Prevention of Children at Risk from Coming in Conflict with the Law in Europe and Central Asia

UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
“Implementing evidence-based prevention programs for girls/boys at risk and their parents/families and developing a comprehensive national prevention strategy, together with girls/boys, that also address the needs of children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility and children involved in status offences and sexual exploitation, will significantly reduce the number of girls/boys at risk who may come in conflict with the law at a later stage of their lives.”

Table of contents

1. The concept of ‘prevention of child offending’  
   1.1. Primary, or general, prevention of child offending  
   1.2. Secondary, or specific, prevention of child offending  
   1.3. Tertiary, or reactive, prevention of child offending

2. International and European standards on the prevention of child offending

3. Two systemic approaches to prevention promoted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child
   3.1. Intervention programmes for children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility
   3.2. Decriminalization of status offences and child victims of sexual exploitation

4. Comprehensive national prevention strategy
   4.1. Content of national prevention strategies
   4.2. Tackling risk factors of child offending
   4.3. Fostering protective factors of child offending

5. Children’s participation in prevention of child offending

6. Evidence-based prevention programmes for children at risk
   6.1. Family-based and community-based prevention programmes
   6.2. Prevention programmes for children charged in counter-terrorism contexts
   6.3. Prevention of child offending through sport-based prevention programmes

7. Coordination between the child justice sector and other sectors for the prevention of child offending

8. References on prevention of child offending
1. The concept of ‘prevention of child offending’

‘Crime prevention’ can be defined as “strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes.” Prevention has been proven to be the most effective way of reducing crime rates, specifically offences committed by children. Preventing the committing of crime by children benefits not only the children and their families, but also their communities and the society as a whole.

Prevention of child offending can be considered a three-level strategy, also called a ‘prevention pyramid’ (see Figure 1 and subsequent subsections). This advocacy brief focuses exclusively on prevention of child offending – that is, preventing children under the age of 18 years from entering the child justice system as alleged child offenders or, in other words, preventing children at risk from coming in conflict with the law (section 1.2.).

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2 The primary focus of UNICEF’s Child Protection Strategy 2021-30 is prevention. The Strategy is intended to scale up evidence-based prevention approaches at the population level – not only in the core child protection sectors of social welfare and justice, but also in the education, health, social protection and other sectors, with strong and clear accountabilities to deliver child protection outcomes.


4 Tertiary prevention of children in conflict with the law is covered in the advocacy briefs on ‘Diversion of Children in Conflict with the Law from Formal Judicial Proceedings’ and ‘Alternatives to Pre-Trial and Post-Trial Detention of Children in Conflict with the Law’.
1.1. Primary, or general, prevention of child offending

Primary, or general, crime prevention is part of the social welfare system and refers to programmes that target all families and children (that is girls and boys who have never been involved in the child justice system and are also not considered at risk of coming into conflict with the law. Primary/general prevention implies creating a protective environment for all children and providing support and education before problems occur. It is intended to tackle the root causes of crime, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, domestic violence and corporal punishment, as well as parental inability to support and care for their children. Primary/general prevention programmes make it less likely for crime to occur, or strengthen community and social structures in order to improve the general well-being of children and their families. Activities could include:\(^5\)

- Educating the general public about domestic violence and/or child abuse
- Raising awareness among teachers, parents, children and young people about (cyber) bullying in schools
- Introducing a curriculum on substance abuse for all students in schools
- Enhancing children’s legal empowerment by providing them with information about their rights and how they can exercise them (by civil society organizations, schools, youth clubs, and so on)
- Applying child protection policies in all schools and institutions

1.2. Secondary, or specific, prevention of child offending

Secondary, or specific, crime prevention is part of the social welfare system and refers to programmes specifically targeting families and their children, or other subgroups that are identified by social services, educational systems or child justice systems as being at risk of coming into conflict with the law. Secondary/specific prevention programmes support vulnerable, dysfunctional and unsupported families and their children in order to prevent them from engaging in illegal and socially unacceptable activities. Activities could include:

- Creating support groups for children exposed to domestic violence and/or substance abuse at home
- Reaching out to pregnant girls and adolescent mothers

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5 The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, 2019, recommends “establishing effective programs for primary prevention to tackle the root causes of crimes committed by children, by strengthening parental support and assistance for dysfunctional families, marginalised communities, addressing domestic violence and gender discrimination, socio-economic disparities and social exclusion, weak educational systems and unemployment among young people” and “allocating adequate resources to primary prevention, particularly including parental support, family-strengthening and community-based programs” (recommendations 3 & 4/page 336).
• Organising informal education/education outside the classroom, or vocational training for out-of-school youth
• Conducting life-skills programmes for children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility who are involved in offending behaviour
• Working with children living and working in the street and/or living in informal settlements or disadvantaged areas with concentrations of economic and social problems
• Supporting vulnerable families that can be characterized by factors such as: poverty; harsh or inconsistent parenting; poor parental supervision; family conflicts and violence; physical, sexual and other violence and abuse; having parents and/or older siblings involved in crime; drug or alcohol abuse or addiction among parents and/or older siblings; or divorce/separation.  

1.3. Tertiary or reactive prevention of child offending

Tertiary, or reactive, crime prevention is part of the child justice system and refers to programmes for children already involved in the child justice system as (alleged) child offenders and children who return to their community after having been in conflict with the law. Tertiary/reactive prevention targets children in conflict with the law (and their parents and caregivers) and aims at prevention of reoffending. Tertiary/reactive prevention programmes provide rehabilitative support to child offenders, and assist them to reintegrate in their communities through community-based services and programmes. Activities could include:

• Referring/diverting child offenders to community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes
• Referring/diverting child offenders to restorative justice processes
• Organizing informal education and/or vocational training for child offenders who serve their sentence in the community
• Conducting life skills programmes and/or job skills programmes for child offenders who are serving their sentences in the community
• Preparing child offenders in juvenile detention centres for early (conditional) release from detention and working with their families and social support systems
• Providing aftercare to children who have been released from detention or residential institutions

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6 In section 4.2., these characteristics are called ‘risk-factors relating to the family’.
In Bulgaria, a systematic approach to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention is still lacking. Local Juvenile Delinquency Commissions implement a range of programmes. However, there is no systematic approach and there are no guidelines, standards and targets devised by the Bulgarian state. The definition of ‘anti-social behaviour’ in article 49(a) of the additional provisions to the Juvenile Delinquency Act (1958), allows for a very broad interpretation of behaviour of children that could constitute grounds for intervention from the child justice system. The judicial and administrative systems operate in silos and are not integrated with the child protection system, which has limited capacity to provide support to and re-socialize children who have committed ‘anti-social’ acts and criminal offences.

2. International and European standards on the prevention of child offending

Various international child-specific instruments incorporate provisions on the prevention of child offending. The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990), also called the ‘Riyadh Guidelines’, deal in their entirety with prevention of child offending. The guidelines emphasize that “the successful prevention of juvenile delinquency requires efforts on the part of the entire society to ensure the harmonious development of adolescents, with respect for and promotion of their personality from early childhood” (guideline 2). One of the guiding principles of the United Nations Common Approach to Justice for Children (2008) is: “Preventing conflict with the law as a crucial element of any juvenile justice policy, Under Guiding Principle 7, the document states that: “Prevention programmes should focus especially on support for particularly vulnerable children and families.” The United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2014) were developed to support a comprehensive, system-wide and strategic approach in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice in order to effectively prevent and respond to violence against children. This document also mentions children in conflict with the law, for example: “Member States that have not yet integrated crime prevention and children’s issues into their overall rule of law efforts [are encouraged to] do so and to develop and implement a comprehensive crime prevention and justice system policy.” The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment No. 24 (2019) on children’s rights in the child justice system states that ‘prevention of child offending’ is one of the core elements of a comprehensive child justice policy (paragraphs 9 to 12). The Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice (2010) also highlight that “in general, a preventive and reintegrating approach should be promoted and implemented in matters of juvenile justice” (explanatory memorandum, paragraph 80).
3. **Two systemic approaches to prevention promoted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child explicates seven **core elements of a comprehensive child justice policy**. Prevention of child offending is mentioned as the first core element, and this incorporates two systemic approaches to prevention of child offending: (i) intervention programmes for children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility; and (ii) decriminalization of status offences and child victims of sexual exploitation.7

3.1. **Intervention programmes for children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that “early intervention for children who are below the minimum age of criminal responsibility requires **child-friendly and multidisciplinary responses** to the first signs of behaviour that would, if the child were above the minimum age of criminal responsibility, be considered an offence”8. Offending behaviour by children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility is very often an indicator of their vulnerability, and should be addressed by the social welfare system as part of its secondary prevention strategy rather than by the child justice system.9 Children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility should not be considered children in conflict with the law, but children at risk. Interventions for these children should address the root causes of their offending behaviour, and support their parents and, therefore, be based on a **comprehensive and interdisciplinary assessment** of the child’s familial, educational and social circumstances; the social support system; the motivation for the child’s offending/problematic behaviour; and the child’s particular characteristics and needs. Such an assessment is of particular importance and in the child’s best interests where the family situation of the child is unknown or gives cause for concern. As an absolute priority, children should be **supported within their families and communities**.10 Such family-based and community-based programmes and services enable children to remain at home and in their normal school setting and support their parents, siblings and families.

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7 Paragraphs 9 to 12 of General Comment No.24, 2019.
8 Paragraph 11 of General Comment No. 24, 2019.
10 Paragraph 11 of General Comment No. 24, 2019.
In 2020, the ‘Juvenile Referral Centre’ was established in Georgia, within the ‘National Agency for Crime Prevention, Non-Custodial Sentences and Probation’. The Centre deals with cases of children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility who commit illegal acts. It assesses their needs and refers them to relevant services. In doing so, the Centre cooperates with the key state agencies in the justice, social and education sectors. Although services for children under minimum age of criminal responsibility are limited in Georgia, the ongoing development support seeks to strengthen the capacities of the Centre for designing and implementing new and more effective services.

3.2. Decriminalization of status offences and child victims of sexual exploitation

The other systemic approach to prevention promoted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child is “closing pathways into the child justice system through the decriminalization of status offences”. These offences are acts, conducts and omissions that are not considered criminal offences if committed by an adult, but are criminal offences when committed by a child. Typical status offences include vagrancy, begging or trespassing, truancy, running away from home or an institution, or being beyond parental control. Status offences are often the result of poverty, homelessness and/or family violence. Sometimes, adolescents who engage with one another in consensual sexual acts and child victims of sexual exploitation are also criminalized. The Committee on the Rights of the Child urges States Parties to remove all status offences from their laws.

4. Comprehensive national prevention strategy

Within child justice policies, emphasis should be placed on national prevention strategies facilitating the successful socialization and integration of all children, in particular through the family, community, peer groups, schools, vocational training and the world of work. The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses that States Parties should develop prevention strategies that are informed by:

11 Article 2(b) of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2000, states that child prostitution is the practice whereby a child is used by others for sexual activities in return for remuneration or any other form of consideration. Legislation should make child prostitution an offence for the person who engages in sexual activity with a child and exempt the child who is exploited for prostitution from being prosecuted as a party to the offence.

12 Paragraph 12 of General Comment No. 24, 2019. See also the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, 2019: “Abolish status offences that criminalise children for acts that would be lawful if they were adults, offences criminalising behavioural issues based on perceptions of morality or tradition and decriminalise children in victimising situations, such as trafficked children or victims of sexual abuse” (recommendation 5/page 336).


14 Paragraph 9 of General Comment No. 24, 2019.
• The United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2014).\textsuperscript{15}
• Comparative national and international research on root causes of children’s involvement in the child justice system.
• Research conducted by the States Parties themselves.

The national prevention strategy should be linked to the national child protection strategy and the national child justice strategy, if developed.

4.1. Content of national prevention strategies

The Riyadh Guidelines (1990) set out a comprehensive and proactive approach to prevention of child offending and social reintegration. They state that “comprehensive prevention plans should be instituted at every level of Government.” The Guidelines elaborate on the content of comprehensive national prevention plans (guideline 9):

• In-depth analyses of the problem and inventories of programmes, services, facilities and resources available.
• Well-defined responsibilities for the qualified agencies, institutions and personnel involved in preventive efforts.
• Mechanisms for the appropriate coordination of prevention efforts between governmental and non-governmental agencies.
• Policies, programmes and strategies based on prognostic studies to be continuously monitored and carefully evaluated in the course of implementation.
• Methods for effectively reducing opportunities to commit delinquent acts.

\textsuperscript{15} This international instrument promotes the implementation of comprehensive prevention programmes on violence against children and urges Member States (paragraph 13):

• To strengthen existing child protection systems and to help to create a protective environment for children.
• To adopt measures to prevent violence within the family and the community, to address cultural acceptance or tolerance of violence against children, including gender-related violence, and to challenge harmful practices.
• To encourage and support the development and implementation at every level of government of comprehensive plans for the prevention of violence against children in all of its forms, based on in-depth analysis of the problem.
• To identify the specific vulnerabilities and risks faced by children in different situations and to adopt proactive measures to reduce those risks.
• To take appropriate actions to support and protect all children, in particular children in different situations of vulnerability and children in need of special protection.
• To be guided by the Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime and play a leading role in developing effective crime prevention strategies and in creating and maintaining institutional frameworks for their implementation and review.
• Community involvement through a wide range of services and programmes.
• Close interdisciplinary cooperation between national, state, provincial and local governments.
• Youth participation in delinquency prevention policies and processes, including recourse to community resources, youth self-help, and victim compensation and assistance programmes.
• Specialized personnel at all levels.

The Riyadh Guidelines (1990) consider prevention of child offending not merely as tackling negative situations, but rather as a means to positively promote general social welfare. The core of prevention of child offending is to **tackle risk factors by fostering protective factors** in children’s lives (see below).

### 4.2. Tackling risk factors of child offending

Offending behaviour of children is the result of a wide range of risk factors and circumstances that influence the lives of individuals, families and local communities. Determining which factors are associated with (which types of) crime contributes to the development of prevention strategies and programmes to change those factors and prevent or reduce the incidence of crime and victimization. The **underlying or causal factors of crime**, also called ‘risk factors’, are of a multifaceted nature (see Figure 2).

**Examples of risk factors** at the various levels are:  

- **Global changes and trends affecting the social and economic conditions of regions and countries**, such as major population movements, rapid urbanization, environmental disasters, economic recessions, and changes in patterns of organized crime.
- **Factors affecting individual countries and local communities**, such as levels of corruption, inadequate infrastructure, poor housing, poor neighbourhood conditions, high levels of income inequality, lack of good education, lack of health services, high unemployment, high crime neighbourhoods and gangs operating in the area, and easy access to alcohol, illicit drugs and/or small arms.

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• Factors relating to the **family and close relationships**, such as poverty, harsh or inconsistent parenting, poor parental supervision, family conflict and violence, early victimization (physical, sexual and other violence and abuse), the involvement of parents and/or siblings in crime, divorce, teenage parenthood, isolation, and relationships with friends and peers that can lead to risk-taking and law breaking.

• Factors affecting **individuals**, such as history of involvement in crime, biological and personal features that may lead to aggressive and disruptive behaviour, or serious substance abuse, poor cognitive development, hyperactivity, conduct disorders, mental health challenges, low school attendance, low educational achievement, association with criminal peers, and peer rejection.

### 4.3. Fostering protective factors of child offending

A more positive approach to prevention of child offending focuses on **strengthening the resilience and capacity** of cities, communities and individuals to avoid or reduce crime and victimization. This focus on so-called ‘protective factors’ is also promoted by the Riyadh Guidelines (1990). “Emphasis should be placed on preventive policies facilitating the successful socialization and integration of all children and young persons, in particular through the family, the community, peer groups, schools, vocational training and the world of work, as well as through voluntary organizations” (guideline 10). **Examples of protective factors** at the various levels are:

- **System and city level:** effective and transparent social welfare system and child justice system, well-governed cities with low levels of inequality and effective and fair leadership, medium socioeconomic status, adequate funding for social, environmental and economic programmes, citizen participation, and availability of appropriate education and employment.

- **Local community and school level:** quality neighbourhood recreation, transport and other services and facilities, non-deprived and non-violent neighbourhoods, drug-free neighbourhoods, no gang networks, strong community links and relationships (including those associated with cultural and faith-based groups or respected elders), schools that address not only the academic needs of children but also their social and emotional needs, strong bonds to school and teachers, and good relationships with class/schoolmates.

- **Family and peer level:** no early trauma/abuse, strong bonds to parents, caring parents, consistent parental support and intensive supervision, moral guidance from parents, pro-social parents and siblings, engagement in healthy and safe leisure activities with peers (such as clubs, sports and other recreation), non-offending peers, and positive social skills role models among peers.

- **Individual level:** above-average intelligence, low level of impulsiveness/high level of self-control, social skills, pro-social attitude, empathy, high educational attainment, and continuing education.

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17 Ibid.
5. **Children’s participation in prevention of child offending**

The participation of children in crime prevention and the development of prevention strategies should always be a key programmatic component. The United Nations Model Strategies document states that: “Whenever possible, **children should be consulted** in the formulation of policies and prevention strategies.”\(^{18}\) Empowering children and youth, and utilizing their resourcefulness to create solutions together with decision-makers, are key for reducing violence and crime in communities.\(^{19}\) Specifically, children and youth can be consulted by policymakers and practitioners in the design and implementation of specific crime prevention policies and programmes at the national and local levels. They can play an **active role in community-based initiatives**, for example to address bullying and corporal punishment in schools, mobilize crime prevention ambassadors, participate in peer-to-peer engagement programmes, and organize neighbourhood drug and crime prevention events and awareness-raising activities.

In **North Macedonia**, a justice for children advocacy programme has been opened by UNICEF in cooperation with national CSOs and national institutions. Sixty children are participating in the programme, including children that have been in conflict with the law. They have participated in an orientation training on children rights. After passing a ‘design thinking workshop’, they were divided in five groups in order to develop initiatives and mechanisms for accessing justice. One group proposed the introduction of peer mediation in schools as a restorative justice mechanism that will support children when they have conflicts or misunderstandings. Another initiative is related to establishing school clubs, to ensure that all children can have a direction and structured time to strive and fulfil their full potential. The third initiative relates to the right of every child to quality education, including children in contact with the law. The fourth mechanism is a one-stop-shop for information, counselling and support for children when their rights are violated or entitlements denied. The last group has worked on a forum theatre that depicts the reality of children when they are faced with bullying and violence. The children and youth have also participated in numerous consultations and meetings, including in the consultations and the presentation of the National Strategy on Prevention and Justice for Children. The programme has proved particularly beneficial for the reintegration of children that have been in conflict with the law and preventing recidivism.

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6. Evidence-based prevention programmes for children at risk

Internationally, countries are encouraged to promote the use and scaling-up of evidence-based prevention programmes that are tailored to national or local contexts. An evidence-based approach is essential for long-term success in preventing child offending. Research has demonstrated that intensive family-based and community-based programmes designed to make positive changes in children’s homes, schools, communities and peer relations reduce the risk of children coming into conflict with the law (see below).

UNICEF North Macedonia has developed a pool of prevention programs for children at risk of coming in conflict with the law and reintegration programs for children who are already in conflict with the law that consists of life-skills programs, peer mentoring programs, abuse and addiction programs, restorative justice programs and a parental skills program.

6.1. Family-based and community-based prevention programmes

Family-based prevention programmes and services focus on support to families, in particular those in vulnerable situations or where violence occurs, and support to children at risk, in particular girls and boys who stop attending school, are excluded or otherwise do not complete their education. The Riyadh Guidelines state that: “Measures should be taken and programmes developed to provide families with the opportunity to learn about parental roles and obligations as regards child development and child care, promoting positive parent-child relationships, sensitizing parents to the problems of children and young persons and encouraging their involvement in family and community-based activities.” UNODC has developed a detailed report on evidence-based family skills training programmes. Community-based programmes and

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22 Paragraph 10 of General Comment No.24, 2019.

23 Articles 18 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, confirm the importance of the responsibility of parents for the upbringing of their children, but at the same time the CRC requires States parties to provide the assistance to parents/caregivers necessary to carry out their child-rearing responsibilities. Investment in early childhood care and education correlates with lower rates of future violence and crime. This can commence when the child is very young, for example with home visitation programs to enhance parenting capacity.


services that respond to the specific needs, problems, concerns and interests of children and that provide appropriate counselling and guidance to their families are also required. The Riyadh Guidelines state that: “Community-based services and programmes should be developed for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, particularly where no agencies have yet been established. Formal agencies of social control should only be utilized as a means of last resort (guideline 6).” The Committee on the Rights of the Child explicitly promotes the development of programmes to improve parent-child interaction, partnerships with schools, positive peer association, and cultural and leisure activities. The Riyadh Guidelines mention that: “Communities should provide, or strengthen where they exist, a wide range of community-based support measures for young persons, including community development centres, recreational facilities and services to respond to the special problems of children who are at social risk.” (guideline 33). Other sources emphasize the importance of education and skills training for girls and boys to make them more resilient to crime. Also, life and social skills development programmes help children to increase their self-awareness, regulate their emotions, establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and empathize with others. Such programmes are aimed at enabling children to deal constructively with the demands of daily life, stressors and interpersonal conflicts, and they have made an impact in reducing aggressive behaviour and violence. The World Health Organization has developed a detailed report on evidence-based youth violence prevention programmes. The most effective prevention programmes are parenting programmes, early childhood development programmes, life and social skills programmes, bullying prevention programmes, and therapeutic programmes. At the community and societal levels, the most effective prevention programmes are hotspots policing, community- and problem-oriented policing, reducing access to and the harmful use of alcohol, drug control programmes, reducing access to and misuse of firearms, special modification and urban upgrading, and poverty de-concentration.
According to national legislation in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, courts can place children at risk in institutions with a closed regime (‘deprivation of liberty’), also called ‘special schools’, as a preventive measure. Often, children at risk and children already in conflict with the law are mixed in these institutions. In both countries, UNICEF strongly promotes ‘deinstitutionalization’ of children, especially for children at risk who are deprived of their liberty.

6.2. Prevention programmes for children charged in counter-terrorism contexts

Rather recently, specific programmes are being designed and implemented focusing on prevention of radicalization among children and youth at risk. The United Nations have verified numerous cases of recruitment and exploitation of children by non-state armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups, not only in conflict areas but also in non-conflict areas. When under the control of such groups, children may become victims of multiple types of violations, such as being used in hostilities and/or terrorist acts, being forced to carry out executions, or being used for the transport or sale of drugs. Often, these children are arrested, detained, prosecuted and put on trial for their actions in conflict areas and, to a lesser extent, also in their countries of origin or return. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that States parties “adopt preventive interventions to tackle social factors and root causes, as well as social reintegration measures” for children recruited and exploited by non-state armed groups and terrorist groups. UNODC provides guidance for effective prevention of child involvement by terrorist and violent extremist groups. A comprehensive prevention strategy should be based on:

- Political will to ensure national ownership of prevention strategies and interventions
- A participatory approach to policy development, including a focus on the participation of children
- The promotion of values of inclusion, dialogue and mutual respect
- A multidisciplinary and coordinated approach to avoid fragmentation and duplication of efforts
- Capacity building of institutions and actors involved in preventive efforts
- A proactive role of the justice system in prevention efforts, including through the development of effective legislation in this area
- An in-depth situation analysis

6.3. Prevention of child offending through sport-based prevention programmes

Another rather recent approach promoted by the United Nations consists of sport-based prevention programmes for children at risk of coming into conflict with the law. Member States are encouraged “to use sport-based activities to promote primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of youth crime and the social reintegration of young offenders as well as to prevent recidivism”. The concept of ‘sport’ is understood in a broad sense: “comprising sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms”.

Sport-based programmes can distract children and youth from crime and other problematic activities, contribute to positive personal development and the development of skills or assets, and provide positive role models and access to pro-social networks. Such programmes also have the potential to prevent the recruitment of children and young people into gangs by offering them a way out and facilitating their social reintegration. However, the sports experiences of socially vulnerable children and youth are not always positive and supportive. Their participation in sporting activities can have integrative results, like friendship, trust and social cohesion, but may also have opposite effects, like experiences of personal failure, disappointment, bullying or exclusion. The most effective sport-based crime prevention programmes are those that, among other things:35

- Are institutionalized as part of holistic crime prevention strategies linked to national crime prevention frameworks or specific crime prevention objectives.
- Recruit and engage young people from vulnerable and at-risk groups without stigmatizing them, recognizing that vulnerable groups are far from homogeneous and that each group presents peculiarities that must be considered during the planning and delivery of interventions.
- Are founded on a strength-based approach aimed at enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors, and provide young people with opportunities for success and recognition.
- Downplay the competitive elements of the sporting activities and emphasize internal motivation and individualized standards of success in task-oriented settings.
- Engage qualified trainers, sports coaches and facilitators trained to deliver effective interventions to address risk factors and build the young people’s resilience to crime and victimization.
- Are part of a multi-agency approach, including schools, sports organizations, crime prevention specialists and, where relevant, the police and criminal justice agencies.

7. **Coordination between the child justice sector and other sectors for the prevention of child offending**

Various international instruments emphasize the need for cooperation to ensure effective prevention of child offending. Coordination between the **social sector and child justice sectors** to support families at risk is crucial, especially to prevent children from coming in conflict with the law.\(^{36}\) The complementary roles of the child justice sector on the one hand, and the **social welfare, child protection, health and education sectors**, on the other, are acknowledged more broadly.\(^ {37}\) In fact, only when these sectors work closely together can a protective environment for children be created and effective responses to violence against children offered. The Riyadh Guidelines (1990) highlight cooperation through stating that “comprehensive prevention plans should be instituted at every level of Government and include … mechanisms for the appropriate co-ordination of prevention efforts between governmental and non-governmental agencies … and close interdisciplinary co-operation between national, State, provincial and local governments, with the involvement of the private sector representative citizens of the community to be served, and labour, child-care, health education, social, law enforcement and judicial agencies in taking concerted action to prevent juvenile delinquency and youth crime” (guideline 9(c)(g)) and “efforts should be made and appropriate mechanisms established to promote, on both a multidisciplinary and an intradisciplinary basis, interaction and co-ordination between economic, social, education and health agencies and services, the justice system, youth, community and development agencies and other relevant institutions” (guideline 60).\(^{38}\)

Turkmenistan has regulatory frameworks requiring coordination and an intersectoral approach to prevention of crimes among children. At the same time, actual interagency coordination in the area of child justice needs to be strengthened both at the municipal and national levels. In order to prevent children from coming in conflict with the law, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, on an annual basis, develop and approve an action plan that covers activities with parents in kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities.

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38 In some countries, for example in Albania, judges do not participate in interdisciplinary meetings as they are of the opinion that providing their view during such meetings may jeopardize their independent position and/or used against them by lawyers when the case comes to court. In Albania, court counsellors replace judges in interdisciplinary meetings.
8. References on prevention of child offending

International legal instruments:

Other references: