

Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the region of the Baltic Sea States, April 2008 until June 2011

Adopted by the Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) on the 1st of October 2008

The Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, the WGCC, is deeply concerned over the fact that unaccompanied children in the region of the Baltic Sea States often lack protection and run a high risk of being exposed to violence and to different forms of exploitation. The fact that children are being trafficked from, to and through countries in the region is another matter of great concern for all actors in the region and calls for immediate action. With this *2nd Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the the Baltic Sea States*, the WGCC reiterates its persistent work to fight all forms of exploitation of children including all forms of trafficking of children regardless of the form the exploitation takes.

Background:

In February 2003, the Working Group for Co-operation on Children at Risk, (WGCC), in co-operation with the Swedish Foreign Ministry organised a meeting of Senior Officials on the issue of Unaccompanied Children in the Region of the Baltic Sea States. The neighbouring countries Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova were invited to the meeting as they are important stakeholders. The outcome of the meeting called for the establishment of National Contact Points on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children, recommended that the WGCC established a plan of action and also recommended that a senior adviser be seconded to the WGCC secretariat to make the urgent work of cooperation more effective.

The 1st WGCC Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children was adopted on the 17th of May 2004 and was later prolonged at the ministerial meeting in Oslo in May 2005. The present WGCC 2nd Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea States is the continuation of the first plan.

Starting point:

The co-operation on unaccompanied and trafficked children takes as its starting point the internationally adopted conventions:

- ◆ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ◆ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
- ◆ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (The Palermo Protocol)
- ◆ ILO Convention no 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.
- ◆ The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- ◆ The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

The co-operation on unaccompanied and trafficked children in the region of the Baltic Sea states aims at assisting:

- Unaccompanied/separated asylum seeking children and young persons
- Children and young persons trafficked from one country to another
- Children and young persons trafficked within one country
- Exploited children and young persons as well as children and young persons at risk of exploitation in a country other than their own with valid documents.
- Children residing in a country in the region without legal documentation.

Results and achievements:

1. National Contact Points

The WGCC recognises that the National Contact Points, NCP, are now an established group in the region. The WGCC has organised annual meetings, 4 meetings have so far been held, where the group of NCPs have met in order to make the cooperation on individual cases as smooth as possible. The meetings have also discussed the impact new developments have in the region when it comes to the form and the manner in which children are being trafficked and exploited. The meetings have also discussed topics such as reintegration of children and the possible return of unaccompanied children to their family of origin. The discussion at the meetings of the NCPs is an indispensable input as the WGCC considers the actions that should be taken. Contact details of the National Contact Points are published and kept updated on the <http://www.childcentre.info> web site.

2. Expert meetings

In December 2004 the Finnish Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the WGCC organised an expert meeting on age assessment, identification, safe return and family reunification.

In April 2005 the Ukrainian Ministry of Youth and Sports in cooperation with the WGCC organised the expert meeting on Care, Protection and Rehabilitation of Children Victims of Trafficking.

3. Baltic Sea Region Comprehensive Assistance to Children Victims of Trafficking, BSR CACVT

From September 2006 until January 2008 the WGCC organised, through support from the European Commission Daphne II programme and with support from Save the Children Sweden and the Oak Foundation, the BSR CACVT training programme. The programme brought together 55 experts from 9 countries in the region in a training series of six meetings on care, protection and rehabilitation of children victims of trafficking and on care for unaccompanied children. The group of experts is now a national and regional resource.

In January 2008 the report “The Frail Chain” was launched. The report, commissioned by the WGCC and funded by the European Commission Daphne II programme demonstrates the existing situation for children victims of trafficking in the region.

WGCC Plan of Action

- 1. The WGCC recognises the importance of the established network of National Contact Points. These have the capacity to function as nodes of information and networking in the respective countries in the region. On the national level, the NCPs should have a coordinating role regarding unaccompanied children and children who are trafficked.*

Activities:

- a. The WGCC will explore opportunities to make a Memorandum of Understanding guiding the work of the National Contact Points.
 - b. The MoU could conceivably confirm the states' commitment to support the coordinating role of the NCPs by mandating services in contact with possible victims of child trafficking to inform the NCP. Through this information would ensure that the NCP network would maintain an overview of the situation regarding unaccompanied and trafficked children in the Baltic Sea Region.
 - c. The WGCC will explore the possibilities to have the MoU described under a. and b. signed by the ministers responsible for these issues in the Baltic Sea Region
 - d. The National Contact Points shall meet yearly.
 - e. The meetings should involve National Contact Points and as appropriate other experts like the National Coordinators.
 - f. The Secretariat of the WGCC shall update the contact details of the National Contact Points and publish these at the Childcentre website.
 - g. Information on how the National Contact Point can be contacted will be disseminated by the WGCC member and through available information channels.
- 2. Prevention of child trafficking should build on knowledge both on what makes children vulnerable to being recruited and what may contribute to the creation of a market where children are exploited. The specific expertise of the WGCC and the network connected to the group is on young persons attitudes to selling and buying sex.*

Activities:

- a. The Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescents' Sexuality will be used to create discussion seminars with teachers and students in higher grades in order to fully explore both what may make a young person sell sex and what may make a young person buy sex.
- 3. The study made by the WGCC on how child victims of trafficking are assisted in the region demonstrates the need for national coordination and monitoring of assistance efforts for child victims. Where such coordination and*

monitoring exist carried by governmental representatives, and where NGOs and public agencies meet and exchange viewpoints support measures are more evenly distributed across the country.

Activities:

- a. The WGCC aims at organising workshops for groups of countries to consider how best to secure the national coordination building on good experiences from some countries in the region. The aim of these workshops would be to look at good practices and how these can be implemented more widely in the region. The National Contact Points will be one of the key actors in ensuring national coordination.
 - b. The network of experts trained under the BSR CACVT programme implemented 2006 – 2007 should be used as resources on the national as well as on the regional level in creating well functioning chains of assistance.
4. *The WGCC considers it to be of a high priority that programmes assisting children that are unaccompanied and/or who are victims of trafficking are mainstreamed into regular child protection structures in the member countries. Child protection workers need updated knowledge on how to recognise children that may be victims of trafficking. Child protection professionals need access to expert knowledge on how to support and rehabilitate unaccompanied and trafficked children. The WGCC also recognises that in some countries organisations aiming at supporting children victims of trafficking may not be sufficiently connected to the national coordination.*

Activities:

- a. In some countries manuals for staff meeting with children that may be victims of trafficking have been developed. The WGCC will coordinate evaluation and adaptation of these manuals for use in all countries in the region.
 - b. The network of experts in the region, trained in the BSR CACVT training, will be used to raise the competence and the capacity within child protection agencies on identification and recognition of children victims of trafficking through organising national training, bilateral meetings and regional conferences targeting child protection professionals.
 - c. Countries in the region will be encouraged to utilise the experts to raise the national level of knowledge.
5. *The WGCC recognises the continued need for cooperation, networking and dissemination of expertise and experiences on how best to assist children victims of trafficking. The National Coordinators, the National Contact Points and the network of trained experts in the region constitute an invaluable professional network.*

Activities:

- a. The WGCC will seek to ensure the continued active cooperation of the entire network through the organising of meetings and events following up on the specific topic of professional care for children that are unaccompanied or trafficked.

- 6. *The WGCC fully recognises and acknowledges the vital role NGOs and civil society play in establishing prevention programmes, rehabilitation programmes and support activities. NGOs suffer from short term project duration and diverse reporting mechanisms not giving them time to focus on the support activity they intended to set up in the first place.*

Activities:

- a. The WGCC will explore the possibility to organise a meeting of donor agencies and NGOs at which this topic will be raised and discussed. The donor organisations' interest in mainstreaming their reporting forms and also to consider how a more long term funding arrangements can be agreed upon will be explored.
- b. Donor organisations will also be encouraged in all their activities to consider how all projects supported should coordinate with the regular child protection programmes in order for these to be continuously strengthened.

Monitoring and detailing the activities

- 1) As with all actions taken by the WGCC activities following this plan of action will be itemised in the yearly Plan of Activities in which also the necessary time limits and funding needs will be added.
- 2) At its meetings the WGCC will monitor and follow up how the co-operation fulfils the goals set up in this action plan.
- 3) The WGCC will broadly disseminate this plan of action to stakeholders in the region and outside of the region.