



Public audit report

EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN SOCIALIZATION CENTRES

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Full audit report in Lithuanian is available on the website of the National Audit Office: www.vkontrole.lt

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child¹ provides for that one of disciplinary educational measures applicable to a child for constant and malignant violations of law and order and for perpetration of dangerous (criminal) activity is placement of the child in a special educational and disciplinary institution, which shall be possible only per recommendation of institutions which have been authorised by court.

Following the provisions of the Law on Minimum and Average Care of the Child, a special educational and disciplinary institution is a children socialization centre (CSC) – a public secondary school providing average care of the child (ACC)². This measure is an obligation with respect to the child, the fulfilment of which covers children's care and development of their abilities, provision of education support and other services³.

As from 1 July 2010 (after the abolishment of county administrations), the Ministry of Education has become the authority having the rights and duties of the owner of children socialization centres.

¹ Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child, 14 March 1996, No. I -1234 (version of 3 April 2003, No. IX -1440), Art. 49, paragraphs 3-5.

² Law on Minimum and Average Care of the Child, 28 June 2007, No. X- 1238 (version of 14 December 2010, No. 1232), Art 2, paragraph 12.

³ Ibid, Art. 2., paragraph 10

In 2012, there were six centres with 160 pupils (data of 1 January 2012) in Lithuania. These centres are funded from the state budget. Appropriations allocated for the centres during the period 2010-2012 total over LTL 30 million.

The audit objective was to assess effectiveness of the organization and implementation of average care of the child.

The audit addressed the following issues:

- Is ACC organised and implemented observing the principle of individualization?
- Is education support provided to the child sufficiently individualized?
- Do CSCs ensure both formal and non-formal children education?
- Are CSCs specialized according to children's age and emotional/behavioural disorders?
- Does the child receive effective support during the ACC period established by court?
- Do children take part in the preparation of average care implementation plans?
- Is child's adaptation at the CSC effective?
- Do institutions responsible for the organization and implementation of ACC sufficiently cooperate seeking to ensure positive socialization of the child?
- Is there proper evaluation of progress in children's behaviour at CSCs carried out?

The audit period – 2010–2012. The analysis of tendencies and changes also used the data for earlier years.

The audit was conducted in the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Vilnius Centre for Children Socialization, Kaunas Centre for Children Socialization, Gruzdžiai Centre for Children Socialization, Children Socialization Centre "Širvėna", Kaunas Centre for Children Socialization "Saulutė", Veliučionys Centre for Children Socialization, Child Rights Protection Divisions of Kaunas City Municipality, Šiauliai City Municipality, and Vilnius City Municipality, Vilnius County Police Headquarters, National Agency for School Evaluation, and National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology.

The public audit conclusions and recommendations provided below were drawn upon the assessment of the audit findings.

AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

1. There are no adequate prerequisites for effective socialization of children because of insufficient cooperation between the authorities responsible for the measures of average care of the child (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, law enforcement institutions, municipalities, children socialization centres, children's parents/custodians/ caretakers):

- children socialization centres and municipalities do not work with child's parents, custodians or caretakers when the child is at the socialization centre, courts do not obligate parents to attend courses;
- police inspectors in charge of minors' affairs according to the child's place of residence are not always informed in advance of the release of the child for holiday and, at the expiry of the average care measure, of the release of the child from the socialization centre;
- there are no re-socialization programmes for children to consolidate the acquired pro-social skills after leaving socialization centres;
- no inter-institutional cooperation mechanism has been provided for.

2. No statistical data is collected on repeated engagement of children in criminal activity and the character of crimes they commit after leaving CSCs, therefore assessment of the effectiveness of the performance of children socialization centres is insufficient and policy is formulated without having enough background information.

3. The application of the child's average care measure is insufficiently effective because since 2011, when the average care measure implementation time was reduced to one year, the number of period extensions went up about 10 times and the number of children who repeatedly returned to socialization centres also increased.

4. The support provided to children is not sufficiently individualized:

- centres are not specialized according to children's age and type of emotional and behavioural disorders;
- children do not take part in the development of their average care plans and plan amendments are not always discussed with the child;
- adaptation of children at the socialization centres is given insufficient attention;
- there is a lack of education support professionals (psychologists, social pedagogues, special education teachers), i.e. those who are "closest to the child".

5. Socialization centres draw up different average care plans, different officials perform different evaluations of changes in the child's behaviour, reports on the implementation of the average care measure provided by children socialization centres to the directors of administration of municipalities differ in the degree of detail. It is difficult to evaluate changes in the child's behaviour, to measure the effectiveness of the implemented measures, and to plan further work with the child without having information prepared in accordance with uniform criteria.

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania:

1. With a view to achieving effective average care of the child, to take decisions to ensure the following:

- implementation of the principle of cooperation between institutions;
- control of the extension of average care in case of unauthorised leave of a child from the socialization centre;
- communication of the socialization centre with the institutions in the child's environment when the child is at the centre and after leaving the centre;
- provision of more education support professionals in the regulatory documents of children socialization centres.

2. With a view to ensuring effective individualized support to the child, to prepare and approve the following:

- a procedure and criteria for the collection and assessment of statistical information on the effectiveness of the implementation of average care of the child;
- a sample plan for the implementation of average care of the child; criteria and procedure for the evaluation of progress in children's behaviour; a form of the progress report on the implementation of average care to be submitted to the director of administration of the municipality.

3. With a view to ensuring more individualized support to children, to consider an option to categorise centres on the basis children's needs (emotional and behavioural disorders, age).

4. With a view to ensuring more effective support to children, to provide for conditions for the staff of socialization centres to receive training and methodological support.

To the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania:

With a view to achieving effective socialization of children, to ensure development and implementation of programmes designed to encourage better re-socialization of the minors at the time when the child is at the socialization centre and after leaving the centre.