REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
COURT OF AUDIT

AUDIT REPORT
Addressing digital technologies addiction of children and adolescents

Performance audit
Audit period: 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G🌐ALS

Excessive use and addiction to digital technologies

Excessive use

is **beyond the recommended use of digital technologies** mainly due to boredom whereby one can limit or stop the use at any time since **the addiction is not yet developed.**
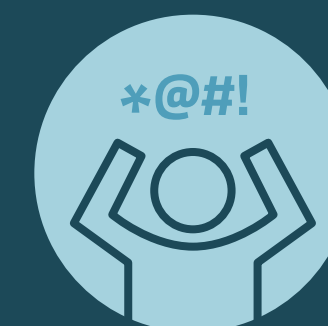
Digital addiction

is **dependence on digital technologies** to cope with emotional distress and **one is unable to limit the use** despite its harmful effects.

Consequences of excessive use and addiction

insomnia, dieting and hygienic disruptions

loss of sense for time and lying about digital technologies use

extreme tiredness and exhaustion

gaining weight and obesity

emotional reactions when digital media use is not possible, withdrawal, irritability

loss of interest in other activities, attention deficit
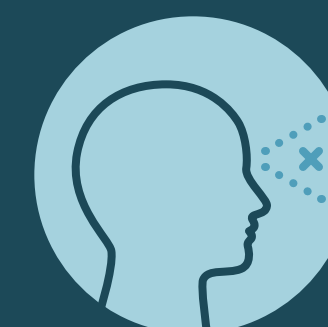
eyesight problems, headaches

depression, anxiety, psychosis occurrence

Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia – audit report Addressing digital technologies addiction of children and adolescents

2

RS
RS

Is the State aware of the digital addiction dimensions?

MDDSZ
Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
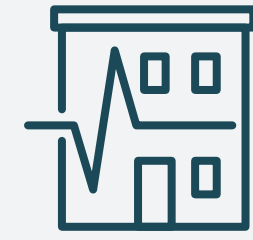
MZ
Ministry of Health

MIZŠ
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

but are mostly referred to children and adolescents **up to 18 years in the period of COVID-19 pandemic**

✓ **The State is actively involved in surveys and analyses** ➡️

Survey
PISA 2018

Survey
HBSC 2020

Survey
KiDiCoTi 2020

Survey
IRSSV 2020

Survey
ZRSŠ 2021
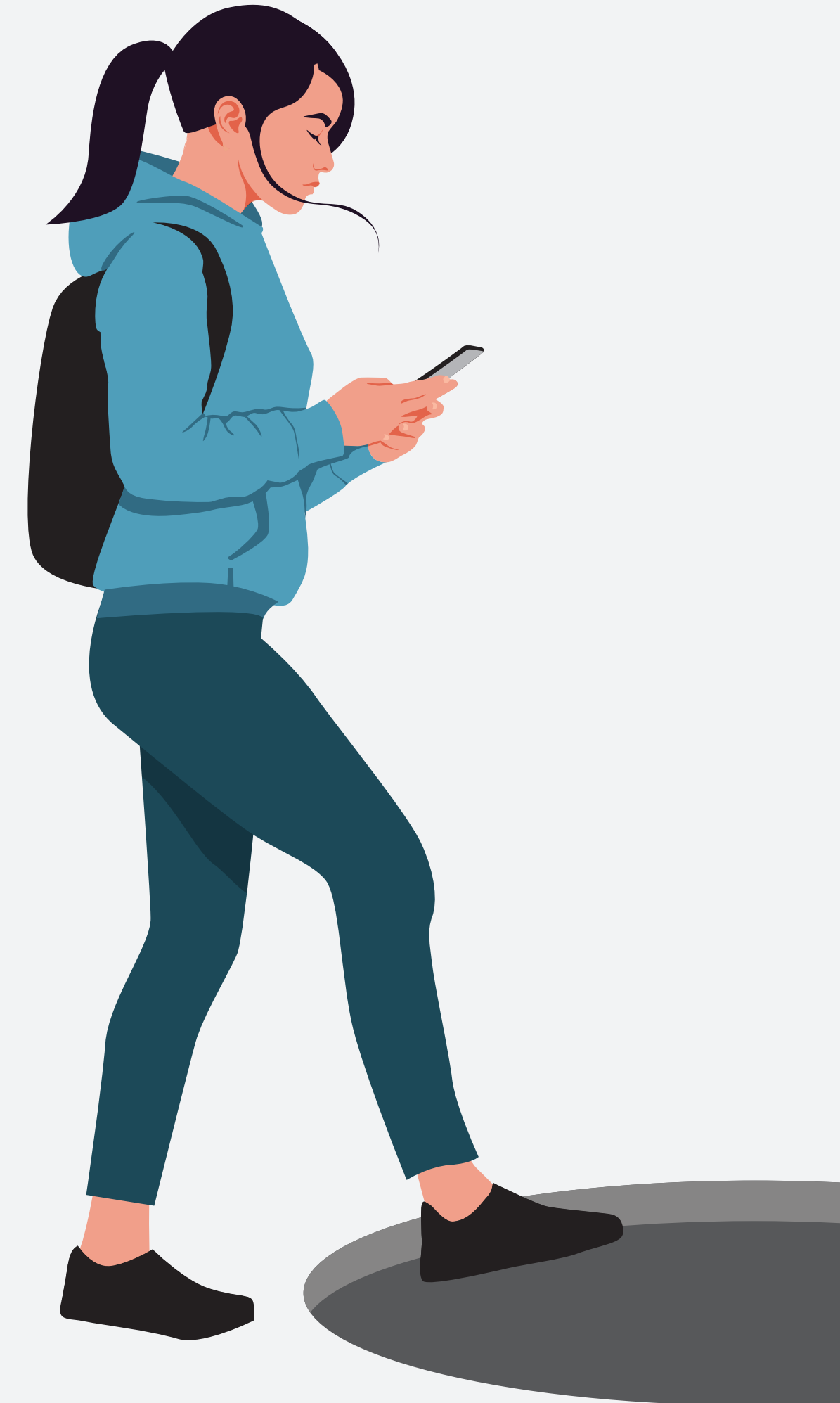
✗ **Nevertheless, the analyses do not offer an answer**

HOW MANY
children and adolescents are addicted or have problems with excessive use of digital technologies?
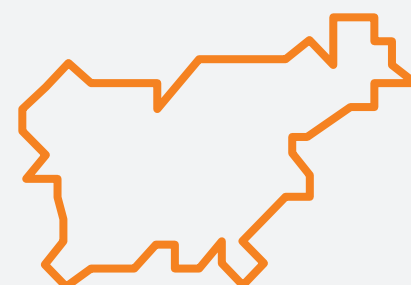
WHERE IN THE COUNTRY
the problems are bigger and the needs are pressing?

Due to presented weaknesses **the conditions** for the efficient measures planning **are not provided.**

Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia – audit report Addressing digital technologies addiction of children and adolescents

3

What are the roles of the stakeholders?

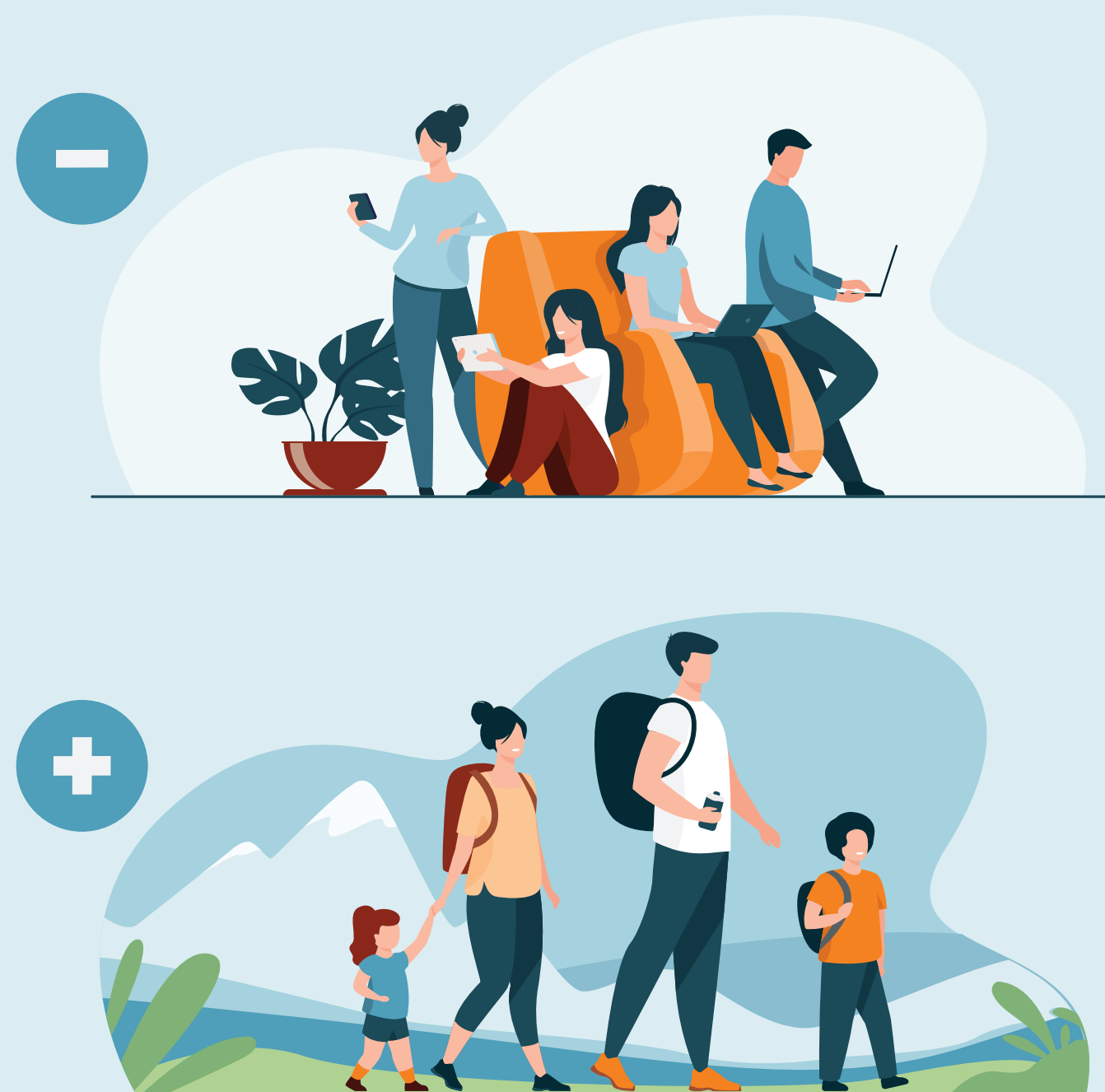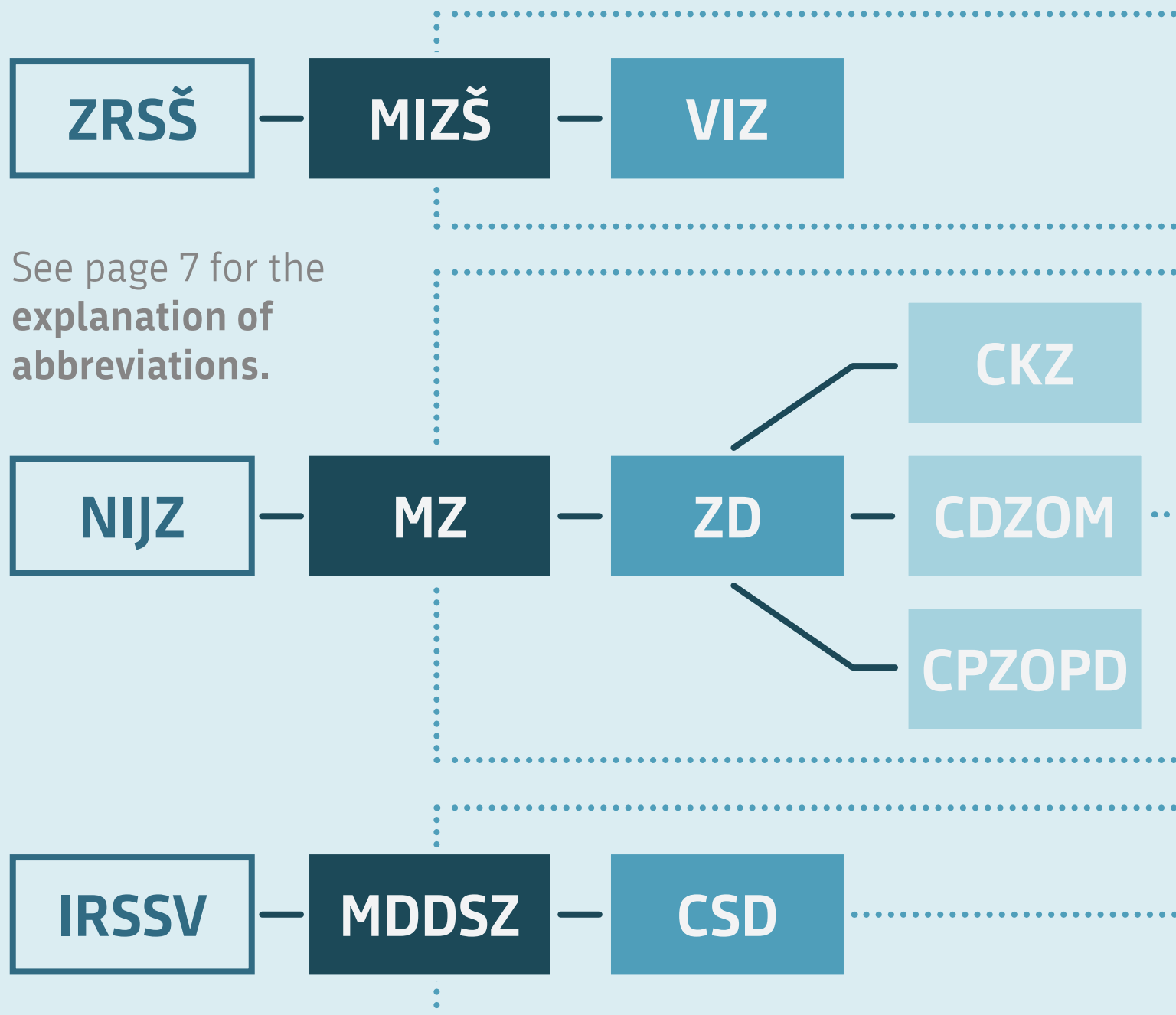## PARENTS/GUARDIANS
(upbringing and setting an example)

STATE
(planning measures and systemic solutions)

| ZRSŠ | — | MIZŠ | — | VIZ |

See page 7 for the **explanation of abbreviations.**

| NIJZ | — | MZ | — | ZD |

CKZ

CDZOM

CPZOPD

| IRSSV | — | MDDSZ | — | CSD |

OTHER PROVIDERS
(carrying out projects)

Safe internet centre

Counselling centres for children, adolescents and parents

Stakeholders providing INCREDIBLE YEARS

External providers

Family centres

INAPPROPRIATE PLANNING OF MEASURES:

? **NOT CLEAR,** who should implement them.

? **NOT CLEAR,** how much money is needed.

Key role in addressing the addiction is played by **parents and guardians** while the State offers support!

7 strategic documents   **9** implementing documents   **12** measures/indicators   →   —   **Objectives and measures** are referred to non-chemical addiction and **not specifically to digital addiction.**

Due to presented weaknesses **the conditions** for the efficient measures implementation **are not provided.**

Is the organisation of the stakeholders transparent?

Stakeholders' tasks not clearly defined. Consequently, it is not clear which stakeholders should implement preventive measures and which measures respectively which stakeholders should undertake action to reduce digital addiction and how.

None of the stakeholders is specialised for treating digital addiction.

None of the stakeholders monitors which activities for preventing and treating digital addiction are already in place and how many children and adolescents are included.

● Centre for preventing and treating drug addiction

● Centre for strengthening health

● Centre for mental health of children and adolescents

None of the stakeholders monitors the needs for specific type of help **so it is not possible to assess whether or in which geographical areas certain types of help are lacking.**

Many stakeholders are activated but **cooperation protocols and treatment paths are not specified,** while MZ, MDDSZ and MIZŠ do not provide the stakeholders the instructions, guides and recommendations to address digital addiction.

Most of the activities are implemented by external providers selected by public calls, but **project approach is not appropriate** since it does not reflect the needs in each part of the state.

● Non-governmental organisations

○ Family centre

● Incredible Years programme

● Counselling centre for children, adolescents and parents

Due to presented weaknesses **actions** of the relevant stakeholders **are not uniform.**

Opinion of the Court of Audit

○ **Ministries (MZ, MIZŠ and MDDSZ) recognised increasing problems** of children's and adolescents' digital addiction since they in cooperation with several stakeholders **planned and implemented many measures and activities,** but they were only **partially efficient** in addressing digital addiction of children and adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COURT OF AUDIT

Auditees **should carry out a survey on the use of digital technologies** by children and adolescents for school and free time purposes.
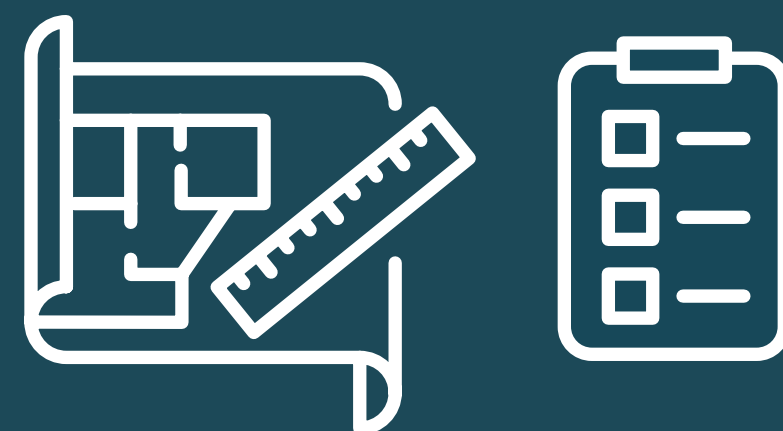
Planning documents should be developed by **precisely defining the measures** to be implemented in the frame of a certain field and **authorised stakeholders should be precisely defined** for implementing the measures within the field.

The roles of the stakeholders within the network of the public sector should be **specifically defined,** as well as the role of external project providers in relation to public sector stakeholders.

Explanation of abbreviations

ZRSŠ – National Education Institute

NIJZ – National Institute of Public Health

IRSSV – Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia

MIZŠ – Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

MZ – Ministry of Health

MDDSZ – Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

VIZ – education centres

ZD – health centres

CSD – social work centres

CKZ – Centres for strengthening health

CDZOM – Centres for mental health of children and adolescents

CPZOPD – Centres for preventing and treating drug addiction