



Foundation for Cultural Studies
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Preventing dropping out from school through socio-pedagogical intervention – *Estonian experience*

Tiina Naarits-Linn
Maria-Helena Naarits

International forum „School dropout: In Search for the Right Approach“ in
Sofia, Bulgaria in August 2012

Organizer of the forum: Foundation Madara Bulgaria, www.madara.bas.bg

Supporter of the Estonian delegacy: Open Estonia Foundation, www.oef.org.ee

Estonian representing organisation: Crisis Consulting Center Mahena, www.mahena.org

Republic of Estonia

www.estonia.eu



- **Established freedom:** 18th of February, 1918
- **Population:** 1,34 million
- **Capital:** Tallinn
- **Official language:** Estonian
- **Currency:** EUR (1€=1,96 BGL)
- **NATO member since** 29th of March, 2004
- **EU member since** 1th of May, 2004
- **Ethnic groups:** Estonians (68%), Russians (25%), others (7%)
- **Geography:**
 - neighbour-countries: Latvia, Russia, Finland
 - has 1521 islands
 - 55% of the Estonia are forests
 - highest point: Suur Munamägi (Great Egg hill) 318m
- **Temperature range:** -20C in February and +20C in July

Distances (km) from Tallinn to



802377 (R01083) 5-95

Helsinki (Finland) – 85

Riga (Latvia) – 310

St. Petersburg (Russia) – 386

Stockholm (Sweden) – 483

Vilnius (Lithuania) – 602

Warsaw (Poland) – 975

Prague (Czech Republic) – 1731

Budapest (Hungary) – 1850

Bucharest (Romania) – 2263

Sofia (Bulgaria) – 2389

Tiina Naarits-Linn

- She is crisis counsellor, psychology teacher, social pedagogue. Has worked both as a school and police psychologist and has experience in international crisis work. During the period 2008-2010 she periodically worked in Georgia, where she was part of the UNICEF Georgia. Work languages are Estonian and Russian.
- 2009-2012 she was the project leader in ESF project „Preventing students from being expelled from school by improving social subsistence.“
- She has written few books, including practical experience-books for adults that wish to support troubled children.



Since 2005 she leads a crisis counseling center (NGO) in Estonia. Besides different courses in her NGO she gives two courses in universities: „Diagnostic methods in social pedagogy and using drawing-tests“ in the University of Tallinn and „Crisis behaviour and psycho-social crisis intervention“ in Estonia Academy of Security Sciences.

Maria-Helena Naarits

- She is currently a third year BA student in the University of Tartu (Estonia), where she is practicing two specialities – psychology and semiotics
- She has attended different psychology courses outside her university, aslo given her first lectures-seminars during the ESF project „Preventing students from being expelled from school by improving social subsistence“. During the project she also participated in composing materials for support persons.
- She was for 5 years co-editor in local newspaper and has helped giving out few books, where she has been an editor and written few chapters. She leads a little publishing company Namaste, which has given out three books by now.
- Work languages are Estonian and English.



**Estonian experience:
prevent dropout from primary school**

NGO Mahena leaded ESF project

(2009/IX-2012/V)

- Research for elementary school students across country (1008 stuents, 1008 parents)
 - To create a reliable picture of the students in different regions and social-financial circumstances
 - To determine the main risk-factors due to what youngsters fall out from school
 - To determine the special needs of children with learning difficulties
- Testing the focus group (150 students, 2 times)
 - Students aged 12-16 with many problems and high risk of dropping out from school
- Practical work done by 50 support specialists
 - With 150 focus group students during 2 school-year period
 - Every support person had 3 students

Dropping out from school in Estonia

- Country bears hard upon low education level
(*According to Statistics Estonia 2010*):
 - Unemployment among youngsters aged 17-27 is more than 50%
 - Earnings among people without basic education (9 years in school) are 82% supportmoney, only 12% salary and 6% other earnings
 - Earnings among people with higher education are 71% salary, 13% supportmoney, 16% other earnings (dividends etc)
- School directors don't think that dropping out from school is a problem
 - Custom is to get rid of troubled child than to find resolutions for the problems

- European Union Lisbon Strategy has an aim that 85% of youngsters has at least secondary education.
- Estonian national plan „Smart and active nation, 2009-2012“ assigns that by the year 2013 the dropout from middle school is less than 1%.
- The aim is accomplished, BUT
 - Among 7-9 class students is dropping out almost 2%
 - Average age of the students that drops out from middle school is decreased
- Every child that skips the school is a loss

General portrait of a student who is in danger-group

- Behavior is neglectful and denying against society standards, self-destructive
- Learning is constantly disturbed, occur different problems, also unwillingness to attend school
- Suicide-behavior and thoughts are sometimes possible, which base on
 - Unbearably difficult life subsistence
 - Feeling as life is pointless because of the deadlock in life
 - Feeling as they are burden for close ones

A portrait of a youngster aged 12-16 who is in risk of dropping out from school

1. Continuous school harassment (bullying)
 - mostly the victim, sometimes the bully one, half of them are both
2. During the last 2 years has experienced traumatic event
 - and/or emotionally difficult situation (98%)
3. Unbalanced situation at home
 - among 2/3 of the families has frequently quarrels, among 15% of the children are abused, among 42% of the families consume often alcohol
4. Parents don't have time for children
5. Child disturbs in a class a lot

6. Child has changed schools (41% of dropped out children)
7. Child has often conflicts when socialising
 - quarrels with teachers, classmates, family
8. Difficulties with studying start in Math and in language lessons
9. Child is not involved with activities
10. Child has only one parent
11. Problems outside home and school (drinking, smoking, involvement with police)
12. Lots of problems at the time
13. Mostly a boy (2/3 of the risk group are boys)

Harassment in school related socialising

- Harassment related with school can occur both – in school or outside
- Mostly between students, sometimes between students and teachers
- Mostly children don't say anything about violence, but they are willing to answer some questions
- Often teachers or parents don't step in at all or they react more than necessary

- Mostly (2/3) victim causes himself the violent behavior he gets
 - Corrupts some social standard
- People don't know how to give primary advice to stop the violence
 - Find a positive thinking friend
 - Make notes about the harassment
 - Tell it in public that someone bullies you
 - Analysis valid group standard
- When dealing with violence it is important to see the whole – victim, bully and group standards

5-steps to social-pedagogical intervention

- Focused and systematic survey
 - Conversations at least 2 times in a month
 - Filling specific survey papers (to see the change)
- Schematic solutions for the problems
 - 5-step model for the student
 - 7-step model for the teachers and family

- Trainings about social abilities for teachers, support persons, parents
 - 4-32 h
 - Main subjects:
 - Understanding the problems and behavior in crisis; different intervention techniques
 - Self-help and advisers co-operation abilities
 - Ethics in intervention

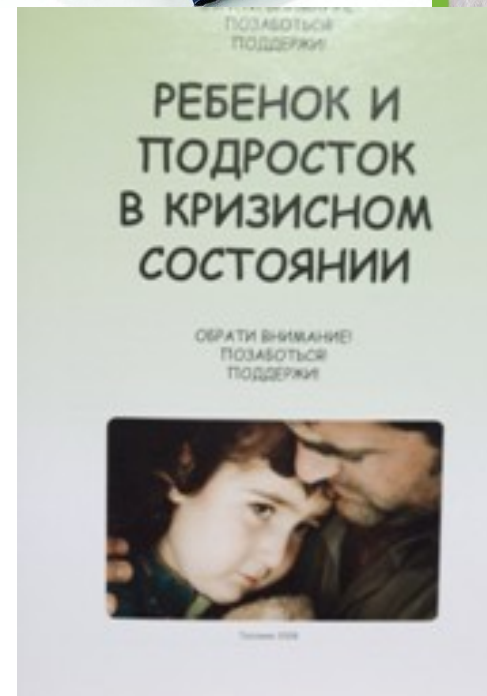
- Supervision for support persons
 - Once in quarter of a year in areal meeting
 - Individually according to necessity

- Handbooks

- Sighting the problems and disorders early, explaining approaches, practical facilities (*„Karid ja päästerõngad“*, 204 p., Estonian)



- *Psychological crisis help among psychic and physical traumas, harassment and grief* (*„Psühhosotsiaalne kriisisekkumine koolisuhetes“*, 38 p. and *„Laps ja nooruk kriisis“*, 10 p., Estonian and Russian)



Results of the project (150 students)

- Risk of dropping out from school decreased or disappeared
 - 16% (24) of the children changed school, so it is not controllable how they attend school now
 - 84% (126) proceeded studies
 - 74% (111) were not anymore in risk group
 - 10% (15) needed continually individual work
- Enlarged co-operation between areal, national and between Estonian and Russian specialists

- Trust to the specialists among parents arised
 - Went more often to the specialists at the beginning of the problems
 - Asked for trainings
 - Went to the doctors with a child
- Children behavior changed
 - Teachers praised them more
 - Involvement with police decreased a lot
 - Children ask for help by themself
 - Self-analysis improved

Abstract

- Dropping out from school is a social problem and expensive for society, but not important enough for school directors.
- Child can study, if
 - There are conditions for it both at school and at home
 - Child's health allows it
 - Individual support is assured if needed
- Studing needs to be supported by teachers, support persons, advisers and parents, who must evolve their social skills for better results



We wish faith and
consistency for finding solutions!

Thank you for the opportunity
to share our experiences!

Respectfully,
Tiina Naarits-Linn
tiina@mahena.org
Maria-Helena Naarits
maria@mahena.org