

Interagency collaboration to collect data regarding child protection policies.

1 Making informed decisions: the importance of data

1 Making informed decisions/ Administrative data

“Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted” -Albert Einstein

- Administrations have always been great producers and consumers of data and reports: their smooth running depend on knowing how much effort and investment is needed where, and what evolutions to anticipate.
- The more a society increases in number and activity, the more administrations develop standardized procedures and complex databases to produce knowledge of their own realities.
- For child protection in particular, it is important to have an understanding of the needs of the population in care, **all the more so** because there are typically many agencies involved, that operate at different levels (vertical and horizontal cooperation): all actors need to have relevant information, from policymakers to caseworkers

1 Making informed decisions/ Case-based systems

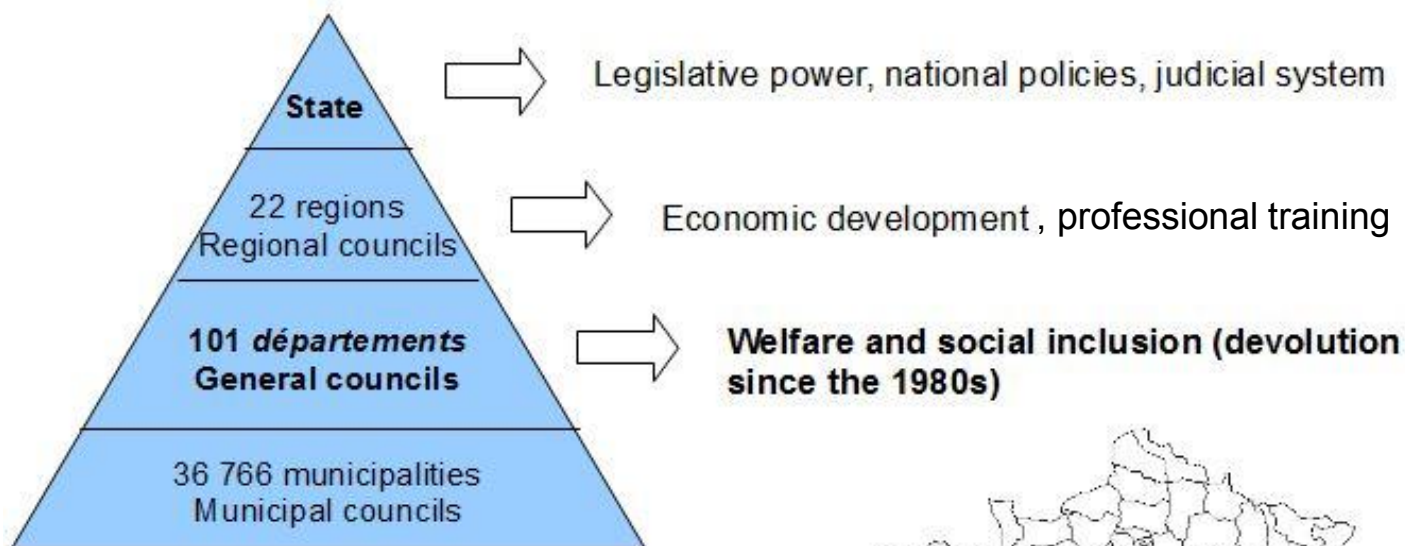
- Our presentation will focus on the practical aspects of setting up monitoring mechanisms, particularly the setting up of a quantitative data collection system in a field marked by inter-agency collaboration.
- In this framework, the data collection system is **backed on the case-management system** in accordance with the *European statistics code of practice*:
- **“Principle 9: Non-excessive Burden on Respondents.** The reporting burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is not excessive for respondents. The statistical authorities monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time. (...)
 - Indicator 9.4: Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.
 - Indicator 9.5: Data sharing within statistical authorities is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.
 - Indicator 9.6: Statistical authorities promote measures that enable the linking of data sources in order to reduce reporting burden”

Conditions for the system's effectiveness

- **Lawfulness:** The monitoring system's must be based on a specific legislation and regulations
- **Legitimacy** is ensured through an accountancy mechanism that designates a specific entity for
 - Governance
 - Piloting
- **Expertise** that requires
 - Knowledge of the field
 - Production of knowledge
 - Support of the professionals who will operate the system
- **Team-building capacity** to guarantee mutual resources, dissemination, the appropriation of the tools by operators, relevance to the needs, as well as institutional and professional requirements

2 Creating synergies around child protection services in France

2 Creating synergies / France's administrative divisions

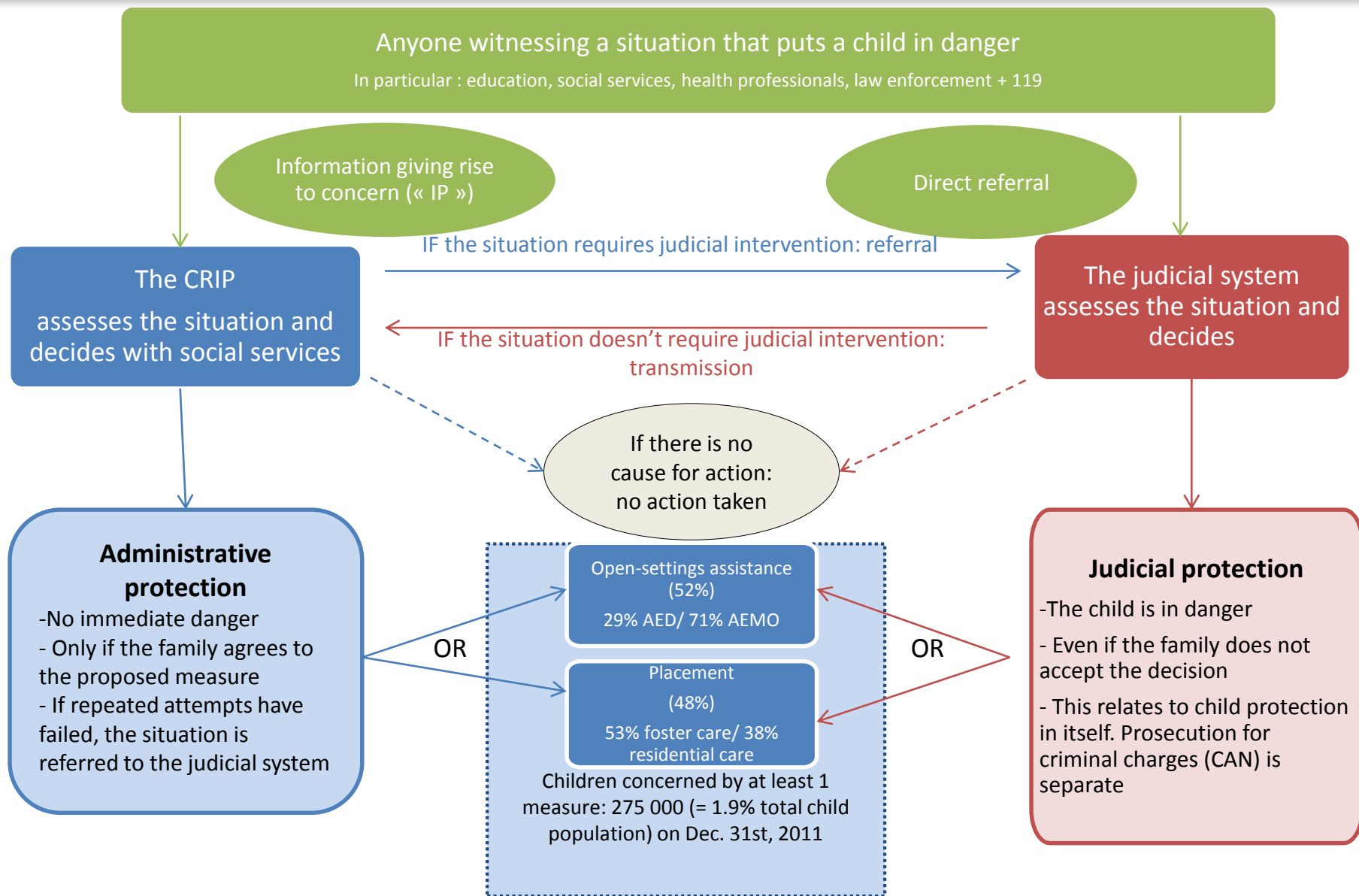


Since the **March 5, 2007 Law** regarding child protection, the President of each general council is in charge of child protection for each *département*.

2 Creating synergies/ Financial & administrative policies connected to CPS

	ECEC	Schools	Health	Child Protection
National level	CNAF (COG with the state)	<i>Education nationale</i> (Ministry)	Health Insurance	Legislation judicial system
Regional level		<i>Lycées</i> (high schools)	ARS CHRU	Professional training
<i>Département</i> level	CAF in each <i>département</i>	<i>Collèges</i> (middle schools)		Social services Child Protection services NGOS
Local level	Structures at <i>commune</i> level	Primary schools	Local health practitioners	

2 Creating synergies / Functional diagram after 2007



2 Creating synergies / What we know so far

■ Minors:

275 000 minors in the child protection system
(19‰ of the total population of under-18s in France)

Minors are predominantly (87%) concerned by judicial measures:

- 150 100 Open-settings assistance measures (52% of all decisions): 71% judicial/29% administrative measures
- 136 200 Placement measures (48% of all decisions): 87% judicial/13% administrative measures (*accueil provisoire*).
- Of these placement measures, 53% are in foster families and 38% in residential care.

■ Young adults:

21 000 young adults in the child protection system
(9‰ of the total population aged 18-20 years in France)

Young adults are almost exclusively concerned by administrative measures:

- 83% of measures are placement measures, and 17% open-settings support
- Open-settings assistance: 95.8% administrative/4.2% judicial measures
- Placement/housing : 99.9% administrative/0.1% judicial

ONED, 9th Annual report to Parliament and Government, 2014

2 **Creating synergies/** What we don't know (and should)

- A very complex system that involves actors from various fields
- Multiple administrations and decision levels
- Some general, aggregated data but very little knowledge of how children and families fare
- The system has a significant cost for the public budget: 6.9 Billion Euros in 2012*, with no real impact analysis for beneficiaries

- **For all these reasons, the need for information becomes even more crucial**

* DRESS, *Etudes et Résultats*, February 2014

3 Advice on setting up data collection systems

ONED's system: longitudinal data on 130 variables

Regrouped in 6 categories

(selected using international recommendations and existing data in the services' software)

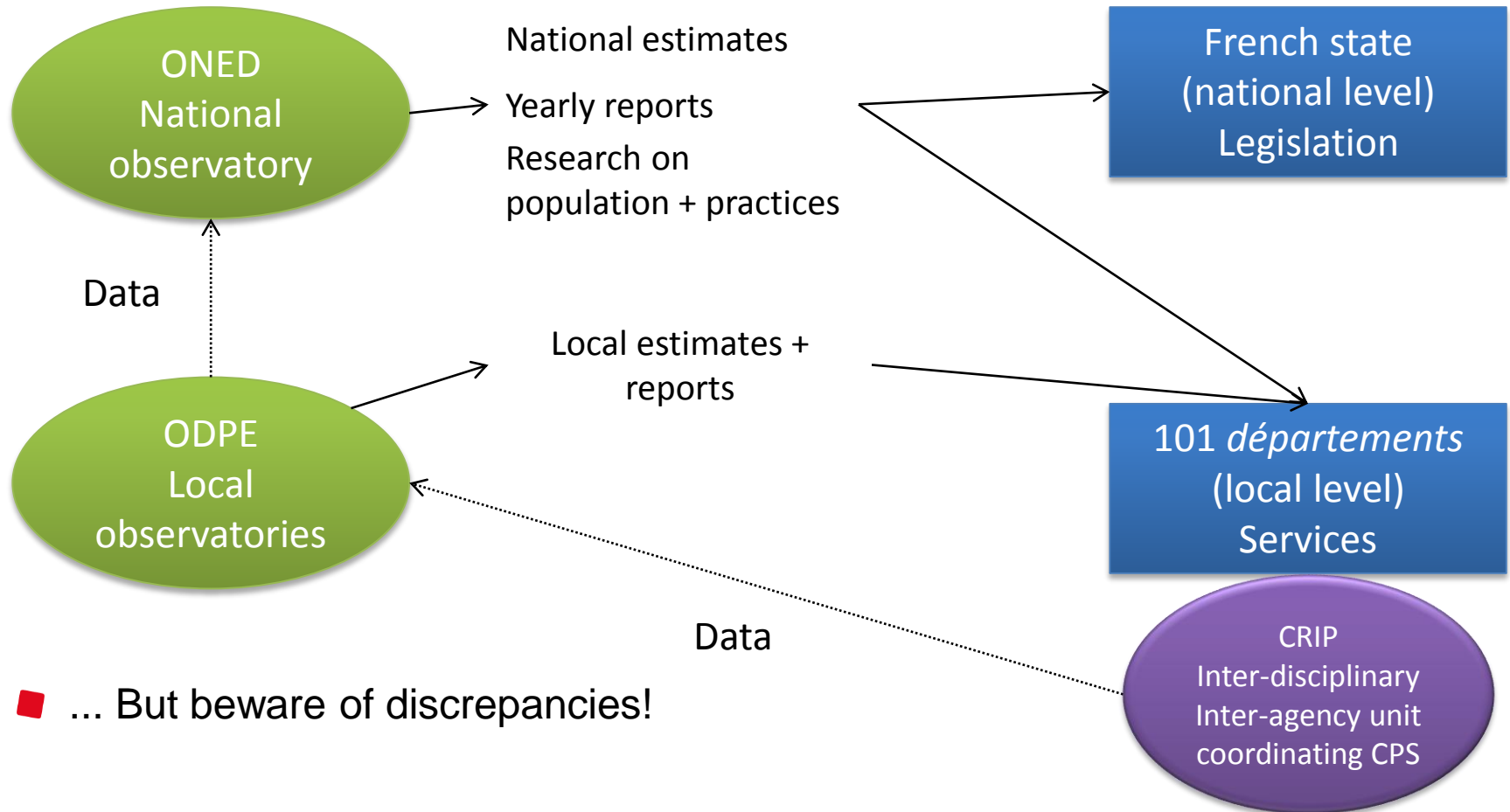
- 1) **General indications** on the children (date of birth, sex, school information, disability)
- 2) **Source** reporting the situation (date, person)
- 3) Characteristics of the caregivers and the **household** (Family composition, parental responsibility, socio-demographic information about the 2 main caregivers and/or parents)
- 4) Information regarding **the situation itself** (after assessment): Type of danger and/or maltreatment, alleged perpetrators, family issues
- 5) **Measures** undertaken by the service (date, duration, kind of measure, type of placement ...)
- 6) **End or renewal** of measures (date, motive)

ONED's system: Lessons from experience

- Our system is very detailed. The consequence is that it is very difficult to set up, as we will explain, and the following considerations are basically recommendations and feedback from our experience.
- The system we are telling you about is longitudinal and ambitious. Depending on where you're at, you may want to start small, with a Minimum Dataset (MDS), for instance: a few variables leading to strong indicators can be extremely useful.
- Whatever type of data collection system you chose, please prepare the implementation phase thoroughly, with training sessions and tools to help professionals enter data in a coherent way, and bear in mind that there will be precisions to make even if you have been very thorough.

3 Setting up data collection systems/ Mirroring administrative levels

- Adapting to all relevant levels of administration makes you more legible for actors in the field and allows for more territory-specific analyses



- ... But beware of discrepancies!

3 Setting up data collection systems/ Discrepancies

- Even when they are using the same words, people managing cases and/or data collection at different levels may be using different definitions and counting methods, which has a profound impact on the data collected and its interpretation
- Another common source of problems when consolidating various databases is linked to the use of different software.
- **Recommendations based on our experience:**
 - All users of the data collection system should be trained and receive a very specific data entry protocol
 - The protocol in question should be reviewed regularly by actors of the field to make sure everyone is using the same definitions and methods, and identify potential problems
 - If at all possible, the specifications for programmers should be based on very precise definitions and calculation methods, and provide standardised extraction formats

3 Setting up data collection systems/ Confidentiality issues

- All European countries have legal provisions regarding the treatment of sensitive personal data, that can be more or less drastic.
- When establishing an inter-agency protocol that involves social work and/or health services and/or the judiciary, you should regard all information as sensitive.
- Data collection systems that involve multiple agencies should be particularly attentive to the transfer of information between different services, which in itself usually carries specific legal requirements.
- **Recommendations based on our experience:**
 - Identify the relevant authorities in your country and try to keep in contact with them as much as possible to identify potential problems and receive advice on how to overcome them
 - According to professional codes of conduct, different types of information will trigger confidentiality alerts among professionals. Involve professionals from all fields when designing your data collection system

3 Setting up data collection systems/ Anonymisation process

- Ensuring that data collected by social workers will remain anonymous is an important step.
- “Anonymous” does not simply refer to the absence of name/surname: a precise birth date can be used to identify someone.
- Whatever process you use to make the information anonymous should occur as early as possible in the proceedings
- **Recommendations based on our experience:**
 - Following the recommendations of the CNIL, the data is encrypted at 2 levels using standard hash algorithms:
 - Once when the information collected by case workers is sent to the ODPE and ONED. ODPE and ONED do not have the algorithms used at this level (i.e. they can't decipher the initial information)
 - A second time when the information reaches ODPE or/and ONED: ODPE and ONED do not have the same reference numbers for a given case.

Ethical considerations

“Persons entitled to professional secrecy who implement child protection (...) or who contribute to it are authorized to share with each other secret information so as to assess an individual situation, identify and implement adequate actions of protection and help that minors and their families may benefit from. **Sharing this information is strictly limited to what is absolutely necessary in the framework of child protection.** Parents, any adult with parental authority, and the children themselves according to their age and maturity are informed beforehand, in an adequate fashion, unless this information goes against the child’s interest.”

Article L 226-2-2, *Code de l’Action sociale et des familles*

- Where do we put the limit between what we want to know and safeguarding the best possible level of confidentiality?

■ Restraint at conception-level

- People entering data and analyzing it need to respect the protocol and its limitations

■ Rigour at input and analysis levels

- It is necessary to keep in mind this “double R” (restraint and rigour) to ensure that the imperative to collect data and improve systems does not have detrimental effects on the people currently in the system.