



Estonia

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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Summary

The State's obligation, on the basis of the Constitution and international law, is to provide parents with opportunities to raise their children and provide the basic necessities for the children, but the State assistance to parents and children in Estonia is not yet at a level that would guarantee the fulfilment of all fundamental needs of the child, in line with international agreements and national legislation. The main aspects of child poverty and social exclusion can be characterised as follows:

- the child at-risk-of-poverty rate was higher than average by 3.1 %, especially in the 0-4 and 15-17 age groups, and for males higher than for females in all age groups;
- the annual number of deaths from accidents and injuries per 100 000 is very high;
- a high rate of dropouts from compulsory school attendance;
- large alcohol and drug consumption.

Prevention and alleviation of child poverty and social exclusion are a high priority in policy-making and there are clear policy objectives and targets for preventing and reducing child poverty and social exclusion in Estonia; even in the coalition's programme for 2007-11, the family and population policy has been brought to the forefront. There are also several strategic documents in different policy areas that are related to child poverty and social exclusion which reveal the multi-dimensional approach to this problem, starting from ensuring the rights of the child and creating a safe environment for them to grow up in, to the prevention and combating of child trafficking, prostitution and pornography (most directly related are the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-08' and the 'Social inclusion plan' — NAP inclusion — of the Estonian national report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion — NR SSPSI — 2006-08). In different strategic documents policy objectives and targets have been set and measures described according to the special nature of children's needs.

The arrangements for mainstreaming the issue of child poverty and wellbeing in national policy are taking place in Estonia, where the NAP inclusion 2006-08 fulfils the function of coordinator, because it incorporates the objectives, measures and activities established within the strategic documents of different areas in the prevention and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion of families with children. However, it is necessary to strengthen the State's coordinating and supporting role to ensure the protection of children and satisfaction of their needs equally in all regions. The principles of the monitoring system of strategic documents are set by the Government regulation on strategic planning and the Ministry who is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of the strategies is also responsible for the evaluation and monitoring. The Ministry is obliged to report once a year to the Government about the implementation of the activities, as well as the achievement of objectives and targets. Although child wellbeing is a policy area where the target setting, as well as cooperation with stakeholders and other involved parties is beneficial, the main issue that has been encountered so far is the lack of stability and analysis in defining and monitoring the targets.

Despite the positive trends of child poverty issues based on policy documents, the actual situation differs significantly. In real life, the topic of children has not become a horizontal indicator in different spheres. There are problems with implementing some strategy measures, because there are not enough human and financial resources, and therefore the regional availability of services as well as their quality is different. The plans envisage too many different measures and activities which are also often carried out within projects. Follow-up surveys are needed, because often measures and activities have been financed on the basis of political decisions and their efficiency has not been assessed from the development aspect.

1. Extent and nature of child poverty and wellbeing in Estonia

According to paragraph 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia ¹, the family, being fundamental to the preservation and growth of the nation and the basis of society, shall be protected by the State; parents have the right and the duty to raise and care for their children; the protection of parents and children shall be provided by law. The Republic of Estonia fulfils the obligations of the UN universal declaration of human rights, the European Council Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which Estonia joined it in 1991, and the European social charter, which means guaranteeing the fundamental civil and social rights. The State obligation is made on the basis of the Constitution and of international law, to provide parents with opportunities to raise their children and provide the basic necessities for children. For achieving these opportunities, the Government institutions shall implement labour market, education, health, housing, cultural, etc. policies. The institutions responsible for children's development and the satisfaction and protection of their needs are on five levels: the family, local government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the State and society in a broader sense (media).

Child protection in Estonia is regulated through several laws, regulations and decrees ², which lay the main responsibility for providing the right of the child on parents, which is right and natural. A national survey of value judgements ³ conducted in January and February 2006 indicated that it has become an attitudinal norm in Estonian society to share personal and State responsibility in child rearing: though child birth is based primarily on personal possibilities, State contributions and support in bringing up children is expected (only one tenth of Estonians count on self-support only). However, State assistance to parents and children in Estonia is not yet on a level that would guarantee the satisfaction of all fundamental necessities of the child, fulfilment of international agreements and national legislation. As a result of households' difficulties in coping, exclusion, insufficient parental knowledge and skills or other factors, approximately 1 250 new children every year, who have remained without parental care, attract the attention of Estonian child protection officials. ⁴ In the context of the decreasing population (due to a negative natural increase and net migration by more than 14 % in the period 1990-2005) and its ageing (in the same period, the share of those aged 0-17 fell from 26.4 to 20.0 % and the share of people aged 60 or more increased from 17.2 to 21.6 % of the mean annual population), child poverty and exclusion is one of the most serious problems in Estonian society. Children in poor households have limited opportunities to realise their abilities, increasing the risk of transmitting poverty on to the next generations.⁵ An adequate and timely interference could avoid a new generation of excluded people.

¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia.

² Republic of Estonia Child protection Act; Lastekaitse kontseptsioon (Child protection concept); Sotsiaalhoolekandeseadus (Social welfare Act); Perekonnaseadus (Family law Act); Põhikooli- ja gümnaasiumiseadus (Basic schools and upper secondary schools Act); Koolieelsete lasteasutuste seadus (Preschool childcare institutions Act); Lapse õiguste tagamise strateegia 2004-2008 (Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-08); Alaealiste mõjutusvahendite seadus (Juvenile sanctions Act); Karistusseadustik (the Penal code); Pornograafilise sisuga ja vägivalda või julmust propageerivate teoste leviku reguleerimise seadus (Act regulating dissemination of works which contain pornography, promote violence or cruelty), etc.

³ *Lapsed ja Eesti ühiskond. Väärtushinnangute uuring RISC. Lisa Eesti maa-aruandele* [Children and Estonian society. A survey of value judgements. Annex to the Estonian national report].

⁴ Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10, 2006.

⁵ In case no reference is made to sources in the text, the viewpoints expressed are based on the author's calculations or understanding.

As of 1 January 2006 there were 265 676 children aged 0-17 in Estonia. According to the *Household Budget Survey* (HBS), households with children aged 0-15 (average number of children per household 1.5) accounted for 27 % (151 600) of all households. The number of households with children in Estonia has decreased faster than the average number of households. Two thirds of the households with children live in towns. Most frequently there is only one child growing up in a household (63 % of the households with children), especially in towns. Every tenth household with children is rearing at least three children, whereas households with many children are over twice as numerous in rural areas as in towns (16 and 7 % of households with children respectively). Over half of the Estonian children are growing with their mother-father (including foster parents) and with at least one brother/sister, whereas nearly one third of the brothers/sisters are of full age; one sixth of the children are growing up in single-parent households (95 % of them with single mother); slightly over 5 % of the children are growing in a three-generation household (one or two parents and at least one grandparent), 3 % in other households (e.g. households with a cohabitee of parent's sister or brother, great-aunt etc., as well as households where a child is growing up with grandparents).⁶

1.1. Overview of the situation in relation to income and household characteristics ⁷

The income poverty indicators used in this part of the report are based on the EU-SILC (Estonian social survey — ESS)⁸ and differ due to several substantial methodological differences from the indicators calculated on the basis of the HBS which were used in previous reports. This is the reason why the comparisons with previous periods and trends of poverty indicators cannot be given in this report. In Estonia, the at-risk-of-poverty rate based on the ESS is lower than the HBS data (18.3 % instead of 19.3 % in 2004⁹, respectively) and by 2 % higher than the first 25 EU Member States' average¹⁰.

In 2004, the child (aged 0-17) at-risk-of-poverty rate was higher by 3.1 % than average¹¹ and especially in the age groups 0-4 and 15-17 (by 5.5 and 4.4 % respectively) in Estonia (Annex 2, Table 1). The average at-risk-of-poverty rate for females was higher than for males (by 1.7 %), but the child at-risk-of-poverty rate, on the contrary, was higher for males than for females in all age groups. The highest compared with the average and with the female indicator was the at-risk-of-poverty rate for males in the 15-17 age group (by 6.7 and 4.8 percentage points respectively).

⁶ Tiit, E.-M., *Lastega pere elujärg Eestis* [Living standard of households with children in Estonia], 2005.

⁷ A more detailed analysis is given in Annex 1, which is structured according to the main text.

⁸ Statistics Estonia has been running the ESS since 2004; pilot surveys were organised in the period 2002-03. Poverty and inequality indicators for 2003 and onwards as well as the share of population with low levels of education and health status by income is calculated on the basis of the ESS. Poverty and inequality measures for 2000-02 are drawn from the HBS. Unemployment indicators as well as the share of early school leavers have been calculated on the basis of the labour force survey (LFS).

⁹ In the Eurostat public use database the Laeken indicators have been published under one year greater than here, as Eurostat uses the survey year and Statistics Estonia an income year.

¹⁰ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal>

¹¹ According to the Innocenti report (2007), the share of children growing up in relative income poverty (14.5 %) is much higher in Estonia than in Nordic countries, but a little lower than in southern European countries, where the child poverty rates are under 5 % and above 15 %, respectively. In such comparisons we should take the income level into account: according to the ESS data, the risk-of-poverty threshold (60 % of median) in Estonia in 2004 was EUR 1 788 for a one person household and EUR 3 755 for a household with two adults and two dependent children ⁷.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate of single-parent households with at least one dependent child (aged 0-17) and of those with two adults and three and more children is much higher than that of households with no dependent children, by 25.6 and 6.6 percentage points respectively (Annex 2, Table 2). The at-risk-of-poverty rate of single-parent households is notably higher compared with the indicator of other household types in all age groups of children.

According to ESS data, the at-risk-of-poverty rate is the greatest among children whose parents do not work (households with children and minimal work intensity), especially in the 15-17 age group (84.6 %), and the lowest among children in households with maximal work intensity (7.7 % in the 10-14 age group). 9.1 % of the children lived in jobless households in 2004. On the basis of this indicator Estonia is one of the last (21st among 24) OECD countries.¹²

Material deprivation¹³ as percentage of children (aged 11, 13 and 15) reporting low family affluence is much higher in Estonia (40.1 %)¹⁴ than in most of the OECD countries (with a 19.8 % average).

According to the HBS for 2004, the share of households with children (at least one of them less than 16 years old) among the subjective poor dropped to 18 % (27 % in 2000) and the number of children being raised in such households decreased from 13 900 to 7 100 (among these, approximately 1 400 children are less than three years old) in five years, which is partly an effect of the parental benefit introduced in 2004.

According to Eurostat, expenditure on children in Estonia accounted for an average of 1.7 % of GDP and relative child poverty was 23 %, in the first 25 EU Member States' expenditures accounted for 2.1 and 20 %, respectively in 2004.

1.2. Health¹⁵

The number of infants dying in their first year has decreased almost three times since 1992 and the number of infants dying in their first year per 1 000 live births was 5.4 ‰ (5.7 ‰ for male and 5.1 ‰ for female) in 2005. For instance, the infant mortality rate is higher in Hungary, Poland and the United States than in Estonia.¹⁶

The data of the past five years indicates some increase in the birth weight of newborns, which becomes more evident in timely births, but in grams the change is small.¹⁷ The average birth weight of a male born in 2005 was 3 570 g, in average 150 g more than that of female children.¹⁸ Comparing data for 2000-04, it can be said that the percentage of children whose birth weight is over 4 kg is increasing slowly. According to the *Estonian Health Statistics Yearbook*, the percentage of infants born with low birth weight (< 2 500 g) was 4.3 %¹⁹ in 2004, hence similar to

¹² *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.*

¹³ According to Statistics Estonia, material deprivation indicators will be worked out by the end of 2007.

¹⁴ *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.*

¹⁵ More detailed information is given in Annex 1.

¹⁶ *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.*

¹⁷ Ruuge, M., *Mother and child health care*, 2006.

¹⁸ Valgma, Ü., *Birth of children and growing environment*, 2006.

¹⁹ *Estonian Health Statistics Yearbook 2004.*

Nordic countries. According to the family doctors, more than half of the one-year-old children had been breastfed up to the age of six months in Saare, Võru, Rapla and Harju counties and the Estonian average was 47.8 % in 2004.²⁰

According to the Estonian Health Protection Inspectorate data, in Estonia as a whole, the vaccination process against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis in 2000-04 was carried out according to the programme.²¹ In the past few years, the percentage of children under two years who have been also vaccinated against measles, rubella and mumps has increased significantly. Across counties, the vaccination coverage is only lower than 95 % in Harju county.

According to the 'Health Behaviour of School-aged Children' (HBSC)²², the share of Estonian children who rate their health as medium or poor is higher than in other European countries. Similarly with the trend in the whole Europe, females in Estonia assess their health to be worse and their share is increasing with age (16.8 and 11.4 %; 16.9 and 16.7 %; 27.5 and 15.7 %, respectively for 11, 13 and 15-year-old females and males).

In the 2001/02 school year, less than 10 % of boys and 5 % of girls among 13 and 15-year-olds were overweight or obese in Estonia. The problem of overweight among children is not yet as sharp in Estonia as elsewhere in the world, even compared with the Nordic countries, but the share of overweight children is higher in Latvia and Lithuania.

Regardless of the prohibition²³, more than four fifths of young males and three fifths of females have smoked at least one cigarette, cigar or pipe during their life before the age of 15 (15.1 and 37.0 %; 46.2 and 68.9 %; 65.0 and 80.5 %, respectively among 11, 13 and 15-year-old females and males²⁴). The share of boys in all ages who have smoked at least once is one third to 50 % higher than the percentage of girls of the corresponding age; the situation is also similar in Latvia and Lithuania, but the young people in the Nordic countries differ in their smoking habits.

One of the key problems with regards to the children in Estonia is the large number of injuries or intoxication: 1 360 injuries and intoxication per 100 000 males and 900 per 100 000 females aged 0-14 in 2003.²⁵ According to the Innocenti report²⁶, the annual number of deaths from accidents and injuries per 100 000 under 19 years is very high (39.4 %) in Estonia compared with OECD countries (average 14.3 % and less than 10 % in Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy).

Estonia has had a leading position as regards new cases of HIV infections in Europe for several years already. The serious nature of the situation is illustrated by the fact that the annual number of new cases of HIV infection per 1 million people is tens of times higher than in most of the EU countries. Among the new cases of HIV infection in Estonia in 2000-04, over two thirds are under 30 years of age, hence most of the infected are young people.²⁷ Most of them are male, but the

²⁰ Ruuge, M., *Mother and child health care*, 2006.

²¹ Immunoprophylaktika riiklik programm nakkushaiguste vältimiseks aastatel 2001-2005 [National immunoprophylactic programme for preventing infectious diseases in 2001-05].

²² Currie, C. et al (eds), *Young people's health in context: international report from the HBSC 2001/02 survey*, 2004.

²³ According to the Estonian tobacco Act, smoking as well as sale of tobacco products is prohibited to persons under the age of 18.

²⁴ Denissov, G., Karelson, K., *Health behaviour of children and young people*, 2006.

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.*

²⁷ Eesti riiklik HIV ja AIDSi strateegia aastateks 2006-2015 (Estonian national HIV and AIDS strategy for 2006-15).

share of females has risen in recent years (from 20 % in 2000 to 36.1 % in 2006). In 2006, out of 668 infected 12.7 % were aged 0-19.²⁸

According to the HBS²⁹, the types of households which had no elderly members and where children were raised, i.e. households of a couple with children and single parent, assessed their health more optimistically compared to the persons of the same age. The members with a worse health assessment compared to the persons of the same age were not present in 95 % of the households of a couple with children, in 93 % of a couple with two children and in 91 % of single parents.

1.3. Education³⁰

The absolute number of kindergarten enrolment that decreased in the second half of the 1990s due to the falling birth-rate in the early 1990s, is increasing again. The share of kindergarten children among the corresponding age group has continuously increased (at the end of 2005, gross enrolment rate for the 1-6 age group was 71 %, net enrolment rate for the 3-6 age group was 86 and 57 % for 2-year-olds).³¹ At the same time, the waiting lines for preschool childcare institutions have been increasing, especially in some attractive regions where residential construction has expanded and young families with children have settled. Though pre-primary education is not obligatory, parents must have a possibility to put their child into kindergarten or provide appropriate preparation for school at home.

The number of grade repeaters in general education has decreased (about 6 000 at the end of 1990), but was still around 4 000 pupils in 2004, whereas nearly 70 % of the grade repeaters were male and nearly two thirds of the repeaters were pupils of seventh to ninth grade.³² The number of those ignoring compulsory school attendance is worrisome in Estonia. The problems with compulsory school attendance are often accompanied by law violations, as demonstrated by a survey based on pupils' own answers (self-reporting)³³: frequent absentees from school have more serious law violations; both violent behaviour and delinquency in general, while repeating a grade is connected with problem behaviour only for boys.

The number of girls and boys attending school is almost the same up to the ninth grade but before acquiring basic education 1 235 boys per 547 girls leave school. The rate of dropouts is the highest at the upper level of basic education (seventh to ninth grade) and the main reason for interrupting studies is passing the minimum school-leaving age. The dropping out of Estonian students from compulsory school attendance is not higher than in other countries of the EU where the share of boys is also higher in dropouts. A clearer gender differentiation begins in general secondary education where the number of girls is somewhat higher than that of boys, but more boys study in vocational secondary education. Looking at the attendance of the education system as a whole, the gender differentiation in favour of girls starts from about the age of 17 when the relative proportion of girls among students (enrolment ratio for 14 and 17-year-old females and males, 99.5 and 99.1 %; 95.3 and 90.8 %, respectively) is starting to grow more and more with

²⁸ Health Protection Inspectorate.

²⁹ Household Living Niveau, 2005. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, 2006.

³⁰ More details are given in Annex 1.

³¹ Statistical Yearbook of Estonia, 2006.

³² Estonian Statistics, 2007.

³³ Markina, A., Šahverdov-Zarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

age.³⁴ The main reasons for dropping out are a lack of surveillance and/or motivation, molesting at school and learning difficulties.

Many of the children dropping out of compulsory school attendance come from homes where there is not enough time, power, skills or will to prepare them for school and support them in their school-work.³⁵ Though learning is a personal freedom to acquire new knowledge and skills, young people have an obligation to obtain basic knowledge for coping in society. It is difficult for children from problem homes to be successful at school, because as a rule, they are not properly prepared for school. Ill success experienced at school is an incentive for non-attendance of school and later interruption of education. To support these children and their homes there are boarding school facilities³⁶, which started work already in 2000, even before the respective decree of the Minister of Education came into force and funds were allocated owing to good cooperation between some schools and local governments. A precondition for entering a boarding school facility is a developed school attendance problem, but it should also help to prevent the problem.³⁷ Boarding school facilities are able to offer an opportunity for children to learn to cope; favourable factors that help children from problem homes under the influence of many risks include first of all recreational activities. The multitude of sports opportunities is of specific importance.

According to the Ministry of Education and Research, there were 25 711 students with special needs (physical, speech, sensory or mental disorder and/or with learning difficulties) in the 2005/06 academic year (15 % of all students obtaining general education). Though increasingly more students with special needs are studying at ordinary schools, the number of students at schools for children with special needs has remained stable. There are 43 schools for children with special needs in Estonia (including four sanatorium schools), encompassing 24 State, 15 municipal and four private schools. In ordinary schools there are 69 classes for students with special needs. The National Audit Office's report on the study opportunities of children with special needs³⁸ identified the main problems:

- there is no agreement on which children are treated as having special needs and their exact number is not known;
- many children with special needs are not attended to in time;
- learning conditions need improvement;
- one fifth of the working-age people who have obtained basic education from school or class for children with specific needs neither study nor work.

Hobby education is an activity taking place on the basis of a national or institutional curriculum to enable versatile development of young people. There are 300 hobby schools in Estonia which have a relevant licence³⁹, including 160 municipal and 140 private hobby schools, with approximately 48 000 students (13 000 in music and art schools, 13 400 in sport schools and

³⁴ Rummo-Laes, T.-L., Education, 2006.

³⁵ Tiko, A., *Esimese klassi õpilaste kooliprobleemide psühhosotsiaalsest taustast* (Psycho-social background of school problems of first grade pupils), 2001.

³⁶ *Õpilaskodu töökorralduse alused* (Basics of work organisation of boarding school facilities).

³⁷ Tiko, A., *Õpilaskodud, nende moodustamise ja funktsioneerimisega seotud probleemid*. Uurimisprojekti aruanne (Boarding schools, problems of their establishment and work), 2003.

³⁸ *Erivajadustega laste õppimisvõimalused* (Opportunities of children with specific needs to study). Riigikontrolli kontrolliaruanne (Report of the National Audit Office of Estonia).

³⁹ Activity of municipal hobby schools is regulated by the Hobby schools Act, which came into force on 1.09.2007 and was implemented also in private hobby schools (unless the Private school Law did not provide for otherwise).

21 300 in other hobby schools).⁴⁰ The hobby schools' law will establish hobby education standards⁴¹ which will provide the requirements for hobby education in Estonia and it will serve as a basic document for hobby schools providing hobby education and is applicable to all hobby schools irrespective of their legal status.

A survey discussing local government support to households with children⁴² indicated that most (with the exception of four in 2005) of the local governments supported children's education at school. The major expenditure by local governments on children and households (60 %) was on education, hobby education and recreation. Average expenditure made by local governments on general and hobby education per 7 to 18-year-old child was EUR 639 annually, including 19 % on hobby education. Large differences occurred in financing general and hobby education between urban and rural children: the average general education funding per child in rural municipalities was 10 % bigger, but hobby education funding in urban municipalities was twice bigger than in rural municipalities.

The indicator of school wellbeing (percentage of young people — aged 11, 13 and 15 — liking school a lot) is twice as low as in the OECD average — 11.1 and 23.3 % respectively.⁴³

1.4. Housing

The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia does not directly regulate housing and accommodation; this sphere is regulated by specific laws (Local government organisation Act, Dwelling Act⁴⁴, etc.). According to the population and dwelling census conducted by the statistical office in 2000, 92.6 % of the households were living separately and 7.4 % of the households did not have their own living space. Reasons for cohabitation of several households are partly economic, and partly connected to social conditions (the need to take care of older family members, etc.). Additionally, nearly two fifths of the households are composite households containing two adult generations. One fourth of young people have not started independent life even at the age of 30. Lack of their own dwelling is a very serious problem for 4 % of the households (22 629 households). A very big problem is the high cost of dwellings and the condition of dwelling is a problem for 10 % of households.

Essential changes have occurred in the spatial location of inhabitants in the direction of social differentiation⁴⁵ — wealthier people live in more expensive districts of private dwellings more

⁴⁰ Noorsootöö strateegia 2006-2013 (Estonian youth work strategy 2006-13).

⁴¹ Huviharidusstandard (Hobby education standards).

⁴² Ainsaar, M. and Soo, K., Omavalitsuste toetus lastega peredele 2004-2005 (Local government support to households with children), 2006.

⁴³ Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.

⁴⁴ Local government organisation Act; Elamuseadus (Dwelling Act).

⁴⁵ Estonia has chosen a liberal way for the development of the housing sector and is also more radical than the other 9 new EU Member States. The expected results have also involved many problems — dwelling market does not work as expected and housing problems have made the life of quite many people strenuous. Some social groups (young, households with many children, students etc) have limited possibilities to obtain a dwelling; low income involves incapability of keeping up with the price rise of the monopolistic public services and paying for the dwelling (Kährik, A., Kõre, J., Hendrikson, M., Eluasemepoliitika Euroopas ja Eestis (Housing policy in Europe and Estonia), 2002. Unwelcome results are also spatial segregation, marginalisation of public rental sector, homelessness, sharp conflicts between owners and tenants, insufficient construction of rental dwellings, difficulties of new households with getting a dwelling, problems arising from different economic

often than other groups, where current expenses are higher, and poorer strata are over-represented in apartments with few conveniences located mainly close to the town centres (in particular in Tallinn and Tartu). Though owners of dwellings in general are not different in composition from the general population, the tenants of the public sector increasingly consist of economically least privileged households. Private sector tenants include both rich and poor, who, however, are strongly polarised within the sector based on the quality of the dwelling. Estonia's housing policy supports increasing spatial segregation.⁴⁶

According to the HBS data, over 80 % of the households with children live in their own dwelling, including most of the households consisting of an adult and child(ren) (24.2 %) who live in a dwelling which is rented or used free of charge. About one third of the households with children live in a dwelling completed after 1981; old dwellings (completion time before 1946) are occupied mostly (17.3 %) by couples with two children. Households with children live mostly in blocks of flats and other dwellings, e.g. 86.2 % of households consisting of an adult and child(ren), nearly one quarter (21.7 %) of households consisting of a couple with two children live in a detached, semidetached or terraced house. The average number of rooms per household member is the highest for an adult and child(ren) (0.9), lowest (0.6) for a couple with three or more children (the average number of rooms per household member is 1.1 and compared with other household types, e.g. 2.1 for a single person aged 60 and over). There are 97.5 % of couples with three or more children who have less than one room per household member and 70.9 % of these households have floor space per household member up to 15 m². Nearly two thirds of the couples with one child and also couples with two children think their condition of dwelling is good or very good; a satisfactory estimate is given to dwelling conditions by the largest portion of households consisting of an adult and child(ren). Depending on the number of children, the average rating (scale 1-5) for the dwelling conditions is 3.4-3.7 for a household with children (highest for a couple with one child and a couple with two children and the lowest for an adult and child(ren)).

According to the HBS, average household expenditure on dwellings in 2000-05 was approximately 15 % of the consumption expenditure per household member. In the households with an adult and one child the dwelling expenses exceeded the average level by 2.7 percentage points in 2005, having been higher than average, also in 2000. Compared with other households with children, the proportion of dwelling expenses in consumption expenditure increased most in this period in households with an adult and two or more children (by 2.2 percentage points).

No reliable statistics are available on the total number of homeless people; social workers estimate that there are approximately 3 000-3 500 homeless people in Estonia.⁴⁷ The number of persons using the night shelter services for the homeless decreased from 2 062 in 2004 to 1 880 in 2005 mainly on account of the homeless persons, but the number of persons who need temporary night accommodation for various reasons (family conflicts, domestic violence, etc.) increased from 362 to 420, respectively.⁴⁸ Four homeless persons using the night shelter service were under 18 years of age. As children without parental care or those belonging to risk groups get mostly into the sphere of interest of child protection officials or the police soon, there are no children that can be directly defined as street children in Estonia. However, one survey has

possibilities of apartment owners in apartment associations etc. Dwelling options have increased only for wealthier than average households (Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10).

⁴⁶ Kährik, A., Kõre, J., Hendrikson, M., *Eluasemepoliitika Euroopas ja Eestis* (Housing policy in Europe and Estonia), 2002.

⁴⁷ Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10.

⁴⁸ Social sector in figures 2006.

identified that the estimated number of children at risk (street children), according to professionals, is approximately 100 children in Tallinn.⁴⁹

1.5. Safe environment

One of the quality indicators of children's environments may be their sense of security; if fears are suppressed or children cannot cope with them, then problems like disorders (e.g. headache, stomach ache, general tiredness, night-time fears, etc.) may occur. A study on the Estonian societal contextual changes relevant to children's (five to six-year-olds) lives⁵⁰ highlighted the enormous changes that the Estonian society and the living conditions of children went through. Several significant changes in preschool children's fears have taken place during the past 10 years and children have more fears today than 10 years ago. However, in reporting fears, children use mainly the same general classes of fears as they previously did.

As it has been described above, children in Estonia have several times more fatal accidents than in other OECD countries. According to Statistics Estonia, 93 children under 19 years of age died in 2005 of an accident, poisoning or a trauma, 20 of them were younger than 4, and 56 were 15-19-years old. According to the road administration, 8 under 15-year-old children died in accidents and 403 were injured in accidents in 2006. Children caused 116 traffic accidents where they were themselves victims. According to the rescue board, four children died and seven were hurt in a fire in 2006.

In the years 2001-05, there were no national statistics in the police system on family violence.⁵¹ According to the police board, 4 731 household quarrels were registered in 2006, and in 25.6 % of these cases a child was a witness; 134 of these cases were registered as a criminal offence. According to the social insurance board, 3 005 victims asked for help from the State's victim support system, which was launched in 2005; the reason in 278 of the cases was violence against children, 841 family violence and in other cases some other reason.

There is no purposeful State-organised prevention for providing children's safety in Estonia like in child-friendly countries (e.g. Sweden).

⁴⁹ Kraanvelt, E., Tänavalapsed Tallinnas: nende aitamise võimalusi (Street children in Tallinn: possibilities of helping them), 2004.

⁵⁰ Taimalu, M., Kraav, I., Lahikainen, A.-R., 'Changes in the security of children in a transition society: The case of Estonia', in: *What's New? Nordic-Baltic perspectives on childhood and families*, 2004.

⁵¹ In 2004, the west prefecture started at their own initiative to keep account of the case of family violence and they registered a total of 754 cases in their region, whereas in 82 % of the cases children had been witnessing the violence.

1.6. Access to childcare and other social services⁵²

High female employment rate in Estonia has created a situation where most of the women go to work before their child is three years old, both for economic reasons (women's income is a very large share of the household budget) and also because most women consider work to be very important⁵³. At the same time, many women wished to stay home with their child longer.⁵⁴ Due to the high employment rate of women, it is especially important in Estonia, to develop a system of public babysitting services (crèches, kindergartens and other babysitting services) and to ensure their accessibility to improve combining of family life and work.

Estonia has a relatively well-developed system of kindergartens and the number of children in day care has increased, but from time to time there are problems in providing children with day care places. Two major problems are still accessibility and the price of day care services.⁵⁵ Early in 2006, 42 % of the municipalities had waiting lists for kindergartens, especially in Tallinn (7 300 children, including only 105 older than three years), where despite the measures, it is a growing problem. The cost of kindergarten places has continued to rise (16.4 % in 2004-05) and one kindergarten place costs EUR 172 monthly, from which 92.9 % was paid by local governments in 2005. Day care accounted for 37 % of local governments' spending on children and families in 2005.

In recent years great efforts have been made in Estonia to develop different forms of day care services. A survey of services used by households with children under three years old⁵⁶ indicated that kindergarten was the preferred childcare service used in 2004, especially as the childcare service was subsidised by local government and only one tenth of the parents of infants occasionally used the babysitting service. Compared with parents from other regions, parents living in Tallinn missed the regulation and legalisation of babysitting service most, as in Tallinn there was a particularly large shortage of kindergartens. In 2006, institutions providing the babysitting services in municipalities and their forms were mapped.⁵⁷ A survey was conducted in 2006 to find out how much the parents are aware and know about different babysitting possibilities and what the parents' experiences are depending on the form.⁵⁸

Since 1 January 2007, the Social welfare Act⁵⁹ legally regulates the childcare service and the requirements set for the service, with the purpose of increasing children's security in the situation where a stranger is temporarily looking after the child, not a person living with that child. Childcare service is a service supporting parents going to work, studying or coping, during which the service provider looks after the child providing his/her development and security. The childcare service is targeted at persons raising a child, who could be the child's parent, guardian or curator. The parent's responsibility will be primarily to evaluate the place offered, conditions and also the minder/babysitter.

⁵² For more see Annex 1.

⁵³ Täht, K. and Unt, M., *Soost tulenev ambivalentsus Eesti tööturul* (Sexual ambivalence in Estonian labour market), 2002.

⁵⁴ Hansson, L., *Naised, perekond ja töö Euroopa Liidu maades* (Women, family and work in the EU countries), 2001.

⁵⁵ Ainsaar, M. and Soo, K., *Omavalitsuste toetus lastega peredele 2004-2005* (Local government support to families with children), 2006.

⁵⁶ Unt, M. and Krusell, S., *Lastehoid Eesti peredes* (Childcare in Estonian families), 2004.

⁵⁷ Mürk, R., *Alternatiivsete väikelastehoiu võimaluste kaardistamine Eestis* (Mapping alternative childcare possibilities in Estonia), 2006.

⁵⁸ Kraav, I., *Lapse areng koolieelses eas ja lapsehoiu erinevad vormid* (Child's development in preschool age and different forms of childcare), 2006.

⁵⁹ *Sotsiaalhoolekandeseadus* (Social welfare Act).

General responsibility for the development of different forms of childcare day services rests upon local governments. A study of the local government support for day childcare, schools, hobby education and households with children⁶⁰ indicated that most municipalities in Estonia have their own kindergarten. In connection with merging municipalities, the number of local governments which have not supported children's day care with their resources has decreased. In 2005, seven local governments did not finance child day care on their territory, it was missing in two municipalities or the services were bought from other municipalities in 83 % of the municipalities. In rural areas there are few private kindergartens and also alternative day care was financed less than in towns.

Most Estonian residents expect a State contribution to child raising through free services (67 %) while 28 % prefer direct financial support.⁶¹ Kinds, scope, conditions and order of receiving State family benefits are provided in national family benefit laws⁶², the aim of which is to provide partial covering of care- and education-related expenses to families with children. Family benefits are paid to permanent residents of Estonia and foreign citizens living in Estonia who have a temporary residence permit or who stay in Estonia pursuant to the Aliens Act provisions. Monthly family benefits are child allowance, childcare allowance, single parent's child allowance, conscript's child allowance, foster care allowance, allowance to a parent of seven or more children, parental benefit. Single family benefits are childbirth allowance, adoption allowance and start-in-independent-life allowance. Quarterly family benefits are allowances to families raising three or more children or triplets. Yearly family benefit is school allowance. Family benefits are financed from the State budget and child allowances are calculated on the basis of the child allowance rate, childcare allowances and allowances to parents of seven or more children on the basis of the childcare allowance rate. These rates are established for each budget year and a new rate may not be lower than the current rate.

Beside financial support, the following social services⁶³ have an important role:

- rehabilitation plans are prepared for all disabled children, which provide all disabled children with services in accordance with their needs;
- the extension of the national rehabilitation service by including the children before the juvenile committee in addition to disabled children;
- the method for calculating child maintenance costs was developed in 2004 and is being used in courts to determine financial support for a child but also for the purposes of pricing welfare services;
- personal assistant and support person services have been developed and are being provided in order to prevent the deepening of the need for help;
- a system for notification of every child in need was established through opening an information phone line 1345, which enables help to reach the child and/or family in need in good time;

⁶⁰ Ainsaar, M. and Soo, K., *Omavalitsuste toetus lastega peredele 2004-2005* (Local government support to families with children), 2006.

⁶¹ *Lapsed ja Eesti ühiskond. Väärtushinnangute uuring RISC. Lisa Eesti maa-aruandele* (Children and Estonian society. A survey of value judgements. Annex to Estonian national report).

⁶² State family benefits Act; Parental benefit Act; Study allowances and Study loans act.

⁶³ National report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion 2006-08 under the 'Open method of coordination' of the EU.

- networks surrounding the child and family are being developed and strengthened through relevant training, e.g. as concerns identification and assistance of abused (including sexually abused) children.

Family benefits accounted for the smallest share (3 %, in comparison to 60 % on education and hobby education and 37 % on child day care) of expenditure made by local governments on children and families. The most frequent family benefits are local birth allowance, Christmas allowance, allowance for children to buy glasses and allowance for families in a difficult economic situation.⁶⁴ Compared with 2004, the number of local governments which paid starting-at-school and study-kit benefits increased in 2005. The largest on average were the benefits for handicapped children, for living in a boarding school and childbirth allowances. The capacity of local governments to provide relevant services to children and families varies largely across regions. Though the obligation of local governments to organise children's social protection allows them to learn about clients' needs, they cannot always fulfil these needs and often those who need help cannot buy the service themselves.

1.7. Culture, sports and recreation facilities

The overall improvement of the standard of living in Estonia has not exerted an equally positive influence on cultural resources from all aspects. For example, opinions about home libraries surprisingly indicate a decline in the number of books: the biggest decline (2006 compared with 1996) was in the number of non-Estonians who thought they had over 200 books at home, while the number of those who said they had only up to 50 books in their bookshelves increased.⁶⁵ The use of electronic media over years has been essentially influenced by the fast spread of the internet.⁶⁶ According to HBS, the share of households with children owning a computer (from 73.1 % of couples with three children to 59.8 % of adults with child(ren)) and access to the internet (from 60.4 % of the couples with two children to 46.8 % of adults with child(ren)) is much higher than that of an average household (41.5 % owning computer and 34.3 % having access to the internet) and also of households without children (44 and 38.3 %, respectively). Active use of the internet is the main reason for the declining popularity of TV (an eighth-grade pupil spent 3-5 hours in front of the TV in 1999, compared to 1-2 hours in 2005). The most time spent on the internet is by pupils of Russian schools in towns (over three hours a day) and the internet is more popular among boys (40 % of the boys and 30 % of the girls spend over three hours on it). The time spent on simply hanging out has changed less than the media behaviour (reduction of 2-3 %) and nearly 90 % of the teenagers still spend hours after school with friends several days a week. Slightly over three quarters are active in some organisation at least a few times a month and those who are not engaged in any joint activity are most numerous (25 %) in rural schools.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ainsaar, M. and Soo, K., *Omavalitsuste toetus lastega peredele 2004-2005* (Local government support to families with children 2004-05), 2006.

⁶⁵ Toots, A., Idanurm, T. and Ševeljova, M., *Noorte kodanikukultuur muutuväs ühiskonnas. Üle-eestilise kodanikukasvatuse kordusuuringu lõppraport* (Civil culture of the youth in changing society. Final report of the second national survey of civil upbringing), 2006.

⁶⁶ According to the information technology report of the World Economic Forum, Estonia has reached the 20th position among nations, the Government is planning the programme 'Tiger jump II', which envisages providing a modern technical equipment and development of learning software for all schools. According to the Eurostat, 90 % of persons aged 16-24 used the internet on average at least once a week (the fifth rank among the first 25 countries of the EU) and 51 % of persons aged 16-24 had high computer skills (the ninth rank among the first 25 countries of the EU) in Estonia in 2006.

⁶⁷ Toots, A., Plakk, M., Idanurm, T., *Infotehnoloogia Eesti koolides: Trendid ja väljakutsed* (Information technology in Estonian schools: trends and challenges), 2004.

Various opportunities for recreation are available to young people and according to the direct or indirect providers of recreation (representatives of open youth centres and related groups) 96-100 % of youth can participate in hobby groups, sports training (95-96 %), events organised by schools (96-97 %), visit libraries (96-97 %), spend time in youth centres and take part in their activities (83 %), actions organised by local governments (77-85 %) and community cultural centres (64-76 %) or go to the theatre and cinema (30-40 %).⁶⁸

Though the variety and availability of recreational possibilities is limited for children with different needs, in connection with the parents' financial resources to use services targeted at children. Hobby activities is especially needful for children with problem behaviour whose home environment does not support their development.⁶⁹ In connection with recreational problems we also have reasons to emphasise alcohol and drug consumption by children and young people, because easily available drugs among young people are a problem. In a small country like Estonia there should not be large differences in children's recreation, in the development of their talents, to share cultural goods, etc. According to the Youth work Act ⁷⁰ and the Local government organisation Act ⁷¹, the organisation of youth work (youth aged 7-26 account for 27.2 % of the population) is the task of local governments and on the basis of the youth work concept, the local government may delegate youth work tasks to the non-governmental sector.

Recreational and educational leisure for the youth is provided through recreational projects and by organising camps. Youth work strategy 2006-13 ⁷² does not provide any growth in resources for youth recreational and educational leisure; the biggest growth is envisaged in the sphere of hobby education and youth hobby activity — its share will rise from 13.4 to 49.0 % of the allocations to youth work in 2005-09.

According to the Estonian Union for Child Welfare (EUCW), children's leisure time should be organised and availability of culture should be provided not only with financial support to families but also, e.g. with ad hoc aid — affordable museum tickets to families with children, support for children's sports activities etc. Children's summer vacations have been subsidised since 1996 from the resources allocated through the gambling tax council. Subsidies for the project-based activities targeted at children's summer vacations are allocated through the Ministry of Education and Research's project. 'Daily subsidisation per child is universal' (EUR 2.56 in a camp which has a licence and EUR 1.15 for children in other camps in 2006). Today, the general principles of financing do not allow taking into account the needs of different target groups and the programmes cannot be implemented in full in camping conditions (mourning camps, health, education camps and camps for children with special needs). Average time spent in camps has decreased from 11.5 to 7.8 days, which is not sufficient for organising a summer vacation.⁷³

In 2005 local governments spent an average of EUR 316 (EUR 264 in 2003) per beneficiary from their budgets on children's hobby education ⁷⁴ and recreation. Towns' spending on hobby activities was larger by EUR 96 than those of rural municipalities. Local governments paid most for children going to a music school or group — on average EUR 753 annually per beneficiary in

⁶⁸ Kasemets, L., Rahnu, L., *Avatud noortekeskuste olukorra kaardistamise uuring* (A survey of mapping the situation of open youth centres), 2005.

⁶⁹ Estonian human development report 2002.

⁷⁰ Noorsootöö seadus (Youth work Act).

⁷¹ Local government organisation Act.

⁷² Noorsootöö strateegia 2006-2013 ('Estonian youth work strategy' 2006-13).

⁷³ Estonian Union for Childcare.

⁷⁴ Sports schools and groups, music schools and groups, other hobby schools and groups, youth centres, children and youth camps, playgrounds, other hobby activity (school excursions, sports days, competitions, song festivals, child organisations).

2005. Hobby education on average per child was most supported by county centres, large towns and satellite towns; the spending were the smallest in the periphery. Local government spending on children's hobby education were statistically much bigger in those municipalities where wages were higher and personal income tax revenue was bigger. The smaller the poor population in the municipality, the bigger the local government's possibilities of investing in children's hobby education. One of the most widely used forms of supporting pupils was partially or fully compensating for school lunches, and the number of local governments which pay for the school lunch has increased compared with 2003 (88 % of local governments in 2005).

1.8. Participation in society and discrimination

A Unicef report⁷⁵ indicates that the great majority of young people growing up in all OECD countries score themselves above the midpoint of the life satisfaction ladder. Low percentages (76.7 %) of young people (aged 11, 13 and 15) with scores above the middle of the life satisfaction scale in Estonia compared with the average in OECD countries (85.8 %) indicate that no serious attention has been paid in Estonia to listening to children and asking their opinion on issues important to them. A research conducted by the EUCW on how municipalities involve children in their planning (response rate was low, less than a third) showed that there are some child councils at local councils, often organised by the local department of education also responsible for youth work; compulsory school pupils' councils that are more or less active; one contact person in Tallinn council realised she was currently working on transportation and had the idea to consult children at planning stage.

A national civic education survey⁷⁶, which enabled the dynamics of civic culture of youth to be analysed for the first time in Estonia (previous survey in 1999), identified that 14 to 16-year-olds have democratic attitudes which have evolutionally developed within the six years. Estonian young people prefer moderate political participation, which over the years indicates a declining tendency (eighth-grade pupils). With growing age the attitudes toward active participation become somewhat more supportive, where a role may be played by the subject of social theory — for example, in the ninth grade the willingness to vote in elections essentially increases. At the same time, the willingness of the older group of respondents to take part in local life or activities does not increase. The research results suggested that the main problem in the behavioural patterns of young people is their inclination to passive activities that do not require any initiative as well as low willingness for civic society activity. Girls are characterised by higher activity, including their growing willingness to interfere in politics. Comparison of youth participation attitudes and their actual participation identified a kind of disharmony: young people want to have a say in deciding may questions at school but they think they have no opportunities for that, and they do not use the potential of pupils' organisations either (the number of children involved in pupils' organisations is small); pupils of Russian schools have a strong support of local civic activity at the level of attitudes, but unfortunately this potential is not realised. The larger variety in both attitudes and participation forms is caused by nationality, rather than the place of residence of the respondents. The patterns of civic behaviour of Estonian and Estonian-Russian youth differ more than their attitudes or knowledge.

⁷⁵ Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. A comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and adolescents in the economically advanced nations.

⁷⁶ Toots, A., Idanurm, T. and Ševeljova, M., Noorte kodanikukultuur muutub ühiskonnas. Üle-eestilise kodanikasvatuse kordusuuringu lõppraport (Youth civic culture in a changing society. Final report of the second national survey of civic education), 2006.

1.9. Intergenerational transmission of disadvantages

According to the research in the framework of 'Policy responses overcoming factors in the intergenerational transmission of inequalities' (Profit), we cannot speak of inheriting a clearly developed inequality from parents in Estonia. However, there are risks of transmitting inequality and the biggest risks arise from the differentiation of the educational system.⁷⁷ The overview of the recent academic discussions in Estonia concerning different aspects of intergenerational inheritance of inequality and factors and policies influencing them⁷⁸ contributes to the development of a greater understanding of the socio-economic-cultural context within which the intergenerational inheritance of inequalities occurs and policy responses at the national level are set up. The review investigates the kinds of inequalities (income, education, occupational status, etc.) which are transmitted from one generation to another and their perceived procedures in Estonia.

1.10. Institutional care and foster care

Unfortunately not all parents are capable of offering their children a safe environment for growing up. The main risk group in Estonia are children without or with insufficient parental care. Information on such children mostly arrives to social/child protection workers, who then try to help the family. If the family cannot change its behaviour, the children will then be placed in a children's welfare institution, a new family (foster family or adoption) or a shelter.

In 2005, there were 4 131 children aged 0-17 in institutional care in Estonia (1.6 % of the children aged 0-17), 1 572 of them in guardianship (1 925 in 2001), 1 219 in foster care (1 420 in 2001) and 1 340 children used children's welfare institutions (1 495 in 2001).⁷⁹ In 2005, 94 children (50 % of which were aged 7-14 years) were separated from families by court decision; 236 children whose parents' parental rights were revoked (upon parental rights being revoked the child is placed into another family or a welfare institution and the parent loses his/her right to guardianship, while still being obligated to maintain the child).

According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the number of first cases of children left without parental care has considerably decreased in the last five years: from 1 255 in 2001, to 858 in 2005. It can be said that fewer and fewer children are placed in welfare institutions and shelters and more and more are placed back into their biological families. The number of children in foster care dropped considerably in 2005: in 2001-04, the number of children in foster care remained around 1 400; in 2005 it dropped to 1 219. The number of foster families has also decreased — from 849 in 2001 to 597 in 2005. The annual number of children taken into foster care has also dropped (from 487 to 238 in 2001-05). The number of children placed into guardianship has increased slightly again, compared with 2004 (from 203 to 221, but, for example, 247 in 2001). The number of children in welfare institutions has remained stable in recent years. It is important to note that the statistical data for 2005 enable to separately identify the children in State welfare

⁷⁷ The project in its final stage and several publications should come out in the short term: Trumm, A. Mapping the understandings of inherited inequalities by elite social actors in Estonia, 2006. Kasearu, K., Trumm, A., Local policy responses for reducing risks of inheritance of inequalities in Pärnu, 2006. Kutsar, D., Strömpl, J., Trumm, A., Focus group and vignette method to study policy responses, 2006.

⁷⁸ Kutsar, D., Trumm, A. and Kasearu, K., Research on the intergenerational transmission of inequalities and policy responses in Estonia, 2005.

⁷⁹ Social sector in figures 2006.

care (1 567 for age group 0-25 +) and children with severe and profound disabilities committed to welfare institutions on the basis of a parent's application (116).

The number of children who have been to a shelter decreased from 1 798 in 2003 to 1 237 in 2005, whereas the 0 to 6-year-old children in shelters accounted for 32.5 %, 7 to 14-year-old children 39 % and 15 to 17-year-old children 28.5 %. The main reasons for coming to a shelter are vagrancy, indifference at home, lack of permanent residence and violence at home.

The number of regular employees dealing with the provision of welfare services to orphans and children left without parental care has decreased to 847 (875 in 2004), 47 % (77 % in 2004) of them were minders of different categories and 2 % social workers. The decrease in the number of minders was caused by the fact that in 2005, 330 minding professionals did not comply with the qualification requirements for minders established by an order of the Minister of Social Affairs (had not managed to complete the required training).

A survey⁸⁰ discussing local government support to households with children identified that in 2005, nearly 42 % of the municipalities had temporarily taken away child benefits from parents (511 households), i.e. social or child protection workers had to temporarily interfere in the life of these households. Other measures (family counselling, taking children to a shelter, etc.) were imposed on 2 920 households. Thirty six municipalities had offered accommodation help to up to 25-year-old young people in need of institutional care and 79 young people had received accommodation with the help of a local government. But there were another 29 young people waiting for accommodation. Twenty one municipalities had also offered accommodation assistance to children from foster care. Assistance to children without parental care and those in need of foster care consisted mainly in municipal benefits to foster families (from EUR 64 to EUR 192 per family). The number of municipalities which pay a 'start-in-independent-life' allowance and employ curators and/or support persons has increased. Additionally, local governments offered the following benefits or services: orphanage or youth home child's allowance, single benefits, compensation for travel expenses or hobby to orphanage children (12 municipalities); benefits to guardianship families (two municipalities); birthday and Christmas presents to children without parental care (two municipalities), support to shelters, including catering (one municipality); counselling to families providing foster care (two municipalities).

A survey of the wishes, needs and opportunities of orphanage children to spend their free time⁸¹ indicates that 71 % of the children do not take part in a hobby group, although almost all children have hobbies which they would like to do. The fulfilment of their wishes was limited mainly by lack of time or money, absence of public transport from the location of the orphanage (in 32 % of cases there were no groups or possibilities in the vicinity).

⁸⁰ Ainsaar, M. and Soo, K.. Omavalitsuste toetus lastega peredele 2004-2005 (Local government support to households with children), 2006.

⁸¹ Rosin, M.-L., Lastekodulaste soovid ja võimaluses vaba aja veetmiseks (Orphanage children's wishes and opportunities concerning spare time), 2004.

1.11. Violence against children, abduction and trafficking of children, homelessness, high levels of drug abuse, being victims of or involved in crime ⁸²

Estonia has only been dealing with violence against children over the last 10 years. The first national survey of the experiences of and attitudes toward sexual abuse of young people was conducted in Estonia in 2003 ⁸³. This survey indicated that nearly one third of the respondents have experienced at least one situation of sexual abuse and 6 % have themselves committed a sexual abduction. Worrying is the growth of sexual abuse of children (under 14 years of age): their number has increased significantly: from 78 in 2004 to 107 in 2005.⁸⁴

The Estonian report on trafficking in children for sexual purposes ⁸⁵ indicated that there are cases of trafficking children both for domestic and foreign exploitation. Cross-border trafficking in children to Estonia exists, but no data is available. There are no cases known about youths, but girls aged 13-14 and above, whereas organised sex industry of children is generally based on the same principles as adult trafficking.

The higher incidence rate of injuries and intoxication among young people (relatively more boys than girls) is, in addition to other factors, caused by the consumption of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol consumption and cannabis use among the Estonian young people is relatively high in comparison with Latvia and the Nordic countries.⁸⁶ A survey of alcohol and drug consumption among 15 to 16-year-old school children conducted in 2003 (within ESPAD) ⁸⁷ indicated that drug consumption by young people has been increasing.

A survey on the deviant behaviour of Estonian children ⁸⁸ where the target group were pupils aged 13-16 in grades seven to nine of the Estonian general education schools (in total 2 623 children) indicated that 12 % of the young people investigated had violated a law. The most widespread violation of law is breach of public order including intentional damaging of objects and shoplifting. According to the Police Board, the number of offences committed by children increased from 3 201 in 2004 to 3 768 in 2005. The structure of offences committed by children on the basis of a police decision indicated that most of the offences committed in 2005 (67 %) were against the alcohol and tobacco law.

According to the Police Board, 441 criminal offences were committed against children in 2005 (485 in 2004). According to the above-mentioned survey ⁸⁹, every fifth child has fallen victim to theft of personal property. Most frequently the victims are 14-15 years old (3-4 % of girls, 6-7 % of boys); victims of assault or extortion are fewer among 16-year-olds (3 % of girls and 5 % of boys). 24 % of the children have been molested at school, with a bigger problem in younger age groups: 40 % of 12 to 13-year-old boys and 30 % of 14-year-old girls mentioned that they have been molested, humiliated or beaten at school.

⁸² More details are given in Annex 1.

⁸³ Seksuaalse väärkohtlemise kogemused ja hoiakud Eesti noorte hulgas (Experiences of and attitudes toward sexual abuse among Estonian young people).

⁸⁴ Ülevaade inimõiguste olukorrast Eestis 2005. aastal (A survey of the human rights situation in Estonia in 2005).

⁸⁵ Alaealiste kaubitsemise seksuaalse eksploateerimise eesmärgil Euroopas: päritoluriigid. Eesti uurimisraport (Trafficking in children for sexual purposes in Europe: countries of origin. The Estonian report).

⁸⁶ Denissov, G. and Karelson, K., Health behaviour of children and young people, 2006.

⁸⁷ Allaste, A.-A., Muutused Eesti koolinoorte uimastitarbimises (Changes in the consumption of drugs by Estonian pupils) (ESPAD 1995, 1999, 2003), 2004.

⁸⁸ Markina, A. and Šahverdov-Žarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

⁸⁹ Markina, A. and Šahverdov-Žarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

2. Assessment of the overall framework for coordinating and developing policies

2.1. Policy framework ⁹⁰

Prevention and alleviation of child poverty and social exclusion are a high priority in policy-making and there are clear policy objectives and targets for preventing and reducing child poverty and social exclusion in Estonia. Compared with previous times, it strikes the eye that in the 2007-11 coalition programme ⁹¹, the family and population policy have been raised to the forefront. The first chapter of the coalition programme states that the main goal of the governing coalition is to achieve a positive population growth in Estonia through an increase in the birth rate, longer average life expectancy and improvement of the living standard.

Analysts have expressed their opinion that political parties have neither settled between themselves nor discussed with the public what they want to achieve — either to mitigate as effectively as possible children's poverty and inequality of families, motivate high-paid persons to bear children or promote working together with child rearing.⁹² A recent study on the effect of financial benefits to families on the mitigation of poverty in Estonia ⁹³ suggested that parental benefit will not reduce inequality of families with children. However, the relatively expensive parental benefits system is better targeted because the 2007-11 coalition programme encourages the birth of three and four children in families. This is achieved through additional benefits for the third child a parent receives at the rate of 0.5 times the parental benefit and for the fourth child at the rate of a single parental benefit. It may be stated on the basis of the above-mentioned studies, which show that the most effective for poor families is the benefit to families with three or more children, as well as the single parent benefit.⁹⁴ On the basis of the initial analysis of the coalition programme measures, it can be said that their implementation would involve a kind of reduction of the child income poverty.

There are several strategic documents of different policy areas that are related to child poverty and social exclusion, which reveal the multidimensional approach to this problem, starting from ensuring the rights of the child and creating a safe environment for them to grow up in, to the prevention and combating of child trafficking, prostitution and pornography. Most directly related to child poverty and social exclusion are two strategies (other strategies are discussed under the main policy areas in this report), which are closely interrelated — the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-08' ⁹⁵ and the NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-2008 ⁹⁶. The Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-08 (approved by the Estonian Government on 16 October 2003) is directed at the better implementation of the UNCRC. The policy objectives and targets are set and measures are described according to the special nature of children's needs in this strategy:

⁹⁰ More details are given in Annex 1.

⁹¹ Programme of the coalition for 2007-11.

⁹² Võrk, A. and Leppik, L., *Rahalaev lastega peredele* (A boat of money to families with children), 2007.

⁹³ Võrk, A. and Paulus, A., *Peredele suunatud rahaliste toetuste mõju vaesuse leevendamisele Eestis: analüüs mikrosimulatsioonimeetodi abil. Uurimisraport* (Effect of financial family benefits to alleviate poverty in Estonia: An analysis with the help of a microsimulation method. A research report), 2007.

⁹⁴ Võrk, A. and Paulus, A., *Peredele suunatud rahaliste toetuste mõju vaesuse leevendamisele Eestis: analüüs mikrosimulatsioonimeetodi abil. Uurimisraport*, 2007.

⁹⁵ *Lapse õiguste tagamise strateegia 2004-2008* ('Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-08'), 2003.

⁹⁶ National report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion 2006-08 under the 'Open method of coordination' of the EU.

- basic needs — development and welfare proper for a certain age (including physical, mental, and emotional welfare); adequate education; participation in culture, sports and leisure activities; access to information, etc;
- special needs — reduction of the number of children in poverty or poverty risk; involvement of handicapped children in society; creating equal opportunities for children with educational special needs; integration of children belonging to minorities or other marginal groups; rendering help to children without parental care;
- need for support from family, community and environment — development of a child-friendly, secure and stable environment, improvement of an efficient childcare system, support to the families raising children according to the principle that children could be raised in families.

The implementation of the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights 2004-2008' shall be ensured with the help of the national action plans made separately for each year. The action plan of the particular year provides the measures, the institution responsible for their implementation, resources, expected results, and cooperation partners according to the strategy objectives.

One of the two priorities of the NAP inclusion is the prevention and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion of families with children. The NAP inclusion takes into account the objectives of the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights', and sets the measures to ensure them — a child's right to a family environment, State support and development of services to families with children, equal opportunities for a good education and better opportunities to realise child's special needs as non-discriminative aspects. The NAP inclusion gives the existing and planned measures to reduce poverty and exclusion, quantified targets for 2008. Considering that the main reason for poverty in Estonia is unemployment, employment is hence the best method to escape poverty. The approach in the NAP inclusion is justified in every way — reduction of child poverty through supporting the employment of parents. An important role is played by financial support to families and children and other measures to support raising and educating children, including:

- the provision of financial support and tailor-made welfare services;
- the improvement of living conditions;
- the creation of equal opportunities to obtain a good education;
- the creation of better development opportunities for children, in consideration of special needs (including disabled children and those living in particular poverty);
- the prevention of children being removed from their families.

The targets set in the NAP inclusion for 2008 are as follows:

- decrease in the number of children living below the relative poverty line by 2 % compared to 2005;
- the difference between the poverty rate of children (0-15 years) and that of total population is 7.9 %;
- increase in the number of child protection officials: 1 000 children per one child protection official;
- increase participation of children with special development needs in kindergartens or preschool classes.

The significance of the children-related problems is indicated by the fact that one of the five strategic objectives in the Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10⁹⁷ is providing better development possibilities and health protection for children. An objective is to enable every child a possibility to grow up in a family environment, create a secure and child-friendly development environment and establish an effective system of child protection organisation. Protecting the rights of the child will be ensured by the following activities:

- implementing the action plan against child trafficking;
- developing the welfare services for children;
- creating a supportive and secure development environment for the health.

The targets set in the Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2010 in this area are as follows:

- absolute poverty rate difference of children (0-15) from that of total population 7 % (8.3 % in 2004);
- share of children aged under 13 who smoke once a week or more for boys 10.2 % and for girls 6.4 % (12.8 and 8.0 % in 2001-02, respectively).

There is a relatively good balance between a universal and preventative approach aimed at promoting the wellbeing of all children and a targeted approach aimed at alleviating poverty and social exclusion among particular groups of children at high risk in Estonia. In all relevant policy documents we can also find, in addition to universal and preventive objectives and measures, these targeted at children at high risk (without parental care, disabled, in jobless households, in households with many children, etc.).

The recognition of children's rights and the balance between the focus on family and on children in their own right in policy documents is at a satisfactory level. All institutions promoting welfare of people living in Estonia are protecting children's rights, but based on their tasks, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Bureau of the Population Minister more than others. The principles of children's rights are best expressed in the Child protection concept⁹⁸, which provides a system for organising protection of child's rights and makes proposals to make amendments to laws regulating the rights and protection of children (e.g. Family law Act). For example, represented in the preparation of the Child protection concept were, in addition to the relevant ministries, the Chancellor of Justice's office, county governments, urban and rural local government associations, NGOs dealing with children, also NGOs uniting students and youth, but the NAP inclusion did not indicate whether or to what extent children were consulted. During the elaboration of the concept the need was discovered for a new child protection law, because the Child protection Act that entered into force in 1993⁹⁹ is too declarative and is not therefore an effective instrument for child protection workers and other specialists dealing with children. The main objective of the new child protection draft law is to make the law implementable for specialists working with children, children and parents and its main focus is aimed at protecting a child's rights in everyday life.

The arrangements for mainstreaming the issue of child poverty and wellbeing in national policy are taking place in Estonia, where the role of local governments has an increasing importance,

⁹⁷ Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10.

⁹⁸ Lastekaitse kontseptsioon (Child protection concept).

⁹⁹ Eesti Vabariigi lastekaitse seadus (Child protection Act of the Republic of Estonia).

because regional child protection work by specialists promotes both protection of child's rights and social protection. So far there has been no coordinating link between the child related topics in different policy spheres. For example, rights of the child (human rights) and protection issues in Estonia are treated separately from family policy — child protection issues are coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and family policy by the Bureau of the Population Minister. It can be said that the NAP inclusion 2006-08 fulfils for the first time the function of coordinator, because the NAP inclusion incorporates the objectives, planned measures and activities established within the strategic documents of different areas in the prevention and alleviation of poverty and social exclusion of families with children. It is additionally necessary to considerably strengthen the State's coordinating and supporting role to ensure equal availability and quality of services in all regions, on the one hand, and to provide an overview on the national level of the services provided in all municipalities, on the other.

Despite the above positive aspects of child issues, which are given based on policy documents, the actual situation differs significantly. In real life, the topic of children has not become a horizontal indicator in different spheres. There are problems with implementing some strategy measures, because there are not enough human and financial resources, and therefore the regional availability of services as well as their quality is different. The plans envisage many different measures and activities which are also carried out, often with projects, but there is no time to evaluate their efficiency. We need follow-up surveys, because often measures and activities have been financed on the basis of political decisions and their efficiency has not been assessed from the development aspect.

2.2. Analysis of main policies

2.2.1. Access to (quality) employment

As the share of children in jobless households in Estonia is much higher than in OECD countries on average (9.1 and 5.0 %, respectively), bringing the unemployed (back) into the labour market has a high importance in the context of child poverty and social exclusion. Legislative preconditions were therefore created with the 'Strategy for labour market measures' (2004) and the Labour market services and benefit Act (2006) which implemented the services and general principles reflected in the strategy and piloted within the framework of many projects. The Labour market services and benefit Act supplements the previous labour market services (career guidance, labour market training, job mediation, etc.) with six new services such as work-based training, basic working skills training, and four new services for disabled people; a total of 13 new labour market services are offered on the basis of this law.¹⁰⁰ The access to active measures was improved: by increasing the stipends and compensations for the transportation and accommodation paid to those participating in labour market training and work internship, and providing them also with health insurance; and by granting the right of every disabled person of working age who is unemployed and searching for work to register as unemployed and receive employment services on equal grounds with other unemployed people (irrespective of the extent of loss of capacity for work or the level of disability). New principles were introduced: preparation of an individual action plan for search for work; and implementation of the concept of suitable work and case management principle. The practical implementation of these new labour market measures and principles for providing assistance are still at a relatively initial stage.

¹⁰⁰ A more detailed description was provided in previous reports of the independent expert in 2005 and 2006.

Besides the implementation and further development of the existing measures, it is intended to focus on the prevention of unemployment and inactivity in 2006-08. The measures for the prevention and reduction of long-term unemployment and exclusion from the labour market are: motivation of, and support to searching for work; creating the system of lifelong learning; extension of client groups and services; encouraging flexible forms of work; more employee-friendly work environment; development of welfare and other public services supporting employment; and the utilisation of the opportunities provided by information and communication technology.

Achieving the highest possible employment rate of the entire working-age population is one of the priorities in the Government's general economic policy, which is also very important for reducing poverty, as work is the best protection against poverty and exclusion. Employment and keeping employment by parents is very important from the aspect of independent coping by families. As most of the women in Estonia wish to continue working away from home also after child birth, it is important that employment policy would provide the parents options for combining home and work, i.e. help to increase labour market flexibility. A positive phenomenon in this respect is that in 2006, the share of people who worked voluntarily part time, and also working outside normal working hours increased (63 700 often or sometimes worked in the evening or night; 35 200 on Saturday and Sunday and at home, 1 900 more people than in 2005)¹⁰¹, but the share of part-time workers in Estonia is still low, accounting for only 7.8 % of employment. Flexible forms of work are not very common in Estonia (according to the LFS, more than 90 % are traditional employment contracts). Although the female employment rate reached 65.1 % in 2006, small children keep quite a large number of women away from work. Flexible forms of work should be available in all occupations in all sectors, so that they could be used both by men and women, whereas it is particularly important for single parents not to lose long-term career outlooks and social guarantees.

Until recently, employment policy mainly concerned unemployment, but the employment growth and unemployment decrease (fell 22 % compared with 2005 and was 5.9 % in 2006) as a result of fast economic growth, increasingly more attention has been focused on possibilities to reduce inactivity (the Ministry of Social Affairs is preparing the analysis). In 2006, opening of the EU labour markets to Estonian citizens continued, but the ensuing outflow of workforce has been smaller than expected, according to initial estimates.¹⁰²

Growing demand for labour, smaller supply of labour, labour market integration into the EU and, as a result, an accelerating wage rise, which in 2006 was 16.2 %¹⁰³ (in the fourth quarter 17.5 %), forces to focus more attention in employment policy to the quality of employment issues. According to Statistics Estonia, most of the wage earners (approximately 75 %) receive lower than average wages.¹⁰⁴ In this context it is very important that employment policy creates all opportunities for single parents to get a job and adequate wages.

¹⁰¹ Tur, D., Viilmann, N., Saarniit, A., Tööturu ülevaade (Labour market overview), 2007.

¹⁰² Tur, D., Viilmann, N., Saarniit, A., Tööturu ülevaade (Labour market overview), 2007.

¹⁰³ Bank of Estonia.

¹⁰⁴ According to Eurostat, the minimum wage in Estonia (EUR 230 a month and 32.1 % of average wage) is one of the lowest in the first 25 countries of the EU (it is even smaller in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia), but those who receive it are quite few (5.7 % of the employees).

2.2.2. Social protection benefits and tax benefits ¹⁰⁵

Of great importance in ensuring that child and family can cope, are the national child and family policy and social protection principles. Estonia agrees that every child is an asset and has the right to State support, irrespective of his/her parents' income and arrangement of life. According to the Family law Act, in Estonia it is the obligation of parents to rear children and take care of them. The State gives support to families for covering costs of caring, rearing and educating. There are two main methods to support families — financial support, e.g. family benefits; tax allowances (e.g. supplementary tax-exempt income by number of children) and in-kind support, e.g. housing free of charge, subsidisation of childcare and health care services. The Estonian family and child benefit system prefers the principle of universal benefits (e.g. child benefits or childcare allowances). It supports every child irrespective of the financial status and situation of the family or parents, meaning that actually support depends on the composition of the household (mainly number and age of children). Benefits dependent on income have been added in recent years (parental benefit and supplementary tax-exempt income as of the second child). An advantage of the universal benefits system is its relative neutrality to the parents' labour market behaviour — they restrict less the parents' labour supply, as labour income does not restrict the benefit, they rather promote labour supply, making employment more attractive. However, the universal system does not need to succeed in mitigating poverty — the smaller the share of families with children living in poverty, the less effective it is.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of family benefits in Estonia is not directly to mitigate poverty¹⁰⁷ but these are the instruments mitigating the poverty risk; for directly combating poverty there is the subsistence benefit in Estonia.¹⁰⁸

Survey results ¹⁰⁹ indicate that State family benefits, parental benefit and supplementary tax-exempt income by number of children together reduce the share of children living in poverty by 8-10 percentage points or nearly one third (nearly 20 000 children). All benefits have a noticeably bigger impact on families with many children. When comparing these three groups of benefits (State family benefits, parental benefit, tax-exempt income by number of children), then poverty in Estonia is most reduced by State family benefits (by 6-8 percentage points), parental benefits (by 1-1.5 percentage points) and tax-exempt income (by 0.2-0.6 percentage points). At the same time, the costs of State family benefits are the biggest and that of tax-exempt income the smallest. From among State family benefits, the biggest role in alleviating child poverty is played by child benefits (3-5 percentage points).

¹⁰⁵ More details are given in Annex 1.

¹⁰⁶ Võrk, A. and Paulus, A., *Peredele suunatud rahaliste toetuste mõju vaesuse leevendamisele Eestis: analüüs mikrosimulatsioonimeetodi abil. Uurimisraport (Impact of financial allocations for families on the mitigation of poverty in Estonia: analysis with the microsimulation method. Research report)*, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ The objective of the State family benefits Act is to provide partial compensation of children-related costs to families; the objective of the Parental benefit Act is to compensate income not received due to rearing children and support combining family and work life.

¹⁰⁸ Detailed overview of family and subsistence benefits system in Estonia is given in: Viies, M., 'First 2006 semester report', Estonia, *Network of independent experts in social inclusion*. Since 1 January 2007, the rates of eight benefits have been raised.

¹⁰⁹ Võrk, A. and Paulus, A., *Peredele suunatud rahaliste toetuste mõju vaesuse leevendamisele Eestis: analüüs mikrosimulatsioonimeetodi abil. Uurimisraport (Impact of financial allocations for families on the mitigation of poverty in Estonia: analysis with the microsimulation method. Research report)*, 2007.

To ensure the support of a child in a situation where one of the parents ¹¹⁰ does not fulfil their obligations and the court proceedings and compulsory execution initiated for receiving the child support have not yet produced the desired results, a new child support act ¹¹¹ was adopted by Riigikogu. This act allows single parents to apply for child support by the State, provided that they initiate court proceedings against the parent who has shrunk away from support obligations. According to the law, the State will pay the single parent child support in the amount of EUR 288 in three portions over a period of 90 days. The preconditions for applying for the support are the initiation of court proceedings and an initial court judgment (ruling) for the benefit of the parent claiming support. The parent can choose between the expedited procedure of the payment order and the ordinary procedure.

State financial support (family benefits and parental benefit) is directly noticeable in households with children up to three years of age, i.e. State support is mostly related to the child's birth and infancy. To increase households' security in the future, which in turn would help to increase the birth rate, it is necessary to elaborate measures and a support system that would involve the child's whole life cycle.

2.2.3. *Subsidised services (e.g. free school meals, holidays)*

Free school lunch was one of the major social promises of the previous government coalition and priorities of the Minister of Education and Research, as well as a part of the State obligation to provide free of charge basic education. The significance of free school lunch has arisen from the fact that for many students, a free school lunch is the only hot meal during the day (for some even the only meal), while it also allows guidance to students to a more healthy behaviour towards nutrition. From September 2002 to September 2006 in cooperation with local governments, free school lunch reached first- to fourth-grade pupils (some towns and rural municipalities even managed to provide free meals in upper secondary schools, but two municipalities still demanded parent's money for school lunch). Since January 2006, the State has also allocated funds to basic school students and 130 000 students started to have free lunches. In September 2006, the Ministry of Education and Research increased the circle of school lunch receivers: a free school lunch and milk programme has been extended to all vocational education students (EUR 0.6 per lunch to 18 000 persons).

The State benefit payment system aimed at ensuring economic access to studying, including allowance for school catering, teaching aids, a place at boarding school facilities, will be extended in the framework of measures of the NAP inclusion. The families with low income are provided with free teaching aids. The improvements of a support system (study, dormitory and transportation support) are notable for economically less-insured students to participate in vocational training. In September 2005, the education allowances for students who entered the vocational education system following basic school became available; in September 2006, the free school lunch and milk programme was extended to all vocational education students, and the so-called State-paid student places were introduced in boarding schools.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ According to the Statistics Estonia, there are approximately 44 000 parents in Estonia who are forced to raise their child alone; 60 800 children are raised in single-parent families and nearly 80 % of the children of single parents do not receive any support from the other parent. According to the the Ministry of Justice, bailiffs had approximately 10 700 files pertaining to child support (two thirds of the claims can be satisfied successfully) in 2006.

¹¹¹ Child support Act.

¹¹² Progress report on the action plan for growth and jobs 2005-07 for implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

Since 2007, the State has been supporting more than before:

- free of charge basic school textbooks, copybooks, art materials, etc., at least textbooks for students in secondary education;
- hobby education;
- youth associations with at least 500 members;
- youth counselling and advice centres;
- camps for health and developing recreation for youths;
- places in boarding school facilities.

The State support to parents with first-grade pupils who have a shorter school day than the parents' working day would be the establishment of a State-financed long-day school where children could eat, systematically attend for hobbies and study, take walks and spend time even until seven at night, until their parents arrive from work. So far, the situation has been alleviated in some municipalities by long-day groups retained from former times, but these finish their day after a few hours and also the possibilities and preference of the municipalities who maintain them are different. The objective of the long-day groups is often to spend time in a useful way until the school bus arrives rather than offering hobby activities. A pupil's progress at school depends largely on the kind of environment in which the child spends its out-of-school hours — is it taken care of, is it taught at home, are its talents used in arts, handicraft, music or sports? Long-day school is a guarantee that there can be conditions for successful studying for many children and their parents can be sure that their children are properly cared for. State-financed long-day schools will be started within the framework of a pilot project (for first- to sixth-grade students in 54 schools) primarily with the participation of those municipalities which need it most. A similar initiative was taken in respect to State-financed boarding school facilities, which have proved extremely necessary in assisting children from homes with social problems.

Holiday pay for additional holidays for minors, disabled persons and additional childcare leave are financed from the State budget:

- extended annual holidays (seven days) for minors and disabled persons (who are granted a pension for incapacity for work or the national pension on the basis of incapacity for work);
- one additional holiday (one day) a month for the parent of a disabled child;
- additional holidays for one parent (three or six days, depending on the number of children);
- additional childcare leave for fathers (14 days). A father has a right to paid additional childcare leave during the pregnancy and maternity leave of the mother or within two months after the birth of the child.

For school transport expenses, 95 % of local governments offered compensation either partly or fully; some local governments additionally allocated benefits to families for the compensation of other transport expenses.

2.2.4. Education

While developing Estonia's education policy and strategic development plans, the principles, objectives and indicators of both the Lisbon strategy and the Copenhagen and Bologna processes have been taken into consideration and are adapted in the light of the situation and development priorities of Estonia's educational system. The common objectives of the reforms carried out and planned at every education level are high-quality education, better accessibility and more effective use of resources. The reform planning has to take into consideration the drastic decrease in the number of children (by the academic year 2008/09, the number of pupils in general education schools will decrease by 30 %), which will directly affect the school network, State order of teacher training, etc. In Estonia, the problem is that small upper secondary schools are uneven in quality and cannot provide options for the students. For reorganising the school network, including finding possible options for separating the basic school and upper secondary school, county pilot projects are being carried out.¹¹³ In 2002, for children from the least privileged families and for those with a difficult social background, a boarding school facilities programme was introduced to guarantee good study and living conditions for them during the week. In 2004, places in boarding school facilities financed by the State were distributed to 0.2 % of the basic school students.

The General education development plan for the years 2007-13¹¹⁴ defined as an overall objective for the general education system to create equal opportunities and conditions for all children to obtain a high-quality formal education based on their abilities and interests, which would enable them to continue studies and cope with dignity in life. The objectives set for the general education system, measures, activities and quantitative indicators until 2013 include the following.

- Application of pre-education to provide all pupils an opportunity to obtain primary education at least a year before school, because according to Statistics Estonia, more than 1 500 children do not go to a preschool childcare institution and the main reason is the parents' poor economic situation. By 2013, it has been envisaged that the share of children with special development needs in preschool age will have been growing constantly, and who are involved in special and adaptation groups in preschool childcare institutions (in 2005, approximately 40 % of the would-be number of children).
- To fulfil the obligation of education and obtaining education to keep up with one's abilities, the trend favoured in recent law amendments to an individual approach to students and flexible organisation of studies will be continued. By 2013, the drop-out rate from basic school (seventh to ninth grade) will fall lower than 1 % and from upper secondary school (10th grade) lower than 3 % (in 2003/04, 1.2 and 3.7 % respectively).
- To regulate the network of education institutions to enable more equal quality of education than so far, a network of educational institutions on regional level is envisaged to provide accessibility and availability of general education.

¹¹³ Preparation of the 2006 Eu Council and European Commission Joint Report on social protection and social inclusion - EU Member State contribution: Estonia.

¹¹⁴ Üldharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2007-2013 (General education development plan).

2.2.5. *Childcare*

Preparations for and the first concrete steps to increase childcare opportunities and make it more flexible have been made in Estonia through cooperation between government institutions, local governments, entrepreneurship organisations and NGOs.¹¹⁵ In 2006, an amendment was made to the social welfare law, introducing the childcare service as a new service¹¹⁶ supports a more effective combining of work and family life and is meant to support subsistence or the work of caregivers, during the rendering of which the provider of a childcare service (instead of these persons) will ensure the looking after, development and security of the child. According to the amendment, it is also possible to provide the childcare service financed by the State to children with a severe or profound disability. Childcare services rendered to eligible persons are financed from the State budget allocations to the municipal budget. State budget allocations for childcare services into the municipal budgets are made through county governments based on the number of children with a severe or profound disability living in the municipality. Social welfare law obliges the local governments to organise childcare services, provide requirements for caregivers and childcare services, health requirements to childcare services and requirements to apply for an activity licence. Acting as a provider of childcare service may be either fully or partly financed from the State or local government budget. The provider of the service may be a self-proprietor, a legal person, a local government institution or an institution under the administration of the local government which has an effective activity licence issued by the county governor for this region.

In addition to childcare services, the 2006 amendment introduced a substitute home service, which means a service provider providing living conditions similar to those of a family, and creating a safe and developmental living environment for the child.

Negotiations have been held between the State and local governments to finance and organise substitute care. For the organisation of substitute care, local governments should focus largely on prevention and implementation of relevant measures. Support to and reinforcement of families with the help of different forms of family work and supporting services is definitely an important priority at local level to prevent children from going to a social welfare institution. The State is trying to offer local governments support, by also improving their capacity to prevent problems. A possibility for this is, for example, providing different forms of training to social and child protection workers and parents. The Ministry of Social Affairs continues to train foster families, and workers in social welfare institutions, to provide them as good a knowledge and skills as possible, to provide children the best service and to grow up in a safe environment. At the same time, support is provided in the form of State-financed and child-friendly institutions.

Estonia has taken steps so that children should not live in institutions but in families and homes, and for this a lot of attention has been paid to improving and developing the system of foster families. At the same time, the Estonian population is so small that it is not possible to immediately replace the institutions with foster families, as the number of such families is not sufficient to accommodate all children. Therefore the country cannot afford to lose all the institutions providing substitute home services in the short term; the systems must be developed gradually. Important developments today are the establishment of family-type substitute homes where the child would feel as being a family member. All these family homes must be child-friendly, providing a safe and suitable growing environment for children.

¹¹⁵ Rummo, P.-E., *Lastehoiuvõimaluste edendamise liidab ühiskonda* (Promotion of childcare facilities unites society), 2007.

¹¹⁶ *Sotsiaalhoolekandeseadus* (Social welfare Act).

Recently, the universal accessibility of public services to citizens has increased: a citizen can receive a service either from home through the internet or from the nearest official, irrespective of it being a local government or central government service. An example of the electronic application of services is the information system for childcare services.¹¹⁷

As a part of the alternative childcare system, an information technology solution was envisaged in 2004 through which the parents could have an overview of all legal providers of childcare services. The Estonian Informatics Centre suggested a system not only for alternative childcare but — based on parents' interests — they decided to also include kindergarten services. The objective of the childcare information system is to improve the accessibility of childcare services, raise the efficiency and transparency of childcare services, and provide instant notification of service providers and users of the occupancy rate of the kindergartens, of alternative childcare possibilities and skilled babysitters. It is used by different parties: parents, kindergartens, private babysitters, local government officials, county governments, the Ministry of Social Affairs for collecting statistics, the Ministry of Education and Research, Statistics Estonia, the Bureau of the Population Minister, etc. The information system for rendering childcare services offers:

- Parents get information on all childcare facilities, both alternative and kindergartens. Parents can also apply through the information system for childcare in kindergartens (place for providing primary education, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research) and with a skilled babysitter (social service coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs). Parents can see the service through the citizen gateway. If they cannot use the internet, the electronic procedures may be conducted for them either by a local government official or a service provider (manager of the kindergarten, a person or institution providing the childcare service).
- Service providers (kindergarten, qualified babysitter) can get information on services provided and receive reservations for services; if necessary, submit to local government and the State financial information for the compensation of their services. A qualified babysitter has a proper training, has been awarded a babysitter qualification (i.e. certificate of competency is in the register of economic activities) and has registered their activity in the register of economic activities.
- Local government officials who have been given the task of coordinating childcare in kindergartens and as a social service, can get information on the services provided on the territory of the respective local government; where necessary, they can conduct procedures for parents and prepare reports.
- The system satisfies the needs for statistics of different institutions, e.g. the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Research, Statistics Estonia, local governments, the Bureau of the Population Minister, the Ministry of the Interior.

¹¹⁷ Kukk, T. and Ilves, A., *Lapsehoiuteenuse osutamise infosüsteem (Information system for rendering childcare services, LHIS)*, 2007.

2.2.6. *Housing*

The housing policy strategy 2007-13¹¹⁸ measures elaborated by the Government envisage an improvement in the housing conditions of risk groups, improvement of acquisition opportunities of dwellings, precise determination of the classification of housing expenses and bringing the operating of local government social registers to joint ground in order to implement the subsistence benefit system more efficiently. The measures include increasing the municipal dwelling stock, expansion of the network of shelter houses and rental apartments with lower rent rates, adjustment of dwellings, etc. Particularly important are the activities that ensure availability of dwellings, maintenance and development of a sustainable dwelling stock, raising of the quality of living environment, and awareness and administrative capacity. A complex improvement of housing conditions will definitely help also improve the situation of those children who come from families with many problems, where parents do not manage by themselves and cannot provide a safe living environment for their children, who will then become at-risk children .

In the NAP inclusion 2006-08, the measures for the improvement of the living conditions of families with children include:

- Improving the housing conditions of risk groups by offering persons who are socially and economically incapable of getting a dwelling or maintaining it an opportunity to rent a subsidised municipal rental dwelling. This is a quite a difficult task as the rental dwelling sector is small, particularly in municipalities.
- Improving the acquisition opportunities of dwellings by offering the young, the tenants of restituted houses, opportunities to solve their housing problems (national housing loans, operational leasing, tax incentives on housing loan interest).
- Making the subsistence benefit system more efficient by determining precisely the classification of housing expenses and bringing the operating of local government social registers to joint grounds in order to implement the subsistence benefit system more efficiently.
- As in the families with many children, dissatisfaction with living conditions is much higher than in other families with children, so the coalition programme envisages a measure to solve housing problems of families with many children by allocating money. This measure must be especially targeted at families with many children who live in rural areas, in farms where there are problems with sewerage, where houses are not equipped with running water or a tap, etc.

¹¹⁸ Eesti eluasemevaldkonna arengukava (Housing policy strategy).

2.2.7. Health

Activities to improve children's health is one of the long-term priorities of health promotion and prevention of diseases in the disease prevention action plan for the years 2007-09 ¹¹⁹ and also an important priority in implementing the Estonian Health Insurance Fund's long-term priorities and principles of financing of the projects for health promotion and disease prevention. The Health promotion action plan for 2007-09 does not distinguish any priority target groups, as the achievement of a healthy lifestyle is possible only in cooperation with all different target groups (children, teachers, parents, grandparents, relatives, colleagues). Efficiency indicators are connected with regularly conducted examinations; the results are separately monitored among young people (11-15) within a survey of pupils' health behaviour.

An objective of health care is to enable pupils to obtain a health promoting lifestyle and skills to achieve physical, mental and social welfare, and to support pupils' progress in cooperation with parents and school personnel. A school health services organisation draft law, which supplements the Health care services organisation Act ¹²⁰, has specified that school health care service is an out-patient health care service provided to pupils studying at primary, basic, upper secondary school, including schools for pupils with special needs, and sanatorium schools and in basic education-based vocational schools, aimed at the prevention of diseases and early detection of diseases, creation of behaviour and lifestyles which value health, and the purposeful development of a school environment which is conducive to pupils' health and for rendering first aid.

A target group of school health care is up to 193 000 pupils of general education schools and of basic education based vocational schools. The school health care agreement is missing in 11 schools, including in 6 sanatorium schools. In 2006, there were 2 617 pupils and 770 nurses per one doctor. Health care is included in the development plan of 58 % of the schools; 34 % of the schools had a health council.

The National Institute for Health Development (NIHD) ¹²¹ has implemented a 'Smoke-free class competition' ¹²² among young people during many years. In 2006, 10 714 students from 175 schools (515 classes) from each county joined the competition and 93 % of them are still competing this year after the first three months of the competition. This year there were more than 10 000 students (nearly 10 % of 5th to 12th grade students) and their class teachers signed an agreement about non-smoking. The participating classes decided to be a non-smoking class for a period of six months. The responsibility for the control of smoking lies mainly with the pupils themselves: pupils monitor their smoking status and report regularly whether they have smoked or not. Classes which refrain from smoking for that period of time are rewarded. The county and local governments, State and private companies have given different prizes to the participants in order to raise their motivation to be and stay smoke-free. The 'Smoke-free class competition' was evaluated several times in Germany and in Finland, and the results of these studies indicate that the 'Smoke-free class competition' is an effective tool in delaying the onset of smoking which therefore deserves more dissemination.

¹¹⁹ Tervise edendamise tegevuskava aastateks 2007-2009 (Health promotion action plan for 2007-09).

¹²⁰ Tervishoiuteenuste korraldamise seadus (Health care services organisation Act).

¹²¹ NIHD.

¹²² The project has been implemented according to the principles of the 'European network on young people and tobacco' (Enypat) framework. The 'Smoke-free class competition' is an international smoking prevention programme that reaches for three main goals: 1. delay or prevent the onset of smoking, 2. motivate pupils who already smoke to quit, 3. establish non-smoking as the normal behaviour for pupils.

At the end of 2006, the NIHD launched for the third year a competition of health promotion project ideas, the 'Health promoting idea project' (TEIP) ¹²³. The competition was held for school children and young people all over Estonia to give them an opportunity to promote health in their own community. Children were very eager to submit ideas for promoting a healthy status throughout life for persons in the same age category. Last year, the TEIP competition gathered up to 55 projects. This year, the NIHD received 49 project ideas; the six best ones were rewarded a valuable prize and these projects will be implemented in 2007. A special prize for the most socially responsible project was issued by the Hansa Elukindlustus (Hansapank Life Insurance Fund).

2.2.8. Social services

Rendering of social welfare services and social assistance in Estonia is based on the principle that assistance should be given to those who need it as close to his/her place of residence as possible and based on individual needs. As the quality of social services rendered in municipalities is extremely variable and does not ensure people equal treatment at least on minimal level, the Ministry of Social Affairs has planned a harmonisation of minimum requirements for social welfare services provided by local governments. Specification of the requirements in turn will increase the pressure on local governments' budgets. According to plans, the services developed on local level are primarily nursing services, supporting services to disabled people (including personal assistance, special transport) and to families with subsistence difficulties as well as to long-term applicants for social assistance.

More attention is intended to be focused on rehabilitation services for disabled children (approximately 5 500 children). Good access and increased offers will ensure an improvement in independent coping of these children and reduced assistance needs, and that they obtain education for coping independently later. For the achievement of the rehabilitation objectives it is necessary to increase the volume of particular services rendered to children, which means to remove 10-20 hour restrictions on rendering particular services and to proceed from particular needs of each disabled child.

Today the Ministry of Social Affairs is working out a new social welfare law, which describes different welfare services that could be offered on a uniform basis throughout Estonia, so that all relevant services are accessible for all people, independent of their place of residence. All children must receive supporting services as well as relevant and high-quality assistance on equal bases, independent of their special needs, nationality, disability, gender, etc.

So as to create an environment enabling children's development irrespective of the subsistence difficulties in the family, the Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs ¹²⁴ has envisaged to develop and offer social welfare services targeted at families (e.g. childcare, family assistants, support persons, family coping programmes). The point of departure in the development of a development environment for children is the viewpoint that the child should grow up in a normal life environment and it is the duty of the State and local government to support families, in particular those who have a young child with special needs.

¹²³ Competition of the health promotion projects TEIP, 2007.

¹²⁴ Development plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs for 2007-10.

Services at different levels of responsibility can be distinguished in the improvement of subsistence of families with children:

- services offered by the public sector;
- services offered by NGOs which supplement public sector services and can be also ordered by the public sector;
- services offered by the private sector, which are oriented to the satisfaction of individual or private needs.

2.2.9. Policies to promote the care and protection of children at risk including integrated early intervention initiatives or policies to assist children with special needs or policies to counter discrimination ¹²⁵

The Ministry of Social Affairs will work out alternatives to taking younger than five-year-old children to social welfare institutions, because other countries' experiences show that it is harmful to a child's development when the child stays in an institution longer than three years without a parent and a guardian. On seminars held in March 2007 (Deinstitutionalisation and changing social welfare services for children) and training courses for children's social welfare workers, politicians, journalists, etc., and experts from European countries shared experiences, presented a 10-step model how to change and close a children's social welfare institution and instead provide children an opportunity to grow up in a family. It was discussed how these experiences can be used in the Estonian context.

In every county and in nearly 40 municipalities in Estonia including all districts in Tallinn, there are juvenile committees; a system of juvenile committees was created on the basis of the Juvenile sanctions Act ¹²⁶ in 1998. A task of the juvenile committee is to coordinate work in the field of crime prevention carried out with minors within its administrative territory, organise the life of juvenile offenders by using the relevant sanctions and reduce offences and the factors fostering young people not being looked after. The juvenile committee is the only institution in Estonia which has been assigned a task by law to work with juvenile offenders to influence their future.

According to the Social welfare Act, local governments (including local child protection officials or social workers) as well as the police are responsible that maltreated children and their family members can get immediate assistance. Educational institutions have an important role in cooperating with the family in the prevention of maltreatment — teaching proper behaviour and acting in violent situations. In Estonia, employees of two centres (Tartu Children Support Centre established in 1995 and Tallinn Children Support Centre established in 1998) ¹²⁷ have received special training on how to work with child victims of sexual abuse and the child's family members.

A reduction of crime against children and crime committed by children is one of the national priorities also expressed in concrete activities — in 2006, the Government approved of the 'Development plan for reducing juvenile crime' 2007-09 ¹²⁸. Its overall purpose is to reduce juvenile crime in general, particularly repeated violations of law and to improve the prevention

¹²⁵ More details are given in Annex 1.

¹²⁶ Alaealiste mõjutusvahendite seadus (Juvenile sanctions Act).

¹²⁷ Tallinn Children Support Centre; Tartu Children Support Centre.

¹²⁸ Alaealiste kuritegevuse vähendamise arengukava aastateks ('Development plan for reducing juvenile crime'), 2007-09.

work with minors. This development plan has set the aims for the prevention and reduction of juvenile crime, planned measures and resources to:

- make prevention more effective by raising awareness and changing attitudes of the population;
- improve the accessibility of social and educational prevention measures;
- make the work of juvenile committees and schools for children who need special education conditions more effective;
- offer effective response of the legal system to violations of law by minor children.

The development plan covers preventive activities on different levels, including gradual provision of services (gatekeeping) primarily for the risk group and those who have already committed a violation of law. Implementation of the activities envisaged in the development plan is based on the general principles of child protection such as subsidiarity, gradual provision of services, partnership with families, case management and joint work. The development plan provides measures, activities and actions plans for the achievement of strategic aims across years. Very important is its objective concerning regulation of the work of juvenile committees and specialised schools with the Ministry of Education and Research, as the current system of so-called 'educational specialised schools' needs thorough rearrangement — the purpose cannot be hiding a child with learning difficulties in a so-called 'colony', but an individual approach to each child in the risk group.

Criminal policy development trends until 2010 ¹²⁹ stipulate that criminal proceedings against minor children must be fast and take into consideration the legal interests of minors (this includes the imposing of punishments or some other sanction), as well as the possibility to influence the child from committing a violation of law in the future. It emphasised the need to work out a system that would enable to notice shortcomings in the child's growing environment and remove them as soon as possible, as well as the need for measures to prevent dropping out from the basic school.

The development plan of the Ministry of Justice until the year 2011 ¹³⁰ envisages as the most important strategic goal of criminal policy — as a measure for reducing crime — to make the combat against juvenile crime more effective and prevent crime against minors. An important activity is to establish standards for criminal proceedings against minor children and their constant surveillance, as well as applying effective interference into juvenile violation of law (analysis of the punishments and sanctions and their efficiency).

Into the Development plan for combating trafficking in persons 2006-09 ¹³¹ were included also activities for preventing and interfering in the trafficking in children, as the measures in the trafficking in persons development plan largely coincided with the preventive and interference measures targeted at children. The measures of this development plan are aimed primarily at the maximal protection of children against any kind of sexual or other abuse.

¹²⁹ Kriminaalpoliitika arengusuunad aastani 2010 (Criminal policy development trends until 2010).

¹³⁰ Justiitsministeeriumi arengukava kuni aastani 2011 (Development plan of the Ministry of Justice until 2011).

¹³¹ Inimkaubanduse vastu võitlemise arengukava aastateks (Development plan for combating human trafficking) 2006-09.

The 'National strategy for the prevention of drug addiction until 2012'¹³² set the aim to reduce the supply (activity of different power enforcement structures, i.e. police, customs, border guards) and demand of drugs (prevention, cure, rehabilitation) and to create an effective treatment and rehabilitation system for drug addicts. One of the main target groups in the strategy are children and young people.

The Action plan for implementing the facultative protocol on the trafficking in children, child prostitution and pornography for 2006-10 of the UNCRC and the Development plan for the prevention of intimate violence 2008-11 are being worked out at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

In February 2007, the Ministry of Justice sent a draft law to other ministries for approval, which prohibits persons convicted of sexual crimes against children from working with children and gives the parents information about the conviction of a person of such crimes in the case of a justified interest.¹³³

2.2.10. Policies to promote the participation of children in social, cultural, recreational and sporting life

An objective of the Estonian 'Sport for all strategic development plan 2006-10' is to contribute to health-promoting sports activities and to the spreading of other forms of sports activities that are feasible for everyone within the population, so that the number of people engaged in regular sports activities will increase to 45 % of the population (i.e. 20 % growth) by 2010. A measure involving the general education system is the support from the Ministry of Education and Research to hobby sports in schools: support to hobby sports after school hours at general education and vocational schools. Hobby sports will be financed in the form of targeted allocations in the amount of EUR 22 per pupil annually, and it will increase when the number of pupils decreases, primarily on account of children who go in for sports outside school and do not use the hobby sports opportunities at school. An objective of the measure is to incorporate young people who are not doing sports outside school (e.g. sports schools or clubs) into recreational sport and regular physical activities through supporting hobby activities at schools.

¹³² Narkomaania ennetamise riiklik strateegia aastani 2012 (National strategy for the prevention of drug addiction until 2012).

¹³³ The new draft act prohibits child molesters from working with children. The purpose of the draft law is to ensure that the persons convicted of a sexual crime against children or a crime relating to minor prostitution or child pornography could not obtain a position where they have direct contact with children. Such positions are, for instance, those of a teacher, nursery school teacher, children's camp counsellor and registered providers of childcare services. According to the draft law, the respective employers are obligated to check the judicial records of the person concerning the crimes before employing them. The limitation of the right to work with children is important from the point of view of prevention of new crimes. Although the draft law places the primary responsibility of checking the background of the person on the employer, it gives the parents, in the case of a justified interest, the right to check whether the person supervising their child has not been convicted of sexual crimes against children. There is a justified interest if a child is under the supervision of another person without the presence of a legal representative, e.g. hobby schools, unregistered babysitters, etc. This way the parents can check and estimate themselves whether the consumption of the services of the private hobby school, kindergarten, school, babysitter, etc. is safe or not in the given case. A written inquiry must be made to the judicial record in order to obtain the information, explaining the existence of a public interest and specifying the person about whom information is sought. The reply will contain only the answer 'yes' or 'no': whether the person has been punished for a sexual crime against children or not. An employer who hires a person who is prohibited from working with children according to law may be fined.

The Youth work strategy 2006-13¹³⁴ sets youth policy aims on the basis of uniform approach principles in the area of all activities connected with the life of young people. The objectives set in the sphere of youth work — which is in addition to formal education, employment and family — create opportunities for diverse development of 7 to 26-year-old young people. Implementation of this strategy is of great significance for creating alternative free-time spending opportunities for young people, to reduce alcohol consumption and drug addiction, as well as for the integration of young Estonians and non-Estonians on the basis of common activities and undertakings.

¹³⁴ Noorsootöö strateegia 2006-2013 (Estonian youth work strategy 2006-13).

3. Assessment of arrangements for monitoring the implementation and impact of policies

In Estonia, the principles of the monitoring system of strategic documents are set by the Government Regulation on strategic planning. According to the regulation, the ministry responsible for the elaboration and implementation of the strategies is also responsible for evaluation and monitoring. The ministry is obliged to report once a year to the Government about the implementation of the activities, as well as about the achievement of objectives and targets.

The monitoring system of the strategies most directly related to child poverty and social exclusion — the Strategy for the protection of child rights and NAP inclusion of the Estonian National report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion 2006-08 — is similar to the institutional setting of the strategies.

- The elaboration of the Estonian Strategy for the protection of child rights was initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and coordinated by the NGO called EUCW. The strategy was prepared in cooperation with different ministries, authorities, NGOs and child's unions. The Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for the elaboration of yearly action plans and activity reports of the strategy. For that purpose, the official Working Group was formed. The members of the Working Group are the representatives of different ministries — Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, but also representatives from the Bureau of the Minister of Population Affairs and from the EUCW. The implementation of the strategy and its yearly action plans is coordinated by the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs, but each ministry as well as the EUCW are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the activities in their sphere(s). The implementation partners are NGOs, local authorities, etc.
- The preparation of NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 was coordinated by the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the first stage of preparation of the report, a general workgroup was established comprising specialists from various departments of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the second stage, a steering committee for preparation of the report was convened to ensure the more efficient inclusion of stakeholders, consisting of representatives of most Government ministries and social partners, as well as a representative from the third sector. For better monitoring of the implementation of new and additional measures presented in the national report, the Ministry of Social Affairs has organised a fixed round table consisting of the NGOs and the members of the above-mentioned steering committee. The members of the round table monitor the processes associated with relevant strategies and development plans, and contribute to the coordination and integration of the social inclusion policy in all relevant policy fields and ensure the inclusion of all levels of government (national, regional and local).

All relevant ministries and authorities submit their activity reports (together with the evaluation of achievement of objectives and targets) to the Ministry of Social Affairs, who once a year submits a comprehensive report to the Government for discussion and deciding on future objectives/targets/activities. Although many indicators related to child poverty, social exclusion and welfare are monitored yearly, only few of them are used in targeting. All the valid quantitative long-term targets related to child wellbeing are set in the NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR

SSPSI 2006-08, but the urge to improve the list of targets is realised by all partners in the process. Although the indicators are elaborated on a strong statistical basis, many targets are set on emotional estimation levels. This is a consequence partly due to lack of time and analytical competences. The data produced by Statistics Estonia are permanently gathered and reliable but sometimes the information is too general, which makes the small target group analysis complicated.

Currently there is no specific database or issue that assembles all poverty, exclusion and welfare statistics related to children. Different databases and sources are used to monitor and evaluate the targets and to prepare the yearly reports. Ministries are responsible for assembling the administrative data in their area of activities. The technical calculation of poverty indicators is carried out once a year by Statistics Estonia and all poverty indicators (Laeken indicators) are available on the statistical office's website (<http://www.stat.ee>). In the yearbook about household living standards which has been published by Statistics Estonia since 1996, some poverty indicators are presented by households types based on the HBS data. Statistic Estonia has a tradition to publish theme-specific information sheets — for example in 2005, two fact sheets on children were published about 'child and family' as well as 'child and social environment'. Great expectations for reliable data that characterise poverty including child poverty were created by the release calendar of Statistics Estonia's statistical publications, whereby it is planned to publish the first yearbook on social inequalities in June 2007.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, being responsible for the issues related to poverty and social exclusion, uses the calculations of Statistics Estonia. This is the ministry responsible for gathering social welfare data. Welfare data are published annually on the ministry's website (<http://www.sm.ee>). In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs publishes basic statistical data on social welfare and social insurance, health and labour domains on a yearly basis (in the *Social sector in figures*) and the latest versions of the publications are available on the Ministry of Social Affairs' website (<http://www.sm.ee/est/pages/index.html>). The yearly reports of the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights' are published on the Ministry of Social Affairs' website (in Estonian only).

In Estonia, the *ex ante* evaluation mechanisms are in place for evaluating the impact and adequacy of policies concerning the 'National strategic reference framework 2007-13'¹³⁵, but not for mainstreaming the fight against child poverty and social exclusion. The use of indicators and targets has become widely common in Estonian strategies and policy papers over recent years. The target setting and measuring are regulated with the Government Regulation on strategy planning and policy-making process. Similar to all strategies and policy papers, the Strategy for the protection of child rights and NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 have passed the same targeting and measuring process. Firstly, the results (mainly statistical data and indicators) of the previous periods are analysed and conclusions are made. After that, the new priorities, objectives and targets are set according to the previous periods' results, but also the political pressure has a big influence. Therefore the future activities are widely discussed in the official working groups.

The involvement of stakeholders is crucial to guarantee the common understanding of objectives and targets. Both strategies — the 'Strategy for the protection of child rights' and NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 — are good examples of how the stakeholders' roundtables and discussions have contributed to the elaboration of the objectives, planned activities and targets. Compared to other policy areas, the child wellbeing is the area where expectations towards

¹³⁵ Riiklik struktuurivahendite kasutamise strateegia (National strategic reference framework), 2007-13.

stakeholders are rather clearly expressed and the communication has been proactive. It is a pity that the children were still not directly consulted and the opinions of children and young people were represented by social partners and NGOs, who are active in the promotion of children's rights and who provide services for families with children. Although child wellbeing is a policy area where the target setting as well as cooperation with stakeholders and other involved parties is beneficial, the main issue that has been encountered so far is the lack of stability and analysis in defining and monitoring the targets.

The overall monitoring system of child wellbeing in Estonia is in place. As the Strategy for the protection of child rights and the NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 are comprehensive, covering all the important areas of child wellbeing, poverty and social exclusion, the other strategies and policies dealing with children's questions must be in accordance with the objectives set in these strategies. Currently there are no major changes foreseen in the system. Evidently, the registers and other means in use to collect statistical data will be developed according to changing needs. For example, the social services and benefits register STAR will be developed for better implementation of the services and benefits. During 2007, a register with the purpose to facilitate the 'Child protection network' (e.g. child protection specialists, school social workers, parents, youth police, family practitioners) coordination in handling child cases will be piloted in some Estonian counties. In addition, the preparations to gather all statistical data and monitoring of child wellbeing into one database have started.

The monitoring and evaluation processes provide a significant input in the policy debate in the area of child wellbeing in Estonia:

- the EUCW;
- a complementary report on the fulfilment of obligations deriving from the UNCRC (the report is available on the EUCW website);¹³⁶
- assessment of the Estonian NAP inclusion 2004-06 in respect of children and youth has been prepared and submitted to Eurochild AISBL in 2004;¹³⁷
- assessment of the NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 in respect of children and youth has been prepared and submitted to Eurochild AISBL in 2004;¹³⁸
- All Unicef Innocenti *Social Monitor* yearly reports on different policy areas are available on the Unicef website.¹³⁹

Scientists of the University of Tartu have been dealing with child poverty in the long term and published their findings within various international joint projects, for example:

Kutsar, D., Harro, M., Tiit, E.-M. and Matrov, D., 'Children's welfare in Estonia from different perspectives', in: *Children's welfare in ageing Europe*, COST A19: Estonia, 2004. Jensen, A.-M., Ben-Arieh, A., Conti, C., Kutsar, D., Phadraig, M. N. G. and Warming Nielsen, H. (eds), *Children in Estonia*¹⁴⁰, Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2000. Kutsar, D. (ed.), UNDP, publications on the research of the intergenerational

¹³⁶ Lapse õiguste konventsiooni täiendav aruanne. Eesti valitsusväliste organisatsioonide täiendused, kommentaarid ning ettepanekud (Supplementary report of the UNCRC. Amendments, comments and proposals by the Estonian NGO).

¹³⁷ http://www.lastekaitseliit.ee/fail/pysivad/nap_aruanne.doc

http://www.lastekaitseliit.ee/fail/pysivad/nap_stat_andmed.doc

¹³⁸ http://www.lastekaitseliit.ee/fail/ajutised/estonian_naps_questionnaire_2006_v3.doc

¹³⁹ <http://www.unicef.org>

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.svt.ntnu.no/noseb/costa19/nytt/welfare/Vol%20I/estonia.pdf>

transmission of inequalities and policy responses (Kutsar, D., Trumm, A., Kasearu, K. and Strömpl, J.) are in print, etc.

Children's NGOs (the EUCW ¹⁴¹; Unicef Estonia ¹⁴²; Foundation Estonian Children's Fund ¹⁴³; SOS-Children's Village Association of Estonia ¹⁴⁴, etc., are active in monitoring and evaluating different aspects of the whole process in the framework of different research projects, which often involve international cooperation in a relevant NGO-specific sphere. Still, so far there has been no consistency and system in conducting the analyses and surveys, which may now emerge in connection with the implementation of measures of NAP inclusion of the Estonian NR SSPSI 2006-08 and the need for monitoring.

An important role in offering supporting services to families is played by various NGOs. Within different projects, these offer counselling, training, events, clubs, humanitarian aid, shelter, etc. Child protection centres and associations are similar service providers to families through projects. A general picture of NGOs is extremely variegated and the level of services uneven. Therefore the main development trend of NGO activity is to make the work consistent, whereas a particularly necessary sphere of activities are the establishment of a family school, regulation of childcare and formation of support groups of families with similar problems. An interesting group among the organisations dealing with families are village and rural women's associations, which mainly offer an opportunity to spend time together, either in joint actions or lectures. In addition to NGOs, of great importance are associations of various hobby groups — associations of large families, single parents, parents of disabled children and many other associations stand up for the interests of their group and arrange actions. The activity of associations is important, because it offers opportunities to families with similar problems to meet and communicate.

¹⁴¹ Estonian Union for Child Welfare.

¹⁴² Unicef Estonia.

¹⁴³ Foundation Estonian Children's Fund.

¹⁴⁴ SOS-Children's Village Association of Estonia.

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Annex 1: Detailed information on the extent and nature of child poverty

1. Extent and nature of child poverty and wellbeing in Estonia

1.1. Overview of the situation in relation to income and household characteristics

The income poverty indicators are calculated on the basis of the ESS. ESS is a sample survey designed to obtain comparative and reliable statistics on income distribution, living conditions and social exclusion at the European level. All households living permanently in Estonia are considered as the surveyed population. Persons living in institutional households (children's homes, care homes, convents) are excluded. All published estimates have been calculated for the total population (or for the population of a respective region). The size of respective population has been determined on the basis of the estimated total population provided by Statistics Estonia. Sampling is carried through among the records of the population register, whereas the sampling frame consists of people 14 years old and older. The sampling of persons is carried out by geographically stratified systematic sampling procedures, i.e. independent sub-samples are drawn separately from the non-overlapping sub-populations called strata. Each person is included with his or her household and all members of this household aged 15 or more are interviewed. Each household is to be interviewed four times, the rotation period is 12 months, whereas every year part of the sample is replaced. Thus, during a year the survey is cross-sectional, which guarantees higher accuracy of estimates while using the given sample size. The interviews carried out with households in four consecutive years will allow getting more precise estimates of changes occurred over the years. Sampling weights are inverses of inclusion probabilities. To compensate for the non-response and frame errors, the weights are corrected using post-stratification. Additionally, the weights are calibrated on demographic data in order to assure the correspondence of certain estimates with other data sources. To ease the analysis, single missing values are imputed.

Estonia is characterised by large regional disparities in both total and the child at-risk-of-poverty rate (Annex 2, Table 3). In 2004, the total at-risk-of-poverty rate varied from 36.0 % in Jõgeva county to 10.9 % in Tallinn. In three (Jõgeva, Põlva, Valga) out of six counties comprising southern Estonia and in north-eastern Estonia (Ida-Viru county), the at-risk-of-poverty rate was higher than 25 %. The child at-risk-of-poverty rate was very high in Jõgeva county (almost every second child lived with income lower than the at-risk-of-poverty threshold) and also in Ida-Viru county (31.8 %). The results of the measurement of relative child poverty would change to a large extent if the national median had not been used as the basis for the calculation, as for example the cost of the food basket as part of the 30-day minimum means of subsistence in 2002 varied by more than one fifth across counties (from EUR 39 in Ida-Viru county to EUR 47 in Tallinn).¹⁴⁵

The change of the at-risk-of-poverty rate threshold from 40 % of the median to 70 % of the median would increase the child at-risk-of-poverty rate by 18.1 percentage points (by 18.6 % for males and 17.6 % for females); the highest increase (by 21.5 percentage points) of the at-risk-of-poverty rate would be for 15 to 17-year-old children (Annex 2, Table 4). If with 70 % of the median threshold the average at-risk-of-poverty rate is 26.2 %, then in the 15-17 age group it would be 29.6 %.

¹⁴⁵ Household Living Niveau, 2005.

The increase of the at-risk-of-poverty rate threshold from 40 % of the median to 70 % of the median would increase the at-risk-of-poverty rate of single-parent households with at least one dependent child, and more than half of these households — in the age group 0-4 even 79 % of the households — would live in relative income poverty (Annex 2, Table 5).

The child relative median risk-of-poverty gap (30.3 %) is by 6.3 percentage points higher than the average (24.0 %), and in the 0-4 age group even over half higher than the average (Annex 1, Table 6). On average, the male relative median risk-of-poverty gap is larger than the female relative median risk-of-poverty gap (by 7.8 percentage points), but the child relative median risk-of-poverty gap in all age groups is higher for females — with the exception of 10 to 14-year-old children, where the male relative median risk-of-poverty gap is slightly higher than the female relative median risk-of-poverty gap (by 0.9 percentage points).

The relative median risk-of-poverty gap in households with dependent children (age group 0-17) is much larger than in households without dependent children, 30.1 and 19.2 % respectively. The relative median risk-of-poverty gap is the largest (33.6 %) in households with two adults and two children (Annex 2, Table 7). Even the smallest relative median risk-of-poverty gap of households with children (20.1 % for other types of households with children) is larger than that of households without dependent children.

Compared with Estonians, the at-risk-of-poverty rate of non-Estonians is by 2.6 percentage points higher, but the child at-risk-of-poverty rate of non-Estonians is even 5.5 percentage points higher than that of Estonians (Annex 2, Table 8).¹⁴⁶ The child at-risk-of-poverty rate of non-Estonians is 5.8 percentage points higher than the average at-risk-of-poverty rate of non-Estonians (for Estonians the respective difference is 2.9 percentage points).

The change in the equivalence scales¹⁴⁷ has influenced the poverty values, including child poverty in Estonia: the former equivalence scales estimated poverty to be the highest in households with three or more children and in single-parent households with two or more children, as a child is estimated to consume as much as an adult person; but the new equivalence scales estimate poverty to be the highest in single-parent households and working-age persons living alone. In connection with the introduction of the new equivalence scales, the absolute child poverty rate fell, which in the period 1997-2004 was six percentage points higher than the absolute poverty rate of households and individuals (HBS data). In 2005, 11% of the children aged 0-15 (6.9 % of households and 7.7 % household members) lived in direct poverty (up to 80 % of the absolute poverty line, EUR 99 per household member per month), 14,8% were at risk of poverty and 74,2% in no risk of poverty.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, the relative poverty rate does not directly depend as much as in previous scales on the number of children (e.g. according to HBS data in 2004, depending on the equivalence scales, the relative poverty rate for single

¹⁴⁶ As it has been shown already in several reports by the independent expert, the economic situation of non-Estonians is particularly influenced by the high unemployment rate — mainly because of the concentration of non-Estonians in regions of high unemployment and inadequate knowledge of the Estonian language.

¹⁴⁷ For evaluating national poverty, a working group at University of Tartu suggested that Estonia as a country with a consumption culture typical of a relatively poor country use the national equivalence scales 1:0.8:0.8 (Poverty Reduction in Estonia. Background and Guidelines). Due to the need to take into consideration the changes in the development of Estonian society, the equivalence scales were adjusted in 2005 on the basis of the survey conducted by order of the Ministry of Social Affairs and were amended to conform to the OECD traditional equivalence scales (1:0.7:0.5) (Tiit, E.-M., Elatusmiinimumi ja vaesuspiiride hindamise meetodika ning sotsiaalsete indikaatorite leidmisel kasutatavate tarbimiskaalude kaasajastamine — Methods for evaluating minimum means of subsistence and the poverty line, and updating of the equivalence scales for calculating social indicators, 2005).

¹⁴⁸ Social sector in figures 2006. Ministry of Social Affairs, 2006.

parents and with two or more children fell from 53.5 % (1:0.8:0.8) to 29.2 % (1:0.7:0.5), with three or more children from 32.6 % to 17.1 %).¹⁴⁹

According to HBS data ¹⁵⁰ for 2004, the subjective poverty of households can be characterised as follows:

- 5 % (6 % in 2000) of the households assessed that their economic situation is very bad and there is not enough money even for basic food (subjectively poor households);
- 45 % can make ends meet, but there is only enough money for basic necessities;
- 41 % can generally manage and sometimes afford also other things besides basic necessities;
- 9 % can afford everything needed for a normal, non-luxurious life.

According to Statistics Estonia for 2005, approximately 60 % of the couples with children can manage generally, but among the couples with three or more children the share of those who can make ends meet (31.1 %, but for instance 20.2 % for couples with two children) was higher than among other couples with children. The average rate (scale 1-5) for the general economic condition of a household was the highest also (3.0) for couples with two children. Nearly one quarter (22.3 %) of the couples with two children (and only 14.2 % of couples with one child) estimated their economic condition in 2005 — compared with five years ago — to be much better.

1.2. Health

The total fertility rate has been below the level necessary for population reproduction, but it increased in Estonia from 1.28 in 1998 to 1.50 in 2005, and the number of births rose from 12 167 in 1998 (when the births rate was the lowest) to 14 350 (109 male per 100 female) in 2005, which is the highest number since 1994.¹⁵¹

The national immunisation rate is ensured in Estonia pursuant to the national immunoprophylactic programme ¹⁵², which aims to reach a situation whereby 95 % of 2-year-old children in every county are vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, rubella and mumps, and 90 % against pertussis. Since 2004, in addition to the WHO recommendations, children have been vaccinated against tuberculosis and B-hepatitis by the State. In different counties, vaccination against B-hepatitis was started at different times and therefore the vaccination coverage of 2-year-old children across counties is uneven. The aim of the revaccination of children over 2 years is also to reach a coverage of 95 %. The data show a decrease in the number of first revaccinations and there is a falling trend in the case of each following compulsory revaccination.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Tiit, E.-M., Vaesus ja selle mõõtmine. Vaesuse suundumused Eestis. Poliitikaanalüüs (Poverty and its measurement. Poverty trends in Estonia. A policy analysis), 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Household Living Niveau, 2004.

¹⁵¹ Statistical Yearbook of Estonia, 2006.

¹⁵² Immunoprofülakтика riiklik programm nakkushaiguste vältimiseks aastatestatel 2001-2005 (National immunoprophylactic programme for preventing infectious diseases in 2001-05).

¹⁵³ Rätsep, M., Immunisation, 2006.

The second survey of 10 to 29-year-old young people on the knowledge about, attitudes toward and behaviour in connection with HIV/AIDS, which was conducted in 2005¹⁵⁴ indicated an overwhelming share of young people who have never been in sexual intercourse or who have not risked in sexual intercourse: 87 % of 14 to 15-year-olds and 80 % of 16 to 18-year-olds. As in 2003, most young people are aware of the connection between HIV infection and drug addiction and of the risks involved in injecting drugs. In 2005, they knew more about the role of safe sex in reducing the risk of infection. However, only a small portion of 14 to 29-year-old people are aware of the methods of reducing the risk of transmitting HIV from infected mother to child. Most young people know that a HIV-test can be made at the AIDS Advice Cabinet and a specialist. The 16 to 18-year-olds are in an age group which has the best knowledge about the spreading of HIV infection and also use condoms.

1.3. Education

A survey on the specific nature of social work at schools with Estonian and Russian language instruction in Tallinn¹⁵⁵ stated that social workers at schools are key persons to deal with students, to prevent or solve their problems and to coordinate networking work. It was also discovered that there are some specific differences in social work between Estonian and Russian language schools: students at Estonian schools were of the opinion that the main problems had their roots at home, in the growing environment and were school-related, while Russian school students thought the main problems were caused by the neighbourhood and society.

The research centre Faktum conducted, in 2005 by order of the Leisure Managers Association, a survey of the attitudes of parents towards children and young people's (4 to 19 years old) hobby education.¹⁵⁶ The size of the target group of hobby education is decreasing as a result of the lower birth rate primarily in younger age groups. The survey indicated that 82 % of the households with children aged 4-19 include children who attend under the supervision of an adult. These children are most numerous in households with 10 to 14-year-old children (91 %) and least numerous in households with 4 to 6-year-old children (71 %). The participation of boys in hobby groups is considered to be more important than that of girls. Hobby school is regarded as a place that helps to keep young people away from bad things and offers recreational and creative activity for a change to school. Valuation of hobby education is based on the child and his/her welfare, as well as on the development of the child's abilities. Hobby schools are distinguished from ordinary schools by valuating the alternative, more variable environment and other than ordinary school facilities are preferred as a place for obtaining education. An overwhelming majority (53 % of the respondents) are doing sports in addition; if possible, they are also learning computer (19 %) and foreign languages (18 %). The main obstacles to obtaining hobby education are insufficient financial resources (34 % of the respondents) and lack of time (25 %). One quarter of the respondents have an opportunity to obtain hobby education free of charge, which is offered more frequently in rural areas and in smaller towns. Half of the respondent households spend less than EUR 19 per month on hobby education.

¹⁵⁴ Lõhmus, L., Trummal, A., HIV/AIDS-i teematikaga seotud teadmised, hoiakud ja käitumine Eesti noorte hulgas (Knowledge of young Estonian people about, attitudes toward and behaviour in connection with HIV/AIDS), 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Arras, L., Koolisotsiaaltöö spetsiifika Tallinna eesti ja vene õppekeeleka koolides (Specifics of school social work in Tallinn schools with Estonian and Russian language), 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Vanemate suhtumine laste ja noorte huvialaharidusse (Parents' attitudes toward hobby education of children). Kaardistav uuring (Mapping survey).

1.6. Access to childcare and other social services

The survey 'Mapping alternative childcare possibilities in Estonia'¹⁵⁷ demonstrated that the demand for babysitting is mainly covered by municipal kindergartens. Alternative childcare services are provided by playrooms, child centres, family centres, etc. Their legal forms are private limited company, general partnership, NGO, sole proprietor or local government institution, and often babysitting is one among many activities of an enterprise. Alternative babysitting services are provided mostly in towns and smaller settlements where there is no kindergarten. So far there is no single register for alternative babysitting services and the activity of enterprises providing babysitting services is uncoordinated; local governments support them according to their needs and possibilities. They mostly support private kindergartens which have an education licence, but also other private kindergartens with single project-based grants.

According to the survey 'Child's development in preschool age and different forms of childcare'¹⁵⁸, the following ranking list of what parents prefer was identified (irrespective of the child's age):

1. at home under the parents' care;
2. at home under relatives' care;
3. kindergarten;
4. family day care;
5. at home with a babysitter;
6. away from home with babysitter.

Though parents think the best place for a child is home, they still do not want the child to grow up only at home before going to school. Kindergarten is highly valued by parents from the aspect of a child's development, as the right growing place both from the aspect of social and cognitive development. Kindergarten is and has to be most available option, because teaching and activity at kindergartens is educative under the guidance of competent teachers/minders; hygiene, catering, etc. is well organised in kindergartens, takes into consideration the children's interests, and is subjected to the required norms. However, kindergarten is not equally good for everyone: when the child is small (not mature for normal care) or for any other reason family day care might be the better place (in the form of child day care, where the minder looks after four to six children of different ages at home). Conspicuous is a mix of different forms, the tendency of taking over positive experiences. For example, Estonia has found solutions appropriate for particular circumstances and needs: family day care has been combined with other day care forms or is operating in the same rooms with kindergarten still retaining its independence, etc.

¹⁵⁷ Mürk, R., Alternatiivsete väikelastehoiu võimaluste kaardistamine Eestis (Mapping alternative childcare possibilities in Estonia), 2006.

¹⁵⁸ Kraav, I., Lapse areng koolieelses eas ja lapsehoiu erinevad vormid (Child's development in preschool age and different forms of childcare), 2006.

1.11. Violence against children, abduction and trafficking of children, homelessness, high levels of drug abuse, being victims of or involved in crime

While analysing the results of the survey 'Experiences of and attitudes toward sexual abuse among Estonian young people'¹⁵⁹, it should be taken into consideration that these are the self-reports of young people of what they have experienced, or how many of them have defined an event as an abuse or found that their own action has abused somebody. Girls (44 %) were much more frequently victims of sexual abuse than boys (15 %). On the other hand, boys (9 %) thought three times more frequently that they had committed a sexual abduction than girls. Victims of sexual abuse are mostly youngsters, mostly aged 14 to 17 years. Abusers during youth are strangers or known persons; in childhood, they are mostly own household members or relatives. Victims and committers of sexual abuse resemble each other in their behavioural disorder (drug addiction, criminal activity, problems in school environment — playing truant, quarrelling, etc.).

An increasing share of pupils aged 15 to 16 are smoking, get drunk and take illegal drugs, especially girls (compared with 1995, the number of girls who have been drunk more than 20 times in their lifetime has increased ten-fold).¹⁶⁰ Also the share of cigarette triers has risen mainly among girls. The share of pupils who have tried illegal drugs rose from 7 % in 1995 to 24 % in 2003. Increasingly, people start to drink alcohol, use drugs and smoke earlier; at the age of 12 or earlier: more than one fourth of the boys who have got drunk; one sixth of the pupils who have tried drugs; one third of the boys and one fifth of the girls who smoke regularly. Illegal drugs are consumed mostly in Tallinn and Ida-Viru county, and drugs from the towns have also reached the country. Like in previous studies, the 2003 survey indicated that boys from Estonian language schools get drunk more frequently and illegal drug triers are more numerous in Russian language schools.

The study of the attitudes and experiences of young people at special schools and childcare institutions in connection with sexual, mental and physical abduction¹⁶¹ filled a major gap in the investigations of the abduction of children and youth, providing a thorough picture of abuse experiences of children living in institutions (15-19 years of age from 11 orphanages, 6 shelters and 3 special schools). The investigation showed that among the youth who study at special schools and live in a shelter, the share of those drinking alcohol, addicting drugs and behaving criminally is bigger than among orphanage children. At the same time, the survey indicated that the youth who lived in orphanages were much more inclined to have taken drugs at least once or were addicted to drugs than school children in 2003. Every fifth orphanage child who answered the questionnaire, 36 % of the wards of shelters and 38 % of the wards of special schools had at least once experienced sexual abuse. 21 % of the orphanage children, 31 % of the wards of special schools and 42 % of the shelter wards mentioned an experience of physical violence; and of mental abduction, 28, 41 and 47 % respectively.

According to the most recent data based on an international (30 countries) comparative self-reporting survey of offences committed by children (pupils in grades seven to nine) — conducted

¹⁵⁹ Seksuaalse väärkohtlemise kogemused ja hoiakud Eesti noorte hulgas (Experiences of and attitudes toward sexual abuse among Estonian young people).

¹⁶⁰ Allaste, A.-A. 2004. Muutused Eesti koolinoorte uimastitarbimises (Changes in the consumption of drugs by Estonian pupils) (ESPAD 1995, 1999, 2003).

¹⁶¹ Erikoolides ja laste hoolekandeesutustes elavate noorte hoiakud ja kogemused seoses seksuaalse, vaimse ja füüsilise vägivallaga (Attitudes and experiences of young people at special schools and childcare institutions in connection with sexual, mental and physical abduction).

in 2006 by the University of Tartu and financed by the Ministry of Justice ¹⁶² — Estonian children stand out in comparison with other countries by large alcohol consumption: 87 % have drunk alcohol during their lifetime, 45 % of the children during the last month. A sad fact is that even in the youngest age group (12-13 years old) approximately one third of both girls and boys had, during the month preceding the questioning, consumed alcohol at least once. Alcohol consumption is increasing with age equally among girls and boys. Consumption of alcohol and drugs is connected with the place of residence (kind of settlement): both low and strong alcoholic beverage was during the last month consumed mostly in Tallinn (45 and 27 % of young people, respectively), and when leaving aside Tallinn, low-alcohol beverages were consumed in major towns and strong alcoholic beverages in smaller settlements. Drug addiction is quite widespread among young people, as 17 % of the respondents had consumed drugs at least once. Drug consumption in major towns (24 % of the respondents in Tallinn) is much more widespread than in smaller settlements. Estonian youth consume more alcoholic beverages than Russian youngsters (87 and 82 % respectively); however, Russian youth consume more cannabis and hashish than Estonians (20 and 15 % respectively).

A survey of the deviant behaviour of Estonian children ¹⁶³ indicated that boys and girls are distinguished in that the violent behaviour of girls diminishes with age while that of boys grows. The deviant behaviour of children is influenced primarily by bad relationships between parents, and less by whether they live in a divorced family or in a two-parent family: the bigger and more violent the conflict between parents grows, the greater is the risk of violation of law by children, in particular among boys. Deviant behaviour has a connection with the kind of settlement: shoplifting is most popular in smaller towns (6 % during the last year) and least popular in villages or townships (0.2 %); a knife or anything alike was most frequently carried by young people in towns (11 % during the last year).

The results of the above-mentioned survey ¹⁶⁴ disproved the widespread belief that upbringing by a single mother is not sufficient in order to keep youths away from committing a violation of law and that children growing up with a single mother commit more violations of law than other children of the same age. The survey demonstrated that the presence or non-presence of a father in a family does not directly influence violation of law, but it does influence the deviant behaviour of children (absence from school, consumption of alcohol and drugs). Parents' concern for the doings of their children has a significant influence on the children's behaviour: when parents or other adults know where and with whom their child goes out, the risk of violation of law is much smaller. The better the relationships between child and parents, the less frequently he/she will commit violations of law. Hence it is important how parents get along with each other as well as how they get along with their children.

A survey financed by the Ministry of Justice ¹⁶⁵ to study the background of the problems of children sent to the juvenile committee (mapping data on 78 children, accounting for one fifth of 7 to 18-year-old children who had been to a juvenile committee in 2004) and the possibilities of the juvenile committee to support children with sanctions, demonstrated that 78 % of the clients of the

¹⁶² Markina, A. and Šahverdov-Žarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

¹⁶³ Markina, A. and Šahverdov-Žarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Markina, A. and Šahverdov-Žarkovski, B., Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant behaviour of Estonian children), 2006.

¹⁶⁵ Rannala, I.-E., Tiko, A. and Rohtla, A., Käitumisraskustega noored ja neile määratud mõjutusvahendite kohaldamine alaealiste komisjonides (Young people with behavioural problems and the juvenile committee sanctions to use against them), 2006.

committee are boys (in recent years the share of girls has started to increase) and mostly 12 to 16 years of age, of whom two thirds speak Estonian. The cases sent to the committee have essentially changed: unlike earlier times, the committee has now cases of road traffic offences, violation of alcohol and tobacco laws, whereas the cases of non-attendance of school obligation have increased (approximately two thirds of all cases in 1999-2002 compared to only 17 % in 2004). Children sent to the committee are divided into single clients who have often committed a small theft, road traffic offence or childish mischief. As a rule, home is responsible for the child's welfare and supports the child, and therefore the punishment should be limited to a police procedure; and frequent clients who are mainly children who have no support at home due to the problems like unemployment, sickness, helplessness, as well as violence, alcohol.

2. Assessment of the overall framework for coordinating and developing policies

2.1. Policy framework

For the achievement of this, the governing coalition has planned 17 fiscal, economic, legal and education policy steps, mostly to improve children's standard of living. For example, through: parental benefit-related measures (extension of the period of payment, payment to the father, change of the payment system to encourage the birth of a third and fourth child, benefits for the third and consecutive child as of cessation of payment, care and medical assistance to small children at the rate of 13 % of the parental benefit, the annual State pension insurance coefficient rise to 1 until the child has reached three years of age, increase the childcare allowance until the child reaches three years to EUR 102 a month by 2009); a national investment programme called 'Nursery school available to each and every child'; the so-called poll tax of the nursery school child for local authorities that fail to provide a nursery school student place; to develop flexible work and childcare opportunities (support employment training and calculate the time spent by a parent on parental leave as a part of the unemployment insurance); national hobby school money (a poll tax of EUR 128 a year for every child of school age, i.e. 6-19 years); the rate of support to foster families to the same level as the actual costs in the child's home (EUR 191 a month, currently EUR 96); benefit for families with many children from the fifth child (currently, from the seventh child); the allocation of EUR 3.2 million a year for solving dwelling problems of families with many children; EUR 1.3 million annually for HIV, drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking, traffic hooliganism, unhealthy nutrition, sedentary lifestyles, etc.

2.2. Analysis of main policies

2.2.2. Social protection benefits and tax benefits

Social protection measures are used mostly in the situation where the need for assistance is bigger than the possibilities of public services. General public services are characterised by their equal accessibility (e.g. basic education, primary health services, etc.). Related services are limited in time and oriented to results, and the beneficiary is related to general public services so that the need for support services will disappear or becomes minimal (counselling, case management, legal assistance, training, etc.). Supporting services are long term in nature and their constant rendering is necessary in order for the beneficiary to use general public services (day centres, home care, set guardianship, probation supervision, etc). Special services are needed when for some reason, there is no possibility by the general public services (teaching of

children with special educational needs at special schools, institutional care, etc). In the system of consecutive services, each follow-up service is rendered only when the previous service could not satisfy the person's needs, or when the person could not use the service. The number of users of services is diminishing according to the grade of specificity. Levels of rendering services cannot be directly connected to State government levels. For rendering assistance, the most optimal distance should be found, primarily considering the beneficiary's interests. As the Constitution does not set any limits to social protection guaranteed by the State to individuals, it is necessary to do so in other laws. An important keyword in setting limits is 'equal treatment'. Practical need is primarily on delimiting the lower margin, meaning agreements expressing values on the State level (there already are agreements for example on financial income — subsistence minimum, minimum wage, etc.). The existing agreements do not concern non-financial assistance and the situation is therefore uneven. In the development of social protection of children, it is also important to define the so-called 'basic set', which will be available for all children to satisfy their needs.

2.2.9. Policies to promote the care and protection of children at risk, including integrated early intervention initiatives or policies to assist children with special needs or policies to counter discrimination

A survey of children in the juvenile committee ¹⁶⁶ indicated that of the nine sanctions, those mainly used are: a warning; community service (but there are serious problems with finding and organising one); and sending the child to a specialist (but there are not enough specialists and there are problems with feedback). It was also discovered that the biggest shortage of sanctions exists concerning the organisation of study, which are extremely limited and inflexible. Estonia needs more boarding school facilities or boarding schools, also for children with behavioural and mental disorders or -diseases, as well as expansion of vocational education to younger children with lower education (currently it is available from 17 years of age onwards and from the eighth or ninth grade). As a result of the survey it was acknowledged that successful crime prevention should begin with support to families and by creating an experience of success at school, and it is also important to notice problems and intervene professionally in time, which in turn presumes responsible political choices and revision of values that serve as the basis for selection criteria. Successful prevention of crime among youth presumes investment into the implementation of these tasks: we cannot rely on the work of volunteers but need to create relevant services and educate experts for rendering these services.

¹⁶⁶ Rannala, I.-E., Tiko, A. and Rohtla, A., Käitumisraskustega noored ja neile määratud mõjutusvahendite kohaldamine alaealiste komisjonides (Children with behavioural problems and sanctions used in juvenile committees), 2006.

Annex 2: Tables

Table 1 At-risk-of-poverty rate by age and gender in 2004, %

Gender	Total	Age groups				
		0-17	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-17
Total	18.3	21.4	23.8	21.9	17.8	22.7
Female	19.1	20.2	23.0	20.0	17.2	20.2
Male	17.4	22.6	24.5	23.6	18.3	25.0

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

Table 2 At-risk-of-poverty rate by household type in 2004, %

	Total	Age groups				
		0-17	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-17
Total no dependent children	19.0					
Total dependent children	17.7	21.5	24.0	22.8	18.0	22.3
Single parent, at least 1 dependent child	40.3	44.6	(70.3)	(41.4)	(39.5)	39.1
2 adults, 1 dependent child	13.0	13.0	...	...	...	(16.3)
2 adults, 2 dependent children	12.4	13.6	(20.9)	(14.0)	(8.3)	(14.8)
2 adults, 3+ dependent children	25.0	25.6	(24.6)	(27.6)	23.1	(28.8)
Other households with dependent children	13.0	16.0	(12.6)	(13.0)	(18.2)	18.6

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

() unreliable data (based on 20 to 49 persons of the sample); ... extremely unreliable data (based on less than 20 persons of the sample).

Table 3 At-risk-of-poverty rate by age and region in 2004, %

	Total	0-17 years
Total	18.3	21.8
Tallinn	10.9	(11.1)
Harju	11.2	...
Hiiu	22.4	(22.6)
Ida-Viru	25.2	31.8
Järva	26.1	(37.2)
Jõgeva	36.0	49.2
Lääne	22.9	(31.3)
Lääne-Viru	23.1	(29.9)
Pärnu	18.7	(21.4)
Põlva	26.9	(28.0)
Rapla	23.2	(27.9)
Saare	20.6	(21.6)
Tartu	17.3	(15.8)
Valga	26.5	(29.0)
Viljandi	23.9	28.6
Võru	24.2	(22.5)

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

() unreliable data (based on 20 to 49 persons of the sample); ... extremely unreliable data (based on less than 20 persons of the sample).

Table 4. At-risk-of-poverty rate by at-risk-of-poverty threshold and age in 2004, %

Age	At-risk-of-poverty threshold, % of median		
	40 %	50 %	70 %
Total	7.1	11.3	26.2
0-17	9.2	14.5	27.3
0-4	11.3	16.9	28.6
5-9	10.8	17.5	28.7
10-14	6.2	10.7	22.2
15-17	8.1	13.1	29.6

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

() unreliable data (based on 20 to 49 persons of the sample); ... extremely unreliable data (based on less than 20 persons of the sample).

Table 5. At-risk-of-poverty rate by at-risk-of-poverty threshold and household type in 2004, %

	Household type					
	Total dependent children	single parent, at least 1 child	2 adults, at least 1 child	2 adults, 2 children	2 adults, 3+ children	other with children
40 % of median						
Total dependent children	7.3	19.1	5.2	6.4	10.9	3.2
0-17	9.4	21.1	...	(7.1)	13.6	...
0-4	(16.5)	...	...	...	...	...
5-9	(10.0)	...	...	...	...	...
10-14	(5.7)	...	...	...	...	...
15-17	8.5	(15.4)	...	...	...	...
50 % of median						
Total dependent children	11.7	28.2	8.6	8.8	19.0	7.2
0-17	14.3	31.8	(8.6)	(8.5)	21.7	9.4
0-4	17.4	...	...	...	(23.5)	...
5-9	15.6	...	...	(12.0)	...	...
10-14	10.4	...	...	...	(20.6)	(10.6)
15-17	13.9	(23.2)	...	...	(23.5)	(9.7)
70 % of median						
Total dependent children	23.3	51.9	18.5	17.7	30.3	18.6
0-17	26.1	55.5	18.2	18.1	33.0	19.3
0-4	28.7	(79.0)	...	(22.7)	(33.1)	(18.7)
5-9	26.9	(43.5)	...	(20.5)	(34.4)	(18.5)
10-14	20.9	(49.0)	...	(10.0)	(28.0)	(21.0)
15-17	28.4	51.1	(19.8)	(23.2)	39.3	(21.8)

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

() unreliable data (based on 20 to 49 persons of the sample); ... extremely unreliable data (based on less than 20 persons of the sample).

Table 6. Relative median risk-of-poverty gap by age and gender in 2004, %

	Total	Age group				
		0-17	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-17
Total	24.0	30.3	43.2	32.1	26.3	26.4
Female	20.8	30.1	33.7	36.2	26.3	27.9
Male	28.6	28.6	26.3	31.3	27.2	24.3

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

Table 7. Relative median risk-of-poverty gap by household type in 2004, %

	No dependent children	Dependent children	Single parent at least 1 child	2 adults 1 dependent	2 adults, 2 children	2 adults, 3+ children	Other with children
Total	19.2	28.0	33.6	28.6	30.0	32.1	18.8
0-17	...	30.1	30.1	29.9	33.6	32.1	20.1

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

<http://pub.stat.ee>

Table 8. At-risk-of-poverty rate by age and nationality in 2004, %

Gender	Total		Age groups									
			0-17		0-4		5-9		10-14		15-17	
	Est.	Non-Est.	Est.	Non-Est.	Est.	Non-Est.	Est.	Non-Est.	Est.	Non-Est.	Est.	Non-Est.
Total	17.5	20.1	20.4	25.9	22.7	(29.6)	20.0	(28.8)	17.3	(19.1)	21.9	25.2
Male	16.6	19.1	20.0	31.1	20.9	...	21.1	...	16.3	...	23.1	(28.7)
Female	18.3	20.9	20.3	(20.3)	23.4	...	19.3	...	18.5	...	20.1	(21.4)

Source: Statistics Estonia, 2007.

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