

# Estonia's policies and practices in improving children well-being

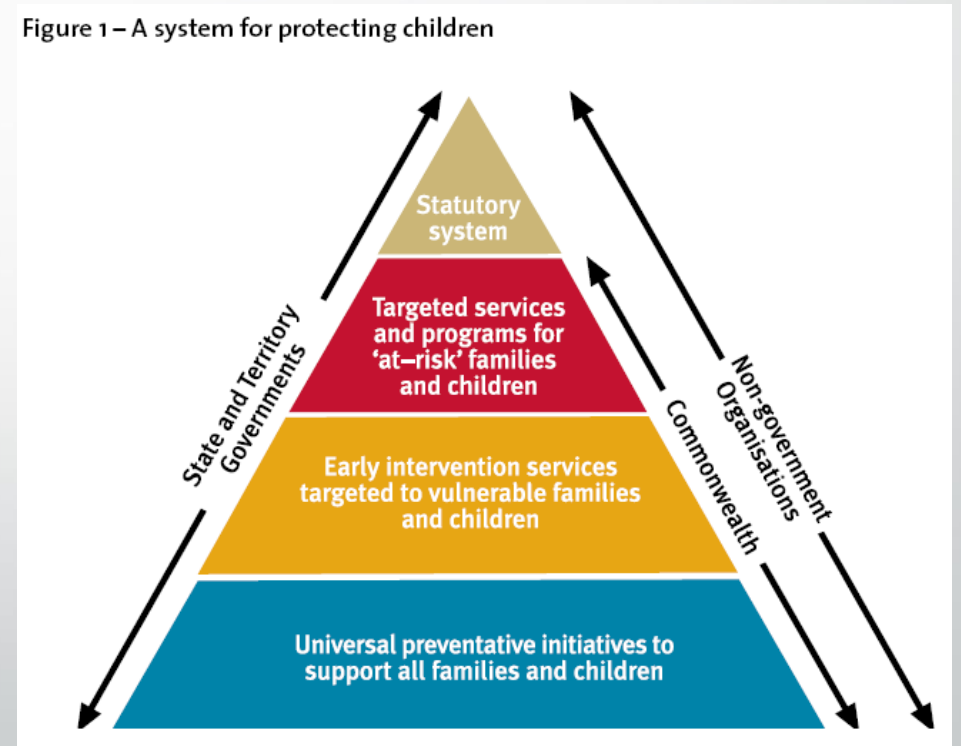
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# Main principles of the Strategy for Children and Families 2012-2020

- Focus on the best interest of the child
- Public health approach – levels of interventions to prevent problems
  - Defining the magnitude and prevalence of the problem
  - Identifying risk and protective factors
  - Selecting interventions that work
- Investments to Prevention and Early Intervention to avoid later costs
- Use of evidence-based interventions (programs which have been proven effective)
- Multi-sectorial cooperation and coordination

Figure 1 – A system for protecting children



# Strategy for Children and Families: 5 Policy Goals

## Main Objective

Improving the well-being of children and families



Laste ja perede  
arengukava  
2012 – 2020

1. Implementing knowledge-based and uniform child and family policy

2. Promoting positive parenting

3. Improving early intervention and strengthening child protection system

4. Providing support to families to cope economically

5. Reconciliation of work, family and private life

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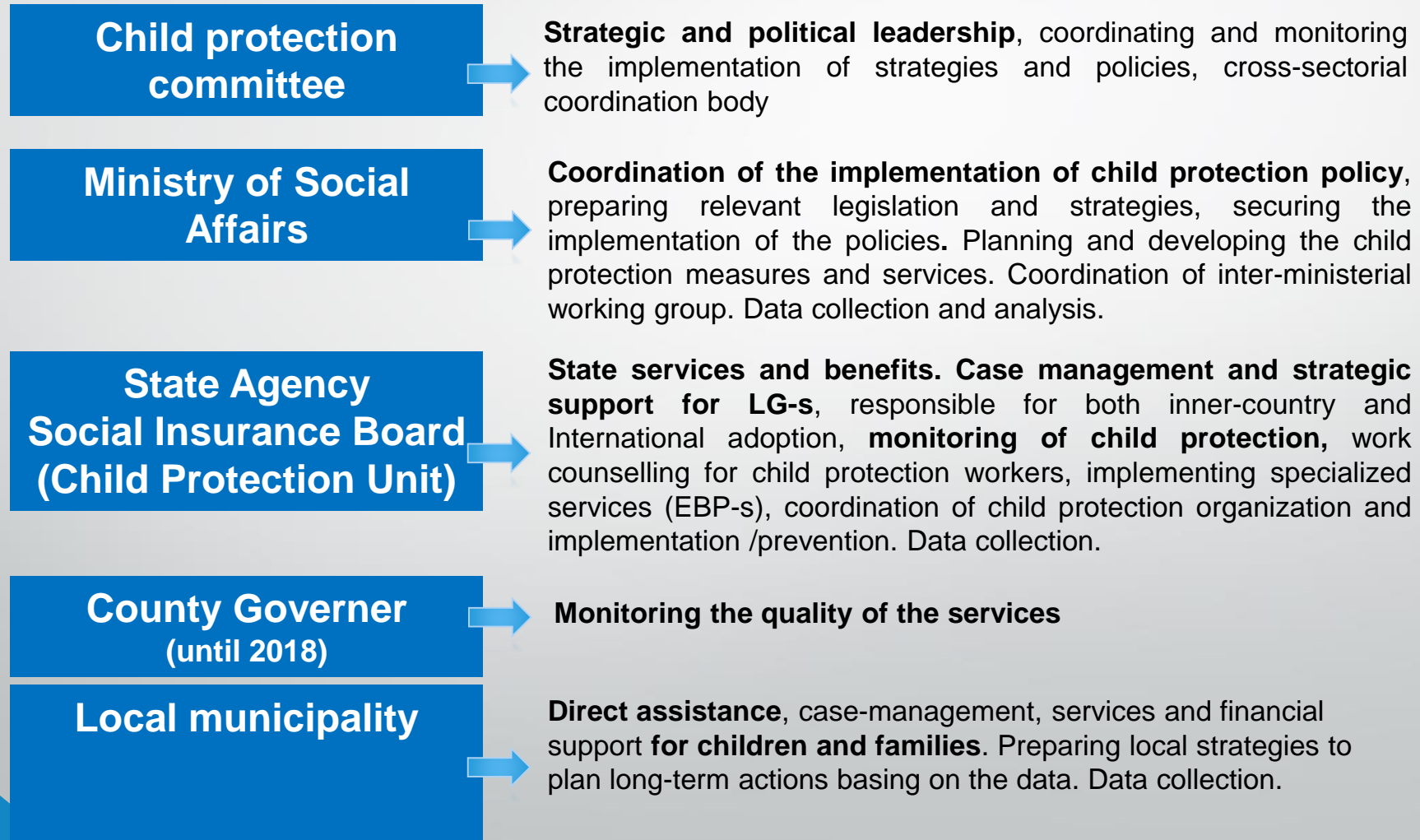
# Changes with the new Child Protection Act

- Introduction of the the new organization of the child protection system
- Obligation for state and local municipalities to develop measures in order to prevent the child's need for assistance and to decrease the existing problems
- Explicit prohibition of corporal punishment of children
- State responsibility to offer trainings and work counselling for the municipal child welfare workers
- Every child protection case has to be assessed (BBIC model) and case plan developed (STAR data register)
- Internal evaluation obligation for children institutions to evaluate efficiency of activities upon ensuring the child's rights and well-being are evaluated



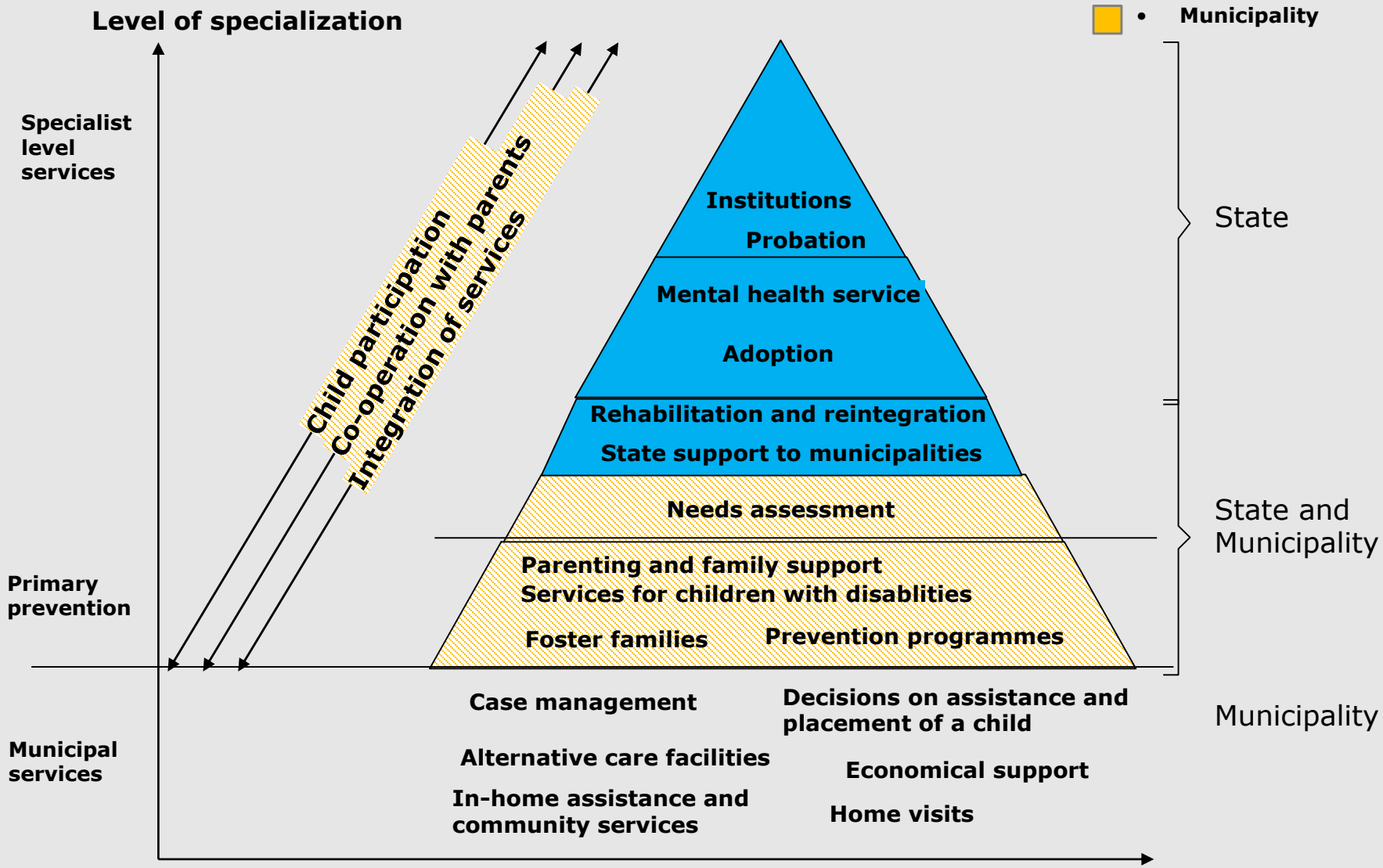
**New Child Protection Act  
in force from January 1,  
2016**

# Organization of child protection in Estonia



# Services to support children and families

- • State
- State and Municipality
- • Municipality



# Getting evidence into policy and practice

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILY WELL-BEING PROFILE**

- To promote evidence-based policy making in local level
- Set of indicators, tools to collect and analyze the data
- Pilot in 2015-2016:
  - Development of the profile, testing in 8 municipalities,
  - Data collection and analysis support
  - Consultations for municipalities on strategic planning
- Continuous strategic support by the State Child Protection Unit

## **EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF INTERVENTIONS**

- Piloting evidence based programs (Incredible Years, Good Behavior Games, KiVA, Multidimensional Family Therapy, ART)

# Relevant reforms and initiatives

- **Children in conflict with the law** – juvenile committees closed down and providing support not punishment through the child protection system (social rehabilitation, mediation, incl closed institution)
- **Alternative care** – law change: after 2018 local municipalities will be responsible for organizing alternative care services including state funding. Improving DI - moving towards family based care, professional foster families (ESF 2014-2020)
- **Children with disabilities** – increasing the availability and accessibility of the support services, integrating services between education and social sector. (33 mill euros 2017-2020). More responsibility organising services given to local government with state funding.
- **Investments to child day care**– in 2017 local municipalities and private sector are supported to build new and flexible child day care places (ESF 2014-2020)
- **Increased family benefits** – additional benefits for families with more than 3 children (3-6 children 200 eur, 7 and more 370 eur per month)




# Preparing next reforms

- **Reforming the system of parental leave and benefits:** better flexibility (parental benefit can be used during 3 years instead of current 1,5 year) and supporting fathers involvement (1-month individual right added to the current parental benefit period)
- **State support for employers in employing 13-16 y/o** children and youth to provide youth with work experience and prevent NEET youth (60% of all unemployed 15–24-y/o youth had no working experience) – 30% of bruto salary (draft law being discussed in the Parliament)
- Implementing **child mental health concept paper** (from 2016)

# Improving early intervention, family support and child mental health: plans

- Integrated family centers at local level to provide primary health care, social and educational support services including integrated joint funding between sectors
- Child mental health competence center to educate specialists and support mental health promotion, including trainings on assessment tools.
- Improving child medical check-ups system to integrate it better with services and renewing home visitation.
- Expanding the availability of parenting support programs

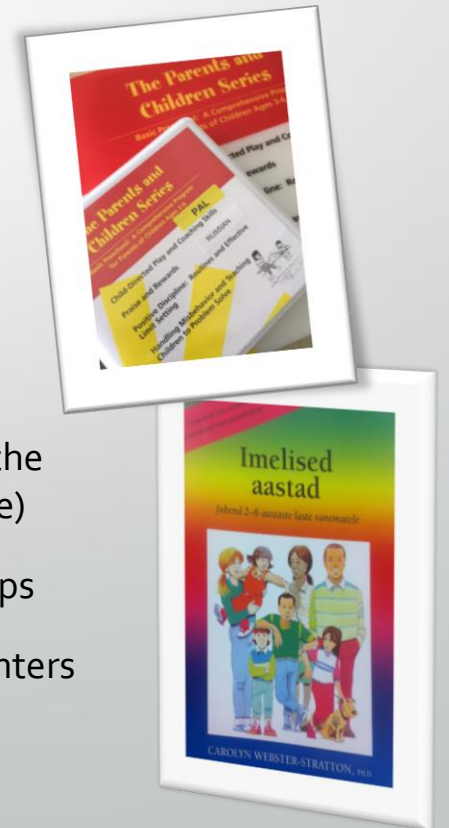


**Example of success:**  
**Implementation of the evidence-based parenting program**  
**“Incredible Years”**

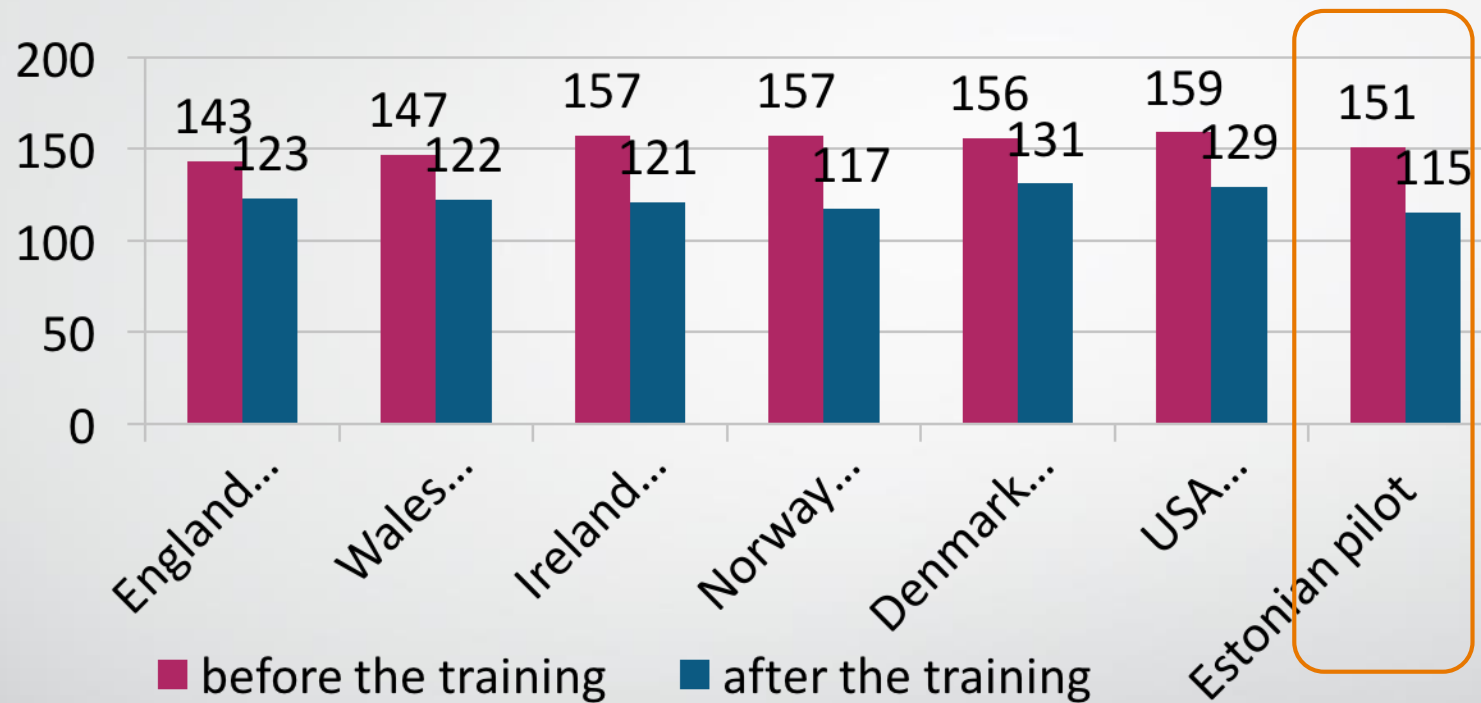
# The Incredible Years pilot project in Estonia

Piloting period from October 2014 till March 2017.

- ✓ 3 training workshops for group leaders
  - Preschool Basic Program – 32 group leaders (1 Russian and 1 Estonian group)
  - Advanced Parent Program – 22 group leaders
- ✓ 523 parents have finished training (52 groups), in Estonian and Russian
- ✓ Cooperation with 21 local governments
- ✓ Pre-and post impact evaluation and after 6 months
- ✓ Conduct disorders of children decreased significantly as well as parental stress
- ✓ Programme coordination and quality assurance system has been institutionalized in the National Institute for Health Development (baseline running costs funded by the state)
- ✓ Local municipalities are expected to organize and eventually fund the parenting groups
- ✓ Ongoing: advanced program pilot in cooperation with the Children Mental Health Centers
- ✓ Media campaign to raise awareness of parenting issues ([www.tarkvanem.ee](http://www.tarkvanem.ee))



## Child behavior intensity score compared to other countries



- Studies concentrate on children with serious conduct problems or diagnose of disorder.
- Score decreased 20 - 40 points, in Estonia 36 points (children with conduct problems).
- Randomized control trials in other countries – small change also in the control group.
- Incredible Years parenting program shows similar good results in different countries.

## Incredible Years cost-benefit analysis (Civitta 2016)

- Bases of the analyses: model developed in Ireland (D. O'Neill and S. McGilloway 2011) for cost-benefit analyses of IY program.
- Estonian pilot data used: Costs of the IY program, results of ECBI intensity score.

Field of impact	Long term impact if conduct problems are developed (international longitudinal studies)	Data on costs available in Estonia
Academic achievements	Increased probability to drop out from high school – 7%	Costs related to not completing high school (income, taxes, health capital, etc)
Criminal activity	Increased probability to commit a crime – 10%	Costs related to crime control, dealing with the results and imprisonment (violent crimes)
Success in labor market	Longer period of unemployment during youthhood – 5 months	Cost of support and compensation related to unemployment

- Long term (related to 20s and 30s) benefit-cost ratio : 1 € spent on IY program equals to 14,3 € gained (costs saved – 12 200 €, cost of IY program per child – 852 €).
- Impact not in the model: less use of health and social services, impact on parents.




# Challenges

# Never stop, keep improving

- **Uneven capacity of local municipalities** to carry out their tasks: trend is that state is giving more responsibilities to the local municipalities (including funding)
- **Investments into prevention and evidence-based interventions** are depending on political will and decisions. We still waste a lot of money on ineffective practices.
- More needs to be done in **building competence** of specialists working with children and families
- **Lack of effective services** (e.g. social rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, mental health services, family support services)
- **Impact assessment** of the programmes and services is not yet commonly used practice – the need to support service providers and NGO-s (including decommissioning of ineffective practices)
- **Good governance systems, leadership and sustainable funding!**





Thank you for your attention!