

Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021

Programme „Local Development and Poverty Reduction“

Predefined project „Establishment of Specialised Youth Justice Approach“

Implementation period: 28.10.2019 – 30.04.2024

Project implementer: Ministry of Justice, Criminal Policy Department, Analysis Unit

Project partners: Oslo Police District, Norwegian Mediation Service, Social Insurance Board,

Prosecutor’s Office

Establishment of Specialised Youth Justice Approach

Aim of the project

Being in contact with the criminal justice system can have an impact on a young person’s life. Over-involvement with the juvenile justice system, and ineffective response or inadequate support by the system may increase the likelihood of reoffending, secondary or repeated victimization and exclusion from social and education system.

Therefore, the aim of the project is to support the specialized juvenile justice approach in practice to ensure minimal negative effects for youth and support positive development: develop alternative measures instead of punishment, extend access to mediation for misdemeanour cases, provide sustainable and effective interventions, build cooperation models and methods and support the development of the attitude, competence (skills) and working practices of policymakers, practitioners, and service providers.

The implementation of juvenile justice reform in Estonia is carried out in accordance with international standards, EU directives and best practice and with a focus on the most vulnerable young offenders.

Project results

- Specifically trained specialists work with juvenile and young offenders and victims, including in closed youth institutions.
- Risk and need assessment tools are freely available for practitioners of the criminal justice system, which help them to evaluate the needs of young offenders and decide on intervention measures accordingly.
- There are cooperation models and methods in use that support cooperation between law enforcement, health sector and child welfare specialists, which ensure that suitable services are provided to juvenile and young offenders.
- Alternative interventions are in use for juvenile offenders to replace fines and sentencing to closed institutions.
- Introducing lay mediation will enhance impact and involvement of community members in solving conflicts and social challenges in communities.

Project activities

1. Competency development

A training programme for professionals working with youth in contact with the law, including technical assistance (coaching/mentoring and supervision), and the strengthening of capacity on strategic planning, coordination and monitoring in the juvenile justice system.

2. The development of tools for evaluation and multi-agency cooperation

Piloting multi-agency cooperation models and prevention practices. Building a system for risk assessment of young offenders in pre-trial proceedings to support the use of effective services that are in coherence with the risks and needs of the juveniles.

3. Alternative interventions for young offenders

The establishment of alternative interventions to fines and institutionalisation for youth, including short-term behaviour-based interventions applicable by police or in cooperation with other sectors such as healthcare, schools, youth work. The project will support access to family therapy approaches to youth offenders on probation and capacity-building for professionals working with youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The establishment of a volunteer mediators system aimed at developing a restorative approach to juvenile justice and better access to mediation

4. Improving residential services for young offenders

Improving conditions in closed facilities for children and youth as an alternative to prison, including the introduction of in-treatment methods and services aimed at re-socialisation, and specialised training for prison staff to work with institutionalised youth.