

YOUTH WORK UNITED

A Manual for Multi-institutional
Cooperation in Youth Work

Estera KÖVÉROVÁ



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1. PARTNERSHIP

The project on which this manual is based was implemented by youth organizations from three European countries with diverse cultural contexts and traditions in youth work: Slovakia, Slovenia, and Iceland. All three organizations share common working principles – they work with young people after school, offer preventive and developmental activities, give young people a voice and space to participate, and build relationships and safety. In Iceland, this type of work could take place in schools after school hours (opinn hús fyrir ungmenni). In Slovenia, it takes the form of open youth clubs and street work as part of a low-threshold approach (nizkopražni pristop), while in Slovakia it takes the form of low-threshold programs in clubs and on the streets. All these initiatives indicate the availability of services for young people. Working together, the organizations involved in the project attempted to explore in individual national contexts how organizations of this type can cooperate with other actors working with young people.

1.1. The Zavod Bob organization

Zavod Bob was founded in 2007 and has the status of an organization operating in the public interest in the youth work sector. The organization operates mainly in Ljubljana, where it seeks to develop its methods of youth work by bringing together organizations working with young people. In 2015, they also received a national award for their contribution to the development of the youth sector. Zavod Bob is therefore an established and sought-after center for young people, especially those who have dropped out of the formal education system or have some type of disadvantage. Thanks to innovative solutions, it comprehensively supports young people in creative expression, social (re)integration, and the development of social entrepreneurship, offering them opportunities for self-realization.

The organization specializes in informal education and the development of work experience for young people, street work with youth, cultural activities, social entrepreneurship, and ensuring the active participation of young people in social events.

It is also a leading organization in the field of participatory planning and management of public green spaces. It is also active in the field of the Theatre of the Oppressed, which uses artistic activism to address issues, dilemmas, and oppression of individuals and groups. One of its employees was selected as an ambassador for structured dialogue, an activity carried out by the Slovenian Youth Advisory Committee, confirming the organization's position as a relevant actor in dialogue with policy-makers. Zavod Bob therefore works closely with public institutions such as the City of Ljubljana and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as the Slovenian Employment Service (and its branches) and social work centers.

Zavod Bob also operates at the national and international level – it is an active member of national networks and a part of two international networks: Dynamo International (an international network of social field workers) and the IGA Garden Network (a network of urban gardens).

Its activities cover various target groups – young people who need individual support and/or counseling services. The organization has developed various strategies to support young people. The main ones are:

1. Basic counseling services directly in youth centers.
2. A network of organizations providing specialized counseling in specific areas (e.g., addiction, (sexual) abuse). If a young person has problems in a specific area, Za-

vod BOB cooperates with organizations that specialize in this area and builds a bridge between the young person and an expert from another organization (e.g., networking, accompanying).

3. Another strategy is mobile psychosocial support within the network of youth centers, which provides support to young people and youth workers: Individual counseling is intended for young people aged 10 to 29 who are looking for someone to talk to when they are in need. Young people who attend youth center programs in Ljubljana can participate. The topics often include mental health and coping with problems or life challenges. Support is also available for youth workers, especially in more challenging situations - risky behavior of young people, stress, violence in intimate relationships, abuse. The organization seeks the best ways to work with young people through interviews, individual conversations, counseling in youth centers, or organizing training for youth workers. It develops plans to help young people and, if necessary, involves state and non-state institutions.

1. 2. The Mládež ulice organization (Slovakia)

The organization provides low-threshold services, family and individual counseling for young people and families with children. Interventions are focused on finding resources and strengthening young people in difficult situations. In addition to club and counseling activities, the organization's work also consists of offering low-threshold and outreach services. Staff members are present in places where young people meet and spend their time after school – playgrounds, skate parks, streets. Assistance to families can also take place in the natural environment of their homes or in the organization's counseling room. The principle of the work is to lower thresholds and provide accessible services. For example, if it is too much of a barrier for a family to come to a counseling center or other support institutions, the organization provides counseling directly in the home environment (Hercog, 2009).

The organization focuses on specific and non-specific prevention. Non-specific prevention consists of creating a safe club environment for children and young people. At the club, young people have the opportunity to form age-appropriate friendships with their peers, develop social skills, and spend their free time as they choose. Club activities are not very structured in order to make them attractive to young people as a compatible element to the highly structured time at school. The club is open to children and young people aged ten to eighteen. Its low-threshold nature is ensured by the fact that it is free of charge, anonymous, and does not require regular attendance. Board games, PlayStation, billiards, and table football are available. The club is usually staffed by two youth workers who are trained in the

helping professions (psychology, social work, pedagogy, etc.). The club is open every working day except Friday from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and any child can come regardless of their place of permanent residence.

Specific prevention is provided in a targeted manner at the club, in the field, through elementary schools, or through other organizations with which the organization cooperates. Within the low-threshold club, young people implicitly or explicitly bring up various topics that are part of their lives. For example, spending time on various online dating platforms, consuming energy drinks, or sexuality. Non-specific prevention draws attention to the risks, but also talks about the pleasant aspects of specific risky behaviors. The main approach is to share positive information with young people, not just negative and fear-inducing information. The reasons for risky behavior are discussed. Young people are informed as much as possible about all the circumstances, consequences, and alternatives to risky behavior, while the responsibility for the decision always lies entirely with the young person. At the same time, group dynamics and peer learning are used, which are an essential part of the club's work. Young people are trained in various skills and attitudes towards their bodies and health wherever it is naturally possible, for example, while playing games at the club. The organization creates structured and targeted activities only around topics that young people explicitly or implicitly bring up, not on topics that it assumes need to be addressed "because young people are old enough for that." (Seraisia, 1994, Okružhlica - Szezmo, 2004).

In addition to working directly with young people in low-threshold programs, the organization currently focuses on networking with organizations that work with children and youth, especially in the area where it operates, and on collaborating with other important adults in the lives of young people.

The organization combines low-threshold elements with a counseling process. Working with individuals or groups in a low-threshold context (in a club or on the street) is complemented by a structured and targeted counseling process, and vice versa. The counseling process involving important adults can be implemented in conjunction with low-threshold elements of work in the natural environment of young people.

1. 3. The Félagsmiðstöðvar Akureyrar organization

At the start of the project, Félagsmiðstöðvar Akureyrar (Youth Akureyri) ran six youth clubs for young people aged 10–16 and one youth center for young people aged 16–25. The aim of the clubs is to support young people during the difficult period of adolescence..

Youth clubs and schools in Iceland fall under the jurisdiction of the municipality. In the past, youth work was handled by a separate department within the municipality, but today youth clubs in schools are part of the schools themselves and fall under the authority of the school principal, which means they have lost a significant degree of independence in focusing primarily on the needs of young people.

The clubs offer club activities and low-threshold youth work so that every young person can find something that suits them. It is important that teenagers feel welcome and that they are treated as equals. Youth centers also play a preventive role, both through organized preventive work and through daily low-threshold youth work by building relationships and safety.

In addition to club activities, professional staff also provide personal counseling. The initiative for personal counseling can come from teenagers, parents, school staff, or youth workers. The problems that club staff deal with vary, and if necessary, the state also gets involved through social services. Our staff have diverse educational backgrounds and experience, including teaching and practical experience in schools, social work, leisure studies, media studies, and marketing.

Given the theme of multi-institutional cooperation, the composition of the consortium is diverse in terms of cultural context and position in the support system. All organizations share similar principles in their direct work with young people. The Slovak organization is an independent non-governmental organization which, in addition to direct work, also develops professional methodologies and provides training in youth work. The Slovenian organization has a similar position, working directly with young people, but also bringing together organizations providing low-threshold services for young people in an informal environment. The Icelandic organization is more close to formal setting, as club activities are carried out within schools, both organizationally and spatially. At the same time, youth centers and youth work are a stable part of the self-governing region.

2. MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

The main objective and motivation of the project was to create a system of cooperation between several sectors in the field of working with youth exhibiting risky behavior. To develop a system of cooperation between state and non-profit

organizations. To create procedures for mutual cooperation. Networking and mutual sharing of procedures and good practices between partner organizations and also between other organizations involved in the project. The organization MIádež ulice (Street Youth) followed up on the previous project “Effective support for young people and families in crisis through field and club social work,” which aimed to support children, young people, and families at risk in dealing with difficult life situations caused by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in their natural environment.

The specific objectives of the project were:

1. To create a professional procedure for cooperation between social assistance institutions (social departments, SPODaSK, etc.) and field social work organizations or low-threshold programs.
2. Implementation of the “Early Social Teen/Family Intervention” program directly in families with the aim of preventing educational measures and its verification in practice.

The project objectives were fully in line with OP HR - Identify and verify innovative tool proposals with the aim of finding further solutions that will lead to the integration of people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion into society, meeting their needs and improving their quality of life.

The main motivation for the partners was to strengthen direct work with young people within the country. In Slovenia, for example, this type of service does not have a long tradition, so the main objective was to create a space for sharing experiences and needs between organizations with a similar focus.

In Iceland, the main motivation was to develop multi-institutional cooperation, which was and is necessary to address certain risk situations, in other words, to strengthen cooperation between institutions for the development of youth support within their natural environment.

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The open structure of the project, its flexible focus, and its generality ensured that the project could be adapted to the needs of individual organizations with di-

verse national and cultural contexts. Each country has its own specifics in terms of the stakeholder cooperation system, and each organization in the consortium has a different position within this system. Similarities can be seen between the Slovak and Slovenian cultural contexts, while Iceland is characterized by several specific features in terms of geography, population composition, and density.

In principle, therefore, the focus of the work was mainly on national activities, which made it possible to develop a system of cooperation between actors in the field of youth work, especially within countries and individual localities. The Icelandic organization appreciated that they were able to implement a way of working based on their own needs, not just pass on their own know-how.

The project enabled partners to strengthen links with local communities. In Slovenia, these were mainly local schools and school counselors. The links were mainly in environmental topics. In Iceland, they appreciated that the project strengthened relationships with other youth clubs in the Akureyri area. In Slovakia, relationships were built mainly with members of school support teams. The project was beneficial for all organizations and provided tangible resources for future work.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND THREATS

in counseling work in organizations providing low-threshold services for children and youth identified during the project

As mentioned above, the organizations involved in the project have diverse cultural contexts, positions, and histories of working with youth. Icelandic clubs are more integrated into the formal education system than Slovenian and Slovak low-threshold programs in clubs and street work. However, the common denominator is the informality and accessibility of services in the natural environment of young people - in schools after school (Iceland) or in neighborhoods (Slovakia, Slovenia). This type of setting can be beneficial for counseling work with young people and their families for several reasons. This can then be reflected in the multi-institutional cooperation itself and the position of organizations of this type within it.

In individual counseling with young people, one often encounters the obstacle that it is not natural for children and young people to sit down and talk about their

difficulties. Such a conversation can take place in a low-threshold program while playing pool in a club or basketball on the street in a much more natural way.

The organization builds a trusting relationship with young people within the club or on the street, which means that the counseling process involves people with whom a relationship has already been established, which is an advantage in the subsequent work of other actors involved in the process. Building relationships and trust is the basis of any intervention and prevention activity, which can be effective for the work process.

At the same time, the use of group dynamics and situational intervention within a low threshold and low structure contributes to the development of social and communication skills in natural situations, which is then an important addition to the counseling process.

On the other hand, the possible risks of combining these services have also become apparent. If an organization providing low-threshold services for youth and family counseling attempts to address all aspects of family life—financial, relational, psychological—and work with both children and adults, their task will be quite challenging. Uncertainties in service provision and insufficient distribution of staff in terms of the contract can lead to unclear and unrealistic expectations on both sides, which is counterproductive.

For example, after families were provided with mainly material assistance as part of the project “Effective support for young people and families in crisis through field and club social work,” families expected much more in terms of solving economic problems (e.g., buying food, school supplies) and were less motivated to address relationships or train parenting skills, and it was very difficult to motivate users to engage in this type of cooperation.

Moving a young person from a low-threshold context to a context of individual or family counseling is sometimes difficult because they are used to a certain type of work—living together in a safe environment. Suddenly, they are expected to follow a more structured approach – regular meetings, involvement of parents and other important adults, setting goals.

At the same time, some families were directly “referred” to the process by an institution (school, Labor Office) as part of projects, which then influenced their perception of the problem and their motivation to change. Young people and their families did not want to be in the process because it was a disciplinary measure on the part of the school/Labor Office. Parents, on the other hand, expected that “the child will be corrected” and “there will be no more problems with him/her.”

The inclusion of individual and family counseling in a low-threshold program is possible and often necessary if we focus on changing the individual and their motivation to find safer ways of meeting their needs. Working with the whole family opens up space to work with the entire system that may be behind the young person's risky behavior. The following chapter will discuss methods for addressing this behavior in a low-threshold context and the challenges associated with it.

5. METHODS AND APPROACHES

TO WORKING WITH RISKY BEHAVIOR

The project created space for reflection on specific practices that professionals use when working with young people. The outcome was a list of challenges and limitations encountered by frontline workers. At the same time, this activity served to network professionals in the field of youth work. This chapter will describe the topics that professionals brought up during intervisions and focus groups. This led to a lively professional discussion on these topics in individual countries. These are important topics that are coming to the foreground in the creation of a system of multi-institutional cooperation. A diverse range of professionals participated in the intervision meetings and focus groups. In Slovenia, these were mainly school counselors and youth workers. In Iceland, they were youth workers working in youth clubs inside the schools after school hours, school staff, police, and authorities for social and legal protection of children. In Slovakia, they were mainly experts working in the formal education system, i.e. members of support teams (psychologists and social pedagogues), one participant was a member of the municipal field team and worked under the auspices of the Bratislava City Council, and one was a police prevention officer.

5.1. Intervision meetings

Intervision meetings serve as an important systemic element of the process of direct work with young people. They serve as a method of reflection on one's own work with young people or families in risky situations, but also as a method of detecting the first signs of risky behavior in the process of early intervention or primary - universal prevention. They can also be used as a method of contact and case work with interested institutions and can be multidisciplinary and multi-institutional in na-

ture¹. Here, intervision can mean - reflecting on the procedures of various institutions and defining tasks and competences in working with young people, unifying diverse languages and procedures, but also defining boundaries - for example: when the state's role in child protection begins, when schools turn to counseling centers in the Slovak context. Without this reflection, it is not possible to functionally set up a system of assistance for young people.

If we understand intervision as an internal tool within a single organization, then employees reflect on specific procedures in their work with specific young people. Others give them feedback and share their own experiences and procedures. Therefore, a heterogeneous group in terms of years of experience is ideal.

5.2. Risky behavior encountered by frontline workers

Due to cultural and geographical differences between countries, but especially due to the nature of the organizations involved in the project, the risky behavior of young people that professionals come into contact with also varies.

In Slovenia, young people often lack motivation to participate in extracurricular activities. They are overloaded with schoolwork and see after-school activities as burden or a hindrance to their schoolwork. Perfectionism is common, which further overloads young people and causes them anxiety. Common risk behaviors include truancy, violent behavior and conflicts among young people, addiction to mobile phones, emotional burnout, self-harm, and suicidal tendencies.

In Iceland, self-harm and violent behavior among young people are also common. There is a lack of mutual support in peer groups and ostracism by peers. Furthermore, there is sexualized behavior that crosses boundaries - sexualized violent behavior is often normalized and consent is frequently absent. Icelandic partners are also trying to work with families - they perceive a lack of boundaries set by parents and insufficient emotional education in families.

In Slovakia, self-harm and suicidal behavior were discussed as threatening behaviors during intervision sessions, as well as sexualized behavior, sexual abuse, and violent behavior by young people towards professionals, but also towards each other.

1 The multidisciplinary nature of intervision means the presence of experts from several fields, but from one institution/team (if the team has a multidisciplinary composition – psychologist, social pedagogue, social worker, etc.). The multi-institutional nature of intervision refers to the involvement of various stakeholders in the process of reflecting on work with young people exhibiting risky behavior – for example, schools, Counselling and Prevention Centre, NGOs, Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children, police, etc. This is not intervision in the true sense of the word, because it is not “internal” and is not carried out within a single organization.

5.3. Challenges in direct work with young people across countries

Despite the diverse cultural contexts, common themes emerged across countries, although individual organizations tended to approach them in different ways depending on the nature of the organization and its position within the support system. In all three countries, the topic of motivating young people was raised, as was the topic of setting boundaries. One of the main topics, especially in Slovakia and Slovenia, was the specifics of non-formal education (low-threshold) in a formal context. This contradiction is not so apparent for Icelandic organizations, as their clubs can be part of schools and their employees are also employees of the municipality, thus creating a smaller contradiction between the formal and informal, i.e., between “what is and what is not part of the system.”

MOTIVATION

Motivation is a topic that is often discussed among people who work with young people. This is especially true in the formal system of educational institutions, where children and young people are not there voluntarily. Often, a directive approach, sanctions, and coercion are ineffective and lead to even greater resistance. One of the main topics among professionals was “how to motivate young people to get involved in activities.”

The fundamental question here is whether staff members bring up topics within the framework of prevention that young people are interested in and that affect their lives, or whether these are just topics that are mandatory and that adults think they should discuss with young people. How well do we know the target group we are working with? Another question is how these topics are presented to young people. Is it in an attractive way through short videos or images/memes, or through long explanations? Do they have space to express their opinions and to give feedback and express dissatisfaction? What kind of relationship do we have with young people? Here, we can consider the directive approach that traditionally prevails in the school environment and the needs-based approach that is more common in informal contexts.

At the same time, the topic of motivation for extracurricular activities resonated in Slovenia, where professionals stated that it is very difficult to motivate young people to participate in extracurricular or out-of-school activities. Young people are often overburdened with schoolwork and in an effort to perform as well as possible at

school, they consider extracurricular activities to be something beyond their duties, even though they can lead to their development. They perceive this as exceeding their limits and primarily do not have time for it.

As motivational tools, we have formulated the following within the project:

- getting to know young people - what interests them, what they enjoy, what difficulties they face.
- build a relationship with them, treat them as equals, take an interest in their experiences and opinions, and give them space to express disagreement.
- give them responsibility for solving a specific task (e.g., developing a project, creating rules) – then they will consider the specific task more as their own than if it came as an order from above.
- if they are reluctant and do not know what to expect from the activity, we can carry out the activity in front of them.
- it is motivating if the employee participates in the activity with them, which also deepens the relationship.
- flexibility and adaptation to the individual needs of young people are motivating
- a less structured environment can also be motivating, allowing for a greater degree of creativity than a formal environment.
- another motivating factor is the choice from a number of alternatives and the fact that they have the decision in their own hands

At the same time, it also became clear what can be demotivating:

- it was perceived as problematic in the school environment that relationship building and consideration of the needs and interests of young people was reduced. Teachers prepare the material for their lessons based on school documents such as the state and school curriculum, which means there is little room for incorporating what young people are interested in. Young people have to cover the compulsory material and no one asks them for their opinion.
- the relationship is often hierarchical and asymmetrical in terms of power.

A major issue, particularly in Iceland and Slovakia, is motivating parents to cooperate or change their behavior towards their children, which may be behind the risky behavior of young people.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

The issue of unclear boundaries can have several dimensions. First and foremost, it is about defining boundaries between workers and clients, whether they are parents or young people. This is often addressed by novice professionals. Furthermore, it can be problematic to define boundaries between professionals themselves. This is highlighted in the topic of multi-institutional cooperation, where it is often unclear who is responsible for what. If we were to dwell on the topic of boundaries between professionals and clients, we would ask about personal boundaries.

For example, in the Slovak group, a participant raises the issue that a client wants to hug her at the end of a session. Different approaches reflect different views on physical contact between professionals and clients—for example, it may be assumed that touch is sought by clients who lack it, but on the other hand, there are approaches that do not recognize any touch between the roles of professional and client, because it would blur the boundaries in a relationship that should be clearly defined by the nature of the meeting itself. This dilemma, with questions such as “What about my personal space?” and “Is this still professional?”, arises mainly in organizations and institutions where there is no code of ethics to guide professionals and educators through ambiguous situations. From our point of view, this provides the following guidelines: if touch is to become a secret and replace words, the professional should avoid it. The same applies if there is a risk of violence, discomfort on the part of the professional, coercion, or an attempt to manipulate the professional into touching (e.g., “Don’t you want to hug me? Don’t you like me? Nobody wants to hug me.”). Last but not least, it should be mentioned that any touch should be purposeful and appropriate. Both parties should understand the boundaries and know the purpose of the touch. Every professional in direct work should be aware of the impact of touch in a professional relationship. The relationship between two people is defined by boundaries and their clear and transparent determination; no relationship should be boundless, and we should not do anything in it that is unpleasant or unclear in its meaning, and we should also teach this to the young people we work with.

In Slovenian groups, vaguely defined boundaries were associated with burnout syndrome. If professionals are unable to set personal boundaries with young people and shift from the role of professional to that of a friend - who shares private information and gossips - creates space for mixing personal and professional life, which can lead to excessive involvement in work matters and, subsequently, to burnout. A professional should have a clearly defined goal in the relationship, asking more

questions than making statements. To reduce asymmetry² in the relationship, it is possible to use personal stories in a targeted manner, provided that this is acceptable to both parties.

The topic of personal boundaries was also reflected in discussions and interviews in the dichotomy of power and powerlessness in helping professions. Sometimes, workers take responsibility for the lives of the young people they work with, thereby invalidating them and making them incapable of making their own decisions and taking responsibility for them. In general, professionals in the helping professions only provide young people with alternative options for solving the difficulties they find themselves in, show them different ways to act in their situation, and inform them about the consequences. They accompany them through the various circumstances they encounter on the path they choose. None of these paths is good or bad; they are just different options, each with its own consequences. The decision is theirs, and the decision may also be to do nothing, to remain passive in resolving their situation. Even with such a decision, it is important for young people to have someone standing by them, even if that person does not approve of their actions or inaction. Every person is responsible for their own life, regardless of their situation.

Professional boundaries are defined by competencies that result from education (training) and experience, which in turn determines what professionals dare to do. In the Slovak group, a novice psychologist brought up the topic of suicidal thoughts in a female student. When should I intervene and call in other institutions or important adults? Who should I call? Is there a limit to when I call the parents, police, health professionals, or child welfare services? If I call someone into the situation without the child's permission, will I lose the relationship?

In principle, intervention is provided by a professional within the scope of their education and experience. If they decide that they are not able to handle the situation on their own, it is legitimate to refer the young person to other professionals – a psychotherapist, psychiatrist, or more experienced psychologist. Professional competence can be improved through regular supervision, intervision, and mentoring from senior workers, or by developing skills through various training courses. If it is desirable to involve other professionals or parents in the case, in a low-threshold context, the rule is that this can only be done with the knowledge and consent of the young person. We try to convince/motivate the young person that broader cooperation is necessary for support.

2 The more the worker knows about the young person and the less the young person knows about the worker, the greater the asymmetry in the relationship.

INFORMAL APPROACH VS. FORMAL ENVIRONMENT

Icelanders refer to the service they provide as “floating youth work” (flakkandi félagsmiðstöð), which is a type of work where the work is moved to places where young people are located. In Slovakia and Slovenia, they talk about working in the natural environment of young people, and in Slovakia, the term low-threshold programs is used. English translates this as street-based youth work or open youth club.

When youth workers decide to enter a formal environment, there is often a conflict between the low-threshold/informal approach and the performance-oriented environment of the school. Where situations must be resolved, culprits punished, and the material mastered. In Slovenian groups, there was a contradiction between what is in the system and what is outside the system, with this contradiction being perceived mainly as a contradiction between voluntariness and obligation. They consider their services as existing outside the system. Young people may or may not be in a youth club, but they must be in school. This also highlights the specificity of who young people contact first – the survey shows that in clubs they are more likely to approach youth workers, but in schools they are less likely to approach school counselors and more likely to approach class teachers.

The question remains whether it is possible to use elements of a low-threshold approach or low-threshold principles in a formal environment.

Low-threshold principles are discussed in this context. There are some that cannot be implemented in a structured and hierarchical environment such as a school—for example, free entry and stay in the facility—students are concentrated in classrooms and must arrive and leave at specific times, otherwise they are marked absent. In a low-threshold club, attendance is voluntary and regular attendance is not a requirement. It is also difficult to implement the principle of “passivity is permissible” in school, as pupils must perform to a certain standard in order to be assessed. The exceptions are non-assessed subjects or various activities carried out by the school support team/school counselors to develop life skills and prevent risky behavior, where this principle can be applied. In a formal institution such as a school, it is not possible to apply the principle of anonymity. Principles that are also applied in the school environment include, for example, the principle of free services or the creation of a safe environment through rules and their enforcement by safe adults – which school employees should be. It is important for young people to feel understood

and accepted, which means that a low-threshold approach can be applied and is very important for building relationships and preventive action. Teachers have a more difficult task, as in addition to building relationships with young people, they also assess them with grades and motivate/force them to perform. Encouraging participation should be an integral part of school through interactive methods. At the same time, young people can also be invited to participate in decision-making through student councils or by carrying out certain tasks within the classroom/school/community. However, traditional schools tend to treat young people as children who must obey the orders of adults, which ultimately makes them dependent and non-self-reliable individuals.

Even in a low-threshold context, the application of principles changes as we move from club or field work to more structured activities such as group activities or counseling. For example, regularity is an important factor here, and free movement and entry cannot be applied - activity and participation in solving one's own problems are key (passivity is not so acceptable). Anonymity is also not preserved in a multidisciplinary or multi-institutional approach, where it is necessary to share information - this is an area that has not been satisfactorily resolved in any of the countries.

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize which principles need to be translated into more structured activities and into a formal system: low-threshold approach (acceptance, not having too high expectations, maximum availability on the part of professionals/locals), safety, setting rules, free of charge, anonymity (keeping information confidential if the young person so wishes), participation in solving the problems that young people come with.

WORKING WITH RULES

Working with rules is different in formal and informal environments. Hierarchy and power asymmetry suggest that rules are formulated from above (school rules) and not together with young people. This results in a lower willingness to comply with these rules. Enforcement of the rules is ensured by a system of sanctions, which follow in order: reprimand by the teacher, reprimand by the class teacher, reprimand by the principal, and expulsion from school.

In low-threshold programs and informal systems, rules are created together with young people, and sanctions are a major topic. If there are rules, there must also be sanctions. Sanctions are an integral part of the rules, and without them, the rules

are meaningless. They can thus follow hierarchically from a warning to a ban on entering the club or a ban on using the service. The discussion is mainly conducted in connection with the purpose of low-threshold services—they are effective and fulfill their purpose only if they do not exclude and are able to integrate those who break the rules and cross boundaries. The third option is a minimalist model of rules. The rules are not formulated from above or together with young people, but rather refer to values and work through situational intervention and group dynamics. Crossing/not crossing boundaries is ensured through relationships. It appeals to basic social values: health, personal integrity, life... The procedure is that the club worker names what the behavior evokes in him/her (“When you jump into the bean bags like that, I’m afraid something will happen to you.”), names the emotion that may be behind the young person’s behavior (“I understand that you want to go crazy, you have a lot of energy.”), sets a boundary (“I would appreciate it if you tried to release your energy in a different way.”), offers alternatives (“We have a punching bag in the counseling room, would you like to try that? Or we could go outside and play soccer...”), But always leaves the choice up to the young person. At the same time, it is possible to use group dynamics through empathy (“How do you think others feel when you make so much noise here?”) or group involvement (“What thoughts or feelings does it evoke in you when someone exposes themselves to risk like this?”).

This chapter summarizes the outcomes of discussions between professionals in individual countries across the system of actors in the field of youth work (people from schools, youth centers, the police, and state child protection services), describing the risky behavior they encounter and the dilemmas they face in their work. The following chapters will focus more on the system of cooperation between individual social assistance institutions focusing on youth, describing the current functioning and possibilities for improvement (ideal model) and formulating challenges.

6 MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

The following chapters will describe the cooperation between individual stakeholders from various departments in the countries of the partner organizations. Cooperation appears to be easiest between non-governmental organizations and the formal education and youth systems.

In Slovenia, cooperation was established between school support staff and youth workers. In Slovakia, school support teams and counseling and prevention centers, which also fall under the Ministry of Education, have been most successfully involved

in direct work processes. To a limited extent, social support organizations such as municipal social departments and social protection and social welfare departments have been successfully involved. In Iceland, cooperation with this type of stakeholder has a long tradition – youth clubs are part of system (schools, municipality),. The chapter thus presents the specifics of individual countries, the limitations and challenges they face, and at the same time aims to formulate ideas for ideal functioning or a so-called ideal model respecting the specificities (legislative and cultural) of individual countries.

6.1 SLOVENIA

CURRENT SITUATION

On the Slovenian side, focus groups and interview meetings mainly involved youth workers and school support counselors. The discussions revealed a number of common challenges, but also opportunities for improving cooperation.

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

In both environments – schools and field/club work – the problem of motivation and burnout prevention in youth work repeatedly arises. Field and club work with young people is a long-term activity where results are not immediately visible. This leads to a decline in energy and enthusiasm, especially when there is a lack of systemic recognition and support from institutions. Burnout is also a significant risk for school counselors and teachers, who face demanding emotional work, administrative duties, and a lack of time for reflection or caring for their own mental health. A common denominator is also a lack of staff and high turnover, which weakens the continuity of relationships with young people and has an impact on the quality of interventions.

Process standards and guidelines for youth work as cooperation between institutions at the state level do not exist in Slovenia, similar to Slovakia, and “youth work in a low-threshold context is in a gray area.” Nevertheless, the Zavod Bob organization has developed a policy focused on protecting service users, which includes non-discrimination, safety and benefits for all participants, and personal data protection. They participate in regular training sessions focused on ensuring the safety of all participating children, and they also receive regular supervision, support, and training.

They also have a system in place for filing complaints, for example, in cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence. Participants are informed about how to file com-

plaints—verbal complaints as part of feedback within the activity, verbal complaints to the director of the Bob Institute, written complaints to the institute’s address, and anonymous complaints to the complaints and compliments box. The organization has five days to resolve complaints. If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant can contact the Socialna zbornica Slovenije (Chamber of Social Work), inform representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs. The organization appoints a leader for the protection of children and youth, and the council also includes a representative for the protection of children and youth. People are also appointed to oversee the quality of work.

There are two protocols: the protocol for protection against sexual violence (Protokol v primeru nasilja ali nadlegovanja) and the protocol for safety at events (Zeleni srčki). The aim is to ensure that all events, activities, and community spaces are safe, friendly, and respectful for everyone. If a situation of violence, harassment, or inappropriate behavior occurs, we follow these steps:

STEP 1:

ASSESS THE SITUATION – CRISIS OR NON-CRISIS

- If it is a **crisis and ongoing situation** (e.g., violence is currently occurring or a person is talking about their experience immediately after the incident), we will use crisis intervention procedures: we will ensure immediate safety, stop harmful behavior, and remove the person from danger.
- If it is a **non-crisis situation** (e.g., the person is talking about an incident that happened in the past), we continue calmly with conversation and support.

STEP 2:

CREATING A SAFE SPACE AND INITIAL CONVERSATION

- We make sure that the person feels **heard, accepted, and safe**.
- We emphasize that they have shown **great courage** in sharing their experience and that **they are not to blame** for what happened.
- We check how emotionally stressful the experience still is. If the person is very shaken, the first meeting can serve mainly to **relieve tension and provide support**.
- We encourage the person to **make their own decisions** – we never make decisions for them.
- We ask if they have a support network (friends, family, colleagues). If they do not, we offer contact or accompaniment to **verified support programs**.

STEP 3:

REPORTING AND PROCEDURE DIRECTLY AT THE EVENT

- If the incident occurs during **an event or activity**:
 - We encourage the person or witnesses to contact the **awareness team**, which is marked with a special symbol.
 - The incident can also be **reported anonymously** to a box marked with the same symbol.
 - The awareness team will handle the case **quickly, discreetly, and with respect for anonymity**.

STEP 4:

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

- Reporting the case to **the police**, if the person decides to do so.
- **Raising awareness** or organizing **workshops for witnesses**.
- Recording the experience and sending it to organizations that collect such cases.
- Informing the **employer or organization** where the incident occurred, if it is related to the work environment.

STEP 5:

REFERRAL TO PROFESSIONAL HELP

- If professional help is needed, we can connect the person to specialized organizations (e.g., helplines, anti-violence associations, counseling centers).

The following subchapters describe the individual stakeholders and their specific position in Slovenia.

SCHOOLS

Schools are at the forefront of youth work – compulsory schooling applies here (9 years, from 6 to 15 years of age). In addition to teaching staff, schools also have school support counselors- a position that is not defined by a specific specialization but can be held by people with a university degree in a helping profession. To be accepted for this position, candidates must pass a “strokovni izpit” (professional examination test). School counselors describe their work as mainly accompanying students individually

through conversations, building trust, and finding ways to cope with the daily pressure of school performance. In some cases, counselors also work with entire classes or groups. In boarding schools, they also address issues such as leisure activities and school attendance (i.e., they have more educational functions). In Slovenia, school counselors work at every school and are the first point of contact for students who find themselves in difficulty. However, their role is very broad, ranging from addressing behavioral and personal issues to administrative tasks such as arranging lunches. They are therefore often overworked, but they play a key role in supporting young people in schools and boarding schools. The difference between them and workers in informal centers is that they do not work with voluntary clients, but with students who have been sent to the counseling center by a teacher or school management.

Their practice involves issues such as long-term absenteeism, conflicts between peers, mobile phone addiction, anxiety, perfectionism, self-harm and suicidal behavior, as well as questions of sexual identity and addiction to psychotropic drugs. It is particularly important to support young people with special needs or those who have experienced traumatic events, such as a fire in a school dormitory. These problems are not individual failures, but are systemic in nature and require a coordinated response from all actors who come into contact with young people.

YOUTH CENTERS/CLUBS

In Slovenia, youth clubs and centers play an important role in youth work. These are spaces and initiatives that provide young people with a safe environment for meeting, spending their free time, and informal learning opportunities. Such clubs usually operate on a community basis—young people are actively involved in planning and implementing activities, which promotes their participation, responsibility, and sense of belonging.

Similar to Zavod Bob, other youth clubs in Slovenia organize a wide range of activities: from cultural and artistic events, through sports and leisure activities, to preventive and educational programs focused on mental health, employability, and the prevention of risky behavior. Many of them also provide counseling—whether career, educational, or social—and are important partners for local governments and schools.

Zavod Bob is known for its innovative street work with young people, and a similar approach is also used in other clubs that reach out to young people directly on the streets, in parks, or in places where they naturally hang out. The aim is to reach out to young people who would not find their way to traditional club spaces. This approach

complements the range of regular leisure activities and helps to build trust between youth workers and young people.

Youth clubs thus form a diverse network that is enshrined in Slovenian youth work legislation and often funded by public sources or European programs. Their common denominator is to support the development of young people in a safe, inclusive environment and to create an alternative to passive or risky leisure activities.

THE IDEAL MODEL

The ideal model in this case consists of ideal cooperation between youth organizations providing low-threshold services and schools, represented by school counselors. Within the focus groups, youth workers and school support counselors sought opportunities for cooperation. The common denominator was the topic of motivation. They tried to answer the question: How to motivate young people to participate in informal activities. As mentioned above, many students perceive leisure programs as an unnecessary distraction from their schoolwork, so it is necessary to adapt the offer to their reality. Flexibility, creativity, and personalization of approach are key – creating safe and informal spaces where young people can be themselves, experiment, and find support without judgment.

The discussions confirmed the importance of links between schools and the informal sector. An interesting proposal was to organize adaptation activities for new students, during which they would also be introduced to youth centers and the services they offer. Youth workers could be part of existing school structures – for example, leading class hours or thematic workshops, making cooperation a natural part of the school schedule.

In crisis situations, a networking system should be in place where the class teacher or counselor connects the student to further assistance outside of school. Survey findings suggest that young people are more likely to approach a youth worker with a problem than a school or boarding school counselor. In schools, pupils are more likely to approach their class teacher, who is closer to the pupils. Sharing boarding school or school facilities is also a way to cooperate and connect these two sectors, and organizing creative workshops or social events in familiar environments can reduce barriers to participation. The importance of joint training and exchange of experiences between school and community workers, whether on the topic of mental health, communication, or burnout prevention, should not be overlooked.

6.2. SLOVAKIA

CURRENT SITUATION

As part of the project “Effective support for young people and families in crisis through field and club social work,” institutions that are directly involved in addressing the difficult situations of young people and families were approached. The project approached social departments of city districts, the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, centers for children and families, the department for the protection and support of children against violence, counseling and prevention centers, non-governmental organizations, schools, and the city police (a total of 29 institutions). Two workshops were held to present the project and the possibilities for our cooperation. One workshop was for social assistance institutions, the other for schools and counseling centers. We received interesting input on ways how to cooperate, but we also considered the obstacles to cooperation. At the same time, conclusions about the positives and negatives of the current state of cooperation were drawn from the Street Counselor 2.0 project and focus groups, where the experiences of individual participants were described in a qualitative manner.

The focus groups involved very similar institutions to those in the previous project: schools and school support teams, counseling and prevention centers, the Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, the National Enlightenment Center, the City of Bratislava, the Rača district, the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, the Police Force Presidium, one foundation, one Center for Children and Families, one family counseling center under the Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, a private psychotherapy center, and one hospital. In terms of expertise, the focus groups included the following professions: 5 social pedagogues, 10 psychologists, 5 social workers, 1 special pedagogue, 1 therapeutic pedagogue, 1 male teacher and 1 female teacher, 1 policewoman. Participants mostly described cooperation with at least one stakeholder in the field of youth work. Cooperation often takes place through personal contacts, as there is no standardised procedure. Some institutions are more open to cooperation than others, such as schools and Centers for Counselling and Prevention, as opposed to Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family or social departments. When asked about cooperating institutions, all institutions that come into contact with the difficulties of young people were mentioned, such as schools, Center for Counselling and Prevention, NGOs, parents, police, Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children, health care facilities, Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, local government, state administration, paid services – private centers.

The following text summarizes the outputs from the focus groups of the Street Counselor 2.0 project through the positives and negatives of multi-institutional cooperation. In both projects, various methods of initial contact and promotion were tested, which will be summarized here and their effectiveness evaluated.

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Within the Street Counselor 2.0 project, focus groups identified several benefits of cooperation between actors. Participants reported that cooperation brings personal and professional development, broadens horizons, improves understanding of one's own limits and competencies, and contributes to the overall professionalization of work. An important aspect is also support and mutual assistance, which strengthens the sense of belonging, provides emotional support, reduces the risk of burnout, and creates a sense of security.

Cooperation also increases work efficiency—it allows for a fairer distribution of responsibilities, promotes the sharing of know-how and good practices, brings a synergistic effect (“more heads—more brains”), and leads to more professional performance and faster case resolution. This also has a positive impact on target groups, as it enables early detection of problems and timely intervention, expands the range of services, and increases the involvement of individual actors. As a bonus, participants also perceived a better understanding of how other institutions work and the joint creation of pressure for systemic change. Ultimately, cooperation is also economically advantageous, as high-quality prevention or detection of risky behavior in its early stages is less costly than subsequent repressive solutions.

Several factors influence the establishment of cooperation. Institutional factors include the possibility of organizing multidisciplinary meetings at labor offices (as mentioned by one participant from the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family). In the current situation, personal contacts, human understanding, good relations with the public, a common philosophical basis, and a focus on the same target group are also of great importance. Effective practices have been found to include thorough preparation and presentation of offers, emphasizing the free nature of services, pointing out common goals, a proactive approach, and participation in conferences and networking events.

Participants identified insufficient legislation defining roles and competences as a major obstacle to effective multi-institutional cooperation. This is often linked to a reluctance to cooperate, especially among public institutions, as there is no legislation specifying how they should cooperate. There is a tendency to shirk respon-

sibility and a lack of professionalism – an absence of clear guidelines, procedures, and standards. Due to this shortcoming, it is unclear who professionals should turn to in individual cases. The lack of professionalism is also caused by a shortage of professional staff. The method of cooperation or feedback on a case is not clearly described. The system is also characterized by departmental fragmentation.

Due to insufficient standardization of guidelines (e.g., in terms of criteria for defining the severity of risky behavior) and processes, it is unclear when to start cooperation in a given case, who should act, and how. Some of the actors consider the risky behavior of young people to be trivial, while others consider it serious—there is no consensus or uniformity in approach. It is not clearly stated who is an expert, who should assess the matter, and who is responsible. Cooperation with parents is also a weak link. Parents cannot be forced to do anything about the situation – they often downplay it.

Public/state institutions struggle with a certain degree of rigidity in their functioning, due to a high degree of bureaucracy and hierarchical structure, in contrast to the flexibility of non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations are not bound by precisely defined approval procedures and have a greater degree of freedom and autonomy, but on the other hand, they have less influence on public administration and rule-setting.

Furthermore, what is lacking in effective multi-institutional cooperation is understanding, as each institution uses a different language. Other obstacles include a lack of a culture of cooperation, mistrust between institutions and organizations, diverse prejudices, different values and visions, and often unrealistic expectations that exceed the competencies of individual actors.

It would be effective to standardize basic terminology, establish legally binding rules for information sharing and procedures, and clearly designate a coordinator for each case—i.e., determine the responsible authority.

Another specific problem in multi-institutional cooperation is the legislation related to personal data protection (GDPR). On one hand, it is necessary to consistently protect the privacy of children and families, but on the other, a strict interpretation of the GDPR often causes uncertainty as to what information can be legally shared between institutions. This leads to limited data exchange between schools, social services, healthcare facilities, and non-governmental organizations. In practice, this often means that individual actors do not know what data they can provide, what data they can request, and who is authorized to work with it.

Instead of supporting cooperation, this legal framework often hinders its effective implementation and leads to situations where professionals do not have enough information to make informed decisions or have to work with incomplete data.

In the model situation, participants repeatedly expressed positive views on the idea of mutual cooperation and declared their readiness to seek common solutions. The discussions highlighted several factors that support cooperation, as well as obstacles that complicate it in real practice.

However, despite a high level of motivation and interest in cooperation, no real cooperative approach was evident in the model tasks. Participants tended to seek solutions individually, maintaining their sectoral perspectives and responsibility “for their own field of activity.”

This discrepancy between the declared willingness to cooperate and actual behavior in the model situation is a key finding that points to the need for deeper skill building in the area of interdisciplinary cooperation and the creation of an environment in which cooperation becomes a natural solution, not an exception.

It is important to develop awareness and the ability to share responsibility, create joint solutions, and also make decisions collectively, not individually. Experts need to understand the system and their own competencies, as well as the overlap of roles between institutions. It is therefore crucial to strengthen understanding between sectors (space for exchanging information on roles, competencies, and procedures in specific situations), practical cooperation training (solving model situations), developing a culture of trust and openness, building a common language (identifying terms used differently between sectors, unification, interconnection).

The goal is not to look like a “worker who has everything under control” at the expense of unhappy families. The goal is to ensure a quality and dignified life for children, young people, and their families, even if it means giving up one’s own power and trusting an unknown worker in another institution.

Various forms of cooperation were tested within the projects, with the organization providing low-threshold services and family counseling playing different roles depending on the cooperating institutions. For example, schools usually have more diverse requirements because they often lack professional staff, meaning that in some cases they need psychological support for pupils, in others they need to work with families or carry out preventive activities. This depends on whether they have a school support team or other professionals at the school. The following text will

present these various ways of cooperation in the context of the current situation of the functioning of individual institutions/actors/stakeholders in Slovakia. The introduction will evaluate the methods of initial contact and promotion.

INITIAL CONTACT AND PROMOTION

A) Workshops

- One way to contact important actors is to organize workshops and subsequent discussions on roles, tasks, competencies, and ways of cooperation.

B) Individual meetings

- Several personal individual meetings were also held with people who either work or have worked at the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family. At the same time, several social departments of city districts were visited. The organization's services were actively offered, mainly through personal meetings with school management or presentations at meetings of school support teams. From a large number of schools, those that are closest to the organization and within the district were selected. This cooperation can serve as good practice for local solutions.

C) Email

- Another method of initial contact was to contact social assistance institutions and formal education institutions (schools, counseling centers) via email and subsequent face-to-face meetings. This method of initial contact for cooperation was more successful with schools and counseling and prevention centers.
- It was often difficult to explain to schools and members of professional teams what our added value was. Why should they cooperate with us, why should they offer our services to families? In the first round of emails, almost no schools responded, which may have been due to the time of year; the first round took place in winter, in February (at the end of the first semester). The second, more successful round took place in April-May, i.e., in the middle of the second semester.

Example of an offer for schools:

"Hello,

*I am writing to you on behalf of our organization, Mládež ulice (Street Youth), where we are currently launching a **new European project** focused on **"early intervention for teens."** The aim of the project is to identify young people who show signs of risky behavior and work with them so that it is not necessary to resort to disciplinary measures. As part of the project, we will focus not only **on young***

people, but also on working with parents and entire families, which larger institutions often do not have enough time for. Cooperation could help you lighten the load on the system in the future and support a high-quality professional approach. We currently have and continue to develop cooperation with state organizations involved in addressing risky situations involving young people and their families. The project is based on our many years of experience working directly with families and young people in the field.

With this email, we would like **to offer you closer cooperation and arrange a personal meeting** where we could present the project, go over the possibilities for cooperation, and answer questions such as: *What do you feel is missing in the school environment? What would you need? What can we offer you?*

We believe that “teen early intervention” is **an important step in helping young people**, families, and making the system more effective, which we can achieve through joint efforts.

We look forward to your response and wish you a pleasant day.”

D) **Edupage - Slovak online platform and mobile application for schools**

Example of an offer for parents mediated by schools through Edupage:

Dear parents, we have been cooperating with Mládež ulice (Street Youth) for a long time. It is a civic association based on Pekná cesta in the premises of Stará jedáleň. They are passionate about helping adolescents and their families. They strive to support children and their parents in coping with the challenging period of adolescence. They have prepared a new special program for you and your children and have asked us to inform you about the possibility of working with them.

Parents can contact us if:

- *their child is entering puberty/adolescence and is beginning to engage in risky behavior—skipping school, having trouble adapting to new environments, or experiencing a decline in academic performance*
- *they exhibit risky sexual behavior*
- *they are experimenting with drugs (cigarettes, alcohol, etc.)*
- *they come into contact with dangerous activities such as petty crime, radical and extremist views, risky behavior on social networks, violent behavior*
- *the child is unable to resolve conflicts, cannot express their emotions appropriately, is lonely*

At the same time, when a parent reflects that something has started to happen in the family that may have a negative long-term impact on the child, for example:

- *conflicts in the family*
- *divorce of parents*
- *deterioration of the economic situation*

In these situations, we can provide support and assistance to parents and their children.

- **Social counseling and assistance** – *which means help with finding a new and more suitable job, working with life goals, help with finding housing, accompanying parents to government offices, understanding the social support system – what I am entitled to in my social situation, help with obtaining the necessary documents*
- **Psychological counseling** – *the opportunity to vent and process your emotions, find ways to cope with them, better understand what is behind your behavior, why you react the way you do, how it affects your immediate environment, what parenting techniques you use and what they bring to your relationships with your children*
- **A safe environment** *and safe, accepting relationships without judgment*

E) **Method of initial contact with the family and a young person**

This is how effective different methods of initial contact were successful:

- *the institution recommends the organization to parents (0 successful cases)*
- *offer on edupage (4 successful cases)*
- *the school organizes a joint meeting with the family (0 successful cases)*
- *the school brings the young person to the club (2 successful cases). After the end of the project, this type of cooperation between the neighborhood school and the organization continued, meaning that other young people who were personally brought in by support team staff continued to attend the club.*
- *Leaflets offering services on the notice board (0 successful cases)*

Cooperation with individual actors

FAMILY

The family is an institution that has a fundamental influence on the behavior of young people. Cooperation with the family can prevent risky behavior or enable timely intervention, thus preventing young people from being put at risk.

Cooperation with family members can be initiated in the context of multi-institutional cooperation in three ways:

- through the young people themselves who use low-threshold services – i.e., they go to a club or use outreach youth work services in places where they meet
- through schools – if the school assesses that cooperation with parents is necessary in the context of risky behavior – intervention in the family (it is important to know – according to certain criteria – when it is necessary to call on the family to cooperate, and when individual or group work with the young person is no longer sufficient)
- Child Protection Authority delegates the implementation of educational measures or prevents the imposition of educational measures and delegates the implementation of prevention - so that educational measures do not have to be imposed.

LOW-THRESHOLD PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

This type of program offers young people a safe space, cohabitation, a low structure, and the opportunity to develop life skills through the use of group dynamics and situational intervention³. Involving young people in the life of the program or the organization is one of the pillars of such programs - the principle here is participation and delegation of responsibility. However, everything is based on voluntariness and motivation. Low-threshold programs also provide higher-level group activities, such as themed youth groups aimed at developing certain skills or providing support. These are regular meetings with a permanent group of young people, which are limited by a specific time and place.

3 The procedure for situational intervention is explained in the sections “Risky Behavior” and “Working with Rules.”

ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING FAMILY COUNSELING IN A LOW-THRESHOLD CONTEXT

Organizations of this type offer an extension to cohabitation in a low-threshold program and structure the process through family counseling, which means setting goals and steps to achieve them (with young people and their family members). The combination of the counseling process and low-threshold services (field work or low-threshold club) makes it possible to get to know young people in their natural environment, as part of a peer group in a club or on the street. The use of group dynamics in the natural environment of a peer group to develop skills complements the structured counseling process, where goals are set and worked towards. Other important adults and institutions are invited to participate in the process if necessary, and if the young person sees the value in it.

Here it is important to consider the boundaries of the role, i.e., the services that the organization provides. Does it work with the family as a group, i.e., with all members together? Or does it work individually with each family member separately? What type of counseling does it provide—social, financial, psychological? Does it work with the family on dynamics and relationship development, or rather on developing relationships with the community? If psychological/social counseling for club visitors is being considered, this involves individual, mainly psychological work in the counseling process and group work or situational intervention within the club or on the street in the natural environment of young people. Social counseling here involves the development of social skills that lead to better integration of young people into society.

If the organization begins to work with a family on a problem that affects the whole family, it is essential to have all family members involved in the family counseling process and to work with them together.

It is essential for the organization to decide what type of counseling it will provide—whether its staff will focus on the dynamics of relationships within the family or, for example, provide support in resolving the family's economic issues. Here, it is important to set a clear goal and offer services. Individual goals may also be divided among staff members—one staff member may deal with accompanying families through the legal process of divorce, while another may deal with relationships between individual family members. At the same time, the organization may have a list of organizations it can contact, to refer families to.

SOCIAL DEPARTMENTS OF CITY DISTRICTS

Social departments of city districts know families in difficult life situations best, they are closest to them – they have the competence to provide social counseling and field social work (search). Based on knowledge of the situation of individual families and identification of the degree of risk and the nature of the critical situation, the young person/family can then be referred to other professionals (organizations working with families, organizations providing social and psychological counseling, low-threshold programs for children and youth, organizations providing family counseling in a low-threshold context, psychological or psychiatric care). If the situation is serious, they can report the case to the Department of Social and Legal Protection and Social Guardianship of the Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family based on certain criteria.

CENTERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Young people and families come to the centers when the situation is more serious or when educational measures are being taken—that is, when there is a risk of the child being removed from the family. Various services are provided here, ranging from psychological and social counseling to field work with families. What is missing here and could be provided by organizations offering counseling in a low-threshold context is the added value of spending time with young people – in a club or in the neighborhood where they meet. Being together, creating an equal relationship and a safe environment, and the related group activities of a higher structure and the counseling process. Cooperation with centers for children and families could be implemented in less serious cases in the case of the early social family/teen intervention method.

SOCIAL AND LEGAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL GUARDIANSHIP DEPARTMENTS

The Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family is the highest-ranking institution within the social assistance institutions. Its role is primarily to supervise and monitor whether educational measures are being imposed, but also to provide social and psychological counseling. Organizations providing family counseling in a low-threshold context are not formal authorities - that is, they have no coercive power. On the contrary, there is an element of acceptance and support, offering alternatives, leaving responsibility for one's own life in the hands of service users. In this context, the role of the department is to monitor the formal authority. At the same time, young people and families come here when difficulties have already arisen, so

it is often not possible to speak of early intervention. It is essential to identify young people and families in time, according to certain criteria, and distribute them to lower levels of support (centers for children and families, low-threshold programs).

SCHOOLS

Schools are institutions that encounter young people and their difficulties on a daily basis. School attendance is compulsory from ages 5 to 16, which means that schools are the ones that are constantly with young people from the moment they enter the formal education system. Through school support teams, educational and career counseling, support measures, and primary prevention, schools have a duty to do more than just teach. Schools should take preventive action and intervene in cases of risky behavior by their students. Organizations providing low-threshold services and family counseling can provide family counseling in a natural environment (field work with families) in cooperation with schools. Schools do not have the capacity or competence to do field work directly in families. They often work with parents only to a very limited extent in parent associations.

COUNSELING AND PREVENTION CENTERS

Counseling and Prevention Centers in Slovakia are school counseling facilities that provide free professional psychological, special educational, therapeutic-educational, and social counseling assistance to children, students, their parents, and teachers. They were created by merging the original centers for pedagogical-psychological and special-pedagogical counseling, and their goal is to support the healthy development of children, assist with educational and behavioral difficulties, learning and behavioral disorders, mental health, and special educational needs. In addition to individual assistance, they also provide prevention of risky behavior such as bullying, violent behavior, substance abuse, and self-harm, and are an important partner for schools, families, and communities in creating an inclusive and safe environment for children and young people. Their role is specific prevention, but also intervention in cases of risky behavior. Organizations providing low-threshold services may have added value over schools and counseling and prevention centers in that: 1. young people can practice a variety of skills in clubs or in the field in a natural, informal environment, through situational intervention and the use of group dynamics, 2. low-threshold programs for children and youth provide a service based on a low-threshold approach (accessibility, acceptance, minimization of expectations, responsibility in the hands of users) and work with families in their natural environment.

Examples of models of operation and definition of roles between counseling and prevention centers, school support teams, and organizations providing low-threshold services:

- Case of a mother and son - the mother has a problematic relationship with her son, the son has ADHD and breaks the rules at school, shares various inappropriate videos, and behaves violently. Representatives of the Counseling and Prevention Center, a special educator and psychologist from the school support team, representatives of the Labor Office, and an organization providing a low-threshold program were invited to a multi-institutional meeting. Division of tasks: Counseling Center - working with the mother on parenting skills and a therapeutic group with the son, school psychologist - social counseling with the son and support for the class teacher, special education teacher - support for assistants for the son, Labor Office - supervisory function. The low-threshold organization for children and youth ensured that he spent time after school in a low-threshold club - working on social skills and ad hoc facilitation of a conflictual parental situation that arose between the mother and son.
- Case of a girl who does not fit into the class community. The multi-institutional meeting was attended by: the school support team - psychologist and special education teacher, and an organization providing low-threshold services for children and youth and family counseling. Division of tasks: the school psychologist and special education teacher took on the task of working with the group dynamics of the class - implementation of various cooperative activities, and the organization providing low-threshold services will work with the girl within the framework of street work and the club, using situational intervention and group dynamics as means of social learning and social skills development, while also being able to involve the girl's mother in the counseling process within the framework of family counseling.
- The case of a student who is not fulfilling her school obligations, has a large number of absences, and whose mother does not cooperate with the school. The multi-institutional meeting was attended by representatives of the school, an organization providing low-threshold services for children and youth and family counseling, and the Labor Office. It was agreed that the Labor Office would have a coordinating and supervisory role in this case, and the school, represented by the class teacher, would work with the whole class so that the girl would not be excluded, as this is the presumed main reason for her absences. The organization providing low-threshold services

will provide psychological counseling to the girl and work with the family on developing parenting skills as part of a family program.

IDEAL MODEL

The following was considered by representatives of institutions in the Street Counselor 2.0 project focus groups to be the ideal model for multi-institutional co-operation: The school (teacher, class teacher, support team) identifies risky behavior. Given compulsory school attendance, the school is the actor in the system with which most young people come into contact. As a first step – if the behavior is of low severity (missing a certain number of lessons, change in behavior, loneliness, beginning to disregard rules) – the student is worked with in group work in the classroom, which is carried out by the school support team with the involvement of the home-room teacher. In this case, the school support team consists mainly of a special/social pedagogue, educational counselor, and prevention coordinator⁴. Of course, the composition depends on the school's personnel options. If the school does not have a support team, the implementation of measures is transferred to experts from the counseling and prevention center. The school management is informed from the outset about the plan of ongoing activities and the seriousness of the risky behavior. A long-term intervention begins in the classroom through structured group activities aimed at preventing specific risky behavior or developing specific skills. Various socio-diagnostic methods may be introduced in the group to map the situation and assess the group dynamics. If the behavior is more serious and requires individual intervention (e.g., violent behavior, experiencing violence, family in a difficult situation - divorce, economic hardship, addictions) or the behavior is escalating (increasingly more and more missed classes, even greater withdrawal, more frequent situations of non-compliance with rules, deteriorating grades), the second step is to start individual counseling with a school psychologist or a psychologist from a counseling center in parallel with the group work. This means that young people most affected by risky behavior will begin regular individual counseling with a school psychologist, where risk factors will be identified at the outset. At the same time, it is necessary at this stage to determine who will contact and work with the parents of the most at-risk young people – not the professionals who work with students in individual counseling or those who provide group activities. This can also be covered by counseling and prevention centers, which can intervene at all levels of prevention: individual counseling/therapy, group activities focused on a specific goal, and work with parents. At the

4. A psychologist will not be part of the direct group work in the classroom, as they will work individually with students exhibiting risky behavior. The classroom teacher will only be involved in specifically targeted facilitation activities, where the goal will be to support the relationship between them and the class. The reason for their absence is to maintain a certain degree of anonymity—members of the school support team are less familiar with the names or parents, which may be more effective in creating a safe space.

same time, they have a supportive role towards teachers when the situation is more complex. They can also diagnose/map the situation. If a low-threshold approach and work with the family in their natural environment is necessary (parents are unable or unwilling to come to school, parents are so nervous or defensive or resistant at school that it is not possible to work with them adequately), external non-governmental organizations providing family counseling can step in if necessary. For example, if there is risky behavior on the part of several family members, or if the family is in a difficult situation or unwilling to use standard counseling services (e.g., it is difficult to come to the institution, they lack sufficient knowledge or motivation, they do not know how the system works, etc.), it is necessary to lower the threshold and make the service more accessible.

If other specialists are needed, such as a psychotherapist, psychiatrist, or doctor, they are also invited to participate in the case. This is the third step.

The fourth step is taken if the behavior continues to escalate and the parents do not cooperate. School mediators and the Labor Office are invited to participate in the process through the departments of social and legal protection and social guardianship, especially when the healthy development of children is already at risk. The police are called in immediately in case of misdemeanor, criminal offense, or planned criminal offense.

Before starting cooperation, it is advisable to conclude a bilateral cooperation agreement with the individual actors, which will mention the method of sharing information so that the client is not harmed, and clearly define the roles - what services the organization providing low-threshold services and family counseling provides to individual institutions (school, counseling and prevention centers, etc.). Ideally, there would be legislation addressing these issues.

Case conference – at the beginning, all stakeholders (young people, parents, members of the school support team, class teacher, professionals from organizations providing low-threshold services and family counseling, police, etc.) should meet and agree on how to proceed – what goals are set, who has which role in the process, and how they will evaluate the success of the process.

Transparency - all steps should be transparent and explained to all actors, including the young people concerned.

Multidisciplinary/multi-institutional approach interventions must be long-term and focused not only on specific students, but also on their class, family, and

broader school and social context. Thanks to multi-institutional cooperation, a comprehensive solution to the problem and the prevention of further negative phenomena can be ensured. The school uses a school support team and involves external experts.

Distribution - the organization (school, counseling and prevention center, organization providing low-threshold services and family counseling, etc.) has a list of organizations where young people and their families can be referred to if other expertise is needed.

Sufficient frequency of meetings - the frequency of meetings with individual actors is agreed upon at the first meeting - within the case conference. It is essential that at least one of the experts is in contact with the family or young person once a week.

6.3 ICELAND

CURRENT SITUATION

The Icelandic model can be seen as an example of effective multi-institutional cooperation and will therefore be presented here as an example of good practice. At the same time, this chapter will discuss opportunities for improvement.

The Icelandic model represents a long-proven approach to preventing risky behavior among young people, particularly the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. It is based on close cooperation between scientists, schools, parents, the community, and local government. It is based on the systematic collection of data through regular surveys (every two years) among students, which provide a detailed picture of their lives, leisure activities, and the presence of risk or protective factors. This data is then analyzed and the results are shared with parents, schools, the community, and local institutions, which use it to take specific measures. The measures focus mainly on promoting using free time wisely through youth clubs like doing sports and cultural activities, strengthening parental skills, creating a safe environment for young people, and limiting opportunities for risky behavior. Specific measures include: curfew – young people are not allowed to stay outside after a certain time – until 8 p.m. for children under 12, until 10 p.m. for young people over 12 and under 16, and until midnight in summer. A ban on advertising tobacco and alcohol products and their sale only in specialized stores, the signing of parental

contracts on the circumstances of the upbringing of minors, and the strengthening of cooperation between individual stakeholders. After a certain period of time, the effectiveness of these steps is evaluated through new surveys, and the whole cycle is repeated. The success of the Icelandic model lies in its long-term sustainability, the systematic use of data, and the strong cooperation of all stakeholders. This approach has made it possible to significantly reduce alcohol and drug use among young people in Iceland, while strengthening healthy lifestyles and community ties. In 1998, 42% of 15- to 16-year-olds consumed alcohol at least once a month, compared to only 5% in 2016. Regular smoking fell from 23% to 3%, and hashish use from 17% to 7%.

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

There is often good cooperation with schools and child protection services, for example in municipalities such as Mosfellsbær.

What is well developed in the system are protocols for reporting cases and also protocols for contact in critical situations. The process for reporting child abuse is very clearly described. However, this model can also be used for other types of risky behavior:

- If a professional is unsure whether a child is experiencing violence or neglect and is unsure whether to call child protection services, it is essential to observe the child's living conditions and seek child protection advice, or to seek such advice immediately.
- Secondary information - if a child or young person indicates that they are experiencing violence or neglect, it is essential to seek child protection advice or call 112 immediately. If a child or young person openly talks about violence, it is essential not to ask any further questions so that the professional does not jeopardize the future investigation (for example, it could be used as a counterargument that the child was influenced). Then thank the child or young person for sharing their experience and offering help. It is essential not to promise confidentiality, as the situation will have to be reported to child protection services. The final step in this situation is to seek child protection advice.
- Obvious violence - if a professional sees someone abusing or mistreating a child. If they see with their own eyes that someone is shouting at or mistreating a child. The professional should intervene in the conflict situation, offer the child help, and tell the abuser that their behavior is unacceptable. If this person works with chil-

dren, it is essential to inform a superior. If a child has been harmed, the professional contacts child protection services or 112. If a professional sees that a child or young person is experiencing violence, it is essential to ensure the child's protection first and foremost, intervene in the situation, and offer help. Call 112 to ensure that the police and child protection services receive all relevant information.

Based on the timing of events, the procedure should be as follows:

- In the case of a recent incident. It is essential to call 112, who will contact the police and child protection services.
- In the case of an older incident, it is reported to the guardian (if the young person is under 18). Here it is important to find out what happened to the people involved, but to avoid leading questions. The outcome should be an emergency plan in case a similar situation occurs again. This leads to contacting child protection services or acting in accordance with the organization's protocols. If someone is over 18, the young person's consent is required to contact their parents. If facts are discovered that could aggravate the case, it is necessary to contact the police immediately.
- In the case of an ongoing incident, a professional calls 112 if a person has a weapon or something that can be used as a weapon, or if there is suspicion of a weapon and its use. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure the safety of all involved, including oneself, and to provide first aid. The employee does not disarm or threaten the person with the weapon. The police will be involved with a call to 112. It is also important to always inform child protection services.

All organizations, including schools, community centers, sports clubs, and youth organizations, must have policies and procedures in place for responding to serious incidents and critical situations. It is very difficult to respond to such incidents if it is unclear which rules have been violated. It is important to practice procedures and review them.

112 can report (24/7 online) to child protection services and contact the police if necessary.

What must be reported: when children and young people have inadequate educational conditions, when they are the victims of violence or similar behavior, when their health and development are seriously endangered.

What is further described in the system as functional is that young people are also invited and it is explained to them how they can file complaints about club staff or other actors involved in the process. The personnel setup also works. There is one senior staff member on duty at each service, and there is also support for employees who feel threatened.

Young people often slip through the support system, creating gaps in information. Information is not always shared between institutions. For example, if a young person is educated through alternative schools, youth centers may not always receive all the information.

The sharing of information between traditional institutions is also problematic – the current protection of clients under the GDPR is a major challenge. This often leads to informal meetings between representatives of institutions, where only initials are used to protect client privacy. The newly emerging system in Iceland is trying to prevent these problems, although parental consent will always be necessary.

Communication and cooperation with child protection services varies greatly from region to region. In the capital, youth centers cooperate more with field teams. Field teams are teams of youth workers who drive or walk around areas where teenagers hang out. Efforts are being made to overcome this and encourage cooperation with other actors.

FAMILY

The family is a fundamental partner in multi-institutional cooperation. Parents sign parental agreements that set boundaries and guide parental upbringing. Social and legal protection of children as a state institution under the jurisdiction of local government provides, for example, parents with so-called parenting skills training (Parent Management Training – Oregon model), where parents can learn, for example, how to set boundaries in parenting. This training is accompanied by direct work in families - regular visits to families are carried out. The training lasts approximately six weeks.

YOUTH CENTERS

This type of service can be compared to organizations providing low-threshold services for children and youth in Slovakia and to open youth clubs in Slovenia. The centers fall under the jurisdiction of local governments/cities. In some cases, they have their own premises, but they often use school premises after school hours.

Akureyri is currently undergoing a transformation, and the centers will fall hierarchically under schools, meaning they will be headed by the school principal. The disadvantage will be heterogeneity in the setup, as each school can set it up in its own way, both in terms of schedule and rules. This may be advantageous for schools but disadvantageous for youth in the youth club. Employees are also concerned about the professional independence of the centers. The centers use what we call a low-threshold approach, meaning that the primary method of work is to create a safe environment and build relationships with young people in their natural environment.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Child Protection Authority in Iceland, known as Barnaverndarstofa (National Authority for Children and Families), plays a central role in the protection of children and young people. Its main task is to ensure that all children in Iceland grow up in a safe environment and receive the necessary support in cases where their rights or healthy development are at risk. The primary responsibility for child protection lies with the municipalities, which provide assistance through local child protection committees. The National Office has a supervisory and support role in this system – it provides methodological guidance, ensures the training of staff, and oversees the quality and consistency of services throughout the country. An important part of its work is also education, research support, and the development of new approaches to child protection.

The Office also operates specialized services, among which Barnahús, an interdisciplinary center for children who have experienced sexual violence, holds a special place. This facility brings together social workers, psychologists, doctors, and police officers in one building to minimize repeated questioning of the child and prevent further traumatization. In addition to Barnahús, the agency also manages treatment and diagnostic facilities for young people struggling with mental health issues, addictions, or delinquent behavior. These centers provide therapy, education, and support through activities tailored to the age and needs of young people.

Overall, the agency bridges the gap between the local and national levels, provides methodological guidance for the child protection system, and directly provides specialized care for the most vulnerable groups of children and adolescents.

POLICE

The State Police (Lögreglan) is divided into nine districts. Each district is headed by its own police chief, with the highest authority being the National Police Commis-

sioner, who reports to the Ministry of Justice. Police officers in Iceland are generally unarmed – they only use batons and defensive spray in normal service. Nevertheless they have access to firearms, but need permission to use them from their superior.

The functioning of the police is strongly based on trust and a community approach. The Icelandic police are actively involved in crime prevention, cooperation with schools, kindergartens, and community centers, and support close links with social services. This approach, known as *samfélagslöggæsla*, means that police officers focus not only on repression, but also on early assistance, education, and strengthening the sense of security in society.

The police also cover the areas of civil protection and crisis management. In the event of natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions or floods, they coordinate cooperation between the state, municipalities, fire brigades, rescue teams, and volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross. Thanks to this centralized and community-oriented structure, the police in Iceland act as a key component that combines the protection of public order, crime prevention, and security measures in crisis situations.

IDEAL MODEL

Icelandic organizations see the need to improve the current model of cooperation between institutions, in particular by adopting good practices that are already in place in other districts of the country (Mosfellsbær, Reykjavík). These good practices include weekly meetings between child protection services and youth centers. At the same time, multidisciplinary early intervention has proven effective in cases where young people begin to show only the initial signs of risky behavior, such as truancy, as well as active cooperation with schools when warning signs appear in young people, such as social isolation.

What is missing in the current model of cooperation is regular training focused on specific skills, including for people who are only part-time employees in the organization. They perceive a demand for topics such as how to respond to emotional and physical violence and how to de-escalate potentially harmful situations. At the same time, regular supervision and mentoring are considered important. Some districts have implemented a training program for new employees.

At the same time, there have been extensive discussions about cooperation with the police - they have implemented regular visits by community police officers in clubs, in order to build trust and dispel myths about the police among young people.

What is lacking in the current model is information sharing. For example, when young people move, only a very limited amount of information is shared between schools. Staff would welcome better communication about individual cases to facilitate a smoother transition to a new environment. It would be necessary to improve the process of sharing information between social care, education, and the leisure sector, which is currently blocked by technical and legal restrictions (such as data protection regulations).

THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS ARE PROPOSED:

Parental education and prevention

- blanket implementation of parent training (PMTO)
- parental education should start very early, even before children reach school age, as part of infant health care, with subsequent support for parents in later stages of development
- the topics of parental training should include boundaries (how to set boundaries for children), communication (how to communicate with each other and support relationships), violence prevention, and emotional literacy

Cooperation between institutions

- regular communication between schools, the police, and youth centers is key
- protocols must be set up so that incidents in schools are shared with youth centers
- Stakeholders should have uniform protocols for crisis situations and a clear division of roles

Availability and visibility of the police

- Police presence is important in clubs as well as schools
- It is crucial to present the police as accessible and supportive, not as a threat.
- Visits to youth centers have been identified as an effective tool.

Support for secondary schools

- Lack of services for this age group
- Increase staffing and provide support during the critical time when risky behavior occurs after school (2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)
- Group work and cooperation between youth centers and support services need to be explored

Systematic cooperation and communication

- Interdepartmental discussion between the departments of social support, education, and public health is recommended
- Existing services and cooperation should be reviewed and updated
- Prevention officers (police officers) should be invited to participate in case management teams

7. CONCLUSION

This publication maps multi-institutional cooperation in three European countries. Depending on the cultural context, multi-institutional cooperation varies in terms of the involvement of actors working in the informal education system on low-threshold principles. In Slovenia and Slovakia, it is a “gray area” where there are no clearly standardized processes of cooperation between individual actors. In Slovakia, a large number of new stakeholders have recently emerged, such as experts in schools and coordinators for violence against children. However, the emergence of new stakeholders cannot improve and streamline the system of assistance to young people unless there are clearly defined rules and standards for cooperation (guidelines, manuals). This only leads to the accumulation and duplication of various institutions, but it is not clear how they contribute to the comprehensive support of young people in finding safer alternatives to meet their needs. In Iceland, there are clear standards and guidelines for cooperation between the various actors in the support system, also known as the Icelandic model.

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

STATE INSTITUTIONS AND MINISTRIES

MŠVVaM SR	Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
PSVaR SR	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
MZ SR	Ministry of Health
MV SR	Ministry of the Interior (police, crisis management, crime prevention)
MS SR	Ministry of Justice (probation and mediation service, family law)

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

NIVAM	National Institute for Education and Youth
VÚDPaP	Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology
NKS	National Coordination Center
Schools	(kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, special schools, universities)
CVČ	Leisure centers, Association of Leisure Centers
State School Inspectorate	- supervisory body in the field of education
ZUŠ	Elementary art schools
CPPAP	Center for Educational and Psychological Counseling and Prevention
School clubs for children	
Special educational counseling centers (CŠPP)	
Libraries	
School support teams	(psychologist, special educator, social educator, teaching assistant)
School prevention specialists	- teachers responsible for preventing risky behavior

HEALTHCARE AND PROFESSIONALS

Doctors	- general practitioners for children and adolescents
	Specialist doctors - pediatricians, psychiatrists, child psychiatrists, neurologists, endocrinologists, speech therapists
Psychologists and therapists	(clinical, counseling, school, psychotherapists)
LVS	- Medical and educational sanatoriums
Rehabilitation and treatment facilities	
NÚDCH	- National Institute of Children's Diseases
Children's wards	in hospitals throughout Slovakia

Children's university hospitals**Psychiatric hospitals and clinics**

Comprehensive counseling centers under ÚPSVaR – counseling in the area of debt and partner relationships

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND CHILD PROTECTION

OSPOD Social and Legal Protection of Children and Social Guardianship Authority

CDR Center for Children and Families

ÚPSVaR Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family

SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Social workers – within the ÚPSVaR, CDR, municipalities, and cities

Field social workers – directly in communities, settlements, and housing estates

Family assistants – work with families in raising children and coping with crises

Mediators in court disputes or conflicts in families, but also in schools

Probation officers – in court disputes or conflicts in families

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Asylum houses

Crisis centers and women's shelters

Community centers and low-threshold clubs

Youth centers and clubhouses

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Slovak Police (crime prevention departments, specialized units, school police patrols)

Municipal police

Slovak Public Prosecutor's Office (oversight of the protection of children's rights)

Forensic experts (psychologists, psychiatrists, social experts)

Regional and local government

Cities and municipalities

Higher territorial units Regional and municipal youth councils

Citizens' councils and commissions in cities (social, youth, education)

NON-PROFIT SECTOR AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Liga za duševné zdravie

Liga za ľudské práva

IPčko

OZ Návrat – helping children in foster care

OZ Usmej sa na mňa, Úsmev ako dar – families and children in crisis

Slovenský Červený kríž – youth, volunteer programs

Youth organizations – Slovak Youth Council, Scouting, eRko, YMCA, other civic associations

National helpline for children in danger - Viac ako Ni(c)k

Linka dôvery Nezábudka, Linka detskej istoty – psychological assistance

o.z. Krédo – <https://secure.ozkredo.sk/>

o.z. Ichtys – <https://ozichtys.sk/>

City field team of the capital city of Bratislava

Združenia STORM – <https://www.zdruzeniestorm.sk/>

Kaspian

OZ Ulita – <https://ulita.sk/>

Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic – <https://www.dfsr.sk/>

YOUNG PERSON AND FAMILY MEMBERS



mladezulice.sk

