Stop program – Alternative Solution for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency in Croatia?

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Starting point

• 8,000 violations committed by minors per year in Croatia
• Emphasis on prevention programs
• **Goal**: to reduce the incidence of violence among children using early intervention, education, consulting and/or involving children and minors in social activities
Stop program

• First national program for preventing juvenile delinquency in Croatia
• Association of youth and family judges and specialists, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Interior, social welfare centres and associations in Zagreb
• Contemporary educational program based on the principles of restorative justice
• Offers rapid treatment of unacceptable behaviour by replacing the trial proceedings with voluntary work, counselling and social skills training
Halt program

- *Het Alternatief* → the alternative, 1981, Rotterdam
- Restorative program for juveniles - focus on minor offences
- Shoplifting, embezzlement and fencing goods, vandalism, graffiti, firework offence, disturbing the order in public transport
Criteria for Halt

- Age: 12 – 18 years
- Offence on the list of Halt offences
- Juvenile admits crime
- Juvenile is first (or second) offender
- Juvenile (and parents) agree with referral to Halt
Most committed offences of minors in 2009 (%)

- Shoplifting - Embezzlement: 33%
- Disturbing the order and peace: 18%
- Using pyrotechnic devices: 15%
- Skipping school: 14%
- Vandalism: 11%
Motivation for offending

- 25% wants to join the group
- 12% is stirred up by friends
- 11% does it for excitement/kick
- 10% does it for fun
- 7% does it out of being bored
Restorative elements

• Victim and offender oriented
• Less focused on punishment, more on empowerment, restoration (apologies and compensation for damage) and prevention (diversion from the criminal justice system)
• Stronger emphasis on parent involvement and peer mediation programs in order to encourage reflection on behaviour
Advantages

- Pedagogical alternative for traditional prosecution
- Reacts at early stage, swiftly and consistently to the offence
- Confronts juvenile with consequences of behavior
- Juvenile can avoid criminal record
- Less cases (Public Prosecution)
How does Halt work?

1. Offence
2. Official report by police
3. Judgement / review by police conform Halt criteria?
   - yes
     - Halt program
     - Successfull: positive message to police - case dismissed
   - no
     - Judicial procedure
     - Official report to Public Prosecutor
     - Failure: negative message to police
Financing

Overall budget approx. € 20 million (50 % / 50 %)

Halt Program

Central financing by Ministry of Security and Justice based on output

Educational programs

Local financing by municipalities
Stop program

- National strategy for the prevention of behavioral disorders of children and youth from 2009-2012 in 2009
- **GOALS:** Ensuring basic conditions necessary for successful and healthy growth and development of younger generation in Republic of Croatia
- Elimination of risk factors responsible for emergence of behavioral disorders
In order to investigate the occurrence of behavioral disorders: Working Group → Standards for terminology, definition, criteria and method of monitoring the occurrence of behavioral disorders in children and youth

- **Standards**: allowed representatives of relevant institutions, civil society organizations and government bodies to:
  1) identify behavioral problems
  2) take appropriate measures in fighting them
Stop program

• **The main objective:** to improve alternative sanctions and educational measures for juveniles who started with inappropriate behavior and direct them towards socially acceptable behavior

• **Short-term goals:** to increase the number of experts who work with young people; network institutions and organizations; to create common ground in order to react to the first bad behavior of juveniles
Criteria for Stop

- Age: 14 – 16 years \((\text{Halt: 12-18})\)
- Offence on the list of Stop offences
- Juvenile admits crime
- Juvenile is first offender
- Juvenile (and parents) agree with referral to Stop
Offence on the list of Stop offences

• First driving without helmet
• Disturbing public peace and order
• Drawing graffiti or damaging the public land
• Consumption of alcohol or drugs

→ interference with the current Misdemeanour Law: all offences must pass the judicial process- LIMITATIONS
• The first phase of the program- minor being in a public place after 11 p.m. without an adult, in a group of people consuming alcohol

• Article 95 of the Family Law→ parents have a duty to prohibit minors under 16 staying out unaccompanied

• Police annually records more than 3,000 cases of young people under 16 who are on the street after 11 p.m. without parental supervision → no penalties for this offence
Pilot project

- 10 minors
- Schools, associations, social services and the police in the district were connected and agreement on cooperation was signed
• 23rd to 25th of November → police approached 12 minors caught being in a public place without supervision and in company of people who consumed alcohol

• Minors and their parents were invited to the police station for a consultation and presentation of Stop program

• Out of 12 juvenile offenders 10 agreed to counselling and voluntary work in one of associations

• The program lasted for 3 weeks
Future projects

- The Centre and Sesvete
- End of summer 2013
- 15 minors
Financing Stop

Overall budget for pilot project: 40,000 HRK (approx. € 5,290)

Stop program

Pilot project

Cooperating associations in Trnje

Financed by City of Zagreb and Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Welfare (approx. € 2,645)
Future projects

- Public bidding: approx. € 2,645
- Education Office: approx. € 2 000
- Local fund-raising activities:?

TWO MUNICIPALITIES = € 4645
Future challenges/ obstacles

• Lack of financial resources
• Modification of Misdemeanor Law
• Lack of specially educated social workers and pedagogues
• Recidivism
• Proving the necessity and effectiveness of Stop (cultural differences, different systems)
Thank you!