

CHILD CENTRE
Expert Group for Cooperation on
Children at Risk, EGCC



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Safeguarding Children as Citizens

Challenges in the CBSS Region: providing Family Support and
quality Alternative Care

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CONTENT OF THE PRESENTATION

- ▶ THE REGIONAL STUDY

„SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AS CITIZENS. ALTERNATIVE CARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION“

- ▶ TALLINN RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN ON ALTERNATIVE CARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION 2015-2020

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

11 member
states + EU
Commission

Expert
Group for
Cooperation
on Children
at Risk
(EGCC)



The Regional Study

„The report provides us a possibility to look at the mirror and see, where we are and where we should be moving to.

The most important is to respond to challenges, make relevant changes in our policies and actions to improve the system and to build a joyful and carefree childhood for children.

This is the investment for the future.“

Margus Tsahkna

Minister of Social Protection, Estonia

The Regional Study: Methodology

- ▶ International and European framework
- ▶ Literature review
- ▶ Data survey
- ▶ Review and consultation on preliminary findings
- ▶ Positive and innovative practice
- ▶ Input from the expert meeting

The Regional Study: Key themes and questions

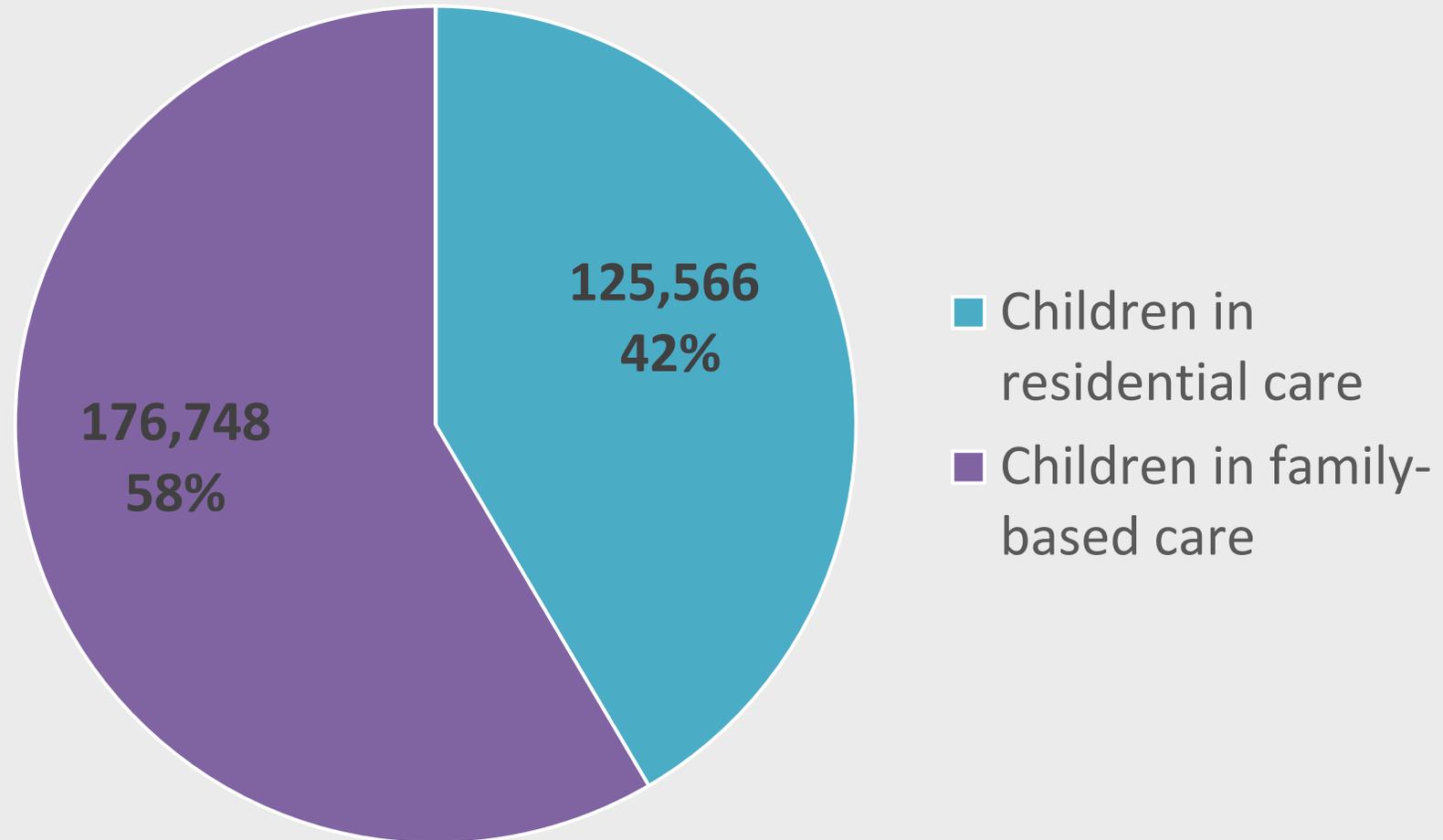
- ▶ Regional overview and trends
 - ▶ (1) Prevention of family separation
 - ▶ (2) Transition from institutional to family-based care
 - ▶ (3) Safeguarding children's rights in alternative care
- **Identification of key indicators from relevant guidelines and recommendations**



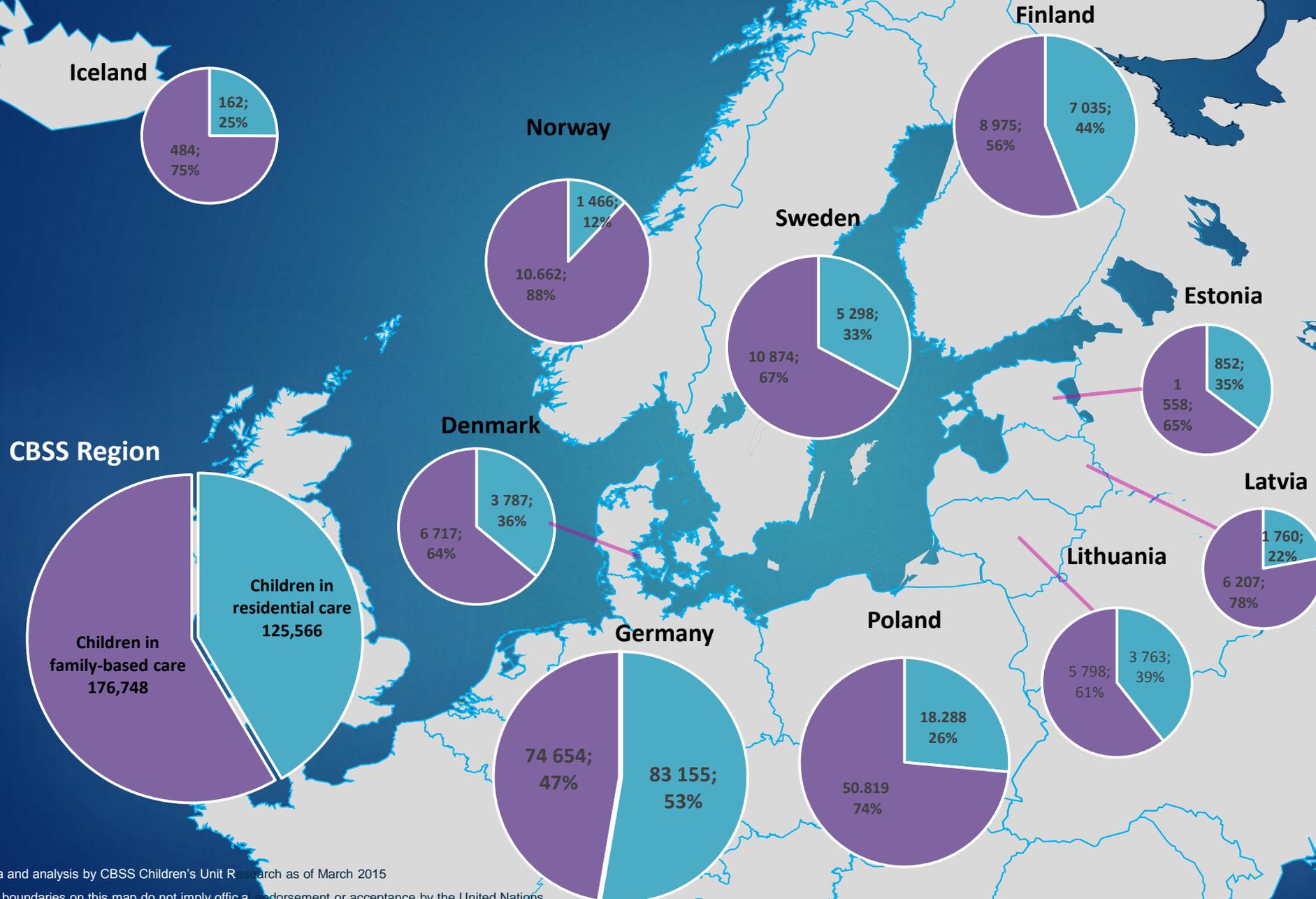
- What international and regional standards provide?
- Why is this important?
- How has it been translated into national laws, policies in CBSS states?
- Good practices in the region?
- Which challenges remain?
- What are the lessons learned, visions and opportunities for change?

Children in care in the CBSS region

Total child population in out-of-home care in the CBSS region
(2013)

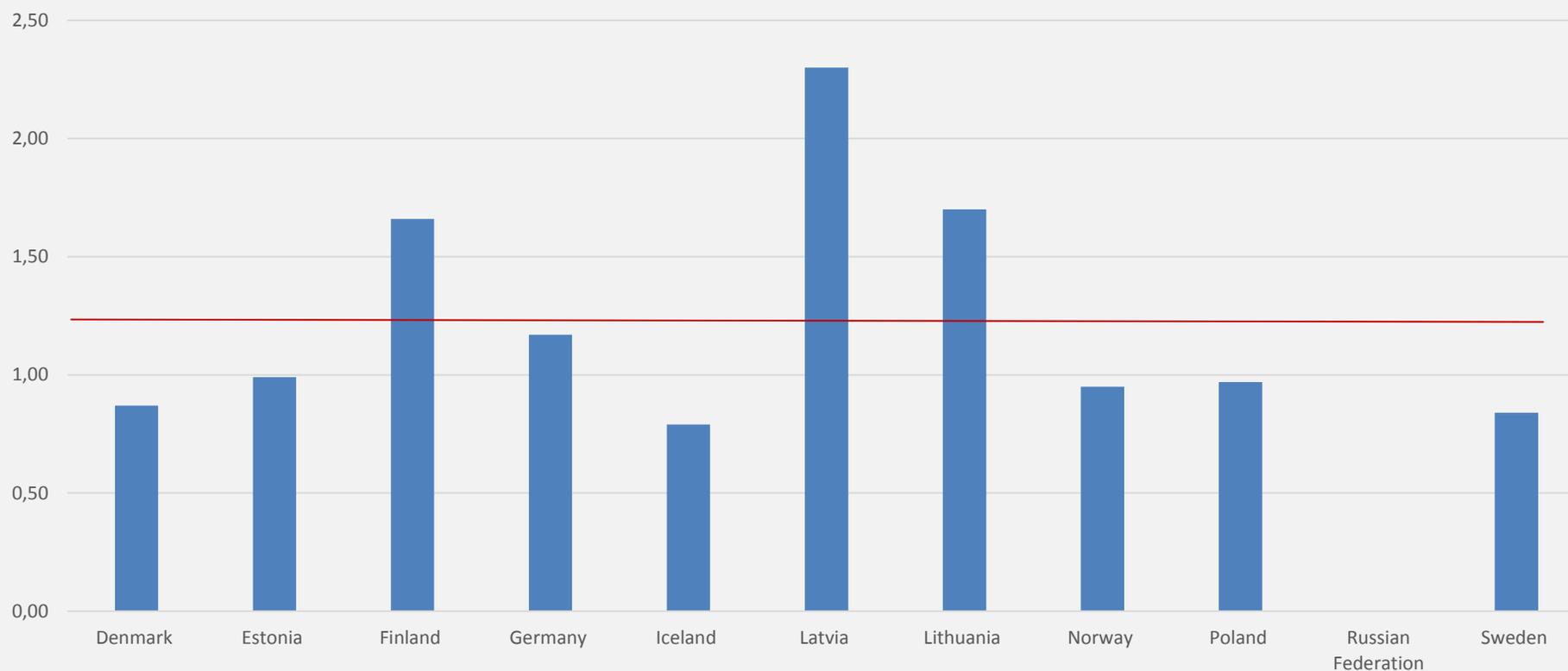


Children in care in the CBSS region



Children in care in the CBSS region

Children in alternative care (Percentage of total child population under 18 years of age, 2013)



Alternative care and family support in the CBSS region: Emerging key recommendations

Prevention of family separation

- ▶ **Strengthening proactive and preventive approaches in family support and child protection**
 - ▶ Availability and accessibility of services, including at low-threshold
 - ▶ Early interventions
 - ▶ Assets-based services
 - ▶ Sustainable solutions and effective follow-up
 - ▶ Strengthen secondary and tertiary prevention
 - ▶ Enable children to contact social services independently
 - ▶ Effective local networks of care
 - ▶ Stronger integration of services

Alternative care and family support in the CBSS region: Emerging key recommendations

Transition from institutional to family-based care

- ▶ Comprehensive national strategies for deinstitutionalisation
- ▶ Invest in quality foster care
- ▶ Institutionalised regional and national dialogue fora

Alternative care and family support in the CBSS region: Emerging key recommendations

Safeguarding children in alternative care

- ▶ Development of individual care plans
- ▶ Support children's development in a holistic way
- ▶ Documentation and transparency
- ▶ Protect children from violence in any form
- ▶ Safeguard the right of the child to have his or her views heard and taken into account as client of social services and in placement
- ▶ Inspections, monitoring, evaluation and auditing

Alternative care and family support in the CBSS region: Emerging key recommendations

General, structural recommendations

- ▶ Children and caregivers as partners in service provision
- ▶ More consistent implementation in decentralised and federal states
- ▶ Accountability in public-private partnership
- ▶ Strengthened workforce
- ▶ Invest in multi-disciplinary cooperation and coordination
- ▶ Individualised services that are rights-based and needs-oriented
- ▶ Strengthen national and transnational cooperation in family support and alternative care

Tallinn Recommendations on Alternative Care and Family Support for the Baltic Sea Region 2015-2020

- ▶ Regional expert meeting on alternative care and family support in Tallinn 5-6 May 2015
- ▶ Government representatives, experts and professionals from BSR and UK endorsed the Tallinn Recommendations

<http://childcentre.info/expertlevelmeeting2015/>

- ▶ The Estonian Presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs and the CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC) hosted the expert level meeting.
- ▶ Alternative care is one of the 5 priorities for the EGCC

Tallinn Recommendation: recommended action in regional level (Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk - EGCC)

- ▶ Promoting the progressive transition from institutional to family-based and family-like care in line with the best interests of the child and quality standards of care;
- ▶ Disseminating the AudTrain tool for auditing and monitoring child care facilities;
- ▶ Promoting child-friendly justice and the Children's House or equivalent models of integrated services for children who are victims of violence;
- ▶ Fostering cooperation at the national and transnational levels to support access to appropriate and continuous support and preventive services for children and caregivers who move within and across national borders;
- ▶ Facilitating an effective implementation of laws for the prevention of violence against children - with a view to achieve a reduction and elimination of violence in practice

Tallinn Recommendation: recommended action in national level (1)

- ▶ **Integrated service models** at the central, regional and local levels including multi-disciplinary approaches (eg training of multi-stakeholder teams)
- ▶ Strengthen the capacity of service providers to **prevent family separation**, promote early intervention and support family reunification
- ▶ The removal of a child and placement in alternative care is a measure of last resort clearly regulated by law
- ▶ Legislation, procedures and practices to safeguard children's right to be heard and to participate in the care system (incl complaint mech)
- ▶ Social service provisions must respect **children and caregivers as competent partners**
- ▶ Research, evaluation and consultation must be regular in **developing and implementing evidence-based methods and interventions** in service provision;

Tallinn Recommendation: recommended action in national level (2)

- ▶ Legal obligation to report and prevent cases of violence, incl corporal punishment, stronger child protection networks (incl social, health, education etc)
- ▶ Build common understanding on transition from institutional to family based care, more focus put on **children with special needs**
- ▶ Professional support, training and supervision for caregivers, especially foster carers and care staff
- ▶ Ensure **financing allocated to residential institutions is redirected to policies and services for family support** and quality alternative care when institutions are being closed down
- ▶ Enhance the quality of care for children in any care setting, **placement and services tailor-made** and appropriate to the individual needs of the child

Tallinn Recommendation: recommended action in national level (3)

- ▶ The same standards of quality care irrespective of the socio-economic background, minority situation, immigration status
- ▶ Support children in their transition into adulthood, developing their skills during placement and through after care services
- ▶ Provide **continuity of care for families and children at risk who move** within or across national borders
- ▶ Monitoring, auditing and evaluation to secure children rights
- ▶ Communication and coordination among the central, regional and local levels of the public administrations

Conclusions

- ▶ High quality care for children is more than the sum of the guidelines and recommendations
- ▶ Capture the holistic vision of the child as a citizen and rights-holder
- ▶ Capability of public administrations to implement this vision in practice
 - ▶ Connect sectors and systems through effective coordination
 - ▶ From a tick-the-box attitude towards true commitment for change
 - ▶ **From sector-specific policies towards a more systemic approach for the implementation of the CRC**

Thank you!

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