

REPORT YOUTH CRIMINALITY



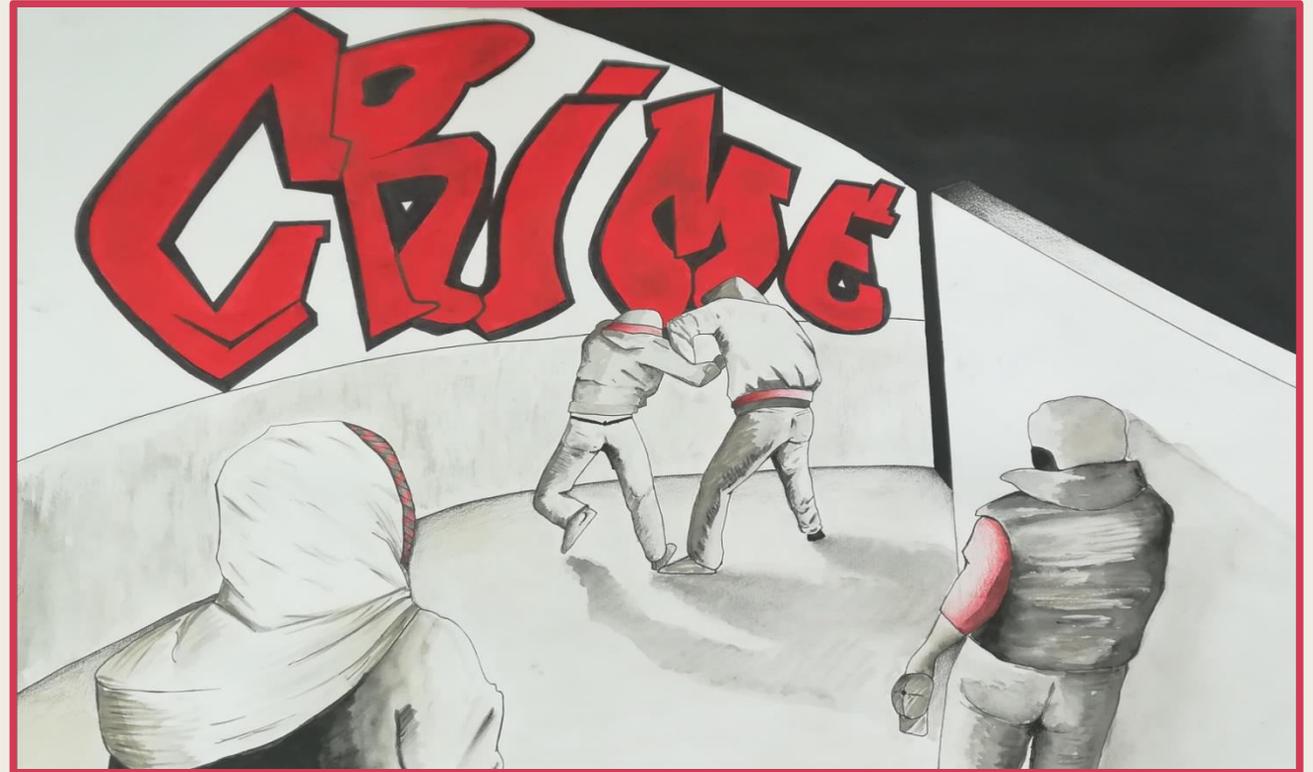
The decree D.P.R. 448/1988, regulations on the criminal proceeding, involving children, introduced new criminal law procedures specifically addressing children and different from the ones provided for adults. A peculiarity of the Italian system is the presence of a dedicate juvenile court ('Tribunale per i Minorenni'), established in 1934 with administrative, civil and criminal jurisdiction. At first, it was composed by two magistrates and one male expert in children's issues, being health, social worker, psychologist, criminologist with proven expertise on children's issues. In 1956, these professionals became two and the law established that they have to be a female and a male. Since then, two magistrates and two professional experts compose the Court.

For the first time, law D.P.R. 448/1988 put the child offender into a key position in all the phases of his/her own proceeding. The Justice System intends not only to ascertain the individual responsibilities for the occurred offence, but to protect the child and provide him/her with an individualized programme of rehabilitation and reintegration, keeping into account his/her specific needs and resources at the same time the guiding principle of the Italian juvenile justice system is that it is 'child-centred'. The child is the focus of any intervention, and the main and constant objective of the proceeding is his/her reintegration in the family/community and his/her development without interruptions. Among others, the juvenile justice system builds mainly upon the principle of the minimum harmfulness of the proceeding and the residual use of detention.

Beginning the investigation, data shows an important development: in addition to social marginalization, which has its roots in disadvantaged conditions, affective-relational marginalization is rapidly increasing, and particularly within middle/upper class families. Thus, the , Italian Department for Juvenile Justice calls this new phenomenon "the malaise of wellbeing". In addition to this, criminal activity of "deprived" youth also persists, that is, those who reside in the peripheries or ghetto zones. There's also the situation of so called "juvenile mafia, which includes non-labile boys (under the age of 14) used as labourers of organized crime.

Central and Northern European countries are in a worse situation

Recorded on good authority, Italy juvenile criminality has undergone a sharp incline, which is undeniably based as much on statistics of government bodies data as on the Attorney General's report. And yet, Italy, in fact, ranks the second lowest among European countries for child crime rate. Certainly, it would be helpful if our analysis - comparing juvenile criminality in Europe - was systematically and constantly updated, but, as it was correctly pointed out, the comparison is difficult in view of the gaping differences between sources of national information. What is clear, in any case, is that juvenile delinquency regarding Central and Northern European countries arouses the greatest alarm (in the following order: Germany, France, England). Italy, on the other hand, fortunately occupies one of the last places within the embarrassing classification.





Bullying and cyberbullying in Europe

As concerns bullying and cyberbullying in Italy, the phenomenon has greatly increased: *Telefono Azzurro* data revealed that in just the last two years the percentage of this wrongdoing has doubled. According to “Observing Teenagers”, a survey carried out by *Telefono Azzurro* and *DoxaKids* on over 1500 Italian students between the ages of 11 and 19 (November, 2014), 35% of the kids admitted to having been involved in bullying, or having been a victim of it.

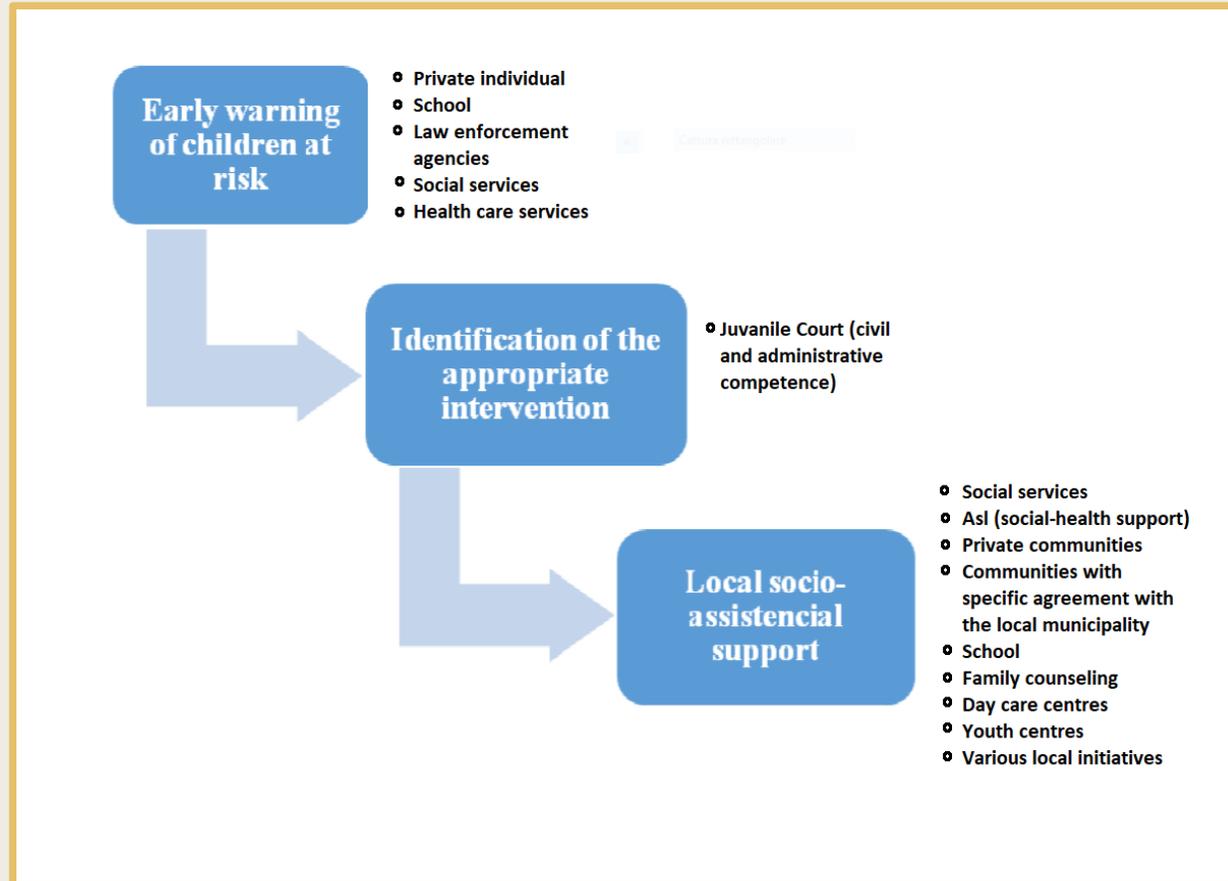
Other research reveals that among the most diffused practices of cyberbullying, the following stand out: violent and vulgar messages (so called flaming), vilification, identity theft, the exclusion of victims from online friend groups.

Now what happens if we turn our gaze to the larger European context? Yet again, results cause great consternation. According to the reports of OCSE (Organization For Economic Cooperation and Development), Italy is recorded to have the lowest number of juvenile bullying. In fact, as low as 5% of Italian teenagers complain about being victims of this type of abuse. Only one European country proves to have better statistics, namely, Switzerland at 4%. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Austria, where statistics regarding juvenile violence appear most concerning. In general, 11% is the average for juvenile violence in European and North American countries is also 11% (*AA. VV. Skills for Social Progress. The Power of Social and Emotional Skills, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015*).

How does the child protection system work in Italy?

The law 285/1997 provided the inter-institutional system. The three main entities that in Italy compose the child protection system, are the Welfare (social services, health care, schools/education, educational communities, foster care institutions, ...), Family and Justice, which should work strongly interconnected.

Child protection cycle and actors involved



A widespread presence of youth centres, associations, foundations, organizations, which provide children and adolescents with various recreational proposals, characterizes the Italian territory. They vary greatly from a geographic area to another, and their presence and activities depend very much on the local municipality that promotes and finances them. For this reason, also the budget allocated for such activities vary regionally and locally, with a higher expenditure registered in Northern Italy in comparison with Southern Italy, consistently with the data on public money and resources allocated for social services in these two macro-regions.

CAUSES

Italy is historically characterised by significant differences among regions and macro-areas, such as North, Centre and South, in regards to many aspects, including the characteristics of the juvenile delinquency. The 2008 financial crisis has had considerably negative socio-economic consequences. According to the National Statistics Institute, between 2011 and 2012, 24,9% of the families lives in conditions of economic disadvantage with a strong concentration in Southern Italy where these families are the 41% of resident families (17.2% in the North-west, 13.5% North-East, 21.6 Centre). The worst situation is registered in Sicily (49,3%) and in Calabria (39%). In line with this data, 58% of children aged 14 in Italy in 2013 declared to be unsatisfied of their economic situation. In the North, the percentage of satisfied children is higher (about 46%) than in the Centre (41.3) and the South (30.9), with the least satisfied in Sicily. In our nation, specially, in the south part of Italy, we fight against a big criminal problem called Mafia, which seems to attract some teenagers. They choose crime, violence and oppression as a life choice, as an ideal model of existence, because they are attracted by the desire of making money quickly, by having power, by a high lifestyle, which is often imposed by a nihilistic and consumerist society, based on appearance.

Society related causes might be:

- social exclusion, unemployment
- in the case of immigrant families: poor integration to the dominant culture, which is often aggravated by poor language skills, due to segregating housing policies and insufficient integration instruction by the society.

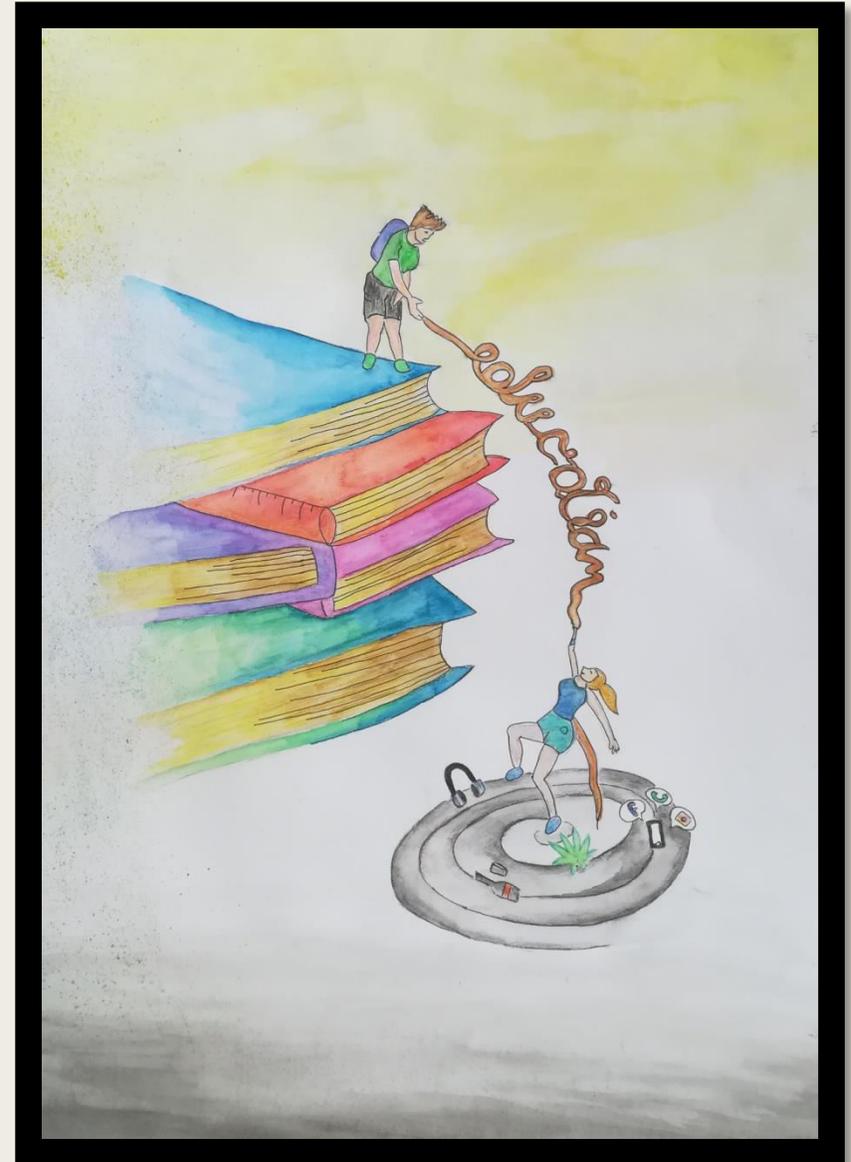
Family based causes could consist of:

- parental neglect caused by alcoholism, drugs, lack of interest or lack of time due to some other reason, as career promotion and efforts to achieve a higher standard of living;
- dropping out of school and the educational system, remaining unskilled with no profession.

These are some of the risk factors, in spite of which, many young people become law-abiding citizens.

Other risk factors that increase the chances of young people committing crimes are:

- Peer group pressure
- Peer involvement in problem behaviour
- Parental criminality
- Poor parental discipline and supervision
- Low family income
- Social isolation
- Family conflict
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Mental illness
- Troubled home life
- Disruptive behaviour such as aggression, hyperactive, bullying
- School disorganisation
- School exclusion
- Early involvement in problem behaviour
- Availability of drugs



Prevention & Early Intervention

Juvenile crime prevention in Italy is the result of joint actions of all the actors involved in the care and protection system, starting from the families, going into the schools, health care system, social services, youth centres, sport clubs, and so on and so forth.

Early prevention strategies consist of programs of social inclusion, with families and schools, educative and recreational activities, with a particular attention given to sportive activities. These programs need to go together with sensitization campaigns for children on legality culture, mediation, conflict resolution, ethics and issues related to drugs. On the other side, families, schools and the entire local communities need awareness campaigning on all these issues, including the importance of early prevention itself, which is too often delegated to 'others'. Typically, juvenile delinquency follows a trajectory similar to that of normal adolescent development. In other words, children and youth tend to follow a path toward delinquent and criminal behaviour rather than engaging randomly. Research has shown that there are two types of delinquents, those in whom the onset of severe antisocial behaviour begins in early childhood, and those in whom this onset coincides with entry into adolescence. In either case, these developmental paths give families, communities, and systems the opportunity to intervene and prevent the onset of antisocial behaviours and justice system involvement. Small things can keep their heads above the water level: a nice neighbour or grandparent, a good teacher, some special talent they happen to have. A nice research result shows a strong correlation between low juvenile delinquency and a daily shared family, showing the importance of family togetherness.

The juvenile delinquency has recently received considerable attention from the mass media and politics. The prevention of delinquency, therefore, is the fundamental resource in all efforts to prevent young people being involved in criminal matters, or other antisocial activities. Increasingly, governments are recognizing the importance of allocating resources to the prevention of delinquency, but as it is increasingly difficult to provide the resources necessary for good prevention, humanitarian organizations are insisting on international cooperation for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. With the development of criminology and the study of the correlation between numerous factors, prevention efforts will be far-reaching; prevention services will include activities such as education and treatment against drug abuse, family counselling, youth supervision, moral support and sheltered housing.

The Italian panorama is rich of a great variety of instruments and projects aimed at preventing children and youths from committing delinquent acts and diverting them from a criminal path, in particular working on social exclusion, school dropout, bullying, children development, education and health.

Both early and secondary prevention are devolved to all the public and private actors who operate in the juvenile justice, care and protection systems. However, as there is not a centralized intervention, the way in which activities from the perspective of delinquency prevention are implemented, changes regionally and locally. Regions and the other local entities in Italy have been given different forms of autonomy: legislative, administrative, and financial. Italy is also characterized by historical differences between three macro-areas: North, Centre and South, with particular distance between North and South on many aspects. These differences are recurrent also in the actual efficacy of the systems and programs aimed at preventing children from delinquency.

What is already existing

A very promising project and good practice in this direction comes from Sicily, In particular, the context of implementation of this project is Catania, historically characterized by a strong presence of mafia: **Invisible City Foundation – Life School ‘Falcone-Borsellino’**

The ‘Invisible City Foundation’ (‘Fondazione Città Invisibile’) established in 2009 and developed various music schools for children in the city of Catania and around the province. They offer free trainings on instruments and free studying material for children to learn how to play and to perform within one of the three orchestra resulted from this project. The name of the project, ‘Invisible City’, refers to the often invisible disadvantages of many children and youths in particularly marginalised contexts, and to the quite ‘invisible’ method used to support them and divert them from an even more marginalised and often deviant path: an educational method which aims at the empowerment of every and each individual. The mission of the Foundation has been, to give support and offer a positive and valuable alternative to children and youths at risk, through education to culture and legality, and through individual empowerment. In doing so, the project involves professional with various backgrounds: music teachers, life-coaching experts, poets, theatre actors and journalists. Children and youths at risk who enter in contact with the school are reported by the authorities, social services or any other public or private individual or entity and are introduced to the music training. The training has a practical approach, where teachers first try to communicate the emotional participation and beauty of music in itself and of playing all together, respecting each other voice/sound and timing, through a sharing experience and a strong effort to boost each child’s self-esteem. Group music classes are always preceded by life-coach sessions on legality and social cohesion, and by interventions aimed at stimulating children’s life skills, such as concentration, memory, creativity, book and writing therapy sessions and various classes, in order to promote a sharing and collaboration perspective among the children and youths involved.

The objectives to achieve are:

- Self-esteem improvement
- Rules' compliance and culture of legality
- Ability to build positive relationships with the others

Solutions

The other promising practice identified in the child protection system in Rome, in particular the centre of the city, is 'Civico Zero' a Save the Children Italy project. The project addresses migrant boys and girls (and their families when present) in disadvantaged situations, juveniles within the justice system, at risk of trafficking, abuse and commit crime, to improve their life conditions and their rights. Beneficiaries have been children around the age of 12 to 18 years old, with a specific attention to migrant and unaccompanied children, reported by the Court or by social services as being at risk, or gone spontaneously into the day care centre.

Outreach and street education: this method consists of reaching children and youths directly in the streets where they spend most of their time, especially the ones at-risk and coming from disadvantaged families and contexts, children and youths involved in prostitution, criminal activities and begging. Once they have built the first contact with the operators, they will have the possibility to benefit from the informative and educational services, and recreational activities implemented directly in the streets.

A Mobile Unit – daytime and night-time – provides them with help, street education and orientation, to monitor and reduce the risk;

Penal/criminal area: children and youths in the First care centres for pre-trial detention measures, in the juvenile facilities or in social services' custody. Various activities are put in place: daytime interventions, social mediation with the families and the communities, peer education, entertainment, linguistic and cultural mediation, legal counselling.

Social and family mediation: mediation is a way of solving conflict, with the intervention of a third impartial actor who intervenes between the ones directly involved, in order to find a satisfying solution for both parties. It can be applied in any context, and social and family mediation aims at supporting children and youths who live in particularly disadvantaged families (economic support, psychosocial assistance, ...), and at supporting their social integration. This method is in fact very effective with migrants and unaccompanied children.

Interventions to prevent school dropouts:

this category comprises all the interventions aimed at improving learning conditions, working on children and teachers' motivation, developing scholastic orientation and professional practical trainings, enhancing and ameliorating the educational proposal for children and youths, investing more resources in both human resources (teachers and their trainings) and structures.

The Ministry of Public Education, University and Research established a collaboration with the Ministry for the Youth Policies and Sportive Activities for drafting and implementing projects on scholastic sportive activities

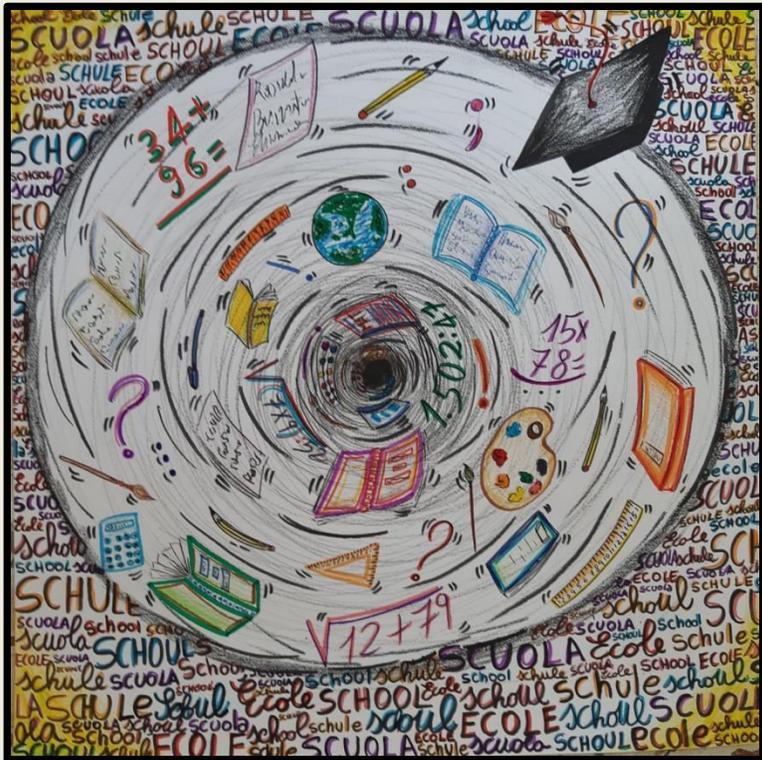
The aim is to involve children into physical activities according to their specific needs, age and development, teaching the sport values.

Together with this Directive, the 30th January 2007 the 'Guidelines on innovative projects for physical and sportive activities in areas at risk' allocated a budget of 900.000 euro. The aim of this budget was to finance projects that use sport to rehabilitate and re-educate children and adolescents "at risk", teaching how to build relationships, how to play in team and to live competition in a healthy way. For this reason, the national scholastic system in Italy offers the activity of the 'Sportive Scholastic Games' (Giochi Sportivi Studenteschi, GSS). Children and youths are encouraged to choose among some disciplines the one they are more suitable for, and the school provides them with the structures and after-hours classes. GSS. promote the inclusion of marginalized and at-risk children, integrating the sportive activities with other educative and training proposals.

Nevertheless, given the little offer on a national level of coordination on this matter, the General Comment of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 18.03.2013 n.17 on art.31 of the CRC, states that in Italy the right to play is not thoroughly granted, despite a strong commitment from institutions and third sector.

Another interesting project is "Let's paint the city" in Veneto: any youth who wants to participate to the contest, youths from schools together with youths reported by the authorities and young artists.

Why: promoting young writers' creativity in the appropriate locations, training youths to respect others' property and improving the conditions of some degraded areas of the city



How: contest with prizes for artistic projects and ideas aimed to upgrade some degraded areas and/or structures. Some well-known artists and writers participate also as trainers for peer-education.

In conclusion there must be:

- focus on categories of particularly vulnerable children;
- attention to fundamental principles of non-discrimination and children participation;
- implementation of comprehensive programme and differentiation of the activities proposed;
- sustainability of the project is deemed extremely important over all, with continuation of a single project over the years, with the same methodology to testify its success formula.



Some concluding remarks

Despite the spread awareness on the crucial importance of juvenile delinquency's early prevention interventions as a child protection commitment, the government and all the private and public actors should take charge of many things have still to be done in Italy to make these interventions effective and sustainable. For example, to:

- Establish a national coordination body/system, where there is no overlapping between projects and where a prompt answer to children and families' needs is guaranteed, no more within an "emergency approach".

Establish a centralised monitoring and evaluation system of the existing programs/projects. The lack of such a system often causes a waste of resources, being funds invested in a large variety of projects without a proper assessment (efficacy, efficiency, relevance, impact, sustainability, transferability).

It is important to intervene early before young people get properly involved in crime. We know that, as with adults, there are often other issues at play which can influence a young person's likelihood to commit crime, including homelessness, education problems, addiction and other health related matters, and difficulties with resettlement or with parenting. So it is necessary to work with young people to overcome these barriers and teach them to approach things differently and solve problems in a way which does not involve crime. Mentoring services can help a young person to participate in, and engage with, a programme better and remove barriers to compliance, as well as providing highly structured and positive activities which can open up new possibilities for young people and help provide a bridge to education, training and employment. It is useful to currently run and manage a wide range of projects and training programmes which work with children, young people and their families both inside and outside the youth justice system, including youth inclusion projects, support panels and other types of programmes, such as those which deal with gang involvement.

Thank you all for you attention

