in a family home. They live together, in small groups, in integrated spaces in the community. They are supervised by professional teams that help them overcome the traumatic experiences of their past, helps them develop their independent life skills and supports them in completing formal education.

Ten years ago, the program for independent living skills began. In the Lprogram for independent living, young people aged between 16 and 18 are included; the program starts as long as the child is in the system and continues for 3 years after leaving the system.

This is a program that helps young people who have grown up in the care system to live an independent life in the community. The program aims at reducing the disadvantage of the beneficiaries of the special protection system to the young people who grew up in their biological families and who, even as young adults, still enjoy the support of their families. The program provides individualized support to young people in order to benefit from healthcare,





further education, finding a job and housing, and providing emotional support.

Since the beginning of 2018, the association has been implementing a new concept. In the old model, the child was given support according to the merits, if not, he was sanctioned. In the new concept, there is the principle of universality, according to which every child is entitled to support, and the support does not abruptly break at age 18. Statistically, the age at which a young person becomes independent is more than 20 years old, going to 24-25 years.

Among the principles on which the *Independent Life Debut Project* is based, we mention: the principle of universality, the principle of child participation (each decision is taken with the child), the principle of individualized approach, the principle of holistic approach.

Financial supports are not enough, and psychological, social, vocational, therapy (if any) is also needed. There are 4 categories of financial support: education, employment, housing support and health care. The decision to grant support to each child is taken by a committee of 3 people, who transfers the program director's recommendations. If money is given to the beneficiaries every day, then they will not stop their dependence on help.

If children at the age of less than 8 years were at the beginning, children aged 13-14 years old now, and 60-70% are Roma, and this is another reason to provide support after the age of 18 years, since beneficiaries need more support for integration, including emotionally.

The association has 105 children in family placement, children placed by decision of the court, and 800 children from biological families.





## Presentation of the association services:

### SOS Children's Villages Family Placement Center

Coordinates a placement service network (children placed in families and centers for young people aged between 14 and 20 years) and 2 social counseling and social support centers (Sofia and Pernic). Beneficiaries of the association's services are sent by the public service, and the case management is also ensured by the public service.

The process of leaving the system of the beneficiaries is difficult, whether it involves reintegration into the family, adoption or exit to 18 years. Young people can stay in the system for up to 20 years to complete high school, if they do not continue their studies, the protection measure ends at 18 years. After exit from the system, there are transition units, funded by the government, but set up by municipalities as a means of support. One of the shortcomings is that there is insufficient support for the biological family to overcome the problems. On the other hand, social workers have very many cases (over 100).

Support for young people can consist of support for finding a job or financial support for studies. University studies are paid, even in state education, and students are no longer in social centers, but in housing for which they pay rent. In Bulgaria, after the closure of large institutions for the protection of children, young people have not been exempted from university fees.

Upon leaving the system, a contract is concluded between the beneficiary and the service provider following the established plan (for a maximum of 3 years). For example, there is a way of

125





financial support for young people leaving the system, through which they can receive money up to 1000 leva even if they work.

## Youth facilities

SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria has 2 youth houses, each with a capacity of 10 seats, where young people aged between 13 and 17 are admitted by court decision. Initially, a house had a capacity of 15 seats, but given the dynamics of social issues in the last 5 years (young people with different patterns - domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug use), their capacity was reduced in order to be able to manage cases and to provide them with the appropriate services. According to the psychological assessment made by the house psychologist, most children are slowly developing, but also emotional. When the beneficiaries are in crisis, they go to the crisis centers, about 6 months, then return home.

As a result, the social integration rate of the beneficiaries has decreased, young people have problems with school attendance, do not finish their studies and have difficulty finding and keeping a job (1/3 fail to finish the 10 classes mandatory). For those who do not finish the school, different courses are organized, but they refuse to participate in them as well. From 2017, children with disabilities are integrated into mainstream education, benefiting from special support teachers and educators.

Preparations for independent life begin 1-2 years before leaving the system, and the plan addresses two important issues: work and home. Unfortunately, because of bureaucracy, employers give up employment for a period of time, for example, during summer holidays.

126





We mention that there are two main meetings a year to adjust the individualized intervention plan. As a staff structure the 2 youth houses have 1 social worker, 1 psychologist, 5 educators / house, 1 coordinator, economist. The relationship of trust between the child and the specialist is important.

### **Benefits and impact for the target group**

Beneficiaries are supported in the decisions they make, as well as the service and assistance plan is drawn up with the participation of the beneficiaries, which also means responsibility for achieving the objectives. They are also supported after the end of the special protection measure, similar to the young people in the family, where parental support (financially, emotionally) does not end suddenly at the 18 age.

### **Sustainability of good practice example**

The SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria Association promotes its "Start for Independent Living" Program at national level and also promotes child rights and human rights across the country.

### **Transferability of good practice example**

It is important to ensure that beneficiaries are monitored after leaving the special protection scheme for a period set by a contract to track the success of integration or, where appropriate, to determine the need for intervention or support. For such situations, monitoring can be provided by local social assistance services or by private bodies, not necessarily by DGASPC.





The service contract is also important, setting the services, delivery arrangements, responsibilities and deadlines.

The involvement / participation of the beneficiary in the preparation for independent life is essential, giving up the passive model that creates a circle of addiction.

Consideration should also be given to the possibility of creating crisis structures for situations difficult to manage in residential structures or in foster families.

### **Model 14 - Social Assistance Agency Bulgaria**

Specialized child protection bodies are the chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection and the Social Assistance Directorates at the Social Assistance Agency. The Social Assistance Directorate is a child protection body at the local level where the Child Protection Department (CPD) operates. CPC social workers take protective measures with regard to children at risk.

The basic principle of special laws and regulations is the commitment of the state to protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of the child in all spheres of social life by providing and implementing measures to protect the rights of the child. Child protection is a system of legislative, administrative and other measures to guarantee the rights of every child.

Ensuring the right of children to live with their parents is one of the priorities of the child protection system. Efforts aim at improving parent's abilities and changing attitudes towards children.





The competent authorities for child protection strive to ensure in their work respect for children's rights, protection of the best interests of the child and support for children and families.

The Bulgarian legislation on child protection and its fundamental principles of preventing child abandonment and placement of children in institutions only in extreme cases correspond to international standards in the field of child rights.

An integral part of the implementation of this principle is the support of parents when they have difficulties in caring for their children. Local child protection authorities make concerted efforts to prevent abandonment and reintegration of children, providing in addition to socio-psychological support and financial assistance that is part of the prevention, reintegration and placement of relatives or foster carers.

Of particular importance is the individual approach to dealing with cases, which is related to the specific needs of the child. Essential to guaranteeing the rights and interests of children is that placement outside the home, including a specialized institution, is done by the court.





## **CHAPTER VI - Identification of the similarities and differences between the child protection systems analyzed, conclusions**

Following the analysis of child protection systems in 4 European Union countries, namely Estonia, Belgium, Croatia and Bulgaria, and comparing the best practice models from the 4 European countries visited in the field of socio-professional integration of children / young people leaving the protection system, we want to achieve the best possible fit of the child protection system in Romania in the framework of the European child protection policies.

### **Reform of the child protection system in: Romania, Estonia, Belgium, Croatia and Bulgaria**

Ensuring the protection of the rights of the child in all 5 states that are targeted by the study is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Integrated Child Protection System puts the child at the center of the system. In this way all key actors and systems - education, health, welfare, justice, civil society, community and family - work in concert to prevent abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence against children and to protect and help children in these situations.

The basis of the reform of the child protection system in the studied states was made starting with their accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In order to implement the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the signatory States have developed framework documents to regulate and coordinate the efforts of the responsible institutions and those responsible for the protection and promotion of children's rights.





### **National Policy Framework on Child Protection in the 5 studied countries:**

Four of the countries studied have a specific national policy or strategy on child protection, as follows:

#### **ROMÂNIA**

"National Strategy in the field of Promoting and Protecting the Rights of the Child for 2014–2020"

#### **ESTONIA**

"Development plan for children and families 2012–2020"

#### **CROAȚIA**

"National Strategy for Children's Rights 2014–2020"

#### **BULGARIA**

"National Strategy for the Child 2008–2018"



In contrast, in Belgium, policies are developed at community level.

On 21 February 2014, the Flemish Government is implementing a new procedure seeking to provide integrated assistance services, and the Order implementing the *Decree on Integrated Assistance for Young People* is approved.

### **BELGIA**

Policies are developed at country-community level  
and  
Integrated assistance services for young people through: "Decree on Integrated Assistance to Young People"

This normative act seeks to provide children / young people with support that they can call at any time, in a situation of need, without discontinuity in the services provided to them.

In former communist countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, similar child protection systems have been inherited and have had to cope with the challenges of reforming child protection systems on their way to EU membership. Romania ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990, and Bulgaria in 1991.

The basic principle regarding the child protection system - common in all the analyzed countries, is to maintain the child in the natural family and to prevent the abandonment of children.





The general framework that characterizes the 5 systems analyzed is that the child needs a stable family environment and the services offered favor child protection with his / her family or in a context as close as possible to the family model.

For example, Bulgarian legislation on child protection emphasizes the fundamental principles of preventing child abandonment and placing children in institutions only in extreme cases. An integral part of the implementation of this principle is the support of parents when they have difficulties in caring for their children. Local child protection authorities are working hard to prevent abandonment and reintegration of children, providing in addition to socio-psychological support and financial assistance that is part of the prevention, reintegration and placement of relatives or foster carers.

When family retention is not possible, a child protection measure is established, with family type alternatives preferring to be institutionalized in residential centers. All the analyzed countries offer a systematic approach to developing an alternative care system that ensures the well-being and rights of children placed in alternative care.

As common alternative identified measures, we mention:

- adoption
- guardianship
- placement in substitute families
- placements with foster carers
- protecting the children in the family houses (there is a person or two living





permanently with them, thus exercising the role of parent / parents)

- protecting children in family-type cottages (with shift workers)

In addition, there is a continuous care service in Estonia after leaving the alternative care system. This is a social service that aims to support a person's ability to leave alternative care and support to cope independently and continue their studies.

The continuous care service is provided on the basis of a case plan that provides: financial resources for individual costs (minimum 240 euros per month), housing, services and benefits to provide basic needs (eg support person ).

Alternative care services are provided to children up to 18 years of age in all 5 systems analyzed, with differences between the maximum ages until the youngsters can benefit from these services. For example, in Romania and Croatia, young people can benefit from alternative services up to the age of 26 for young people continuing their studies. In Estonia, if young people continue to pursue their studies, alternative services are available until the end of the academic year in which the person reaches the age of 19, in Bulgaria, after reaching the age of 18, these young people are taken to adult institutions and in Belgium the age to that young people can benefit from alternative services is 25 years, provided they continue their studies or participate in vocational training programs.

In Belgium, for example, different from all other countries is that there is a common procedure that allows uniform access to assistance. As the number of places in these forms of youth support is limited, an "Intersectoral Gateway" - the cross-sectoral portal - has been created to allow access to these services, which are not directly accessible. It allows for a uniform and transparent operation, offering the opportunity to combine the services provided by other sectors, always with

134





a clear vision of the demand and supply of youth help, and in some cases allows the adjustment of the social services offered. This portal provides access to forms of assistance directly accessible to young people. The Intersectoral Portal analyzes what form of aid corresponds to the difficulty faced by the young person and who can provide it in an efficient way.

In the period after 2000, the tendency of policies in the field of protection and promotion of child rights focuses on the decentralization and the responsibility of the local community. Currently, in Croatia, for example, the priority at national level is the closure of residential centers and the development of community services. In this respect, the local community is considered to be able to identify and prevent risk situations as well as to identify primary resources and primary interventions. Within the child protection systems in all studied countries, emphasis was laid on, among others, the public-private partnership on child protection through services developed at local community level that allowed for early intervention in the family at risk and support for the family in difficulty through counseling, material and financial assistance, child-care services in daycare centers, mother-to-child centers, have been able to prevent institutionalization or abandonment in one way or another. Also in Croatia, where state institutions can not provide all services, non-governmental organizations (accredited organizations, funded by national and international programs) are subcontracted. In this country, the municipality is usually focused on prevention, it does not work directly with the beneficiaries, but through NGOs, encouraging the development of the private system (13,000 NGOs in Zagreb) and 132 child protection centers at the country level. Also, the working methodology is based on the child-centered approach, the working methods being adapted to the age category of the beneficiaries, but also to the problems raised. For example, children use dialogue techniques, games, musical activities; with adolescents





doing activities that make them happy (eg playing cards BELA) or doing role-playing games; Adults use role-playing games. Group activities are performed in groups of up to 15 people.

In Romania, the socio-professional integration of young people leaving the child protection system is an area that is being addressed. Thus, both the creation of adequate services within the Child Protection Departments focused on the preparation for life for adolescents and young people, as well as the creation of a legislative and institutional framework that would provide the necessary support for the young people to find a job and of a dwelling. However, problems have not been resolved. In order to prepare adolescents and young people for life, specific services have begun to be developed within the Child Protection Departments. The vast majority of these are flats or family-type homes where young people manage themselves with a minimum level of supervision by adults (hired staff).

With regard to this area, the socio-professional integration of young people leaving the child protection system, for example, Belgium uses one of the working tools, which, from the point of view of the specialists of the organization implementing it, contributed to the increase of the quality services provided to young people and better results on their integration into the socio-professional environment, "Outcomes Star", an instrument that supports and measures change. This instrument is applicable in several sectors such as adult care, armed forces, autism and ADHD, community, criminal justice, domestic violence, education, employment, families and children, health, homelessness and other needs, mental health, substance abuse and youth.





*Starlessness Star* covers ten key areas of life that help develop independent skills and abilities:

1. Motivation and assumption of responsibility;
2. Self-care and life skills;
3. Managing money and personal goods;
4. Networks and social relationships;
5. Drug and alcohol addiction;
6. Physical health;
7. Psycho-emotional health;
8. Time management;
9. Self-management;
10. The delinquent behavior.

A second instrument used in Belgium is the Trust Circle in which both beneficiaries and staff participate. Circle of Trust is done at least 2 times a day or whenever it is deemed necessary. The participants sit in the circle and say what they feel, creating an atmosphere of trust and intimacy that makes them free themselves from inhibitions and gain trust in each other. Pe baza experiențelor din anii trecuți și ținând cont de practicile țărilor dezvoltate, România a adoptat și a început să aplice din anul 2005 o legislație care face trecerea de la un sistem axat pe protecția copilului în dificultate la un sistem care vizează promovarea și respectarea drepturilor tuturor copiilor.





Important progress has been made in Romania in child protection policies, the increase in state support and funds allocated for this purpose, but we can not say that the problem of children in difficulty has so far been solved.

Bulgaria has also made progress on the rights of the child. A new concept is implemented by SOS Children's Villages. In the old model, the child was given support according to the merits, if not, he was sanctioned. In the new concept, the principle of universality is the principle of universality, according to which every child has the right to support and the support does not abruptly break at age 18. Statistically, the age at which a young person becomes independent is more than 20 years old, going to 24-25 years. The other principles on which this model is based are: the principle of child participation (each decision is taken with the child), the principle of individualized approach, the principle of holistic approach. Financial spirits are not enough, and psychological, social, vocational, therapy (if any) is also needed. There are four categories of support: education, employment, housing support and health care. The decision to grant support to each child is taken by a committee of 3 people, who transfers the program director's recommendations. If money is given to the beneficiaries every day, then they will not stop their dependence on help.

Finally, a major issue that has been highlighted in all the countries involved in this study is the participation of children, their consultation and involvement in all decisions that concern them.

The right of children to be consulted on "matters affecting them" implies that the views of certain groups of children on certain aspects need to be ascertained. Children should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of child protection policies and programs.

Also very important and common to all the countries studied is the individual approach to solving cases, which is related to the specific needs of the child. Essential to guarantee children's rights





and interests is that placement outside the home, including a specialized institution, is done by the court, and this is valid in all five child protection systems studied.

## Conclusions

young people to leave the protection system are one of the most problematic and vulnerable groups

in order to increase the chances of socio-professional integration, it is essential both an individualized approach tailored to the needs of children / young people and the participation of children, their consultation and involvement in all decisions concerning them

the involvement of local communities is also essential for the successful socio-professional reintegration of young people to leave the protection system

