

## National recommendations on how to ensure alternative care is provided with a focus on the rights of children and their best interests

### Country: *Estonia*

<p><b>Child rights should be introduced as part of an obligatory training for care workers. A minimum number of hours and topics have to be identified. Participatory approach should be recommended for such trainings</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> The National Health Development Institute, who is in charge of organising trainings for this target group and in particular the related trainings. The institute is in subordination of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Also, the Ministry of Social Affairs should be addressed as they are in charge of overall issues related to care and its quality and have the power to regulate the requirement for training and its contents.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> According to the Social Welfare Act, all caregivers in residential care facilities and family-like residential care should undergo an obligatory set of trainings: social work and pedagogic. At the moment, child rights are trained as part of the social work training. Yet the curriculum does not identify how many hours should be dedicated to the topic and what exactly should be addressed. The child rights block in this training is offered as one of three other topics, for which a total number of three hours is envisaged.</p> <p>Child rights and child rights approach should be explicitly trained during the obligatory trainings for care workers (substitute homes, shelters, boarding schools for juvenile offenders). The minimum number of hours should be set and topics to be addressed identified.</p> <p>Trainings should be available both in Estonian language and Russian. It is highly advised that the participatory approach is used for such trainings.</p> <p>A pool of trainers expert in child rights in care and skilled in participatory approaches should be created and used for such trainings. Training for care professionals can be used as the model for such trainings (number of hours, topics, approach). Funding should be allocated for such trainings.</p> <p>It can be beneficial to organise trainings for mixed groups, where kinship families, legal guardian families, foster care families and care workers from institutions are brought together.</p>
<p><b>Child rights should be introduced as part of an</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> The National Health Development Institute who is in charge of organising trainings for this target group and</p>

<p><b>obligatory training for foster carers, kinship carers and legal guardianship foster careers. A minimum number of hours and topics have to be identified. Participatory approach should be recommended for such trainings.</b></p>	<p>in particular the related trainings. The institute is in subordination of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Also, the Ministry of Social Affairs should be addressed as they are in charge of overall issues related to care and its quality and have the power to regulate the requirement for training and its contents.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> According to the Social Welfare Act, all foster parents should undergo an obligatory training which at the moment is PRIDE.</p> <p>Legal guardian families (kinship carers and volunteers not having any connection with the child in need of care) are not obliged to undergo any of the trainings at all.</p> <p>Foster parents and legal guardianship families should be obliged to undergo child rights training as part of preparation for taking a child into care.</p> <p>The minimum number of hours should be set and topics to be addressed identified. Trainings should be available both in Estonian language and Russian. It is highly advised that the participatory approach is used for such trainings. A pool of trainers expert in child rights in care and skilled in participatory approaches should be created and used for such trainings. Training for care professionals can be used as the model for such trainings (topics, number of hours, approach). Funding should be allocated for such trainings. It can be beneficial to organise trainings for mixed groups, where kinship families, legal guardian families, foster care families and care workers from institutions are brought together.</p>
<p><b>Follow up trainings on child rights and child rights approach should be regularly offered to all care workers, foster families, kinship carers and others, at the minimum at least once every three years. The method used should be participatory, with a special section dedicated to case studies and case discussions</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> The National Health Development Institute, who is in charge of organising trainings for this target group and in particular the related trainings. The institute is in subordination of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Also, the Ministry of Social Affairs should be addressed as they are in charge of overall issues related to care and its quality and have the power to regulate the requirement for training and its contents. Also, local county level authorities and child ombudsmen should be addressed as they have the power of monitoring over the quality of the care service provided and competences of the care workers as part of the quality indicator.</p> <p>The third target group are heads of residential care facilities, who should be in charge of professional qualification of the staff they employ and their attitude toward their work with children.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Child rights trainings should be carried out regularly as a follow-up training for professional and volunteer care workers as well as social workers.</p>

	<p>They should be made available every three years. In order to obtain regularity, it is advisable to create a file for each care worker in order to be able to see what training is needed for a specific person.</p> <p>The follow-up training should have a session where it will be possible for the participants to discuss cases from their practice or hypothetical cases of issues that are known.</p>
<p><b>Positive parenting trainings for care workers, foster families, kinship families and others should be made available and part of professional training</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> The National Health Development Institute, which is in charge of implementing a project under which organisation of positive parenting courses “Incredible Years” is managed and the Ministry of Social Affairs having overall responsibility over the quality of alternative care and child rights.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Positive parenting courses are being implemented in Estonia at the moment and are aimed at parents of children with problematic behaviour. Professional care workers and volunteer care workers often have to work with children whose behaviour is problematic, yet they are not required to undergo any such training. Their own knowledge of caring after children might be limited, if at all. Moreover, kinship families take care of relatives’ children, sometimes their own grandchildren as the parents are not able to take care of their children themselves. It might be the case that grandparents, who failed to properly raise their own children as a result, take care of their grandchildren, yet do not receive any additional training.</p>
<p><b>Regular roundtables for care professionals (substitute home care takers, social workers) and care volunteers (kinship families, foster families) should be organised at least once per year</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> A number of stakeholders can be addressed: Child protection division at the Social Insurance Board which is a newly established department whose main responsibilities are to support child protection workers, increase of services and quality of alternative care. This body is under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs who should also be addressed in order to have their support and possible funding. Secondly, the Union of Child and Welfare Institutions and the Union of Alternative Care Workers and organisations of foster families should be addressed as it is important to have this initiative coming from them to increase the ownership and readiness to participate. At the same time, local authorities should be addressed as it is in their power to initiate official cooperation with other stakeholders that are providing services.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Regular roundtables for mixed stakeholders should be</p>

	<p>organised at least once a year in order for various professionals and volunteers to interface and discuss issues of value relevant to all. Sometimes personal factors can serve a positive or negative experience for a stakeholder, and it is important that they share experiences, solve the issues and learn from each other.</p> <p>The experience and feedback from the care professionals' trainings serve as a good example of such interaction and was evaluated highly.</p>
<p><b>Professional education of social workers and child protection specialists should contain an obligatory block on child rights, with special attention paid to the requirements of the international documents such as UN CRC, UN Guidelines, CoE instruments, including those on participation, and questions on child rights should be part of the final exam.</b></p>	<p><b>Whom to address:</b> Universities providing high-level education for social workers and specialisation on child protection. Ministry of Social Affairs- National Health Development Institute in regards to additional training.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> According to the new Child Protection Act that entered into force 01. 01.2015, child protection workers who will start their career after the Act enters into force must within max 2 years after beginning of their employment finalise their education in social work with specialisation on child protection. Those persons who were employed before the legal act entered into force should comply with the education requirement by 01.01.2022.</p> <p>At the moment, the professional education curriculum is to be decided by the university or other education institution that organises such studies.</p> <p>Child rights as a separate subject is not being taught on a regular basis. Child rights-related topics are being incorporated into other subjects, yet the scope is to be decided by the professor.</p> <p>Child rights should become an obligatory part of university education for social workers and especially specialising on child protection, which should be taught as an obligatory separate subject.</p> <p>Also starting from the second part of 2016, an additional training course for child protection workers had been developed by the Child Ombudsman and the Child Welfare Union under the order of the National Health Development Institute. The training addresses child rights as a separate topic. The trainings will be piloted. Yet, the training is not obligatory.</p> <p>The recommendation would be to make this course obligatory for all child protection specialists or those who fulfil the tasks of child protection specialists. The training should be available regularly.</p>